



# IDENTITY AND BORDERS

vol. 52

department of spanish and portuguese /  
university of california, los angeles

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*Mester* (ISSN 0160-2764) is the graduate student journal of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of California, Los Angeles. It is published annually online ([https://escholarship.org/uc/ucla\\_spanport\\_mester](https://escholarship.org/uc/ucla_spanport_mester)) and in print with the generous assistance of the UCLA Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the Del Amo Foundation, and the UCLA Graduate Students Association.

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ISSN 0160-2764

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# Introduction

On behalf of the Editorial Board of *Mester*, the academic journal of the graduate students of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California (Los Angeles), I am honored to introduce its fifty-second issue. *Mester* LII welcomed submissions for articles, essays, and interviews written in Spanish, Portuguese, and English from transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches related to Identity and Borders. *Mester* LII also encouraged submissions focused on – but not limited to – the representation of Identity(ies) through Migrations, Language, Belonging, and Borders in the 21st Century. We invited submissions that explore the relationship between (re)formulating and (re)imagining the complexities of identity and its representation in contemporary times, where mobilizations and migrations challenge the dominant identity discourse in space and time.

In the contemporary global landscape, the intersection of identity and borders has emerged as a multifaceted and dynamic area of scholarly inquiry. The intricate interplay between individuals' sense of self and the physical or metaphorical demarcations that define their spaces is a subject that transcends disciplinary boundaries, necessitating a comprehensive exploration. Understanding the impact of borders on identity is not merely an academic exercise but a critical endeavor with profound implications for individuals, communities, and societies. The global surge in migration, displacement, and transnational connections underscores the urgency of inves-

tigating how borders shape, challenge, and redefine identity constructs. In fact, *Mester* LII received texts from a wide range of fields, such as Literature, History, Anthropology, Education Studies, Linguistics, and Cinema, as detailed below. This issue aims to contribute to a deeper comprehension of these dynamics by bringing together cutting-edge research, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies that span disciplines and methodologies.

Opening the General Section on Identity and Borders, in “Liminal Bodies: Boundaries, Transgression, and Gender in Pan-Mediterranean Chapbooks”, Roxanna Colón-Cosme studies the depiction of gender in Iberian and Sephardic chapbooks. Colón-Cosme showcases the liminal experiences of women in the context of warfare and conjugal relationships. Through an enriching analysis of medieval *romances*, she argues that women shift between passive and active performances where they often transgress imposed gender roles. Colón-Cosme’s fluid prose offers a stimulating introduction to the subject.

In the second article, “A chuva nunca foi o problema”: Memory, Indigeneity, and Decoloniality through Uýra”, Logan A. Krishka studies the video-performance “Manaus: Uma cidade na aldeia” by Uýra Sodoma. Krishka explores Uýra as an *alter-political* and *decolonial* figure, arguing that she presents a path not necessarily predicated on *adversarial schemas* where Uýra prefers to *contar outras histórias* by physically becoming something else. Through an anthropo-

logical approach, Krishka explores how Uyra's body serves as the immanent/imminent site of perspectival differentiation. Krishka additionally offers that the video performance points to the messiness of memory, history, colonial violence, and other forms of being, and achieves a different outcome for nature and indigenous communities in and outside Brazil.

In the third text and last article of this section, "Irrupciones de la memoria en el cine documental sobre el conflicto armado interno peruano: *Tarea Pendiente* (2003) y *Lucanamarca* (2008)" María Claudia Huerta Vera transitions to 1983 Peru. Huerta Vera analyzes two documentaries that portrait the consequences of the Sendero Luminoso's massacre: *Tarea pendiente* (2003), by Carlos Cárdenas, and *Lucanamarca* (2008), by Carlos Cárdenas and Héctor Gálvez. In the first half, she explores how these documentaries are produced in two irruptive moments of the memory of post-conflict Peru and are representative of their genre. In the second half, Huerta Vera focuses on *Lucanamarca*, where she argues that this documentary presents a counter-hegemonic narrative as it moves away from the narrative of a "civic memory".

Transitioning to current immigration issues, "Los restos del camino: el territorio transnacional en el *Libro centroamericano de los muertos de Balam Rodrigo*", Zyanya Dóniz Ibáñez opens the section on mobilization discourses. Dóniz Ibáñez proposes, through Deleuze and Guattari and Edouard Glissant's approach, that the *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* discursively produces the territory by extending geographical, linguistic, and literary limits to (re)configure a Central America image that transcends political borders through the figure of the migrant. Additionally, Dóniz Ibáñez analyses that the *poemario* is indeed related to the *crónica de viajes* not only because of the inclusion of Las Casas as co-author of the text but also visible through the showcase of Central America's 'kingdoms'.

The second article of this section is "Urban Numbness toward Mexican Domestic Workers from the 1970s to Present Day: A Spiral of Instability in *Roma*, *Hilda*, and 'Esperanza número equivocado'" where Estefanía R. Morales compares the aforementioned works to the domestic workers' situation in Mexico during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify the oppressive conditions described in literature and film and to highlight the urban numbness that has lessened solidarity. Morales interconnects recent films *Roma* and *Hilda* to Poniatowska's "Esperanza número equivocado" through the domestic worker's historical instability from a historical and political standpoint that occurred in The Corpus Christi Massacre in 1971. Morales additionally compares this issue to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, where domestic workers were affected due to the ongoing spiral of instability.

In the third text of this section, "Entornos hostiles, deserción escolar y migraciones," María del Consuelo Martínez Berber proposes an analysis of the hostile environments currently faced by young people within their families, their school environment, and their place of origin, which cause school dropout, family uprooting, and consequently, migration. Martínez Berber's reflection arises from the experience(s) of elementary and high school students in marginalized populations in urban and indigenous areas of Mexico. Her work, from education and pedagogy approaches, offers to open the doors to a new perspective of youth with their own identity as agents of change in their communities of origin, a role that rightfully belongs to them as people and citizens.

In the fourth and last text of this section, Cristina G. Vázquez explores in "Percepción y narrativa: inmigración, adopción del dolor y agentes circulantes en *Biutiful* (2010) y *La Promesse* (1996)" a range of interpretations regarding immigration and historical memory in contemporary Spain and Belgium.

Through a series of techniques, *Beautiful* interweaves the lives of Senegalese and Chinese immigrants with those of Spanish citizens in a dark Barcelona, outside of the city's iconic tourist image but within the parameters of reality without losing the sense of the fictional elements. On the other hand, *La Promesse*, projects the image and reality of pain as seen through the eyes of a young teenager from Belgium towards and with the immigrants who work for him and his father. Vázquez argues that these films fulfill their purpose of formulating an intrinsic discourse on their own vision of immigration in Spain and Belgium with the aim of creating a reconciliation with the spectator and the protagonists.

A preface, “A Linguistic Perspective,” by César Hoyos Álvarez opens the section on Identity and Language. It is followed by the article “Botiflers and Betrayal: Heraldic Semiotics and Linguistic Landscape on Catalonia's National Day” by Marguerite Morlan, who analyzes the Linguistic Landscape and Catalan heraldic imagery of the 2022 *Diada*, Catalonia's National Day. Morlan takes us to an interesting qualitative content analysis that complements her quantitative coding scheme and reveals that *Independence* was the dominant theme in signage, followed by *Betrayal*, *Solidarity*, and *Catalan Cultural Identity*. Through a series of photographs and graphs, Morlan argues that the 2022 *Diada* shed light on the evolution of secessionist sentiment and the role of traditional Catalan symbols in the tense socio-political climate of post-referendum Catalonia.

The second text of the linguistics section is “Identity through Gaming in the L2 Classroom: Contextualization and Narrative” by Kyle Patterson, who offers a linguistic approach to teaching second languages and a pedagogy study on EdTech competencies. Through contextualization and narration, Patterson discusses the impact of video games on student identification in the L2 classroom.

He also presents a few examples of various forms of identification through students' creation of avatars in the video game *The Sims*. Through his discussion of this approach, Patterson hopes to inspire future studies and discussions on video games and identity in the language classroom.

The last text of the Linguistics section is “Using *Nearpod* for Pronunciation Training in Elementary Spanish Courses” by César Hoyos Álvarez. In this article, Hoyos Álvarez presents a qualitative study that examines the first impressions of 18 second-language learners of Spanish to an online pronunciation activity completed during class. In his study, Hoyos Álvarez uses the digital and interactive platform *Nearpod*, arguing that enhances instruction and supports student language learning. Additionally, the author proves that using tools such as *Nearpod* provides valuable insight into the global utility of an in-class pronunciation task. Although Hoyos Álvarez evaluates *Nearpod* as part of the student learning experience, he also argues that these online platforms provide blueprints for instructors looking to implement pedagogies that harness technology for language learning.

The following section comprises Verónica García Moreno's interviews with Salvador de la Torre and Rocío Rojas Marcos. The “The Visual Poetics of the Border: A Conversation with Salvador de la Torre” introduces us to Salvador de la Torre, a Mexican-born Texas-raised artist, educator, and storyteller based in Southern California, whose performance works engage with political activism and migration. In the second interview, “Tánger multiplicada en los espejos: La otra orilla de Rocío Rojas Marcos”, Moreno introduces Rojas Marcos, author and researcher whose interests revolve around contemporary Moroccan literature and literary multilingualism, as well as the Spanish presence in the international city of Tangier from the late 19th to the mid-20th century.

In conclusion, the LII issue dedicated to the theme of Identity and Borders seeks to unravel the nuanced connections between human identity formation and the geographical, cultural, and political borders that shape and redefine it. The articles presented in this issue offer diverse perspectives and insights into the ways in which borders shape human identity and, reciprocally, how identity influences the conceptualization and reinforcement of borders. By examining this dynamic interrelationship, we aim to enrich academic discourse and foster a deeper appreciation of the lived experiences of individuals navigating the complex terrain of identity within the context of borders.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the authors whose rigorous research, expertise, scholarship, and innovative perspectives have enriched the content of this volume. The successful realization of this LII issue owes much to the dedicated efforts and commitment of the 2022-2023 Editorial Board, comprised of Adela Mckay Villegas, Cristián Mora, Erin Mauffray, Gabriela Cruz, Ícaro Carvalho, Jesús Duarte, John Carter, José Galindo Benítez, Julia González, Raquel Zandomenighi, Pedro Cuevas, and Saraí Jaramillo from the University of California, Los Angeles. Additionally, this year I had the opportunity to work and collaborate with Associate Editor, Verónica García Moreno (Montana State University) as well as with Guest Contributing Editors César Hoyos Álvarez (Northwestern University) and Mara Uriol-Garate (UC Davis), all of who reviewed submissions, provided constructive feedback, and shaped the intellectual direction of this issue.

I would also like to give special thanks to Leandro Hernández, the previous Editor-in-Chief of *Mester*, and to José Galindo Benítez, the current Editor-in-Chief, for their support throughout the editorial process.

I am very grateful to *Mester* LII's Faculty Advisor, Professor Maite Zubiaurre, for the support from the current Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Maarten Van Delden, and the 2023 Vice Chair for Graduate Studies, Barbara Fuchs. I would also like to thank the GSA Publication Office staff members, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese staff, and the student body.

**Cristina G. Vázquez**

Editor-in-Chief, *Mester* 52

University of California, Los Angeles

*I* dentity

and

*B*orders

# LIMINAL BODIES: BOUNDARIES, TRANSGRESSION, AND GENDER IN PAN-MEDITERRANEAN CHAPBOOKS

Roxanna Colón-Cosme  
Haverford College

From the late fifteenth century and well into the twentieth, small, brief, inexpensive pamphlets, known as *pliegos sueltos*, were one of the primary sources of information and entertainment in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>1</sup>

These unassuming publications usually contained *romances*, *glosas de romance*, songs, accounts of shipwrecks, battles, weddings, natural disasters, and other forms of popular literature.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the Iberian Peninsula, publications like the *librikos de romansas*—brief booklets written in Judeo-Spanish using Hebrew script (i.e., *aljamiado*)—left a record of the popular ballads sung among the Sephardic community living in the Mediterranean. These popular and ephemeral publications—sixteenth century Iberian *pliegos sueltos* and twentieth century Sephardic *librikos de romansas*—appropriated and refashioned the contents of the medieval *romancero viejo* and similarly sang about lovers and heartbreak, explored the war between Moors and Christians and represented<sup>3</sup> liminal spaces of war, conflict, and negotiation.

Something interesting about these chapbooks is that whether they are narrating a shipwreck or commemorating the events of the so-called “Reconquista,” the representation of spaces of interaction between gender was commonplace. In this article, we will explore how these publications that spanned across time—from the late fifteenth to the twentieth century—and space—from the Iberian Peninsula to the Mediterranean—depicted gender and gender roles. We will intern into spaces where women are seen as victims of the geopolitical context, regarded as spoils of war, involved in disreputable sexual relationships, or engaging in masculine-labeled behaviors. I believe the study of liminal experiences from a gendered perspective, focusing on how each gender recognizes their incumbent sociopolitical boundaries and means of

transgressing them, is integral to understanding one of the main thematic concerns of pan-Mediterranean chapbooks: gender interactions.

Liminal is defined in the dictionary as the transitional or intermediate point between two conditions, stages, or periods. In anthropology, liminality has been described as the middle stage of a rite of passage where the individual is no longer in a pre-ritual status, but they have not yet transitioned to their new post-ritual stage.<sup>4</sup>

I understand liminal as what lies between a geopolitical border and also as the transitional periods or circumstances in which the boundaries between one thing and another are completely erased. Liminal represents both the limits and unrestrictedness of an experience. Liminality can be gendered and understood as the liminal experiences associated with and triggered by gender or as the blurring of the confines of gender. Through the study of gender liminalities, we may explore, for instance, how the body interacts with interstitial spaces or how men and women conform or break with social boundaries and negotiate imposed gender roles. In exploring gender in these Iberian and Mediterranean brief publications, we must weigh in the purpose of these texts, their intended audience, and the reasoning behind their chapbook format. Most importantly, since I believe that the brief pages and amusing contents of the *pliegos sueltos* and the *librikos de romansas* move in the uncertain space of the liminal, my analysis of gender in pan-Mediterranean chapbooks will focus precisely on the ambiguity, hybridity, and overall distress of women living liminal experiences in a geopolitical or social border.



## Spoils of War: Negotiating Gender in Warfare

One of the main topics of the *romancero* was the medieval past of the “Reconquista.” Therefore, the glosses or variants, printed in *pliegos sueltos* and inspired by the medieval *romancero*, brought to the minds of their readers past stories of warfare and geopolitical instability. Encouraged by this historical-literary space, in 1525 the glossator Francisco de Lora composed a gloss inspired by the famous medieval Romance del rey moro que perdió Valencia, “Helo helo por do viene / el moro por la calçada” (Lora 3).<sup>5</sup> The story takes place in a Valencia recently conquered by the Cid, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, and features a Moorish king, probably King Bucar of Morocco, attempting to regain the lost city. In the *glosa*, the city of Valencia is characterized as a woman and contested between the Christian and Moorish forces. Moreover, the depiction of Valencia as a territory-body disputed between two intrinsically masculine forces is restated in the interactions between men and women in the text.

In his attempt of avenging the loss of Valencia, the Moorish king decides to take advantage of the female community of his adversary: “contra la real usança / me haze tomar vengança / delas muy flacas mugeres” (Lora 4).<sup>6</sup> More specifically, the Muslim king intended to capture both the wife and daughter of the Cid: “su muger doña ximena / sera de mi cativada,” and “su hija Urraca hernando / sea mi enamorada” (Lora 4).<sup>7</sup> In this space of political instability, the female body takes center stage as a weapon to inflict damage on the enemy. Dishonoring the women works as a sort of reparations for the lost space of Valencia, seen as feminine:

Partese mi corazon  
 en saber Valencia mia  
 que toda mi perdicion  
 este tu nuevo patron  
 la convierte en alegria. (Lora 4)<sup>8</sup>

The Moorish king tries to seduce Urraca as part of his (re)conquest strategy. Simultaneously, the Cid, Urra-

ca as part of his (re)conquest strategy. Simultaneously, the Cid, Urraca’s father, has asked her to seduce and distract the Muslim king from an imminent and secret attack:

aquel moro hide [perro]  
 detene melo en palabra.  
 Fingireys tenerle fe  
 mostrandole mil favores  
 porque mas credito os de. (Lora 5)<sup>9</sup>

Spectators of a double cross, we witness how the Moorish king and Urraca are deceptively falsifying love as a means to secure the political territory.

The woman’s body becomes a device to forge the war between Moors and Christians. For the Moorish king, the attempted capture of Urraca’s body would dishonor the Cid; similarly, the Cid turned the body of his own daughter into bait to neutralize the advances of the Muslim king. The border is negotiated through the weaponization of the female body—as a captive and as bait. The woman’s body—in lieu of the territory of Valencia—is thus exploited by men as part of their geopolitical transaction. However, reminiscent of Valencia, the woman’s body also resists the conquest attempt. Ultimately, the Moorish king and the Cid are on two sides of a border, and the body of Urraca—and, by extension, the territory of Valencia—is stuck in a liminal space of negotiation where the female body is exploited and threatened by men’s desires and geopolitical objectives.

In another *pliego suelto* of the sixteenth century, we find a gloss to the medieval *Romance del asalto de Baeza*, also known as the *Romance de Pero Díaz*, “Moricos los mis moricos / los que ganays mi soldada” (Peralta264).<sup>10</sup> The *romance* narrates the historical assault planned by the Moorish community against the city of Baeza in 1407. The *glosa* by Luys de Peralta delves into the details of the siege, which encompassed the capture of a woman (daughter of a certain Pero Díaz) projected to be the new lover of the Moorish king: “y trae con alegrías / la hija de Pero

Pero diaz / para ser mi enamorada” (Peralta 265).<sup>11</sup> Once again, we find a woman at the center of geopolitical negotiations. The Muslim king, concerned with the conditions in which the captive lady should be delivered, commands that her honor remains intact, untouched by other men: “Y ninguno sea osado / de le tocar en desonra / mas traelda a buen recabdo” (Peralta 265).<sup>12</sup> The extraction conditions of the daughter are carefully designed by the Moorish king to delimit her space and erase her possibility of interaction with others.

Once captured, the woman needed to be groomed and adorned: “de joyas de gran valor / haze que venga arreada / como conviene a mi honor” (Peralta 265).<sup>13</sup> The nameless daughter is an inanimate object about to travel among the rest of the loot; through her ornamentation, the woman becomes one of the new material possessions of the Muslim king. The woman’s body and identity are completely lost within the transportation and garment arrangements created to change her appearance and prevent her communication with others. The conquest of the territory of Baeza also constitutes the conquest of the women within the territory and the erasure of their bodies and identity. Once again, the female body is represented in an intermediate, liminal, and ambiguous space in which women’s identity is suppressed in the process of negotiating a border.

Another example of women’s liminality in the context of war is from the gloss of the *Romance de la Mora Morayma*, “Yo mera mora Morayma / morilla de un bel catar,” composed by Jerónimo Pinar.<sup>14</sup> The famous *romance* tells the story of a frightened Moorish woman called by the door in the middle of the night. The person at the liminal space of the door is a Christian man posing as her uncle. The gloss explores the negotiations between the Moorish woman and the Christian man who wants to transgress into her private space. This Christian man disarms Morayma by falsifying a Moorish identity. He achieves this by showcasing his linguistic expertise—as a speaker of Arabic—his familial appeal—by providing insider information about Morayma’s family circle—and his sociocultural competence—through his awareness of the social circumstances that affected the Muslim community at the time. In a way, the Christian man appropriated his enemies’ culture. Through all these strategies, the Christian weakens the liminal space of the door that separates him from Morayma.

