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Technologies and Social Change in the Americas (Introduction)

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Technologies profoundly shape the development and the interaction of societies and cultures. Technologies are embedded in forms of social life and fields of cultural creativity. [1] They are catalysts for the creation of cultural divides and cultural networks. Technology and culture also directly influence each other. Cultural creativity spurs new technological development. Technological innovation brings forth new cultural media and expressions. Technology comprises of an entire cultural field with ideas and practices concerning how to interact between humans and to relate to non-humans. While there is a long debate on whether technologies are neutral instruments or, on the contrary, if technologies may foster undesirable social developments, it seems that this antagonism is more complex in the contemporary Information Age. Moreover, several technologic devices are integral parts of the body and the production of the social. In posthumanist thinking, technologies question traditional differences and recommend crossing boundaries and a more inclusive attitude towards non-humans, be they natural or artificial. [2]

In general terms, technological instruments often serve as a prolongation of the body. With that the boundaries between the human and the technical began to blur which is expressed in the concept of the cyborg. On the other hand, technological artefacts are increasingly not only understood as objects or instruments, but as actants (Latour 71) that have an own agency to produce the social. As concerns the relation between the human and technologies, American cultures have often been at the forefront of the development and cultural coding of new technologies for the redesign

of communication in social and cultural media. Technological inventions often also inspire social innovations. In trans- and intercultural contexts, the appropriation and incorporation of external cultural elements have often triggered social innovations. Also new inventions and innovations accelerate new imaginaries of the social. For example, the automobile changed not only the perception of time, place, and space, but also changed the patterns of mass-production and mass-consumption. The rise of radio and the record industry have enabled popular music to become a force of social and cultural change and a message carrier between movements and scenes in diverse contexts.

In its early stages, the Zapatista Movement in southern Mexico started to adopt virtual communication as a mix of surreal poetics, art practices, and political statements, and influenced global social movements such as the Occupy Movement. The Silicon Valley media complex shapes the channels of entertainment, virtual communication, and new media interaction on a global scale. As the Black Lives Matter protests after the murder of George Floyd have shown, amateur videos produced with camera phones have become a powerful weapon in the struggle against police brutality and anti-Black racism, providing victims, witnesses, and activists with a means of producing evidence and documenting human rights violations in ways that have sparked worldwide antiracist mobilizations. In times of the Corona pandemic, the importance of webinars and virtual demonstrations, concerts, and conferences as platforms for transnational communication between activists, artists, and academics have increased significantly, opening

new opportunities for networks of solidarity and cross-cultural dialogues beyond geographical and social borders.

Nevertheless, in many cases technological innovations have also lead to dystopic imaginaries of the social. Contemporary fears of a society of control, dominated by powerful private enterprises are a case in point. Cultural Studies researcher Néstor García Canclini recently diagnosed the emergence of an “algorithmic governmentality” where under the leadership of tech-oligopolies such as Google, Amazon and Microsoft, state institutions are replaced by apps, public media by social networks, and—in the end—the citizen by algorithms. [3] The articles in this edition address technologies and their cultural, historical and social role in shaping societies and their interactions in the Americas. The editors define technologies in a broad sense as technical and cultural. Contributions address technologies like the railroad, muralism, cinema, television, internet and new media as well as topics such as art and technology, history and technology, literature and technology, technology and social innovation in an interdisciplinary fashion.

The article by Paola Ravasio explores the technology of the railroad transport and its literary representations and reflections as trainscapes in selected literary writings by the Asian American writer Maxine Hong Kingston, the African American author Colson Whitehead and the Afro Costa Rican writer Quince Duncan who all articulate a type of rail intertextuality along the categories of repetition and difference. As symbol par excellence of modern progress, the nineteenth-century rail transport revolution defined an entirely new collective experience of technology (Harrington 229), in which metropolises and rural areas, people of different social classes, time intervals, and tracts of land met in the carriages that traversed huge territories in the Americas. The railroad represented a life-changing innovation in transportation technology and, by extension, in modern capitalist economies, due to the compression of the categories of speed and proximity through mechanized travel. As the literary reflections show, technological progress manifests itself as a complex and conflictive

process that, while creating a new awareness of geography and a heightened sense of mobility, it also expanded the colonial networks of exploitations as concerns land and people.

Gigi Adair draws on posthumanist thinking in her literary and cultural analysis of Earl Lovelace’s 2011 novel *Is Just a Movie*. The novel imagines the arrival of the “age of technology” in Trinidad. Set mostly in the 1970s and 1980s, it ponders the apparent failure of the emancipatory hopes associated with independence in the Caribbean, then the radical politics of the 1970 Black Power Revolution to ask about the role of technology in cultural and social life, and the potential for technology and culture to remake the social. Refusing both technological determinism and development discourse, both of which are portrayed as forms of neocolonialism, the novel instead insists on the possibility of a politicized and emancipatory engagement with technology that emerges from a longer history of Caribbean proto-posthumanist thought and the cultural technology of the Caribbean Carnival.

Exploring contemporary expressions of muralism in Mexico, Rozenn Le Mur discusses the visual art form as cultural technology to reappropriate imaginaries about indigeneity. In order to commemorate the International Day of Indigenous Peoples and the International Year of Indigenous Languages, in August 2019, Urban Indigenous Youth, Raíces del Verso, and the Nahuales Collective organized the painting of the community mural *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* (And may no one erase our footprints) in the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco. They proposed to collaborate to make visible the presence of indigenous youth in the city, using public space to reconfigure and reappropriate the imaginary about indigeneity, in what they called a “political act of resistance.” The essay reflects on community muralism as a tool to dialogue and reconfigure imaginaries, where the political is a fundamental axis. It builds its argumentation around the following questions: How is an artistic proposal such as this mural used to open a debate on interculturality, discrimination, and indigenous identity in the city? And in what way is the community mural *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas*, as a discursive production, an act of resistance?

Television profoundly changed mass entertainment and the public sphere in the second half of the twentieth century. But as many technological and social changes before, television encountered obstacles and problems on its way to mainstream culture. Francisco Hernández Lomelí explores the initial weaknesses that the absence of a content policy meant for the consolidation of the television industry in Mexico. The article provides a general framework of the slow start of this medium in several nations (Germany, United States, and Great Britain) and draws a comparative perspective between different Ibero-American countries (Argentina, Colombia, and Spain). In doing so, the text demonstrates the precariousness of the programming proposals made by the promoters of public and private television in its early years, the financial insolvency of television companies and the relationship of dependence of television with respect to the rest of the mass media. In this way, the essay renders it possible to observe both the common problems faced by the television industry at the international level and the particular obstacles of each country.

In the 1960s artists looked intensively for collaboration with technology and engineers who were developing and using technology. Artistic networks like Fluxus, EAT, Black Mountain College, Black Arts Repertory Theatre, Sun Ra's Solar Arkestra, Teatro Campesino, Cunningham Dance Theater, and Judson Dance Theater produced performances in which artistic expression and social impetus were strongly embedded in collaborative art projects. Wilfried Rausert's contribution analyzes examples from U.S. postmodern dance in the 1960s to explore the emergence of collaborative aesthetics as a matrix for new developments in the performance arts. In this context, creativity is defined as a collective effort and achievement; postmodern dance is interpreted as a laboratory for redefining community and rethinking the relationship between the human, the social, and technology. The essay argues that postmodern dance can serve as a blueprint for an artistic vision of new forms of social bonding.

Fabiola Alcalá Anguiano and Alejandra Sañudo Martín explore the close ties between cinema and the social world. As their article

argues, cinema is a reflection of the social world and the representation of certain social groups is significant when studying it. In particular, this text addresses aspects of gender and technology focusing on the representation of women in commercial or mainstream cinema, specifically reviewing the stereotypes and female archetypes that appear throughout the Star Wars saga, with the intention of reviewing whether they perpetuate certain forms of representation or if they propose some new ones. By focusing on three female characters, Leia, Padmé and Rey, the article explores particular case studies to shed light on the relationship of technology and representations of the social world in science fiction film.

In contemporary times social visions and freedom of expression are linked with the diversity of flows, streams, and blogs on the internet. Rodrigo Liceaga's text questions the assumption of the internet as a human right and of technology as fundamental for everyday life through inquiring into the relation between capitalism, technology, and coloniality. By drawing on a postcolonial approach to the constitution of a European/Western subject and bridging postcolonial studies and political ecology, the essay analyzes how and to what extent coloniality, capitalism, and technology might be intertwined. The main argument is that the internet, as we know it and expect it, to mediate everyday life has been possible as it is grounded on capitalism and coloniality as socio-ecological regimes embedded in technological devices. Additionally, the use of the internet by the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, is analyzed to demonstrate how their alternative use of the Internet redefines some of the basic traits of technology's expansion but not necessarily accounts for how the use of these devices and assemblages reproduce coloniality even in its use for activism and social transformation. Finally, the article proposes to look deeper into both the socio-ecological constitution of technology and other ways of being and understanding human, and non-human beings such as Tseltal and Tsotsil philosophy—Maya roots of Zapatismo in Chiapas—and mainly the idea of *ich'el ta muk'*—recognition-respect, to explore different perspectives to the one offered by capitalism and

coloniality, and concealed through technology, from which “non-technological” socio-ecological relations, and communities can emerge.

Bielefeld University with a focus on afro-diasporic movements and cultures in the Americas.

Endnotes

[1] See Coeckelbergh 2020.

[2] See Haraway 2000.

[3] See García Canclini 2019.

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Rail Intertextuality: A Time-Travel Escapade upon the Iron Rails of the Americas

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Abstract

*The representation of the railroad in literature is by no means new. The train-trope has been significantly re-presented through repetition and difference in cultural production across the Americas ever since the nineteenth century, consolidating an inter-American 'rail intertextuality'. The ensuing pages track this intertextuality by carrying out a close reading of literary trainscapes in the past four decades. The discussion focuses on how trainscapes from Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1980), Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016), and *Los cuatro espejos* (1973) from Afro-Costa Rican Quince Duncan articulate a rail intertextuality along the categories of repetition and difference. The paper is grounded upon the premise that trainscapes create an intertextual narrative along stories of im/mobility, of exclusion and erasure, and of the struggle for recognition.*

Keywords: literary trainscapes, transcontinental railroad, underground railroad, Costa Rican railroad, rail intertextuality

1. Introduction

The symbol par excellence for tracking Modernity (cf. Aguiar), the nineteenth-century railroad transport revolution defined a wholly new "collective experience of technology" (Harrington 229) in that metropolis and rural areas, people from different social classes, time intervals and stretches of land were all reunited on the wagons gliding upon the iron rails, thrust by a steam locomotive. As a result, the train ride radically transformed the sensuous awareness of geography, distorted through the reformed mathematical occurrence of a condensed space-time ratio (Schivelbusch, ch. 3). That is, the railway represented a life-changing innovation in transport technology, and by extension in modern capitalist economies, because of the compression of the categories of *speed* and *vicinity* by way of the mechanized journey. As Eric Hobsbawm asserts, by bringing places and people together in ways before unimaginable, the railroad became right from the start, "a sort of synonym for ultra-modernity in the 1840s" (89). From then on, 'progress' became a discourse embedded in the railroad imagery.

The representation of the railroad in literature is by no means novel. It is not far-fetched to argue that the train-trope has been significantly re-presented through repetition and difference in cultural production across the Americas ever since the nineteenth century, consolidating an inter-American 'rail intertextuality'. The ensuing pages track this intertextuality by studying the sociohistorical meaning carried in the representation of *literary trainscapes*, which are defined here as narrative nodes that portray human and material capital put in motion by both the railway system and the specific economies mobilizing such capital. Generally speaking, literary trainscapes articulate a complex portrait of modern capitalism whose emergence since the late 1700s combined and thus determined new interactions among land, labor, material and human capital (see Frieden and Rogowski 384). In the following analysis, the nineteenth-century slave-plantation economy of the US and the Chinese and the Afro-Caribbean labor diasporas of the same period are approached as examples of modern capitalism. In these contexts, literary trainscapes depict both the railroad-transport technology and international overseas labor

mobility as indivisible aspects of modernity. As a result, they create a triangular constellation in which the interrelationships among the train, people, and capital can be traced by way of close reading.

I have referred previously to literary trainscapes and the idea of a rail intertextuality elsewhere (Ravasio, *This Train*). There, I examined the correlation between spatial mobility and social immobility along and upon the railroad tracks in literature concerning migrant im/mobilities at the Panama Canal Zone, the United Fruit Company's enclaves, and undocumented transmigrants traversing Mexico towards the US border upon 'La Bestia'. With the purpose of expanding on this inter-American intertextuality, I explore here a different literary corpus pertaining to other historical imaginations and following a different purpose. The present discussion thus draws first on Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1980) and the construction of the US transcontinental railroad. Next, Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016) is approached so as to correlate the railroad's relevance for resisting slavery in nineteenth-century North America. The last section deals with *Los cuatro espejos* (1973) by Afro-Costa Rican Quince Duncan, a work which engages Afro-Costa Rican "double consciousness" (Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* 1903). By exploring these works from the perspective that tackles the intersection between the sociohistorical processes of the past and the literary production referring to those processes, the ensuing study shall demonstrate how a relational approach to selected literary trainscapes identifies a rail intertextuality drawn around the experience of erasure and discrimination.

2. The Wedding of the Rails

Chinese American literature, together with oral history, legends, and travel notes concerning the construction of the US transcontinental railroad express in many respects "a different sensibility" (Xiaohuang 10) regarding the acclaimed industrialization and modernization of the United States of America. As Xiaohuang maintains (20), compared to the ideals of progress and prosperity that the transcontinental railroad meant for the

economic development of the country in order "to move the nation forward" (Hall 331), the American dream that many Chinese immigrants pursued as railroad builders was met with unfulfilled expectations of advancement and of betterment.

Almost half a decade after the western portion of the transcontinental railroad started laying the tracks across the harsh Sierra Nevada landscape in 1863, the Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad were successfully merged in May 1869 in the "wedding of the rails" (Dearing 70). This landmark event represented without a doubt one of the ultimate technological achievements of nineteenth-century America, which had demanded the hiring not only of Chinese, but also of Irish and Mormon wage workers for it to be accomplished. Notwithstanding Chinese historical agency in the development of nineteenth-century USA, the stories of these railroad builders have been however left out of "the national narrative that celebrated American progress in the 19th century" (Hall 331).

As a response to this lack of recognition, literature by generations born out of the Chinese labor diaspora articulates how fundamental these migrant workers were to this epic event and thus to the industrialization of the US as a whole. Chinese American literature takes on the task of deploying a collective memory through individual tales, which, together, craft a historical imagination concerning the building of the transcontinental railroad. In so doing, it underscores, on the one hand, the Chinese's role in the industrialization of America, while declaiming, on the other, how they were excluded both from the recognition of their labor and from the benefits thereof. As a result, feelings of "alienation and disillusion" (Xiaohuang 20) fill Chinese American nineteenth- and twentieth-century writings, whose impressions of the Reconstruction Era's transportation technology contrast the aforementioned awareness of industrial innovation. They reveal instead exclusion and marginalization of Chinese and their US-born children on account of racism both after the wedding of the rails and in the production of historical knowledge on the subject.

"Great-Grandfather built the railroad through the Sierra Nevada in difficult seasons," remembers Rainsford Chan, the narrator of Shawn Wong's 1979 novel *Homebase* (9). The novel crafts a transgenerational narrative from the perspective of Rainsford, a fourth-generation Chinese American, whose memories pronounce how his family constantly attempted to make the US their home ever since Great-Grandfather first immigrated to the country. Particular to the account is the amalgam of sources used by Chan to articulate his family's stories. Poetry, dialogues, essays, short stories, memories, letters, all of these intertwine with each other in order to unravel those "'hidden corners' of American Asian history" (Chen 393). In so doing, they enunciate precisely those silences and elisions that have given the descendants of the labor diaspora an ambiguous place in their country's historical imagination.

The permanent presence of the railroad in the fabric of Chan's familial memoirs reveals the heartaches and the pain that Chinese immigrants underwent during and after its construction. Its literary trainscapes thus reveal and place at the forefront those hidden corners which pertain to the physical hardships endured at the Sierra Nevada mountains. As Great-Grandfather recalls: "[t]heir eyes [were] swollen from the blood pushed into the aching veins of their sight" (Wong 15). Emotional struggles are also touched upon by Wong, traversed by the impossibility of belonging to the host country on account of nineteenth-century institutional racism. When the railroad was finished, the narrator goes on to tell us, his great-grandfather and the many other Chinese immigrants were "chased out of the mines" and "cut loose to wander through the West," until racial considerations of national belonging prohibited them to continue working the land as farmers, eventually banning them to enter the country altogether through the Exclusion Act of 1882 (14).

Although the Central Pacific Railroad was built mainly by Chinese migrant workers who had come to substitute European laborers by late 1865 (Chang et al. 2), and while American mining corporations thrived thanks to Chinese miners and merchants alike, the Chinese fell however prey to class exploitation and hostile racial

discrimination (Yung et al. 2). The Exclusion Act, which Chan's Great-Grandfather referred to, had in reality banned the entry of Chinese labor for ten years, prohibiting Chinese to acquire US citizenship (4). Other legal strategies were also implemented so as to eradicate Chinese presence from the American social tissue. "They were allowed to live, but not to marry," explains Chan. As Wong states, "The law was designed so that the Chinese would gradually die out, leaving [behind] no sons or daughters." (14)

Despite such tactics, meant to hinder Chinese' integration to mainstream society, Yung, Chang, and Lai (5) also refer to the fact that Asian communities developed judicial and diplomatic strategies in order to defend their civil rights. As a result, the American constitutional jurisprudence was developed and modified significantly due to the Chinese' contribution and struggle as the undesired Others. Nevertheless, the anti-Chinese civil and governmental movement of the time had long-lasting consequences for the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the labor diaspora. Among these consequences is the absence of their forefathers' and -mothers' contribution to 'The United States of America' in official narratives. As David Leiwei Li maintains, "America/Americanness is a geopolitical concept motivated by interests materialized in canonical texts." He goes on to clarify how this concept is constructed not only literarily, but also historically (482). I agree with Chang, et al. that a central deed necessary to accomplish the deconstruction of the homogeneous construct of 'America/Americanness' is the recognition of those hidden and silent stories concerning Chinese railroad builders as fundamental narratives of US history. As the editors of *The Chinese and the Iron Road* (2019) have emphasized it, these are narratives that have been "pushed to the margins of public memory and historical scholarship" (Chang et al. 19).

Julia H. Lee refers to this dual presence/absence of Asian Americans in US history as a dialectics of in/visibility which she considers is made fully evident with the train trope. For Lee, the transcontinental railroad occupies a dominant yet complicated place in Asian American literature (31). It articulates an encrypted message which localizes the labor of Chinese immigrants at

the center of US history, while simultaneously emerging from the American landscape as a hollow image embracing the experience of economic exploitation, exclusion, and, above all, erasure of America's Asian "others."

Reminiscent of Chan's Great-Grandfather's tales from Sierra Nevada, Maxine Hong Kingston's story of Ah Goong in "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains" (*China Men* 1980; 1981 National Book Award) too speaks of the completion of the transcontinental railroad while underscoring, simultaneously, the eradication of Chinese presence in the records we find in the historical archive. Like Wong's male narrator, Kingston's female narrator recollects and transmits the individual and collective memories of Chinese immigrants. She reconstructs the stories of her forefathers and brother, as well as experiences of other men outside her family, creating thus an intricate web of transgenerational memories.

As Aiming Cheng considers *Homebase* to reclaim America as a home for Chinese families, for Elaine Kim *China Men* portrays "the [Chinese] heroes who lay claim on America" (212). Accordingly, in one of her scholarly contributions to *Chinese Railroad Workers in North America*, [1] Pin-Chia Feng underscores that *China Men* reenacts in effect a counter-history of official US narratives of the past. Chinese American literature, and hence the literary trainscapes portraying the construction of the transcontinental railroad play a critical role in underscoring those historical imaginations placed at the margins. For Lee, the train trope is in fact the narratological element that sets the stage for these historical re-enactments, which "have been otherwise made invisible." (266) She offers furthermore a keen understating of the railroad in *China Men*. For the author, "Kingston represents the railroad as *narrative*" (267; emphasis added). This narrative is constructed upon a system of signifiers that correlate the naming and claiming of the Chinese's fundamental role in the history of US with their erasure and omission in the national imagination.

There is one particular literary trainscape in "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains" that makes the authors' claims obvious, re-writing the unwritten racial story of

the inauguration of the First Transcontinental Railroad in 1869: "when the engine from the West and the one from the East rolled toward one another and touched." (Kingston 145) "The transcontinental railroad was finished," the narrator goes on to describe. "The white demon officials gave speeches" in which they underlined how the "The Greatest Feat of the Nineteenth Century" and "in the History of Mankind" could "only" have been done by "Americans." Next, a photograph is taken so as to commemorate the extraordinary occasion. "*While the demons posed for photographs, the China Men dispersed,*" the story continues. It is little surprise that "*Ah Goong does not appear in railroad photographs.*" (145; emphasis added)

Displaced wage workers, technological innovation, and the recognition of the greatest accomplishment of the century in racist key are fused in this literary trainscape. Particular to it, furthermore, is the fact that the moment has been framed in time and for generations to come in the form of a photograph, itself an innovative technology of the epoch for preserving the moment. Apparently transparent and straightforward, this visual archive documents the happening of the *wedding of the rails* itself. As a means of stor(y)ing the past, the photograph portrays a historical truth, one that, when perceived from Kim's, Feng's, and Lee's considerations, must however be explained from the elision and suppression of those absent from it.

Kingston's literary trainscape has a bearing on the enforced removal of the Chinese wage workers' significant contribution to US economy. Their physical effort cutting and chipping away through the Sierra Nevada was going to make it possible "to cross the country in a matter of days instead of months," allowing people to travel faster and easier across the country's continental expanse, costing less to merchants to transport goods from one point of the country to another and beyond (Chang et al. 2). Hence, Chinese railroad builders helped modernize the United States through the transcontinental transport technology. The photograph not only documents the inauguration moment of this exceptional industrial achievement, its literary trainscape also showcases the exemplary omissions enabled

and conjoined in the historical imagination of 'the greatest feat of humankind'. As described by Li, the section dedicated to Grandfather Ah Goong in the Sierra Nevada Mountains "is a chapter that exactly makes up the historical loss the Chinese of America have suffered" (490). The taking of the photograph condenses and simultaneously restores this historical loss by underlining the 'dispersal of the Chinese' as the scenery (not) captured by the camera.

As a result, the photographic trainscape brings to the fore a historical 'truth' that, paradoxically, makes visible the process of invisibility that Chinese railroad workers underwent once their work was no longer relevant to their host land, for many of whom it was to become their unwelcoming new homeland. Their *dispersal* together with Ah Goong's *absence* from the picture/s are underscored moreover through speech acts that emphasize how *Only Americans could have done it*. Kingston words echo journalist Samuel Bowles's remarks, who in 1869 stated how the transcontinental railroad was "a triumph of the American people" and asserted "no other people than ours" could have accomplished it (qtd. in Chang et al. 19). Kingston's decision to capitalize "Only" reveals with a sarcastic tone what Lee has so acutely underscored: the presence of the railroad represents "the cause and sign of Chinese American erasure." (266) The visual archive and the written speech act thus conspire together to remove and obliterate the Chinese from the big picture so that Only Americans could be recognized – i.e. *seen* – as those responsible for the Greatest Feat of Humankind. It is not a coincidence that Bowles's book, from where Kingston draws her inspiration, is entitled *Our New West*.

A picture is said to be worth a thousand words. Here, ironically, the photograph, a source of power for constructing master narratives of the past, calls for masking and silencing. In the words of Pin-Chia Feng, the picture "references a glaring historical injustice in need of redress."

3. Back into the Future

Invisibility and historical injustice are two of the manifold experiences associated to the

train-trope in African American literature as well. Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2017, is emblematic thereof. The novel tells the story of young Cora, a third-generation plantation slave born to and raised at the Randall brothers' cotton plantation in the southern province of Georgia in the mid-nineteenth century. One of the narratives that introduce the reader to Cora's story is that of her mother Mabel, who decided one day to escape from the cotton prison and flee to the North. Mabel did not take her daughter with her. While growing up motherless, Cora resists the plantation logic, sustained by the enslaved human capital that sows the crops of this violent plantation economy, and becomes the sole proprietor of her life when she decides to run with Caesar, another slave. Like her mother before her, she escapes determined to arrive at those states up North where the right to live as a free wo/man regardless of the color of a person's skin is respected and advocated for. Cora flees from the South to the North via South and North Carolina before Ridgeway, her hunter, finds her for the first time and takes her to Tennessee, straying her from her original path. Before and after this moment, when she escapes from him and flees next towards Indiana, Cora uses not only her feet, legs, and the totality of her body and mind during her endless exile, but also, as the title implies it, the underground railroad.

A freedom movement that began in the late 1830s, the Underground Railroad (URR) represented a "political position" (LaRoche xii) that helped runaway slaves to escape from inhumane captivity enforced on them in the South's plantations. The URR was no ordinary railway system. It was actually *not* an actual railroad at all nor an ordinary train with a steam engine, railway tracks and wagons, stopping at train stations to un/load goods. Rather, the "Underground Railroad" refers to a system of clandestine routes, safe houses, and a network of individuals who worked together in order to aid black slaves in their journey up North (Shadd et al. 17), be it by supplying housing arrangements, food, transportation means, or new identities. As a result of the new transport technology of the time, that is, *the steam locomotion*, "the name

'Underground Railroad' caught on," affirm the authors of *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Toronto!*, "and was used by abolitionists as a metaphor to describe their activities in assisting slaves." (Shadd et al. 17f.) The term first appeared in 1839 in an abolitionist newspaper, leaving no definite trace of who coined the term. From then on, it has been frequently used as a figure of speech in reference to the organized assistance it offered slaves in escaping their lifelong bondage in the South (Schulz, "The Perilous Lure").

As a consequence, between the 1830s and the end of the US Civil War, steam locomotion and imageries of freedom were co-drafted as indissoluble in the minds and actions of slaves, maroons, abolitionists, plantation owners, and slave catchers alike. The URR-trope synonymized train "stations" or "stops" to the safe houses; in turn, "cargo" and "freight" became synonyms for the runaway human capital; and "stationmasters" and "conductors" developed into metonymies for the white, black, and Native American people who put their own lives at risk for the slaves' right to freedom (Shadd et al. 18). Quakers from Ohio, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass are in fact distinguished conductors of the URR.

Across the border between the slave-free North and the plantation-driven South lay promises of liberty and autonomy. Ralph Harrington asserts that the nineteenth-century railway system represented a groundbreaking symbol of progress, "promising economic and social betterment, democracy, energy, freedom" (229). Even though the author is referring to the social innovation provided by the modernization of transport technology in Victorian societies, his connotations can certainly be stretched in reference to the nineteenth-century slave plantation scenarios in the United States. *Democracy, freedom, and prosperity* do, indeed, underscore the tangible meanings ascribed to the industrial metaphor of the Underground Railroad. As it was suggested by Whitehead's abolitionists of New York, "any colored person became magically free once they stepped over the border." (94)

Nevertheless, to cross the threshold at work between freedom and captivity meant enduring

the difficulties, life-threatening risks, and the endless exile, together with the uncertain future at the desired destination that the decision to flee from the plantation economy involved. In this sense, the railroad withholds a substantially different meaning when explored against the history of slavery in the United States. As Cheryl J. LaRoche maintains, "the Underground Railroad movement nags at the nation's psyche." (1) It "nags," hassles, and lastly confronts those imageries of freedom inherent in the URR because they are also indivisible from the counterpart experiences of captivity, violence, and injustice endured by African Americans riding it – as embodied by Cora herself.

Embraced by the title, Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* is a literary trainscape from the beginning to the end. The novel is a story-in-motion, of being on the move and still bonded to captivity while escaping from it. In these dialectics of im/mobility, freedom (or, at least mobility toward it) has been made possible because of the URR. The underground railway system shapes the pace and nature of Cora's journey by framing it with experiences of imprisonment, exile, and interrupted escape. As a result, her story is one of un-arrival on account of the stories of im/mobility she endures as a runaway slave. "Between departure and arrival, in transit like the passenger she'd been ever since she ran" (Whitehead 215), Cora hides in attics and basements; runs through the woods and across the swamps; is transported in a wagon after her slave catcher captures her the first time; and after the URR takes her to South Carolina, she works as a free woman under the alias "Bessie," first as the hired help at the Andersons household, later as a live African stand-in-statue at the Museum of Natural Wonders. At the end, Cora flees once again from Ridgeway upon iron lines of the Underground Railroad.

Hence, the URR constantly cuts across the plot. It checks the tempo of Cora's fight for freedom while unfolding a social world defined by exploitation and violence, captivity and racism. Cora herself is not oblivious to the dialectics of im/mobility that the Underground Railroad offers her. "Whether in the fields or underground or in an attic room, America remained her warden" (Whitehead 207), she confides in her readers.

The Underground Railroad was the engine driving her through the corners of this “labyrinth of bondage.” (48)

The URR was and remains to this day a symbol to freedom seekers and enablers in a country where racism continues to mark the social, political, and economic tissue of the nation. Cora’s story illustrates it as a trope of resistance in antebellum US slave and escape narratives, by which African Americans sought to find a way to flee from exploitation in an oppressive and inhumane economy so as to belong to the Northern states as free human beings. Very much like the literary trainscapes in Wong and Kingston, which demand recognition and visibility, the URR, too, in its own declamation of racial oppression of African descendants, dwells deep and strong in the national imagination. In its wake, we are left with a historical imagination that, like the Asian American, has been articulated at the margins not only with oral histories, laws, newspaper articles, and scholarly treatises dating back to its very origins in the first half of the nineteenth century, but, of course, by contemporary literature as well. [2]

Whitehead’s narrative stands out in this literary historiography due precisely to his take on the Underground Railroad’s “fantastical infrastructure” (Schulz, “The Perilous Lure”). The acclaimed author’s “wildly inventive” novel, as acclaimed by *The Observer*, finds its ingenious approach to black history and its relationship to technology in the train-trope. Whitehead imagines a past that is defined by the forthcoming and not-yet-existent technology—not a real railway system, but a network of people and means of transportation. Throughout the novel, however, the Underground Railroad appears as summoned from the future, that is, in the form of a genuine steam iron horse, built underground and ridden over actual railroad lines, rumbling and whistling on its way from one underground station to the next—almost as a subway train were it not for its nineteenth-century setting.

In her study of the (underground) railroad in literature, Zabel engages how the train-symbol is used by twentieth-century African American writers in a way that distinguishes itself from other American writers. For Zabel,

[w]hen there is a train in the text, instead of being an object symbolizing progress to which an author has either a positive or negative response, the train most often symbolizes an interstice in time and space that transcends chronological history. (5)

The author’s understanding of the train-trope is insightful. Written over a decade before *The Underground Railroad*, her affirmation is quite fitting for scrutinizing Whitehead’s novel. Otherwise said, Whitehead’s URR-trope is an excellent illustration of Zabel’s keen affirmation. His inscription of a futuristic train in America’s slave-past constitutes the narratological quintessence of his Afrofuturistic narrative, [3] by which linear temporal dimensions (i.e. past-present-future) are merged into one single and unique instant, disrupting the temporal continuum. More precisely, the presence of the Underground Railroad in Whitehead’s novel is the narratological element *par excellence*, an interstice that fuses and alters the plot’s time and space, creating instead a parallel universe: as though the past were a memory of the future. This is accomplished across the novel in its entirety and Cora’s first vision of the steam-engine’s greatness best illustrates the use of the railroad with the purpose of disrupting chronological time. Baffled in awe, she is mesmerized by its industrial greatness:

The locomotive was black [...] The main body consisted of a large black box topped by the engineer’s cabin. Below that, pistons and large cylinders engaged in a relentless dance with the ten wheels, two sets of small ones in front and three behind. The locomotive pulled one single car, a dilapidated boxcar missing numerous planks in its walls. (Whitehead 83)

By representing US slave history through Cora’s break from the plantation economy, the reader is transported to nineteenth-century America. At the same time, however, the plot is fueled by an actual steam locomotive and the spatio-temporal scenery is constantly altered by way of the URR itself. As a result, (the disruption of) time is transformed into a rhetorical tool, suitable for engaging themes

like structural racism and racial violence in the United States from a historical perspective that traces their origins back to slavery and African American resistance to it. Through this dexterous maneuvering of non-chronological time, we, the readers, experience an all too familiar and invariable present. As stated by Schulz ("The Perilous Lure"), "the story of slavery is fundamentally the story of America, and [Whitehead] uses Cora's journey to observe our nation." In this sense, the URR-trope annihilates time by narratologically inscribing historically inaccurate technology in order to explode and challenge the history of white supremacy in the United States.

Unlike Wong's and Kingston's literary trainscapes, deemed to unearth long hidden historical facts, the URR-trope entails instead an anachronic representation of the past. Yet each one of the Underground Railroad's train stations, as stated by Knowles, "reveals a possible configuration of race relations in America." As Knowles further posits, these relations could be as easily situated in the eighteenth century as in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries (163). Recalling the shooting of George Floyd and the many other tragic life-stories from which the Black Lives Matters movement has emerged, it is rather pertinent to add 'the twenty-first century' to Knowles affirmation as well. This way, Whitehead's Underground Railroad travels back into the future.

4. The symphony of reminiscence upon the rails

So far, I have approached Asian and African American literary trainscapes so as to portray how labor and slave-plantation economies, mobility, and the new railway system interlock at the train-trope in nineteenth-century US historical imagination/s. As a way of concluding this tracing of inter-American rail intertextuality, I would like to draw once again on Zabel's consideration of the train-trope as disruptive of chronological time in literature. In my reading, this view is, in fact, not exclusive to African American literature and can be usefully applied to literature south of the border as well.

In *Los cuatro espejos* (1973) by Afro-

Costa Rican Quince Duncan, the train-trope is indispensable to the deployment of the plot, whose story is persistently carried from the present to the past, and back to the present again in order to question the relationship between racial premises and national belonging in twentieth-century Costa Rica. Although the literary trainscapes sketched in Duncan's novel do not portray a futuristic railroad like Whitehead does, the train that travels between San José and Estrada in *Los cuatro espejos* stands, like the URR and the Chinese American train-trope, as a gateway to freedom and recognition. This time, liberation is sought not from slavery, but from the psychoemotional crisis (Martin-Ogunsola 9) that overwhelms and cripples the Afro-Costa Rican protagonist. Thereby, the erasure of the Afro-Caribbean labor diaspora's contribution to the modernization of Costa Rica's economy is alluded to tacitly.

The novel starts when, after attending a conference on ethnonational minorities at the National Theater in the capital of San José, Charles McForbes, an Afro-Costa Rican from Limón, wakes up the next day and, submerged in a state of invisibility, cannot see his face in the mirror. The second time he looks into the mirror, he is still submerged in a state of blindness. When he attempts to see himself a third time, he realizes that his face has blackened. His state of mind aggressively disintegrates henceforth because of this unrecognizable reflection materialized in the mirror-heterotopia. [4] Drawing on the parallels between Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Duncan's *Los cuatro espejos*, Dellita L. Martin-Ogunsola comments on the mirror as the medium that reveals heretofore masked racial identities. In her words, "McForbes is blind as well as invisible because his face, which has no distinguishing features, dissolves into darkness." (10) From this moment on, the protagonist wanders in a sort of urban Odyssey searching for his sanity and his identity. This search is the organizing principle of the novel (Jackson 173).

Los cuatro espejos is in fact a paradigmatic example of the catastrophic psychological effects of what W.E.B. Du Bois termed *double consciousness* at the beginning of the twentieth century.[5] Charles, a light-skinned Afro-Costa

Rican of Caribbean descent, does not recognize himself as black. An educated landowner from Limon, he imagines himself as a white-mestizo rather than as a Costa Rican of Afro-Caribbean origin. On this day, however, the image reflected in the mirror challenges Charles as he becomes a “character who literally and figuratively confronts his reflected self.” (Martin-Ogunsola 9) Growing up in a mestizo society whose racial cartography has been ideologically whitened and discursively imagined as of European ascendance (Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 51-61), Charles imagines himself and, subconsciously wishes to be, non-black. Hence, caught between two seemingly dissimilar identities, i.e., *black* and *Costa Rican*, Charles’s double consciousness materializes in the mirror-heterotopia in the form, first, of invisibility and then of blackness, a sequence that results in his loss of self.

Complementary to Du Bois’s double consciousness, the protagonist’s fall into madness is best understood in light of what Frantz Fanon (*Peau noire, masques blancs* 1952) described and explained as the psychological alienation Afro-descendants have historically endured due to the discursive hegemony of European colonialism. In Fanon’s words, Charles has internalized and assumed both an attitude and a way of thinking and seeing that are, in essence, white constructs (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 148). His character is the literary embodiment of this “psychoexistential complex” (14), which culminates in his incapacity to see himself in the mirror mainly because what he sees is the reflection of an unrecognizable self. Drawing on Fanon, we can conclude that Duncan has transposed a sociopolitical discourse to prose fiction, in which Charles’s competing Afro/Costa Rican double consciousness had long provided him with a white mask for his black skin.

In a desperate act of self-preservation, the protagonist boards the train in San José in order to return to Estrada, his hometown in Limon, and to cure the “spontaneous” blackness that has brought him to the edge of madness (Duncan 109-118; ch. VIII). Here, the train becomes the most appropriate means of transportation, permitting the protagonist and his readers to travel to the past so as to take care of the present

and cure the future. Following Zabel, the train-trope appears here as a narratological strategy that neutralizes, suspends, and reverses the linear dimensions of time in order to articulate a non-chronological storyline so as to reconstruct Charles’s memories and thus cure his identity crisis. In this sense, the train trip annihilates time and space so as to enable Charles’s “process of self exploration” (Persico 16).

The locomotive transports the protagonist’s body from the interior of the country to the Atlantic province. While aboard the train, and with every blow of the railroad’s whistle, Charles has an episode of remembrance that transports him figuratively to the past. Therefore, the train trip facilitates both a territorial displacement and a temporal one. It carries Charles emotionally to those reminiscences that his memory had chosen to suppress and that the mirror image has so violently brought to the surface. Here, the narratological features of non-chronological time correspond to one of the most elaborate schemes of the novel. In effect, the novel’s readers have to actively reconstruct Charles’s life-story, which is built upon various other storylines that continually intersect, intertwine, and construct the background of his identity crisis, set not only between San José and Estrada but also between Limon and the Caribbean islands. The trainscape-chapter therefore connects Charles’s psychoemotional breakdown to his departure from Estrada (identified as his cultural uprooting) and to his subsequent rooting in San José—a displacement that equates an attempt at whitening his heritage. Charles’s mobile spaces of the past – the train ride to the capital’s hospital, his ex-wife Lorena’s sickness, her death – are inscribed here as the foundation of his troubled double consciousness, which nonetheless lend meaning to his identity crisis once they are put in relation with the broader narratives of his familial memories, localized between Limon and the Caribbean archipelago. The train journey becomes hence the im/mobile space for coming to terms with his black reflection by recalling the generations that preceded him. As a result, Charles understands the ride back home as a century-long journey (“parecía un viaje a lo largo de mil siglos” [Duncan 111]).