We can assume that this narrative takes place in a city that has just been conquered by Christians, where there is no peace and security for the Muslim community and where death is plausible and common: “Si no me abres tu [la puerta ] mi vida / aqui me veras matar” (Pinar 290).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Christian man transgresses into the private space of Morayma with ease, thus revealing the social conditions of a persecuted community that probably lived in relative social insecurity. These sociopolitical conditions symbolically transformed Morayma into a territory doomed to be conquered. At the end of the *glosa*, the Moorish woman surrenders and opens the door, breaking the liminal threshold separating her from the Christian man: “fuerame para la puerta / y abril de par en par” (Pinar 291).<sup>16</sup> Morayma was a victim of a historical moment of geopolitical insecurity that forced her into a liminal space—previously occupied by the door—at the risk of being sexually assaulted.

In all the cases explored in this section, women found themselves in a liminal space where gender became part of a political strategy. Urraca was exploited by her father (the Cid) and used as bait to lure the Moorish enemy. The daughter of Pero Díaz was bound to become part of the material bounty of the conquest of Baeza, a mere possession of the Moorish king. Morayma is in a liminal space between two geopolitical realities and at the mercy of a sexual assault—a symbolical reflection of territorial invasion. These chapbooks addressed not only the liminal space of the frontier but also how women experienced that liminality of warfare. The geographical border is disputed between two masculine geopolitical forces, and women are placed precisely in that liminal space when a political reality is not clear from the other. Women do not have agency but become an intrinsic part of the war strategy in these liminal communities: Urraca is a bait, a distraction on the battlefield; the nameless daughter is a potential captive, part of the material loot gained from the seizure of land; and Morayma is a victim of the political instability of a newly conquered space, the conquered body available for a sexual assault. In these belligerent spaces, women’s bodies are territorialized and bound to become a spoil of war.





### Assassins and Adulterers: Negotiating Gender in Bed

Conversely, it would be unfair to represent women only as a passive element in gender relationships. In this section of the article, we will explore how the liminality of women's experiences is also represented in how women break with the limits of the typical qualities associated with their gender to negotiate their identity and subvert gender roles. In this case, we will observe how the female body navigates liminal experiences as active elements of negotiation. This type of representation will not only be consulted in *pliegos sueltos* of the sixteenth century but also in chapbooks published by Sephardic communities in the Mediterranean in the twentieth century.

A *romance* from 1583 narrates the death of a man who breaks with his promise of marriage. Let us review the headline: "Aquí se contiene un horrendo y espantoso caso, agora nuevamente acontecido en Berberia en la ciudad de Marruecos con un Moro llamado Çulema y una Barbara Mora llamada Belayda, los quales tratando de sus amores, porque el Moro se casó con otra, le dieron la muerte, y ella con sus manos hizo cosas inauditas" (Pérez 279).<sup>17</sup> The *pliego suelto*, composed by Hierónimo Pérez de Almazán, chronicles the story of a Moorish woman named Belayda who, after learning that her fiancée Zulema has married another, decides to take revenge with the help of her cousins. Through an amorous letter, Belayda lures Zulema. Upon his arrival, he is soon stripped of his clothes by the cousins and left defenseless upon the demands of the distressed women. Belayda then commences to torture the man mercilessly: "diciendo aquestos dos ojos, / ya sacarlos convenia, / que en mirar [a otra] fueron traidores" (Pérez 281).<sup>18</sup> From the dissection of the eyes, Belayda proceeds toward the dismemberment of Zulema's ears, nose, tongue, hands, and of course, his private parts. The mutilation of Zulema's body was not enough punishment; Belayda progresses to feed him his genitals: "Traydor come de tu carne / que mas me offendia" (Pérez 281).<sup>19</sup>

The gruesome spectacle is not necessarily expected of women, who are often regarded as delicate and

sweet beings. In turn, Belayda becomes an active entity in exacting revenge by dismembering the body of the unfaithful man. Appropriating each part of Zulema's body, Belayda claims a violent behavior usually conferred to men. Let us remember that revenge was the principal motivator of the Moorish kings that wanted to disgrace Urraca in one case and the daughter of Pero Diaz in the other. The territorial vendettas explored in the previous section were taken against female bodies placed liminally and strategically at a geopolitical border. However, in other *romances*, such as Belayda's, we notice how revenge, in this case with a sentimental motive, is taken by the own hands of the woman, who is then the one who decides a man's fate.

We see a comparable example of female agency in some couplets of 1530 where a presumably powerful lady asks a Black slave man to sing and charm her: "Coplas de como una dama ruega a un negro que cante en manera de requiebro: y como el negro se deja rogar en fin la señora vencida de su gracia le ofrece su persona" ("Coplas" 157).<sup>20</sup> Throughout the couplets, the lady implores Jorge, the enslaved Black person, for a song: "Canta Jorge por tu fe / y veras que te dare / una argolla para el pie / y otra para la garganta" ("Coplas" 157).<sup>21</sup> However, Jorge understands the disparity between the lady, a free woman allowed to ponder about love and affection, and himself, an enslaved person who does not enjoy the same luxuries: "No puedo cantar cativo / que soy mas muerto que vivo / de vuestro amor tan esquivo" ("Coplas" 157).<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the obstinate woman tries to convince Jorge by presenting him with many benefits: he will be clothed, received in a perfumed bed, fed a recently killed chicken, and, lastly, he will be freed from slavery: "y luego te quitare / el hierro que traes al pie / y la argolla a la garganta" ("Coplas" 159).<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, in return for the lady's promise of freedom, Jorge agrees to sing, i.e., approves the sexual act.

Interestingly, in the final couplet we learn about the woman's absent husband:

Porque cantas tan donoso  
deste mi cuerpo gracioso  
te sirve mientras mi esposo

viene de la tierra santa  
ya quere canta. (“Coplas” 160)<sup>24</sup>

By “tierra santa,” the couplets refer to the Crusades, a series of religious wars fought between Christians and Muslims to secure the control of holy sites. Upon the doubtful return of the husband, the lady oversees both her household and her sexual desires. Through her infidelity and also by becoming romantically involved with a man outside her social circle, the woman has placed herself as an outlaw in a liminal space outside of the conditions imposed on a woman of her degree. She rationalizes her decision to have a romantic and sexual relationship with an enslaved person by indicating that although dark in color, Jorge speaks as a white person—a notion perhaps associated with his ability to sing and charm her: “que aunque de color mohíno / la platica tienes blanca” (“Coplas” 160).<sup>25</sup> By voicing this justification, the lady confirms to the reader that she is aware of the possible ramifications of her decision; we may infer that being sexually involved with a Black and enslaved person was frowned upon in the society of her time.

The interesting couplets showcase a woman negotiating the expected roles of her gender. At the time, women had to patiently wait for the man of the house to return from the war. The lady, however, has decided to take advantage of her situation and become an agent of her own sexuality and her security. It is important to remember that male adultery, although criticized by the church, was tolerated, while female infidelity was thoroughly disapproved by society and the church. María Sanchez-Perez explains the subject of adultery in the *pliegos sueltos*:

Desde siempre, el adulterio masculino— aunque criticado por los teólogos—era tolerado y solo vagamente censurado, mientras que la infidelidad femenina era reprobada y denostada duramente. Ya en la Biblia se estipulaba claramente qué se entendía por adulterio: mientras que la mujer era siempre adúltera, el hombre solo lo era cuando lo cometía con una mujer casada. Es decir, era el estado civil de la mujer lo que definía el adulterio -

(Deuteronomio 22:22). Ahora bien, mientras que la Iglesia consideraba el adulterio—masculino y femenino—como un pecado y, por tanto, como un delito, la justicia civil únicamente lo consideraba así cuando lo cometía la mujer. Lo más frecuente además, en la época que nos ocupa y ya desde la Edad Media, es que si una mujer era descubierta manteniendo relaciones extraconyugales la justicia entregara a los adúlteros—junto con los bienes de la esposa—al marido para que él hiciese con ellos lo que desease, sin excluir que pudiese matarlos. (289)

Therefore, by deciding to be sentimentally or sexually involved with an enslaved Black person, the powerful woman in these couplets is not only acting against marriage and societal rules but also against the church and God. Furthermore, by granting freedom to her enslaved person, the woman intermingles with social policies regarding slavery, a transaction primarily associated with men. Of course, the lady’s resolve is not without its problems because the enslaved person is her subordinate, and she does not decide to free him out of goodwill but to fulfill her desires. Nevertheless, the lady’s determination to free Jorge and make him her lover places her socially beyond the gender rules associated with the women of her time.

Similarly, the Sephardic *librikos de romansas* edited and adapted the medieval *romancero* to retell or invent stories about promiscuous, adulterous, and evil women. In these Judeo-Spanish compositions, there is quite an impressive list of *romansas* about inadequate and old husbands and unfaithful and evil wives. One of the cases is the *romansa* “La adúltera” compiled and published by Yacob Abraham Yoná in 1908. It tells the story of an unfaithful woman who is visited by her lover while still in bed with her husband and breastfeeding her child. As soon as the husband walks out the door, the lover enters through a window. However, when the husband forgets something and returns home, the lover needs to hide in a closet, where he is discovered soon afterward by the husband. The woman in the *romansa* interacts with her lover while she is still in bed nursing the child.

The incredible scene destroys the holiness often associated with motherhood. Beyond the idea of the unfaithful woman, the *romansa* represents a quasi-antithetical image of an unfaithful mother: a woman that is both a mother and a lover. The way the mother navigates womanhood goes, once again, outside the typical delimitations of gender.

A more brazen case is the Sephardic *romansa* of “Celinos y la adúltera,” also compiled and published by Yacob Abraham Yoná in 1905. The *romansa* has roots in a twelfth century French *chanson de geste*, and there are several (oral) records of the *romance* in twentieth century Sarajevo, Salonika, and Burgos. It tells the story of the wife of an old count (Blankaninyya), who, dissatisfied with her marriage, falls in love with a young man named Celinos (Klareto in the Sephardic version). The lover, Celinos, advises the woman to fake a pregnancy and to ask the husband for deer meat to eat (*hazir* [pig] in the Sephardic *romansa*). Celinos planned to kill the old husband once he went hunting the deer/pig. However, the old husband kills Celinos instead and brings his head to the adulterous woman, after which he also proceeds to behead her.

While only the twentieth century versions of “Celinos y la adúltera” survive, the premise of this *romansa* was prevalent in folk literature and especially present in the *romances* and *relaciones de sucesos* printed in chapbooks.<sup>27</sup> Many of these *relaciones* were known as *casos escabrosos* and narrated sensationalist and tremendous events, such as murder, torture, adultery, and other repudiable behavior.<sup>28</sup> Let us review the very graphic heading of one of these *casos* about a *malcasada* (not happily married):

Aqui se contiene vn caso digno de ser memorado, el qual sucedio en este año de mil y quinientos y nouenta en la ciudad de çamora, el qual trata de la cruda muerte que vna muger dio a su padre por casarla a su disgusto y assimesmo trata como mato a su marido, y causo otras cinco muertes como la obra lo yra declarando por su estilo y trata de la justicia que se hizo della, y de vn amigo suyo / Fue la presente compuesta por Iuan Vazquez natural de Fuente Ouejuna. (Vázquez 1)<sup>29</sup>

In the *romance* published by Juan Vázquez in 1590, a lady is in love and refuses to marry a young man selected by her father. After the negative of the daughter, the father fell ill and decided to wed her to a seventy-year-old man instead of the original lover or the young man. The daughter then plots with her lover to kill her old husband:

todo gusto os quiero dar  
dezime señora en que,  
en que le hemos de matar.

Y alli el concierto hizieron  
de como le matarían  
y por obra lo pusieron  
y sus desseos cumplieron  
que entre ambos tenia  
y aquella noche siguiente  
entro en su casa el amigo  
por un secreto postigo. (Vázquez 5)<sup>30</sup>

In the process, the couple kills not only the husband but also two servants and a maid. She then cross-dresses as a man to avoid being recognized in their journey to evading justice: from Zamora to Burgos and then Santander. Later, the woman’s father discovers the daughter’s location and decides to pay her a visit, only to find his own demise at the hands of his own daughter. Finally, the authorities arrest the couple and torture them to confession: the lover is subjected to the gallows and the woman to the *garrote vil*.<sup>31</sup>

In this story, we see one of the most recurrent topics of the Sephardic *romancero* and the *casos escabrosos*: the unfaithful woman who plans the death of her husband with the help of a lover. In this *caso*, the woman kills her husband and father, along with three others, before being executed by the law.

She is depicted as an insatiable and fierce demon: “La infernal llena de gozo / quando le vio degollado” (Vázquez 7).<sup>32</sup> Something interesting about these unfaithful and deadly women is that beyond wishing for the death of their husbands, they both had a complicated and hostile relationship with their parents. The woman of the *caso*, in addition to killing her husband, seeks revenge against her father for marrying her against her will: “oy te truxo tu pecado / ante la presencia mia / donde entiendo lo has pagado” (Vázquez 7).<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Blankaninyya, the woman from the Sephardic *romansa*, is depicted as a vain woman who contrastingly blesses her beauty and curses her parents for marrying her to an older person:

bendizyendo al Dyez del syelo,

ke tal linda la fu'e a kriar;

maldizyendo 'a padre 'i madre,

ke kon 'un vyežo la fu'e a kazar.

(“Romansa 12” 227)<sup>34</sup>

We notice that the women in these chapbooks do not live within the parameters of their assigned gender. Instead, they exploit their circumstances and adopt a way of living that seems more masculine to find justice or sexual freedom. Most of these women have been dealt a bad hand—they have been betrayed, abandoned, and forced to marry someone older—and, as a consequence, they have taken action and adopted a more masculine role, even cross-dressing as a man, to seek vengeance or ensure that their romantic or sexual needs are met.



### Conclusion

Through this review of a selection of *romances*, *glosas de romance*, *coplas*, and *romansas* published in Iberian and Sephardic chapbooks, we evaluated the boundaries, transgressions, and negotiations associated with gender.

In the first section of the paper, we explored the female body as a liminal and passive entity used to negotiate a border in a warfare scenario. In those cases, the woman—Urraca, the daughter, and Morayma—does not have agency and is right in the center, in the liminal space between two masculine political and ideological camps. In the second section of the paper, we considered a different type of liminality, one in which women (re)act and negotiate their own social roles. In this second case, the woman is an active entity. Her liminality consists of how she disrupts the limits established for her feminine gender and adopts behaviors or strategies that tend to be associated with men or masculinity: revenge, violence, torture, murder, subordination of the other, infidelity, cross-dressing, etc.

In all these chapbooks, we noticed some recurrent stories and themes. First, some women were reduced to interchangeable goods and spoils of war as part of a geopolitical conflict scenario. Another recurrent story was those of unfaithful women who look for entertainment outside the home and at the expense of the husband's absence. Related to this motif, we have that of the *malcasada*, the unhappily married woman that often seeks the help of a lover to get rid of the husband (by killing him). Interestingly, women in these stories were willing to participate in violent activities, like killing and torturing, to get rid of a husband or to avenge an infidelity.

Our study of gender in these publications provides certain preliminary conclusions. The creators of chapbooks were simultaneously editing and reprising medieval oral materials while also creating new compositions that went completely beyond the medieval contents of the *romancero*. These publications, from both the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries, were unapologetic and brutal; they were heavily invested in presenting the boundaries and transgressions in the daily interactions of men and women. As we have seen in the examples provided, these chapbooks simultaneously broadcasted Moorish kings and Christian knights defending a border, reported adulterous women plotting against gullible, old, and inadequate husbands, and showcased women taking committing murder, taking revenge, and torturing. Women in these scenarios were always in the middle of the experience, either as a sacrifice of the war between

two male sides or as the daring axis, here and there, exerting their femininity while also engaging in behaviors expected of men and breaking with expected roles.

My work reinstates the connection between the Iberian *pliegos sueltos* and the Sephardic *librikos de romansas*.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, I aim to emphasize the fondness within the Hispanic and Sephardic letters for ephemeral publications that, from distant spaces and contexts, showcase women's licentious deeds and scandalous sexual behaviors. These pan-Mediterranean chapbooks present women in the interspace, experiencing life in-between different geopolitical realities or in the middle of expected gender roles. Did others use women to negotiate a boundary, or were women negotiating their own boundaries? Undoubtedly, these texts illustrate how geopolitical borders and social boundaries influence how women navigate space and participate in liminal experiences where they remain hybrid in their political and gender identities. At times, women conform to their assigned roles within society, but at other times, they are able to transgress and negotiate their function and agency. Pan-Mediterranean chapbooks provide a marvelous sight into the liminality of the women's experience, the negotiation of their sociopolitical identity, and their shifting gender roles in warfare, in bed, and beyond.



### Notes

[1] See Sánchez-Pérez.

[2] Note that *romance* here refers to the metric pattern found in Spanish ballads, not the genre of chivalric romance or the Romance languages. The *glosa de romance* is a poetic composition that emerged in *pliegos sueltos* in the sixteenth century to gloss, comment, and expand the content of a *romance*.

[3] The *romancero viejo* denotes the collection of medieval Iberian anonymous *romances* that were transmitted orally and eventually passed on to written literature in divergent or glossed versions. In contrast,

the *romancero nuevo* includes those romances written by a known author for their printed inclusion in *cancioneros*, *romanceros*, and *pliegos sueltos*.

It is important to note that, from a material perspective, the printed chapbook recontextualized and appropriated the contents of the medieval and oral *romancero*. Regardless of their origin—oral or printed—these ballads belonged to an indeterminate space between oral and written culture because, even after being printed in chapbooks, they continued to be sung orally from generation to generation. For more information about the relationship between oral and written Sephardic literature, see Díaz-Mas.

[4] See Genep.

[5] The original formatting, capitalization, and punctuation found on the chapbooks is preserved in all the quotations. My translation: “Look, look, where he comes / rides the Moorish king this way.”

[6] “in opposition to the royal norms / makes me take vengeance / against the frail women” (my trans.).

[7] “his wife doña Ximena / shall be my slave” and “his daughter Urraca Hernando / for my mistress I intend” (my trans.).

[8] “My heart breaks / in knowing, my Valencia / that all my undoing / your new lord / turns to happiness” (my trans.).

[9] “that Moor son of a [dog] / charm him with words. // Pretend your devotion / shower him with a thousand courtesies / so he confides in you” (my trans.).

[10] “Moorish, oh my Moorish / those who earn my salary” (my trans.).

[11] “and bring with joy / the daughter of Pero Díaz / to be my lover” (my trans.).

[12] “And no one be daring / to touch her dishonorably / but bring her safe and sound” (my trans.).

[13] “with jewels of great value / have her come dressed up / as befits my honor” (my trans.).

[14] “I was the Moorish woman Morayma / a Moorish maiden of a beautiful face” (my trans.).

[15] “If you do not open [the door], my life / I will perish here before you” (my trans.).

[16] “I went to the door / and opened it wide-open” (my trans.).

[17] “Here is contained a horrendous and frightful case, newly occurred in Barbary [Coast] in the city of Morocco with a Moorish man named Zulema and a barbaric Moorish woman named Belayda, who dealing with their love, because the Moorish man

married another, was given death, and she did unheard things with her own hands” (my trans.).

[18] “saying these two eyes / it is convenient to take them out / because by looking [at another] they were traitors” (my trans.).

[19] “Traitor, eat your [own] flesh / that which offended me the most” (my trans.).

[20] “Songs of how a lady begs a Black man to sing as a way of flattery: and how the Black man plays hard to get, finally, the lady, defeated by his grace, offers herself” (my trans.).

[21] “Sing Jorge, for the love of God / and you will see that I will give you / a ring for the foot / and another for the throat” (my trans.).

[22] “I cannot sing while I am a captive / because I am more dead than alive / elusive from your love” (my trans.).

[23] “and then I will take away / the iron that you wear on your foot / and the ring around your throat” (my trans.).

[24] “Why do you sing so gracefully / of my gracious body / help yourself, while my husband / comes from the Holy Land (the Crusades) / you already want to sing” (my trans.).

[25] “although dark in color / you have a white talk” (my trans.). Mohíno said of the cattle that have very dark black hair, also refers to a hinny, the offspring of a horse and a donkey.

[26] His name varies across versions: Klareto, Carleto, Delino, Zelino, Celinos, etc.

[27] The *relaciones de sucesos* worked as a kind of news booklet where people read about battles and stories of captives and were informed about recent events, like weddings and natural disasters.

[28] The *casos escabrosos*, written as *romances* or songs, were one of the subgenres that achieved more success in the *pliegos sueltos* of the sixteenth century. For more information about the *casos*, see Sánchez-Pérez.

[29] My translation:

Here is a case worthy of being commemorated, which happened in the year 1590 in the city of Zamora, which deals with the cruel death that a woman gave her father for marrying her to her displeasure and likewise deals with how she killed her husband, and caused five other deaths as the work will be declaring in its style and deals with the justice that was done to her, and to a lover of hers. This was composed by Juan Vázquez, a native of Fuente Ovejuna.

[30] “I want to give you all the pleasure / tell me, lady, how / how are we going to kill him. // And there they made an agreement / about how they would kill him / and they put it to work / and fulfilled were the desires / that they both had / and that next night / the lover entered her house / through a secret shutter” (my trans.).

[31] The *garrote vil* was a weapon used to strangle a person.

[32] “The infernal [woman] filled with joy / when she saw him beheaded” (my trans.).

[33] “today your sin brought you / before my presence / where I understand that you have paid” (my trans.).

[34] “blessing God in Heaven / who made her so beautiful / cursing her father and mother / who married her to an old man” (my trans.).

[35] See Pedrosa.

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# “A CHUVA NUNCA FOI O PROBLEMA”: MEMORY, INDIGENEITY, AND DECOLONIALITY THROUGH UÝRA

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## Introduction

“A tree that walks” is how biologist, educator, and indigenous visual artist Emerson Munduruku often describes themselves as they embody Uýra Sodoma [uw-’i-rə so-’do-mə], an entity that muddies the taxonomic distinction between human, plant, and animal. In the Brazilian city of Manaus, Munduruku (who is trans and identifies as nonbinary) created Uýra, a being that manifests as many things and many people in and on Munduruku’s body. When Munduruku speaks of Uýra in interviews or on social media platforms, they use the first name and feminine pronoun “ela.” In this article, I will refer to Munduruku as a visual artist and Uýra as an embodied expression of stories, thoughts, affective positions, and politics. I hope that using different pronouns in reference to the two will minimize the confusion of different voices. When Uýra inhabits Munduruku, she offers a unique response to the mandate that indigenous people remain immobilized in time. As well as this, she calls on those who see and hear her to notice other forms in a way analogous to anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s formulation of perspectivism and multinaturalism. As Munduruku says of these forms, “Cada presença tem uma maquiagem, uma completa presença de diferença” (Sodoma, “Arte Indígena” 8:11-8:20). These rather abstract concepts materialize artistically in the photographs and video performances of which Uýra is the protagonist. However, Uýra is not only a rupture with an anthropocentric model of modernity that has come

to characterize many cities, discourses, and imaginaries since the consolidation of settler colonial states like Brazil. She is also an unmasking of this very condition, a petition to envision the possibility of being other than what we are, or have become, by making visible a dwelling in otherness that the city of Manaus itself conceals.

In this article, I draw on Uýra’s video-performance “Manaus: Uma cidade na aldeia” to argue that Uýra is an alter-political (Hage), and therefore decolonial (Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*; Mignolo and Walsh) response to what Suzy Zepeda calls detribalization, “the process of Indigenous peoples’ loss of identification with their lineages, spiritual practices, and land-based connection and culture due to the harm of colonization” (7). I will examine the performance and insert analysis throughout. Then, I will discuss it through the framework of alter-politics, a response to writings against the “capitalist-colonialist-domesticating world order” (Hage 9) that end up privileging an oppositional, anti-, politics. In response to the anti-, alter-politics finds value in searching for alternative ways of inhabiting the earth that aren’t necessarily predicated on adversarial schemas. With this framework, I will ultimately demonstrate that the video-performance does not reify the questions of resistance arising from colonial dominance’s legacies. Instead, it brings to the fore an oft-hidden interrelationality between the colonial city on the one hand and the necessarily allied forms of human, animal, and plant, and river on the other. With this relationship in mind, the piece therefore fashions a speculative and decolonial outcome that bypasses a dialectic of social antagonism and “[heals] through remembering” (Zepeda 7).

Born in Mojuí dos Campos, a small town outside Brazil's capital's northern state of Pará, Munduruku moved to Manaus, Amazonas, at five years old. To this day, they still inhabit the peripheral neighborhoods of the two million-strong capital of the rainforest. In fact, in an episode of "Arte Indígena Contemporânea," a Brazilian series released in March 2022, Munduruku happily states that "as periferias são a minha aldeia" (Sodoma, "Arte Indígena" 1:13). This statement may be understood as a reclaiming through exclusion. In fact, indigenous people were not officially granted status as Brazilians with a political voice until the Constitution of 1988, and as Devine Guzmán reminds us, "indigenous Brazilians are still situated mostly outside the polis, both in theory (law) and in practice" (51). This establishes the tone of the rest of the interview and introduces how, in the performance "Manaus: Cidade na aldeia," Uýra's body and affections become the "site and instrument of ontological differentiation and referential disjunction" (Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology" 6). Indeed, this is precisely how Uýra was born. Munduruku tells us in their interview with Instituto Cultural Vale that "a Uýra nasce do momento quando [era] criança aos dois, três, quatro anos. Comecei a brincar com essas coisas, a andar pelo mato, a ver bichos e a experimentar com folhas no meu cabelo, no meu rosto, [e] col[á-las] com barro na minha pele ... Ao juntar meu corpo com uma folha, nós viramos uma" (Sodoma, "Arte Indígena" 4:55-5:42). Not only does the body's prominence here denaturalize the space between nature and society, it also turns on its head the notion that theoretical and conceptual frameworks necessarily precede praxis (Mignolo and Walsh 19). Uýra tells us that doing is thinking, and that thinking has never only been for those with a quill or a printing press.



### Engaging a More-than-Human Environment through Memory, History, and the Body

Filmed and produced in November of 2020 and released the following month, the six-minute video-performance "retrata uma forma documental meio fi-

ccional a história dessa cidade [Manaus]" (Sodoma, "Arte Indígena" 12:33-12:41). Being "somewhat fictional" in this sense alludes to the themes of history and memory. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot's treatment of such compliments Zepeda's analysis of remembering as a decolonizing methodology (Zepeda 1). In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Trouillot critiques the "storage model of memory-history," which assumes that "memories are discrete representations stored in a cabinet, the contents of which are generally accurate and accessible at will" (14). Both Trouillot and Uýra invalidate the notion that history has an independent, fixed existence in the past, and that memory is the mere retrieval of that substance. Past and present are relational and necessarily co-constituted. If one's constitution as subject goes hand-in-hand with the creation of the past, and if in cases where a collective subject (in this case Brazilian indigenous people) did not exist at the time of events they claim to remember, then these collective subjects "do not succeed such a past: they are its contemporaries" (Trouillot 16). Giorgio Agamben also comments on the contemporary. In his formulation, "All eras, for those who experience contemporariness, are obscure. The contemporary is precisely the person who knows how to see this obscurity, who is able to write by dipping his pen in the obscurity of the present" (44). In this temporal and situational elasticity, therefore, Uýra toys with the past, the present, the colonial city, and decolonial ideas of indigeneity in order to "conta[r] as histórias das plantas, dos bichos, dos processos, das outras entidades (o rio, a água, a terra)" (Sodoma, "Arte Indígena" 7:05-7:32). In playing with notions of past and present, fiction and history, Uýra brings to the fore how "tradições indígenas consideram a história dessa natureza [como] parte de tudo que se entende da cultura indígena" (Sodoma, "Arte Indígena" 7:36-7:48). She also blurs these very distinctions, thereby renouncing long-held oppositions (nature/culture, human/nonhuman) so that radical interrelationality may bloom in the face of the West's pre-established editorial voice, a voice that has for centuries sought to naturalize its own universality.

In lieu of a traditional plot, the performance is composed of four acts and portrays Uýra in various locations around the city of Manaus.

The accompanying audio is an account, in Uýra's voice, of the bleak history of the colonization of the Amazon and its indigenous people. The performance opens with the first act: "Pra Memória Guardar - Nasceu de Costas." We see Uýra standing with her back to the viewer facing the Rio Negro, the Amazon's largest tributary (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

The river is "uma entidade ancestral afetada pelas ações que a gente vem tomando" (Sodoma, "Arte Indígena" 7:55-7:59), one entity among many whose story deserves to be told. The sky is overcast, the water still, and the sandy banks littered with trash contrasted only by sparse and scraggy vegetation.



Figure 1

We hear, "Para meus presentes ...por em nome das noites de fome por causa de nossa língua ... pedaços de nossos corpos entregues como troféu. Por isso nasci de costas" (Sodoma, "Programa Convida 0:22-0:43). Being born with her back turned is a reference to the physical architecture and structural organization of the city of Manaus, which treats the river as a convenient means for waste removal. Uýra wears only a pair of black shorts, and her body is painted to resemble reptilian scales. She wears a beaded headdress which completely obscures her face—in fact, we don't see Uýra's face until the very end of the video-performance. Uýra begins to walk backward toward the viewer, and the frame jostles rapidly, displacing Uýra's location on the screen.

Accompanying the visuals are some rather discordant phonics: A revving engine, perhaps of a moto-taxi, gives way to the sharp call of a bird, which yields to a guttural, almost haunting growl. These sounds continue throughout and produce an affective sensibility in the viewer that harmonizes with Uýra's narration. Already in the first minute of the performance, we begin to see how, along with the visual performance, vocal narration, and overlaid sound effects, the editing of the video itself suggests a clash. The chaotic back-and-forth movement of the frame displays Uýra's "corporeal morphology" (Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics* 72), and the sounds, both of the city and of the other-than-human life of the Amazon, contribute to understanding the ontological politics of the performance itself.

Uýra is both here and there, as well as not necessarily or only human, as Munduruku tells us:

Quando a Uýra me habita ela me indica não somente o meu corpo mas também os outros corpos. A Uýra é um monte de gente, uma legião de reindivicações. E dentro dessas reindivicações é o corpo, mas não somente o corpo humano porque me interessa romper com esse antropocentrismo em que somente o corpo humano vale a pena; gosto de virar outras coisas—um sapo, uma coruja, uma planta, uma árvore que anda—pra nos lembrar que também essas outras criaturas são pouquinho diferente que a gente. Não estão tão distantes. (Sodoma, “Arte Indígena” 14:52-15:34)

This continues when next the performance cuts to Uýra still walking backwards, however now in front of the Palace of Liberty Museum in the center of Manaus. The viewer is asked, “Bonito prédio né? Uma beleza arquitetônica” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 1:06-1:12). The viewer is told that “o clássico cobriu o natural...ali dentro, exibidas em sala como objeto estão os funerários de meus parentes que lá são chamados de ‘povos nativos pré-colombianos’” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 1:28-1:51). As Uýra is seen descending the front steps of the museum on all fours, an additional clip is overlaid, again suggesting multiple engagements with the environment and a unique mimetic faculty (Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*; Willerslev 9-13, 96-97) (Figure 2).



Figure 2

The reference to the “classic covering the natural” alludes to the baroque style that dominates downtown Manaus. Particularly notable is the Teatro Amazonas opera house, constructed in the late nineteenth century and financed by the riches of the rubber boom. Uýra’s narration continues: “Onde pisa estavam 256 vestígios arqueológicos, pedaços nossos, indígenas. 133 anos depois a cidade descobriu o que cobriu: gente originária, nossas culturas e conhecimentos cobertos por pisos telhados, reboco, concreto e escadas metálicas. Abandonaram a memória da terra e [estamos] também abandonadas” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 2:01–2:37). Here it is explicit that the tensions between forgetting and remembering are paramount to Uýra’s project. Not only does remembering heal in Zepeda’s sense, but Uýra’s healing is both “guided by inner wisdom and aligned [with] connection to ancestors and elders” (Zepeda 7) as well as contemporary with them (Trouillot).

The question of memory is clearly at the heart of “Manaus: Cidade na aldeia.” To analyze it appropriately, I turn in part to the book *Queering Mesoamerican Diasporas*. In it, Suzy Zepeda discusses how visual art and cultural production in response to epistemic violence can be understood as a decolonial heuristic. Through archival research and analysis, participant observation, and interviews, her intention is to highlight and disentangle the intertwined histories of heteropatriarchy, nation, and non-Western forms of knowledge by means of developing a queer Xicana<sup>2</sup> Indígena methodology of remembering. That is, by recognizing that “decolonization requires recovering, excavating, or breathing life back into knowledges that have been hidden, lost, or silenced” (Zepeda 86), Indigenous-centered visual narratives and performances are not only transformative but make visible that which has been paved over, literally, as Uýra makes clear, by colonial violence. But healing through remembering is not solely an act of unveiling past traumas; it is simultaneously and necessarily a fecund landscape of creation and politics. By this, Zepeda means that the work of remembering “makes it possible to piece together...representations that engage the complexities of difference and the interconnections of local and global relations of power” (21–22). It should be noted that in this article, I treat “representation” in a way analogous to Eduardo Kohn. In *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*,

Kohn vigorously engages with Charles Peirce’s triadic semiology to argue that all sign processes “do things” in the world and that what we refer to as the mind or the self is itself a product of semiosis (Kohn 34). In brief, Kohn’s work with the *runa puma* of Ecuador’s Upper Amazon leads him to theorize that not *only* humans find themselves in the participation and production of open-ended relational processes of signification but that this is precisely how humans and other-than-humans interact. Representation, then, is not just a means to connect to global and historical relations of power but also to the affective elements of ongoing selfhood, transcorporeality, and dwelling in the Other.

Although she deals with Xicana/x and Latina/x identities, Zepeda’s framework and methodology can surely be extended to the Brazilian context. Whereas Zepeda treats visual art forms themselves as a mode of forging new representations that challenge colonial logics, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro’s theory of multinaturalism tells us that Amerindian cosmology proposes not a plurality of *representations*, which he takes as properties of the mind, but a multiplicity of *bodily modes of engagement* with varying realities. Therefore, Amerindian perspectivism “is not a representation because representations are properties of mind, whereas a *point of view is in the body* (Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics* 72, italics original). Kohn, however, points out that Viveiros de Castro assumes that paying attention to bodies may allow us to dodge the issue of representation itself. This problematic is at the crux of how Uýra engages with the world, and more specifically, with Manaus. Uýra’s attention is both on the body and the broader representational practices of which the body is only one component.

A great deal of what Uýra displays to the viewer in this video-performance resonates with Viveiros de Castro’s analysis of Amerindian cosmology. The reference above to a multiplicity of bodily modes of engagements points to how “the common point of reference for all beings of nature is not humans as a species but rather humanity as a condition” (Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis” 472). This is an ascription of humanity to all living beings. Yet if one of Uýra’s goals is to break with anthropocentrism, we must assume that she believes that plants, animals, and all living beings have and are worthy of life in their own right, not merely because they are an extension

of humanity, as Viveiros de Castro posits. This is in line with other recent studies of the more-than-human which privilege political, economic, scientific, and cultural entanglements with what has, in the West, been thought of as a definite, independent, and ontologically inferior “nature” (De la Cadena; Govindrajani; Helmreich; Lien and Law; Paxson; Povinelli; Tsing, for example).<sup>3</sup> Despite theoretical problem of a blanket ascription of humanity to all, there is a useful point of analysis in Viveiros de Castro’s metaphysics: the body. Uýra’s project is to “contar outras histórias” by physically becoming something else, her body serving as the immanent/imminent site of perspectival differentiation. If things and beings are the points of view themselves (Viveiros de Castro, “Perspectival Anthropology” 11), then becoming another form of life, understood as the “affects, dispositions or capacities which render the body of every different species unique” (Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis” 478), is for Uýra a source of embodied power. In his article “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism,” Viveiros de Castro tells us:

It is not so much that the body is a clothing but rather that clothing is a body. We are dealing with societies which inscribe efficacious meanings onto the skin, and which use animal masks (or at least know their principle) endowed with the power metaphysically to transform the identities of those who wear them, if used in the appropriate ritual context. To put on mask-clothing is not so much to conceal a human essence beneath an animal appearance, but rather to activate the powers of a different body. (482)

With Uýra’s headdress and painted scales, she does exactly this. Uýra exposes the power of things taken for granted—rivers that have been polluted, trees that have been felled, cosmologies that have been disregarded—by representing and becoming them. However, whereas in other performances Uýra’s assumption of another body or form is clear, in the video-performance discussed here, her form is more ambiguous. This is one way she expresses the equivocacy of interpretations and embodiments of the

Enlightenment-era dichotomies of memory/history, nature/culture, body/mind: For Uýra, ambiguity annuls antithesis, at least partially.



### Indigeneity, Alter-Politics, and Decoloniality

Yet another parallel project emerges in Uýra’s performance, one of what anthropologist Ghassan Hage terms “alter-politics,” which posits the assumption of our existence in multiple, simultaneous realities, realities that modernity has actively obscured. A response to oppositional or anti-politics, alter-politics lies within the anthropological reminder that “enables us to reflexively move outside ourselves” (Hage 42) and, therefore, it seeks to provide an alternative to the political order rather than solely critique it. Hage’s book moves beyond the tradition of a critical mode of unmasking the workings of power to propose that humans are continuously living multiple realities. A point of differentiation must be made: Hage prefers to speak of multiple realities rather than multiple natures, like Viveiros de Castro, “because the very idea of ‘nature’ emerges out of the very specific reality that requires of us humans to delineate a world of ‘nature.’ It is therefore preferable not to reintroduce it in a multiplicity of other realities where it has no referent” (Hage 54). Whereas perspectivism and multinaturalism remain at least partly confined by established binaries and ontological oppositions, the multiple realities allowed by alter-politics permits an analysis of power and domination as not only a struggle within a reality but also a struggle *between* different realities (Hage 57). This is exactly the intention of “Manaus: Uma cidade na aldeia.” Uýra undoubtedly tells a story of indigenous struggle in a colonial city, but she also privileges the story of “água que não parou de se mover, de ... peixes que estão ali existindo, resistindo” (Sodoma, “Arte Indígena” 16:55–17:05). Although Uýra’s anti-colonial politics of Manaus as a city are clear, she relies more heavily on the alter-political dimensions and memory of indigeneity to suppose path forward.

As I just mentioned, Uýra critiques the city's colonial architecture as a whole. In their episode of “Arte Indígena Contemporânea,” Munduruku cites the idea that because Amazonian cities use the river for sewage disposal, the city itself turns its back to the river. Munduruku remembers how when it rained when they were young, their house would flood with sewage-filled water. However, they insist on believing that the rain was never the problem but rather the construction of a city that permeabilizes the soil and actively worsens, if not creates, the flooding that afflicts houses near the river. Despite the contaminated water bringing sewage and trash, it also brought animals—especially frogs—and life (Sodoma, “Arte Indígena” 3:10–3:56). Birthed from a city with its back toward the river, then, is an entity, Uýra, with its back to the insistence that this is to remain the naturalized condition.