Like Wong and Kingston, Duncan interlaces

the figure of the railroad with the narrator's familial stories, specifically those of his Jamaican forefathers. In so doing, other accounts of collective departures and arrivals are reconstructed – this time between the Caribbean archipelago and the Central American isthmus –, which precede and thus define him. These are traced back to the story of his successful Jamaican grandfather, Papa Saltimán, who exhorted his descendants to deny their blackness and to avoid marrying black women, encouraging them instead to espouse mulatto or white women so as to climb up the social ladder: Hay que subir de color para escapar de esta cochinidad en que estamos... Hay que ir blanqueando, esa es la solución: hay que ir blanqueando (Duncan 115). [6]

While Charles's self-assigned white mask can be traced back to his grandfather's beliefs, his psychological cure, on the other hand, interlocks with the memories of his father Pete. After Saltimán's death, Pete fell into misery and poverty in Limón but still sacrificed his body's strength at every cost so that his son could get a better education in San José, master the official language, and have a better future. Charles remembers his father's insistence in erasing Saltimán's wrong assumptions so as to instead help him affirm his blackness proudly: "Charles, usted es negro. Papá Saltimán era un pobre tonto." (Duncan 115) [7]

All of these memories, superimposed and bounded together by the train ride into memories and territories of the past, explain the troubled psychology behind Charles's mirror-heterotopia. During the train ride and between the spatio-temporal jumps inscribed by the locomotive's *pitazos*, Duncan is constantly confronted with the depths of his denied identity. "¿Nosotros los hombres negros?" (114), he asks himself shocked while conversing with another black man traveling from the city to the Caribbean coast, as though the "black" and the "me" implied by the man with "we" were inconceivable to his sense of self. His uneasiness to assume his origins reveals his psychological whitening: "mi piel: pucha, no es negra. Es decir, si no fuera por mi pelo y mis facciones, yo podría pasar en cualquier parte como blanco-mestizo." (114) [8]

Charles's mental conflict slowly becomes untangled with every new confrontation,

with every new question and answer that he engages within his mind by the whistle blowing up his memories. Reminiscing, Charles tries to comprehend the precise moment and the particular reasons that made his dreams and ideals come in conflict with his blackness. He continually asks himself: "¿En qué momento preciso perdí mi propia identidad?" (114) [9]

Similar to Kingston's picture of the wedding of the rails-scene, the trainscape-chapter frames the erasure –or better said, the whitening– of Charles's blackness. This white mask has been conceived by Charles as necessary in order for him to survive and thrive among the capital's elites. Not only does Charles recognize himself as white-mestizo, he also expects all others to perceive him as such (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 163, n. 25). Dorothy Mosby, echoing Charles's words quoted above, has coherently described Duncan's novel as a novel of passing. By contextualizing the author's production within Costa Rican literary historiography, she has defined *Los cuatro espejos* as Duncan's second novel of Afro-Costa Rican identity (Mosby, *Quince Duncan* 74). [10] Rightly asserted by Mosby, Charles's story portrays the psychological struggles that Afro-Caribbeans have endured in their attempt to integrate successfully into mainstream Costa Rican mestizo culture. In this sense, the train-trope's distortion of time not only guides Charles's personal self-exploration. It alludes as well to the broader historical imagination concerning Afro-Caribbean migration in the Central American isthmus at the end of the nineteenth century and the Costa Rican generations of Caribbean origin that were assimilated to the hegemonic culture of the twentieth century. In the words of Alan Persico,

[t]he journey should not be interpreted as an individual struggle alone. It is a statement concerning the plight of Blacks in Costa Rica on the one hand, as well of the contributions that Blacks have made ... on the other. (16)

As I noted before, the train represents the most appropriate technology for curing Charles's doubly fragmented sense of being,

[11] a technology and a space that makes him whole again. This is so because the trainscape-chapter, with its temporal breaks enabled by the iron horse, projects, in all its semantic strength, a historical meaning concerning the nineteenth-century Afro-Caribbean diaspora and the conjunction of labor mobility, modern capitalism, and transport technology.

The building of the railroad to the Atlantic in Costa Rica was, very much like the transcontinental railroad in the US, built by non-white wage workers. Although Chinese and Italian laborers were also contracted for the job, it was mainly emancipated Afro-Caribbeans, mostly from Jamaica, who arrived in Limón since 1872 to lay the railway lines. Parallel to the construction of the railroad, the Costa Rican nation-building process matured into a narrative for which claims of an exceptional racial homogeneity became one foundational pillar (Putnam 142). During the ideological whitening of the national social cartography, black migrant workers were tolerated. Their work was deemed as a “mal necesario” (Alvarenga 4) in order to enter the grand narrative of progress, modernization, and industrialization through the building of the railroad that would facilitate exporting coffee to various markets across the globe.

Once the railroad was completed in 1890, many of the black workers moved on to work at the United Fruit Company (UFCo.) and, like the Chinese railroad builders in the United States, became farmers. At first, land acquisition had been facilitated by both the Costa Rican government and Minor C. Keith, the US entrepreneur who was in charge of the building of the railroad and established the UFCo. The objective was to keep these workers from emigrating and thus to lure them into sustaining the enclave economy (Chomsky 28). Thanks to black agency in the industrialization of transport technology and in the consolidation of the banana enclaves, Costa Rica's export economy thrived in the first decade of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, once civil and governmental fears of Costa Rica becoming an ‘Africanized’ country grew stronger from the 1920s onwards, institutional measures were taken to prevent further immigration, strip blacks of their lands, and complicate their integration

into the nation's social fabric, thus hindering their upward mobility for decades to come (Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 75-84). It was not until 1949 that black people in Costa Rica were recognized as lawful citizens who were, from then on, assimilated into the hegemonic culture. As a result, Afro-Costa Ricans have “remained a footnote in Costa Rican history and a forgotten part of the national heritage.” (Harpelle 183)

Against this historical backdrop, which resembles to a large extent that of Chinese migrant workers in the United States, the trainscape-chapter in *Los cuatro espejos* fuses the national and the diasporic unto the iron rails. The train-trope alludes tacitly to the diasporic origins of black Costa Ricans at the same time that Charles's memories upon it expose racial discrimination and the straining social conditions that black Costa Ricans had to endure in their struggle to become Costa Rican. Decisively, Duncan sets forth Charles as an example so as to make visible the psychoemotional hardships endured by generations of the Afro-Costa Rican minority in their attempt to belong to a nation that, as an imagined community, did not recognize their ethnocultural identity nor their antecessors' contribution to the modernization of the country. The trainscape-chapter brings this to the fore through the symphony of reminiscences that crowds Charles's self-exploration.

The train-trope is thus bound to collective and individual memories of displacement as migrant wage workers, like Pete McForbes, and of the new places of mooring created at the coasts of the Costa Rican Caribbean. It also refers to the Costa Rican generations born to Afro-Caribbean migrants who, like Charles, left the Caribbean province to forge a new home at the capital. Lastly, the train-trope represents the link to cultural and family roots left behind (Mosby, *Place, Language and Identity* 227). It is therefore apt to assert that the railroad provides Charles with an im/mobile space for recalling and coming to terms with his past, his history of routes and roots, and, above all, his negritude. His psychoemotional crisis finally winds down when, stepping out of the train, he attempts to understand when exactly he began to mask his identity. “En dónde, pues, había perdido mi identidad al punto de redescubirla con tanto horror?” (Duncan 117)

[12] The protagonist's catharsis takes place as he travels through space and time upon the rail lines. At last, the railroad journey frees him from his psychoemotional captivity in the same way the URR assisted Cora free herself from her existential bondage.

5. Conclusion

In this essay, I have approached three distinct historical imaginations concerning labor mobility through a close reading of literary trainscapes. As I have argued, similar to how the transcontinental railroad triggered the migration of Chinese wage laborers to the United States and the ways the construction of the railroad in Costa Rica necessitated the immigration of an Afro-Caribbean proletarian workforce, the URR represents Cora's escape from the Randall plantation as a rebellious migration out of slavery (cf. LaRoche 105). In sum, in adopting the train-trip, all these novels comprise stories of origins, departures, and arrivals, while they also investigate the experiences of racism and inequality as a result of these im/mobilities.

A relational approach to the deep structure of sociohistorical meaning deployed by trainscapes makes evident how, despite the fact that processes of global change and industrial transformation are inherently bound to railroad imageries, Kingston's, Whitehead's, and Duncan's trainscapes deploy other narratives than those pertaining to the iron horse as a symbol of progress. In all of these storylines, the train-trope persuades us instead to reflect upon the stories of those mobile, marginalized minorities who sustained the modernization of the countries they have struggled to belong to. Hence, much like the way the photographic trainscape in Kingston unravels the Chinese as an un-portrayed shadow of modern America, Duncan's trainscapes-chapter creatively underlines how "Blacks are Costa Rica's double; they exist in the shadow of the country; they are irrevocably tied to her" (Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 233). Likewise, the URR-trope reveals another double of American historical identity that nags, as affirmed by LaRoche, at the nation's psyche. "If you want to see what this nation is all about," Lumbly the station manager tells Cora, "I always

say, you have to ride the rails. Look outside as you speed through, and you'll find the true face of America." (Whitehead 83) On her journey, Cora looks out the window and sees the shadow of darkness, a metaphor for the spatiality of slavery. Recalling Lee's assertion, trainscapes become in fact a narrative themselves, one whose deep structure of meaning articulates stories of im/mobility, of exclusion and erasure, and of the struggle for recognition.

By drawing on such similarities while considering the novels' core differences, overlapping narratives of historical injustice and struggle are identified. These are linked by way of the train-trope, the narratological constant among them, deployed moreover along the categories of repetition and difference. Difference is necessarily installed by the individual circumstances that situate the novels' plots in space and time. Repetition instead is provided by the trainscapes that frame exclusion, erasure, and discrimination as experiences lived similarly by the Chinese, African American, and Afro-Costa Rican protagonists in different spatiotemporal scenarios.

The various arrangements of mobile individuals, modern capitalism, and technology showcase a rail intertextuality whose historical narratives declaim equally ethnonational discrimination against the mobile Others: Chinese, African American, Caribbean. As a result, trainscapes construct a complex, multileveled narrative of historical references that confronts, refutes, and lastly exceeds the homogeneous and empty time of History (Benjamin 261). Above all, they compel us to replace the idea of humankind's progress in time with a cyclical understanding of historical movement. This movement is defined by the interplay that is woven between repetition and difference across the train-trope.

To conclude, I should add that the use of an industrial metaphor in these novels and my reading of them as a central driving force behind the narratives they put forth are by no means gratuitous. Far from that, this metaphor conjoins capitalism, labor im/mobility, and transport technology as the foundation of western Modernity and confronts the celebratory narrative of prosperity and progress ascribed

to it from the perspective of the human capital used to fuel the machine. As evoked by Cora, be it the forced uprooting for Africans or the labor diasporas of the nineteenth century, “[t]he engine [of Modernity] huffed and groaned and kept running. They had merely switched the fuel that moved the pistons.” (Whitehead 205)

Endnotes

[1] *Chinese Railroad Workers in North America* Project at Stanford University (2012-2020) produced a comprehensive collection of sources and reflections regarding the construction of the transcontinental railroad by the Chinese. The collective research project resulted in important publications with the purpose of providing information on issues such as how many Chinese worked at the railroad, where they came from, how much they earned and how much of it was sent as remittances back home, their attempts at unionization, etc. For further information, see <https://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/faqs/>.

[2] See “Escape from Slavery: The Law, Media and Literature” (LaRoche 3-15; Introduction), where the author provides a comprehensive literary historiography of the Underground Railroad, including not only narratives of slavery and of escape, but also newspaper articles, scholarly treatises, recollections of oral histories, and the drafting of laws on the subject.

[3] I follow here Whit Frazier Peterson’s (2019) term “Afrofuturistic”. For Mark Dery, who coined the term “Afrofuturism”, this genre refers to “African American voices [which] have other stories to tell about culture, technology, and things to come.” (182) These voices speak across various genres, transcending disciplinary boundaries from literature and music to film and art. In effect, Afrofuturism corresponds to a transdisciplinary genre (Elia 84) in which history, technology, and issues concerning black futures intersect. Drawing on Afrofuturism, Afrofuturistic historical literature is defined by Peterson as “literature that is concerned with black history, and the relationship technology has and has had to black life.” For Peterson, this genre “fuses the past with the future” and introduces “modern-day technologies” as an inherent part of “narratives that would not typically include these things.” (1)

[4] In “Of Other Spaces,” Michel Foucault defines heterotopias as spaces that oppose utopias. Heterotopia corresponds to counter-sites that contest and invert the representation of real sites, while utopia represents unreal spaces because they stand as perfected versions thereof. As Foucault maintains, the *mirror* stands as a gateway between utopias and heterotopias. “The mirror is, after all, a utopia,” he states, “since it is a placeless place. ... I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal virtual space ... there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent...” He then defines the mirror as a *heterotopia* by stating instead: “it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass

at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.” (24) Similarly, Charles’s image is defined here as a mirror-heterotopia because his black reflection stands as an un/real counter-site confronting and inverting Charles’s utopian identity (whiteness) which, in order to be perceived as such, has to pass through the shadow of his own invisibility in order to enable him to see himself where he is most absent (i.e. in his blackness).

[5] In “Of our spiritual Strivings”, W.E.B. Du Bois describes African American double consciousness as a “two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” (2) In Duncan’s novel, the experience of double consciousness is depicted between the alleged incompatibility of being black and being Costa Rican, a discourse constructed by the liberal intellectuals of the nineteenth century (see Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica*, “Imagining Costa Rica: ‘We are Different, We are White’”).

[6] “We have to go up the color scale to escape from this mess we are in... We have to go on whitening, that is the solution: we have to go on whitening.” (Translation is mine.)

[7] “Charles, you’re black. Papa Saltiman was a poor fool.” (Translation is mine.)

[8] “... my skin: heck, it’s not black. I mean, if it weren’t for my hair and my features, I could pass anywhere as white-mestizo.” (Translation is mine.)

[9] “At what precise moment did I lose my own identity?” (Translation is mine.)

[10] Mosby identifies *Hombres curtidos* (1971) as Duncan’s first novel of identity. She describes it as being “the first novel to explore identity from the point of view of an Afro-West Indian subject in Costa Rica who evolves from foreigner to citizen, but yet remains an Other.” (*Quince Duncan*, 50) Contrarily, the protagonist of *Los cuatro espejos* is a Costa Rican-born man of Caribbean origin.

[11] It is doubly fragmented because, as Martin-Ogunsola asserts, the title of the novel, *Los cuatro espejos*, refers to four different moments in the plot in which Charles sees his conflicted reflection. Each of these reflections portray four different identities that overlap one another and contribute to Charles’s identity crisis. I quote here the author’s catalogue of Charles’s psychology: firstly, he is (1) “an Anglophone mulatto in a predominantly black milieu; (2) he is an educated landowner in a basically illiterate and poor community; (3) he is a *moreno* ... in a white/latino society, but with roots in an English-speaking ‘minority’ group; and (4) he is a macho figure in a female-dependent world and an ex-minister of the Anglican Church with a tremendous guilt complex.” (9).

[12] “Where, then, had I lost my identity to the point of rediscovering it with such horror?” (Translation is mine.)

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Technologies of Rebellion: technology and the posthuman social in Earl Lovelace's *Is Just a Movie*

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Abstract

Earl Lovelace's 2011 novel Is Just a Movie imagines the arrival of the "age of technology" in Trinidad. Set mostly in the 1970s and 1980s, it ponders the apparent failure of the emancipatory hopes associated with independence, then the radical politics of the 1970 Black Power Revolution to ask about the role of technology in cultural and social life, and the potential for technology and culture to remake the social. Refusing both technological determinism and development discourse, both of which are portrayed as forms of neocolonialism, the novel instead insists on the possibility of a politicized and emancipatory engagement with technology that emerges from a longer history of Caribbean proto-posthumanist thought and the cultural technology of the Caribbean Carnival.

Keywords: Earl Lovelace, technology, Caribbean, carnival, neoliberalism

1. Is Just a Movie

Is Just a Movie is set in the 1970s in the small town of Cascadu, in the years after the short-lived Black Power Revolution in Trinidad. The narrator, the formerly successful, now washed up calypsonian King Kala, the self-styled poet of the revolution, is bereft after the failing of the uprising, when he, like many other men in the town, auditions as an extra for a Hollywood film being shot on the island. The movie industry, according to the producer and the media coverage, promises "local talent wedded to foreign technology" (Lovelace 21), and of course the film maker "have his people, *foreign industry*, that he bring with him" (21, italics in original). King Kala soon understands the role assigned to the Trinidadians in the film: "Local talent. Our role is to die" (23). Most of the extras, who play stereotyped Africans in grass skirts in this "jungle" film, obey the director's instructions to die unobtrusively, "falling down and dying just so" (25). Although they recognize the insult of the role they have been assigned, they insist that it doesn't matter—"is just a movie" (29). Only King Kala and one other man, Sonnyboy, refuse, with King insisting that "it is as human that we must die" (28), but such deaths do not

suit the filmmakers: "The quality of our dying is an embarrassment to them. We dying too slow. We wasting too much of the Whitepeople time" (27). King Kala and Sonnyboy quit the film, and the novel then tells the story of them and many of the other residents of Cascadu over the preceding and following years.

This scene introduces the key themes of the novel: the value, meaning and work of culture in a globalizing world of neocolonial relations; selfhood and humanity; and the place of technology in all these realms: in cultural practices, in relation to the self and community, and in the emerging geopolitical order. Towards the end of the novel these questions are revived when the narrative pivots into a bitter satire of neoliberal development politics. A miracle occurs—the resurrection of a woman named Doreen, giving her powers to heal the sick and grant other wishes—and a storm of prosperity, development and international interest breaks over the island: new oil and gas fields are discovered, and thousands of tourists expected. When a crime wave threatens the nascent tourism industry, a foreign expert suggests the problem is "people who wanted the impossible"; as a solution is for "the state and private enterprise ... to join together to rid the

people of unrealistic and stifling dreams” (315). So begins “the programme to buy up useless dreams,” promising not only money in exchange for dreams, but also “the freedom associated with people who had surrendered their dreams”, and, above all, *development*: the slogan of the programme is “dreams gone, development take over now” (316). Crucially, this buy-back scheme from the government is made possible not only by the sudden wealth of Trinidad, but also by foreign technology, as the government and local experts explain to the people. According to the Prime Minister: “This is the age of technology. The leading nations have everything down to a science and there is no longer any need for their people to dream. Everything has already been thought through.” The “experts from the university” agree: “We don’t need to think again. There is no point in reinventing the wheel. The technology is available and we have the money to purchase. We just have to follow” (316). Just as dreams in the form of unrealized potential are deemed “encumbering” (315), the Prime Minister and university experts’ vision brands “technological dependence” (Cooper 5) as “freedom.”

In this vision, technology is purchased for the purposes of “development”, which means “to give us here everything they have there” (309). Not only are the aims of “development” here unquestioned and assumed to be universal, there is also a particular form of technological determinism at work: the assumption that the purchased technology will have the desired effects, and that those effects are inherent—and inherently desirable, because they constitute “progress”—and thus outside political and social control or influence. This serves to naturalize the effects of the government’s development program, which are nonetheless telling:

In the days to come, the experts continued to work feverishly in preparation for the influx of tourists. They tilted the savannah to face the sea. They take what used to be Shannon cricket ground, where Learie Constantine, C.L.R. James, and Pascal used to play, and make a car park. They build a curtain of buildings to drape the waterfront so that the working population

would not be distracted from their labours by the sight of the sea. They hang buildings over the street to block out the sun so that we would have the gloom of the city of London. They had wanted fog, but they discovered that due to a clerical error it had not been budgeted for. But that would be a problem easy to correct, the contractors said, since once the paperwork was done and the money allocated, it would be a simple matter to pipe in the vapours of sadness from the reservoir hanging over the slum settlement we knew as The Beetham. (311)

In this satire of “development,” the landscape is rearranged, the weather engineered, and history erased. Even the Trinidadian carnival is to be shortened, standardized and rearranged in order to create an “efficient show” (311) for the visitors. Technology has the function of reshaping Trinidad to conform to the desires of international business and Western tourists. It transforms the natural and built environment according to the norms of the City of London—both the historical colonial power and the contemporary centre of global financial capitalism—while *preserving* existing social relations of exploitation, inequality and poverty. Despite the sudden wealth generated by the miracle of Doreen’s resurrection, the material circumstances, labour conditions and suffering of the local people go unchanged—indeed they must be perpetuated to guarantee the progress promised by “development.” [1]

The continuity between historical colonialism and this technological neocolonialism, in which Trinidadians cede power to both thinking and technology developed elsewhere without any benefit to the local people, is soon made explicit when the international visitors arrive for Carnival. They include “Christopher Columbus; Sir Francis Drake; General Sir John Hawkins,” prominent colonial officers, writers and artists from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, as well as “architects from the World Bank, city planners to take us into the Developed World” (323). These visitors portray the contemporary “success” of Trinidad as a result of the “wisdom” of the (former) colonial powers: “an achievement whose foundation is your stable labour force and

your educated elite ... laid by us in an earlier time”—a claim that a government minister is happy to parrot, assuring the visitors that Trinidadians “still have a lot to learn from you ... you have laid the foundations of the society we now enjoy” (324). In response, King Kala reflects on those forgotten by this neocolonial rewriting of Trinidad’s history: the “ordinary people” whose “resistance gave us a sense of self, whose artistry speaks for our humanity and whose struggle turned plantations into the battlefields for humanness” (324-25). In between King Kala’s insistence at the film shooting at the beginning of the novel that “it is as human that we must die” (28) and his reminder towards the end that humanness was not simply granted to colonized and enslaved populations, but had to be won by them in centuries of struggle and cultural creation, the novel traces the late twentieth century struggles of its characters to stay human amidst poverty and oppression, and asks what it means to be human in the “age of technology” (316) announced by the Prime Minister. It does so by tracing the stories of the people of Cascadu in the years before and after the Black Power uprising, in a series of vignettes often narrated via a focus on a particular object, tool or device. I argue that the novel should therefore be understood as a recent iteration of a long history of Caribbean thought on the definition and limits of the human, but also as a contribution to debates on the relationship between technology, culture and the social.

2. Critical Humanism and Posthumanism in Caribbean Thought

At least since the mid-twentieth century, Caribbean thinkers have frequently drawn attention to dehumanization as a technology of colonialism and called for forms of critical humanism in response to the “narrow and fragmentary, incomplete and biased and, all things considered, sordidly racist” (Césaire “Discourse” 37) definition of the human, or Man, and the attached “rights of man” that emerged from the European Enlightenment. In his *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire summarized it simply: “colonization = ‘thingification’” (42). Thingification, for Césaire, involves brutalization

and the deliberate destruction of the past—for both colonized and colonizer—as well as the justification of this destruction via a discourse of development: “They talk to me about progress, about ‘achievements,’ diseases cured, improved standards of living. ... They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks” (“Discourse” 42-43). In response, he demands “a humanism made to the measure of the world” (“Discourse” 73). Césaire’s humanism may be termed a “situated humanism,” in which “particular peoples in specific historical situations, as well as their situated thinkers, could offer concrete forms of life as global gifts that could indicate how to live a more fully human life” (Wilder 593). Frantz Fanon’s work shares with Césaire an analysis of colonialism as destructive of the humanity of both colonized and colonizer, however he is critical of what he sees as the essentializing tendencies of *Négritude*. Perhaps most significantly, Fanon conceives of a “new humanism” (*Black Skin* 9) and a “new humanity” (*Wretched* 2) detached from history—which, in his view, has been destroyed by colonialism—and instead forged entirely in the struggle for national liberation: “the ‘thing’ colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation” (Fanon, *Wretched* 2; cf. Klinger).

More recently, Sylvia Wynter has updated this Caribbean critique and tradition of critical humanism for the new millennium, stating that “all our present struggles with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment, global warming, severe climate change, the sharply unequal distribution of the world’s resources ... —these are all different facets of the central ethnoclass Man vs. Human struggle” (260-61). By “ethnoclass Man,” Wynter means the Western bourgeois conception of the human and its struggle to maintain its privilege, as opposed to “securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioural autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves” (260). Wynter positions herself as a follower of both Fanon and Césaire, but she widens their critique of colonial humanism to a broader timeline, insisting that it is relevant to more contemporary concerns such as climate change, but also offering a long genealogy of Man not

limited to the concept of “race” and European imperialism, but including also the intellectual history of Renaissance humanism, then the rise first of the physical sciences, then of the biological sciences. The alternative conceptualization of humanism that Wynter offers in response is perhaps unexpected. Central to the problem, in Wynter’s view, is a biocentric conception of Man, that is, the Darwinian understanding of humans as natural organisms enables the naturalization of current social realities, a refusal of politics and political responsibility, and with it the naturalization of the “Color (cum Colonial) Line” (322) that continues to designate and divide the deserving and undeserving, now functioning “at all levels of the social order” (323) and not strictly tied to race or colonial status. (Wynter’s theory of the naturalization, multiplication and deterritorialization of the line of inclusion/exclusion from the category of the fully human or Man thus has substantial affinities with what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls “abyssal thinking”). Within this conceptualization, nonwhite people may be accepted as “honorary humans” (329), but are more likely to be relegated to the subhuman in order to enable the reproduction of the current social order. As an alternative, Wynter returns to Césaire’s call for “a new science, beyond the limits of the natural sciences ... a science in which the ‘study of the Word’ ... will condition the ‘study of nature’” (Wynter 328). That is, she calls for a new perspective, overcoming the cultural-epistemological divide between the natural sciences and humanities/social sciences, in order to open up “a new frontier” onto “a nonadaptive mode of human self-cognition” (331). Rhetorically modelling this epistemological bridge, Wynter calls for a poetic science of “nature” by drawing on recent evolutionary theory to conceptualize a “nonadaptive mode” of human self-understanding—that is, one that allows for mutations, drift or recombinations—and she cites the physicist Heintz Pagels’s book *The Dreams of Reason*, which argues for randomness and complexity to destabilize dominant paradigms. In addition, Louis Chude-Sokei identifies in this passage the “eminently science fictional” trope of the “new frontier,” and suggests that Wynter’s reading of Césaire demands “new genres of the

human made necessary due to the remarkable growth of computer capacity and our increasing dependence on them as a material site of memory” (Chude-Sokei 201). Chude-Sokei, like Alexander Weheliye (“Feenin”), therefore insists upon recognizing Wynter, alongside some other Caribbean writers, as a posthumanist thinker, and indeed on recognizing a longer history of what he terms “Caribbean pre-posthumanism” that prefigures the geographical and temporal timeframe often according to posthumanism, that is, the United States or Europe and USA in the late twentieth century. [2]

Amidst the surge of scholarly interest in posthumanism in recent years, there have also been voices of dissent and caution, in particular from black scholars and people of colour, in general arguing that “much of posthumanist thought as well as animal studies suffers from an often unmarked Euro-American focus and through that, ironically, a philosophical resuscitation of the status of ‘the human’ as a transparent category” (Livingston and Puar 5). If posthumanist thought is understood as a call to move “beyond the human,” this poses a range of questions and problems for black people and black thinkers. Lewis Gordon points out that “dominant groups can ‘give up’ humanism for the simple fact that their humanity is presumed, while other communities have struggled too long for the humanistic prize” (39). Zakiyyah Iman Jackson asks, “what and crucially whose conception of humanity are we moving beyond?” (“Outer Worlds” 215, italics in original). Jackson has elsewhere criticized many posthumanist scholars’ ignorance of decolonial thought as a significant forerunner of their own challenges to Enlightenment humanism (“Animal”). While some scholars therefore conclude that posthumanist thought offers no potential for a decolonial or emancipatory philosophy or politics (e.g. Brennan), others argue that so-called critical posthumanism must become more critical—more attuned to questions of race and inequality, and more aware of the work of non-white and/or non-Western scholars and traditions in thinking through and beyond the human (e.g. Islam; M. Jackson; Luisetti). Accordingly, recent years have witnessed a significant number of books in particular on race or blackness and nature,

particularly “the animal” or animal studies (e.g. Bennett; Boisseron; Z. Jackson, *Becoming*; Johnson; Kim; Montford and Taylor; Suzuki), but—with the notable exceptions of Chude-Sokei and Weheliye—far fewer on race or blackness and technology or nonhuman matter within a broadly posthumanist framework. [3]

One reason for this is perhaps that technology is in general undertheorized, as books on the meaning, philosophy and social effects of technology commonly assert. According to Carl Mitcham, “Technology, or the making and using of artifacts, is a largely unthinking activity. It emerges from unattended to ideas and motives, while it produces and engages with unreflected upon objects” (1). Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman agree, writing that “we live our lives in a world of things people have made. Mostly we take that world for granted.” The reason, they suggest, is the dominance of technological determinism, so that “technological change seems to have its own logic, which we may perhaps protest about even try to block, but which we appear to be unable to alter fundamentally” (1). Langdon Winner suggests two reasons for this “technological somnambulism:” first, the “astonishing hold that the idea of ‘progress’ has exercised on social thought during the industrial age”—and the assumption that progress stems primarily from new technologies—and because the relationship between humans and technical things is seen as “too obvious to merit serious reflection” (5). In postcolonial contexts, however, this is not necessarily the case. There, “European (and, as the last century unfolded, American) technological intervention was characterized by violence—a physical and epistemological violence directed against past practices and outmoded technics; but also a current violence expressed through technologies of warfare and policing, of rapacious land appropriation and mineral extraction, of intrusive medicine and coercive public health” (Arnold 87). In these contexts, technological time is frequently out of joint, as Arnold further notes: “while colonies and ex-colonies might sometimes be the dumping ground for Europe’s unwanted goods and obsolete technologies, they might also be favored sites for the development of the most modern technologies” (89).

I suggest that *Is Just a Movie* should be read as a rare reflection on the politics of technology in a world of global inequality and neocolonialism and a literary contribution to the tradition of Caribbean critical posthumanist thought identified by Chude-Sokei—a critical posthumanism thought through everyday technology rather than nature or non-human animals (both of which barely feature in the novel). While so-called transhumanist thought looks forward to “a radical transformation of the human condition by existing, emerging, and speculative technologies” (Ferrando 3), this emerges from a philosophical tradition that uncritically endorses a teleology of progress and that does not seek to deconstruct or question the genealogy of the “human.” In the field of posthumanism that has emerged from poststructuralist and deconstructionist thought and anti- and postcolonial critiques of the “human,” and particularly in literary studies work within this field, the focus has instead more commonly rested on deconstructing the human/animal or human/nature distinction (albeit with some notable exceptions [e.g. Hayles]). In this context, the work of Weheliye and Chude-Sokei is particularly important, but while they focus on cultural phenomena such as electronic music and science fiction, arguing convincingly both for a black posthumanism and for the centrality of race to the history of thinking through the impact of technology on the social, I suggest that Lovelace’s novel instead explores the everyday (but far from mundane) cultures of Trinidad, especially those associated with Carnival, and the relationship between the self, the social, and everyday technology. The novel draws attention to mostly ordinary technical objects that are shown to have an outsized role in constituting and reconstituting selves and communities. Although published in the digital age in 2011 and satirically referencing social and political developments in Trinidad in the twenty first century (around the time of the global financial crisis, sparked by the far-reaching decisions of “machinic actors” [Pötzsch and Hayles 98]), the novel takes place somewhat earlier, covering a period from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, thus anchoring its reflections on technology in the era of Trinidad’s independence and extending into

the era of neoliberal globalization. It therefore extends Earl Lovelace's central concern with, in his own words, "independence ... [in] all its aspects, its flaws as well as its promise" (qtd in Grau-Perejoan 207) to ask how technology shapes the social in Trinidad, what a decolonial relationship to technology might look like, and how, in an age of technology, Trinidadians might "reclaim rebellion" (Lovelace qtd in Grau-Perejoan 211) to further the unfinished project of independence.

3. Technological assemblages in *Is Just a Movie*

The film shooting at the beginning of *Is Just a Movie* and the satire of neoliberalism and development politics at the end frame technology—without the term being defined any further—as both *foreign* and *lacking* in Trinidad. Trinidad may have other resources, like "local talent" (Lovelace 21) or the miraculous powers of the resurrected woman Doreen, but it apparently has no technology nor technological knowledge of its own. The "useless dreams" (316) of the local people—dreams for a better life and a different, more just society—are to be exchanged for the "useful knowledge" (Berg) of technology and development. This vision of technology as a property of elsewhere (presumably primarily the "West"), transferred to Trinidad, is a throwback to earlier, and distinctly colonialist, modes of historiography in the history of science and technology, in which modern technology was assumed to be "a boon bestowed by technologically advanced civilizations on societies considered 'backward,' even 'primitive'" (Arnold 86). In both Arnold's summary of the historiography and the vision of the Trinidadian politicians and academics in the novel, technology is not only Western (ignoring, indeed denying the possibility of indigenous and non-Western technologies), but it is also assumed to be neutral and apolitical. When technology is imported, it is presumed to travel intact, so that it functions in the same way in every context. (If not, then it is the context, whether racial, cultural or geographical, that is assumed to be at fault: "If such technologies failed, it was because local populations, stubborn

or misguided, were unable to appreciate their benefits or local physical conditions militated against their effective use" [Arnold 87].) The novel questions all of these assumptions, although it is concerned less with the recovery of indigenous technologies and scientific knowledges, more with a consideration of the uses, meanings and effects—political, and social and personal—of mostly everyday technologies. It thus corresponds to the historiographical mode Arnold categorizes as "postcolonial" (87), and affirms the "provocative" notion that "technical things have political qualities" (Winner 19). In doing so, it further develops a technological understanding of culture itself: culture as a technology for reprocessing and reprogramming the social.

In the years after the demise of the Black Power Revolution at the beginning of the novel, the people of Cascadu continue to search for and dream of a better life on the island. They seek joy, selfhood, recognition, identity and community—that is, to stay human—through various means: in political parties, in intimate relationships, in sport and music, in work, and, for a brief period, in an ethnic chauvinism that promises people a "secure place" (Lovelace 183) as an African or Indian at the cost of denigrating Caribbean cultures such as calypso and Carnival. In narrating these experiences of political organizing, work, love, friendship, celebration and more, the novel draws attention to the central role of technology and technological objects in these experiences and relationships. In numerous scenes of the novel, the narration crystallizes around a particular object: a steelpan, a deck of cards, a microphone, a pair of binoculars, a letter, a van, a loudspeaker, gasoline lamps and flambeau, a cricket bat, a black beret, a car, a red flag, a piano, a zipper, a bucket of mud. Many of these technologies of everyday life have an intended practical use, some a more symbolic value. In all cases, however, the novel draws attention to the way in which the objects function beyond their intended or practical function. These technologies are revealed to be neither entirely subject to human control nor entirely autonomous; rather, these technologies are instead bound into complex processes of the making of the social and the

self.

In this regard, two scenes of the novel featuring a steelpan are instructive. In the development satire at the end of the novel, culture is also set to be reshaped in the pursuit of profit and according to the perceived desires of the tourist industry—monumental, commercial, assimilated to European traditions, or museumized. An opera house is built, “a monstrous structure to dwarf the savannah,” a copy of Disneyland is constructed, and a “symphony orchestra from the steelbands” (310) created.

A “tourist village” is built in Cascadu, including “a steelband yard where they had pan tuners demonstrating the process by which oil drums were turned into musical instruments” (305). This is a rare acknowledgement of the existence of local technology, but in a setting which exoticizes, primitivizes, dehistoricizes and desocializes the technical process. The “tourist village” carries uneasy overtones of “native villages” at colonial exhibitions; it is inexplicably built in Cascadu rather than Laventille, the deprived district that is the historical home of the steelpan; the process of producing the steelpan is assumed only to produce the practical object—the musical instrument—and not the maker, the player, the listeners, the dancers, or the community; and even the practical object is not for playing in a real life context but has a primarily economic function: to entertain visitors to the “tourist village” and tempt them to pay a fee to “join” a band and play the instruments.

This vision of memorialized and commercialized Trinidadian culture stands in stark contrast to the process of making a steelpan described in an early scene of the novel. A vignette from Sonnyboy’s childhood in Laventille describes in detail the relationship between his father Lance and his steelpan: “every Monday and Tuesday midday he would go to the empty train carriage at the railway station to jam with the fellows from the abattoir, each man beating out the rhythm on his own pan or calling out the ringing rejoicing spirit from his own piece of iron” (40). Lance forgets his pan one day, and when he gets it back it has been beaten out of shape, leading him to spend days and weeks trying to repair it. This process of tuning the pan soon becomes less a strictly

musical technology—designed to produce an instrument with a particular sound—and more a technology of producing the self and the social, yet this process is not driven in any sense by the practical function of the object: “in pounding to find the lost note, Lance had begun to hear a note that as yet hadn’t made a sound. And what he was doing now was trying to get not the note he had lost but the note behind that note, a note unsounded and sacred and surprising and potential—to get that note to sound” (41). Rather than a technological determinism in which the social is transformed by the new capabilities offered by a technology, here the self and social are remade via the making process and from within the social, described in religious and transcendent terms: “a growing congregation” of other men gather to watch him, “cheering him on as he journeyed into the heart of the pan,” and he himself becomes “spirit, Ogun” (42).

A similar process soon becomes apparent in other scenes, as in the relationship between Franklyn, his cricket bat, and the community in Cascadu. When Franklyn goes in to bat, everything and everyone in the village stops what they are doing to watch, and they experience it not as observers, but as participants: “when Franklyn batting we were the ones batting” (89). For as long as he holds the cricket back in his hand, he represents the community as a whole, he becomes a “mirror” and a window: “we would see ourselves in contest with the world” (89). Franklyn alone does not hold this power—as soon as he puts down his bat after getting out, this function is lost, and day-to-day life in Cascadu whirs into action again. Instead, this is the power of a social-cyborg assemblage of Franklyn, his bat, his batting ability, and the attention and psychic investment of the villagers. The cricket bat, in Franklyn’s hands and with the attention of the village upon it, is attributed a particular agency, it appears to speak, voicing the political questions that will later be taken up by the Black Power revolutionaries and some of the characters: “just when the keeper feel he have the ball in his fists, his bat come down sweet and long, long and sweet, slap, between the keeper and slips, *How you going to stop we? How you go keep we down?*” (89, italics in original). In the narration, King Kala speaks of

“the poetry of his batting” (85).

This is one of the significant modes of technology in the novel, a mode in which technology functions very differently than in the Trinidadian government’s vision, and also quite differently than in most philosophies of technology. While the cricket bat, in its function as an instrument with which to strike and propel the cricket ball, might reasonably be understood as a replication and extension of the human body, as in common understandings of technology as “organ projection” (Mitcham 23-24), such a conceptualization of technology cannot account for the additional effects of the Franklyn–cricket bat–spectators assemblage on the consciousness of the villagers or the pace of life and work in Cascadu. Lance’s steelpan has at first a concrete use as a musical instrument plus an instrument of selfhood and community in binding Lance to the other men and bringing out the “ringing rejoicing spirit” (40). Upon losing its initial, practical function it becomes a spiritual and symbolic object that generates self and community through its promise of transcendence and newness, so that the object, individual and collective are bound together in their shared transformation, yet Lance can hardly be understood as a hero inventor—the effects of the process of repairing the steelpan are clearly collective, not individual. Similar, if somewhat less idealistic and mystical, hybrid assemblages and transformational relations are found throughout the novel, such as when Sonnyboy is equipped with a pair of binoculars during the Black Power uprising and “with the binoculars glued to his eyes ... he searched the crowd, for what, he wasn’t clear” (72). Sonnyboy, in particular, tries to use technology and its potential to remake selves and social relations in his repeated attempts to “get people of the town to see the man he really was” (79)—via a van, a microphone, a loudspeaker, a car. Technology in the novel is not a tool, however, and cannot be harnessed easily to human desires or intentions, as becomes sadly clear in another scene when Claude, sensing he and his wife “had been drifting apart” (252), seeks to reverse that trend by zipping up her dress—only to have the zip break in his hand, so that it instead becomes “a sign, an event in its own right, for them to

witness together the blight that had ensnared their relationship” (255).

The unfolding process of the co-constitution of the self, the social and the technological object in these scenes has affinities with Bruno Latour’s concept of “mediation,” that is, an understanding of relations between (human and non-human) actants as “concatenations of mediators where each point can be said to fully act” (59). This means that human intentions do not determine the outcomes of the events that such associations become; rather, such events are characterized by an “*under-determination of action*, from the uncertainties and controversies about who and what is acting when ‘we’ act” (45, italics in original). Latour’s theory of mediation has been criticized, however, for its refusal of historicity—a criticism that takes on particular pertinence in the Caribbean context of the novel. Jeff Kochan writes:

On the one hand, Latour is committed to the fundamental historicity of all phenomena—everything comes into being through a historical process of mediation. On the other hand, he seems unwilling to allow any historicity with respect to the phenomenon of mediation itself—mediation is the agent of historical change but is not itself subject to historical change. (584)

In Kochan’s reading, Latour’s refusal to consider the historical origins and development of mediation makes his theory one of disavowed technological determinism, despite Latour’s railing against such positions. In the context of the Caribbean world of the novel, another much more immediate problem is apparent: in a society deeply shaped by colonial politics of technologies—from the colonial industries, such as sugar plantations, established on the island, and the associated technology of slave labour, to later colonial policies of underdevelopment—and by post-independence politics that has often resulted in the neglect of science, technology and infrastructure, history is an inescapable force in the hybrid assemblages created by human–object interactions, and in the social relations that result. Certainly, as a range of recent scholarly work attests, “technologies and

human lives are mutually embedded, enabling, and determining” (Schatzki 91), but this insight should not only be accounted for in writing history, but must itself also be historicized. The actant assemblages of the novel do not arise out of nothing; rather, history and the currently existing social is another actant or “mediator” in the assemblage.