The second act, “Vovó Presente - Cadê Vovó? - Estranha Vovó” begins, and the remainder of the performance is set in the heart of Manaus. Uýra walks through the streets, silently engages with people, and “reads” a gargantuan book made of glued-together leaves. The verdant volume she reads itself metaphorizes the immensity of indigenous knowledge production, but its construction of leaves and lack of written text renders it null and void to Western eyes: Uýra tells us, “Me incomoda em faz falar não o que está aqui em real sendo visto. Mas o que está aqui é real; o que sempre esteve, estará aqui, e não é vista” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 2:40–2:54). This act also centers around personal and national identity. Uýra’s voiceover asks, “Tô índio, né? Mas tô índio de verdade? Mas tô índio de verdade?” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 2:55–3:04) several times. The choice of verb, content of the phrase, and the repetition of the question reveals a profound poetic effect. First, the use of the verb “estar,” which denotes temporary conditions, instead of “ser,” which references a permanent state of being, invokes Uýra’s transcendence of bodily forms.<sup>4</sup> Uýra makes the fact that she can temporarily transform into something else evident not only in the content of what she says but also in the grammatical conjugation of her speech. Again, bodies and clothes *do* rather than conceal (Viveiros de Castro, “Cosmological Deixis” 482). Second, Uýra questions what it means to be indigenous in Brazil today. She remembers how her ancestors said that one day indigenous people

would be reduced to myth: “Parece que o teatro de Anchieta funcionou. Esse dia chegou. As páginas brancas abertas ensinam que ficamos no século XVI, que o índio não existe mais. Por isso, de novo, no vírus, e o governo brasileiro, enterraram meus presentes como não indígenas e dessa vez eu vi” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 3:28–3:57). The “theater of Anchieta” refers to José de Anchieta, a Portuguese Jesuit missionary who was among the first Europeans to set foot in Brazil after its initial *achamento* (“discovery”). He wrote a detailed linguistic analysis of Tupi, one of the most common indigenous languages in Brazil, and is often credited, through his early writings of/about Brazil, as the “founder” of the Brazilian corpus, both historically and literarily, although this latter claim is contested among Brazilian literary critics.<sup>5</sup> Wasserman notes that the Jesuit writings “provided continuity between the new Portuguese colonies and European civilization while effecting the adaptation of the latter to the former that came to define a Brazilian national character” (72).

Indeed, the idea of a national identity in Brazil has always at least partially centered around indigenous people. In literary and cultural thought since Brazilian independence in 1822 and through the rest of the nineteenth century, Anchieta’s work, and the idea of an Amerindian past more broadly, figured prominently in the thinkers of the time who charged themselves with co-opting a national identity (Wasserman 80). This is evident from the period of Romantic literature through the formulation of a uniquely Brazilian *mestiçagem* or “Brazilian race” in the 20th century.<sup>6</sup> Yet while indigenous thought and practice contest the endorsement of nation-based homogeneity, indigenous discourse didn’t overcome racialized essentialisms (Devine Guzmán 131). If this does not seem clear, it is because indigeneity as an idea in Brazil has been held in paradoxical tension with both national discourse and the state itself. Devine Guzmán traces two periods of *mestiçagem*. The first half of the 20th century was marked by assimilation, acculturation, and transculturation, which promoted “Indian” assimilation into national discourses and society as inevitable but always incomplete. The second half of the century is characterized by heterogeneity, hybridity, multiculturalism, and interculturality, which understood *mestiçagem* as a doubling-down of margi-

nalization for indigenous forms of being and knowing (Devine Guzmán 132). In other words, there is a move from viewing indigeneity as a positive marker of difference to an erasure because “we’re all partly *índio*; we’re all *mestiço*; we’re all Brazilian,” meanwhile leaving behind the minority indigenous population who were reduced to “pregiven subject[s] to whom experience happens” (Das et al. 5). All this Uýra condenses in a few lines of speech.

The third act “O Globo se Perdeu,” continues along these lines by focusing on a municipal statue (Figure 3). Uýra looks through a gate at two men. The viewer is asked another question, “Você conhece a história do homem primitivo e o homem moderno?” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 4:00–4:00).

Commissioned by the state in 1964, the beginning of a military dictatorship that would last until 1985, the statue depicts a stereotypically racialized indigenous man looking at a “modern” man. Uýra tells us that the “pre-historic” man symbolizes a primitive Amazon that looks toward its future: the “modern” man, who points outward toward the conquest of the entire globe. “Mais uma vez,” Uýra tells us, “parece cobrir a memória em nome de uma identidade nacional. Era mais apagamento indígena” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 4:15–4:24). Indexing the turbulent history of *mestiçagem* and its links to collective memory and history, Uýra challenges the simplicity of a narrative that simultaneously attempts to minimize and hyperbolize some in the name of an idealized national unity.



Figure 3



Funnily, we are told, the modern man originally held a globe, symbolizing his conquest of such, but the globe was lost in the process of moving the statue many times. Uýra says, “O globo está se perdendo enquanto o moderno só se aponta para um futuro que não existe” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 5:01–5:07). This gets to the heart of the video-performance: in their interview, Munduruku tells us that: Quando digo Manaus é uma cidade na aldeia é porque a cidade vive com a aldeia, mas hoje ela insiste em estar *sobre* a aldeia. Manaus é uma cidade de ocupação colonial com toda a arquitetura e com todo o mundo imaginário que ocupam um território e cobre as identidades...tá acontecendo tudo isso ao mesmo tempo (Sodoma, “Arte Indígena” 12:59–13:46).

The alter-politics of Uýra’s project become clearer. Although alter-politics suggests that “we are continuously shadowed by realities in which we are dwelling (Hage 56), we may not be fully aware of these other realities. But this is precisely what Uýra does; she “induces in us a vague feeling, or a sense of their presence” (Hage 56) by embodying other forms of life and the attention that they beckon. In act three of the video-performance, Uýra accomplishes this through a reflection on a statue that ostensibly points toward a convergent future, one of modernity and a post-ethnoracial *mestiçagem*. Yet the “alter” of her politics points out that this future doesn’t yet exist and is in fact in need of a formulation that relies not necessarily on a dialectic synthesis that reflects the “whole reality of a people” (Devine Guzmán 157). Rather, her very transformation into something else is a response to detribalization and represents a search for other ways of inhabiting Manaus as an individual, the earth as a collective of indigenous people, and socio-political spaces beyond the mere human.

In the last act, “Recomeçou a Cheia – o Rio Volta a Encher,” Uýra returns to the river to claim that “o que brota de território indígena é brota indígena. Se Manaus começou de costas para o rio, para a vóvó e para quem é de verdade, essa é a época do ano quando as águas voltam encher. As águas trazem nas águas reais passos de liberdade” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 5:33–5:51). The tone shifts from a lugubrious reflection on the violence inflicted on indigenous people past and present to an auspicious expression of the strength found in imagining another tomorrow.

Uýra at last removes the headdress adorned throughout the performance, ruffles her hair, and looks directly at the viewer. She tells that “somente em Manaus, reexistam mais que 45 povos indígenas de diversas origens, identificadas ou não” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 5:52–6:01). By revealing her face and bringing attention to the many groups of indigenous people that inhabit Manaus, Uýra makes it clear that despite being a frog or a tree that walks, *she is also still a person*. This may seem an obvious point, but it calls on the viewer to recognize that a living being, whether human or not, is never singular or plural, never the product of the universal or the particular, never extant in just one nature/culture; these categories always “overlap and exceed each other” (De la Cadena 5).

It is now appropriate to discuss the video-performance as a decolonial act. Conceptualizing modernity and coloniality as two sides of the same coin, Mignolo and Walsh attempt to “undo,” “disobey,” and “delink” from the colonial matrix of power, which has its origins in the sixteenth century yet continues to today (Mignolo and Walsh 4). Decoloniality is at once a standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis (5), and, importantly, any engagement against Western overconfidence must go beyond the human: “No living organism at this point in time is immune to coloniality” (Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* 3). Mignolo proposes that modernity/rationality/coloniality have, since the eighteenth century, colonized aesthetics. Therefore, a delinked aesthesis, which Mignolo tells us includes “sensing, being, [and] emotioning” (*The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* 8, 24) can heal colonial wounds. Uýra’s relevance is not only theoretical, aesthetic, and onto-epistemic; her use of visual media itself is decolonial. Critics of both postcolonial and decolonial theory point to the fact that an academic book on the subject is not the most suitable format to disseminate and think through the claims of such theories. However, in Moya Bailey’s article on online media production by queer women of color, she states, “The creation of media by minoritarian subjects about themselves and for themselves can be a liberatory act. These acts of image redefinition actually engender different outcomes for marginalized groups, and the processes by which they are created build networks of resilience that far out lives the relevant content” (82).

Uýra, then, achieves something more than a book about decoloniality or a film about oneself: She produces something that can be more widely distributed and more accessible than a book, and the subject of her artistic creations are not solely herself or for herself—they are for the rivers, the frogs, and the trees, as well as for the indigenous communities within and beyond Brazil.



### Transforming, Appropriating, and Taking Back

At the end of the fourth act of the performance, Uýra sits at the Feira da Banana, overlooking the river and reading her leafy book, and then finally removes her headdress to face the viewer and say, “Eu não pedi para estar aqui—eu vou aprender a viver nesse encontro de mundos. Pra onde a gente for, a gente vai ser indígena” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 6:02–6:10). Moving beyond ethnoracial essentialism and mononaturalism, Uýra tells us that “cada maquiagem tem uma presença” (Sodoma, “Arte Indígena” 8:11–8:20). As a philosopher herself, although perhaps not by arbitrary Western standards, Uýra points to memory and its inherent ambiguities to reveal how colonial architecture (the city of Manaus) and political dominance (indigenous genocide and political erasure) conceal a multiplicity of realities, realities in which we all partake in different times and places and to varying degrees. What we might call Uýra’s “march toward pluriversality” (Mignolo, “Foreword” ix)<sup>7</sup> calls into question the insistence of the West’s self-ascribed and other-prescribed universality, both in epistemological and metaphysical terms.

Uýra not only “segue andando, se transformando, se apropriando, retomando” (Sodoma, “Programa Convida” 5:21–5:28), as she tells us in the last minute of the video-performance; she also produces theory through her praxis: “It is in this concrete making and doing, in embodied practice, that theory is crafted and that theorizations are continually made.

Moreover, it is also in this concrete making and doing...that decoloniality is constructed and unfolds” (Mignolo and Walsh 35). Weaving together a project of politics and praxis with a kaleidoscope of inter- and intra-relationality, “Manaus: Uma cidade na aldeia” finds a re-enchantment of nature (Taussig, *Mastery of Non-Mastery*) through staying with the trouble (Haraway), be this trouble memorious/historical, political, and/or onto-epistemic. By presenting herself as something simultaneously human and more-than-human, by remembering a past of colonial violence through questioning what it means to be in the “past,” “present,” or “future,” and by encouraging the viewer to listen to other forms and other realities in which we all to some extent dwell, Uýra’s performance posits a new type of relation heading forward, one that might finally face the river.



### Notes

- [1] All images in this article were taken as screenshots from the video-performance on this [YouTube Link](#).
- [2] Xicana/x is an attempt to encompass various signifiers within studies of Spanish-speaking people, including but not limited to latin@, latinx, chican@, chicanx, Latin American and Hispanic. With a nod to indigeneity and decolonial thinking, as well in recognition of the ambiguities of identity caused by borders, migration, the gender binary, and U.S. cultural and academic hegemony, the term xicana/x moves beyond superficial representations of “latinidad.” For further reading on the history and creation of the terms mentioned in this note, see: Alberto; Hooker; Morales; Oboler.
- [3] For a more comprehensive review on multispecies/more-than-human anthropology, see: De la Cadena and Blaser; Kirksey and Helmreich; Ogden et al.
- [4] For example: *Em um momento, ela pode estar índio; em outro momento, ela pode estar um sapo, ou uma árvore.*

[5] Some consider “A carta de Pêro Vaz de Caminha,” written to Dom Manuel I of Portugal, as the first instantiation of a Brazilian literature, despite the fact that Pedro Álvares Cabral’s fleet remained in Brazil for only ten days. For more on the debate surrounding the genesis of Brazilian literature, see: Cândido; Coutinho; Goldberg; González Echevarría and Pupo-Walker.

[6] José de Alencar’s *O guarani* and *Iracema*, José Gonçalves de Magalhães’s *Suspiros poéticos e saudades*, and Antônio Gonçalves Teixeira e Sousa’s *O filho do pescador* are among the more notable examples of Brazilian Romantic literature.

[7] See also: Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*; Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*.



### Acknowledgements

*I am extremely grateful to Uýra Sodoma not only for allowing me to use the images that appear in this article but also for serving, with equal parts inspiration and humility, as a powerful reminder to think with care for all others, human or not.*

*I would also like to thank the UW Madison Department of Anthropology for the financial support during the time this article was written.*

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# IRRUPCIONES DE LA MEMORIA EN EL CINE DOCUMENTAL SOBRE EL CONFLICTO ARMADO INTERNO PERUANO: *TAREA PENDIENTE* (2003) Y *LUCANAMARCA* (2008)

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## Introducción

Se calcula que fueron más de sesenta y nueve mil las personas que murieron o desaparecieron durante el conflicto armado interno peruano entre 1980 y 2000.<sup>1</sup> Los responsables son varios. El Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL), aunque no fue el único grupo subversivo que actuó durante esos años, fue responsable del 54% de las muertes del conflicto. En efecto, el PCP-SL se distancia mucho de otras guerrillas en América Latina, no solo porque fue la única guerrilla maoísta importante en todo el continente, sino que fue excepcionalmente letal. El Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA), el otro grupo subversivo que se enfrentó al Estado peruano en ese periodo, fue responsable del 1,5% de las muertes (CVR 2004: 435, 438). Además, el propio Estado peruano, a través de las Fuerzas Policiales y las Fuerzas Armadas, también fue responsable de innumerables violaciones de los derechos humanos: las Fuerzas Armadas fueron responsables del 28,73% de las muertes, mientras que las Fuerzas Policiales lo fueron del 6,6% (CVR 2004: 259). Así, no es difícil imaginar cuán grande ha sido el impacto del conflicto armado interno en la vida del Perú republicano. Pero el impacto fue más fuerte para los grupos más vulnerables del país.

La sistemática fragmentación y exclusión que existía —y existe todavía— en el país se ve reflejada en la demografía de las víctimas. La Comisión de la

Verdad y Reconciliación [CVR], conformada en el 2001 para investigar lo sucedido en estas dos décadas, indicó que, de las aproximadamente sesenta y nueve mil personas que murieron en el Perú, el 79% del total de víctimas reportadas vivía en zonas rurales; el 56% se ocupaba en actividades agropecuarias y el 75% tenía el quechua u otra lengua nativa como idioma materno; esto último es bastante sorprendente si se considera que solo el 16% de la población compartía esta característica de acuerdo con el censo nacional de 1993 (CVR 2004: 434). Así, tres de cada cuatro víctimas de la violencia “fueron campesinos o campesinas cuya lengua materna era el quechua, un amplio sector de la población históricamente ignorado —hasta en ocasiones despreciado— por el Estado y por la sociedad urbana, aquella que sí disfrutaba de los beneficios de la comunidad política” (Lerner 2003). Estas precisamente eran las características de los pobladores de Lucanamarca, en Ayacucho, una de las zonas más afectadas del país.

La masacre de Lucanamarca debe entenderse en este contexto. El 3 de abril de 1983, por órdenes de sus dirigentes, militantes de Sendero Luminoso entraron a Santiago de Lucanamarca y pueblos aledaños y asesinaron brutalmente a sesenta y nueve personas. Entre las víctimas de la masacre, se encontraban niños, personas mayores y mujeres embarazadas. Días antes, los lucanamarquinos se habían rebelado contra Sendero Luminoso y habían

asesinado a Olegario Curitomay, un comandante senderista posicionado en Lucanamarca. La decisión de atacar a toda la comunidad como represalia fue uno de los motivos por los cuales Abimael Guzmán y Elena Iparraguirre —la cúpula de Sendero— fueron condenados a cadena perpetua más de veinte años después. Lamentablemente también tuvieron que pasar casi veinte años para que se exhumaran e identificaran los cuerpos de las víctimas mortales de esta masacre. La CVR fue central en este proceso; y su trabajo fue capturado de cerca por dos documentales que serán la materia principal de este ensayo. En claros momentos *irruptores* de la memoria —en los que se ahondará más adelante—, los documentales *Tarea pendiente* (2003), de Carlos Cárdenas, y *Lucanamarca* (2008), de Carlos Cárdenas y Héctor Gálvez, muestran distintos aspectos de la justicia transicional en el Perú posconflicto y, más importante aún, muestra cómo la comunidad lidia con un pasado traumático que sigue muy presente en la vida diaria.



### Momentos irruptores de la memoria en el cine documental

Estos documentales surgen efectivamente en momentos *irruptores* de la memoria. Por ello, me refiero a la gran influencia que ciertos eventos históricos pueden tener sobre la producción artística y, en ese caso específico, el cine documental, especialmente en el caso de artistas y realizadores socialmente comprometidos. Alexander Wilde llama “irruptions of memory” a los eventos que son “public events that break in upon [a country’s] national consciousness, unbidden and often suddenly, to evoke associations with symbols, figures, causes, ways of life which to an unusual degree are associated with a political past that is still present in the lived experience of a major part of the population” (1999: 475). Los documentales podían reflejar directamente el evento que había *irrupido* en la memoria y había despertado reflexiones sobre el conflicto armado que el país estaba viviendo, como es el caso del cortometraje *María Elena: Semilla de Paz* (1992), de

Carlos Marín y Mario Gutiérrez, en clara respuesta al asesinato de María Elena Moyano en 1992 a manos de Sendero Luminoso. Otro evento que *irrupió* en la conciencia nacional y motivó la producción de cortometrajes y medimetrajes fue la aprobación de la Ley de Amnistía en 1995 que incrementó el grado de impunidad de la dictadura de Fujimori.<sup>2</sup> Destacan los trabajos de José Antonio Portugal, *Vergüenza* (1995) y *Los hijos del orden, jóvenes en tiempos de violencia* (1995); Javier Corcuera, *Perú: Presos inocentes* (1996); y Marco Condori, *Fieles en la memoria* (1996).

Además de los momentos *irruptores* de memoria en los años ochenta y noventa, en los que los realizadores socialmente comprometidos tenían la intención de despertar la conciencia nacional e ir en contra de la “memoria salvadora” que primaba en el país,<sup>3</sup> también se produjeron momentos importantes en el Perú posconflicto. El primero y más importante fue la conformación de la propia CVR y la presentación de los nueve volúmenes que conforman su *Informe final*. Los hallazgos de la CVR fueron tan impactantes que son considerados “un punto de inflexión en los estudios sobre el conflicto armado interno”, pues el informe logró descentrar “no solo muchas de las ideas fuerza y los sentidos comunes sobre el conflicto armado interno sino, en términos más generales, sobre la historia del Perú” (Degregori 2013: 63–64). A raíz y como parte de las investigaciones llevadas a cabo por la CVR se produce una serie de documentales —cortometrajes en su mayoría— que tienen en común el nacer en el contexto de las investigaciones de la CVR o el usar sus conclusiones como guía. Así, Marco Condori realizó tres cortometrajes en esta época, antes de la publicación del *Informe final* de la CVR: *Comunidad universitaria y violencia política* (2002), *Desplazamiento forzado y violencia política* (2002) y *Sociedad civil* (2002). Posteriormente, Carlos Cárdenas realizó la ya mencionada *Tarea pendiente* (2003), además de *Huanta: la tragedia de un pueblo* (2003) y *Lusita: no es solo mi problema* (2003). Y, en los años siguientes, Felipe Degregori estrenaría *Difundiendo la verdad* (2004), *Mujeres en la guerra* (2005) y *Violencia a puerta cerrada* (2005).



Narrativas “cívicas”: *Tarea pendiente*

*Tarea pendiente* es un mediodocumental de solo 25 minutos de Carlos Cárdenas que se enfoca en un grupo de estudiantes del colegio Augusto Salazar Bondy de Santiago de Lucanamarca mientras averiguan sobre la masacre ocurrida en su localidad en 1983. Cárdenas pertenecía a la asociación TV Cultura.<sup>4</sup> No obstante, lo que realmente permite la producción de este documental es el trabajo que la CVR estaba realizando en Lucanamarca, hasta donde Cárdenas y su equipo van a filmar. Además de ser representativa de este momento *irruptor* de la memoria, *Tarea pendiente* es también interesante porque ofrece a los estudiantes el rol de periodistas, como se verá más adelante. Además, este mediodocumental no explora solo las consecuencias del conflicto, sino explícitamente la forma en que se recuerda el conflicto, en este caso, el sentido que distintos miembros de la comunidad le otorgan a la masacre de Lucanamarca y al periodo de violencia en general.

Carlos Cárdenas es el director de *Tarea pendiente*, pero es importante mencionar que en los créditos de la película se señala que Héctor Gálvez fue su asistente de dirección, además de haber sido también responsable, junto con Cárdenas, de la cámara. Por ello no sorprende que, en *Lucanamarca*, ya ambos aparezcan como directores y que, además, muchas de las tomas de *Tarea pendiente* aparezcan también en *Lucanamarca* años después. Aun así, veremos cómo ambos documentales, a pesar de haber sido filmados casi simultáneamente por los mismos equipos de producción resultan ser tan distintos. Para comenzar, los protagonistas de *Tarea pendiente* son los estudiantes que conforman el “club de periodismo de Lucanamarca”, que nace justamente a partir de la presencia de los directores en el pueblo. Así lo explica la voz en *off*:

A los realizadores de este documental se nos ocurrió la idea de ir al colegio Augusto Salazar Bondy de Lucanamarca, donde nunca se había hablado del asunto, ni siquiera durante el tiempo de las exhumaciones, y proponer a algunos voluntarios un experimento, que ellos mismos investiguen lo ocurrido sin inter-

vención de los mayores. Ya que en las filas de Sendero Luminoso veinte años atrás había jóvenes de la misma edad que ellos participando en la masacre, parecía interesante que los alumnos de hoy se formaran una opinión sobre el papel que cumplieron el colegio y los alumnos de esa época. Así que a partir de ese momento fue creado el club de periodismo de Lucanamarca, que registraría con una cámara de video los progresos de la investigación, pero para eso tuvimos que empezar por el principio (Cárdenas 2003).

Así, el equipo de producción le entrega cámaras y micrófonos a los estudiantes que son parte del club y les enseñan a manejar los equipos. Las tomas que los estudiantes registran se incluyen a lo largo del documental, entrecruzadas con las tomas que los propios documentalistas grabaron. De alguna manera, el otorgarles la cámara y el micrófono a los estudiantes para que ellos mismos exploren su historia quiere devolverle la agencia a la comunidad. Pero en este documental, como en la mayoría de los de la época, esta agencia se ve limitada por la voz narradora —la voz en *off*— que se impone sobre los recuentos individuales y tiene la palabra final.

Los testimonios que se nos presentan provienen principalmente de los propios estudiantes y de los maestros a los que entrevistan. Los estudiantes-periodistas buscan comprender cómo y por qué, veinte años atrás, otros niños y jóvenes de su edad decidieron unirse a Sendero Luminoso, el principal responsable de la masacre que afectó a su comunidad. Así, los miembros del club de periodismo se presentan cada uno ante las cámaras y luego emprenden su investigación tanto en su propia escuela en Lucanamarca como en el colegio Los Andes, en la vecina ciudad de Huancasancos, la capital de la provincia. El *Informe final* de la CVR justamente señala que Sendero Luminoso “hizo su ingreso a Huancasancos en los años setenta y realizó un trabajo de proselitismo a través del colegio Los Andes” y que este fue “un vínculo importante para llegar al campo” (CVR 2003: 43). Algo muy parecido dice la voz en *off* del documental:

El edificio que se ve al fondo es el colegio Los Andes. Desde mediados de los años setenta fue usado por maestros senderistas como escuela de formación de cuadros y captación de jóvenes militantes, algunos de los cuales tomaron parte después en la masacre de Lucanamarca. Uno de esos alumnos fue Gílder Curitomay (Cárdenas 2003).

En este y otros casos, es claro cómo los hallazgos de la CVR son los que guían la narrativa del documental, lo cual, nuevamente, no es sorprendente dado el trabajo tan cercano entre estos realizadores y el equipo de la CVR que investigó el caso de Lucanamarca.

La mayoría de los estudiantes entrevistados en el colegio Los Andes —entrevistados por otros jóvenes de su edad, recordemos— dice no saber qué sucedió a inicios de los años ochenta. Cuando se les pregunta directamente si sabían que en su colegio había habido profesores implicados, la respuesta es la misma: “eso no se sabe”. También se entrevista a un profesor y, cuando le preguntan si él conversa con sus estudiantes sobre lo sucedido, este simplemente responde en voz baja: “En el caso mío, no conversamos. No hay motivo”. Cuando se le pregunta por qué, el profesor replica:

A veces son... es un triste recuerdo hablar de esas cosas, ¿no? Sabemos por experiencia que cosas pasó, ¿no? Hubo muerte. Muchos inocentes han muerto. Muchos niños han quedado huérfanos, y esa política pues prácticamente ha sido negativa para nuestro pueblo. Y el recordarse... ¿para qué? Es recordarse la muerte, ¿no? (Cárdenas 2003).

En este testimonio, el acto de recordar no es presentado como algo positivo; al contrario, el recordar solo implica dolor y muerte y, para este profesor, “no hay motivo”. Como veremos posteriormente, en línea con este testimonio, en *Lucanamarca* se complejiza lo que significa recordar solo por el acto de recordar, en especial para una comunidad cuyas heridas siguen abiertas. En *Tarea pendiente*, sin embargo, la premisa es otra, pues se resaltan los peligros del no-recordar al sugerir, en una de las escenas finales, que la historia se puede repetir.

Así, el documental denuncia el silencio que existe respecto al conflicto armado interno no solo en la comunidad sino en el propio sistema educativo. Tanto estudiantes como profesores evitan hablar del periodo de violencia, lo cual es especialmente relevante al tratarse de una comunidad que la experimentó en carne propia. Algunos de los profesores entrevistados, cuando les preguntan por qué no se habla del conflicto en el aula, además de mencionar lo sensible y doloroso que el tema puede resultar, también le echan la culpa al currículo del gobierno y al ministerio de educación: enseñar sobre el conflicto armado interno simplemente no está en el plan del Estado. El director del colegio Augusto Salazar Bondy también explica que existe temor de tratar estos temas porque los profesores no quieren ser falsamente acusados de apología al terrorismo.

Como resultado, muchos de los jóvenes de la comunidad —detrás de cámaras y frente a ellas— aprenden sobre su pasado por primera vez. El club de periodismo quiere comprender cómo otros jóvenes de su edad llegaron a ser parte de Sendero Luminoso. La pregunta que surge ya cerca al final del documental, entonces, es qué hubieran hecho ellos mismos en su lugar. Así, uno de ellos entrevista a un compañero y le plantea el siguiente escenario:

“Una pregunta, ¿ya? ¿Qué tal Sendero vendría, entonces obligaría a todos los jóvenes, incluyéndote a usted? Este... ‘vamos a luchar por la libertad, vamos a ser iguales en todo, vamos a tener todos iguales, va a haber justicia’, así. ‘Entonces si no entras, te matamos’. A ver, ¿qué diría usted?, a ver” (Cárdenas 2003).

El estudiante entrevistado baja la mirada y se queda en silencio, pensativo. La cámara hace un close up a su expresión mientras este reflexiona, todavía en silencio. Finalmente, la cámara se acerca más aún a su rostro y el estudiante solo asiente brevemente, sin decir nada. De manera similar, en la escena final, los miembros del club de periodismo se reúnen por última vez para intercambiar sus opiniones. Cuando conversan sobre la naturaleza e ideales de Sendero Luminoso, resalta la intervención de uno de los estudiantes que los defiende abiertamente. El documental termina luego

de esta intervención. Así, *Tarea pendiente* parece querer llamar la atención sobre los peligros de no enseñar y reflexionar sobre la historia de la violencia en el Perú, en especial en los jóvenes.

Dado el trabajo tan cercano con la CVR, en *Tarea pendiente* —y en varios de los documentales que se produjeron en el mismo periodo—, se puede notar cómo, aunque los realizadores de estas películas mantienen su libertad creativa, no se distancian mucho de la línea narrativa establecida por la CVR. El ejemplo más evidente es *Difundiendo la verdad* (2004), un documental de 37 minutos de Felipe Degregori que se caracteriza por tener un tono claramente pedagógico, con una voz narradora femenina quechua que hace explícito su objetivo desde el inicio: “ilustraremos algunas de las principales conclusiones de la CVR”. Aunque *Tarea pendiente* no es tan directa en su cercanía con la CVR como el ejemplo anterior, igual es representativa de esta narrativa. De hecho, uno de los estudiantes entrevistados, cuando cuenta cómo en su escuela no se conversa sobre el conflicto, dice: “No sé por qué han ocultado, tratado de cubrir, pero la Comisión de la Verdad descubrió toda la verdad” (Cárdenas 2003). Así, aunque *Tarea pendiente* no tiene el mismo tono didáctico que *Difundiendo la verdad*, sí parece tener un objetivo muy similar. Aunque el propósito del proyecto del club de periodismo es comprender, el propósito del documental es enseñar.

La investigadora y realizadora Karen Bernedo, siguiendo a la socióloga Anahí Durand, llama “memoria cívica” a esta línea narrativa, en clara oposición a la “memoria salvadora” del Fujimorato (Bernedo 2015).<sup>5</sup> Este concepto es muy útil para pensar este corpus de documentales que surge alrededor de la *irrupción* de la CVR; pero es importante considerar que no todo lo producido después de la CVR y que hace uso de sus conclusiones o de sus materiales de archivo necesariamente defiende o representa una “memoria cívica”. De hecho, *Tarea pendiente*, aunque parte principalmente de esta “memoria cívica”, por momentos explora narrativas que van más allá de la visión binaria entre víctimas y victimarios. Esto sucede cuando el club de periodismo investiga el caso de Gílder Curitomay, un muchacho de segundo de secundaria del colegio Los Andes que, junto con sus hermanos mayores Olegario y Nicanor Curitomay, se unió a Sendero Luminoso.

Todos los que hablan de Gílder lo describen solo con adjetivos positivos: “hábil, inteligente, bastante dedicado a sus estudios”. Además, se resalta cuán cercanas son las conexiones entre estos personajes —los senderistas— y el resto de la comunidad: no solo todos conocían a los Curitomay, sino uno de los miembros del club de periodismo, Ángel Curitomay, es el sobrino de Gílder. Como parte de la investigación, los estudiantes conversan también con Honorio Curitomay, quien habla de sus hermanos con una empatía que los humaniza. Honorio es uno de los personajes más importantes en *Lucanamarca*, donde ya no se habla tanto de Gílder sino principalmente de Olegario, por el rol principal que tuvo en la masacre de Lucanamarca. Así, aunque en *Tarea pendiente* todavía no se cuestionan las etiquetas de víctima o victimario, sí se abren las puertas a esta discusión, como se verá a continuación.



#### Narrativas contrahegemónicas desde la institucionalidad: *Lucanamarca*

Otro momento importante para la producción artística y la producción de cine documental en específico se produce varios años después de la publicación del *Informe final*. Se trata de documentales que efectivamente parten de los hallazgos de la CVR, pero que presentan miradas que van más allá de una “memoria cívica”, donde solo hay buenos y malos. Un quinquenio después de la presentación del *Informe final*, los eventos irruptores de la memoria son más bien los fracasos del Estado para llevar a cabo políticas de justicia transicional y de reparaciones eficientes. En ese sentido, aunque en sus miradas prima la distinción clara entre víctimas y perpetradores, siguiendo a la CVR, también se puede encontrar críticas a la efectividad de su trabajo. También se puede ver que, a diferencia de muchas obras anteriores, en estos años hay más largometrajes. Son varios los documentales que se pueden ubicar en este grupo, pero resalta, por supuesto, *Lucanamarca*.

Este largometraje también nace de la cercanía de

los realizadores con el trabajo que la CVR realizó en Lucanamarca, pero es interesante cómo este hecho no hace que la mirada hacia los comisionados o el gobierno en general sea menos crítica. Los lazos que se pueden establecer entre este largometraje y *Tarea pendiente* son varios, pero me interesa sobre todo resaltar cómo dos proyectos audiovisuales filmados casi simultáneamente por casi el mismo equipo de producción resultan ser tan distintos. Por ejemplo, a diferencia de los documentales anteriores que tienen siempre una voz en *off* que narra, explica y contextualiza, en *Lucanamarca* no hay una voz en *off* que hable por encima de los entrevistados: los pobladores de Lucanamarca tienen la última palabra. Además, al explorar la memoria de Honorio Curitomay, hermano del senderista Olegario Curitomay, *Lucanamarca* abre las puertas a una serie de documentales que posteriormente explorarán ya no solo las categorías de víctimas y perpetradores, sino todo el espectro. En ese sentido, a pesar de que los realizadores trabajaron muy de cerca con la CVR, es difícil clasificar esta película como representante de una “memoria cívica”, pues sus preocupaciones son distintas a las que se tenían cinco años atrás con la presentación del *Informe final* de la CVR.

Producido por TV Cultura y estrenado en el año 2008, *Lucanamarca* es un documental que sigue de cerca el proceso de exhumación e identificación de las víctimas de la masacre. Pero además documenta el actuar de la CVR en la comunidad y la manera en que esta última lidia con su pasado traumático. El juicio a Guzmán por haber ordenado esta masacre también es uno de los acontecimientos clave del largometraje —de hecho, este inicia con escenas de una de las audiencias a Guzmán e Iparraguirre y termina con el anuncio de la sentencia a la comunidad a través de un altavoz—, pero no es de ninguna manera el único gran tema que se explora en el filme. De hecho, se pueden señalar por lo menos cuatro: primero, la masacre de 1983 en sí misma y los acontecimientos que la rodearon (el testimonio tiene un valor central, pues conocemos el pasado solo a través de los relatos de los lucanamarquinos entrevistados); segundo, la exhumación y el entierro de los cuerpos en 2002 y 2003 (que invitan a pensar en la naturaleza del duelo y en el papel que desempeñó la CVR); tercero, el ya mencionado juicio a Guzmán (que invita a pensar en el duelo en relación con la justicia); y, cuarto, los retos que enfrenta la población de Lucanamarca en el pre-

sente, punto que voy a desarrollar de manera más extensa.

Aunque el evento principal detrás del documental es la masacre de 1983, *Lucanamarca*, al igual que *Tarea pendiente*, es más un documental sobre el presente que sobre el pasado. En la película se hacen visibles los retos que la comunidad enfrenta en la actualidad. Si bien estos retos son una secuela de lo acontecido veinte años atrás, el dedo de denuncia que parece alzar *Lucanamarca* apunta ya no solo a actores del pasado, sino a actores contemporáneos. Al enfocar su atención en el presente, *Lucanamarca* se distancia de los largometrajes que lo anteceden (nuevamente, el antecedente de *Tarea pendiente* es muy importante aquí). A pesar de compartir el espíritu de responsabilidad social con documentales de la misma época —era la intención explícita de los directores que su “invocación a la memoria sirva como conjuro y ciertas cosas no se repitan más” (Cárdenas y Gálvez 2009)—, ya no se trata de un documental meramente didáctico, que busque solo informar al espectador. *Lucanamarca* problematiza los retos que enfrenta esta población como una comunidad posconflicto, como se verá en las siguientes páginas. Por un lado, el documental muestra la intervención de la CVR en la comunidad. Por otro, denuncia las promesas rotas del gobierno central a la comunidad. Por último, revela las memorias incómodas y zonas grises del conflicto que complican la clara distinción entre víctimas y victimarios.



### La intervención de la CVR en la comunidad

Los documentales que antecedieron a *Lucanamarca*, como *State of Fear* (2005), de Pamela Yates, o *Lágrimas de Wayronco* (2007), de Jorge Meyer y Xavier Urios, presentan panoramas amplios de lo que fue la época del terrorismo en el Perú; son documentales “generalistas”. *Lucanamarca*, en cambio, se centra en un solo episodio y, lo que es más importante, “en las memorias y las secuelas del conflicto y en el proceso actual de reconocimiento de los hechos” (Malek 2016: 113). Además, mientras que

estos dos primeros documentales recurren a herramientas audiovisuales más tradicionales del género documental, como las imágenes de archivo, los comentarios de voz en *off* y las entrevistas a analistas externos, *Lucanamarca* no hace uso de estos elementos.

De hecho, la ausencia de expertos y especialistas sobre el tema como narradores o entrevistados es un rasgo muy importante. Casi todas las voces que se oyen en el largometraje les pertenecen a los propios residentes de Lucanamarca: es un gesto que le devuelve a los protagonistas el poder de narrar su propia historia (Heilman 2010: 596). Aparecen algunas autoridades del gobierno central, como el presidente de aquella época, Alejandro Toledo, o Carlos Iván Degregori, uno de los comisionados más reconocidos de la CVR, pero “no aparecen como entrevistados, sino más bien llegamos a ellos y los vemos desde la misma perspectiva que los pobladores lucanamarquinos” (Malek 2016: 138). Salvo por una investigadora del equipo encargado de exhumar e identificar los cuerpos, a quien sí se la entrevista brevemente, al resto de autoridades o figuras consideradas expertas solo se las escucha cuando se dirigen a los miembros de la comunidad de forma grupal o individual. Las voces de los directores también están ausentes. Escuchamos a los entrevistados, pero no a los entrevistadores. Solo al inicio se puede escuchar la voz de una mujer detrás de la cámara que le pregunta a un lucanamarquino sobre el local que están arreglando para recibir a los miembros de la CVR. Salvo esa interacción inicial, no se vuelven a escuchar las preguntas del equipo de filmación, solo las voces de los entrevistados.

Privilegiar la voz de los lucanamarquinos por sobre la de las autoridades tradicionales es un acierto importante de este documental. *Tarea pendiente* lo había empezado a hacer, al ofrecerle a los estudiantes el rol de periodistas, pero *Lucanamarca* va más allá al dejar la narración por completo a la comunidad. Esto, por supuesto, no quiere decir que el rol de la CVR no haya sido tomado en cuenta. TV Cultura, la productora de *Lucanamarca*, ayudó a la CVR a grabar sus entrevistas y el trabajo de campo realizado. La CVR, a cambio, ayudó a los directores de manera logística para lograr este documental (Malek 2016: 60). Incluso sin esta cooperación, hubiera sido esperable que el documental, como sus antecesores y

contemporáneos, siguiera la línea del *Informe final* de la CVR publicado en el año 2003. Este trabajo de investigación sobre el conflicto armado interno se convirtió en un importante y justificado punto de referencia, y los investigadores detrás de este, en importantes autoridades sobre el tema. Así, las narrativas de *State of Fear* y *Lágrimas de Wayronco* siguen la línea del *Informe final* en todo sentido y tienen a personajes como Degregori como expertos y narradores. Es impensable afirmar que Lucanamarca no haya tenido también al *Informe final* como un gran referente historiográfico. Pero no solo deja en segundo plano a los especialistas, sino que, desde el principio, cuando se entrevista a los lucanamarquinos que estaban arreglando el local municipal y construyendo “un bañito” para recibir a los miembros de la CVR, delata la gran distancia existente entre los funcionarios de la CVR enviados desde Lima y la población de Lucanamarca.

Existe también una lectura que va un paso más allá. Según el crítico Russ Hunter, el documental cumple con mostrar que la presencia de la CVR en Lucanamarca solo exacerbó las tensiones y enemistades subyacentes en la comunidad (Hunter 2010: 128). Efectivamente, el documental muestra el conflicto que se produce alrededor de la construcción y distribución de treinta viviendas que la Asociación de Familiares de las Víctimas de la Violencia Política del Distrito de Santiago de Lucanamarca logró gestionar en Lima para la comunidad (se habían pedido sesenta originalmente). Podemos escuchar a un entrevistado, que justamente estaba trabajando en la construcción de una de las casas, contar cómo él también, con documentos en mano, había solicitado varias veces que se le considere para “una casita”, porque él también lo había perdido todo: su familia, sus animales, sus posesiones. No dice explícitamente cuál fue el resultado de su pedido, pero da a entender que no fue positivo. Otro entrevistado indica que no está de acuerdo con que personas que han estado relacionadas con el terrorismo, “esos que han causado [...] el atraso de Lucanamarca”, también sean beneficiadas. Sin embargo, como se verá después, las líneas que definen a las figuras de víctima y perpetrador no son sencillas de delimitar. Y otro, finalmente, señala la aparición del egoísmo, el odio y la envidia entre las familias; y le atribuye a ese factor el que el pueblo no se pueda desarrollar. Pareciera que el temor del profesor entrevistado en *Tarea pendiente*,

para quien “no hay motivo” para recordar un pasado tan doloroso como el de esta comunidad, se hubiera vuelto realidad.