The novel offers a glimpse of the weight of history in the meaning and work of technology in a vignette involving a red flag. The Black Power Revolution is underway and King Kala and the other revolutionaries are planning a demonstration in Cascadu. Only one Indian-Trinidadian man, Manick, plans to join the demonstration, and he foments “trouble” among the other revolutionaries with his request to carry the red flag—the “principle symbol of the Black struggle.” The revolutionaries are unable to resolve the political questions that Manick thereby exposes: “if he was one of the fellars, one of us, if we were in this together, how come he wasn’t allowed to carry the red flag? And, if he couldn’t carry the flag, what was his position in this demonstration? Why should he be there at all?” (Lovelace 162). In this particular constellation of the flag, the Trinidadian men of African and Indian heritage, and Trinidad’s complex colonial history of slavery and indentureship and the stratified multiracial society that it has generated, the flag can no longer function as a symbolic technology of “the Black struggle,” but rather works to expose the undertheorized nature of race, “blackness” and solidarity in the Trinidadian Black Power movement. Ironically, Manick not only wants to carry the red flag but to make a speech addressing that history: a speech portraying indentureship as a technology of social stabilization, of maintaining colonial power and the extreme exploitation of the African population. The speech goes unsaid, however—the trouble over the red flag causes Manick to leave the Black Power movement, and the political confusion this incident generates continues to haunt the narrator in the following years.

The idealistic, almost mystical function of technology in the scenes with the steelpan and cricketbat is represented in tension with the history and material reality of life in Cascadu, which

both sets limits to the transformations enacted by such object–human–social assemblages and provides them with a decidedly political, rather than purely spiritual dimension. Lance’s search for transcendence runs up against the fact that “the world didn’t stop demanding money for things” (42): his search for newness in the steelpan is not helping to feed his family. Franklyn’s poetic batting and its clock-stopping effect on the village comes to an abrupt end when he is killed by the police under mysterious circumstances in the aftermath of the Black Power uprising. Structural poverty, disadvantage and state repression destroy or put a stop to the transformation of the social effected by these assemblages; at the same time, those material conditions fuel the political demands that also emerge, albeit with limits, from these cultural practices. The transcendence of these scenes is therefore not the technological enchantment David Noble describes as an “other-worldly quest for transcendence and salvation” (qtd in Ferrando 36)—an attitude to technology traceable to Friedrich Dessauer (Mitcham 29–33) and categorized by Francesca Ferrando as typical of the current transhumanist discourse on technology. Rather, it is a transcendence of the self *as constituted by current social relations* in order to imagine an alternative social. The novel is neither technophilic nor technophobic, but techno-critical: it asks what counts as a technology, by focusing on everyday, ordinary technologies rather than spectacular new inventions, and how humans and communities and technologies interact, are imbricated, constitute each other in historical, political and material contexts. Technology, at times, enables political insight and vision and new ways of being and relating, and this potential is embraced by the novel. This understanding of technology, however, is also shown to be not limited to the technological objects described so far, but also to be found in other cultural practices, which are thereby recast as cultural technologies which similarly work to enable a “reprogramming” of the social. The best example of this technology is no foreign import, but a Trinidadian original, in which the spiritual transcendence hinted at in Lance’s making of the steelpan takes on a decidedly embodied and immanent form: the

Carnival mas.

4. Carnival as a Technology of the Social

Lovelace has written about the powerful joy of Carnival and its relation to Caribbean personhood and humanity before, particularly in his 1979 novel *The Dragon Can't Dance*. In *Is Just a Movie*, the function of Carnival as a technology of the self and the social is made much more explicit via the novel's focus on technological objects and its satirization of a neoliberal development discourse that frames technology as the solution to global neocolonialism and local political cowardice. The novel frames Carnival first as political resistance, as in the brief history offered by a man in Laventille: "We know that what the mas was doing was fortifying a community, was holding up a people their system had set about to waste down. We know that celebration was not just mindless fun, it was rebellion, it was community, it was creativity" (225). Later, for Claude, it is religious:

When the sun come up he see in the eyes of the people on the roadside looking on at him the magnificence of this ordinary raggedy bunch daubed with mud, knitted by this love and community and peace, the feeling inside him so holy in raised in him again the sense of people their beauty. By the time the morning was over, Claude felt touched by everybody in the band. He was ready to go again. And he saw that this was what would save him, this little Carnival Jouvay band. All the grandiose dreams he had about the future were collapsed into this little band. (245)

Claude finds in this Carnival band—a spontaneous formation of friends and strangers—a deeply moving sense of humanity and community, but it soon becomes clear that Claude's type of investment in Carnival, his hope that it will compensate for the many frustrations in his life, is an error. Year after year, he tries to recreate this spontaneous Jouvay band and is disappointed that it is not exactly the same, seeing this as evidence that "the people had no responsibility, no commitment" (247). But in the final year of the story, during the Carnival shortly

after the miracle of Doreen, the selling of dreams and the frenzy of "development," he embraces this randomness, understanding it suddenly as a radical political and social formation of its own: "it hit him, the sense that we were the people we were waiting on. It was an awesome feeling and frightening and grand and so simple" (341).

In this formulation, Carnival is an embodied experience that enables a reassessment and reconfiguration of the social and political. It is not so much political action itself, as in the earlier claim that "it was rebellion," but rather it makes visible political potential and, after years of frustration with the failed hopes and politics of independence, inspires a sense of democratic responsibility: "we were the people we were waiting on." Similarly, it does not permanently reshape social relations or forge community, but rather enables a glimpse of the potential thereof. This political insight and thus the function of Carnival as a technology of the social is enabled by its specific iteration as a Caribbean technology of the self. Technologies of the self are defined by Michel Foucault as those technologies "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (18). The state—and the self—which is strived for is, of course, in part culturally and historically specific, as other scholars following Foucault have explored in more depth (Martin, Gutman and Hutton). In Lovelace's novel, Carnival is shown to be a technology of the self that is a posthuman, intra-active practice. The selves that are created in and through Carnival emerge only in and through cultural practices enacted with technical and human others; these enable the characters to see "that self of themselves" (344) that emerges, temporarily, at Carnival each year. This is not a lost or true self, but rather a future self: Carnival is described as a rehearsal for the society to come, the society that Lovelace understands to be the project of independence. Even as that society remains on the horizon, however, the practices of Carnival refuse the atomistic self and the neoliberal mantra of "no alternative" proposed by the

novel's other technology of the self: the selling of dreams. The dream scheme is also a technique of the care of the self and of governmentality, and thus appropriately run by the "Ministry of National Security and Mental Health" (316). The renunciation of dreams promises the "freedom" of a self unencumbered by hopes for social change and which has replaced collective aspirations with consumer goods. In contrast, Carnival is a technology of the self that is also a political and social technology: it does not offer a concrete political program but it makes possible the belief that politics and the social might be otherwise. Carnival is therefore not a cultural product or industry, but a collective practice that enables collective and self knowledge and transformation—it is what might be termed a "cultural technique" (Krämer and Bredekamp; Siegert). This radically opposes the separation of culture and the social implied in the claim of the title of the novel—the claim of "is just a movie" that cultural representations and embodied participation in culture do not matter, that they are simply entertainment, rather than actants in processes of constituting the social.

This vision of Carnival aligns with Césaire's understanding of humanism as comprising "concrete forms of life as global gifts that could indicate how to live a more fully human life" (Wilder 593), yet it might be better understood, I suggest, as a *posthumanist* understanding of technology, culture and the social. Indeed the novel's reflections on the co-constitution of these forces, and its location of this in Caribbean cultural practices such as Carnival, suggest a more significant role for Caribbean literature, culture and critical thought in posthumanist philosophy than has so far been widely acknowledged. Gavin Rae suggests that "posthumanism tries to overcome the humanist human–technology opposition by showing that human being does not simply have an instrumentalist relationship to technology, but is, in fact, intimately and ontologically connected to technology" (52). According to Ferrando, posthumanism "investigates technology as a mode of revealing, thus re-accessing its ontological significations in a scenario where technology had been repeatedly reduced to its technical endeavors" (44). Thus both Rae (following Don Ihde) and Ferrando

therefore turn to Heidegger, and particularly his concept of technologies as either "revealing" or "enframing," to conceptualize a posthumanist understanding of technology in social relations. In Heidegger's formulation, technologies are potentially "revealing" or a *poiesis*, that is, they may bring forth something that is not fixed in advance. Modern technologies, however, instead generally function in the mode of partial or limited revealing that Heidegger calls "enframing:" framed in entirely utilitarian terms, measurable and available, and conceived of as outside socio-political agency (Heidegger; see also Ferrando 39-44; Rae 60-63). Countering readings of Heidegger as a technophobe—perhaps most prominently from Latour (cf. Kochan)—these thinkers instead understand Heidegger's work as central to a posthumanist attitude to technology that understands it as central to and intertwined with the human, and deeply political. In Ferrando's reading of Heidegger, "technology per se is not the problem; the problem lays in how human societies approach it, that is, the sociocultural oblivion of the poietic power of technology is the problem" (42). Returning to Césaire and Wynter, however, we can recognize a comparable Caribbean tradition of decolonial, emancipatory thought, as in Césaire's concept of "poetic knowledge" (Wilder 589) and Wynter's call for a "nonadaptive" (331) conceptualization of the human, characterized by randomness, mutations and recombinations.

Lovelace's identification of Carnival as a technology of the social demands a reassessment of the technological determinism promoted as "development" by the Trinidadian government in the novel. Instead of "development" and techno-colonialism understood as the end of politics and the end of dreams, the novel insists on maintaining the project of independence—understood not in formal terms, but in the way formulated by thinkers like Césaire, who understood decolonization as "a world-historical opening, opportunity, and responsibility to remake the world," the aim of which "was not only political independence, but what Marx ... called "human emancipation" on a global scale" (Wilder 586)—and updating it for a more technological age. In contrast to the violence of the development discourse of technology—seen

in the violent reconstructions of the landscape and built environment, the destruction of history and the violence of perpetuating poverty that the “development” programme entails, and then manifested in the wave of killings and violent crimes that it suddenly brings forth—the novel offers the chaotic, fragmented, decentered repetitions and recombinations of Caribbean culture and particularly Carnival, described by Antonio Benítez-Rojo as “aesthetic whose desire is nonviolence” (21), revealing these as a model, a technology, or in Benítez-Rojo’s terms, a “machine” with which to think through the challenges of new technology—a means to approach the “age of technology” in the spirit not of defeatist techno-colonialism, but emancipatory techno-rebellion.

Endnotes

[1] This section of the novel is properly a satire, and not a dystopic vision: a wall was built around Beetham Gardens in Port of Spain, Trinidad as a “beautifying touch” (that is, blocking the view into the neighborhood) in preparation for the 2009 5th Summit of the Americas in the city (“Wall built”).

[2] See also Weheliye, *Phonographies* and *Habeus Viscus*.

[3] For work on the relation of race and technology generally, see e.g. Nakamura and Chow-White; Nelson, Tu and Hines. See also *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader*, edited by Sandra Harding.

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La redefinición del imaginario sobre la indigenidad como acto político de resistencia.

ROZENN LE MUR (UNIVERSIDAD DE GUADALAJARA, MÉXICO)

Resumen

Para conmemorar el Día Internacional de los Pueblos Indígenas y el Año internacional de las Lenguas Indígenas, en agosto del 2019, Jóvenes Indígenas Urbanos, Raíces del Verso y el Colectivo Nahuales organizaron la pinta del mural comunitario Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas en la ciudad de Guadalajara, Jalisco. Se propusieron colaborar para visibilizar la presencia de los jóvenes indígenas en la ciudad, usando el espacio público para reconfigurar y reapropiarse del imaginario sobre indigenidad, en lo que denominaron un “acto político de resistencia.” En esta investigación, nos proponemos reflexionar sobre el muralismo comunitario como herramienta para dialogar y reconfigurar imaginarios, donde lo político es un eje fundamental. Nos preguntaremos: ¿De qué forma se usa una propuesta artística como este mural para abrir un debate sobre interculturalidad, discriminación e identidad indígena en la ciudad? Y ¿de qué forma el mural comunitario Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas, como producción discursiva, es un acto de resistencia?

Palabras claves: Muralismo comunitario; imaginario; indigenidad; interculturalidad; análisis del discurso.

Introducción

En 2019, la autora mixe Yásnara Elena Aguilar comentaba en una entrevista en *El País*: “Pocas veces se nos ve [a los indígenas] como agentes políticos. Somos usados como una reserva folclórica que justifica cultural y espiritualmente al Estado mexicano” (Ferri). Aguilar propone una crítica al discurso oficial del gobierno mexicano que celebra el pluralismo cultural del país mientras deja de lado las cuestiones económicas y sociopolíticas fundamentales que afecta a las comunidades indígenas. La entrevistada argumenta que se representa a los pueblos indígenas como una de las mayores riquezas de México, que se usa sus costumbres y artesanías como atractivo turístico, sin que sean consultados ni tomados en consideración políticamente y, por lo tanto, sin que esta exaltación de su cultura se traduzca en derechos.

Esta misma preocupación fue el punto de partida de la JIU (Jóvenes Indígenas Urbanos) para iniciar la propuesta de la realización del

mural comunitario *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* en la ciudad de Guadalajara, en el marco del Día Internacional de los Pueblos Indígenas y del Año internacional de las Lenguas Indígenas en 2019. Trabajaron en colaboración con otras asociaciones: Raíces del Verso y el Colectivo Nahuales, y organizaron juntos los talleres y la pinta de este mural.

Así, propusieron visibilizar la presencia de los jóvenes indígenas en la ciudad, usando el espacio público para reapropiarse del imaginario sobre indigenidad, en lo que denominaron un “acto político de resistencia.” Al plasmar un conjunto de elementos iconográficos que diseñaron en grupo, elaboraron un soporte que les permitió plantear problemáticas ligadas a la falta de derechos sociales de las comunidades indígenas en la ciudad, a su invisibilización, a problemas de discriminación y a conflictos identitarios frente a los discursos hegemónicos estereotipantes sobre la indigenidad.

La tradición muralista en México, desde el muralismo clásico del principio del siglo pasado hasta las propuestas comunitarias de Tepito

Arte Acá o del Taller de Investigación Plástica, ha demostrado que el compromiso político ha sido un componente importante de las distintas propuestas de arte mural mexicano. En cuanto al aspecto comunitario, el muralismo comenzó a generar desde los años sesenta acciones directas en el espacio urbano, resignificando y replanteando un arte social construido desde la gente, con la gente y para la gente. Se empezaron a definir como “herramientas de construcción social y de resistencia” a partir de la ocupación de espacios urbanos planteados desde el arte público, con todas las connotaciones políticas y sociales que esto conlleva dentro de un territorio específico. Aquí, lo social se entiende como una “comunidad de ciudadanos,” según lo que plantea Fernando Calderón (261), enfatizando cada palabra y lo que implica. Por un lado, la comunidad: es decir, el lazo social, la solidaridad, el proyecto común y por el otro, la ciudadanía: la participación activa y la concientización de los derechos políticos.

Además, como obras públicas, los murales se vuelven experiencias didácticas, pedagógicas y hasta subversivas, y, por lo tanto, inevitablemente se instalan en el imaginario social del entorno (Castellanos 152). Asimismo, al ser una práctica de la didáctica social, el muralismo se puede entender como una tecnología: un conjunto de recursos empleados para la concientización social, una apropiación de una práctica histórica, de sus procedimientos y de sus connotaciones para abrir un diálogo.

En esta investigación, nos proponemos reflexionar sobre el muralismo comunitario como herramienta para dialogar y reconfigurar imaginarios, donde lo político es un eje fundamental. Nos planteamos las siguientes preguntas: ¿De qué forma se usa una propuesta artística como este mural para abrir un debate sobre interculturalidad, discriminación e identidad indígena en la ciudad? Y ¿de qué forma el mural comunitario *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas*, como producción discursiva, es un *acto de resistencia*?

En cuanto a la metodología

Para analizar este mural comunitario, lo definiremos como una producción discursiva.

Partiremos de la idea de que el discurso es una concepción del lenguaje, según la línea teórica de Mikhail Bajtín, que resalta el aspecto dialógico de los discursos.

El discurso es un fenómeno social, y como tal, se produce en un contexto social. El estudio de este contexto (aspectos económicos, políticos, sociales) hace parte del análisis del discurso. Así, el discurso es una práctica social determinada por estructuras sociales, por órdenes del discurso (que es un conjunto de convenciones). Por lo tanto, tienen un efecto sobre las estructuras sociales y al mismo tiempo están determinadas por ellas. De esta forma, pueden contribuir a una continuidad social o a su cambio, que es precisamente lo que se propuso con el mural *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* y que proponemos examinar en este trabajo.

De forma más específica, aplicaremos los preceptos del Análisis Crítico del Discurso (ACD), que integra a la vez nociones estructuralistas y constructivistas, y permite transcender la oposición entre el determinismo social y el socio-constructivismo. Desde este planteamiento, las estructuras sociales determinan y también son transformadas por las prácticas discursivas. [1] Entonces, el análisis consistirá en estudiar qué tanto el discurso, en este caso el mural comunitario, puede contribuir a cuestionar y desafiar el orden social y a construir un imaginario diferente para referirse a las comunidades indígenas en el espacio urbano.

Generalmente, las diferentes corrientes de análisis del discurso no proponen una metodología fija; lo que se entiende por el hecho de que estas corrientes parten de conceptos y disciplinas que pueden variar y, sobre todo, que sus propósitos pueden ser diferentes. Además, la metodología se adapta al material discursivo en el cual se centra el análisis. El objetivo de esta investigación fue delinear una propuesta de análisis de discurso que se enlaza con la antropología, es decir, que esté constantemente preocupada por la dimensión social de los procesos semióticos, por los cuales los significados y los textos son construidos y reconstruidos.

Un mural no se puede estudiar solo. Como lo señala Dominique Maingueneau, “el análisis del discurso supone la consideración conjunta

de varios textos, dado que la organización interna del texto aislado no puede remitir sino a sí misma (estructura cerrada) o a la lengua (estructura infinita, reiteración de los mismos procesos)” (19). Por lo tanto, una parte esencial de la metodología consiste en apoyarse en varias entrevistas a los participantes, que ayudarán a reconocer los aspectos contextuales relevantes al análisis del mural.

El contexto se considera como la estructura de aquellas propiedades de la situación social que son relevantes para la producción y la comprensión del discurso. Consiste en categorías tales como la definición global de la situación, su espacio y tiempo; las acciones en curso (incluyendo los discursos y sus géneros); los participantes en roles variados, comunicativos, sociales o institucionales; al igual que sus representaciones mentales: objetivos, conocimientos, opiniones, actitudes e ideologías (Van Dijk, “Análisis crítico del discurso” 27).

El análisis que realizamos presenta la siguiente estructura: en un primer momento, describiremos el mural, sus elementos iconográficos, y el proceso con el cual fue realizado. A continuación, reflexionaremos sobre esta producción discursiva siguiendo tres ejes: el espacio urbano y público como lugar de tensión social, el muralismo como herramienta de disidencia política, y el componente didáctico del muralismo y la forma con la cual abre un debate sobre interculturalidad.

Descripción del mural

El proceso empezó cuando la JIU (la asociación de Jóvenes Indígenas Urbanos en

la zona metropolitana de Guadalajara) contactó a otras organizaciones, Raíces del verso y el Colectivo Nahuales, para trabajar juntos en el proyecto. En un segundo momento, la JIU invitó a los indígenas urbanos de la Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara a participar en un taller en el cual dialogaron acerca de su identidad indígena en la ciudad, y en el que se evidenciaron experiencias y sentires compartidos. Los participantes hablaron de lo que experimentaban al llegar a la ciudad, los conflictos identitarios que pueden atravesar, y las situaciones de discriminación que desafortunadamente son muy comunes. A partir de ahí, diseñaron juntos el boceto del mural.

En este sentido, la realización del mural tiene rasgos de muralismo comunitario, pero también de muralismo colectivo. Según las definiciones de Polo Castellanos, en el muralismo comunitario, “la comunidad interviene en el proceso de construcción de la obra de muchas maneras, pero no interviene directamente en el diseño al carecer de los elementos y herramientas plásticas necesarias para la elaboración de un mural; en pocas palabras, la comunidad ayuda a pintar la obra sobre un diseño ya elaborado” (148). En cuanto al muralismo colectivo: “Aquí se trata de buscar el empoderamiento de quienes toman el laboratorio y pintan el mural a partir de un diálogo permanente, desde la humildad en el reconocimiento del otro y su autopertenencia a la diversidad: todas las voces deben ser escuchadas y respetadas, y todas las voces deben hacerse escuchar” (Castellanos 150).

A nivel de la iconografía, lo que predomina en el mural es un corazón formado por una mazorca de maíz. Este elemento está fuertemente



ilustración 1. Fotografía del taller de diseño del mural. (Facebook JIU)

relacionado con la identidad indígena del pueblo mexicano, y muestra que el corazón de los pueblos indígenas está conectado con los frutos de la tierra mexicana. A su vez, según Ana García (miembro de la JIU), representa la unificación e igualdad “en un solo latido, el del pueblo mexicano.” Nos habla del propósito dialógico del mural, inscribiéndose en una perspectiva intercultural: no solamente está dirigido a un público indígena, pero a la sociedad en general, sin descartar a nadie.

Enfoquémonos en este aspecto clave: los idiomas indígenas, el “aire” y la interculturalidad existente en la ZMG están plasmados a través de doce glifos que brotan de la mazorca. En cada uno de ellos, jóvenes indígenas de diferentes culturas escribieron “Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas” en su lengua materna. Las lenguas que se incluyen son: ch’ol, nawatl, purepecha, mixe, mixteco, tzotsil, cora, totonaco, wixarika, zapoteco, otomi y mazahua. Además, estas “huellas” son plasmadas de forma literal, con las

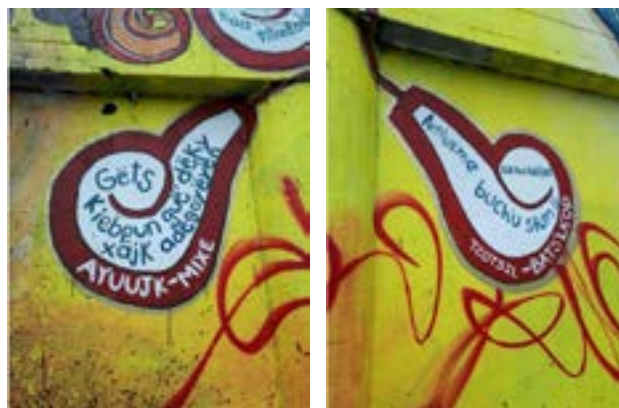


Ilustración 2. El mural “Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas” (Fotografía propia)

El corazón está envuelto en hojas de maíz azules, las mismas que al llegar al suelo se separan en raíces que representan las venas y las arterias del corazón. Estas raíces representan la conexión que los indígenas tienen con su tierra. De hecho, toda la conceptualización del mural y de su iconografía está articulada a partir de una mirada metafórica de la naturaleza y de sus elementos. Como lo explica Ulises Machuca (del colectivo Raíces del verso, encargado de la pinta del mural):

“El mural está compuesto por cuatro elementos. *Tierra*; quien se encuentra por debajo cobijado de raíces las cuales se extienden con el término de unas manos, en representación de unidad. Estos mismos conectan al maíz quien mediante su cabello abraza al segundo elemento *Aire*, representado con las voces naturales de los pueblos de México. A los extremos dos manos: a la Derecha el *Agua* quien purifica la lengua y la justicia a la izquierda el *Fuego* muestra de honor, valentía y pasión de los pueblos indígenas.

marcas de las manos de todos los participantes del proyecto, destacando su protagonismo como comunidad en la realización del mural.



Insertar ilustración 3. Ejemplo de glifos en mixe y tzotsil (Fotografía propia)

I. El espacio urbano como lugar de tensión social

1. La invisibilización de los indígenas en la ciudad

El censo del INEGI de 2010 reporta la presencia de 51702 indígenas en el estado

de Jalisco. De esta población, casi la mitad vive en la Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara (25215 personas) [2]. Además, es probable que esta población esté subrepresentada en las encuestas, de un lado, por el uso exclusivo del criterio lingüístico como contundente para determinar la pertenencia a un grupo indígena (Chávez 12) y, del otro, por el hecho de que puedan decidir no presentarse como indígenas para evitar actos de discriminación.

Claramente, las ciudades mexicanas se están convirtiendo en escenarios de diversidad étnica y por lo tanto cultural. Sin embargo, aún si la proporción de indígenas que viven en la ciudad es alta, en general, no se imagina a los indígenas en las grandes ciudades. No se reconoce esta diversidad étnica en contextos urbanos, debido a la manera en la cual se ha conceptualizado a los indígenas en México desde la Colonia y que todavía persiste en la sociedad contemporánea. La construcción del imaginario sobre los pueblos indígenas, para la sociedad mayoritaria y sobre todo en el ámbito urbano, les ubica en el campo. Aunque la presencia de los pueblos indígenas en la ciudad es obvia, se considera que no es un espacio que les pertenezca, y que su presencia en la urbe solo se debe a propósitos temporales (venta de artesanía, servicio doméstico, necesidad de ir al hospital, etc.).

Por lo tanto, difícilmente se puede afirmar que se ha llegado al reconocimiento de la población indígena en las ciudades, sea por parte de las autoridades públicas o también de la sociedad en general (Chávez 12).

La propuesta del mural *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* es que, para lograr tal reconocimiento, y a su vez derivar en un “reconocimiento jurídico y transversal de la diferencia cultural, una redistribución de recursos, un empoderamiento de los sujetos diferenciados y finalmente una gestión de los propios involucrados” (Dietz y Mateos 123), lo primero es enfrentar la invisibilización de los indígenas en la ciudad. Los participantes del proyecto, al manifestar su presencia en este espacio plasmando una pintura mural tan imponente, replican contra la delimitación de espacios exclusivos y marca de distancias entre indígenas/no-indígenas, los de arriba/los de abajo, los de la ciudad/los del campo. Rechazan

esta “ubicación diferenciada en el espacio urbano,” cuestionando esta “jerarquización de los espacios” (Silva Téllez, *La ciudad* 108).

2. La rearticulación de la tradición

De la misma forma que se considera al indígena en un espacio rural, se lo considera en el pasado. Esta dicotomía ha sido, hasta la fecha, la manera más común de pensar la historia y la diferencia étnica. Se piensan las tradiciones indígenas como fenómenos estáticos, fijadas alrededor de componentes folklóricos. Los festivales sobre culturas indígenas se celebran de manera casi automática, haciendo referencia a su vestimenta tradicional, a su artesanía, a sus bailes, etc.

Los colectivos involucrados en la realización de *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* querían proponer esta vez algo diferente, para subrayar que es necesario modificar nuestros marcos de entendimiento sobre los grupos étnicos y la diversidad cultural. Querían desafiar la mirada hacia los indígenas, el perfil exclusivamente folclórico que se les atribuye de forma rígida en los diferentes eventos sobre culturas indígenas.

Al realizar un mural para hablar de su cultura y de sus derechos, su trabajo se vincula obviamente con la tradición muralista clásica mexicana, con el muralismo comunitario más reciente, pero también con el graffiti, la cultura juvenil y las connotaciones alternativas que conlleva. De esta manera, demuestran que son parte de la sociedad moderna actual, sin que los procesos de modernización sean sinónimos de pérdida cultural. Así, incitan a los paseantes a pensar las culturas indígenas desde nociones más dinámicas, no tan apegadas a miradas esencialistas. En términos de George Yúdice, proponen una “rearticulación de la tradición” (100).

Sin embargo, es interesante notar que esta visión de la modernidad contrasta con el muralismo postrevolucionario. No es la modernidad mecánica y la admiración por el progreso tecnológico y la ciencia de Diego Rivero o David Alfaro Siqueiros. Vemos más bien una modernidad sustentable, donde lo que se repite es la representación de elementos naturales y la sinergia del hombre con la naturaleza. Muestran

así que la inclusión en la sociedad urbana, moderna, no implica un rechazo a los elementos más importantes de su cosmovisión. Sus formas de vida y su pensamiento están relacionados directamente con la naturaleza, que es un aspecto trascendental de su identidad. Como lo plantea Estela Mayo:

Aunque en la ciudad no estamos sembrando, no estamos yendo a las milpas, no estamos cosechando y no estamos haciendo las cosas como lo haríamos en nuestros lugares de origen, estos elementos de la naturaleza nos siguen marcando. Quieras o no, a pesar de estar aquí, incluso a pesar de haber nacido aquí, siempre nos identificamos con estos elementos. Es nuestra conexión con la comunidad de origen.

Con este mural urbano, declaran que forman parte de la ciudad, de forma pluricultural, sin tener que descartar los elementos culturales más importantes de su identidad como indígenas.

Además, este discurso sobre la naturaleza no sólo adopta “formas modernas” al plasmarse en un formato innovador desde una iniciativa indígena, también tiene resonancias significativas en el contexto del mundo actual, definiéndose como parte de una presente cultura ecológica y una conciencia ambientalista (Sánchez Parga 142). Les permite, de forma estratégica, encontrar aliados, unirse con otros grupos que comparten los mismos objetivos, para que sus reivindicaciones tengan más alcance.

3. El espacio público para reconfigurar y redefinir los imaginarios

Un componente central del muralismo, desde la época posrevolucionaria y a través de sus diferentes manifestaciones desde entonces, es su componente público. En una sociedad donde se denota claramente una tendencia a la privatización y a la burocratización en el contexto de transformación y crisis del Estado, destaca la importancia de repensar lo público (Ramírez Kuri 101).

Primero, es necesario indicar que, si lo estatal

es público, lo público no necesariamente es estatal. En este caso, los jóvenes indígenas que realizaron al mural, lo hicieron desde su propia iniciativa, sin responder a ningún proyecto gubernamental. Aunque solicitaron apoyos económicos a diferentes instituciones para poder llevarlo a cabo (por ejemplo, la Comisión Estatal Indígena, la Secretaría de Cultura, entre otros), los aportes brindados consistieron sobre todo en materiales y algunos viáticos. Este financiamiento mínimo no implicó ninguna participación o condición de parte gubernamental en cuanto al proceso de decisión sobre la organización de talleres, la temática o la iconografía del mural.

Asimismo, se apegaron al aspecto *popular* de la comprensión de lo público. Su visión corresponde a la definición propuesta por Polo Castellanos: “un espacio que pertenece a la gente que lo habita y lo circula, donde se ubican los sentidos de identidad y pertenencia de los pueblos, la memoria y hasta las tradiciones” (147). Así, el objetivo era evadir los canales burocráticos para poder expresarse sin lineamientos preestablecidos y sin necesidad de recursos que permitan el acceso al discurso. No había distancia entre artista y espectador. Es más, cualquiera podía participar en la elaboración del mural. De la misma forma, se distinguen del ámbito académico, donde se acostumbra hablar *del* indígena, o *sobre el* indígena, o donde se *deja hablar al* indígena. En contraste, los participantes elaboraron un discurso sobre la indigenidad desde su propia experiencia, y literalmente, desde sus propios idiomas.

El lugar donde se encuentra pintado el mural también es importante, está cercano al cruce de dos avenidas centrales de Guadalajara (Federalismo y Juárez), en el corazón de la ciudad. A una cuadra se encuentra el Parque Revolución, un punto de encuentro para muchos jóvenes y personas que trabajan por la zona, por lo que es evidente que se buscaba una exposición masiva del mural entre la población de la ciudad.

De esta forma, los jóvenes indígenas participantes del proyecto se apropiaron de la ciudad, entendida como un espacio de representación y expresiones de tensiones

sociales, culturales y políticas. El mural se inserta en el flujo de discursos e imaginarios que contribuyen a definir el espacio urbano, material y simbólicamente (Sandoval). Usan el espacio público para reconfigurar, redefinir y reapropiarse de la imagen de los indígenas.

Su meta consistió en partir de la experiencia diaria, para, como lo expresa Keane, “transformar los códigos predominantes de la vida cotidiana” (58). Desde la convivencia local en la ciudad, empezar a transformar las formas de relación, la manera de concebir e interactuar con el otro.

Aparte, demostraron su creatividad vinculando su trabajo con estrategias del campo de la comunicación. Extendieron su visibilización de diferentes formas: por ejemplo, realizando numerosas entrevistas para diferentes periódicos y asegurando su presencia en las redes sociales. Así, su entendimiento del espacio público se entiende desde el movimiento y el cambio continuo, acentuando el carácter interactivo del mural, de un lado; y del otro, sus propias capacidades como jóvenes indígenas urbanos para elaborar un discurso innovador y dinámico y aprovechar las nuevas tecnologías para extender su visibilización.

II. El muralismo como herramienta de disidencia política

1. Ciudadanía étnica e intermediación cultural

La elección del ámbito público para realizar el mural comunitario es una parte central de su proceso de elaboración y de su significación. Es un escenario crucial para comprender como tiene lugar en la práctica este vital entrecruzamiento de lo cultural y lo político.

Es decir, el espacio público, entendido como espacio político y como lugar donde se expresan nuevas realidades urbanas, actúa como medio de acceso a la ciudadanía, como mecanismo redistributivo, de integración social y de articulación espacial (Ramírez Kuri 98).

La ciudadanía se define en relación a la aplicación de obligaciones y el goce de los derechos que se define en las constituciones de los Estados nacionales. Un ciudadano es un sujeto de derechos, que conoce dichos derechos

y que tiene la posibilidad y la capacidad de defenderlos (Olvera 35).

De manera más específica, en relación al caso que nos interesa, Guillermo de la Peña habla de ciudadanía étnica, para referirse a la exigencia de derechos por parte de las comunidades indígenas. Afirma que

Podemos clasificar las demandas de la ciudadanía étnica en cuatro grandes apartados: (1) la visibilidad digna, (2) el fortalecimiento y la reproducción de las expresiones culturales, (3) el desarrollo sustentable conforme a los valores propios, (4) la autoridad y la representación política diferenciada. (12)

Para dicho autor, al ejercer su ciudadanía étnica, los miembros de las comunidades indígenas fungen como intermediarios culturales y políticos. Construyen su indigenidad como elemento de resistencia, respondiendo de manera crítica a discursos oficiales referentes a los indígenas en México.

Los colectivos que trabajaron de manera comunitaria en la realización del mural *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* corresponden directamente a esta definición de Guillermo de la Peña de intermediarios culturales y ciudadanos étnicos, al proponer una reflexión sobre la manera con la cual son representados los indígenas desde la exigencia de derechos constitucionales. Ana García lo explicaba así en una entrevista individual:

Lo que exigimos es, principalmente, el permitirnos hacer parte de la ciudad. Pareciera que no tenemos este derecho como indígenas. Pareciera que nosotros no tenemos por qué visibilizarnos en la ciudad porque da mala imagen. Principalmente esto, el derecho a la ciudad y también el derecho de hablar de interculturalidad y de derechos en la educación, en la salud, en la economía ... y el derecho a nuestra identidad. Que supuestamente, todos estos derechos están escritos, firmados, en varios convenios ... pero en nuestra realidad, siguen siendo ausentes. Exigimos hablar de este tema, desde una postura más consciente, más reflexiva,

una interculturalidad real.

García recalca que, si bien estos derechos están reconocidos jurídicamente en México, y son garantizados por la Constitución, no existen los mecanismos para permitir su aplicabilidad en la práctica social.

De hecho, como lo subraya Alberto Olvera, no sólo no se cumplen ni se aplican, sino que, incluso, no siempre son exigidos por los ciudadanos (45). Generalmente, los derechos sociales que son plasmados en la Constitución acostumbra ser ejercidos por aquellos sectores de la población que tienen la capacidad organizativa y política para hacerlos valer. Como estos sectores son sumamente reducidos, la mayoría de la población termina careciendo de ciudadanía social (Olvera 46). Considerando este aspecto en los talleres que organizaron de forma comunitaria, uno de los objetivos principales al realizar el mural fue definirse como ciudadanos realizando una lucha por el reconocimiento de sus derechos; y antes de esto, empezar con una lucha por el reconocimiento de su misma *presencia*. Los participantes quisieron generar espacios de ciudadanía activa, incitando tanto a las instituciones como a todos los paseantes, desde la calle, a cuestionarse sobre el ambiente en el cual quieren convivir.

En el proceso, adquirieron un rol de traductores culturales. Aprendieron las reglas de colaboración de diferentes espacios, y a presentarse como ciudadanos aptos a tomar acciones e iniciativas, a reconocer los intentos de apropiación de sus proyectos, etc.

Si bien la propuesta se llevó a cabo desde un afán de solidaridad, aún así los participantes tenían conciencia de las luchas de poder y de las necesarias estrategias discursivas implicadas. En este sentido, se puede definir el mural como un acto político: no desde espacios institucionales claramente delimitados, pero desde el espacio público urbano como la calle.

2. Lucha por la primacía icónica

Históricamente, la iconografía sobre las comunidades indígenas mexicanas ha sido un correlato de la dominación que las instituciones públicas y privadas han ejercido para justificar

sus medidas y asentar su poder político y económico. Las imágenes han tenido una participación determinante en la construcción de discursos identitarios referentes a la indigenidad y han estado vinculadas al reforzamiento de ideologías y a las luchas por la hegemonía.

Estas representaciones hegemónicas de la indigenidad suelen elaborarse a partir de estereotipos fundamentados en los aspectos folklóricos de las culturas indígenas. Lo que se expone son las artesanías, las vestimentas, las fotografías estetizadas de los rostros arrugados de la sabiduría ancestral, como “riqueza nacional,” como patrimonio de todos los mexicanos. Es una mirada romántica completamente desvinculada de las problemáticas económicas y sociales de estas comunidades; se trata de una visión esencialista de la cultura, diseñada para impulsar el turismo y la venta de diversos productos, que excluyen de su imaginario la hibridez, la diversidad y el dinamismo de las culturas. Dicha visión les permite expresarse solamente dentro de un marco rígido y controlado por las élites. Constituye una imagen de la diferencia que habla más de quienes la construyen que de los representados. Es una imagen que se puede consumir.

A partir de la exaltación superficial de algunos elementos culturales articulados con estereotipos –por ejemplo, de ignorancia o vulnerabilidad– se justifica una política que impide que se respeten los derechos constitucionales de los indígenas. En este sentido, se reproducen dinámicas colonialistas: un “colonialismo interno” donde no solamente se permite la persistencia de relaciones desiguales y asimétricas entre indígenas y no-indígenas, pero donde incluso se ejerce un control sobre la forma en la cual se nombra y se muestra el *Otro*. Los espacios oficiales de representación, como los museos, por ejemplo, han cimentado el imaginario de la sociedad sobre la indigeneidad. En un ejercicio de “reflexión narcisista” y de “adoctrinamiento político y cultural” se procede a una selección de imágenes simplificadoras. No representa solamente una práctica simbólica, también es una práctica política (Pazos 34).

El mural *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* se pensó en respuesta a esta tendencia de hablar en nombre de los indígenas, y a la dificultad para

imaginarlos como pueblos contemporáneos, urbanos, ciudadanos.

Estamos resistiendo en la ciudad. Porque no ven la ciudad como un espacio para indígenas, y queríamos demostrar que estamos presentes, en constante interacción con la ciudad. Esta es la resistencia: que nos quieras ver o no en la ciudad, pues nosotros nos plantamos en un mural, y que nos veas constantemente en el centro de la ciudad. A lo mejor, posteriormente nos puedes reconocer como parte de este espacio. (Mayo)

Es una resistencia que estos colectivos han emprendido ante la colonialidad de las imágenes, tejiendo las relaciones entre política, cultura e imagen para demostrar el conflicto de los indígenas urbanos frente a las hegemonías (Nahmad Rodríguez 105). El simple hecho de visibilizarse en el escenario público y de introducir referencias nuevas sobre las diferencias étnicas sin que la definición de sí mismos sea impuesta, es ya un acto de resistencia. Los jóvenes indígenas participantes querían demostrar a las instituciones que ‘no solamente sirven para sus presentaciones o eventos,’ sino que son capaces de cuestionar los discursos dominantes.

De esta forma, se enfrentan directamente a la idea de vulnerabilidad con la cual se ha concebido tradicionalmente al indígena en México; idea que promueve acciones desequilibradas y que implica una desigualdad discursiva que no favorece el arreglo político (Corona 18). Las acciones que realizaron para llevar a cabo el mural demuestran que aplicaron diferentes estrategias para cumplir con la visión política que tienen: organizarse para encontrar financiamiento, encontrar aliados que compartan sus convicciones, negociar con instituciones gubernamentales. Reflexionaron, desde lo comunitario, sobre las imágenes con las cuales se sienten identificados. Fue una producción colectiva de contra-imágenes, dirigida hacia la “institucionalidad dominante,” una “lucha entre lo instituido y lo emergente” (Silva Téllez, *El graffiti como parte*). No necesariamente implicó un rechazo de todas las representaciones sobre indigenidad a las cuales

estamos acostumbrados; ciertos elementos fueron apropiados, otros presentados desde un enfoque diferente. El aspecto clave en el proceso fue sobre todo tomar el protagonismo, el imponer su propia definición de quiénes son, asentándose como actores sociales y políticos.

III. El muralismo para hablar de interculturalidad

1. Educarnos interculturalmente desde un pluralismo agónico

Esta lucha por la primacía icónica hace que el mural sea explícitamente político, al incitar a los espectadores al diálogo y al generar opinión pública. En este sentido, el arte se vuelve una herramienta de construcción política muy poderosa. Es un espacio de interacción, creación y transformación que permite reconfigurar los imaginarios fuera de los parámetros institucionales que pueden ser rígidos, que se elaboran a partir de perspectivas hegemónicas, estándares y estereotipos.

La cuestión de la accesibilidad fue fundamental en la realización del proyecto, porque se plantearon llevarlo a cabo a partir de nociones como la inclusión, el diálogo y la apertura a todos, independientemente de su identidad étnica o condición social. La falta de acceso y de control puede llegar a ser muy notable en las relaciones de poder entre los grupos indígenas y los no-indígenas: empezando (en el caso de México) por la cuestión de la dominación del idioma español, el acceso al conocimiento de diferentes géneros discursivos (el género académico, el género mediático, etc.), o incluso la imposibilidad de acceso *físico* a ciertos espacios (todos los círculos sociales no son igualmente abiertos y accesibles a todos los grupos). En otras palabras, la dominación que se implementa de forma discursiva implica un acceso preferente al discurso, que se toma como base o recurso de poder, comparable a recursos sociales tales como la riqueza, el estatus, el conocimiento y la educación (Van Dijk, *Racismo y análisis críticos* 19).

Al plasmarse en la calle, en el centro de la ciudad, invitando a todos a participar, el mural propone limitar el factor de desigualdad en

la accesibilidad y redefinir las definiciones que hacemos de “nosotros” y de “ellos,” promoviendo lo que Chacón-Cervera y Cuesta-Moreno llaman un “pluralismo agónico” (73). Lo hacen plasmando diferentes voces y diferentes idiomas, sin que tenga un punto final, pensando en su obra como un inicio, una apertura al dialogo para compartir diferentes experiencias y puntos de vista.

Por lo mismo, el campo artístico puede entenderse como un espacio educativo: es una práctica social que genera interpelación en los sujetos e incide en su mirada, al cuestionar sus juicios valorativos. Como lo plantea Torres (55), sería erróneo pensar en las políticas educativas interculturales como un asunto exclusivo de las autoridades educativas o del sistema educativo, además de pensar que deberían ser dirigidas exclusivamente a las poblaciones indígenas. Los retos que impone la interculturalidad implican una redefinición exhaustiva de la relación de todos los ciudadanos y una consecuente transformación de las sociedades contemporáneas. Es necesario reeducar nuestra mirada y repensar nuestras relaciones, a partir de una gestión que involucre a personas de diferentes culturas. Muchos proyectos existentes, en particular en el espacio escolar, han llegado “desde arriba” y siguen circunscritas únicamente a las escuelas que cuentan con población indígena (Durin 64). Con su presencia, los jóvenes indígenas urbanos quieren cambiar esta aproximación a la interculturalidad, educar a la sociedad mayoritaria sobre la realidad de los pueblos indígenas y convertirse en un elemento detonador en la construcción de una ciudadanía más respetuosa de su diversidad.

En esta óptica, en continuidad con el discurso propuesto en la elaboración del mural, los jóvenes de la JIU organizan diferentes tipos de talleres: cursos de lenguas indígenas, de elaboración de artesanías de diferentes regiones, de fotografía, de poesía ... todos desde “su voz y sus conocimientos” (García). Para empezar, se empeñan en ‘desmitificar’ la idea de indigeneidad: romper con el mito que ubica a las comunidades indígenas como una sociedad homogénea, con características similares. Es importante para ellos no reducir las clases a un enfoque folklórico, por lo tanto,

relacionan las enseñanzas sobre técnicas con una comprensión cultural de los contextos. Asimismo, los talleres se articulan con reflexiones sobre los estereotipos que se usan para concebir a los indígenas y con una crítica al racismo estructural que experimentan. Por ejemplo, en los talleres de idiomas, dedican tiempo a reflexionar sobre las connotaciones de términos como “dialectos” en lugar de “idiomas,” demostrando que son vinculados con una comprensión prejuiciosa de las culturas indígenas.

2. La identidad indígena en este espacio

Un punto recurrente en las entrevistas llevadas a cabo con los participantes es su trabajo de reflexión en cuanto a su identidad indígena en la ciudad, primero individual y luego colectiva.

Los conflictos identitarios que sienten en el espacio urbano están ligados principalmente a la discriminación casi sistemática que experimentan, pero también a las diversas expectativas a las cuales sienten que tienen que responder (comunidad de origen o familiares, por ejemplo). Identificarse como indígena en la ciudad es un asunto complicado para los jóvenes, y esta cuestión fue en realidad el punto de partida en la realización del mural, desde los talleres iniciales. Los entrevistados explican que “preservar un idioma, vestirse como se vive en los pueblos originarios, querer expresar lo que se piensa desde el modo originario, en la ciudad ... es un acto de valentía” (Machuca) y “el no quitar nuestra identidad estando en la ciudad, el seguir siendo nosotras y nosotros mismos a pesar de la discriminación, a pesar del racismo, a pesar de estas desigualdades, a pesar de que se quieran apropiarse de lo que somos y de lo que estamos haciendo es un acto de resistencia” (García).

Estas reflexiones nos hablan del surgimiento de nuevas identidades que toman posesión y presencia en las ciudades. No existen muchos espacios donde se reflexione sobre estas nuevas identidades de los jóvenes indígenas y que consideren las situaciones muy diversas que viven. Por ejemplo, desde la academia, el indígena de los textos antropológicos casi siempre ha sido un hombre adulto, dirigente,

curandero, artesano. Falta mucho que investigar en relación a lo que experimentan los jóvenes indígenas en cuanto a los procesos de movilidad o migración, con lo que implica de inconsistencia internas y conflictos identitarios y culturales (Castro Pozo 674). Sin embargo, su papel es crucial en la reconfiguración de la familia y la comunidad.

Conclusión

Al definirse a la vez como práctica contestaría y recurso estético, el mural comunitario *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* es un ejemplo de que los límites entre arte, comunicación y política se pueden confundir, es decir proponer nuevos encuentros y cruces entre estética, comunicación y militancia política (López).

Para aproximarnos a la cuestión de la resistencia en el arte mural, subrayamos que, por ser una producción discursiva, este mural comunitario se inscribe en un contexto dado. Como lo plantea Peter Burke, el mural nos habla del “ojo de la época”: de acontecimientos políticos, de tendencias económicas y estructuras sociales, y también de las “historia de las mentalidades” (11). La ciudad juega aquí un rol determinante, clave para la comprensión del discurso que es este mural. Como lo indica Remedi, existe a la vez como realidad material, socialmente construida, que se habita; como un conjunto de estructuras e instituciones que nos preceden y de la que somos producto, y también como una representación imaginaria, una construcción simbólico-discursiva.

Aquí, el “acto de resistencia” consistió simplemente en visibilizarse, nombrarse a sí mismos e insistir en tener voz en este espacio tradicionalmente dominado por discursos ideológicos hegemónicos. Decimos simplemente, no porque sea una tarea fácil, sino porque solamente exigen el ejercicio de derechos básicos, a nivel individual y comunitario. Claramente, la reconfiguración del imaginario colectivo construido por las imágenes pasa necesariamente por el ejercicio del poder, por lo tanto, el espacio público urbano se convierte en un territorio donde confluyen herramientas estratégicas de resistencia (Castellanos 145).

La idea del mural era dirigirse a todos los

ciudadanos. Por un lado, interpelar a la sociedad mayoritaria, concientizar a la población respecto a los conflictos identitarios expuestos por los jóvenes indígenas, mostrar que son ligados a un sistema estructural de discriminación, de racismo y de falta de aplicabilidad de derechos. En este aspecto, el idioma era el hilo director para expresarse al mismo tiempo sobre su identidad y sus derechos, indicando que, si muchos deciden dejar de hablar su idioma materno, es para no ser objeto de la estigmatización social que viven en la ciudad. Se puso hincapié en la falta de reconocimiento de la diversidad étnica en los contextos urbanos, sugiriendo nuevas vías para construir una interculturalidad más efectiva.

Los participantes planearon esta interpelación, o “llamada de atención,” desde principios de solidaridad, pidiendo a los paseantes, indígenas y no-indígenas, que se unieran, que participaran en la pinta del mural, que plasmaran también sus huellas. Crearon así un espacio para generar formas de reconstrucción del tejido social y, aunque sea a una escala local, romper las relaciones asimétricas entre indígenas y no indígenas.

Por otro lado, al realizar el mural, también se propusieron dirigirse a otros indígenas urbanos, hacerles sentir que muchos jóvenes compartían sus experiencias y sus conflictos, y abrir de esta manera un espacio de diálogo comunitario. No se trataba de convencerlos de mantener cierta identidad en la ciudad, sino de manifestarse como comunidad de apoyo, como interlocutores susceptibles de haberse enfrentado a los mismos obstáculos y capaces de entender los conflictos que puedan sentir. La idea era comunicarles que podían definirse como quisieran, sin tener que alinearse con categorías hegemónicas preestablecidas. Es un derecho proclamado en la Declaración de las Naciones Unidas (2013): que la definición de la indigeneidad se reserve a los propios pueblos originarios y que no sea impuesta por otros grupos.

Los colectivos participantes propusieron un espacio para evidenciar que las identidades indígenas son dinámicas, múltiples, que se actualizan constantemente y que se pueden pensar fuera de los marcos esencialistas de autenticidad y pureza impuestos por la sociedad

occidental. No hay “falsos indígenas” o “medio indígenas,” como a menudo se les critica a los jóvenes indígenas urbanos, y no es inevitable tomar decisiones maniqueas en cuanto a quienes son y cómo se presentan. Es un proceso que implica apropiaciones diversas, asimilaciones, rechazos, resignificaciones y estrategias.

Al abrir este espacio de dialogo entre jóvenes indígenas urbanos, los colectivos que pintaron *Y que nadie borre nuestras huellas* conforman lo que Martínez y de la Peña llaman una “comunidad moral,” es decir una comunidad no definida principalmente por su territorialidad, sino por las redes de apoyo (218). De esta forma, proponen un modelo asociativo moderno, acorde con las problemáticas actuales de ciudadanía étnica en la ciudad.

Notas

[1] Ver Foucault 1971.

[2] 5471 en Guadalajara, 12339 en Zapopán, 1719 en Tonalá, 3175 en San Pedro Tlaquepaque, 476 en el Salto y 2035 en Tlajomulco (INEGI).

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La debilidad inicial de la industria de la televisión.

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Resumen

Este trabajo estudia las debilidades iniciales que supuso la ausencia de una política de contenidos para la consolidación de la industria de la televisión en México, se proporciona un marco general del lento arranque de este medio en varias naciones (Alemania, Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña) y se traza una perspectiva comparativa entre diferentes países iberoamericanos (Argentina, Colombia y España). La idea es demostrar la precariedad de las propuestas de programación que hicieron los promotores de la televisión pública y privada en sus primeros años, la insolvencia financiera de las empresas de televisión y la relación de dependencia de la televisión con respecto al resto de los medios de comunicación masiva. De esta manera, es posible observar tanto los problemas comunes que afrontó la industria de la televisión a nivel internacional como los obstáculos particulares de cada país.

Palabras claves: industria de la televisión, México, televisión latinoamericana, política de contenidos.

Introducción

Este trabajo propone que en la década de los 50 del siglo pasado la televisión surgió como un medio de comunicación muy frágil. Al menos durante los diez primeros años de actividades, las televisiones latinoamericanas –públicas o privadas– fueron un medio de comunicación débil y no cubrieron las altas expectativas que imaginaron sus promotores. Tampoco el parque de aparatos de televisión se difundió a la velocidad esperada. Este despegue lento de la televisión latinoamericana se debió, en gran medida, a tres tipos de factores, a saber:

1) La ausencia de una política de contenidos: los pioneros de la televisión no tenían claro qué producir y qué exhibir, tan sólo existían marcos generales difíciles de llevar a la práctica. Ante la falta de directrices, las decisiones sobre la programación se improvisaban y se tomaban sobre la marcha. El resultado fue que, durante los primeros años, la televisión fuera un medio de comunicación que poseía la élite, y solo una década después se convirtió en un fenómeno de masas.

2) Las televisiones latinoamericanas de orientación comercial-privada no obtuvieron las ganancias necesarias para ser empresas rentables. Por el contrario, las pérdidas

aumentaban año tras año y cada país, de acuerdo con su historia y condiciones particulares, planteó una solución a la insolvencia financiera.

3) La televisión fue una industria altamente dependiente de los medios de comunicación que la precedieron. La estructura administrativa y el modelo de negocios de la televisión fue una copia de la establecida por la radiodifusión en la tercera década del siglo XX. El personal técnico y creativo que colonizó la televisión provenía de la cinematografía, la radio, el teatro y otras actividades del espectáculo.

En este trabajo entiendo a la televisión de la misma forma que lo hace Bannister, como “un sistema tecnológico a gran escala que comprende artefactos tecnológicos, relaciones sociales, organizaciones empresariales y agencias gubernamentales” (Bannister 1), el reto intelectual entonces es mostrar cómo esos “factores sociales, políticos y económicos dieron forma a esa nueva tecnología” (ibid.). Y retomo las palabras de Claude S. Fischer, quien señala que las propiedades mecánicas no predestinan el desarrollo o el empleo de una innovación tecnológica, sino que son más bien “las disputas y negociaciones entre grupos determinados los que dan forma a la historia de una innovación, Los inventores, inversionistas, competidores, organizaciones de consumidores, agencias

gubernamentales, los medios de comunicación entre otros, deliberan acerca de cómo debe desarrollarse una innovación” (Fischer 16).

2. Antecedentes

Durante los primeros años del siglo XX los científicos que experimentaban con la televisión no tenían gran interés en el tipo de información a transmitir, su prioridad era que la posibilidad de *ver a distancia* fuera técnicamente factible. Los científicos se conformaban con enviar imágenes de letras y números de una habitación a otra. Más aún, no estaban muy seguros de qué usos sociales se le asignarían a este invento pues “no se sabía bien para qué podía servir” (Vilches 17). Esta idea también es compartida por Keilbach y Stauff, quienes argumentan que “como en el caso de la mayoría de los laboratorios, los experimentos en televisión no buscaban resolver un problema bien definido, no había un objeto de investigación claro” (86). Elsner et al. van más allá y señalan que, durante la década de los años 30 del siglo pasado en Alemania, la televisión tuvo en sus inicios “problemas de identidad” (212), ya que fue difícil asignarle un papel y una función dentro del sistema de medios de la época de entreguerras. Además, quienes promovieron la implantación de la televisión “no tenían idea de qué hacer con este medio” (Elsner et al. 212).

Cuando la televisión estuvo lista para salir del laboratorio y hacer su presentación en sociedad, surgió el asunto de los contenidos. ¿Qué programas producir? ¿Qué programas transmitir? ¿Con qué materiales llenar el tiempo de transmisión? Este fenómeno fue observado agudamente por Raymond Williams, y le llevó a establecer un principio que, desde su inicio hasta la época actual, sigue prevaleciendo en la televisión: “la oferta de infraestructura tecnológica es *anterior* a los contenidos y a la demanda” (18, cursivas mías). Esto quiere decir, entre otras cosas, que el asunto de los contenidos nunca fue el móvil para desarrollar un nuevo medio de comunicación. Tanto la radio como la televisión “fueron sistemas pensados para la transmisión y recepción como proceso abstracto, con una vaga idea o sin ninguna definición sobre los contenidos”

(Williams 18-19). Este hecho ha condenado a la televisión a mantener “una relación dependiente (*parásita*)” con agencias sociales en lo tocante a la producción de contenido. Los promotores de la televisión –fuera esta pública o privada– resolvieron estos dilemas incluyendo en su parrilla de programación “actos oficiales, deportes o piezas teatrales” (Williams 18, cursivas mías). La cinematografía, los deportes y la radio fueron las instituciones sociales que proveyeron de contenido al recién nacido medio de comunicación.

Para Cebrián, los contenidos cinematográficos “aparecen desde los orígenes de la televisión como uno de los más presentes y de mayor gancho para la audiencia” (2). Ya que la televisión “mantiene un porcentaje muy alto de programación dedicada a contenidos que se manifiestan no sólo en la programación de películas sino, además, de un conjunto de programas vinculados al cine” (Cebrián 3). El autor agrega que “la televisión se ha aprovechado de la producción cinematográfica para organizar su programación” (2).

Por otro lado, las ventajas de incluir deportes en la parrilla de programación son bien conocidas. Además del acto o evento deportivo en sí mismo, el deporte como tema constituye una fuente inagotable de noticias, de programas, de transmisiones (en directo o en diferido), que representan una parte cada día más importante del total de la emisión televisiva moderna. El costo de producción es bajo comparado con la cantidad que se debe invertir en un programa realizado en un estudio. La consolidación de algunas cadenas de televisión y su popularidad se ha debido en parte al protagonismo adquirido con la cobertura de grandes acontecimientos deportivos. En opinión de Parente, los deportes son el único tipo de programación que puede atraer grandes audiencias “durante la tarde de sábado y domingo” (129). En resumen, “la televisión encuentra en el deporte un objeto de alto rendimiento, relativamente fácil de producir, con gran impacto en sus audiencias, y un estímulo constante para su desarrollo tecnológico” (Moragas 5).

Las crónicas sobre el surgimiento de la televisión en Alemania, Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña señalan también la debilidad

que padeció la industria en esos países. Ante el anuncio de la British Broadcasting Company (BBC) de que en poco tiempo lanzaría un servicio de televisión regular que transmitiría desde Londres, el gobierno nacionalsocialista alemán anunció ante una centena de invitados, que ese día 22 de marzo de 1935 daba inicio el programa de pruebas de televisión en Berlín. El prematuro plan consistía en hacer público y a gran escala lo que se ensayaba hasta entonces bajo condiciones experimentales de laboratorio. El carácter altamente improvisado del plan fue notorio en la baja calidad y escasez de los contenidos que se transmitieron. Elsner et al. dan cuenta de la precariedad, ya que tan solo se transmitieron “películas y noticieros acompañados de intervenciones verbales breves, tres veces a la semana y con una duración de dos horas por emisión” (207). Así se mantuvo de agosto de 1935 hasta enero de 1936, ya que un incendio y fallas técnicas obligaron a las autoridades a suspender el servicio. A pesar de lo modesto del servicio, Alemania se presentó orgullosamente –y sigue presentándose– como “el primer sistema de emisiones regulares en el mundo” (Elsner et al. 207). Posteriormente y mejor organizados, la televisión alemana vio en los Juegos de la XI Olimpiada de 1936 la ocasión ideal para relanzar su servicio de transmisiones regulares. Más de 150 mil berlineses vieron las justas deportivas por televisión, pero a diferencia del modelo estadounidense y británico, que lanzaba al aire la señal y cada persona con un receptor podía *bajar* esa señal y disfrutarla en su hogar, el modelo alemán puso especial énfasis en transmitir a veintiocho puntos específicos, llamados “salas de televisión.” Estos espacios, con capacidad de treinta a cincuenta espectadores, eran los lugares asignados para una “recepción comunitaria” (Elsner et al. 208). La recepción privada en los hogares fue muy limitada, solamente algunos críticos y miembros del partido o funcionarios gubernamentales tenían aparatos receptores en casa. Contrario a lo que puede pensarse, y a pesar de este despliegue técnico-político, el régimen nazi “careció de un plan conceptual apropiado para la televisión” (Hoff 229); el control y desarrollo de este nuevo medio se lo disputaron tanto los

Ministerios de Propaganda como de Correos y, ya en plena guerra, el resto de las fuerzas armadas. Los fabricantes de componentes electrónicos preferían al régimen nazi como principal cliente sobre el potencial mercado civil.

En octubre de 1938 David Sarnoff, presidente de la *Radio Corporation of America* (RCA), pronunció un discurso ante los miembros de la Asociación de Fabricantes de Radios (RMA por sus siglas en inglés) en donde prometía que las transmisiones regulares de televisión se iniciarían en el marco de la Feria Mundial de Nueva York, evento que tendría lugar seis meses más tarde. Sarnoff agregó que las transmisiones tendrían un alcance de cincuenta millas de radio tomando como centro el edificio Empire State, ubicado en Manhattan; y el tiempo de transmisión sería de dos horas semanales sin anuncios comerciales, ya que se utilizaría el permiso de emisiones experimentales otorgado por la *Federal Communication Commission*. Seis meses después de esa alocución y diez días antes de la inauguración oficial de la Feria, David Sarnoff, ante las cámaras y micrófonos de los estudios experimentales de la cadena de televisión NBC declaraba: “Estamos en la víspera del lanzamiento de una nueva industria, basada en la imaginación, la investigación científica y el compromiso” (Magoun 68). El 30 de abril de 1939, el Presidente Roosevelt inauguró la Feria y fue el primer mandatario en aparecer en televisión.

Durante varios meses, miles de personas visitaron el pabellón de la RCA y vieron su propia imagen en diversos receptores. Concluida la Feria Mundial, las transmisiones prosiguieron con una programación matutina compuesta por deportes colegiales y desfiles de moda de tiendas de departamentos, y por la noche peleas de boxeo y los encuentros de hockey sobre hielo celebrados en el *Madison Square Garden*. Los contenidos consistían básicamente en controles remotos, todavía no existían condiciones para una producción de programas suficientes para llenar los tiempos de transmisión. La dependencia de *programas parásitos* era casi total.

La popularización de la televisión no fue un proceso sencillo. La participación de Estados Unidos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial provocó

que, en diciembre de 1941, las estaciones de televisión redujeran drásticamente sus horarios y varias de ellas suspendieron totalmente sus servicios. A pesar de los esfuerzos de Sarnoff y la campaña publicitaria de la RCA para promocionar la venta de aparatos receptores, los resultados fueron decepcionantes. Inicialmente, la RCA calculó que vendería 75 000, poco después ajustó a la baja la cifra y esperó vender 25 000 en 1940. En la primavera de 1941 había vendido “no más de 2 500 televisores” (Magoun 71). Una cifra decepcionante si se toman en cuenta los millones de dólares invertidos en el desarrollo de la televisión. Los consumidores no estaban dispuestos a invertir 400 o 600 dólares en un televisor hasta estar frente a “una clara indicación de que la televisión sería más que una moda” (Bannister 131). El arranque de la televisión en Estados Unidos fue lento y muy por debajo de las expectativas de los promotores.

En Gran Bretaña, John Logie Baird hace una demostración pública de la televisión ante unos cuarenta miembros de la *Royal Institution*. De acuerdo con Burns, en 1926 publicaciones como *The Times*, *The New York Times* y *Nature* daban cuenta del invento y de lo que consideraban la primera transmisión de imágenes en medios tonos. Sin embargo, y a pesar de esos logros técnicos, en un principio la BBC no mostró entusiasmo alguno en apoyar o financiar la empresa de Baird. La objeción de la BBC ante la propuesta de Baird fue que un servicio de televisión no podía reducirse a ver siluetas de “cabezas y hombros”, sus expectativas eran más altas y solo estaba dispuesta a apoyar un sistema capaz de distinguir imágenes de “hombres de pie conversando entre ellos, un grupo de hombres jugando al fútbol, el arribo de un transatlántico al puerto de Plymouth o un juego de tenis en Wimbledon” (Burns 175). En septiembre de 1929, la BBC autorizó el uso de sus instalaciones para que Baird transmita unas horas a la semana con su sistema mecánico de baja resolución. El acuerdo estableció que la transmisión sería de media hora de lunes a viernes, iniciando a las 11 de la mañana, y con posibilidad ocasional de hacer otros 30 minutos a media noche. Como era de esperarse, la primera transmisión fue bastante precaria, pues la BBC sólo permitió el uso de un transmisor, de

tal forma que primero se enviaban las imágenes y después el audio. Además, las imágenes aparecían en *negativo* y era necesaria su conversión a *positivo*. El programa inaugural consistió en tan solo 15 minutos de discursos y, para completar la media hora, algunos artistas interpretaron monólogos y canciones. La importancia de este evento fue el logro técnico alcanzado, los contenidos no importaban tanto y se les consideró un tema secundario.

Las transmisiones experimentales continuaron hasta agosto de 1932 y, a partir de esa fecha, “*The Baird Company* proporcionó la tecnología y la BBC se encargó de proveer los contenidos” (Medhusrt 295). Una división del trabajo lógica, dada la experiencia de la BBC en la producción de material radiofónico; sin embargo, la televisión todavía era inmadura y no encontraba su propio lenguaje, esa condición se reflejaba en la programación. Bajo este convenio la oferta era modesta, y consistía en la presentación de cantantes, violinistas, caricaturistas, compañías de ballet y “cualquiera que estuviese dispuesto a aparecer en la televisión por una cuota de una o dos guineas” (Burns 190).

El 2 de noviembre de 1936, la BBC inauguró formalmente un servicio de emisiones regulares que consistían en dos horas diarias, seis días por semana. Inevitablemente, la parrilla de programación de llenó con contenidos parásitos. Por ejemplo, Davis señala que el dueto ballet-televisión fue muy importante hasta el cierre del servicio en septiembre de 1939 a raíz del inicio de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Robson señala que en esos dos años y medio de transmisiones se exhibieron 326 obras de teatro y 36 óperas, sin embargo, los programas más populares fueron “los deportes y eventos de la realeza” (225). A pesar de los esfuerzos “la audiencia no creció lo suficiente” y la televisión fracasó “en alcanzar su potencial” (Robson 224). La BBC reinicia las transmisiones de televisión en junio de 1946, y en esta nueva etapa “y durante los primeros dieciocho meses el ballet y la televisión se convirtieron en un matrimonio cercano” (Davis 139).

3. El caso mexicano

Los antecedentes de la televisión en México se remontan a 1935, cuando se inaugura una estación de televisión a iniciativa del Partido Nacional Revolucionario, en ese tiempo en el poder. La estación no tuvo continuidad y meses después fue abandonada. En agosto de 1946 se inauguró una estación experimental de televisión a cargo de Guillermo González Camarena, y en octubre de ese año empresarios solicitaron al gobierno concesiones para operar la televisión bajo régimen privado comercial. La inauguración oficial del Canal 4, primera estación de televisión en México, fue en septiembre de 1950 gracias a la concesión gubernamental que obtuvo el empresario Rómulo O'Farrill. La segunda concesión recayó en Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, quien puso en marcha el Canal 2 en marzo de 1951. Un año después, Guillermo González Camarena inició las transmisiones del Canal 5. Los tres canales privados tuvieron como centro de operaciones a la ciudad de México, fenómeno nada extraño pues, históricamente, la capital del país ha concentrado la mayor cantidad de recursos materiales y simbólicos.

En los primeros años de la televisión comercial en México, el principio de los *contenidos dependientes* o *parásitos* se pudo observar de manera clara. El historiador de los medios de comunicación Fernando Mejía Barquera documentó que, durante su primer año de vida (1950-1951), el Canal 4 difundía “únicamente de las 3 de la tarde a las 7 de la noche, tenía muy poca producción y las transmisiones deportivas, que duraban dos horas en promedio, le permitían llenar el tiempo de pantalla e incluso alargar su horario hasta las 9 o 10 de la noche” (169-170). Por supuesto, no faltaron demostraciones de zarzuela y opereta, además de breves obras de teatro. [1] Un periodista estadounidense que dio cuenta del surgimiento de la televisión en México, escribió que la televisión era “tan novedosa y experimental, que no le ha permitido a su restringida audiencia crear una *estrella* ... lo que más se le parece son los toros” (Kalb 37, cursivas mías). El periodista continuó su nota diciendo que a finales de 1950 la televisión en México era “un solo canal (Canal 4) a la espera de la corrida [de toros] dominical que

inicia a las 4 de la tarde” (37). Un análisis de la programación –de acuerdo con lo publicado en la prensa– indica que, a un año de estar al aire, el 40% del tiempo de transmisión del Canal 4 lo dedicaba a exhibir películas, otro contenido parásito por excelencia.

Lo mismo puede decirse del Canal 2: su programa inaugural, en marzo de 1951, fue un partido de béisbol, y durante meses “lo único que programábamos era béisbol y algunas películas” (de la Herrán, citado en Castellot 74). En efecto, en un análisis de la programación –de acuerdo con lo publicado en la prensa– a seis meses de su inauguración, resultó que sólo se transmitieron juegos de béisbol, excepto un par de días en que se exhibieron “Festivales artísticos.” La presencia de contenidos parásitos en la parrilla de programación es casi total. Otro entrevistado por Castellot afirmó que la programación inicial fue “a base de películas y uno que otro programa vivo” y un año después se incorporó la transmisión de lucha libre (86-87).

El Canal 5 se inauguró el 10 de mayo de 1951 y, desde el inicio de sus actividades, cayó en un círculo perverso: “no había regularidad en las transmisiones” pues “la falta de dinero la hacía imposible” (Ramírez p. 7). Si un equipo electrónico o mecánico fallaba, había que conseguir el dinero para repararlo; era una gestión que podía prolongarse, y en ese tiempo, la estación no transmitía. Los escasos programas que se producían en el Canal 5 carecían de patrocinio comercial. El Canal 5 necesitaba dinero porque “nadie quería comprar programas en una estación tan irregular” (Ramírez p. 7). Después de dos años de actividades, el Canal 5 no logró concertar los patrocinios suficientes que le permitieran cubrir –por lo menos– los gastos de operación y “llegó un momento en que tuvo que enfrentarse a la realidad. Si nadie le prestaba la más mínima ayuda, si los medios publicitarios le cerraban sus puertas, si el mundo oficial no le concedía atención y si el grueso del público no veía el canal 5, ¿qué caso tenía continuar con la actitud de estrellar su cabeza contra un muro de piedra?” (Ramírez p. 7). Inevitablemente se cumplieron los peores pronósticos y, después de dos años de actividades, el Canal tuvo que cerrar.

La fortaleza de una televisión privada está en relación directa con la venta de publicidad (ya sea por patrocinio o venta de espacios publicitarios), porque los recursos provenientes de esta operación se convierten en su principal fuente de ingresos. Dentro de un régimen comercial, la prioridad de la televisión es la ganancia; la educación y la cultura se convierten, en el mejor de los casos, en objetivos secundarios. Es muy difícil saber cuánto invertían las agencias de publicidad en la televisión, pero lo que sí es posible conocer es que la cantidad era insuficiente para satisfacer las expectativas de los concesionarios. A mediados de 1952, el panorama económico de la televisión en México era sombrío, tres empresas se disputaban la reducida tarta publicitaria, y la teleaudiencia no crecía al ritmo esperado debido en parte también al alto costo de los receptores. El problema lo planteó claramente el presidente de la firma publicitaria Guastella MacCann Erickson:

La mayor parte de los anunciantes no quieren hacer inversiones importantes en programas y spots... hasta no tener un auditorio suficientemente grande que le garantice circulación a sus mensajes comerciales. El público, por su parte, no quiere invertir en la compra de un telerreceptor, hasta que el número y calidad de los programas justifiquen esa inversión. Y claro, el *círculo vicioso* tiene que romperlo el anunciante o la propia televisora, ya que son los *buenos programas* los que incitan al público a comprar telerreceptores y, a mayor número de telerreceptores, mayor valor para el anunciante (Guastella, citado en Anguiano 10, cursivas mías).

Planteo de manera diferente la ecuación de Guastella: Al no haber una oferta de *buenos programas*, el público no se siente motivado a comprar televisiones, en consecuencia, estos pequeños públicos no son atractivos para los anunciantes. En efecto, los vendedores de aparatos de televisión, publicistas y concesionarios habían calculado que, para efecto de rentabilidad comercial de la nueva industria, se necesitaban al menos 40 mil aparatos en servicio. Con ese número se

llegaría a un público de 4 millones de personas, a condición de que las televisiones se instalaran “no en casas particulares, sino en restaurantes, bares, cafés, vestíbulos de teatros, cines, etcétera” (Alba p. 20). Con ese número de aparatos funcionando “muchas firmas estarían dispuestas a gastarse sumas considerables patrocinando programas de televisión, que es lo que permite existir a las emisoras” (Alba p. 20).

Pero llegar a la meta de los 40 mil receptores no era una tarea fácil. El gobierno mexicano anunció que solamente serían autorizados para su importación 10 mil aparatos de televisión, cantidad muy por abajo de los 40 mil que pretendían los distribuidores y publicistas. La Secretaría de Economía argumentó que con la importación de 10 mil aparatos, el país sólo erogaría 3 y medio millones de dólares; por el contrario, autorizando la importación de 40 mil el gasto en divisas sería de ocho millones de dólares. Los empresarios estaban orgullosos de su programación y nunca reconocieron que esa era la causa de la baja inversión publicitaria. Su explicación era otra, aunque Azcárraga Milmo reconoció que “no sabíamos muy bien por qué, pero no teníamos patrocinadores, ninguno” la explicación se debía a que “era carísimo el aparato” [receptor] (citado en Castellot 51).

La televisión mexicana también padeció de otra debilidad. Los diarios *Novedades* y *Excélsior* eran proveedores de materiales de los noticieros de los canales 2 y 4. La televisión mexicana no creó su propio departamento de noticias hasta 1969. Antes de este año la televisión no tenía una voz propia. Fue necesario esperar una década para que la televisión encontrara su propio lenguaje, para crear un producto distintivo. La televisión era popular porque transmitía deportes y películas, aprovechó los públicos de estas actividades para darse a conocer como nuevo medio de comunicación.

En una nota publicada sobre las preferencias del público, se ve claramente el papel central que adquirió la programación parásita:

No hay programa de televisión, por bueno que sea, que tenga tanto auditorio como la transmisión de los *eventos taurinos*: efectivamente, acapara el 80 por ciento y a veces más, del total de televidentes...

Después de lo toros, lo que más le interesa al público es la transmisión del *boxeo*; normalmente cuenta con más del 60 por ciento de los videntes, en las funciones sabatinas en las que generalmente se presentan peleas de mayor categoría y con 40 por ciento en la función de los miércoles.

Otro evento que está considerado entre los predilectos, es el *fútbol*; la mayoría de los aparatos que funcionan los domingos por la mañana, están sintonizados en el Canal 2 para ver el deporte de las patadas.

En seguida viene la lista que nuestros lectores ya han conocido: programas musicales, cómicos, telenovelas, etcétera. Así está en la actualidad gusto de los televidentes, *que no ha variado en lo que primero se refiere, desde que existe la TV en México* (“La transmisión de toros” 11, cursivas mías).

4. Los casos iberoamericanos

Existen suficientes indicios que ponen en evidencia la fragilidad inicial de las televisiones iberoamericanas. Por ejemplo en Guatemala, la televisión surgió bajo el sistema público y tuvo un inicio fallido, ya que la primera estación TGW Canal 8 tuvo que cerrar en 1956 tras un año de emisión “ante la falta de apoyo gubernamental, de rentabilidad económica y del buen ver de los políticos” (Lucas 1). Ecuador es otro ejemplo; aquí la televisión tuvo que transitar por un largo periplo antes de convertirse en un medio de comunicación estable. Inició en 1954, cuando el estadounidense Gliford Hartwell decide reparar un equipo de televisión que se encontraba abandonado en las bodegas de General Electric, compañía en la que trabajaba. El arreglo duró cuatro años y finalmente el equipo arribó a Ecuador en enero 1959. Seis meses después se realizaron algunas pruebas y se transmitieron las primeras películas dobladas al español, donadas por la embajada de Estados Unidos. Días después, se realizaron transmisiones en circuito cerrado. Para 1961, el parque de aparatos receptores sumaba tan solo 500, muy por debajo de lo esperado (Ortiz y Suing 37-38).

4.1 Argentina

En la Argentina la televisión se inauguró – sin pena ni gloria– el 17 de octubre de 1951, con imágenes de Perón y Evita durante un acto multitudinario en la Plaza de Mayo. “Seguido de un partido de fútbol y de innumerables conciertos y ballets oficiales” (Varela 13). La inauguración generó sentimientos agridulces: por un lado, se vivió como una suerte de trauma nacional, ya que la llegada tardía “debiera considerarse un escándalo” (Varela 13). Tal vez por esa razón “los diarios y las revistas de esos días apenas registran la aparición del nuevo medio” (Varela 30). Para Hiram, el debut de la televisión “estuvo signado por cierta apatía por parte de la prensa gráfica en comparación con las expectativas que generó la aparición del cine principalmente y en menor medida la radio” (1044). Por su parte, Ulanovsky et al. confirman que la repercusión que tuvo el estreno televisivo en los diarios de aquella época “fue mínima” (16), y citan a Max Koelble, quien atribuye esta baja cobertura a la “deliberada decisión de la prensa escrita, temerosa de que aquí se repitiera lo que ya había ocurrido en los Estados Unidos: que el nuevo medio le moviera el piso y le mordiera la torta publicitaria” (16). En cuanto a la programación, los autores afirman que “salvo excepciones” lo que se vio por Canal 7 después de su apertura fueron “números sueltos, saludos y, fundamentalmente, pruebas de tonos, sonido e imagen. Oficialmente la televisión atravesó una confusa transición de casi quince días” (20). Por esta razón, la revista *Antena* informó que, a partir de su inauguración “las transmisiones continuarían con carácter experimental, de afianzamiento o regularización, podríamos decir, hasta el próximo 1° de noviembre, fecha en la cual se dará comienzo al plan de transmisiones diarias a horario de tipo comercial” (Nielsen 23). TV 7, el único canal, transmitía de las 18 a las 22 horas y “la programación no estaba afianzada en cuanto a la frecuencia de emisión y la duración de los programas” y la pantalla estaba dominada por “transmisiones teatrales o de ballets y de shows musicales” (Mazziotti 26). De nuevo, el testimonio de Ulanovsky et al. es contundente:

Como la imagen se interrumpía con frecuencia, en un rincón aguardaba, listo para salvar el bache, un dúo folclórico, y en una especie de cámara que muy pocos llamaban telecine se almacenaban unos cortos fílmicos que, en poco tiempo, por la cantidad de veces que fueron transmitidos y vueltos a transmitir, se convirtieron en el terror de los pocos televidentes (21).