También es interesante la escena con la que cierra la película. El 2 de noviembre de 2006 (recordemos que la película inicia mostrando lo que ocurría el 2 de noviembre de 2002), un abogado lee en la plaza principal la sentencia a Guzmán e Iparraguire y dice:

esta sentencia es una reivindicación a todas las víctimas de Sendero Luminoso. Entonces todas aquellas personas que fueron... o sufrieron alguna pérdida de sus familiares a manos de Sendero Luminoso creo que deben sentirse reivindicados a través de esta sentencia. El tiempo puede pasar, las heridas pueden aparentemente estar cerradas, pero si no hay justicia nunca esa herida se va a cerrar (Cárdenas y Gálvez).

La presencia de la CVR en Lucanamarca, veinte años después de ocurrida la masacre, en efecto pudo haber generado tensiones y haber abierto heridas. Pero las heridas, como señala el abogado, siempre estuvieron abiertas. Por otro lado, ese “deben sentirse reivindicados” delata que sigue existiendo la creencia de que es legítimo decirles a los deudos, desde fuera, casi con autoridad, lo que deben o no deben sentir.



### Las promesas rotas del gobierno central a la comunidad

La reivindicación de la que se habla en la película se basa principalmente en dos hechos: la exhumación, identificación y entierro de las víctimas mortales de la masacre, y la sentencia a los autores intelectuales. Sin embargo, hay un tercer elemento que el documental denuncia abiertamente: las promesas no cumplidas por el gobierno en la actualidad. “Se habla mucho de

Lucanamarca”, dice uno de los entrevistados, “pero en realidad no estamos todavía recibiendo ese apoyo del gobierno central”. Otro señala lo mismo, aunque al mismo tiempo dice que no fue sino hasta que la CVR fue a la comunidad que “el pueblo se da cuenta de que sí hay una deuda de parte del Estado [...] por toda esta cosa que pasó por todo el abandono del Estado”. Sea recién gracias a la intervención de la CVR o no, lo cierto es que los personajes que intervienen en *Lucanamarca* ahora son conscientes de la deuda histórica que el gobierno central tiene con la población, y que la exhumación de los cuerpos y la sentencia son solo parte de lo que se les debía: la deuda está lejos de estar saldada por completo.

Una de las escenas más ilustrativas es la llegada a Lucanamarca del presidente del Perú, Alejandro Toledo, para el entierro de los cuerpos. Después de todo, la masacre de Lucanamarca se convirtió con el tiempo en uno de los casos más representativos de la época del conflicto armado interno. Las autoridades lo reciben con honores: “Excelentísimo señor presidente, doctor Alejandro Toledo Manrique, el pueblo de Lucanamarca expresa su gratitud por este apoyo invaluable de vuestro gobierno. El primer presidente de la República del Perú pisando tierra de Lucanamarca” (Cárdenas y Gálvez 2009). Llamam la atención palabras como “gratitud” y “apoyo”, pues generan la impresión de que la presencia del presidente no fuera una obligación moral, sino un favor a la población. Toledo, efectivamente el primer presidente que llegó hasta Lucanamarca, responde con un discurso muy interesante:

Como presidente constitucional, aquí pueblo grande, y a los pueblos de todo el Perú que sufrieron la masacre de ese terrorismo, que me la van a pagar, te vengo a pedir perdón. Te vengo a prometer que al regreso hoy día a Lima daré instrucciones a mis ministros para que actúen con rapidez en la construcción de escuelas, de postas médicas. Haremos lo posible para construir carreteras que permitan sacar tus productos agropecuarios al mercado, para que te paguen precios justos y puedas empuñar en tus manos la decisión de tumbar la pobreza (Cárdenas y Gálvez).

Mucho se podría decir de las palabras de Toledo, de cómo se dirige a la población usando la segunda persona en singular en vez de plural, o de cómo suelta una amenaza hacia los terroristas en general que parece de carácter personal, pero importan sobre todo las promesas que hace: educación, salud y carreteras que permitan el desarrollo de Lucanamarca. El público que lo escucha conmovido no puede evitar aplaudir.

Esta secuencia, acompañada de las imágenes desoladoras del llanto de la población y de los ataúdes blancos que marchan rumbo al cementerio, se contrasta con el verdadero desenlace de estas promesas. El documental nos muestra cómo, tiempo después, un grupo de lucanamarquinos intenta conseguir una audiencia con Toledo en Lima infructuosamente, para recordarle las promesas hechas. Y, luego, al final del largometraje, los subtítulos nos informan que Toledo terminó su mandato en julio de 2006 sin cumplir ninguna de las ofertas. Son estas promesas rotas, más la sensación de abandono y de traición, las que llevan a un lucanamarquino a comparar a Sendero Luminoso con el Estado.

Yo creo que son ilusiones, ¿no?, muchas veces que planteábamos de Sendero, efectivamente. Y nuestros gobiernos de turno también siempre nos han planteado eso, salir de la pobreza, va a haber trabajo, ocupación. Y eso casi lo mismo, ¿no? Sigue incluso con los gobiernos de turno. Hubo más hambre, más miseria. Apoyo de los gobiernos nunca no nos han llegado. Entonces yo pienso acá la gente estamos casi en el mismo nivel, ¿no?, en la misma situación (Cárdenas y Gálvez)



### Memorias incómodas y zonas grises

Por último, el hermano de Olegario Curitomay, Honorio, cuenta cómo su hermano fue atraído por Sendero Luminoso y cómo no fue el único que se

unió a sus filas. En efecto, como se señaló páginas atrás, el documental logra mostrar las divisiones de la comunidad y lo difícil de la reconciliación: aunque muchos campesinos apoyaron a Sendero Luminoso en sus inicios, solo se culpa a algunos militantes y a sus parientes, excluyéndolos de la comunidad (Heilman 2010: 596). El día después de la masacre del 3 de abril de 1983, los padres de Olegario fueron asesinados por la comunidad, acusados de haberle avisado a Sendero de la muerte de su hijo. Honorio se pregunta: “A mi familia, como a mis hermanos, a mis padres, lo matan... ¿Y para nosotros no habrá justicia? ¿Y para nosotros no habrá, igual...? Y que, ¿no somos también nosotros peruanos?” Él dice nunca haber pertenecido a las filas de Sendero, pero aún así, por haber sido su hermano quien fue, Honorio y su hermana son excluidos de la comunidad hasta el día de hoy.

Durante la entrevista, en una secuencia muy impactante, Honorio saca de un rincón de su casa el cráneo de su hermano Olegario. Lo tiene envuelto en una manta. Y lo tiene ahí, dice, porque no puede enterrarlo en un cementerio por miedo a represalias de la comunidad. Él no puede encontrar trabajo en Lucanamarca, por lo que se muda a Huamanga, donde encuentra trabajos temporales como cargador en el mercado, para mantener a su hijo. Casi al final, dice: “El sol sale para todos; la justicia entonces también debe salir para todos”.

El recuento de la masacre es impactante, doloroso, pero también lo es el recuento del asesinato de los padres de Honorio, contado por él mismo, y el de Olegario, contado por la propia comunidad. Ninguno de los entrevistados titubea al contar los detalles del linchamiento y asesinato de este último; ninguno niega en ningún momento su responsabilidad. De esta manera, el testimonio de Honorio complica la discusión sobre las víctimas y perpetradores, sobre la justicia y las reparaciones. Lucanamarca, en ese sentido, es un documental que, a pesar de seguir trabajando con una narrativa bastante apegada al *Informe final* de la CVR, se empieza a distanciar de la institucionalidad que caracteriza a los trabajos sobre el conflicto armado interno de esta época y empieza a plantear memorias incómodas que dejan en vilo al espectador.

*Lucanamarca*, entonces, no solo denuncia la ineficacia y negligencia del gobierno central, sino que incluso cuestiona el rol de la CVR, esto a pesar de que aquella inspiró y permitió la producción del largometraje. Así, aunque es un documental marcado por la publicación del *Informe final* de la CVR, se distancia de la institucionalidad que caracteriza a los trabajos sobre el conflicto armado interno de aquellos años, tanto por ahondar en las hasta entonces poco exploradas zonas grises del conflicto, como por explorar las memorias más incómodas para quienes además de verdad buscan reconciliación. *Lucanamarca* complica la discusión sobre las víctimas y los perpetradores (y con ella sobre justicia y reparaciones) a través del testimonio de Honorio Curitomay sobre el asesinato de su hermano Olegario, miembro de Sendero Luminoso.

Como se vio en las páginas anteriores, *Lucanamarca* no solo denuncia la ineficacia y negligencia del gobierno central, sino que incluso cuestiona sutilmente el modo en que la CVR intervino en la comunidad, esto a pesar de que aquella inspiró y permitió la producción del largometraje. Además, también se distancia de la institucionalidad que caracteriza a los trabajos sobre el conflicto armado interno de aquellos años al ahondar en las hasta entonces poco exploradas zonas grises y memorias incómodas del conflicto a través del caso de la familia Curitomay. Así, estos dos documentales son representativos de su género y momento; y, más importante aún, nos permiten observar, a través del cine documental, la forma en que la memoria sobre el pasado reciente en el Perú posconflicto se configura y manifiesta.



## Conclusiones

Este ensayo analizó dos documentales que tratan sobre las consecuencias de la masacre de Lucanamarca y alrededores: *Tarea pendiente* (2003), de Carlos Cárdenas, y *Lucanamarca* (2008), de Carlos Cárdenas y Héctor Gálvez. A pesar de que estos proyectos audiovisuales fueron filmados casi simultáneamente por casi el mismo equipo de producción, cada uno de ellos responde a un distinto momento *irruptor* de la memoria del Perú posconflicto. Por ello mismo, no sorprende que *Tarea pendiente*, a pesar de ofrecer una mirada novedosa y valiosa sobre el impacto de la violencia en la comunidad, no se distancie mucho de la línea narrativa establecida por la CVR. *Lucanamarca*, en cambio, se empieza a distanciar de la institucionalidad que caracteriza a los trabajos sobre el conflicto armado interno de esta época y empieza a plantear memorias contrahegemónicas. A pesar de compartir cierto espíritu de responsabilidad social con otros documentales sobre el conflicto armado interno que se produjeron y estrenaron en la década del dos mil, *Lucanamarca* se aleja de la narrativa de una “memoria cívica” de distintas maneras.



## Notas

[1] Esta cifra es una estimación estadística realizada por la CVR: “A lo largo de su trabajo de investigación, la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR) recibió testimonios que le permitieron identificar a 23.969 peruanos muertos o desaparecidos; sin embargo, los cálculos y las estimaciones estadísticas realizadas permiten afirmar que la cifra total de víctimas fatales del conflicto armado interno superó en 2,9 veces esa cantidad. Aplicando una metodología llamada Estimación de múltiples sistemas, la CVR ha estimado que el número más probable de peruanos muertos o desaparecidos en el conflicto armado interno se sitúa alrededor de las 69 mil personas” (CVR, 2004, p. 17).

[2] El 4 de junio de 1995, durante el gobierno de Alberto Fujimori, se aprobó la Ley de Amnistía 26479, que concedía la amnistía general a cualquier miembro del personal militar o civil que estuviera siendo denunciado, investigado, encausado, procesado o condenado o que estuviera cumpliendo penas de prisión por violaciones de derechos humanos (días después, cuando el Poder Judicial quiso emitir una opinión sobre un caso específico, se aprobó también la ley 26492, que prohibía al Poder Judicial decidir sobre la legalidad o aplicabilidad de la primera ley de amnistía y ampliaba su ámbito).

[3] Steve Stern expuso originalmente la idea de una “memoria como salvación” para el caso chileno que investigadores como Carlos Iván Degregori han usado también para el caso peruano. En este caso, la “memoria salvadora” de la dictadura de Fujimori, para justificar sus abusos, “desarrolló una intensa lucha por la memoria que tenía por objetivos; por un lado, construir al Estado peruano y a sus Fuerzas Armadas como las víctimas fundamentales de la violencia terrorista; por otro lado, edificar una memoria en la cual el país era salvado por dos actores principales, el presidente Fujimori y su asesor Montesinos con las Fuerzas Armadas y Policiales como actores secundarios” (Degregori 2013: 271).

[4] TV Cultura es una asociación peruana de comunicadores sociales creada en 1986 que tiene por misión contribuir al fortalecimiento de la identidad nacional, la democratización de las comunicaciones y la creación de redes de comunicación alternativa para la construcción de una sociedad con mayor justicia, equidad y democracia.

[5] La socióloga Anahí Durand define la “memoria cívica” como la “versión fomentada por las organizaciones de Iglesia y de DDHH en la que el movimiento social y la sociedad civil son percibidos como víctimas pasivas en medio de un fuego cruzado. [...] Ambas memorias, la ‘salvadora’ y la ‘cívica’ se construyen en función a la condición de la víctima como un correlato de la inocencia y la del victimario como un correlato de la culpabilidad, en estos discursos estas identidades son opuestos contrarios” (Bernedo 2015: 3-5).



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# LOS RESTOS DEL CAMINO: EL TERRITORIO TRASNACIONAL EN EL LIBRO CENTROAMERICANO DE LOS MUERTOS DE BALAM RODRIGO

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“Escribir quizás no sea más que seleccionar las voces susurrantes,  
convocar las tribus y los idiomas secretos  
de los que extraigo algo que llamo Yo.  
Yo es una consigna.”  
(Deleuze y Guattari, *Mil mesetas*)

**E**l *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* es el segundo de una trilogía con la que Balam Rodrigo, poeta chiapaneco, reconstruye el tránsito de migrantes centroamericanos en su paso por México. El poemario ganó la quincuagésima entrega del Premio Bellas Artes de Poesía Aguascalientes 2018, el galardón más importante del género en México. Rodrigo observó que la fecha era significativa pues el primer ganador del premio, el también chiapaneco Juan Bañuelos, lo recibió por *Espejo humeante* en 1968, obra de particular importancia en el desarrollo de la poesía testimonial en la región. El *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* se vincula con el carácter testimonial solo que en lugar de denunciar las guerrillas de los años sesenta, como Bañuelos, Rodrigo lo hace con los abusos ejercidos por el Estado hacia migrantes centroamericanos.<sup>1</sup>

*El Libro* está organizado en capítulos, cada uno correspondiente a un país: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua y México. Entre estos se intercalan cinco momentos del “Álbum familiar centroamericano” donde los poemas se vuelcan hacia un tono confesional y la voz poética habla desde la primera persona. En la “Nota del autor,” se establece una relación de coautoría con el obispo dominico Bartolomé de las Casas, específicamente con su defensa de los grupos indígenas en la *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. El autor afirma: “realicé actualizaciones, incorporaciones y reapropiaciones de dichos epígrafes a manera de palimpsesto” (13). La reescritura del texto de Las Casas se vuelve un gesto simbólico al ser este el

primer comentarista del Diario de Colón, “el primer enunciado sobre América escrito en lengua española” (Zamora 25), y con el que se inaugura la colonización en el continente. Al traer la voz de Las Casas al texto, Rodrigo apunta a un proceso de violencia que encuentra su antecedente en el siglo XVI y que continúa hasta la contemporaneidad.

El poemario está emparentado con la crónica de viajes no solamente por la inclusión de Las Casas como coautor del texto sino en la misma organización de los capítulos, que organizan los poemas a manera de recorrido por los “reinos” de Centroamérica. Cada subtítulo incluye además una serie de coordenadas geográficas con las que Rodrigo va trazando un mapa de la violencia ejercida hacia los migrantes centroamericanos en el territorio mexicano. En este ensayo me propongo investigar ¿qué funciones cumplen las referencias intertextuales con las que dialoga el poemario?, ¿cómo se configura el espacio en el texto? Y finalmente, ¿qué relación tienen estos dos elementos con la propuesta política de Rodrigo? Planteo que el *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* produce discursivamente el territorio extendiendo los límites geográficos, lingüísticos y literarios para (re)configurar una imagen de Centroamérica, que trasciende las fronteras políticas a través de la figura del migrante. Para el análisis parto del planteamiento de Deleuze y Guattari y de Édouard Glissant. Me detendré a estudiar las referencias topográficas con las que el poemario va trazando el mapa del territorio, las referencias textuales con las que dialoga y, por último, el lugar de enunciación desde donde se articula la voz poética.



### El territorio transnacional

El concepto de territorio abarca mucho más que su dimensión física. Deleuze y Guattari extienden el término más allá de su uso en otras ramas del conocimiento para decir que “es un conjunto de representaciones las cuales van a desembocar, pragmáticamente, en una serie de comportamientos, inversiones, en tiempos y espacios sociales, culturales, estéticos, cognitivos” (ctd. en Herner 166). Por lo tanto, en esta concepción, el territorio pertenece al orden simbólico y es susceptible a entrar en diálogo con otros imaginarios territoriales. Por el movimiento de los elementos que lo componen, este puede desterritorializarse, esto es “abrirse en líneas de fuga y así salir de su curso” (Guattari y Rolnik 323). A partir de esta acción constante se produce una nueva reterritorialización por medio de las nuevas relaciones, o agenciamientos, que se establecen entre los elementos heterogéneos que componen el territorio.

Por medio de este movimiento, continúan Deleuze y Guattari, los elementos que participan en la relación desterritorialización/reterritorialización se encadenan y alternan produciendo líneas de fuga que, en su impulso, crean una estructura rizomática. En este proceso: “desire and matter spread beyond the boundaries of property, where identities and bodies are pushed towards absolute destratification, and where radically new forms of social life may be created on a ‘new earth’” (Munro and Thanem 70). Así, el territorio como espacio simbólico desestabiliza las nociones hegemónicas de frontera, Estado e identidad.

Por otra parte, Edouard Glissant parte de las ideas de Deleuze y Guattari para rechazar la idea de que la identidad debe partir de una sola unidad de sentido — raíz única — que funja como punto de origen coherente. En su lugar, el autor acepta la concepción rizomática<sup>2</sup> y teoriza acerca de las relaciones que se establecen en dicha estructura. Para Glissant, los individuos existen como entidades *relacionales*, esto significa que “their identities are subject to redefinition when they come into contact with each other” (ctd. en Coombes 6).

A partir de ahí, Glissant estudia la idea de nomadismo, que también toma de Deleuze y Guattari, y lo articula a partir de la errancia. El errante “challenges and discards the universal — this generalizing edict that summarized the world as something obvious and transparent, claiming for it one presupposed sense and destiny. He plunged into the opacities of that part of the world to which he has access” (*Poetics* 20). Al contrario que el conquistador o el viajero, el errante rechaza cualquier identidad monolítica pues se articula a partir del movimiento mismo. La relación que construye con el Otro entonces — sea un territorio o quienes lo habitan — parte precisamente de la imposibilidad de asir esas opacidades por completo.



### Referencias topográficas en el *Libro*: máquinas, ríos y desiertos

El título del libro lo emparenta inmediatamente con uno de sus principales modelos, el *Libro de los muertos*. Esta obra se conformaba por “sortilegios y oraciones que, en el Antiguo Egipto, debían asistir a las almas de los difuntos en su tránsito por el inframundo hacia la otra vida” (González Arce 249). Este conjunto de textos no se registraba en papiros sino en las paredes de las tumbas o cámaras mortuorias.<sup>3</sup> Así, los textos del *Libro de los muertos* podrían pensarse como una forma precursora de los epitafios modernos. Desde esta consideración, el *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* establece con su título un vínculo importante entre el texto y la materialidad — aun en la forma de metáfora — a la que remite y en la que desea inscribirse. Si se atiende esta relación, todo el espacio que marca el texto está atravesado por la metáfora del cementerio: “este fértil camposanto llamado México” (115), como lo afirma la voz poética.

Como ya se ha mencionado, los capítulos se organizan a partir de países centroamericanos que responden también a los capítulos que organiza Las Casas en su defensa. Los “migrantes centroamericanos”, término que homogeneiza las características de cada país, se encuentran aquí particularizados en sus identidades nacionales.