De acuerdo con la Asociación de Teledifusoras Argentinas (ATA), el primer programa que se realizó en un estudio fue transmitido desde los salones del hotel Alvear “y tenía las características de un musical. Contó con un ballet y un coro del teatro Colón, la orquesta era de Radio Belgrado, y duró poco más de una hora” (10). La abrumadora presencia de contenidos parásitos no parecía incomodar a TV7. La misma Asociación relata que en 1960, cuando salió al aire el Canal 9, “su primer programa fue un teleteatro romántico” y un año después al iniciar sus transmisiones el Canal 11 “eligió pasar al aire solamente *tapes* y películas” (ATA 16). Existen más indicios que apoyan la idea de existencia de un *patrón de precariedad* (Varela 65) de la televisión argentina. Heram arguye que “durante sus primeros años tuvo una programación muy precaria, había pocos aparatos televisivos y por ende no era un medio de masas” (1049). El carácter público de la televisión no fue suficiente para delinear su función social, ya que “el Estado no sólo *no tenía ningún proyecto para ella*, sino que se desatendía de cualquier responsabilidad sobre la estación que le pertenecía y dejaba todo a cargo de los empresarios” (Heram 1042, cursivas mías). Esta aseveración concuerda con los propios testimonios de miembros la familia Yankelevich y publicados por Ulanovsky et al. El primero de ellos asegura que “en 1951 don Jaime [Yankelevich] convenció al presidente Perón y trajo la televisión a su total riesgo. Cuando partió a los Estados Unidos a comparar los equipos, le dijo a la prensa: ‘Voy a traer la televisión. Si el gobierno la quiere, bien, si no, la traigo igual’ (Samuel Yankelevich, citado en Ulanovsky et al. 46). Otro testimonio afirma que “del gobierno la única exigencia que había recibido era que inauguraran el 17 de octubre.

Y la cumplieron” (Raquel Yankelevich, citada en Ulanovsky et al. 46). Otro testimonio asevera que la televisión “se hizo con dinero proveniente de Radio Belgrano, que por aquel entonces tenía la forma de una sociedad anónima ... El estado no tuvo que aportar un peso” (Samuel Yankelevich, citado en Ulanovsky et al. 39).

4.2 Colombia

En Colombia la televisión tuvo una “naturaleza estatal originaria” (Rey 120) y fue asignada para su gestión a la Oficina de Información y Prensa del Estado (ODIPE). Este hecho le imprimió un carácter instrumental dentro de la gestión propagandística del gobierno de la dictadura militar del general Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. En los planes originales, la televisión buscó proveer de “una programación educativa, artística y cultural en las regiones donde la presencia del Estado era nula” (Arango 68). Para Carrillo & Montaña, el objetivo fue “consolidar el programa educativo que perseguía erradicar el analfabetismo y la culminación de un proyecto nacional basado en la religión católica, la raza y el idioma” (139). Esta idea la confirma García, al afirmar que en Colombia “la TV nació con funciones educativas y culturales que buscaban la unidad y construcción de una nación homogénea” (79).

La orientación estatal tampoco resolvió el tema de los contenidos; el ente gestor del nuevo medio, al inicio la ODIPR y a partir de 1955 Televisora Nacional, prometió una programación abstracta y poco precisa con tópicos tan variados como “temas agrícolas para campesinos y agricultores, temas técnicos para industriales... El arte y la ciencia serán difundidos por intermedio de innumerables películas” (Rey 117). Esta vaguedad e ingenuidad en cuanto a los futuros contenidos se estrellaron rápidamente con la realidad. En opinión de Samper, los promotores de la televisión en Colombia “no calcularon lo que era llevar al aire, diariamente, varias horas de programación” (26). Después de la primera transmisión el 13 de junio de 1954, y durante varias semanas e incluso meses, “nadie sabía lo que iba a salir al aire. Ni los televidentes, ni quienes trabajaban en la televisión... había días en que no se sabía qué se transmitiría en el próximo espacio y con frecuencia se recurría a

distintos músicos para rellenar espacios... uno de ellos... aparecía varias veces en un mismo día" (Samper 26). Con estas características, el nuevo medio transmitía en 1954 dos horas de programación diaria. Este espacio fue sin embargo en aumento: en 1955 se transmitían cuatro horas y diez minutos aproximadamente, empezando a las seis y veinte de la tarde; y a finales de 1957 y durante 1958, se transmitía en promedio seis horas y media diarias, con variaciones durante la semana y fines de semana. Un análisis de la programación entre 1954 y 1957 realizado por Uribe muestra la inexistencia de espacios semanales o programas dedicados específicamente a la instrucción y que tuvieran una continuidad significativa. El teleteatro fue el género más consistente, y otros de mayor continuidad fueron el *Boletín de noticias* y las *Efemérides*, especie de corta presentación diaria de la televisión. Por supuesto, completaban la programación las transmisiones en directo de inauguraciones de obras públicas o alocuciones de ministros y del presidente (Uribe 30-31). Los primeros años de la televisión colombiana estuvieron marcados por los constantes baches en la transmisión, lo que constituyó un motivo de frecuentes quejas en periódicos y revistas. Igualmente, se criticaba la calidad de algunos programas, en especial los actuados y los de variedades; en el caso de los primeros, la poca preparación de los actores, así como la sobreactuación de los presentadores fueron considerados factores negativos en la televisión. El creciente número de tele espectadores manifestó que estaban cansados de ver solo programas institucionales y películas extranjeras. En descargo de la programación, los programas infantiles recibieron críticas positivas (Carrillo y Montaña 142; Arango 68).

En resumen, la televisión de esos años "no fue el medio central para la divulgación masiva del proyecto e ideario rojista" (Samper 26). Y no lo fue porque en sus primeros años era un medio frágil donde "reinaba la improvisación" (ibid.). Además "porque en la década del cincuenta la televisión estaba lejos de ser un medio de consumo masivo" (Uribe 31, cursivas mías) y segundo, porque los programas dedicados a la propaganda rojista eran "más bien escasos en comparación al resto de la oferta, que se centró

en la divulgación cultural" (ibid.). Para Carrillo y Montaña, en los años 60 la señal todavía tenía problemas de sonido, imagen y cobertura, y la televisión recién empezó a popularizarse en Colombia "durante los años setenta" (142).

4.3 España

El establecimiento de la televisión en España en octubre de 1956 es un claro ejemplo de incertidumbre y recelo ante el advenimiento de este nuevo medio y de una dependencia en la programación. Palacio afirma que a partir de 1953 Televisión Española realizó transmisiones experimentales, y el personal involucrado en estas prácticas "no tenía idea cuándo iniciarían las transmisiones regulares, ni tampoco sabía cuál sería el futuro modelo de gestión de la televisión" (601). La incertidumbre se prolongó durante años, ya que "nadie en la Administración posee planes concretos sobre ... la forma de financiación de los programas, la organización jurídica, empresarial y laboral de la emisora, los pormenores prácticos del desarrollo de la red, ni ... cómo se va a abastecer el mercado de aparatos, habida cuenta que ninguna fábrica española produce televisores (Palacio 31). Lo único con que se contaba era el Plan Nacional de Televisión. Dicho documento se dio a conocer en el Primer Congreso Nacional de Ingenieros de Telecomunicación, celebrado en 1955 y que contenía una serie de recomendaciones de tipo técnico. Dos días antes de la inauguración de las transmisiones, se registra "la primera explicitación pública de los planes de aquellos que estaban haciendo la televisión" (Palacio 37). Joaquín Sánchez Cordobés, director técnico de los servicios de televisión, no fue capaz de manifestar la duración exacta de la programación: "unas dos horas diarias de diez a doce, pero los programas no podrán prodigarse por los costos" (Palacio 37-38). Otro funcionario de alto nivel confesó que ignoraba si habría en el nuevo servicio "una tendencia estatal o de monopolio o si derivará en empresas de carácter privado" (Palacio 38). Además, Televisión Española (TVE) "nace como un órgano de la administración central del Estado, sin personalidad jurídica propia alguna y sujeta al derecho administrativo" (Bustamante

31). Posiblemente esta falta de regulación era producto de la desconfianza que la televisión despertaba en el dictador.

El acto inaugural de la televisión en España fue a las seis de la tarde del 28 de noviembre de 1956, el evento consistió en la celebración de una misa en un altar que se instaló en el plató. Después vinieron los discursos, para luego cerrar con la programación propiamente dicha. [2] Documentales cedidos por la embajada estadounidense, exhibición de dos *NO-DO* y el de *Imágenes*. “También se ofrece un reportaje titulado *España hoy* y se intercalan tres actuaciones de los coros y Danzas de la Sección Femenina... dos actuaciones musicales a cargo del pianista José Cubiles y la orquesta de Roberto Inglez” (Baget 23).

La etapa inicial de la televisión española se caracteriza por la lucha contra el tiempo, la improvisación ‘por sacar adelante’ una programación que estaba por encima de las disponibilidades técnicas de la época. TVE contaba con instalaciones (un chalé en el Paseo de la Habana) “en donde se acondicionó un plató de trabajo y otro dedicado al ensayo y montaje de programas. En este reducido espacio hay que preparar y ensayar todos los programas... y después emitirlos. En directo, naturalmente, ya que el kinescopio es un sueño lejano” (Baget 24). TVE emitía tres horas diarias, luego se amplía a cuatro, y el cierre era a las doce de la noche, aunque casi nunca se respetaba. En abril de 1957 se amplía el horario de emisión a cinco horas diarias “y se cierra en agosto por vacaciones” (Díaz 38).

Con el tiempo, la programación de *contenidos parásitos* desempeñó un papel decisivo en la aceptación cultural de la televisión. TVE dedicó mucho espacio de pantalla a contenido popular y entretenimiento con la idea de construir una audiencia.

Las retransmisiones deportivas permitieron que TVE se liberara de la esclavitud del estudio y tuviese un mayor margen de maniobra en la producción de sus programas. Gracias a esta intervención y tras casi dos años de vida, la televisión pública estabilizó su situación y diversificó sus contenidos... Por su parte,

los espacios deportivos se convirtieron en los referentes de la cadena con respecto a las transmisiones en directo, una situación que se ha mantenido hasta nuestros días (Bonaut 111).

Para De Haro, el éxito de esta estrategia se puede comprobar con los resultados que arrojó la primera encuesta sobre preferencias de los televidentes elaborada en 1961. Los programas con mayor aceptación fueron “los encuentros de fútbol y las corridas de toros” (De Haro 70), preferencias muy semejantes a la teleaudiencia mexicana. Seis años después, los sondeos indicaron que “la fiesta nacional [corridas de toros] atrae al mayor porcentaje de televidentes (17%) seguida de eventos deportivos con un 14%” (De Haro 83). Los contenidos parásitos —en especial las corridas de toros y el fútbol— fueron la locomotora que con los años llevó a TVE a convertirse en un medio de masas.

Conclusiones

Reconocer la *debilidad inicial* de la industria de la televisión implica plantear de manera diferente la historia de este medio de comunicación. Por un lado, sugiere concebirla como un medio modesto, que enfrentó con mucha dificultad los retos técnicos y financieros que supone el arranque de una nueva industria. Que tuvo que competir con la radio y la cinematografía para hacerse un lugar en las preferencias del público. Que fue necesario esperar una década para que la televisión encontrara una fórmula que le permitiera producir contenidos propios que contrarrestaran la dependencia parásita. La *debilidad inicial* es visible tanto en Alemania, Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña, como en los países iberoamericanos aquí estudiados.

Esta posición invita a abandonar la idea de concebir a la televisión como un medio poderoso e influyente desde su nacimiento, y este giro permite formular nuevas preguntas. Por ejemplo: ¿Por qué no se cumplieron las expectativas empresariales? ¿Cómo se popularizó este nuevo medio de comunicación? Por supuesto, resulta necesario preguntarse por la relación de la industria de la televisión con el Estado.

Para la industria iberoamericana de la

televisión, cabe preguntarse en qué medida se ha liberado de la presencia de *contenidos parásitos* en su programación. Además ¿cuál fue la relación de la televisión con el resto de los medios de comunicación? El caso argentino muestra una pugna especialmente con la prensa, mientras que la televisión mexicana tuvo una relación difícil con la cinematografía. ¿Cómo se superó el *patrón de precariedad* en el caso argentino? En Colombia, ¿cómo pasó la televisión de ser un medio elitista y restringido a un fenómeno de masas? ¿Qué procesos de negociación se llevaron a cabo para estabilizar y legitimar la televisión en España? Cada país resolvió de manera diferente su debilidad inicial. Y siempre bajo un proceso de negociación –no siempre amistoso– entre las diferentes organizaciones sociales, los organismos gubernamentales y las audiencias.

Endnotes

[1] Ver Castellot 1993.

[2] Ver Baget 1993 y Palacio 2001.

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Creativity as Collaborative Endeavor with Social Vision: Postmodern Dance, the Creative Body, and Electronically Networked Performance Spaces in the 1960s

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Abstract

This article revisits examples from U.S. postmodern dance in the 1960s to explore the emergence of collaborative aesthetics as a matrix for new developments in the performance arts. In this context, creativity is defined as collective effort and achievement; postmodern dance is interpreted as a laboratory for redefining community and rethinking the relationship between the human, the social, and technology. The article argues that postmodern dance can serve as a blueprint for an artistic vision of new forms of social bonding.

Keywords: collaborative creativity, postmodern dance, networks, technology, social vision

Introduction and Context

In the turbulent 1960s, artistic networks like Fluxus, EAT, Black Mountain College, Black Arts Repertory Theatre, Sun Ra's Solar Arkestra, Teatro Campesino, Cunningham Dance Theater, and Judson Dance Theater produced performances in which artistic expression and social impetus were strongly embedded in collaborative art projects. Networking, collaboration, and exchange brought forth a vanguard understanding of art as group expression with the objective of social construction and change. These networks interpreted creativity as collaborative social action across disciplinary boundaries. Their practices challenged the idea of a lone artistic genius by emphasizing that creativity is a result of group collaboration and art thoroughly embedded in processes of larger social networking.

Artists looked intensively for collaboration with technology and engineers who were developing and using technology. This resulted in close collaborations such as those between Robert Rauschenberg with the electrical engineer Billy Klüver, who partnered in EAT (Experiments in Art and Technology). Other groups, such as USCO, were made up of engineers, filmmakers, painters,

and poets. Influenced by Marshall McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller, they saw in technology a creative potential that was indispensable for the future development of art and society. According to Douglas Davis, they cherished "technology as a means of bringing people together in a new and sophisticated tribalism. In pursuit of that ideal, they lived, worked, and created together in virtual anonymity" (67). As the objectives of these groups illustrate, an industrial cooperation between art and technology was to develop new interaction models for society as a whole. [1]

Their creative collaborations attest that "technologies and human lives are mutually embedded, enabling, and determining" (Schatzki 91). Playfully, their projects merged archaic ritual performance patterns with seemingly ever-progressing technology; they did so in a dialogical fashion in which humans moved machines and machines moved humans in an attempt to create new visions of community and coexistence. The turn to technology as means of creative and communal expression, in spite of unequal access to new media and computer technology, was in no way limited to groups of hegemonic white artists. Sun Ra's Solar Arkestra expressed his vision of black galaxy in futurist group sound collectives and Motown records;

“turning the recording studio into a creative instrument” produced collective soundscapes emerging from the dynamic interplay of individual and background voice arrangements, thus developing African American technologies in the creation of new communal expressions (Weheliye 1; Rausser, *‘What’s Going On’* 210-15).

Marshall McLuhan’s concept of the global village as media-centered utopia opened new horizons for a globally connected world (McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* 8; *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 3), but this utopianism was tempered by awareness of technology’s destructive power. The arms race and the race to the moon between the USA and Russia showcased technology as an expression of power during the Cold War. Experiments in biological warfare took place behind the backs of the American population and turned poor neighborhoods in cities like St. Louis into the scene of biological experiments on humans. Operations such as ‘Operation LAC’ sprayed bacteria over populated areas in the USA and Canada in the 1950s and 60s to measure their spread and applicability in the event of war (Schreyer 38-39). Finally, the use of napalm bombs in the Vietnam War sadly refreshed public awareness of the devastating potential of technological renewal and showed how technology, while “embedded in global societal exchange relations” (Hornborg 117), was also central to U.S. imperialist warfare in Asia.

Despite this dystopian element of technology, or arguably precisely for this reason, artists in the 1960s turned to technology while searching for artistic and social visions of coexistence. Theatre, performance art, music, and dance took to the streets to occupy public sites such as street corners, plazas, and parks to perform community building, to express individual and collective dissent, to support individual political causes and social movements, and to liberate public space from military control, police surveillance, state control, and mob violence. Bodies functioned as acting collectives in performances in public sites and served as media for rethinking social relations. Artists joined in collaborative projects whose fusion of the everyday, art, and media voiced posthumanist thinking and embraced

technology “as central to and intertwined with the human, and deeply political” (Ferrando 42). At the same time, the beatnik collective around poets like Allen Ginsberg developed spiritual visions for coexistence on earth, rejecting technocratic control systems while embracing technology as communicative medium (Roszak 124-31; Goffman and Joy 10-12, 279-80). Through performances in streets, parks, and plazas, these collectives took on a central role in reinventing the social and public space in relation to cultural and political discourses such as: the utopian vision of a global village; anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist struggles in the U.S., Latin America, Asia, and Africa; and the iron curtain separating communist and capitalist world orders (Rausser, *¿Hasta dónde llega la calle?* 116).

Pragmatist Aesthetics and Collaborative Creativity

Creativity as collaborative endeavor within U.S. based artistic developments in the 1960s could draw upon John Dewey’s pragmatist aesthetics, developed in the 1920 and 30s. Dewey’s processual vision of existence and creativity, I argue, functioned as a spearhead for artistic collaboration in the 1960s. Fundamental to Dewey’s thinking was his notion of existence as continuum. His conception of processual development, which includes nature, culture, and technology, gives art an overriding role in the transfer of experience that is consequently also valid for an increasingly technological world. Pragmatist aesthetics, in Dewey’s reflections on experience and creativity, replaced the autonomy of art with an instrumental function for art, expressed in the creation of new experience (Schneider 219-20). Behind the instrumental conception of art lies a philosophy of experience that lends new expression to the belief in the newness of an “[American] way of life” and a belief in the continuum of progressive renewal in aesthetics that is always embedded in social and natural context. “The first great consideration,” says Dewey, “is that life goes on in an environment, not merely in it, but because of it, through interaction with it” (535). Art and culture do not arise in an autonomous space but

as a result of the interaction of individuals with their environment and their social circle.

Likewise, Dewey sees experience as always involving a larger social context: "Experience in the degree in which it is experience is heightened vitality ... at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events" (540). Dewey repeatedly emphasizes that communication by active participants embodies the highest levels of aesthetic perception and social behavior. For him, "[e]xperience is the result ... of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication" (543). The basis for his work on aesthetics is his notion of the inherently aesthetic character of every event. In everyday activities lies the basis for the consideration of aesthetically complex forms, like what arises from art, music, and literature. [2] This basic aesthetic component of human existence can be experienced anytime, anywhere, regardless of social and cultural conditions. Since Dewey sees in each everyday experience an aesthetic experience, he rejects the idea of a separation between life and art. Like life, art only gains in significance when it is linked to a social environment (technology included). While Dewey's thinking bears important meaning for artistic practice in the 1960s, it equally holds significance for current discourses on the role of creativity.

In recent years, scholarly networks have emerged that reassess the power of creativity. [3] With a nod to these recent developments, creativity is best defined as "a form of action in and on the world, performed in relation to others, and leading to continuous renewal of culture" (Glăveanu 84). This implies meaningful novelty in thought and action. Cultural creation is seen as a social act taking place in a specific time and context; it is understood as responsive, situational, and relational. The process of creation—be it individual or collective—is always related to community(ies) (Waldenfels 408). The actors are understood as "*homo respondens*" (Waldenfels 16), meaning that the human is perceived as "interbeing," creating relations as well as bridges and responding to the world around, be it simply different or oppositional.

Basically, there are two sides to culture: creativity and tradition, revolution and conservatism (Buber 383-86).

Cultural creativity, accordingly, takes place in oppositional realms and can be seen as a process of continuous interaction full of tension and reciprocity. For humanist thinkers like Buber, it functions as the backbone of a vital and dynamic society and culture. Creative action, like social development and change, is always intersubjective and communal (Buber 99). Creativity gains meaning in social structures and shapes these structures at the same time. As Jonathan Friedman puts it, "[t]he understanding of creativity must pass through the social and existential conditions that are its foundation" (49). In particular, creativity unfolds in open spaces, gaps, and interstitial zones (Lavie et al. 2) and can be characterized as a phenomenon of cultural contact (Lieb 7). Acts of cultural creativity include technological inventions, artistic creations, the creation of ideas for social enhancement, concepts for communal living, creation in everyday life, new directions in education, and environmental interaction in response to social conditions. Creative action is conducted by individuals as well as groups, but its meaning multiplies in intersubjective social contexts.

Calling for new directions in studying cultural creativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon, contemporary scholars in the field of creativity studies point out that "creativity will become a necessity for the dignity and survival of the human species" (Glăveanu et al. 742). As the manifesto highlights, "creativity takes the form of action or activity" and occurs "in a given symbolic, social-institutional, and material context" (ibid. 743). This assumption rings true for communities in the past as well as the present.

Postmodern Dance: Examples of Collaborative Creativity

Postmodern dance in the U.S. in the 1960s produced striking examples for investigating artistic collaborative experiments with a claim to aesthetic innovation and social change. The artistic collaborations of artists like Merce Cunningham, Deborah Hay, and Yvonne Rainer

showed dance embracing everyday activities as well as visionary moves in which the human, the social, and the technological were seen as interconnected and interdependent. Exemplary for a collaborative approach were the projects of the Judson Dance Theater, a collective of dancers, composers, and visual and media artists who performed at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, New York City, from 1962 until 1964 (Banes 3-10). The collective was a creative space for collaboration between artists in fields such as dance, writing, film, music and multi-media. Judson Dance Theater merged body movement, group constellation, and human-technological fusion as a way out of classical modern dance toward postmodern expression.



Judson Dance Theater (1964). Copyright Rainer.

The break from traditional dance, with its representations of physicality and hierarchical relationships, expressed both criticism and the pursuit of new relationalities and forms of community. Thus, in Deborah Hay's *Ten* (1963), repeatedly shifting group images were formed that consisted of two, three, or more male and female dancers, creating new visual expressions of community. Dance approached the expressive quality of the visual arts, especially when static bodies directed the eye of the beholder to the correlations of the dancers. [4]

Technology functioned as site of spatial anchoring. Horizontal and vertical bars installed in the church space were used as holding and orientation points for the artists. These bars served as spatial extension of human bodies, deepening the connection between body and environment. In some performances, the bars were connected to networked light and sound systems responding to human touch, embedding the dance movements in a multi-media environment.

Another example of the collective's aesthetics was Yvonne Rainer's dance, *We Shall Run* (1963). The performers—both dancers and non-dancers—dance and move in work clothes while forming different group images to the recorded music of Berlioz. Phases of dynamic movement alternated with short-lived static images of the main and secondary groups reconnecting continuously. The dance repeatedly performed the inclusion of marginal groups within the largest group of actors. Rainer's choreography was designed so that the front dancers of the group change constantly, with both men and women taking directional functions for certain time segments. The ideas of horizontal community embodied by the dancers underwent constant transformation. Through the continuous integration of marginal groups, the performance appeared as a mobile collective; as the different groupings and their resolution blended harmoniously into each other, the performance derived its dynamics from change rather than conceivable tension. Constantly crossing the boundaries of dance by inserting acrobatic moves and fast-walking, *We Shall Run* unfolded as an integrationist process of continually changing group formation.

As part of its mission to democratize society through revolutionizing dance, the collective at Judson Church also reached out to larger audiences by performing open air at Washington Square and other public sites in Manhattan. [5] Utopia expressed through physical relationality became a central theme of postmodern dance and a concrete alliance between dance and political movements took place alongside aesthetically realized models of equality (Sorell 408). [6]

Another outstanding example of collective creativity was present in the performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Arguably the most influential postmodern dancer and choreographer, Cunningham embraced an expanded possibility of dance, music, and visual arts that reads like a blueprint of how to push the boundaries of collaboration and culture for subsequent generations. *Variations V*, a sophisticated multi-media dance performance and collage of dance, music, and film (1965) exemplifies how collaborative creativity works at the intersection of ritual and technology.



Image *Variations 5* (1966). Copyright Cunningham.

It integrated a variety of acoustic possibilities through the presence of sound bands, radio programs, antennas, photocells, and oscillators: depending on the arrangement of the technical media and movement of the dancers, the sound image of the performance changed. Visual materials formed further components of a border-crossing artistic process. The idea of collage was central to *Variations V* and its montage was multi-layered as the visual materials represented 'assemblage' in themselves. Commercials,

animation films, feature film scenes, and documentary footage were projected onto the horizon by means of film and slide projections, detaching from and overlapping each other.

A further level of fragmentation occurred through distortion of the images by the use of templates that partially concealed the visual material. On another level, images were projected one on top of the other, so that the different components appeared spatially offset but simultaneously present. In the performance,



Image: Yvonne Rainer and Merce Cunningham in *Variations V* (1966). Copyright Cunningham.

the aesthetic idea of an expanded space of complex interaction was also implemented in the physical movement. Daily routines, ritualized body movements, gymnastics, and acrobatics, as well as dance movements and phases of physical stillness in fixed positions, were mutually interrelated. Ritual became dance and dance turned into ritual.

Cunningham developed his notion of dance as social vision through the movements of the performers continuously creating new alliances. Changing collectives on stage interacted with each other and shaped the progression of visual and sound effects during the performances. The idea of an extended community was integrated into the stage set-up, including work by such different artists as Nam Jun Paik, John Cage, and Gus Solomons Jr., and was further expanded by embedding the dancing into a network of technology. In *Variations V*, almost the entire performance space, as well as the props used, were electronically networked. Through contact microphones, a plant, a table, chairs and cushions were connected to an electronic sound system so that different sounds and sound sequences were caused by the touch or movement of the dancers. The bicycle that Cunningham rode through the room also triggered sounds via electronic connections. The dance and movement produced tones and reversed the traditional dependence of the dancer on the music. The movement of the body did not take place according to a rhythm prescribed by the music but according to the structure provided by choreography. The dancer's body became the central propelling force of performance and interaction. [7] Cunningham's vision and practice embraced a heightened level of intersubjectivity in which the relations among and between the dancers determined the integration of everyday ritual, ritualistic patterns, electronically networked stages, and choreographic structures in an experimental process that expanded dance into a social, aesthetic, and technological event.

Concluding Reflections

The above examples illustrate that many of the dance art practices of the 1960s raised awareness of the need to establish collaborative creativity

in the art world. Many of these collaborations made it equally clear that technology could help fuse art practices with everyday practices and thus meld artistic creativity with social principles. Dance and performance could move beyond the realm of aesthetics and leisure to function as a corrective to a world that had slipped out of balance, to long established power hierarchies in colonial and neocolonial worlds, and to blind and passive submission to technology.

Although the utopian concept of the Saint Simonists explained technology and art as elementary components of progress, the relationship between art and technology has not always been a harmonious one. Artists, like John Ruskin, from countries where the industrial revolution began, categorically rejected the mechanical production of art and craft. However, around the turn of the 20th century, the machine became the central concern and symbol of aesthetic creation within art. Different vanguard groups formulated designs for an aesthetic of the machine that made technology, although in very different ways, the central aspect of artistic design and manufacture. The futurists glorified and idealized machines in visual apotheoses, the surrealists associated it with the powers of the unconscious, the Dadaists faced it with irony, and the Bauhaus artists strove for a compromise between aesthetic and mechanical production. Finally, Alexander Calder's experiments in kinetic art showed the aesthetic importance of technological renewal for vanguard art projects that expressed a mobility-oriented development of cultures, collectives, and communities. [8]

Both technological and utopian elements as they appear in art practices in the 1960s in the U.S. are largely free of historical reference. Still, a special feature is the combination of technology and ritual, which creates a bridge between archetypal phenomena and modern technical developments. Many artists embraced logical models as a welcome link between the technological world and tribal culture. The combination of ritual and technique appears as a critique of a purely technologically-oriented social order, because through the interaction of ritual and technology, the latter is integrated into a social process with new social and aesthetic significance. In the works of artists

like John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Carolee Schneeman, Deborah Hay, Nam June Paik, Sun Ra, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Yoko Ono, and Weng Ying Tsai, ritual and technology are playfully integrated into artistic and social action.

Ritual patterns of action often formed the basic framework of processual art development through arts media renewal, extending Dewey's vision of creativity into a new epoch of technological revolution. In the sixties, the structuralist ethnological view of cultural processes was the matrix by which many artists in the U.S. oriented themselves to the ritualistic requirements of "primitive" cultural circles. Claude Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), *La pensée sauvage* (1962), and *Le cru et le cuit* (1964) provided a structuralist view of cultures and found wide circulation in American artists' circles; they became central texts for the redefinition of culture. As Varnedoe explains, "[t]hese writings were influential in both style and substance. They framed a strongly felt critique of the pretensions of modern technological society, and a countervailing appreciation of primitive life and thought, in a tone of intellectual rigor free from sentiment or taint or romance" (662). Lévi-Strauss's vision is far from linking the "primitive" with elements of magic and hallucination, such as appear in Surrealism. Rather, he emphasizes the presence of structures within so-called "primitive forms" of culture that differ from their scientific-technological counterpart in western cultures, but nonetheless are logically constructed according to the ideas of their cultural circle. These alternative structures served also as guidance for logically-based models and choreography linking the technological world and tribal culture in postmodern dance.

What distinguishes the experiments of postmodern dance in the 1960s from earlier artistic fascinations with technology is what I call a distinct dimension of intersubjectivity, a mutual relationality of bodies, which includes the handling and integration of technologies in the performative process. It is the element of intersubjective connectivity that accompanies the interaction with technologies and guides and controls the processes of technologizing dance. In Cunningham's choreographic approach, the

dancing body is the mobile center for interaction with the world and others. As a mobile, relational, and kinetic expression, the dancing body gains agency that, according to Cunningham's choreography, becomes a leading component in the design of new aesthetic and social orders. Thus, on an arguably utopian level, he designs the idea of a collective of individuals. [9]

In his reflection on the dance performance *Crisis* (1960), Cunningham emphasizes that the group performance is based on a dialogic and dialectic process of bonding and liberating the dancing bodies:

An adventure in togetherness ... I decided to allow for the dancers (there were five, four girls and one man) contacting each other, not only through holding and being held, but also by outside means. I used elastic bands around a wrist, an arm, a waist, or a leg. By one dancer inserting a hand under the band on another they were attached but also at the same time instant free. Where these contacts came in the continuity, or where they were broken, was left to chance in the composition and not to personal psychology or physical pressure... From this I made the action. The gamuts of movement for each dancer were individualized to a great degree. ("Merce Cunningham," 122)

In Cunningham's choreography, the dancing body becomes *homo respondens*, creating intersubjective relations and relations to environment. By means of performing positions and movements, the dancers shape the environment, giving impulse to human constellation, light, sound, and music within an electronically networked space of interaction. [10]

Cunningham and his dancers develop a spectrum of almost unlimited movement possibilities within the dance performance. As he emphasizes the body as human technological force, the spine forms the mobile core of a polycentric understanding of motion and action:

The possibilities of movement are enormous and limitless, obviously, but the understanding of organization of

movement is the high point of the dancer's craft. If the spine is taken as the center of radius, much as the animal makes it his physical conscience, then the action proceeds from the center outwards, and also can reverse the process and proceed from outward back to the center ("The Function of a Technique").

Let us assume that creativity is essential for humanity in the confrontation with crises like global warming, famine, pandemics, sexism, and racism. Let us further project that, while the creativity of each individual is important, social change is ultimately achieved through collaborative creativity. Looking at the examples from postmodern dance, we can see how important the fields of artistic creativity are for the design of new visions and models of social interaction beyond the arts' role in entertainment and leisure. Art in its aesthetic and performative quality is an irreplaceable laboratory for social interaction. Art, dance, literature, and music should receive far greater attention in research and social discourse about social crisis and redemption. Postmodern dance as an intersubjective link, as a meeting place of people and technology, and as a bridge between aesthetics and social interaction may well serve as a blueprint for creating new models of collaborative creativity with pragmatic ends.

Endnotes

[1] In an interview with Douglas Davis, Billy Klüver says the following about his relation to technology, art, and the world: "Duchamp's commitment to reality is now becoming accepted. The Bauhaus and the Futurists were, I think, involved with the process of seeing and with preserving certain idealistic notions about the world. The function of technology as a material is not to put previous esthetic concepts into new forms but to provide the basis for a new esthetic, one that has an organic relationship with the contemporary world" (qtd. in Davis 138).

[2] For Dewey, the everyday event is the beginning of any aesthetic experience and subsequent systematics. He emphasizes: "In order to understand the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens: the sights that hold the crowd—the fire engine rushing by; the machines excavating enormous holes in the earth, the human fly climbing the steeple-side; the men perched high in the air on girders,

throwing and catching red hot bolts. The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball player infects the onlooking crowd; who notes the delight of the housewife in tending her plants, and the intent interest of her goodman in tending the patch of green in front of the house" (Dewey 527-28).

[3] See Glăveanu 2019.

[4] The body also repeatedly takes on the form of a sculpture during solo dances as in, for example, Aileen Passloff's *Structures* (1960).

[5] In this respect, Anna Halprin's experimental dance works were direction-oriented from the mid-1950s onwards, and the choreographers were repeatedly encouraged to dance in public. See also Vásárhelyi and Sunberg 1992, 67-74.

[6] In a sign of social and cultural protest, a large number of African American dance groups emerged during the Civil Rights Movement.

[7] See also Kostelanetz 1983, 107-108. Kostelanetz sees Cunningham's avant-garde elements as the third step from innovation within the Modern Dance tradition. At the beginning, Isadora deviates from stylistic means of classical ballet through the introduction of free-form gestures and a new foot technique that allowed the dancers to lay their feet flatly, which in turn triggered the development of a choreography that set themselves apart from all other forms of dance. The second stage was developed primarily by Martha Graham, who created theories of dance movement in components as contraction and release. Both Duncan and Graham, however, adhered to conventional tonal music, and primarily the rhythm of the dance movement. Cunningham broke with the musical as well as dance rhythmic tradition.

[8] See also Popper 1975, 28.

[9] See also Richard Kostelanetz 1983, 111. Kostelanetz mentions that Cunningham's dancers rarely look the same and differentiate themselves strongly by different clothes. Both the outward appearance and various activities act as a sign of individuality.

[10] In this analysis, I refer to video recordings of *Variations V* (1965) that I have acquired from the *Merce Cunningham Dance Company* in New York. The film version was completed in 1966 under the direction of Arne Amborn and close cooperation with the Norddeutschen Rundfunk in Hamburg and the Sveriges Radio/TV from Sweden. Introduction written by Hansjörg Pauli.

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La representación de la mujer en el cine de ciencia ficción. Estereotipos y arquetipos femeninos en Star Wars

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Resumen

El cine es un reflejo del mundo social y la representación de determinados grupos sociales resulta significativa a la hora de estudiarlo. Este texto se centra en preguntarse sobre la representación de la mujer en el cine comercial o mainstream; de forma puntual se revisarán los estereotipos y los arquetipos femeninos que aparecen a lo largo de la saga Star Wars, con la intención de revisar si éstos perpetúan ciertas formas de representación o si proponen algunas nuevas. Ello con enfoque en tres personajes femeninos: Leia, Padmé y Rey.

Palabras claves: cine, mujeres, imagen, estereotipos, arquetipos

1. Introducción. El cine como reflejo del mundo social

El cine logra mostrar valores sociales, normas y comportamientos, por lo que puede considerarse un “testigo del mundo” (Núñez 139). Las películas plantean un escenario en donde se pueden observar diferentes identidades (Iadevito 213) y la representación cinematográfica permite comprender de forma específica una visión sobre la vida social. Por este motivo, las imágenes del cine son significativas para los espectadores puesto que además de entretener, sirven como un espejo del mundo y de sus distintas realidades.

El punto de partida de este texto es comprender que existe una resonancia entre el cine y el mundo social. Una serie de ecos que permiten entender cómo se vive, cómo se piensa, cómo se organiza una sociedad determinada a través de su representación en la pantalla. En este sentido, se puede afirmar que en las películas se hacen evidentes las dinámicas que existen entre las clases sociales, así como en relación a la raza y el género (Colatrella 562), por poner algunos ejemplos.

Partiendo de que existen relaciones posibles entre el mundo social y el mundo representado en pantalla, en este artículo se revisará cómo se

representa a la mujer en el cine de ciencia ficción. Más específicamente, se profundiza en tres personajes puntuales de la saga de Star Wars: Leia, Padmé y Rey. El objetivo central es el de reflexionar sobre el papel de las mujeres como personajes en el cine, sobre los estereotipos y arquetipos con los que se muestran y sobre la posibilidad de cambios en su representación a lo largo de más de cuatro décadas.

Se presenta un recorrido que parte de la revisión de los textos “Placer Visual y Cine Narrativo” de Laura Mulvey, *The Desire to Desire. Woman’s Film of the 1940s* de Maria Ann Doane y *Cine de Mujeres. Feminismo y Cine* de Annette Kuhn, consideradas pioneras al abordar la representación de la mujer en el cine; así como del estudio “FanGirls Going Rogue. The Reception of the Force Awakens and Rogue One with Female Fans” de Jessica Austin, y “The Portrayal of Female Characters in Star Wars Film Saga” de Vilma Vainikka, que recuperan de forma específica las imágenes de la mujer en la propia saga de Star Wars.

Esta investigación sienta sus bases en la ‘cultura visual’ como marco teórico, y se pregunta sobre la importancia de la visualización de la mujer en el cine y sus posibles implicaciones sociopolíticas. Posteriormente, se retoma el estudio “Mujer y Cine” de Virginia Guarinos

(sobre estereotipos), así como el libro *Diosas y Tumbas. Mitos Femeninos en el Cine de Hollywood* de Nuria Bou (sobre arquetipos), para crear observables y analizar los filmes. Consiguientemente, se profundiza en el análisis de Leía, Padmé y Rey, planteando una reflexión sobre la presencia de estereotipos y de los arquetipos femeninos, cómo algunos de ellos perpetúan viejas maneras de representar y cómo algunos crean nuevas maneras de visibilizar a la mujer en el cine.

Este recorrido pretende sumar a la investigación sobre la representación de la mujer en el cine, estudiando nueve películas que han llenado salas, recaudado millones y extendido su narrativa a más filmes, y muchos otros productos transmedia. El alcance de esta saga vista en el mundo entero invita a pensar si desde el *mainstream* se propone algún cambio al representar a la mujer, puesto que en cine clásico la representación estaba sujeta a estereotipos y arquetipos dicotómicos que colocaban a las mujeres sólo como buenas o malas, y siempre al servicio de los personajes masculinos. ¿Seguirá siendo así?

2. Estudios pioneros sobre la representación de la mujer en el cine

Mulvey hace una importante propuesta desde el psicoanálisis, utilizando sobre todo el concepto freudiano de escopofilia (el placer de mirar). Explica que “el cine refleja, revela e incluso interviene activamente, en la interpretación recta, socialmente establecida, de la diferencia sexual que domina las imágenes, las formas eróticas de mirar y el espectáculo” (365). Propone que, en Hollywood y en el cine clásico, se ha elaborado una diferencia a la hora de representar a los hombres y a las mujeres.

La mirada masculina se impone hasta el punto en que las mujeres en pantalla son sujetos pasivos y elementos del deseo masculino, configurando una cultura audiovisual que se ajusta a esa mirada. La identificación con el público llega a ser solo para el hombre, presentando a una mujer dependiente y castrada. Las mujeres son exhibidas de manera erótica, con la función de mantener el deseo masculino, convirtiéndose en un objeto dentro de la pantalla, para la mirada

masculina dentro de la narrativa; y fuera de ella, para los espectadores (Mulvey 366).

Doane, otra pionera en el campo, explica que las espectadoras en los años cuarenta eran invitadas a verse a sí mismas en una serie de filmes “poseídos por mujeres.” Con una visión psicoanalítica, se adentra en la subjetividad femenina que se articula en las narrativas clásicas. La autora no se concentra en medir lo progresivo de un filme en comparación de otros, sino en observar cómo se representa la subjetividad femenina en las películas que tienen una ideología sumamente patriarcal (7-22). Así, divide en cuatro categorías los filmes de mujeres: películas con discurso médico, donde la mujer o su psique necesita tratamiento por parte de un hombre, buscando la cura de la enfermedad de la feminidad o de su forma de mirar femenina (Doane 38); los melodramas maternos, donde la madre está en amenaza por la separación de sus hijos (Doane 70); las historias de amor, donde el deseo femenino es frustrado o por encontrar una expresión de su deseo, la mujer es castigada (Doane 96-98); y los melodramas góticos, en los que las mujeres casadas viven bajo la amenaza del propio hombre que aman (Doane 155). Categorías que hacen evidente la gran diferencia entre los filmes protagonizados por hombres o mujeres.

Por su parte, Kuhn explica que el feminismo es una actividad política y un conjunto de actividades que tiene su propia organización, historia y discursos, por lo que no se puede hablar de un solo feminismo. El cine tiene su propia historia, la cual presenta muchas posibles interrelaciones entre éste y los distintos feminismos (Kuhn 17-18). La autora distingue entre el cine feminista y el cine hecho por mujeres, y aclara que puede haber mujeres produciendo contenido que no sea necesariamente feminista, mientras que puede haber hombres produciendo contenidos feministas (21).

Una de sus propuestas es la necesidad de hacer visible lo invisible, al visibilizar las contradicciones y las ausencias que pueda tener una sociedad sexista. En el cine se puede ejercer de distintas formas: con un análisis feminista se puede hacer una interpretación que exponga cómo se construye a las mujeres mediante imágenes; o desde la realización de la

película, y qué tipo de relaciones sociales están involucradas en el proceso y en los modos de producción (Kuhn 87).

La propuesta de las tres autoras arriba mencionadas va de la mano con entender que las formas fílmicas clásicas tienen una postura patriarcal, que presenta y entiende a la mujer dentro del cine en relación con el hombre, con su deseo y sus formas de mirar, con ausencias en la mujer y con una brecha al representar las diferencias de género. También, la necesidad de dialogar y reflexionar sobre cómo el cine se ha centrado en que, tradicionalmente, el acceso a mirar se le ha otorgado a los hombres, lo que limita a las mujeres a ser miradas.

Vemos entonces que tanto el trabajo de Mulvey, como el de Doane y el de Kuhn dejan claro que existe una forma diferente de mirar lo masculino y lo femenino en el cine, que la representación de la mujer está inscrita en un modo dominante de ver el mundo, pero también exponen que los discursos feministas inciden en la cultura ofreciendo nuevas propuestas. Más adelante, se verá si en el caso de *Star Wars* se repiten los modelos, o si se les permite a los personajes femeninos algo más que ser simplemente objetos pasivos al servicio de ellos.

3. Estudios previos sobre la representación de la mujer en *Star Wars*

Austin explica cómo el estreno de las películas *The Force Awakens* y *Rogue One* rompieron récords en taquilla, vendiendo más de tres millones de dólares. Lo importante a observar es que son dos filmes de una saga famosa a nivel mundial, donde los personajes principales y quienes mueven los acontecimientos de los filmes son mujeres. Dicha saga siempre ha tenido personajes femeninos entre sus personajes principales, pero en el caso de Rey y Jyn, son colocadas como heroínas sobre las que recae el peso de la historia (Austin 46 - 47).

La autora en mención hizo un estudio de recepción a mujeres fans de la saga y contempló la importancia de tener a una mujer como personaje principal, su nivel de involucramiento y actividad, así como la forma en que se las representa. Algo central en el debate fue la masculinización de las mujeres,

ya que, de acuerdo con la autora, hay una tendencia por presentar de manera masculina a las heroínas. Afirma que las heroínas modernas constantemente tienen una mezcla de rasgos tanto femeninos como masculinos (Austin 51 - 59).



Figura 1. Poster por Hayley Gilmore utilizado en la Marcha de las Mujeres del 2017.

Las protagonistas en las nuevas películas no están exageradamente sexualizadas, y eso también fue bien recibido por las fans entrevistadas. Cabe hacer hincapié en que, a pesar de ser diferentes en ciertos sentidos, siguen siendo mujeres blancas, atractivas y delgadas. Las seguidoras de la saga de *Star Wars* son cada día más y se vienen apropiando de sus contenidos, como es el caso de la imagen de la Princesa Leia durante la Marcha de las Mujeres (Austin 58, 61).

Por su parte, Vilma Vainikka explica que la representación de las mujeres en los medios resulta central para producir y reciclar ideas culturales sobre las mujeres, ya que los filmes son poderosos dispositivos ideológicos. Desde la teoría feminista, hace un análisis de los estereotipos y de la objetivización de los personajes femeninos, criticando la ideología patriarcal predominante en la saga. Asimismo, explica que la ciencia ficción es un género tradicionalmente pensado para los hombres, lo que conlleva a que represente a la mujer de manera estereotípica (Vainikka 4-5).

Una de sus principales propuestas es que los personajes femeninos dentro de *Star Wars* se mueven hacia una nueva dirección, al representar a las mujeres un poco más alejadas de estereotipos y tratándolas menos

como objeto. De esta forma, plantea que existe una importante diferencia en la forma en que se representa a Rey (Vainikka 12-15, 71-72). Rey es la primera mujer en un papel de Jedi y que carga con la narrativa de la película como personaje principal. [1]

Según Vainikka, Rey no es presentada de manera estereotípica ni objetivizada, sino de manera más humana y similar a los personajes masculinos. Aún así, queda la duda sobre si la autora no le da suficiente peso a la masculinización del personaje, y cómo el parecido con Luke Skywalker no hace sino reproducir una manera de contar historias que, aunque esté protagonizada por una mujer, sigue perpetuando la idea de que para ser una heroína se debe abandonar la feminidad (71 - 72).

4. Marco teórico. Cultura visual y Estudios Visuales

José Luis Brea define los Estudios Visuales como los “estudios sobre la producción de significado cultural a través de la visualidad” (7), partiendo de que todo *ver* es el resultado de una construcción cultural y de un hacer complejo que involucra instituciones, textos, medios, diferencias culturales, creencias, afinidades, así como cuestiones de raza, clase y género. Cabe entender que la acción de ver es una consecuencia de lo cultural y por efecto de un hacer complejo, dándole importancia al acto de ver como práctica política y cultural, además del potencial que las imágenes tienen para generar identificación y socialización (Brea 9).

Explica Simón Marchán que, en Estados Unidos, los Estudios Visuales se transformaron en la Cultura Visual al utilizarlos como sinónimos. Estos tienen su origen en el ámbito del arte y la necesidad de legitimar medios como la fotografía y el cine, partiendo de que la historia del arte solo toma en cuenta una parte de lo visual. Surgen de la necesidad de hacer nuevos acercamientos cualitativos a un rango más amplio de lo visual, superando fronteras disciplinares y limitaciones institucionales: lo cotidiano, la alta cultura, lo popular, los usos, los métodos, etc. (Marchán 75-79, 83).

Desde sus inicios, dicha propuesta se ha preocupado por hablar de miradas e

identidades de lo real que producen los que miran (Hernández 15). Hace a un lado la jerarquización de las artes o de la cultura para poner el enfoque en el predominio actual que es visual, pensando en una democratización de las imágenes. Además, la intercambiabilidad entre las imágenes populares y las de la alta cultura propician una nueva manera de abordaje de la visualidad (Marchán 82, 87).

Asimismo, hay que recalcar que la Cultura Visual, epistemológicamente, propone una superación del “giro lingüístico” (Marchán 84) que abarcan otras tradiciones, para concentrarse en un “giro de la imagen” (Mitchell 82). De esa manera, se puede reconocer completamente el potencial de aquello que no es verbal. Se parte de la necesidad de comprender que no se puede ingresar a los estudios de las imágenes utilizando formas tradicionales de la textualidad, para ir redescubriendo las interacciones entre imágenes, visualidades, instituciones, discursos, cuerpos, aparatos, etc. (Marchán 84).

El papel de la Cultura Visual es el de resaltar que las imágenes son construcciones sociales de los espacios y de los entornos donde son creadas. No sólo son consecuencia de *mirar* con los ojos como órganos visuales, sino de procesos simbólicos culturales y sociales, por lo que las imágenes merecen especial atención teórica. No se trata de entender a la Cultura Visual como un reflejo o una simple construcción social, sino como una construcción social de lo visual (Marchán 89). El protagonismo está en los fenómenos visuales que abarcan desde las formas tradicionales del arte hasta los medios como la televisión, el internet y el cine.

La cultura visual no se refiere sólo a una serie de objetos, sino a un campo de estudio que ha ido emergiendo desde la confluencia de diferentes disciplinas, en particular desde la sociología, la Semiótica, los Estudios Culturales y feministas y la historia cultural del arte, y que dibuja diferentes perspectivas teóricas y metodológicas. Este campo suele pensarse como formado por dos elementos próximos: las formas culturales vinculadas a la mirada y que denominamos prácticas ‘visualidad’; y el estudio de un amplio espectro de artefactos visuales

que van más allá de los recogidos y presentados en las instituciones de arte (Hernández 12 - 13).

En la actualidad no se trata de hablar solo de la vida social reflejada en los medios y viceversa, sino de caracterizarse por ser una sociedad apegada a la imagen y las pantallas. Las pantallas son estructuradoras y creadoras de ambientes sociales, en donde hay una relación directa entre las imágenes que se ven y la realidad. Las pantallas son la vida cotidiana, convirtiéndolas en grandes campos de exportación de significados, viviendo en una cultura visual moderna, donde existe una saturación de lo visual. Dicha cultura no depende de las imágenes como tal, sino de la tendencia actual de figurar en imágenes la existencia; plasmando, entre muchas otras cosas, imágenes de la mujer en la vida social (Mirzoeff, *Una Introducción* 17 - 28, 23).

Nos guste o no, esta emergente sociedad global es visual. Todas estas fotografías y vídeos son nuestra manera de intentar ver el mundo. Nos sentimos obligados a representarlo en imágenes y a compartirlas con otros, como una parte esencial de nuestro esfuerzo por comprender el cambiante mundo que nos rodea y nuestro lugar en él (Mirzoeff, *Cómo ver* 18).

Observar a la mujer como personaje dentro de una saga específica, en una época concreta y en una industria particular, conlleva hablar de lo visible: una construcción cultural e histórica que cuenta con una perspectiva propia y con elementos singulares. Es decir que una forma de ver a la mujer puede ser narrativamente o en algunos estereotipos; además de manera mitológica o dentro de ciertos arquetipos. El contexto en el que los filmes se encuentran inmersos y el propio universo cinematográfico ponen las bases para una comprensión que se fusiona con las propias condiciones históricas y culturales del mundo.

El análisis que se desarrolla en este texto toma en cuenta la relevancia de la imagen en la Cultura Visual, así como la importancia que para los Estudios Visuales tiene la representación de la mujer en el cine como caso

de una visualidad que debe ser atendida para crear representaciones más justas y cercanas. Ello permite llegar a una interpretación de las imágenes que se actualizan de acuerdo a los marcos culturales y temporales de los sujetos. Con este fin, se plantea un estudio de los estereotipos y arquetipos de los tres personajes femeninos principales de la saga *Star Wars*.

5. Metodología. Estudios sobre los estereotipos y los arquetipos de la mujer en el cine

Guarinos propone que, de todos los medios de comunicación, el cine es el pionero en cuanto a su relación y retroalimentación con la sociedad. Sin embargo, es un medio relativamente conservador si se le compara con la televisión, pues es una máquina ideológica que tarda en procesar e incorporar lo cultural. De acuerdo con eso, la mujer con relación al cine se puede estudiar desde tres perspectivas: detrás de la cámara, frente a la pantalla, o en el relato como personaje (Guarinos 103, 106).

La mujer dentro de la narrativa de una película no solo es un personaje, sino un objeto, un reflejo del deseo o del poder masculino. Por lo que Guarinos las cataloga como estereotipos sin matices o sin gran profundidad, que no producen narratividad; como un elemento escenográfico o siendo definidas simplemente por lo físico, sin cambios, como mitos, marginadas y fetichizadas; como un objeto de intercambio, éstas no hablan y solo parlotean, son deseadas, pero no desean, son controladas, ellas no miran, son miradas, y si se rebelan, fracasan (105, 111).

Tradicionalmente, a la mujer se la constriñe a un estereotipo, pues si llegan a ser profesionales, se les recuerda por su apariencia más que por su papel (Guarinos 115, 119). Se suele malentender la igualdad, al otorgarle a los personajes femeninos un comportamiento masculino, creando un estereotipo más en lugar de una evolución, al seguir presentándolas como hermosas y erotizadas, pero embrutecidas, dominantes y listas para matar. La vida de una mujer como personaje es estereotípica (Guarinos 114). "Cualquiera de las películas más taquilleras de este momento arrojan un puñado de estereotipos normalizados, aprehendidos

desde nuestra infancia a través de la literatura y el cine” (Guarinos 115).

Aún así, los estereotipos evolucionan, se crean nuevas clasificaciones de roles tradicionales que abren paso a nuevos estereotipos, de los que mayormente se desprenden dos grandes etiquetas: las malas y las tontas. Los estereotipos femeninos más comunes en el cine son: la buena, el ángel, la virgen, la solterona, la mala, la guerrera, la *femme fatale*, la madre amable, la madre dolorosa, la madre castradora, la madrastra, la madre del monstruo, la madre sin hijos, la cenicienta, la *turris ebúrnea*, la reina negra/bruja/viuda negra, la villana, la superheroína y la dominatrix (Guarinos 116-118), además del estereotipo de damisela en apuros (George 115) y *token* (Vainikka 12).

Bou aborda a la mujer en el cine desde los arquetipos que se visualizan en el cine clásico de Hollywood. Los arquetipos guardan una abundante repetición, a manera de resonancia de la tradición mítica de algunas divinidades: figuras del pasado que se ven renovadas a través del lenguaje, en el paisaje o en los gestos, pero que se mantienen estáticos al presentar tipos de mujeres particulares. Bou organiza a las mujeres inspiradas en la mitología griega: las mujeres belicosas y las mujeres silenciosas (14 - 15).

Dentro de esas dos distinciones, las mujeres belicosas encarnan la perdición del hombre debido a su feminidad dual: inteligencia y trampa, sensualidad y peligro que expresa “un bello mal” (Bou 39-45). Mientras que, también dentro de la categoría de mujeres belicosas y con resonancia a Atenea, está el arquetipo de la *southern belle*, una hija prodigio del padre, casi o sumamente virginal, pero al mismo tiempo una peligrosa guerrera, la cual no duda en dar batalla (Bou 47-70).

Como contraparte están las mujeres silenciosas, un opuesto a las belicosas. Su papel va de la mano con la posibilidad de llevar sus penas en silencio. El arquetipo de la madre benefactora es una figura que se desvive por sus hijos y está inspirada en Deméter, una diosa de la tierra fértil (Bou 73, 80-88). Por otro lado, está Perséfone, una diosa sumamente virginal que es raptada por el dios del inframundo, resultando seducida o abusada por él. Una

mujer sumamente infantil que en algún punto de la narrativa llega a caer en la tentación (Bou 99-122).

Las mujeres en el cine, de acuerdo con la devito, están siempre en constante construcción a través de una fantasía, una narrativa, un mito o una memoria que expone una visión cultural del mundo (218). Esto permite pensar en las categorías propuestas por Guarinos (116-118) y Bou (15) como formas de pensar y simplificar a las mujeres personificadas en el cine desde una narrativa específica o desde el mito. El presente análisis toma de sus propuestas para lograr reconocer cómo se comportan los tres personajes, pero sobre todo para revisar si alguna de ellas crea nuevos estereotipos o arquetipos, o bien si actualiza alguno de ellos.

6. Análisis. Leia, Padmé y Rey: tres formas de visualizar a la mujer

Es complicado definir *Star Wars*, ya que más que ser parte del género cinematográfico de ciencia ficción o de ser clasificado como un *space opera*, puede considerarse como una mitología épica espacial, un cuento de hadas para toda la familia, una historia con tintes samuráis o una aventura de acción que refiere a un estilo de la Segunda Guerra Mundial (Taylor 34). Es sabido que el creador del universo de *Star Wars*, George Lucas, se inspiró conscientemente en el libro de Joseph Campbell, *El Héroe de las Mil Caras*, un texto que propone el viaje del héroe como modelo narrativo, el mismo que se puede reconocer en muchas mitologías, leyendas e historias populares dentro de distintas culturas (Lyden 1).

La saga Skywalker completa se divide en tres trilogías. La primera, considerada la original, fue estrenada en 1977, 1980 y 1983 sucesivamente. Estas tres películas cuentan la historia del joven Luke Skywalker, quien sale a la aventura gracias a la guía de un viejo maestro Jedi que le enseña a hacer uso de la fuerza, un poder que le permite tener habilidades extraordinarias. En su aventura, rescata y entabla una amistad con la Princesa Leia, quien resulta ser su hermana; destruye dos armas gigantes que acaban planetas completos; además de descubrir que su padre es el villano, Darth Vader, quien se

redime al final.

Tiempo después, se estrenó la trilogía de las precuelas en 1999, 2002 y 2005 respectivamente. Estas muestran la historia de Anakin Skywalker, su carrera como Jedi, su romance prohibido con Padmé Amidala y su caída como villano hasta convertirse en Darth Vader. Mientras que la trilogía de las secuelas, estrenadas en 2015, 2017 y 2019, exponen la historia posterior a la trilogía original. Rey es una chatarrera con sensibilidad a la fuerza, que es entrenada por Luke y Leia en sus versiones más maduras; salva a la galaxia siguiendo los pasos de Luke, y rescata al hijo de Leia del lado oscuro de la fuerza.

Al seguir la lógica de la saga en su totalidad, cada trilogía cuenta con al menos una mujer clave para la historia. Los personajes femeninos principales en general son Leia, Padmé y Rey. Leia como personaje fundamental en la trilogía original, además de ser también parte crucial de la trilogía de las secuelas; Padmé fue parte importante en la trilogía de las precuelas; mientras que Rey ocupa el lugar del personaje principal en la trilogía más reciente estrenada o de las secuelas.

Princesa Leia Organa

En la trilogía original, Leia es una princesa que es parte de la Alianza Rebelde en contra del Imperio y que más tarde encabeza el grupo de la Resistencia. En la primera película de la saga, Leia pide ser salvada, lo que la coloca inmediatamente dentro del estereotipo de 'damisela en apuros.' Pareciera que existe una tendencia en que las mujeres, no solo en el cine sino en cualquier tipo de narrativa, deben ser rescatadas, además de ser bellas para lograr ese fin (George 115). Aún así, tras ser rescatada, Leia toma las riendas de la situación, al notar que quienes pretenden salvarla no logran hacerlo. Gracias a eso, también se puede categorizar dentro del estereotipo de guerrera o heroína (Guarinos 116 - 118), donde ella toma la posición del héroe y el control de la situación para lograr escapar.

Debido a que este personaje toma la posición de guerrera, es criticada por su interés romántico Han Solo, por tener la audacia de

tomar decisiones siendo mujer. Ello da inicio a una relación amorosa complicada en la que ambos personajes se encuentran en constante enfrentamiento. Al comprender esa relación como una constante lucha de poder, Leia se puede clasificar dentro del estereotipo de dominatrix, el cual muestra a mujeres que tienden a ser independientes y personajes importantes, pero que suelen tener relaciones complicadas y enfrentamientos con los hombres a su alrededor.

En *Return of the Jedi*, el último filme de la trilogía original, Leia se abre paso disfrazada como cazarrecompensas para salvar a Han, quien ha sido capturado por una deuda pendiente a un líder mafioso. El rescate sale mal y Leia termina esclavizada, vestida en un bikini, con una cadena alrededor del cuello y sentada en el regazo de un alienígena que se asemeja a una babosa gigante. Ello la convierte en un objeto de deseo, en una presa cosificada y sexualizada, como un estereotipo de *token*. Estereotipo que Vainikka define como aquellas mujeres que no pueden desprenderse de alguna relación con un hombre, mientras sirven como premio o motivación para el héroe (12).



Figura 2. Fotograma de la Princesa Leia esclavizada en *Return of the Jedi*.

Con Leia envejecida en las secuelas, se la muestra dentro del estereotipo de consejera, al funcionar como una figura de sabiduría y experiencia para los miembros más jóvenes de la Resistencia. Pero también dentro del estereotipo de madre dolorosa, ya que Guarinos explica que éste define a las madres que no pueden hacer nada más que observar cómo sus hijos son maltratados por la vida, cómo estos maltratan a otros o cómo éstos llegan a maltratar a su propia madre (117). También se coloca

dentro del estereotipo de madre del monstruo, demostrado en cómo su hijo se desvía hacia el lado oscuro de la fuerza, cometiendo parricidio, intentando matar a su tío y buscando destruir a la Resistencia, el movimiento que su madre encabeza.

En términos arquetípicos, dentro la trilogía original, Leia joven se puede entender como un ejemplo de Atenea. Según explica Bou, dicho arquetipo se caracteriza por presentar mujeres como guerreras virginales y la hija prodigio del padre (47-70). Además, Woolger y Woolger explican que el arquetipo de Atenea lo constituyen mujeres que suelen presentarse como líderes guerreras, inteligentes, que están armadas y que tienden a estar siempre en compañía de los héroes (47, 65 - 72). Pero también se la encuentra representada como Perséfone, al ser una mujer virginal que llega a ser seducida por un hombre problemático. En este caso, al enamorarse de Han, quien es un contrabandista sin interés por la causa Rebelde.

También existe una representación del arquetipo de Deméter en el personaje de Leia. Según explica Bou, dicho arquetipo se caracteriza por presentar mujeres en la figura de madre benefactora (no necesariamente madre natural o biológica), una madre que se desvive y lo da todo por sus hijos, aquella que da todo por el otro (73 -88). Leia ejemplifica este arquetipo al cuidar de sus subordinados en la Resistencia y al fungir como figura materna para Rey, al entrenarla, cuidarla y brindarle consejo. A lo largo de las secuelas, se la presenta cuidando y nutriendo el crecimiento de sus compañeros y subordinados en la Resistencia, mientras que su final se debe a que se entrega para salvar a su hijo.

No es común encontrar en Hollywood visualizaciones de mujeres que envejezcan en pantalla como lo hizo Leia. El personaje no solo se presenta con canas, un poco encorvada, con bastón y con marcas de edad en el rostro, sino que también su carrera profesional se ve acrecentada como líder de la resistencia. Por todo ello, se la puede reconocer como un arquetipo de Hera, al ser una mujer con posición de liderazgo, a cargo de otros y con inteligencia, pero siempre en alguna relación conflictiva. Aún así, Leia presenta en general lo opuesto a otras

mujeres en narrativas más tradicionales, en las que, tras haber encontrado el amor, suelen retirarse para dedicarse al romance o la familia. En contraste, Leia no abandona el enfoque por su causa.

Cabe entender a Leia como un personaje contrastante y dicotómico, ya que a pesar de colocarse dentro de estereotipos como el de damisela en peligro, también es una guerrera que lucha por sus ideales, y no necesita rescate en momentos clave. Como personaje de mayor edad, es una madre dolorosa, pero que también funge como consejera; quien, a pesar de la situación de su hijo y su pareja, nunca abandona su lucha. Se muestra a través de arquetipos como una Atenea que lucha por el bien común, pero también se la coloca como una Perséfone que es seducida por el hombre peligroso. Como mujer envejecida, se plantea como Deméter al cuidar de sus hijos, y como Hera al tener un carácter fuerte y una posición de liderazgo. Tipologías contradictorias que permiten ver la evolución del personaje, cómo se mueve y cómo se transforma a lo largo de la historia, dotando al personaje de un dinamismo identitario que no suele ser parte de las mujeres en pantalla.

Reina / Senadora Padmé Amidala

Padmé como la Reina Amidala en *Phantom Menace*, la primera película de la trilogía de las precuelas, se coloca en una posición lejana, con actitud fría y calculadora, por lo que se la puede colocar dentro del estereotipo de *turris eburnea*, al ser una mujer sumamente deseable gracias a su lejanía y posición inalcanzable. Guarinos denomina dicho estereotipo como la torre de marfil, un concepto de mujer fría, lejana e inalcanzable, pero sumamente deseada (116). No obstante en general, durante toda su trilogía, se coloca como estereotipo de *token*, al servir para el desarrollo narrativo del héroe y no ser más que su interés amoroso.

A lo largo de *Phantom Menace*, pasa la mayoría de su tiempo disfrazada como dama de compañía para salvaguardar su vida y tener la posibilidad de explorar sin limitaciones. Ahí se muestra como una virgen rebelde, al no presentar atributos sexuales o remarcados y concentrarse en otros temas de interés para

la trama (Guarinos 116). Dentro de la misma película, también se coloca brevemente dentro del estereotipo de guerrera, además de algún otro pequeño momento en *Attack of the Clones*. En el primer filme decide retomar el palacio y la capital de su planeta, por lo que lidera un ataque con ese fin. En tanto que, en el segundo filme, logra liberarse tras estar presa en una arena de batallas.

En el segundo filme de la trilogía, *Attack of the Clones*, la trama que envuelve al personaje de Padmé la coloca en el estereotipo de damisela en apuros, éste siendo el estereotipo en que más se la representa dentro de su trilogía. Normalmente, dichas damiselas suelen ser mujeres bellas que se limitan a su necesidad a ser rescatadas. Su posición como figura política, ya sea como reina o senadora, la coloca en la mira para secuestros, ataques y más situaciones de las cuales tiene que ser protegida, auxiliada o liberada. A pesar de hacer buen uso de las armas y de ser autosuficiente en momentos clave, su papel se limita a servir como motivación del personaje principal.

Según explica Bou, el arquetipo de Perséfone se caracteriza por presentar a mujeres sumamente virginales que son raptadas o seducidas por el dios del inframundo, mujeres que se presentan como puras e incluso infantiles que caen en la tentación para convertirse en seres pasionales (99). En *Attack of the Clones*, se puede observar a Padmé en dicho arquetipo, al mostrar su relación problemática con Anakin, que se convierte en un matrimonio prohibido. Asimismo, en *Revenge of the Sith*, Padmé muere debido a esa relación, por el maltrato que recibe por parte de su esposo, quien se convierte en

villano, durante el parto de Leia y Luke.

Por otro lado, al personaje se la presenta siempre ataviada con vestidos ostentosos, maquillaje llamativo, rodeada de joyas y de lujos, características que Woolger y Woolger atribuyen al arquetipo de Afrodita. Además de ser mujeres personificadas que tienden a ser sumamente bellas, sensuales y seductoras (Woolger y Woolger 133-147). Padmé se coloca también dentro de ese arquetipo al cumplir no solo con todas las características anteriores, sino que la trama que la envuelve va de la mano con servir como la tentación de Anakin, dada la prohibición de mantener relaciones románticas según el código Jedi que este debe cumplir, y al presentarse en vestidos sensuales y suntuosos en *Attack of the Clones*.

Aún así, es un personaje que, pese a contar con una profesión y mostrarse en algunos roles poco tradicionales, en general se la observa contenida en visualidades establecidas dentro del estereotipo de *token*, ya que funciona como accesorio o interés del personaje principal; o en el de damisela en apuros, donde su propia profesión como senadora la convierte en un blanco político del que necesita ser rescatada constantemente. También se la presenta como Perséfone o Afrodita, donde su función es ser seducida o ser la tentación del héroe; además de mostrar muchos más roles de género tradicionales en comparación a otras mujeres de la saga, como por ejemplo el de víctima o de objeto del deseo del hombre.

Una de sus principales funciones dentro de la narrativa, e incluso desde lo mitológico, es ser la tentación y distracción del héroe como un *token*. Ella representa el amor prohibido para

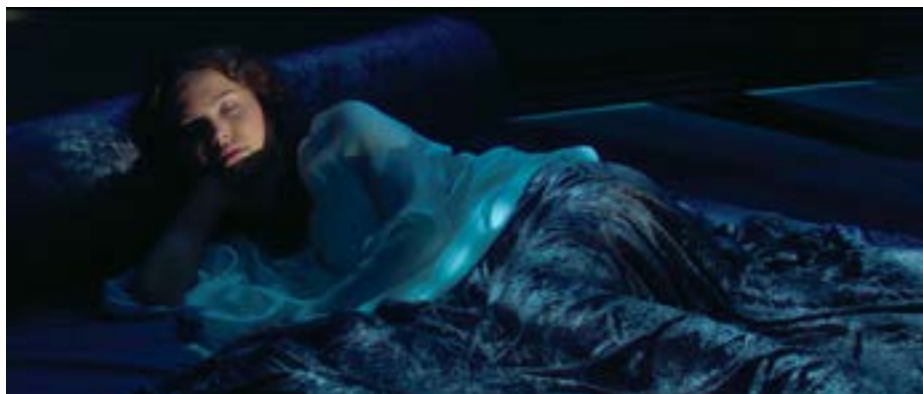


Figura 3. Fotograma de la Senadora Padmé Amidala dormida en *Attack of the Clones*.

Anakin desde temprana edad, cumpliendo con el estereotipo de *turris eburnea*, o la torre de marfil perfecta e inalcanzable a lo largo de los dos primeros filmes, *Phantom Menace* y *Attack of the Clones*. Además de ser un arquetipo de *Perséfone*, al ser tentada por el personaje principal, quien la lleva a la ruina. Con diferencia al personaje de Leia, Padmé tras casarse pierde no solo tiempo en pantalla, sino también importancia en la narrativa, al no ser más que el motivo por el cual el héroe se convierte en villano, y al limitar sus diálogos a la interacción con solo tres hombres durante *Revenge of the Sith*. A ello se agrega que se mantiene embarazada y sufriendo dentro de un rol de víctima, hasta su muerte, causada por un corazón roto.

Por lo tanto, es importante resaltar que Padmé es un personaje que, a pesar de su carrera profesional política, se limita, sobre todo, a complementar el viaje del héroe, distraerlo y darle un rostro a la madre de Luke Skywalker y la Princesa Leia. Sus acciones dentro de la trilogía no tienen un impacto mayor, al ser un interés romántico que inspira la conversión del héroe al villano, además de ser la madre muerta del héroe y la princesa de la trilogía original. Por lo que se la coloca dentro de estereotipos y arquetipos considerados tradicionales o esperados dentro del cine con narrativas clásicas.

Rey Palpatine / Skywalker

El personaje de Rey se presenta como una mujer muy activa, que se encuentra en medio de la acción en todo momento y sumamente capaz de luchar. Es joven, bella, con destreza física, atlética e inteligente, además de anteponer la lucha a otras facetas personales, por lo que se la puede colocar dentro del estereotipo de guerrera (Guarinos 117). Esa priorización por la lucha se observa al momento en que Rey renuncia a la espera por sus padres, para en su lugar ser entrenada por Luke como Jedi y así ayudar a la Resistencia a luchar contra la Primera Orden.

Efectivamente, se pueden encontrar elementos en toda la trilogía de las secuelas en donde se muestra a Rey dentro del estereotipo de guerrera. A lo largo de *A Force Awakens*, el personaje se muestra atlética y luchando con

soldados de la Primera Orden, o lo que parece el regreso del Imperio, para escapar con sus compañeros de aventuras. Adicionalmente a pilotar naves, usa su inteligencia para repararlas y su destreza física para ayudar a escapar a sus nuevos amigos. Estos elementos se ven presentes también en *Last Jedi* y *Rise of Skywalker*, además de luchar a mano armada y hacer uso de la fuerza.

Otro estereotipo importante que se identificó en el personaje es el de la cenicienta, pues este se caracteriza por presentar a mujeres ingenuas, jóvenes y hermosas que ascienden de clase social sin buscarlo o pretenderlo (Guarinos 117). La gran trama del personaje de Rey, a lo largo de la trilogía de las secuelas, encaja perfectamente dentro de ese estereotipo, al presentar a una mujer bella que vive en medio de la nada y apenas sobrevive; la cual conoce a nuevos amigos, maestros y figuras que la acompañan en sus aventuras, y que encuentra un lugar al cual pertenecer. Hasta que el antagonista le revela que es nieta del Emperador del Imperio Galáctico Palpatine, y se ve tentada a heredar el Imperio al ser llamada Emperatriz por su abuelo.

Se coloca como dominatrix, al llevar una relación complicada con el antagonista por una constante lucha de poder. Además, a pesar de depender de sus propias habilidades la mayoría de su tiempo, de manera muy breve y en pocos momentos, también se ve en la posición de damisela en apuros, al depender de un hombre para salir de una situación problemática. Esto se da especialmente con su antagonista Kylo Ren, quien la ayuda a destruir a su abuelo, el Emperador Palpatine, y quien la revive al final de *Rise of the Skywalker*. También puede considerarse dentro del estereotipo de virgen rebelde, al no ser sexualizada y poner todo su enfoque en su búsqueda y entrenamiento como Jedi.

Rey, por otro lado, se acerca a los arquetipos de Artemis y de Atenea, pero con marcadas diferencias. Según explican Woolger y Woolger, el arquetipo de Artemis se caracteriza por presentar mujeres personificadas muy atléticas, asertivas y que pueden ser guerreras, pero, a diferencia del arquetipo de Atenea, estas suelen ser más introvertidas o no se las coloca necesariamente en posiciones de liderazgo

(90-103). Rey, a lo largo de las secuelas, se muestra insegura sobre abandonar su hogar y lo que conoce; prefiere recluirse, esperar y estar rodeada de pocas personas.

Asimismo, Artemis es considerada la diosa de la caza, los animales, lo silvestre, la luna y la castidad (Woolger & Woolger 91-96), todos atributos que se pueden encontrar en el personaje. Al igual que la imagen arquetípica de Artemis, que es siempre presentada como una mujer armada, Rey aparece con una especie de lanza y sables de luz. Respecto a la relación del arquetipo con la naturaleza y los animales, el personaje es presentado en espacios abiertos y naturales durante la mayoría de su tiempo en pantalla, en contacto con animales o droides, que funcionan como un guiño a un animal de compañía y que sirven como soporte narrativo.

En general Rey es una mujer que es visualizada de forma casi idéntica al héroe, y contiene visualidades que, de igual manera, son estereotipos, arquetipos y roles de género que respectivamente corresponden al héroe tradicional de una narrativa con influencia mitológica, en este caso, una mitología moderna espacial. Una forma de ejemplificar lo anterior es a través de su vestuario, ya que, a diferencia de las otras mujeres de la saga cuyas vestimentas tienen claras influencias externas culturales y sociales de la época, Rey se presenta vestida en relación con los héroes que la preceden dentro de las mismas trilogías.



Figura 4. Luke Skywalker en el set de *A New Hope* y Rey en el set de *A Force Awakens*

Rey es un personaje mujer que cae en la masculinización y que sigue casi fielmente el camino que otros hombres dentro de la saga ya han recorrido. Se la muestra mayormente dentro de estereotipos de guerrera, al ser sumamente masculinizada, mientras se deja lugar suficiente para características femeninas, como dominatrix, debido a la complicada relación que lleva con el antagonista de la trilogía, y como cenicienta, al comenzar como una chatarrera que termina siendo por sangre emperatriz del Imperio y, por adjudicación propia, al tomar el apellido de la familia Skywalker.

Arquetípicamente, se presenta como una mujer virginal, pero que se ocupa con la guerra o la caza, es decir, realizando acciones tradicionalmente consideradas masculinas, o rodeada por hombres gracias a los roles que ejerce. Por lo tanto, cumple con el arquetipo de Artemis, al ser una mujer introvertida pero que también es activa, guerrera, virginal, armada, asertiva y masculinizada; al igual que con el de Atenea, al estar rodeada constantemente por hombres, además de cumplir con roles tradicionalmente masculinos como el rescate de otros, encontrarse en medio de la acción, y la búsqueda de aventura, pero siempre sin dejar a un lado características femeninas.

La Princesa, la Reina y la Jedi

Al comprender que las imágenes se encuentran relacionadas no solo en cuanto a su contexto histórico, social y cultural, sino entre sí mismas, es de importancia considerar la relación entre las propias imágenes de las mujeres personificadas dentro de la saga para comprenderlas con mayor profundidad. A partir del análisis e interpretación de cada personaje, es posible realizar una breve comparación entre las imágenes de las mujeres clave dentro de *Star Wars*, al entender cómo se expresa lo cotidiano visualmente por medio de estereotipos dentro de la narrativa y arquetipos como ciclos mitológicos.

Por lo tanto, los paralelismos que existen entre las formas de representación de Leia, Padmé y Rey también se relacionan en un nivel categórico, al presentar estereotipos o arquetipos similares o establecidos como

una forma dominante de ver el mundo. Es claro que existen formas de representación y categorización visual que los personajes comparten, a pesar de otras tantas diferencias. Aunque dichas diferencias son importantes, vale la pena reconocer que las similitudes en cuanto a estereotipos y arquetipos reconocibles marcan una forma específica de representar a las mujeres observadas en pantalla.

Como se observa en la siguiente tabla, en general los tres personajes comparten formas específicas al ser representadas a través de clasificaciones visuales. Dichos paralelismos coinciden en relación a los estereotipos de guerrera, damisela en peligro y dominatrix, ya que todas se colocan en primer lugar como mujeres que luchan, están armadas, en servicio y como figuras de acción; lo que no las libra de necesitar rescate en diversas ocasiones, ni de funcionar como la motivación del héroe u otros hombres para sus actos heroicos; agregando que las tres tienen una relación problemática con los hombres a su alrededor, incluyendo luchas de poder dentro del romance.

Bajo esta misma lógica, tanto Leia, como Padmé y como Rey son personajes que

siguen patrones cíclicos, que las muestran por medio de visualizaciones establecidas mitológicamente como mujeres aguerridas, con participación activa pero también involucradas necesariamente con los héroes o antihéroes del mito. Una constante entre los tres personajes es su ubicación dentro de ciertos arquetipos definidos por la propia naturaleza mítica de *Star Wars*, además como parte de un ciclo o historia reiterativa.

Como se explicita en la tabla anterior, se presenta tanto a Leia, como a Padmé y a Rey dentro de la visualidad de Atenea, al ser mujeres guerreras que comienzan siendo sumamente virginales, constantemente armadas, prodigiosas en algún tema, y que luchan por el bien común. Son mujeres que se encuentran rodeadas por hombres y que no realizan o cumplen con roles típicamente femeninos. Pese a ello, también se las coloca dentro del arquetipo de Perséfone, como personajes que son seducidos por hombres problemáticos o malos, son mujeres que caen en la tentación y se entregan de alguna manera a un hombre que no es necesariamente un modelo ejemplar.

Estereotipos y Arquetipos Paralelos entre Personajes

Mujeres personificadas	Número de películas en las que se clasifica a los personajes				
	Estereotipos			Arquetipos	
	Guerrera	Damisela	Dominatrix	Atenea	Perséfone
Princesa Leia	5	3	3	4	3
Padmé Amidala	2	3	2	2	2
Jedi Rey	3	3	3	3	3
Total de estereotipos y arquetipos en la saga	10	9	8	9	8

*La tabla presenta el número de películas en donde se hace uso de estereotipos o arquetipos para representar a los personajes analizados.

**Solo se incluyen los arquetipos y estereotipos que son compartidos por los tres personajes.



Figura 5. Padmé en vestuario para *Attack of the Clones*, Leia en *Empire Strikes Back* y Rey en *Rise of Skywalker*.

Los tres personajes comparten formas de ser representadas que se definen por el contexto cultural y social de quien las mira. Eso las coloca de maneras específicas, sobre todo dentro de los estereotipos de guerrera y damisela en peligro, en los arquetipos de Atenea y Perséfone. Están limitadas por sus contextos y las formas de ver, cumplen con roles de género tradicionalmente femeninos al ser el foco de la mirada masculina con su atractivo físico, como víctimas que necesitan rescate del héroe, o con roles un poco más atípicos, al ser personajes de acción o intelectuales. Dicha interpretación permite identificar su representación como mujeres personificadas dentro de una saga que les permite realizar roles y actividades típicamente masculinas, mientras se sigue colocándolas visualmente dentro de estereotipos y arquetipos tradicionalmente femeninos.

7. Conclusiones

A manera de síntesis, y reiterando lo abordado a lo largo del texto, fue posible determinar y entender que las mujeres son personificadas en el cine al presentar un registro fragmentado de lo real de manera visual. Esto a través de características y del desempeño de funciones y roles determinados por lo social a través de la cultura y de momentos históricos específicos.