En el *Libro*, la voz fluctúa entre “migrantes originarios del reino de Guatemala” [*sic*] (25), “migrantes salvadoreños” (49), “estas gentes de Nicaragua” (93), etc. Sin embargo, al establecer el tono de denuncia, la voz poética vuelve a nombrarlos a todos como “migrantes centroamericanos.” La identidad se muestra entonces dependiente tanto de las fronteras territoriales que se atraviesan como de la posición desde la cual se habla.

Si bien el *Libro* remite a otros territorios de Centroamérica, el espacio formal donde se desarrolla el texto se encuentra dentro de las fronteras políticas que componen México. Al igual que el tránsito de los migrantes centroamericanos por el territorio mexicano, el *Libro* comienza en el río Suchiate, en la frontera entre Chiapas y Guatemala: “Este es el origen de la reciente historia de un lugar llamado México” (28). Con este verso inicial, que remite al *Popol Vuh*, la voz poética se articula en un tiempo indefinido, el tiempo mítico del origen, y también introduce la ambigüedad de los nombres.<sup>4</sup> México no es México sino solamente la forma en la que se le llama a este territorio: un conjunto de representaciones temporales, espaciales y sociales, convendrían Deleuze y Guattari.

Cada poema obtiene además un doble título. Este está conformado por una parte en la que se marcan coordenadas geográficas y, posteriormente, se nombra el espacio que representan. De forma similar a lo que ocurriría con la particularización vs. homogeneización de las identidades migrantes, las coordenadas abren la posibilidad de nombrar el territorio como puntos específicos del mapa sin restringirlo a categorías políticas. Es decir, Chiapas se convierte así solo en un punto que corresponde a la referencia en un sistema cartesiano sin cargarse de la categoría de territorio mexicano o centroamericano. Sin embargo, al establecer el nombre formal del punto topográfico que se marca en la segunda parte del título: “14°40'35.5” N 92°08'50.4” W – Suchiate, Chiapas” (28), se le inscribe en una lógica que lo vincula a categoría lingüísticas y políticas nacionales.

Además del movimiento transversal de entrada, este primer poema efectúa también un segundo movimiento, esta vez en forma vertical:

Bajé de los Cuchumatanes, desde los bosques

de azules hojas de la nación Quiché,

desde la casa en donde habitan la niebla y los quetzales

hasta llegar, cerca de Ayutla, a la orilla del río Suchiate. (28)

Al estar en el apartado de la región de Guatemala, los marcadores topográficos como Ayutla, los Cuchumatanes y el propio río Suchiate tienen el efecto de fijar el territorio. Al igual que el juego que proponen las coordenadas de los capítulos, sería posible encontrar un punto geográfico desde donde situar el punto de enunciación. Sin embargo, esto se contrasta con marcadores ambiguos como ‘nación Quiché’ que expande el territorio incluso más allá de las fronteras políticas de la nación de Guatemala. El bosque, la niebla y los quetzales producen un efecto similar, incluso onírico, que desestabiliza la posibilidad de un punto geográfico estable.<sup>5</sup> Por último, si todo el espacio se presenta a través de la metáfora del cementerio, el descenso es simbólico pues, en la cosmogonía cristiana, remite al viaje al Inframundo.<sup>6</sup>

A partir del cruce del portal, el río, el poemario comienza a trazar un mapa del territorio mexicano. Este no se construye de forma ordenada, ni obedece a una lógica realista del camino migrante, más bien, se articula a partir del contrapunteo de espacios de referencia que el autor elige de acuerdo con una lógica de denuncia. Cada coordenada que sigue marca el espacio donde un migrante ha sido encontrado muerto dentro de los límites de México. Así, en este contrapunteo, la voz habla desde Chiapas, pero también salta después hacia Sabinas, Coahuila, se mueve hasta Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, regresa a Tenosique, Tabasco y continúa. El poema produce — y es producido a su vez por — el espacio geográfico donde se inscribe. Además, la voz poética alterna de referencia conforme salta de un poema al siguiente, aunque muchas veces corresponde a un coro de voces que Rodrigo *hace hablar* desde la muerte para contar la historia de su migración.

Por ejemplo, el poema que se titula “25°46'27.3” N 103°15'43.2” W – (Francisco I. Madero, Coahuila)” comienza con la primera persona del plural para enunciarse desde lo colectivo: “Así noso-

tros, desperdigados en el desierto, / La ropa salpicada entre arbustos y espinales, / Flores de informes corolas, desteñidas.” (73). Al contrario de lo que sucedía en el primer poema, donde predominaban las metáforas acuáticas, el espacio que se construye en este responde a la aridez y vulnerabilidad a la que obliga el desierto de la frontera norte. Los primeros versos dirigen la mirada hacia arriba al hablar del cielo solamente para contemplar cómo este masacra a la luz, que a su vez se transforma en colgajos de “fósiles estrellas decapitadas” (73). Después de una serie de versos en los que el coro de la voz poética narra cómo fueron secuestrados por un grupo de jóvenes sicarios en Torreón Coahuila, el poema se vuelca de nuevo a la descripción del espacio:

Pasto seco, sol sin aire, zopilotes en círculo  
resguardan nuestras cabezas. Abandonados  
y encogidos en la incandescencia del frío,  
morimos de dolor, de sed, a veces de hambre;  
y seguimos con las manos juntas, encintados  
de pies y quijadas, la lengua enroscada  
como víbora seca. (73)

Estos versos producen un efecto de mareo que se exalta con los indicadores arriba/abajo que pueblan el poema. La luz también juega un papel importante en el vértigo. Algunas veces se le caracteriza como “deshilachada,” víctima de los cielos, mientras que en otras se manifiesta a través de la “blancura del polvo” que maquilla la violencia de los sicarios o en la “incandescencia del frío.” Hacia los versos finales, la voz poética obliga a voltear de nuevo hacia arriba, solo para ser testigos de la luz “descuartizada / y su cadáver, túmulos de estrellas en rotación” (73). Finalmente, el espacio del desierto se contrasta con una aparición casi onírica, un recuerdo: “En las montañas de Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras, / tierra mía, florecen las orquídeas. En esta zanja / crecen enjambres de moscas sobre mi carne azul” (73). El afuera, lo que no es desierto, se presenta entonces solo como parte de los recuerdos o las alucinaciones. Centroamérica, o en este caso específico Guatemala, no se construye en un presente temporal marcado a su vez por una presencia en el territorio sino solo como

un afuera del tiempo actual que es siempre inalcanzable y utópico.

El primer poema que se analizó se inscribe en el sur, el segundo habla desde el norte. Si bien en un primer nivel la estructura no lo explicita, el poemario vincula estos dos territorios — y el resto de los espacios topográficos que construye — usando el mismo medio que les permite a los migrantes centroamericanos cruzar el país: la Bestia. Este tren de carga aparece en numerosas ocasiones y, aunque son muy diversas las metáforas que lo acompañan, siempre tienen un lugar antagónico en el discurso de la voz poética. Por ejemplo, el poema “16°07’12.1” N 93°48’11.7” W – (Tonalá, Chiapas)” traza el camino de un niño de 11 años, migrante salvadoreño que murió en el lugar que indican las coordenadas del título al caer del vagón del tren:

Nací en el Barrio FendeSal de Soyapango,  
cerca de San Salvador, pero a mí nadie,  
nunca me salvó.  
[...] Dos días hasta llegar a la frontera con México;  
atrasamos el río y subimos al tren La Bestia  
delante de Tecún, en Ciudad Hidalgo.  
Antes de Arriaga me quedé dormido  
y todavía sigo cayendo.” (51-52)

El poema es uno de los más narrativos del *Libro* y está cargado de referencias puntuales que indican el camino migrante. Antes del fragmento que se reproduce aquí, la voz poética narra su descubrimiento del jugador Mágico González en un local de tortas mexicanas en Coatepeque, Guatemala. La especificidad de los referentes le otorga una mayor fuerza narrativa al poema mientras que lo vinculan a su vez a un camino particular. El lector es obligado entonces a recorrer junto con el niño cada uno de los puntos de su viaje hasta su encuentro con La Bestia y su muerte en Tonalá, Chiapas.

En varias ocasiones, el espacio en el que aparecen los migrantes centroamericanos se construye a través de metáforas asociadas con el mundo natural: volcanes, pájaros, niebla, flores, plantas, animales, etc.

Lo opuesto sucede cuando se introduce el espacio dominado por La Bestia, las metáforas se alejan del mundo natural, aunque sin desprenderse por completo de él, para subrayar el aspecto amenazador de la máquina. En el poema titulado “Desperté cuando el tren me estaba destrozando” una voz anónima dice: “Cabalgo sobre un cetáceo de hierro / y recorro una distancia sólo medida / por el sueño de los pájaros” (89). La metáfora que se usa para nombrar al tren combina ambos elementos, la animalidad del cetáceo y el material del que está hecho para crear un monstruo inquietante que recorre el territorio.<sup>7</sup> El hierro a su vez resalta la artificialidad del mamífero a la vez que trae la sonoridad del metal al poema. Finalmente, lo gigantesco del tren contrasta con la pequeñez del pájaro que remite directamente a los migrantes centroamericanos.



### Referencias textuales: de lo universal a lo regional

Ya se ha mencionado la relación que establece el *Libro con la Brevísima relación* de Bartolomé de las Casas y su importancia tanto a nivel estructural como intertextual. Además de la crónica lascasiana, el Libro dialoga con otros textos literarios y periodísticos que lo insertan en una tradición específica de América Latina: la poesía testimonial y de denuncia.<sup>8</sup> Sin embargo, el texto disloca su posicionamiento en esta tradición al ponerla en diálogo con referencias más amplias de la tradición occidental como la Biblia y el mismo *Libro de los muertos* a la vez que la mantiene anclada al territorio por medio de coordenadas literarias específicas de la tradición mexicana. En una entrevista, Rodrigo afirma:

Pensé que donde dice Suchiate bien podría decir Río Jordán, o Yangtsé u otros ríos que dividen países. Y donde dice centroamericano bien podría decir marroquí, magrebí, sirio, afgano, kurdo... es decir, que cualquier persona que sea o haya sido un migrante pueda leer uno de los poemas y le parezca que refleja su propia condición humana. (ctd. en González Arce 250)

El movimiento de tensión y distensión abre un espacio de enunciación particular que se nutre de los movimientos de desterritorialización y reterritorialización que articularon Deluze y Guattari.

En el sentido de expansión, el texto establece un diálogo particularmente simbólico con la tradición cristiana a través de referencias al Éxodo y al Apocalipsis, así como a textos de los evangelios bíblicos. El poema que inaugura el texto se titula “Sermón del migrante (bajo una ceiba)” — referencia directa al “Sermón de la montaña” — y abre la posibilidad de interpretar el poemario, el éxodo y exterminio de migrantes centroamericanos, a partir del relato cristiano. No obstante, en un movimiento de reterritorialización inmediato, el poema introduce un epígrafe de Francisco Morazán, militar y político hondureño que reza “Declaro: Que mi amor a Centroamérica muere conmigo” (21). En este gesto, aunque la voz poética habla desde lo “universal,” vuelve a anclarse a un contexto geopolítico específico. Los primeros versos del poema ponen a Dios en el lugar de los migrantes:

Y Dios también estaba en exilio, migrando sin término;  
viajaba montado en *La Bestia* y no había sufrido crucifixión  
sino mutilación de piernas, brazos, mudo y cenizo todo Él,  
mientras caía en cruz desde lo alto de los cielos,  
arrojado por los malandros desde las negras nubes del tren,  
desde góndolas y vagones laberínticos, sin fin. (21)

Como se observa en el fragmento, el conjuntivo “y” y el adverbio “también” marcan una presencia anterior en el poema que, en este caso, remite a los migrantes centroamericanos. Dios imita su exilio y los acompaña en el trayecto. En un gesto profundamente subversivo, no se enuncia como el origen de la acción sino solamente un participante más del fenómeno. Asimismo, en un gesto de pasión cristiana, sufre los mismos maltratos que los migrantes centroamericanos y padece las mismas muertes. La crucifixión se equipara, en estos versos, con la acción de ser arrojado desde las góndolas de *La Bestia*.

El poema continúa para dislocar ahora el centro de enunciación del mensaje de Dios y que es recibido por los que se convertirán en migrantes:

[...] era su sufrimiento tan grande  
 como el de todos los migrantes juntos, es decir,  
 el dolor de cualquiera; antes, mientras Él estaba en  
 Centroamérica,  
 esa pequeña Belén hundida en la esquina rota del mundo,  
 nos decía en su sermón del domingo [...]  
 “El que quiera seguirme a Estados Unidos,  
 que deje a su familia y abandone las maras, la violencia,  
 el hambre, la miseria, que olvide a los infames  
 caciques y oligarcas de Centroamérica, y sígame.” (21)

Al contrario de lo que sucede en la tradición cristiana, en el poema de Rodrigo Dios se encuentra en Centroamérica y habla desde ahí. Belén, uno de los centros de peregrinación más importantes — y que encierra ya en sí mismo la idea del viaje — y lugar de nacimiento de Jesús, se traslada también a la región centroamericana. Posteriormente, la voz poética cita textualmente a Dios. La Palabra y con ella todos los significados que invoca se trasladan hacia los países centroamericanos y con esto disloca el biñario centro/periferia. Lo que se dice remite al evangelio de san Mateo, que hace una llamada a los escuchas del sermón para convertirse en discípulos de Jesús.<sup>9</sup> En el *Libro* seguir a Dios significa convertirse en migrante.

Por otro lado, como nota González Arce, el texto está poblado de referencias apocalípticas. Uno de los últimos poemas, por ejemplo, titulado “Hablan los que migran por México” comienza con uno de los signos fatídicos: “Arriba el temblor del cielo” (121). El cronotopo del poema se construye a partir de categorías que remiten al fin de los tiempos:

Arde la luna como tea inmóvil, muerta,  
 y la Bestia se alarga,  
 hecha de lenguas gemelas

que va partiendo la tierra

y los cuerpos que yacen a los pies de Dios. (121)

Aquí, Dios ya no se encuentra realizando el mismo camino que los migrantes, sino que se erige como árbitro supremo en el Juicio Final. El poema termina con una referencia a la súplica que hace Jesús cuando es crucificado: “¿Centroamérica, Centroamérica / por qué me has abandonado?” (122).<sup>10</sup> El territorio regional sustituye el lugar que, en la cita bíblica, correspondería a Dios, heredando así su omnipotencia y piedad salvadora.

Al incluir la voz de Dios en el texto, así como las referencias apocalípticas, el autor se convierte en un profeta. Como apunta González Arce, al hacer esto “recurre al significado original de este término, a saber: el testigo, el denunciante” (257). La voz se vincula además con otras figuras que trae al poemario en la forma de epígrafes. Por ejemplo, en el primer poema de esta sección, Francisco Morazán es quien recibe la orden de Dios de “migrar setenta veces siete [...] sin volver a ver más nunca, atrás...” (22).<sup>11</sup> En otro más se incluye un epígrafe de Otto René Castillo, activista y combatiente guatemalteco, mientras que la última parte se anuncia desde la voz del mismo Bartolomé de las Casas. De esta forma, a través de las referencias se tiende un puente entre los activistas centroamericanos, testigos y denunciantes del contexto regional y el texto bíblico.<sup>12</sup>

Al mismo tiempo, el *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* establece referencias intertextuales claras con el contexto regional en el que se desarrolla, una de ellas, por supuesto, con la *Relación* lascasiana. Otra, igual de importante que la primera, es con el *Popol Vuh* y los *Anales de los Xahil*, texto que narra el origen del mundo desde la cosmovisión maya y recopila una gran parte de las tradiciones del pueblo quiché. El primer interlocutor de Rodrigo después de la entrada de la voz al territorio mexicano es Balam K'itze', el primer hombre de maíz, quien dice “¿Sólo migras y narcos / habrá bajo los bejucos?” (Rodrigo 31). Estos versos remiten una vez más al primer libro del *Popol Vuh*, en el que los Progenitores, al ver la tierra vacía, se proponen dar origen a los primeros hombres y al resto de la creación. La frase “migras y narcos” permite entender este fenómeno en su contexto mexicano.

La última entrada del “Álbum” construye un poema alrededor de la imagen de unos niños en una poza del río Despoblado. El poema introduce una última relación intertextual: los icnucúcatl o cantos tristes de la conquista. Poemas breves que se escribieron poco después de la caída de México-Tenochtitlan ante los españoles y en los que la voz poética se lamenta de su destrucción. En los versos siguientes, la voz poética viaja todavía más atrás hasta un tiempo primigenio: “memoria de ancestros Cromañón y su corazón vegetal, / sin más herramientas que la fuerza de una roca / latiendo entre las manos” (129). En un ejercicio imaginativo, el tiempo del recuerdo, puntual y cercano, se traslada hacia un pasado ancestral para después regresar de pronto a lo inmediato: “Río Despoblado: hay dos difuntos en la foto” (129). A pesar del viaje temporal, el yo lírico no puede librarse de lo evidente al realizar el ejercicio eidético, que quienes intenta describir están marcados por su ausencia. El primero es uno de los niños migrantes que fue asesinado a los quince años. El otro es el padre que está tomando la fotografía y que experimenta una doble ausencia porque tampoco sale retratado en ella. Sin embargo, su aparición en la memoria de Rodrigo detona una lista larga de migrantes centroamericanos que pasaron por su casa de la infancia invitados por su propio padre. De esta forma, el texto convoca a un conjunto de personas, voces, presencias, ecos — memoria colectiva — a partir del recuerdo familiar.

Finalmente, el autor firma el poemario y establece su lugar de enunciación: “Altos de la provincia de las Chiapas, Centroamérica, en casa de mi mujer y mis hijos, todos lectores de libros” (138). En este último gesto subversivo, la voz no solo traslada el origen de la palabra, sino que extiende las fronteras geopolíticas actuales de la región para incluir al territorio chiapaneco en ella. Por medio de procesos de desterritorialización y reterritorialización, en la propuesta de Rodrigo, Chiapas se vuelve centroamericana.

## Conclusiones

El *Libro centroamericano de los muertos* es, antes que nada, una obra de denuncia y duelo. En el postprólogo del poemario, Rodrigo vuelve a hablar a través de la voz de Fray Bartolomé de las Casas para enunciar su voluntad política. En este caso tuerce el receptor del dominico para dirigir su súplica al “Muy alto e poderoso señor Lector” [*sic*] a quien le pide que “no conceda ni permita las que los tiranos inventaron, prosiguieron y han cometido que llaman *plagio, secuestro, tortura, masacre, violación*” (137). Así, el poema admite explícitamente su vocación de erigirse como un artefacto de denuncia política al mismo tiempo que se afirma como un poema de corte testimonial y social.

Las marcas topográficas que abundan en el texto constituyen los puntos de referencia a través de los cuales la voz poética, en ocasiones plural y colectiva, va trazando el mapa del territorio mexicano y centroamericano. En un ejercicio de desterritorialización y territorialización — sístole y diástole — Rodrigo extiende los límites del territorio, entendido como espacio simbólico, para después volver a anclarlo a un marco regional. Al hacer este movimiento, reconfigura una imagen de Centroamérica que trasciende las fronteras políticas a través de la figura del migrante. Además, al voltear los referentes “universales,” como las sagradas escrituras de la tradición cristiana, convierte a Centroamérica en el centro discursivo.

Los intertextos literarios tienen una función similar. Al establecer como su interlocutor a Bartolomé de las Casas, Rodrigo amplifica las fronteras temporales de la migración centroamericana hasta la conquista. Asimismo, se inserta en una tradición específica mexicana, pero sobre todo centroamericana, que vincula ambos territorios por medio del ejercicio literario. Las voces de Rulfo, los icnucúcatl, el *Popol Vuh*, el diálogo que establece con escritores y activistas guatemaltecos y hondureños y otras voces que pueblan los poemas ofrecen un contrapunto para el marco de referencias extranjeras que, en el poema, se enuncian desde un lugar centroamericano. De esta forma, el *Libro* cuestiona también las categorías de adentro/afuera que marcan



la tradición literaria nacional. Al desdibujar las fronteras territoriales es posible también marcar una producción literaria, que se enuncia desde México, como centroamericana.