Los estereotipos y arquetipos en donde se las coloca se deben a la tendencia de hacer visual la vida cotidiana a través de la gran pantalla, donde se mezcla lo posible, lo real y lo simbólico en imágenes que categorizan a las mujeres en el cine.

La representación visual de las mujeres de la saga las muestra delgadas y bellas, con características similares a las de otras mujeres dentro del cine y dentro del género cinematográfico de la ciencia ficción. Pero también son presentadas dentro de diversas situaciones, con personalidades diferentes y realizando acciones distintas. Ello está relacionado directamente con dos ámbitos: el momento histórico, social, político y cultural al momento del desarrollo de cada personaje, lo que contempla el contexto dentro de la propia saga donde se presenta a los personajes, además del contexto externo; agregando su condición como personajes al tener una función concreta en la historia, por lo que se les adjudican formas específicas de visualización que dependen de la narrativa y los ciclos mitológicos, ya sea de manera intencional o no.

Como personajes, Rey, Leia y Padmé tienen un cometido dentro de la narrativa. Así, se les conceden rasgos característicos, así como un físico específico que les da un propósito dentro de la historia. Como mujeres dentro de la saga, tanto Padmé como Leia son presentadas de una forma establecida, en la que se ven sujetas a su relación con los personajes principales de la historia (a excepción de Leia envejecida), ya que su existencia dentro de esta ficción depende de los hombres. Su papel es el de acompañar, tentar y ser la motivación del héroe. Por otro lado, Rey cumple su papel de personaje principal, por lo que su finalidad es la de cargar con la historia.

No se las representa de una única forma, sino que sus respectivas representaciones se ven afectadas por sus acciones dentro de la narrativa y por ser personajes inspirados en mitos. Además, al no ser independientes de la propia historia, son categorizadas bajo estereotipos y arquetipos que provienen de la inspiración estética y narrativa dentro de la misma saga con relación a otros personajes, pero que se forman sobre todo dentro de un contexto social y dependen de formas específicas de ver el mundo.

Incluso los acuerdos de lo que supuestamente deberían ser las mujeres en el espacio público influyen también la representación de los tres personajes.

Gracias a esa lógica, se entiende que los personajes de Padmé, Rey y Leia, a pesar de ser distintos en ciertos ámbitos, también comparten similitudes al seguir normas visuales de lo que se supone 'debe' ser una mujer en la gran pantalla. Por lo tanto, las tres son mostradas como guerreras, al tener que ser masculinizadas y rodeadas de hombres para poder cumplir con sus objetivos en un género cinematográfico como la ciencia ficción; como damiselas en peligro al ser una mujer, en ciertos casos la única en pantalla, que le otorga al personaje principal masculino su valor o heroísmo; y dentro del estereotipo de dominatrix, algo que esta saga en específico se da necesariamente, por la naturaleza de la historia como una saga familiar, ya que el drama y el romance son piezas clave en la narrativa.

Por su parte, la propia naturaleza mítica de la saga, su inspiración en el viaje mitológico del héroe, las coloca necesariamente como inspiradas en figuras cíclicas y limitadas a formas básicas de ver el mundo. Las mujeres analizadas redondeadas en arquetipos presentan también una norma visual, pero que se desprende de reiteraciones que se mantienen a través del tiempo y que cambian mucho menos que un estereotipo limitado a cambios sociales más inmediatos. Por consiguiente, tanto Leia, Rey y Padmé, siguiendo la lógica de mujeres guerreras, son visualmente representadas como un arquetipo de Atenea, al seguir el corte mítico de la propia historia de *Star Wars* y al no limitarse a ser personajes pasivos, sino mujeres armadas, inteligentes, pero siempre en compañía de hombres.

A pesar de ello, y siguiendo una lógica patriarcal, tanto la naturaleza mítica de la historia como el subgénero de la ciencia ficción al que pertenece corresponde a una *space opera*. Estas mujeres no logran desprenderse del romance, tanto dentro del estereotipo de dominatrix, como cuando cumplen con una reiteración de la figura arquetípica de Perséfone. Así, son presentadas como mujeres virginales, con sus propias metas y objetivos, que en algún punto de su historia terminan siendo seducidas

por el hombre problemático.

Como se expresó anteriormente, tanto Mulvey como Doane y Kuhn plantean en sus propuestas en general que, efectivamente, existe una forma muy distinta de ver lo masculino y femenino en el cine (Mulvey 365-366; Doane 7-22; y Kuhn 87). *Star Wars* no es la excepción, ya que presenta a las mujeres claves para su historia aún dentro de formas dominantes visuales, al categorizarlas de manera tradicional. Esto debido a que, dentro de esta saga y en otros filmes, el resultado visual es una construcción cultural compleja que depende de muchas cuestiones, entre ellas la forma en que se tiende a concebir el género.

Bajo esa misma lógica, Vainikka expone que Rey, al ser la primera mujer en el papel de Jedi y que carga con la narrativa como personaje principal, no sufre de una estereotipación al no ser una damisela en peligro o un interés romántico (70). Aún así, la realidad es que, aunque en menor medida que Leia y Padmé, Rey en *Rise of The Skywalker* es rescatada por su interés romántico. También es importante recalcar que, a pesar de esperar que sea el personaje que rompa con la típica forma de representar a una mujer, cae en la masculinización para lograr sus fines y metas.

Rey es un personaje que hace lo mismo que Luke en términos narrativos, pero su búsqueda se centra en su origen, no en salvar a nadie. Ella es una mujer fuerte y masculinizada, que no deja de ser una joven cenicienta que quiere tener un príncipe y una familia. En lugar de concebir nuevas formas de entender visualmente lo femenino o masculino, se creó una mezcla de características, actitudes y roles ideales de cada género para presentar un nuevo estereotipo híbrido. Se han realizado cambios a nivel de contenido, sin que eso realmente implique cambiar la forma en que se visualiza a las mujeres, colocándolas más fuertes o "realistas" sin remover visualidades o convenciones estilísticas previas (Macklem 10).

Por lo tanto, Rey no escapa necesariamente de ser representada a través de estereotipos o arquetipos, ya que se sigue colocando dentro de un contexto social y cultural externo que la recorta de acuerdo con la realidad donde se expresa visualmente. Aún así, es Leia quien presenta

una contravisualidad, al romper con normas de visualización reiterativas y establecidas, pues de acuerdo con Mirzoeff, una contravisualidad es una ruptura de las normas tradicionales al momento de representar visualmente (citado en Alcalá 61).

Leia es un personaje que, a pesar de seguir siendo estereotipada y sumamente sexualizada, recorre un camino que la convierte en un personaje que se visualiza de manera contradictoria: aunque presenta características tradicionales o típicamente femeninas, también rompe con ciertos estatutos establecidos. Aún así, también es una mujer que se muestra con carácter agresivo, asertiva y valiente; se coloca en puestos de liderazgo y da instrucciones; es una princesa que se pone en peligro para salvar a su interés amoroso; al ser sexualizada utiliza su posición para matar a su opresor y liberarse con la propia cadena que la esclaviza; y sobre todo, es activa en parte de la acción y necesaria para el triunfo sobre el Imperio. También es necesario reconocer lo poco común que es ver a una mujer envejecer en pantalla, sobre todo en Hollywood.

Con relación a los recortes de realidad y las formas de ver que se definen social y culturalmente, es importante entender que Leia es un personaje que inicia su historia a finales de los setenta y la termina en el 2019. Esto permite que se cuente con una nueva dimensión sobre ella, ya que es un personaje que nace en el seno del Movimiento de la Liberación de la Mujer, y que se muestra como una madre que no abandona sus ideales para dedicarse a la crianza, y como una mujer que no continúa con su relación romántica, con el atributo adicional de crecer dentro de su carrera profesional como General de la Resistencia. [2]

En lugar de recaer en Rey, el personaje más nuevo y dentro de un contexto político, social y cultural que supone retratar a las mujeres de manera más novedosa, es Leia quien presenta una contravisualidad, al romper con normas de visualización reiterativas y establecidas. Rey no es un personaje que se pueda considerar contravisual por su relación y refracción con las visualizaciones del héroe mitológico. De igual manera, Leia durante la trilogía original cuenta con pocos elementos y características

que la coloquen dentro del concepto de contravisualidad. Dicho concepto se cumple recién con su representación en las secuelas, al verla envejecer en pantalla y observar los resultados de su relación amorosa, maternidad y crecimiento dentro de su profesión.

Una mujer que encabeza la lucha, que prioriza su misión por encima de su relación afectiva y de su rol de madre, muestra una mujer diferente en el cine. Si ya en los setenta, con las primeras películas, veíamos una Leia capaz de romper sus propias cadenas, en los últimos filmes la vemos capaz de morir por el bien común, por salvar a la galaxia antes de cualquier otra cosa. Las mujeres en el cine ya no pueden ser representadas de forma pasiva, sin voluntad y a expensas de los personajes masculinos; el mundo real está cambiando y su reflejo en pantalla debe hacer lo mismo.

En el terreno de la representación femenina en el cine, queda mucho camino por recorrer hasta poder alcanzar personajes de los que no sólo se pueda mencionar la fractura o sofisticación de un arquetipo o de un estereotipo, sino de la creación de nuevas formas de representación. En otras palabras, es necesario un ejercicio más interseccional que cuestione dentro del cine en dónde están las mujeres de otras razas, clases sociales, orientaciones e identidades sexuales. Esto puede lograrse a través del uso de los Estudios Visuales, gracias a su diálogo con otros campos de investigación como el feminismo, los estudios culturales, los estudios de género, la semiótica, etc. Se trata de “prestar atención a la intersección de raza, clase social, sexo y género en los medios visuales para poder elucidar y observar operaciones y formas de visualización y posicionalidad discursiva más compleja” (Hernández 11).

Notas

[1] Los *Jedi* dentro de la saga *Star Wars* son guerreros defensores de la paz y con servicio para la comunidad. Se da a entender que la fuerza es un poder otorgado a ciertos personajes, que les da habilidades como telequinesis, control mental, capacidades físicas y psíquicas, clarividencia, etc.

[2] Entre los sesenta, setentas y los primeros años de los ochenta, tenía lugar el *Women's Liberation*

Movement en Estados Unidos. Grupos y protestas que buscaban la equidad para las mujeres (ver Napikoski 2019; Burkett 2002), además de considerarse el nacimiento de la segunda ola del feminismo. Movimiento de relevancia para la liberación sexual de la mujer con comienzo de la venta y uso de anticonceptivos, la legalización del aborto y la penalización de la discriminación sexual.

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Internet, Coloniality and Environment: Technology, Economic Commensurability of Diversity, and *Ich'el ta muk'*

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Abstract

*This article questions the assumption of the Internet as a human right and of technology as fundamental for everyday life through inquiring into the relation between capitalism, technology and coloniality. By drawing on a postcolonial approach to the constitution of a European/Western subject and bridging postcolonial studies and political ecology, the article analyses how and to what extent coloniality, capitalism and technology might be intertwined. The main argument is that the Internet as we know it and expect it to mediate everyday life is grounded on capitalism and coloniality as socio-ecological regimes embedded in technological devices. The use of the Internet by the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, is analysed to demonstrate how their alternative use of the Internet redefines some of the basic traits of this technology's expansion but also how the use of these devices and assemblages reproduces coloniality even when applied to activism and social transformation. Finally, the article looks more deeply into both the socio-ecological constitution of technology and other ways of understanding human and non-human beings; in this instance, using Tseltal and Tsotsil knowledge –constituent of the Maya roots of Zapatismo in Chiapas– and the idea of *ich'el ta muk'* (recognition-respect) to explore different perspectives to the one offered by capitalism and coloniality from which “non-technological” socio-ecological relations and communities can emerge.*

1. Introduction

In December 2019, the human rights firm International Rights Advocates filed a forced child labour case on behalf of fourteen Congolese families against the giant tech corporations Apple, Alphabet (Google), Dell, Microsoft and Tesla (Kelly, “Apple;” Soguel-dit-Picard). On the basis of field research by anti-slavery economist Siddharth Kara and Dr. Roger-Claude Liwanga (Kelly, “Apple”), and in collaboration with the Congo-based NGO Alternatives Plus (Kelly, “Human”), the lawsuit is for “aiding and abetting extreme abuse of children mining cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC]” (International Rights Advocates). Cobalt is necessary to produce lithium batteries for electronic devices like smartphones, laptops, and tablets. However, cobalt is not the only mineral that is crucial for the Internet's expansion and inextricably linked to violence and coloniality: tantalum, tungsten, tin, gold, columbite and

tantalite (coltan) are fundamental components of informatic devices associated with violence not only in the DRC but also in other countries, like Colombia in the case of gold (ALBOAN), or Indonesia, where tin mining equals high “death and injury rates, and the destruction of coral reefs and forests” (Kirby).

While the lawsuit is a novel enterprise, attention has been drawn before to the regulation of conflict minerals (for example, United States Securities and Exchange Commission, OECD). Consequently, efforts to promote violence-free technology have emerged, such as “technology free of conflict” campaigns that advocate responsible supply chains to protect human rights and the environment in the local communities where these minerals are being mined (ALBOAN), and “due diligence” policies that try to reveal companies' supply chains to the public, in case minerals are being sourced from conflict areas. Unfortunately, such policy measures, as undertaken by the United States,

Europe, China and the DRC, are a matter of controversy as unintended negative effects have been widely reported [1] and, as the above-mentioned lawsuit clearly testifies, violence and forced labour continue to happen.

Notwithstanding the exploitative material basis of the digital expansion, in 2011 a United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression called upon all nations to ensure universal access to the Internet. [2] By 2016, the Human Rights Council had affirmed “the importance of applying a comprehensive human rights-based approach in providing and expanding access to Internet and request[ed] all States to make efforts to bridge the many forms of digital divides” (Human Rights Council 3). Access to the Internet was optimistically and widely embraced as a “human right.” More recently, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, several individuals, institutions and nations have urged guaranteeing access, which is increasingly considered a fundamental right. Unfortunately, as exposed by the lawsuit above, this human right has been declared, embraced and promoted before minimum conditions and “human rights” have been guaranteed to those who make this technology’s envisioned expansion materially possible. In other words, a human right for privileged digital subjects is based on the exploitation of other subjects who make possible, together with the minerals and ore mined, the massive accumulation of profit by giant corporations who mobilise the expansion of digital devices and Internet infrastructure. The Internet is, in more than one sense, being transformed into a “tool on which even the victims of colonization would now seem to depend” (Couldry and Mejías ix), and vice versa: victims of colonisation are being transformed into an instrument on which the Internet seems to depend.

Despite visibilisation and regulation efforts, mining is one of the most environmentally pernicious activities, not only part of a global electronics industry but emblematic of Silicon Valley’s pervasive exacerbation of environmental and social inequality, racism and injustice, which have been documented in the large production of contaminants, temporary work and gender

inequities as linked to historical patterns of colonialism. [3] Rare-earth mining, as well as being crucial to smartphone and other device manufacture, also implies great environmental destruction linked to coloniality and the production of expendable human and non-human beings (Kaiman). Regardless of the violence inflicted, the myriad devices that represent connectivity are assumed from a privileged position to be fundamentals of “human” life. In this context, we need to question how violence (in terms of dispossession, plunder and depletion), capitalism and technology are related, whether and how this violence and the Internet are linked to coloniality and, therefore, whether a conflict-free technology is actually possible or rather, other “non-technological” ethical horizons are to follow.

This article questions the assumption of the Internet as a human right and of technology as fundamental for everyday life through inquiring into the relation between capitalism, technology and coloniality. The article is organised in four sections. The first section points out the current limitations in the literature on colonialism and the digital. The second section draws on a postcolonial approach to the constitution of a European/Western subject [4] and bridges postcolonial studies and political ecology [5] in order to analyse how coloniality, capitalism and technology –as material devices and assemblages put into “human” use– are linked. The third section, drawing on the previous sections, complements data colonialism as analysed by Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejías and contends that the Internet as we know it and expect it to mediate everyday life is grounded on capitalism and coloniality. The final section draws on the use of the Internet by the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, to see how an alternative use of the Internet, one that does not assume a sociotechnical reality and does not mediate their daily interactions as a community, redefines some of the basic traits of this technology’s expansion but also how the use of these artefacts and systems reproduce coloniality even in their use for activism and social transformation. The article finally proposes to look more deeply into both the socio-ecological constitution of technology

and into other ways of being and understanding human and non-human beings; in this instance, into Tseltal knowledge and the Maya roots of Zapatismo in Chiapas. The latter, it is argued, offers a different perspective: *ich'el ta muk'*—to live in recognition and respect for every being—to the one offered by capitalism and coloniality, and concealed through technology, from which “non-technological” beings can emerge.

2. Colonialism and the Internet

While great contributions have been made in denouncing practices of colonialism and imperialism through and on the Internet, the assumption of a technological world and its digital futures remain largely unquestioned. [6] For instance, data colonialism in the case of international aid work and development has been addressed as ‘ongoing Western control over data’ and ‘lack of ethical processes around data collection’ (“Data Colonialism”), with limited proposals such as local data ownership and consent as measures to prevent exploitation and colonialism. In this way, countering data colonialism remains a task that starts in the “West” with the creation of sustainable models in and by western agencies (“Data Colonialism”). In a similar way, attention has been paid to the need either to evenly distribute the benefits of an expanding Internet [7] or for each community to develop its own infrastructure, programming codes and alternative and decolonised digital futures, without questioning the “digital” in such futures. [8] In addition, technopolitical analyses have considered “how the material properties of technologies [have] shaped the exercise of political power”, providing means to accomplish strategic goals in world politics but also opportunities to escape the intentions of its designers (Hecht 3). Along these lines, analyses of the Internet and colonialism, despite recognising that a “new form of imperialism, techno-imperialism, is conflated with traditional political imperialism for what concerns Internet governance,” have concluded “that new governance models should be envisaged so as to achieve true democratic and multilateral Internet governance” (Hill 78).

Efforts to decolonise technology and the

Internet through equality in access, design, production and/or distribution remain within the scope of technological development, power politics and/or human rights, finally proposing “harm reduction” [9] instead of questioning the colonial character of the technological object. The same happens when violations to privacy and surveillance are taken to correlate to cyber-colonialism and traditional economic domination—“as a legacy of traditional colonialism” (Danezis), a perspective which despite having enormous relevance in pointing out the economic, military and government potential of direct control over people, data and resources, remains within the framework of competitiveness and economic/technological development. The link between technology and coloniality has not yet been addressed through their shared socio-ecological relations, which, recalling Science and Technology Studies and Critical Theory of Technology, [10] most probably are embedded by design in technological artifacts and systems like the Internet. An important contribution in that direction has been Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias’ study on data colonialism, analysed in detail in the fourth section of this article, although their main focus is on “human” autonomy and not “human” and “non-human” socio-ecological relations. So far, attempts to decolonise the digital maintain the digital and the technological as its playground, assuming its place and continuity as part of an established everyday technical experience. This article questions such everyday technical experience on the basis of its intertwinement with coloniality and capitalism.

3. On socio-ecological relations: Technology, coloniality and the constitution of a privileged subject

Gayatri Spivak, in “Can the subaltern speak?,” called for attention to the risks of totalizing certain views corresponding to specific formations of subject, desire and power. While considering that resistance to power can ‘complement’, but not substitute, ‘macrological struggles along “Marxist” lines’, she warned against any attempts to universalize the consideration of resistance to power as a guaranteed privilege of the (European) subject. More recently,

regarding celebratory expectations of employing digital communications for activism, she has pointed out how “rather than the end of imperialism (postcolonial digital multitudes or social networks), globalization is a new stage of imperialism” (Spivak, “What is to be done” 5). Nowadays, a privileged digital literate subject has been repeatedly assumed on the basis and possibility of politically neutral technologies, with the underside of technology and its constitutive links to coloniality and capitalism often disregarded.

Recalling that her critique was directed at Foucault’s disregard for a theory of ideology and imperialism, Spivak argues that there has been a lack of “awareness of the topographical reinscription of imperialism” and calls upon us to “[n]otice the omission of the fact ... that the new mechanism of power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (the extraction of surplus value without extraeconomic coercion is its Marxist description) is secured *by means of* territorial imperialism—the Earth and its products—‘elsewhere’” (“Subaltern” 85). This assertion might help explain how current practices of data mining and big data, known as the 21st century’s oil, are made possible by dispossession and plunder “elsewhere,” for instance the DRC, but also points towards a fundamental appraisal of “the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription” (Spivak, “Subaltern” 85).

Spivak questions how “a conception of ‘power’... is made possible by a certain stage in exploitation” and calls for attention to ‘the broader narratives of imperialism’ in an effort to avoid isolation in a “self-contained version of the West” (“Subaltern” 85-86), regarding not only the first transformation described by Foucault from sovereign societies to discipline societies, when the focus and dependency shifts from the Earth and its products to ‘bodies’ and their practices, but a more contemporary transformation in the middle of the twentieth century. This transformation refers to “Atlantic imperialism under American leadership” and the integrations that made “possible the new era of commercial liberalism” as described by Mike Davis (qtd. in Spivak, “Subaltern” 86). By paying attention to how the exploitation of the Earth and its products is entailed by any power formation,

a broad narrative of imperialism allows one to consider that its privileged subject is constituted by otherness, one of exploitation and domination not limited to the human social. The subjective constitution and praxis of such a subject can be drawn from a self-consolidating constitution through the inclusion/exclusion of its human “other,” but also from that subject’s consideration or exclusion of its “extra-human other” and relation to the environment. The introduction of a decolonial element through political ecology, and more precisely critical environmental studies, helps us understand such a relationship. Without assuming capital as purely economic, the socio-ecological relations of capitalism (Moore, “Transcending” 5) are fundamental for interpreting and understanding subjectivation. It is not only the “other” social subject—colonized or subaltern— but also an “other” extra-human object of exploitation, including technologies and resources, that constitute the European and/or Western privileged subject.

While aiming to elucidate those concealed relations to “the Earth and its products,” a decolonial element acknowledges that there is no modernity without coloniality and that “modernity, capitalism and coloniality are aspects of the same package of control of economy and authority, of gender and sexuality, of knowledge and subjectivity” (Mignolo 9). Moreover, the capitalist world-ecological system is inextricably linked to coloniality. [11] As political ecology has unfolded a global perspective cognizant of the problematics brought by ecological crises in the so-called Anthropocene, Capitalocene [12] or Technocene, [13] it has also drawn attention to the socio-technical networks that underpin such transformations. [14] Global assemblages of artefacts appear within such approaches and analyses as parts of a highly inequitable world-system based on appropriation, economic commensurability, and interchangeability of diversity. From this perspective, “the steam engine ... was made possible not only by James Watt’s engineering, but by the eighteenth-century world-system in which capital accumulation in Britain was based on African slave labor and depopulated American land” (Hornborg, “Global” 17). Technology, like capitalism, has been understood as profoundly intertwined with

colonialism, according to Alf Hornborg.

Along such lines, Hornborg has pointed out how “the continued operation of a given technology [...] is contingent on asymmetric flows of energy, labor time, and/or other resources” (“Global” 151). Therefore, he conceptualises technology in terms of appropriation and capitalism, as the “machine or infrastructure as a material entity, which requires continuous inputs of fuel and maintenance work to function over time” (“Global” 151). Technology, like capitalism, depends on assymetric resource flows –ecologically unequal exchange– and the economic equivalence or commensurability of diversity that is expressed in the use of money. Moreover, Hornborg makes the case that “the cross-cultural essence of capitalist power [is] a recursive relation between some kind of material infrastructure, on the one hand, and the capacity to make claims on other people’s labor and resources, on the other” (“Global” 151). Therefore, as appropriation, capitalism refers to any supralocal system of exchange dependent on assymetric resource flows, any system “[urging] to displace work and environmental loads to other populations” (Hornborg, “Global” 5). Ultimately, sustainability is not only a matter of purely physical calculations but also needs to be cognizant of how technology is “embedded in global societal exchange relations” (Hornborg, “Nature” 117). On this basis, the author argues that there is no technological fix to problems of sustainability as technology is embedded in capitalism and colonialism and vice versa: technology’s agency depends on an ongoing supply of resources provided through a global system of exchange, whose social strategy and interests are obscured –by its own fetishism– assuming instruments’ agency on the basis of properties socially assigned by “humans” (Hornborg, “Global” 151).

Technology then, which is to be distinguished from techniques and implements, is inherently and profoundly intertwined with capitalism and coloniality as the appropriation of human and extra-human life. Turning to Jason Moore’s detailed analysis of nature(s) and capitalism adds important detail here. The author does not render these two categories a binary or two separate spheres –Nature and Society; rather,

he asserts, capitalism “does not act upon nature so much as develop through nature-society relations,” “*through* human and extra-human natures” (“Transcending” 2-4). In contrast to other interpretations of the metabolic rift, [15] environmental degradation is constitutive of capitalism and not a consequence of it: “[h]istorical capitalism does not create ecological crises so much as it has been created through them” (Moore, “Transcending” 11). Therefore, for Moore, “the town-country division of labour does not produce a metabolic rift; it is a metabolic rift”: the separation between direct producers and means of production, the unequal exchange of resources or biophysical wealth and nutrient loss and “depletion in the countryside, and pollution in the cities” integrate an ongoing rupture in nutrient cycling (“Transcending” 7). The author thus theorizes capitalism “as *world-ecology*, a perspective that joins the accumulation of capital and the production of nature in dialectical unity” (“Transcending” 2), being able to analyse the “socio-ecological constitution of capitalism” through its socio-ecological relations and maintaining a critical view on the “irremediable tension between the ‘economic equivalence’ and the ‘natural distinctiveness’ of the commodity” (“Transcending” 3).

With respect to technology and “epoch-making innovations,” including the shipbuilding-cartographic revolution, the steam engine, and the internal combustion engine, Moore asserts that “[e]ach epoch-making innovation has [...] joined together productivity and plunder” (“Transcending” 26, emphasis in original) and their success has depended on their operation within ecological regimes that expand “the opportunities for the appropriation of human and extra-human nature” (“Transcending” 26). Each of such innovations has been dependent on the vast appropriation of uncaptialized nature –as a “free gift” or “Cheap Natures” (Moore, “Transcending” 26) “[driving down] the share of world nature directly dependent on the circuit of capital” (Moore, “Capitalocene II” 242, emphasis in original). This means that successful epoch-making technological innovations have been clearly dependent on and fundamental for accumulation, which takes place on the basis of appropriation, plunder and dispossession of

natures in the outskirts of the circuit of capital and with disregard for “the socio-ecological conditions of its (uncapitalized) reproduction” (Moore, “Transcending” 20). Technology, in this respect, has depended on and extended geographical expansion for the appropriation and depletion of natures, which the cultural, legal and philosophical referents of capitalism are unable to value and respect independently of their being-as-resource (even within “sustainable” efforts).

In a similar way to Hornborg’s understanding of technology as appropriation and economic equivalence and commensurability of diverse natures (“Global,” “Nature”), Moore argues that “value as world-historical project presupposes something false, that all of nature can be reduced to an interchangeable part; at the same time, it powerfully effects the partial transformation of nature into simplified spaces, such as cashcrop monocultures” (“Transcending” 17). Technology then, this article contends, *is based on and expands value as world-historical project, reproduces the economic commensurability and equivalence of natures, and produces simplified spaces*. Technological artifacts appear as simplified spaces that appropriate and compress time and space through homogenised incorporation of diversity based on the “immanent” (“human” socially conferred) instrumental properties of distant resources whose agency depends not on such alleged natural properties but rather on an ongoing supply of resources. The latter is provided through an unequal system of exchange and through technology’s embedded strategic interests, which are concealed and thus socially and politically unable to acknowledge the socio-ecological conditions of their uncapitalized reproduction. Therefore, they are unable to witness the diversity or multiplicity of beings and entangled intentionalities that constitute natures before and beyond their resource value form. Technology, in this view, is embedded with coloniality as a socio-ecological regime that silences its own socio-ecological and political trajectories and affects.

4. Data Colonialism and the economic commensurability of natures

Recalling Jason Moore’s analysis of capitalist dependency on “cheap natures,” Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias have understood colonization by data as “the systematic attempt to turn all human lives and relations into inputs for the generation of profit” (x). Such forms of colonisation draw upon the fundamental logic of capitalism and “historical colonialism,” which assumes the existence of uncapitalized nature or “natural” resources (“cheap social data”) to be appropriated and exploited in massive amounts to generate larger profits (Couldry and Mejias 89). However, in this instance, data is extracted from the mediation of social interactions through digital devices and according to the social strategies and interests of those third parties who program the artifacts and mine and process the data. This extraction through mediation, it can be argued, expresses the arbitrary attribution of value and the production of “nature” and the “social” as dependent on a socio-ecological regime and not as naturally given. Ultimately, extractivism and dispossession of “social resources,” according to the authors, leads to the destruction of social life in the name of economic progress (90) and to the human body being “reworked into something that requires a distant infrastructure, from which, incidentally, profit can be made” (x). In this case, they argue, individuals need not work for the capitalist but just “participate in social life, as they ordinarily would, in order to generate value for the capitalist” (102). Accordingly, dataism presents human life as graspable only through algorithms (Couldry and Mejias 199), while data infrastructures ultimately tend to dismantle human autonomy as data relations are “the means whereby capitalist relations are formed and extended –literally, as we connect” (ibid. 193) and data collection serves “deep and partial interests” (ibid. 208). Therefore, regarding platform activism, the authors assert that short-term achievements are important but “if the price of new tools for ‘overthrowing capitalism’ is to annex all of social life to capitalism, then the deal is a bad one” (103).

To counter data colonialism, Couldry and

Mejias put forth *“a vision that rejects the idea that the continuous collection of data from human beings is a rational way of organizing human life”* and propose “research as a decolonial tool, a tool in the hands of the subjects of colonial oppression” (203-208, emphasis in the original). Notwithstanding, and recalling Moore (“Transcending”) and Hornborg (“Power,” “Global,” “Nature”), the link between coloniality and the Internet unfolds beyond a call for more grounded designs for a decolonial tool or local “human” participatory and control processes. Rather, coloniality in this instance affects human and extra-human beings and, in times of unprecedented ecological crises, we cannot remain afraid of exploring and experiencing “non-technological” realities or communities “which de facto require *less* [or no] technological activity, thus less resource-concentration and inequity, and less environmental “turnover” consumption, and destruction’ (Wynne xiv, emphasis in the original). The latter is never intended as either an imposition or a prohibition, but as an invitation to rediscover the multiplicity of beings and natures to which the “environment” and the “Earth” refer – “the environment of each organism, and therefore of all organisms, is all other organisms” (Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 180), and to value each one beyond their exchange or economic value based on economic commensurability of diversity. Accordingly, coloniality in this instance is not only about datafication in the 21st century but also about the persistence of socio-ecological regimes that have made data exploitation possible.

In other words, and emphasising Moore’s (“Transcending” 17) and Hornborg’s (“Global” 171) attention to value as world-historical project, the economic commensurability of all beings for capitalism (through money) implies the insignificance of diversity outside the margins of capitalism, except for its availability as “cheap nature” or “free gift.” It means that data colonialism is not only a matter of data and human social life but is also about exploitation of extra-human and “non-human” resources. The ideal of connectivity expressed in the Internet as a human right not only ignores such beings but also constitutes a “connected humanity” on

the basis of such concealment. Across layers of socio-ecological relations, technological devices and assemblages as complex as the Internet reproduce economic commensurability and indifference toward diverse natures (and communities) through each of its standardised (material) components, many of them (if not all) coming from distant geographies and intertwined with appropriation, exploitation and ignorance. Alternatives to data colonialism and, more importantly, to coloniality, may not appear within a socio-technical reality that assumes technology as basic to everyday life, even if this reality is critical of its own conditions. The proposal here is to consider not a romanticized perspective of a non-technological past that allegedly happened “before” a technological present, subject to an ongoing timeline of progress, but rather the multiplicities of “non-technological” (non-capitalist/non-colonialist/non-instrumental) diversified socio-ecological relations and entangled intentionalities that take place simultaneously but are dismissed on the basis of progress/development/humanity (and comfort) and the assumption of particular cultural values.

The following section explores the Zapatista experience of the Internet in order to further understand how the Internet and technology can be revisited through acknowledging the primacy of the Earth and community knowledge and practices. Through emphasising the critical adoption and collective use of the internet by the Zapatistas as an alternative to data colonialism, the section calls attention to the task of acknowledging how even alternative and activist uses of technology, although collective and observant of diversity at a local stage, may reproduce and operate on the basis of coloniality as embedded in artifacts. Therefore, it is important to address socio-ecological relations not only at the local level of reinscription or use of technological devices but also as embedded in technological artifacts and systems. The final part of the article draws on Tseltal and Tsotsil knowledge, in which Zapatismo in Chiapas is rooted, to offer an important instance in which recognition of and respect for all beings is an important foundation of community life.

5. The Zapatistas in Chiapas and the Internet

The most emblematic mobilisation in Mexico that has found the Internet an asset for activism is the *Zapatista* organisation in Chiapas, known as EZLN. This predominantly 'indigenous' guerrilla movement comprises Tsotsil, Tseltal, Tojolabal, Chol, Mame, Zoque and mestizo communities. It became visible in 1994, after more than ten years of being clandestine (Muñoz 27), the day the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect supported by amendments to Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, which had previously promoted territorial distribution and been used to protect indigenous peoples' communal land and *ejidos* from being sold as private property. This uprising brought attention to the inequities of capitalism and the persistence of colonization within modernity as a long-lasting (more than 500 years long) reality in Mexico. This reality was fostered by the Mexican state and transnational capitalism under the banners of progress, globalisation and free trade (Subcomandante Marcos, "Entrevista"). As the *Zapatista* spokesperson, then Subcomandante Marcos, explained, the "free trade" agreement was for them an expression of transnational liberalism and the neoliberalisation process that was intensifying its effects over other models of production and political understanding. NAFTA was emblematic of a confrontation between 'two winds', one from above aiming towards the exploitation of land as a mere resource for consumption and the concentration of wealth, and one from below claiming 'tierra y libertad' [land and liberty]: a wind that 'born below the trees, will come down from the mountains; it whispers of a new world, so new that it is but an intuition in the collective heart' (Subcomandante Marcos, "Chiapas" 297). Beyond any idealisations of the Zapatista struggle, it is the strategic significance and political use of digital technologies by EZLN that is addressed in the following lines as indissociable from 'tierra y libertad' and that 'collective heart' to which Marcos refers.

The displacement of indigenous peoples from their territory has been a constant practice in Mexico, spearheaded by racism and the inequalities it fosters. Territories have been seized from peasants and indigenous peoples, either

illegally or by exploiting the gaps in agrarian and land tenure laws. Pushed deeper and deeper into lowland rainforest, Maya communities in Chiapas were increasingly excluded from political and economic life, and the territories they inhabited further exploited and depleted. [16] In this context, the Zapatistas –mainly Maya communities and urban Marxist and middle-class revolutionaries (Tsotsil, Tseltal, Tojolabal, Chol, Mame, Zoque and mestizo)– gained national visibility on the 1st of January 1994, occupying prominent towns and municipalities in the state of Chiapas, the poorest state in Mexico. The guerrillas initially relied on military skills and the programme of action developed by the rebellion's military command. [17] Once the EZLN was forced back into the mountains by the military strength of the Mexican state, the movement and allied activists resorted to information technologies as a main strategic component. The EZLN developed an international information campaign that was retransmitted through the Internet thanks to a network of activists and NGOs from within Mexico, the US and Canada (*redes de solidaridad*, "solidarity networks" in English). [18] The campaign and the network established "gave constant visibility" (Rovira Sancho, "Networks" 388) to events regarding the Zapatista indigenous communities and achieved international pressure against the Mexican government.

The EZLN later consolidated itself as an anti-systemic heritage retrieved by new movements standing against neoliberalism, and more concretely against corporate media. Its innovative Internet operation inspired new efforts based in the US and Canada –such as the *Indymedia* project, a network of independent media that developed in the wake of the battle of Seattle in 1999 (Wolfson) – and other contemporary social movements. [19] The Zapatistas' example gave activists interested in new media and the Internet an extraordinary case: a "framework and a language that catalyzed the development of a new type of social movement that had media and communications at the core" (Wolfson 152).

It is significant that the Zapatistas and EZLN, an insurgency mainly composed of indigenous peoples and with very limited access to the Internet, successfully gathered a support

network that made it the “first major case anywhere” of “information-age social network” (Arquilla et al. 3). Unlike many other movements and mobilisations that have employed digital devices and the Internet to advance their demands and agendas, the Zapatistas have pointed to the peculiarity of the Internet as it has been designed within capitalist expansion, offering a critique of development agendas and discrimination and making a very specific use of such technology. Part of a thirty-year-long organisational effort toward national liberation and autonomy, the Zapatista use of the Internet is worth revisiting against the background of an expanding normalisation of Internet-based digital technologies.

Despite having a “superb media spokesman,” the insurgency “did not have their own laptop computers, Internet connections, fax machines, and cellular telephones” (Arquilla et al. 3). Such devices “were in the hands of most transnational and some Mexican NGOs –and they used them to great effect for conveying the EZLN’s and their own views, for communicating and coordinating with each other, and for creating an extraordinary mobilization of support” (Arquilla et al. 23). As Todd Wolfson has explained in a particularly clear way, “it was the use of new media tools principally taken up by activists and NGO leaders outside the EZLN that marked the movement” in the eyes of an international audience (160-163). Technological mediation allowed both NGOs and the EZLN to take advantage of already existing relations of solidarity and to create new ones that received increasing support from beyond Chiapas. Nevertheless, the use of the Internet was always politically grounded in “a process that comes from a clear political line, based first and foremost in the interests of ... peasants of southern Mexico, and consequently allows for an adaptable strategy of confrontation” (Wolfson 160-163). This clear political line is expressed in the slogan ‘*tierra y libertad*’ [land and liberty]. In other words, NGO and civil society support was included within an already and to a large extent consistent process of political understanding that had land and autonomous self-government [liberty] at the core of its efforts.

It is in relation to land and liberty that we may comprehend the historical and spatial

development of Zapatismo in Chiapas as a complex set of events and multiple encounters, from the organization of Maya communities in the jungle, the on-going relationship with the Catholic church and liberation theologians, to the arrival in indigenous communities of urban Marxist and middle-class revolutionaries coming from Northern Mexico. The translation and mixture between western revolutionary traditions and Maya roots [20] led to what has been described as a sort of “Marxist/Mayan synthesis” in armed confrontation with the Mexican military, which led finally to the change of strategy and the use of information networks (Wolfson 160). By the 1990s, the Zapatistas were listening to and *talking with* variegated expressions of a common concern against neo-liberalism and a common understanding of humanity expressed in eleven demands: work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice and peace (*trabajo, tierra, techo, alimentación, salud, educación, independencia, libertad, democracia, justicia y paz*) (Comandancia EZLN 35). [21]

The Internet provided an opportunity for dialogue, coordination and organization between the community in rebellion and outside organizations and activists. The shared experience of being together as a community as such did not rely on technological support but on a form of living together grounded on and translated into territory. Paying more attention to the latter, the constitution of the Zapatistas as a political process and collective subject was not due to its digital networked character, which was only acquired after the uprising. The collective practice was constantly formed and transformed through decades of everyday interactions and organization that go back to the years of land distribution, *ejidos* formation from jungle settlements, extra communitarian solidarity networks [22] and the intersubjective translation –respect and dialogue– that started in the 1970s. [23] All that was finally expressed to world audiences as a visible collective voice on the 1st of January 1994.

The insurgency’s use of the Internet has much more to do with their own experience of the political than with information networks, communiqués, or bullets. The “EZLN was not a

‘wired’ indigenous army” (Arquilla et al. 23), the insurgency neither saw information technologies as fundamental to their political unity nor expressed static guidelines and principles of organization for technological endorsement. In contrast to more recent mobilisations – ‘connected multitudes’ – with collective actions fundamentally mediated by the Internet, [24] the Zapatista’s distinctive practice did not rely on mediating collective existence and practice through the Internet. Recent urban activism and mobilisation through social media platforms can be understood as mainly responding, as Stefania Milan has characterised, to the importance of private individuals personalising and putting forth their own experiences, where the “‘collective’ [is] experienced through the ‘individual’ and the group is the means of collective action, rather than its end” (887). The individual is constituted within the limits of the platform, then grouped in a collective as a result of individual aims and shared emotions, which then cluster around a perception of reality and a specific aim [25] that although fulfilled temporarily does not necessarily have the collective as its end. In contrast, the Zapatistas located the Internet within their own way of life and experience of the earth [la tierra] and according to their own knowledge, understanding and practice of community, which has underpinned their use of technology and their ongoing questioning of developmental efforts and mainstream trends towards the normalisation of Internet mediation of everyday life, using the technology they question to diffuse their critique.

As many Zapatista members have asserted recently, a crucial motivation for using the Internet has been to stay informed about what happens beyond Zapatista territory and mainly about the grievances committed against other peoples across the world in the name of capital, in addition to establishing solidarity with those peoples (personal communications). The rebellion has used information technologies to gather support, coordinate actions, and diffuse information against capitalism and the neoliberal agenda. Strategic skills and savvy use of the media have proved fundamental for the Zapatista organisation.

In 2014, once the organisation noticed that commercial media copyrighted information on the organisation and offered their interpretation of events but not the Zapatista voice, they decided to organise their own media: *Los Tercios Compas*. Instead of media, which in Spanish is *medios* and in terms of portions means “halves,” they used *tercios*, which would mean “thirds” in addition to *compas*, short for *compañeros* or partners (Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, “Medios”). *Los Tercios Compas* stands for the organisation’s use of their own information and diffusion appliances, describing them as thirds that are partners (ibid.). *Tercios Compas* is an alternative to mass media and an option for information to become a partner, not a worker under the sign of commodification. The communities required journalism that performed investigation and analysis, so scarce in mass and commercial media, as well as avoiding third party mediation of their voice to the world. They wanted to speak for themselves to other communities and groups within and beyond the Zapatista territory. They recorded events and information to share with sympathisers and the general public and allowed Zapatista members to recognise the many events that take place between them and other sectors of national and international society. With *Tercios Compas*, the Zapatista organisation took over the administration and publication of the website *Enlace Zapatista*, where they publish *communiqués* and call for participation in events. More recently, they have produced and presented films at their own film festival *Puyta cuxlejaltic* in Chiapas (Comisión Sexta del EZLN).

The collective use of the Internet has thus maintained a shared political meaning and orientation within the framework of the organization, while their understanding of the Internet corresponds in many ways to their political orientation. Paradigmatically, Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano (former Subcomandante Marcos) when talking to alternative and free media has described the Internet as a battlefield (“Primera parte”), a notion that has been alluded to in more recent events like CompArte Cybernetic Edition in 2017. Moreover, informatics has been described

by Subcomandante Marcos as the means of globalisation to expand and conquer the world, as all languages are to be translated into that of informatics (Subcomandante Marcos, “Cuarta”). “Alongside a technological revolution that sets the entire world, through a computer, in their desks and to its commands, financial markets imposed their laws and precepts on the entire planet,” the informatics revolution, just like the industrial revolution replaced muscle with machine, replaces brain with computer (Subcomandante Marcos, “7 piezas,” my translation). Contrary to understandings of the Internet as a new public sphere that is essentially open and democratic, Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano and the Zapatistas have emphasised its conflicting traits and the necessity to spread art, resistance and rebellion across and through this space. In this light, the Internet and social media platforms are part of an overall critique of capitalism and developmentalism with a particular focus on technology. As Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés and Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano (“300”) have emphasised in a Zapatista forum:

The possibility to purchase labor power is provided for by private ownership of the means of production, circulation, and consumption. Private ownership of the means of production forms the nucleus of the system. Built upon this class division (the owner of private property and the dispossessed), and hiding it as such, are a whole range of juridical and media simulations, as well as other dominant evidentiary forms: citizenship and juridical equality; the penal and police system; electoral democracy and entertainment (increasingly difficult to differentiate); neo-religions and the supposed neutrality of technology; social sciences and the arts; free access to the market and to consumption; and a whole spectrum of nonsense (with some versions more developed than others) of things like “change begins within oneself,” “you are the architect of your own destiny,” “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade,” “don’t give fish to the hungry, teach them to fish” (“and sell them fishing poles”), and, highly fashionable today, efforts to

“humanize” capitalism by making it good, rational, and objective, that is, “capitalism light.”

The neutrality of technology as a form of simulation is understood in relation to private ownership. This form of simulation can be seen as part of the effort of those who simulate to sympathise with other political communities in order to make them embrace a capitalist way of life by subterfuge, taking advantage of simulation to convince and expand but directly threatening territory and, with it, community life. Thus, Subcomandante Moisés and Subcomandante Galeano explain that

[w]hen a mining company invades the territory of originary peoples —often with the alibi of offering “work opportunities” to the “autochthonous population” (yes, that’s what they call us), they aren’t just offering people wages to buy a new high-end cell phone: they are also discarding a part of this population and annihilating (in all senses of the word) the territory in which that population functions. The “development” and “progress” offered by the system in reality disguises what is truly its own development and progress and, more importantly, hides the fact that that progress and development are obtained via the death and destruction of populations and territories (“300,” emphasis in the original).

The neutrality of technology, as a promise with no cost, helps conceal the core practice of capitalism regarding originary territories: depletion and dispossession. Capitalism expands through concealment embedded in the implicit, although for the Zapatistas explicit, agreement to be governed. In this same line, discussions through social media platforms have been described as “autoerotic exercise” (Subcomandante Moisés and Subcomandante Galeano, “A continent”), thus calling into question the idea of a new public sphere from its capitalist foundations. Besides waging war through the Internet through spreading their word (or word-seed, in Spanish *palabra-semilla*), it is clear that in terms of information, communication

and most importantly organisation, there is an intent to surpass concealment and the mediation of third parties and establish interpersonal communication and autonomy. Even the use of social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube has been notably limited to diffusion of information under a collective account.

Subcomandante Galeano has emphasised that “the best information is that which comes from the actor and not from that who is covering the news” (“Primera parte,” my translation). The idea is to have those who are living in the place you want information about “tell us what is going on, not through someone else” (ibid.). In addition, it is clear that the Internet offers huge amounts of information and “you can find whatever you want, if you are in favour of something you will find arguments in favour, if you are against something in there you will find arguments against” (ibid.). What is needed, according to Subcomandante Galeano, is “for that information to have a space to accommodate within, to be legible” (ibid.). This is where free, autonomous and alternative media have an opportunity to investigate and inform and maybe even communicate as direct interlocutors. This is why he asserts that “those who have disrupted the world of information are collectives where the individual is completely diluted” (ibid.). And he finishes off by saying that “what they have seen is that the anonymity of the collective is what is starting to replace and put in crisis [that] media eagerness of those above for finding individualities and personalities” (ibid.).

In light of data colonialism, Zapatista municipalities have intended to establish autonomous infrastructure, or at least try not to compromise autonomy as a community through third party commitments. While the Zapatistas support art, resistance and rebellion, and of course the copyleft idea as opposed to the copyright regime (Subcomandante Galeano, “Medios”), information on everyday life in the communities has not been digitised so technologically and technically equipped corporations and organisations cannot exploit such data. In developing their own services, they have dismissed digitisation as intended by governmental agendas and as expanded through health, education, revenues, taxes, and banking services. Limiting their use of

the Internet mainly to communication with the outside, with individual and family limitations on mobile phones with Internet connections and geographic limitations to infrastructure, drastically reduces the amount of data available. Most importantly, their decision-making process is able to assess collectively instead of according to foreign parameters of development and digitisation.

As emphasised by Subcomandante Galeano, the intent of the Zapatistas is to establish direct communication while upholding anonymity and collectivity instead of personalisation and individuality (“Primera parte”). Without dismissing individuality, there has been a tendency to locate and ground such individuality in community life and face-to-face interaction. Neither community organisation nor internal communications rely on the Internet. Their sense of being a community has not depended on technological support but rather on the shared horizon of an autonomous way of coexistence, collectivity and practices like patience, listening, and decision informed by a ‘culture of intersubjectivity’ that consists in considering all beings as subjects to be respected. [26] The organisation looks towards awareness and constant reiteration of the importance of recognising and respecting equality (which does not necessarily mean a *de facto* condition) rather than individualistic fashions.

The individualisation of identity, through profiling and data mining of behaviour, desires and attitudes, becomes ineffective in a non-mediated community. The principle of non-commodification of information, communication and organisation, along with fundamental cultural values and knowledge of equality and patience, makes appropriating individual identities that are distinguished from the collective less probable. Where members of a community live together, there is less space for foreign mediation of community practices. This does not mean taking for granted that Internet expansion and the vast use of profiling platforms is merely impossible within the Zapatista municipios; it means that the political experience of the Zapatistas is grounded in concrete communities, on concrete territory, and in a concrete mode of life. To expand the individualisation of identity and its associated

capitalist values would most probably mean displacing autonomous self-government and the principles and practices that have nurtured the endurance of these peoples. It is also necessary to acknowledge, however, that despite a local and embodied political process that underpins their use of the Internet, socio-ecological relations as embedded in artifacts still remain unaccounted for, at least in a direct manner.

It is clear how the Zapatista use of the Internet rejects what Couldry and Mejias call data colonialism – “*the idea that the continuous collection of data from human beings is a rational way of organizing human life*” (203) – and the interests that motivate it. Just as these authors propose constructing a different vision of order, one that rejects “the imposition of one reading of how the world and its knowledges should be organized” (203), the Zapatistas uphold a world where many worlds are possible. The Zapatistas, as Couldry and Mejias propose, have “disidentif[ied] from the social pressures of digital networks” and they “do not conform to the organizing logic of the network, whether by choice, by accident or by exclusion” (205). The Zapatistas, one could argue, have been “outside the network even while remaining formally inside” (Couldry and Mejias 206), the Zapatista’s rebellion “acknowledges the totality that must be rejected but denies the legitimacy of that emerging order *as a whole* while admitting our continuing complicity in the practical relations of data colonialism” (ibid.). Notwithstanding, efforts to understand capitalism, modernity, technology and coloniality should not stop at this point as the internet and technological artifacts can be used in the name of a different reality without destabilising technology’s socio-ecological and cultural/philosophical groundings.

Considering the above, the collective knowledges on which the Zapatista rebellion has been rooted have received little attention so far, despite offering alternative readings to value as a world-historical project based on economic equivalence. Indigenous peoples’ knowledges, as with many other knowledges and philosophies across the world, might offer different perspectives on how socio-ecological relations *in toto* can be organised. In other words, it does not seem enough to imagine and develop

alternative orders of sociality if we still do not acknowledge, first, the socio-ecological regime and the multiplicities this regime dismisses, as embedded in “technological” artifacts; and second, the multiplicity that is already here, situated and incorporated in ourselves. We need to acknowledge how technological artifacts and systems entail embedded processes and socio-ecological relations no longer explicit in their everyday, anthropocentric and socio-technical instrumental forms, a task still pending within important anthropological readings (for example, Viveiros de Castro and Danowski 187). Technology, taken as expanding economic commensurability and instruments that are means to a “human” end, halts this acknowledgement and affection. Therefore, the need remains to recognise and respect the diversity of natures and entangled intentionalities that constitute us.

As Xuno López Intzín explained in a Zapatista forum, among the Tseltal and Tsotsil peoples “everything that exists has its *O’tan*-heart and all *O’tan* has *W’otan*, its guardian” (267), and

this notion of *O’tan* is one of the forms of our *sna’el k’inal* in our pueblos [towns]. *Sna’el k’inal* is something like knowing the world [saber el mundo], meeting/getting to know the world, to comprehend it, understand it, recognise it, to long for it, to miss it, to apprehend it, knowing to be-exist in it, knowing to direct the word, knowing to live in the *ich’el ta muk’*-recognition-respect, knowing to listen, knowing to feel, being awake, being vigilant, being guardians [estar de guardianes], knowing to correspond (ibid., my translation).

From the *O’tan*-heart the *sna’el k’inal* unfolds, while at the same time the *O’tan*-heart unfolds as a form of *sna’el k’inal*. *Ich’el ta muk* appears as a mode of knowing and living in recognition and respect for everything as everything has *O’tan*. This is the seed-word [semilla-palabra] that is taught by current *Tsotsil* youngest elders [mayores-menores actuales] (López Intzín 267). As the author continued explaining, “our grandmothers and grandfathers also comment that, just as everything has *O’tan* and *Wo’tan*, as well everything has *Ch’ulel*, which ‘is like the spirit, the soul, conscience and language,

it is being, that which on its own [de por sí/ naturally] exists” (269, my translation). Instead of an instrumental understanding of nature in which beings are objects designed or meant to follow another being’s specific programme, each and every being in the universe has its *Ch’ulel*. In contrast to digitisation’s rush to relocate trust from human mediation to machine mediation and concealed human strategies, recognition and respect for every single and *whatever* being speak of a fundamental and immediate interaction and trust among a multiplicity of beings and worlds. “With the existence of many *Ch’ulel*’, Tseltal and Tsotsil people, among others, ‘consider that a pluriverse *Ch’ulel* exists” (*ibidem*). “From this notion our world was ordered,” asserted López Intzín as he emphasised how “the sacred is co-substantial to our humanity,” as it is about “matter and spirit amalgamated” and about all that exists being sacred (271).

López Intzín has described how “this mode of *sna’el k’inal* [the notion of *O’tan*] is increasingly less common” as “[capitalism] has taken away *Ch’ulel* from all that exists and has turned it into an object, a thing, a commodity” (269). However, he underlines, “re-cognising [re-conocer] again the sacred in everything that exists means to take back our sacrality, our humanity, to hearten-us [*corazonarnos*] and unite-us [*hermanarnos*]” (271). The way of being-together in this account is an inquiry into collective experience accompanied by the reiteration of equality in facticity and from which meaning and order arise in a specific form. As López confirms,

constituting us into a *kol-lek-tive Wo’tan* is as well to become a *kol-lek-tive Ch’ulel* and to become a cosmic-*kolektive Xch’ulel wo’tan*, so to speak, in guardian spirit-consciousnesses of all that exists. In this all that exists is included our own existence. To be vigilant, sentinels... each one in the place that corresponds to her but with feet, heart and eyes [from/on] the earth. It is a come-and-go... We enunciate ourselves from an exclusive-excluded *ko’tanjo’tik* [heart] in order to reconstruct, reincarnate a *ko’tantik*, a new heart, an our-we-humanity [una nosotras humanidad nuestra], in which we walk *pajal-pajal* [as equals], in evenness as

those women in our towns demand, in which there is *ich’el ta muk’*- respect and recognition to each one of its grandeur, its value, its importance, its being, its doing, its thinking and its existence (268-269).

In the preceding lines, the experience of collective existence pushes towards becoming ethics, not as prescriptive points or specific norms of conduct but as a call for and embodiment in place and community of a concrete and grounded encounter. This encounter occurs, firstly, within an exclusive community and within and between each of its members through awareness of what *is* (facticity) and the way in which tradition has preserved knowledge; and secondly, through the awareness of community’s collective form and its distance from other modes of life, both based on the awareness of a fundamental living together in recognition and respect –*ich’el ta muk’*– for the equality of all things. This ethical direction might speak of “non-technological” politics and societies, in which beings and natures are not reduced to interchangeable parts and appropriated to be exploited and ignored as members of a community.

6. Conclusion

The article analysed how, while access to the internet is championed as a fundamental human right, “human” and “extra-human” beings are being exploited at affective and cognitive distances generally concealed from everyday users in privileged socio-technical realities. Following Spivak, in order to not enclose the location of the “other” as homogeneous, we explored heterogeneity in ways that make it possible to acknowledge the multiplicity of socio-ecological relations (and affections) that constitute us but that we have consistently ignored. In this instance, technology has been analysed through the lens of coloniality and political ecology, elucidating what from a postcolonial-marxist perspective are concealed relations to “the Earth and its products,” in order to show how the latter are not only constituted as objects of an existing exploited “Nature” but also as an index to the multiplicity of socio-ecological relations that constitute each of us.

The article has demonstrated how technological devices are embedded with capitalism and coloniality as a socio-ecological regime. These devices and assemblages reproduce the economic commensurability and equivalence of natures and produce simplified spaces through disregard for the socio-ecological conditions of their uncaptialized reproduction. Technology, then, silences its own socio-ecological and political trajectories and affects and is unable to witness the diversity or multiplicity of beings and entangled intentionalities that constitute natures before and beyond their resource value form.

Bridging the political-ecological, the postcolonial, the decolonial and the Tsotsil and Tseltal philosophical contributions analysed here, this article's contribution has been to account for the socio-ecological regime of coloniality and capitalism in which technological artifacts are embedded, as well as propose how to learn from other political praxes and philosophical traditions that point towards non-reductionist understandings of nature and the multiplicity and difference that constitute each one of us. Ultimately, the suggestion is not to reject technological devices or assemblages but reincorporate and acknowledge those beings before and beyond their becoming instrumental, with their being as "Nature" reduced to an interchangeable part. To do so, we acknowledged, first, the socio-ecological regime, and the multiplicities and socio-ecological relations this regime dismisses; and second, the multiplicity that is already here, situated and incorporated in ourselves. This means acknowledging and sensing how technological artifacts and systems entail embedded processes and socio-ecological relations no longer explicit in their everyday, anthropocentric and socio-technical instrumental forms.

The contribution also points toward future inquiries into similarities with philosophical analyses such as those of Giorgio Agamben, who offers a critical account of the notion of *instrumentality* within Western ontologies and proposes "use" as a modal ontology, an ethics of modes of being. On this basis, it is possible to acknowledge both the persistence of coloniality in alternative uses of technological artifacts and systems as well as the open possibilities that

other experiences not only of technology but also of reality can offer in times of planetary uncertainty and ecological crises. This means that we still have to consider the analysis of capitalism as world-ecology, in which technology is based on inequality and concealment (Hornborg, "Nature") and reproduces and diffuses economic commensurability of diversity and Nature as "cheap" (Moore, "Capitalocene II") and a "free gift" (Moore, "Transcending"). The philosophical foundations of such constructions of nature within the Western tradition also require analysis in order to further develop, along with different modes of being, different socio-ecological relations as ethics. Perhaps other horizons might unfold in *ich'el ta muk'* – recognition and respect for all beings (López Intzín) – from such diversity. In other words, in *ich'el ta muk'*, "non-technological" politics and societies might unfold, in which beings and natures are not reduced to interchangeable parts and appropriated, thus ignoring diversity and affection –our collective heart– in service of a highly inequitable world-system.

Endnotes

- [1] See Jameson et al., Koch and Kinsbergen, Radley and Vogel, Vogel and Raeymaekers.
- [2] See La Rue 2011.
- [3] See Pellow and Park 2002.
- [4] See Spivak 1988.
- [5] See Hornborg 2019, 2016, 2015, 2001, and Moore 2017a, 2017b, 2011.
- [6] See (Anonymous, Danezis 2014, Hill 2014, Knowledge Commons Brasil, Martini 2017, Simmons 2018, and Soundararajan 2017.
- [7] See Hill 2014.
- [8] See Kwet 2019, Martini 2018, Ogden et al. 2015.
- [9] See Soundararajan 2017.
- [10] See McCarthy 2015 and 2017.
- [11] See Escobar 2004, Quijano 2010.
- [12] See Moore 2017b.
- [13] See Hornborg 2001 and 2015.
- [14] See Hornborg 2019, 2016, 2015 and 2001.
- [15] See Foster 2015, Clark and York 2005, Clark and

Foster 2009.

[16] See Subcomandante Marcos 1994, 2003, and Estrada Saavedra 2007.

[17] See Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) 1993.

[18] See Rovira Sancho 2009.

[19] See Castells 1996, Cleaver 1998, Dyer- Witheford 1999, Juris 2008, and Wolfson 2012.

[20] See Bartra 1998.

[21] See Ceceña 2004.

[22] See Estrada Saavedra 2007 and Renard 1997.

[23] See Bartra 1998, García de León 1995, and Renard 1997.

[24] See Toret et al. 2013. See Castells 2012.

[25] See Castells 2012.

[26] See Ceceña 2004, Lenkersdorf 2002, and López Intzín 2015.

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Horizontality in Perspective: Interview with Olaf Kaltmeier and Sarah Corona Berkin

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Transl. Nora Wallenius

"I was eight years old, my mother hid me there because the owner of the house ordered her to. I was the daughter of the cleaning lady. It's because there were visitors and I was very black [...] Let me see your passport, Miss Murillo, because with that suspicious skin we don't know what your intention is when coming to our country. Many times I have wanted, and still want to, conform myself. Be silent. Leave the issue alone, but it is not a unique battle, my experience is not mine, it would be poor and petty to think that. We are so many, so many.

Nacas, indias, rateras.

(Murillo, 2020)

In 2012, the book *En diálogo. Metodología horizontales en las ciencias sociales y culturales*. "In Dialogue: Horizontal Methodologies in Social and Cultural Sciences", coordinated by Sarah Corona Berkin and Olaf Kaltmeier, was published almost simultaneously in Mexico and Germany, here with the title *Methoden dekolonialisieren. Eine Werkzeugkiste zur Demokratisierung der Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Westfälisches Dampfboot, Münster). The introduction of the book, written by the coordinators, as well as several of the book's chapters have been cited profoundly and have converted into key input for new theses, research projects, and novel perspectives in the formulation of objects of study. The creation of The Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies (CALAS) in Latin America with its central headquarters in Guadalajara combined with the center's concern for developing a line of research that addresses methodical issues (in times of multiple crises), have established these horizontal methodologies as the foundational

lenses to rethink research methodologies in the global south. And so, eight years later, we return to *Horizontalidad: hacia una crítica de la metodología*. The coordinators of this volume wish to recognize the seminal importance of *En diálogo...* and take a step back in time through an interview with Kaltmeier and Corona Berkin, who contributed to this book as well.

As we were finishing this volume, the COVID-19 pandemic radically changed, in a matter of weeks, the dynamics of social life almost everywhere on the planet (including teaching, research, field work, and, in many cases, survival itself). Apart from the serious and unknown circumstances that the global health crisis brought with it, a series of events that we have endured in a systematic way have also become critically evident, and have found in this juncture a place to express themselves and become visible: outbreaks of racism, questionings within various countries of supposedly developed GDP, and the exacerbation of poverty hidden under a mask of prosperity.

Until December of 2019, a state of affairs had, to a certain extent, become normalized: neo-extractivism, eviction of entire villages, mass sterilization practices, death by poisoning of population groups that were never forensically resolved, regular discoveries of dozens of clandestine graves with hundreds of anonymous corpses, destruction of forests, slaughter of millions of animals artificially raised for rapid and toxic consumption, refrigerator trucks filled with bodies, populations taken over by law enforcement or by drug trafficking. A dark and dangerous relationship between the United States and countries in Central and South America, openly corrupt political leaders and government coups orchestrated under the obscurity of the State of Law, as in the case of

Bolivia and elsewhere, were a part of our daily lives.

Not to state the obvious, we assumed, somewhat blindly, in the neoliberal model, which within its framework the healthcare system was practically dismantled. All of this became obvious with the beginning of the health crisis in the pandemic situation. It is as if a prominent building displayed a scaffolding built with scraps or made of patches, in other words, a structure that can no longer withstand. Today most of the region's leaders (Bolsonaro in Brazil, Piñera in Chile, Bukele in El Salvador, Añez in Bolivia) have been laid bare.

Taking into account this context, and not wishing to be another one of those thinkers who, at the last second, tries to reconstruct the future and their own theories to promote a type of tomorrow that they want to foresee and affirm (a lucky competence that is not well understood). Avoiding this, there could be two options: The first option, not considering that there was a historical break, could be easily achieved if medical science finds a solution soon. The second, looking beyond the health phenomenon and taking it as an altogether cruel pretext in which thousands of people suffered indescribable ailments, in order to observe everything that we have been dragging with us, we cannot discard the controversial option that took over the world in the last decades. What we are sure of is that in either of the options, the outlooks will no longer be the same as those that we could have had in December of 2019.

Appealing to "contextualism," which, according to Stuart Hall, is the crucial methodological condition for thinking about the social world, we wanted to open the debate in this sense because we consider that the text cannot completely omit those that traverse us. In times of a pandemic, of a clear political movement towards the right by a large part of the American continent, of the obscene accumulation of capital in the hands of a small portion of the population, together with a growing depauperization of the majorities on a global scale, and a notorious weakness of the State of Law to meet the minimum guarantees of justice and equity, the concerns about horizontality seem ever more urgent.

Horizontalidad: Hacia una crítica de la metodología, edited by Inés Cornejo and Mario Rufer, can be downloaded for free from the CALAS library at CLACSO: https://www.clacso.org.ar/biblioteca_calas/detalle.php?id_libro=2245

In dialogue with Olaf and Sarah

First question: *In her text included in the volume *Horizontalidad: Hacia una crítica de la metodología*, Sarah states that, having recently understood that in addition to the dimensions that dialogical texts acquire between Wixaritari professors and Western academics, there is an even more obscure viewpoint, at least what she considers a "blind spot of shared text." This blind spot can be seen as the difficulty in referring to the ominous, to the unpleasantness that researchers prefer not to ask, see, or write about: that which questions the very certainty of our academic and even political profession. In his turn, Olaf tells us in his text that currently in Latin America, "with the crisis of the progressive governments [in the cases of Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, and recently Uruguay], there is an ending of the conjuncture of decolonization and a renewed conjuncture of colonization promoted by sectors of the white-mestizo elite." After several years of reflection, both Sarah and Olaf seem to view horizontal methods from a more critical standpoint. Sarah, from the subjective perspective (the collaborator's own resistance in dialogic production); Olaf, from the structural perspective (the turn towards conservatism and the elite that impose new perspectives on research). Why do you think that both the "blind spots" of knowledge and the return of the "right-wing" need more research that benefits from horizontality?*

Olaf Kaltmeier: In many discussions on horizontal methodologies, questions arise as to whether they are also applicable in contexts of various inequalities and in social spheres of power. Is it possible to apply horizontal methodologies, for example, to hedge fund managers? If we want to answer this question in methodological terms, we can affirm that it is possible to define the topic and the research

design together. We can also imagine dialogical relationships, a “founding conflict.” In the same way, we could “write with two hands” and jointly publish. In other words, if we understand horizontal methodologies as such an instrument, this could be possible. But Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno have already warned us against such instrumental reasoning. In this sense, we have never imagined these horizontal approaches as a method, but rather as a methodology. This is an important difference, as methodology implies defining the application area and defining whether or not certain methods are adequate and relevant. More than this distinction, horizontal methodologies not only have the objective of democratizing the research process, but also of contributing to the decolonization of the academic field. It is a field that is deeply marked by colonial projects, not only in the global South, but also in the West. This is evident in the murder of the wise-women in Europe during the Inquisition. The epistimocide and the homogenization of knowledge according to Western criteria is a global process. Vis-à-vis this historical gap in the academic field, horizontal methodologies aim to contribute to the decolonization of knowledge, including its institutions and habitual practices.

This implies a deconstruction of the idea of the subject-researcher, who investigates the Other in an instrumental way. It seems to me that, despite all the criticisms facing the subject in the practice of social research, the idea of the subject has been preserved, almost understood as genius in a romanticized way. It must be acknowledged that such imaginings play into the researcher’s vanity, which, more than just a personality trait, is essentially a requirement in the academic field. In all applications for academic positions and scholarships, we evaluate the excellence of the subject-investigator. Thus, the imagination of a hyperreal subject-researcher does not correspond to the reality of knowledge production that takes place in rhizomatic networks of exchange and dialogue.

It is an explicit objective to recognize and make visible this invisibilized part of the production of knowledge in order to change the ways of generating and exchanging knowledge. Instead of an extractivism of knowledge, horizontal

methodologies lean in favor of mutualism. And I think this is of particular importance in an era of growing and immense social inequality. Niklas Luhmann, but also to a certain extent Pierre Bourdieu, think of these fields as functionally separate areas. Researchers such as Néstor García Canclini have emphasized that in Latin America, this supposed logic of separation does not work so discreetly. And I think this is also true for Europe. There are homologies between the different social fields. And if in the academic field we manage to change practical logic, this may also have an impact on other fields. In this sense, the decolonization of knowledge through the horizontal production of knowledge implies a mutual logic that is ready to face the logic of individual accumulation, whether of capital or knowledge.

Sarah Corona Berkin: You are basically affirming that viewpoints are imposed on knowledge from macro-political and micro-political places. We do not see a way to transform these dominant structures without modifying the micropolitical mechanisms of knowledge production. Without neglecting the economic foundations of social order, we assume that social relations are not directly and immediately detached from economic relations. Feminists have already said that “the personal is political” to explain that the experience of women is the result of a social structure of oppression and exploitation. However, personal and political choices are indistinguishable and, therefore, changes should come first from personal practice and then defended as political changes. I add that in respect to the field that concerns us: the construction of new knowledge begins with the decisions and practices of researchers. When choosing horizontality, knowledge is built from a critical viewpoint capable of exposing the power relations that prevent the creation of new forms of knowledge, thus producing new knowledge and new relationships between people.

In the horizontal proposal, the classic subjective/political or theory/practice oppositions are dissolved. Any research that does not superimpose among its goals the insubordination of the subjects who participate in the construction of knowledge, we believe, is doomed to repeat

forms of micro and macro-political oppression, and is bound to produce knowledge that has already been exhausted.

However, there are also obscurities that subjectivity does not always recognize and, therefore, do not allow the problem to be widely evident. The title of the famous Pink Floyd album, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, suggests to me an apt reflection regarding horizontal methodologies. When we refer to the dark side of the moon as a metaphor, we are talking about a face of our satellite that is never observed from Earth. This is because the moon, in the time it takes to complete its movement around our planet, is actually rotating upon itself, so we always see the same face. Here, the interplay between visibility and the existence of a zone hidden from our view caused by its self-rotation makes us think about the horizontal production of knowledge. There are also places of darkness that make social phenomena even more difficult to understand. If we continue to see only one face, the one we know because it is the one we are doomed to look at only from a single place, we lose the opportunity to construct WITH others who see from other places, who bring new “faces” and new answers to social questions. From here, the main axes arise that define horizontality for me: the *conflict generator*, *discursive equity*, and the *autonomy of voices*.

Nonetheless, social structures and political order can oppose our position, as a product of our belonging, of our language. But the choice is not individual, it is not neutral, and it always carries historical ties. That is why the gaze of another, a peer researcher, can modify blind loyalty to a single response, to a single social structure, and to a given political order. The various voices that observe from multiple places, academic and non-academic, together can build a “third text” that will be new, different, and that will show “another face of the moon.” Addressing the darker side of horizontal research involves not avoiding blind spots, recognizing and trying to understand them together with, and thanks to, peer researchers.

Second question: *It becomes inevitable to think, as Stuart Hall would say, “contextually.” The pandemic caused by Covid-19 that continues to*

haunt us is presented as an absolute, as a kind of vertical and violent magma that confounds everyone. Could it be that if we view separately each of the aspects that shape it—medical, biological, political, social, collective emotion, and economic—we could clear up the confusion and, from here, possibly achieve a horizontal and diligent conversation with the other?

O.K: The first image that comes to mind when hearing this question is Foucault’s famous interpretation of Borges’ text on the animal encyclopedia of the emperor of ancient China. It seems to me that, in a certain way, social differentiation—and in academia with the emergence of different disciplines—has made us aphasic. Obviously, there is an order in each of the discourses. But they are different, opposing, and incompatible discourses that intersect and sometimes intertwine.

I am skeptical of reaching a total, absolute truth—also in the case of Covid-19. But it seems to show that within academia we have to overcome the great gap between the social sciences and humanities, on the one hand, and the natural sciences, on the other hand. The pandemic shows that—if we want to channel Latour—the virus is an actant with a higher power in social assembly. In the era of the Anthropocene - the crisis of climate change, overexploitation of natural resources, acidification of the oceans, transformation of landscapes into garbage dumps, sixth extinction - we can no longer ignore these types of actants whether they be a virus, hurricane, or neobiota. Therefore, it seems to me that the challenge goes beyond entering into a transdisciplinary dialogue between academics and other knowledge producers. In fact, I believe that one of the great challenges for the social sciences and humanities—as well as for horizontal methodologies—is how to enter into dialogue or exchange with these actants of the biosphere. I believe that here we can learn a lot from indigenous knowledge without falling into exoticism.

The Western model is in a crisis that some, like Edgardo Lander, have called a crisis of civilization. I, in particular, am not a fan of the concept of civilization, due to its historical burden from the 19th century and the disqualification of

“barbaric” antagonism, but the description of a fundamental rupture in the global capitalist system, in Western epistemology and its planetary limits, is for me an obvious constellation which we have to face. Perhaps we can learn from the Covid-19 crisis that we need a different conduct, one of solidarity, based on ethics of caring.

S.C.B: I think that horizontality should go through the whole process. The different disciplines on their own, as raw material for dialogue, must also contribute their knowledge that is built on horizontality. Because it is not just about expressing what is known and exchanging ideas, not even attentively listening to the other person, it is about constructing something new. Conflicts are not resolved by adding points of view, but by generating together new responses that cannot be built in solitude and disciplinary isolation.

And it is not just about inviting different disciplines to the table to form a group with interdisciplinary intentions, but that they are building with the knowledge of everyone, non-academics as well. That is why we say that the horizontal production of knowledge produces new knowledge and new relationships between people.

In a problem that needs solving, such as Covid-19, it is necessary to construct a “third text” together with the disciplines that have something to say and with the non-academic voices that also have something to say. In this way, I think that we could go down a path that dialogically solves a problem through a collaboration with those involved with scientific thinking and, at the same time, solves the political problem of representation for those who have not been heard in order to solve problems of this magnitude.

There is another actor that is not heard and that we know that with all our strength we cannot control, which is nature. Modernity brought the separation between nature and society—can we return to building bridges to get to know each other? García Canclini wonders how to change the relations between people and animals. Would the solution be to invite all living beings (perhaps other non-living beings as well) to the *conflict*

generator, with *discursive equality*, to develop new solutions? What is clear to us today is that the scientific and technological developments that in the past gave us certainties and answers that we trusted. Today, rather, we see that this same blind development has brought greater insecurity and a feeling of unease. For example, today we have discovered that when it comes to health, we know less than what we thought we knew.

Third Question: *One of the most fruitful axes of horizontal methodologies is found when placing self-reflexivity at the center of the scientific method. Social or cultural sciences would not exist without a political gaze and without a radical theory of difference. This brings up some criticisms and warnings of the “classic” sectors, let’s call them, of social research: criticism about the romanticization of otherness that horizontal, decolonial, or perspective knowledge proposes; romanticization of poverty or of the indigenous world; criticisms of binary visions of pure or “savior” knowledge (can be of capital, destruction, extractivism, etc.); warnings about the dangers that these methods can bring to objectivity and the “gap” that needs to be “narrowed” to do “good science.” What can be said today, in the context of profound uncertainty, for what horizontal methodologies offer to this discussion?*

O.K: Horizontal methodologies do not promote exoticism, but rather democratization. I begin with the idea that we are living in a common world, a global capitalist system, in which we have experiences, conditions, and exchanges that we share, although we share them from unequal positions in the Global North and the Global South. I understand these concepts in epistemological, and not geographic, terms—since in Mexico City and Buenos Aires there are many neighborhoods of the Global North. This shared reality—created by colonialism, capitalism, ecological crisis and the movements against them—is to me the basis for entering into a dialogue based on horizontal methodologies. This is why I am critical of separate methodologies—some for the “North,” others for the “South”; some for “Westerners,”

others for “the indigenous.”

And I think that this perspective of intertwining also helps us to avoid falling into exoticism or a construction of the hyper-real indigenous. We know that many communities have incorporated western elements, starting with the horses from the plains in North America and Patagonia, to *sombreros* in the Andes. Many who have worked closely with indigenous communities already know that not everything lends itself to idealization. This is present in the experience of intercommunal violence, especially against women, as well as ecological degradation and extreme poverty. In this sense, I do not believe that the solution lies only with indigenous peoples or other marginalized groups. However, without dialogue and self-determination for these groups, there can be no solution for the global problems we face.

S.C.B: Horizontal methodologies offer the opportunity to deploy all of the democratic tools that we researchers possess in order to act within scientific and political horizontalities. We need to understand that horizontality means listening to all participants involved in the problem to take a step beyond the answers that we have already reached with our particular gaze—western, white, and masculine. The search is for a new knowledge that only through dialogue with others will we be able to learn (What reflexivity/self-reflexivity is this? What mirror or which objectivity is achieved when we understand the world and ourselves with the unique words of our discipline, learned from our social belonging and our history?).

We can see that these problems are connected: the virus, the economic debacle, the power of authority and the administration of justice, racism, hunger, dispossession, human communication, coexistence, and more. Everything becomes visible and debatable. We also see that technocratic nostalgia for numbers as a basis for objectivity is only part of the diagnosis and answer to the problem. Bourdieu, an eternity ago, quoted Pareto to reproach numbers as scientific proof: How can we say that older people do not exist since we do not know at what point in life old age begins? Neither childhood nor poverty, for that matter.

Today we see the limits that numbers have when explaining reality. Recently we found out about classifications based on numbers that only betray the ideology of scientists, such as when a code of ethics based on numbers was implemented in order to decide who has the right to a respirator during the pandemic’s hospital saturation. Not to mention the war of numbers between continents and political systems that are only useful to boost already disreputable news broadcasts.

The solutions to these problems—the very conception of the problem—cannot advance and improve the world if we do not enlarge the concepts as researcher/researched, scientist/user. The reality, we are seeing, is more complex and has more variables that go undetected in a laboratory, survey, interview, or observation.

In another text, Olaf Kaltmeier and I spoke about the malicious use of dialogue, such as in advertising and politics, and we demarcated ourselves from them. We clarified, in our case, that we were looking for mutual knowledge in dialogue and, as a first condition, the conscious affirmation of the horizontal situation during research.

Fourth question: *We formulated this question thinking, on the one hand, of the recent demands of indigenous peoples, the #MeToo movement, the movements for self-defense of young women such as Ni una menos, recognition for new gender identities, movements of mass migrations, and the presence, despite the circumstances, of public education in various countries as a possible alternative for more disadvantaged sectors; on the other hand, we thought of the increasing speed with which devastating neo-extravism has been imposed on Latin America. We are interested to know if the gap between interviewer and interviewee has changed or not. Has it become narrower? Has it become wider? Or has it become zigzagged, meaning, has it become narrower and wider at the same time?*

O.K: Horizontal methodologies are greatly enriched by these movements because, for one thing, they are articulators of other knowledge, however they have the intercultural capacity to

transport it to other social fields, especially to the political field, the field of cultural production, as well as the academic field. I do not believe that it is the task of horizontal methodologies to be a spokesperson for social movements. The movements can speak for themselves. But for the production of knowledge, dialogue can be fruitful for both activists and researchers.

I believe it is important to underline here the conflict of horizontal methodologies. Dialogue does not mean that we need to have the same opinion. If we all think the same, the dialogue ends. In this sense, what you call a zigzagging movement is a good way to describe the communicative situation of dialogue. This mixture of closeness and distance seems to be the key to the research process. However, I want to emphasize that in recent years perhaps it has become more accepted – especially outside the discipline of anthropology – to accept the horizontality of the other and its production of knowledge. But I do worry about academic trends. Working with indigenous peoples is no longer in fashion: neither politically, after the turn to combative protesting within the indigenous movement and its repercussions in international forums, especially in the UN; nor academically, where the topic of the indigenous is already viewed with boredom. Rethinking academic trends would be, for me, another necessary self-reflective task.

S.C.B: Zigzagging! Yes. There is no one size fits all for everyone to wear the same jacket. Horizontality does not imply rigid methods. Scientific categories are transformed and the axes that guide research are expanded. What is in the center is the coming and going (zigzagging) between the “expert” and the *peer researcher*, based on the *conflict generator*, in *discursive equality*, and with *autonomy of gaze* to produce a “third text.” The new actors that have become visible today are the basis for the scientific understanding of reality and implementation of change. I believe that the horizontal production of knowledge has two merits: first, to build and incorporate the knowledge of all those involved in the problem and, second, to build a common world where no one is superior (Jacotot/Rancière *dixit*) and where we are all *peer researchers*.

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