Finalmente, la voz que construye el autor para sí mismo forma parte de su propuesta política. En su poética, Glissant dice que “each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (11). El “Álbum” se construye a partir de las relaciones entre el autor y los migrantes centroamericanos que pasaron por su casa de la infancia. El Otro que es desconocido en su errancia o exilio y el sujeto se encuentran y, en el pequeño momento de contacto, las identidades de ambos se reconocen. La imposibilidad de saber qué sucedió con aquellas personas lleva a la voz en una búsqueda de los testimonios que construyen el poemario. Solo que, al ser imposible la factualidad, lo que se propone el *Libro* es re-crearlos. En este sentido se vuelven apócrifos: parten del ejercicio imaginativo de la voz poética que se ha encomendado a la tarea omnipotente de hacer hablar a los muertos.



### Notas

[1] Otras publicaciones de Rodrigo incluyen *Marabunta* (2017), primer libro de la trilogía; *Braille para sordos* (2013), *Libelo de varia necrología* (2008) y *El tañedor de cadáveres* (2021), por mencionar algunos.

[2] Como varios de los filósofos posteriores a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Glissant cree que esta concepción de la identidad es limitante en sí misma. Sin embargo, él cree que es especialmente irrealizable en el contexto del Caribe donde las condiciones históricas de la inmigración francófona, la esclavitud y la dominación colonial han creado un fenómeno particular. Ver Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*.

[3] Para un estudio completo del *Libro de los muertos* y su importancia en la cosmovisión egipcia ver *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*.

[4] “Este es el principio de las antiguas historias de este lugar llamado Quiché” (*Popol Vuh* 21).

[5] En diferentes momentos del poemario la imagen de los pájaros, específicamente de los quetzales, está asociada a los migrantes: “Parvadas de lenguas migratorias que se desplazan en busca de sus despojos” (133). En el apartado de Guatemala, el poema “Emigra el quetzal hacia la biosfera del volcán Tacaná” tuerce la metáfora con un sentido irónico al señalar la contradicción entre la protección que le ofrece la Comisión Natural de Áreas Protegidas al quetzal mientras los migrantes centroamericanos son masacrados. La voz poética de este poema pertenece al último indígena mam que se lamenta por la muerte de los “pájaros despedazados por mandíbulas de óxido” (41). Sus intervenciones se intercalan con notas periodísticas sobre la migración de los quetzales.

[6] La catábasis abre toda una serie de posibilidades que vinculan al poemario con una veta importante de la literatura occidental que encuentra sus orígenes en Dante. Para un estudio completo sobre el descenso ver González Serrano.

[7] Para un estudio completo en torno a la figura del monstruo y su relación con la modernidad ver Moraña.

[8] Esta poesía fue especialmente relevante en el contexto centroamericano de las luchas armadas, basta nombrar a Otto René Castillo en Guatemala y Roque Dalton en El Salvador.

[9] “Entonces Jesús dijo a sus discípulos: Si alguno quiere venir en pos de mí, niéguese a sí mismo, tome su cruz y sígame” (Mateo 16:24). Para todas las referencias bíblicas utilicé la versión de la Biblia de las Américas.

[10] “Alrededor de la hora novena, Jesús exclamó a gran voz, diciendo: “Eli, Eli, ¿lema sabactani?” Esto es: ‘Dios mío, Dios mío, ¿por qué me has abandonado?’” (Mateo 27:46).

[11] Esta orden remite también al evangelio de san Mateo que indica la importancia del perdón (Mateo 18:21-26).

[12] En una entrevista, Rodrigo dice “ahora, algunos poetas relativamente recientes piensan que están descubriendo la poesía que habla de la violencia y demás, cuando el grupo de La Espiga Amotinada escribió sobre esto hace más de sesenta años. Sucede que la poesía testimonial es una poesía tachada de roja, cercana al comunismo, y además no pertenece sino a tradición centroamericana. Yo no hago más que escribir a partir de dicha tradición” (ctd en Busta-

mante Bermúdez 152). La Espiga Amotinada fue un grupo de poetas mexicanos entre los que se encontraban Juan Bañuelos, Óscar Oliva, Jaime Augusto Shelley, Eraclio Zepeda y Agustín Bartra.

[13] Naiman menciona que “la voz de los muertos devela las condiciones de destrucción de Comala desarticulando discursos occidentales que retrotraen al proceso de la colonización europea” (5). En el *Libro* la apropiación del discurso de Las Casas produce un efecto similar al trazar una continuidad entre el proceso de colonización y la migración centroamericana actual.

[14] En la tradición literaria latinoamericana no son pocos los ejemplos que se dan de una poesía combativa, social o vinculada a procesos de resistencia. Sin embargo, existen matices entre la poesía de protesta y la poesía testimonial, según Edmund Stephen Urbansky esta: “puede consistir en que la poesía social propugna a veces una programática de izquierda, levanta una bandera; los testimonialistas no. Ellos, más bien son simpatizantes con el socialismo cristiano” (634). Aunque esta opinión es de 1967 algunas diferencias se mantienen. Según Bustamante Bermúdez en la poesía social “los temas de la memoria, la experiencia y el testimonio quedan vinculados a las vivencias autobiográficas-familiares, es decir, a la memoria personal y colectiva de un conflicto específico e histórico” (154). Para más detalle sobre la tradición de la poesía política específica del contexto mexicano ver *La libertad tiene otro nombre. Antología de la poesía política y social en México*, coordinada por Iván Cruz Osorio.

[15] En este sentido, el texto actúa a partir de la figura de la interposita persona, un recurso legal que permite a quien habla interceder en nombre de un otro ausente para que quede fijo en un registro.

[16] Nicolás Campisi estudia cómo esta imposibilidad muchas veces conlleva a un rechazo de las nociones tradicionales de archivo “as well as [a] contest [to] the notion of progress or linear history by conceiving literature as a collaborative practice between the voices of the living and the dead” (36).

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# URBAN NUMBNESS TOWARD MEXICAN DOMESTIC WORKERS FROM THE 1970S TO PRESENT DAY: A SPIRAL OF INSTABILITY IN *ROMA*, *HÍLDA*, AND “ESPERANZA NÚMERO EQUIVOCADO”

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In March of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic, provoking uncertainty around the world. The emergence of the COVID-19 virus led to an imbalance in various sectors of daily life, directly affecting employment—cuts, layoffs, and business closures, among other problems. In particular, the pandemic produced instability in domestic workers' employment in Mexico. During the surge of COVID-19, such instability revealed the marginal importance that Mexican society has placed on the lives of domestic workers, especially on their health, independence, and labor rights. This insensible attitude and impassivity triggered a spiral of instability where the domestic workers' emotional and socioeconomic state fluctuated in the face of historical events. The domestic workers' spiral of instability phenomenon is confirmed in unfavorable situations demonstrated in literature and film. I will elaborate on this spiral phenomenon through The Corpus Christi Massacre in 1971, evidenced in Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* (2018), returning the domestic worker to everyday life, revealed in Elena Poniatowska's "Esperanza número equivocado" (1979) and Andrés Bello's *Hilda* (2014) and, again, placing the domestic worker in a state of instability during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 explained through press report interviews. I will compare the aforementioned works to the current situation of domestic workers in Mexico during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify the oppressive conditions described in literature and film and to highlight the urban numbness that has lessened solidarity.

The velocity present in modern-day capitalism has led to an urban numbness. According to Richard Sennett, "People travel today at speeds our forbears [*sic*] could not at all conceive" (17). Such speed triggers an urban numbness: "the sensory deprivation which seems to curse most modern building; the dullness, the monotony, and the tactile sterility which afflicts the urban environment" (15). Due to this dullness and monotony, as Sennett explains, "the body moves passively, desensitized into space" (18), society stands numb to the physical senses, naturalizes this numbness, and ignores social inequality. This inability to perceive social injustice comes from living without instability, where individuals face monotonous routines that fail to provide any sort of uncertainty. However, Sennett explains that "The body comes to life when coping with difficulty" (310). Through difficulties or, rather, instability, individuals have the opportunity to wake up from the urban numbness to face the inequities of this world.

Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* follows the life of Cleo, an Indigenous woman working as a domestic worker in Mexico City's Roma neighborhood. The scenes show the daily life of her work and the clear social class division between the employer, Sofia, and the employee, Cleo. In one scene, as Sofia is arguing with her husband on the phone, she starts yelling at Cleo, transferring her marital anger and making Cleo feel responsible. The class distinction is evident in Sofia and Cleo's employment relationship, where the middle-class environment imposes rules toward the subordinate, represented by a lower-class Indigenous woman.

In addition to the aggressions evident in numerous scenes, Roma voices another concern of greater magnitude regarding domestic work. The problems established between Mexican society and the labor sector relate to sociopolitical issues that occur throughout history. As Sergio de la Mora explains, “[h]owever much it is a domestic view of familial drama, Roma keeps politics in its peripheral vision, showing how domestic and personal politics reverberates with the public and exterior” (46). One of the key scenes occurs in the midst of the Corpus Christi Massacre<sup>1</sup> named after the Corpus Christi celebration in the Catholic church in June.

According to Alberto Nájar, on Thursday, June 10, 1971, a group of college students prepared a march asking for a budget increase in their education, among various other demands. This was the first protest during Luis Echeverría Álvarez’s presidency; he was sworn into office a few months prior on December 1, 1970. Kate Doyle explains that prior to becoming president, Echeverría served as the Secretary of Interior during Gustavo Díaz Ordaz’s presidency. Thus, “Echeverría had been at the helm of internal security when the massacre at Tlatelolco exploded in 1968, leaving dozens of students dead at the hands of Mexican police and military forces.” On October 2, 1968, a student movement gathered at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City protesting the authoritarian government. The protest ended in a bloodbath where the Mexican army stormed in and began shooting unarmed students. When the shooting ceased, hundreds were dead, injured, arrested, or had disappeared. Despite President Díaz Ordaz’s unsettling relationship with student protests that preceded the demonstration on October 2, at that time the Mexican government refused to acknowledge and disclose the true cause of what ended in a massacre; instead, “the government pointed back, claiming that extremists and Communist agitators had initiated the violence” (Doyle). As a result, Echeverría’s reputation as a violent leader under Ordaz’s presidency brewed hostility from the younger generations when he ran for president two years later. Nonetheless, “Echeverría promised a kinder, gentler government and reached out to the constituency most affected by the tough tactics of the Díaz Ordaz regime: Mexico’s young people” (Doyle). In doing so, Echeverría was able to mend his reputation during his presidential campaign.

Six months after being sworn into the presidency, however, Echeverría faced his first test when the Autonomous University of Nuevo León in Monterrey, “long torn by political differences, was shut down by angry demonstrators on May 1, 1971, after the conservative state congress changed the university’s bylaws, greatly reducing its autonomy” (Doyle). Thus, Echeverría came under scrutiny as the first conflict involving the youth arose. To maintain his promise of a “kinder” government, as opposed to Díaz Ordaz, “President Echeverría intervened to annul the offending law and restore full autonomy to the university” (Doyle). Months later, in solidarity with the students from Monterrey, students in Mexico City planned a march on June 10, 1971, scheduled to begin at the National Polytechnic Institute (Instituto Politécnico Nacional, IPN). After all, Echeverría had promised a gentler approach to the student population during his campaign. As a result, it must be noted that this march was “the first major student demonstration since Tlatelolco, and many hoped it would revive the student movement, hard hit by the repression of 1968” (Doyle). The march had a great turnout with about 10,000 demonstrators. Despite the peaceful march, another group with dozens of young people arrived in buses and trucks and headed toward the demonstrators. It should be emphasized that these young men who arrived later in the protest, all dressed in civilian clothing, “were armed with wooden poles, chains and truncheons. They attacked the students as scores of police stood idly by and watched” (Doyle). In response, the demonstrators tried to protect themselves with stones or sticks, but when the opposition pulled out firearms, the demonstration, yet again, turned into a massacre. Fifty years later, the exact number of deaths and injuries is still unknown.

The Corpus Christi massacre is also known as the Halconazo after the attackers, who belonged to a paramilitary group called the Halcones, the Falcons. It should be highlighted that through their use of violence and aggression toward the demonstrators on June 10, the Halcones tried to instill fear in Mexican society. They were “thugs-for-hire enlisted, trained and armed by the Federal District government to carry out the dirty work of suppressing the student movement in Mexico City” (Doyle). Rodríguez Munguía adds that the group was built in collaboration with the Mexican army.

After recruitment, these young men were trained in martial arts and self-defense tactics. Among these tactics was kendo, a martial art of Japanese origin that uses bamboo poles. These poles were the same ones used to attack the protesters during the Corpus Christi massacre. Although there are various eyewitness accounts and the Halcones were directly created by the government, to this day, the Mexican government, including former president Echeverría, has not confessed the truth behind the attack.

The Halcones were the government's tactic to combat student protesters and control Mexican society during Echeverría's presidency. Despite his denial regarding his involvement in the Corpus Christi massacre, US documents provide convincing evidence of the government's connection with the formation of the Halcones. As Kate Doyle suggests, the use of the Halcones to combat a student group in Mexico City while trying to improve his relationship with students in Monterrey suggests that he was "playing a double<sup>1</sup> game." Thus, "[p]ossibly out of anger over the fact that the students insisted on demonstrating even after he had gone to such great lengths to meet their aspirations, Echeverría may well have given his blessing to the use of the group against the IPN demonstrations" (Doyle). Despite its origin, it is crucial to contextualize the Halcones with the government. Some researchers point out that the Halcones also participated in the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre that occurred in Mexico City. However, it is worth mentioning that the protest of June 10, 1971, three years after the Tlatelolco massacre, was the first demonstration organized after 1968, according to Rodríguez Munguía. He explains that the Federal Security Agency (Dirección Federal de Seguridad) "detectó una creciente disconformidad hacia el gobierno de Echeverría, [. . .] y por eso la respuesta a la protesta del Jueves de Corpus, a la que oficialmente se le ubicaba como una subversión" (Nájar) [detected a growing nonconformity toward Echeverría's government [. . .] hence the response to the Corpus Christi Massacre, which was officially classified as a subversion].<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the response from the government towards the protesters was a clear message from president Echeverría: any type of demonstration was prohibited and there would be harsh consequences. Rodríguez concludes that after the massacre, there was very little open social mobilization and the Halconazo served as a warning

to the Mexican society declaring that public manifestation was forbidden.

The strategies used by the government to silence the voices of the Mexican people can be identified in *Roma* within the context of domestic workers. Although Cleo is not a student, like those who participated in the protest of June 10, 1971, there is a parallel oppression between the students and the domestic workers who have equally been silenced. Echeverría's oppression of the students, through the violence organized by the Halcones toward the protesters, is directly connected with Cleo's life during the massacre scene. This scene occurs when Cleo enters a furniture store looking for a crib, and she encounters Fermín, her ex-boyfriend, an active participant of the Halcones who abandons her after discovering she is pregnant.

With this scene in mind, it is essential to recognize the suffering that women in the film encounter. Just like Cleo's boyfriend abandons her after informing him of her pregnancy, Sofia's husband also abandons his family. Amelie Hastie suggests that Fermín "is typical of the primary men of the film" (58). In fact, just as Cleo prepares to notify Sofia that she is pregnant, "Sofia sits with her mother discussing her own husband's disappearance from the family" (Hastie 58). Fortunately, Sofia does not fire Cleo when she tells her about her pregnancy. Rather, she supports her and says, "Claro que no, Cleo, no seas tonta, hay que llevarte al doctor ya" [Of course not, Cleo, don't be silly, we have to take you to the doctor now]. Hastie points out that "Sofia instead accepts her news and announces that she will bring her to a doctor (and one, the film soon shows, who is also a woman)" (58). This moment offers a solidarity model from Sofia toward Cleo. Sofia not only pities her out of goodwill when she sees Cleo as a single mother, she also shows a resignification where Sofia begins to understand Cleo's pain when she sees herself faced with her husband's abandonment. In other words, Sofia becomes what Michel de Certeau identifies as a "shifter" (143). Rossana Reguillo further explains that shifters are defined for their capacity to change the direction or meaning of social situations in unorthodox ways. These "shifters" provide an alternative way, a different lens, to view a situation—they become individuals capable of changing and altering the stereotypes (7). For this reason, Sofia, as a

middle-class woman, changes the direction in which she treats Cleo and becomes a shifter in this scene when she recognizes Cleo's pain.

Everything goes well during the medical visit. As Cleo is leaving, she goes down to the third floor of the hospital to see the newborns when, suddenly, an earthquake strikes. This scene is particularly crucial because it foreshadows the future of Cleo's baby. While Cleo is looking at the newborns, the earthquake hits and a small piece of ceiling material falls on top of a premature baby's incubator. The nurses panic and one can hear the babies crying. At the end of the scene, just as the ceiling material falls on top of the incubator, the camera does a closeup on the baby. The scene concludes in a rather ambiguous form because it is unknown if the baby survives. However, this scene is symbolic for one particular reason: the piece of ceiling that falls and injures the baby in the incubator represents the same emotional injury that Fermín will give to Cleo when she encounters him later in the Corpus Christi massacre, provoking her preterm labor and, eventually, her baby's death.

After visiting the doctor, Cleo searches for Fermín in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Mexico City, but she finds him with a large group of young people training kendo martial arts. Amelie Hastie reveals that Cleo finds Fermín "at a training camp where hordes of men train in martial arts at the base of a hill inscribed with the initials of the current president: LEA" (58). Therefore, LEA refers to the president Luis Echeverría Álvarez and to the relationship that Fermín has with the Halcones. As mentioned before, the martial arts practiced by these young people were the same martial arts used to attack the students during the Corpus Christi massacre scene. In this same scene, the violence initiated during the demonstrations between the students and the Halcones begins right when Cleo is looking for cribs at the furniture store. Suddenly, Fermín enters the store with a gun and meets Cleo; he looks at her, takes aim, and upon recognizing her, slowly walks away with his gun still pointed at her. When he walks away, Cleo looks down and finds the floor wet because the fear incited by the confrontation of the Halcones makes her water break. At the hospital, despite all of the doctors' attempts, the baby does not survive, thus fulfilling the anticipated omen.

The Halconazo and Cleo's personal life, including her pregnancy, are intertwined, and they represent the future of domestic workers and what Mexican society has to offer. Citing Carla Marcantonio, the scene where Fermín and Cleo meet during the Halconazo "is significant because it clearly fuses the personal with the political and demonstrates their inextricability" (40). The oppression from the Halcones and the government in hopes of silencing the voice of the people and, above all, the students, becomes the same way that many families oppress their employees. Their future of creating a family is almost impossible with the life they have as domestic workers. It is important to note that this type of oppression dates back many centuries. Sergio de la Mora explains, "The structure of domestic work is a legacy of the caste system of New Spain (the colonial term for what is now Mexico), which encoded a system of racial classification tied to social status, whereby Indigenous people were obliged to work for criollos and mestizos for no compensation other than room and board" (47). Nonetheless, beyond the relationship between the employer and the domestic worker, the emotional pain that Cleo experiences represents the pain that society has inflicted on domestic workers. Marcantonio reveals a relationship between the personal sphere and the political sphere in Cleo's life. In other words, Fermín's abandonment after Cleo conveys her pregnancy and the Halconazo are strongly related. Marcantonio explains that "absent and violent patriarchs are to blame for the disintegration of the nuclear family, while failed and violent patriarchal institutions are responsible for the massacre of a nation's young citizens" (40). The entire country suffers due to the political conflicts. Nevertheless, those who are excluded, the least privileged, such as domestic workers, are the most affected in these types of conflicts. The film voices a crucial message during the scene when Cleo's baby dies. On one hand, the death of Cleo's baby represents the losses of these women whose lives, in one way or another, were affected by violent historical events. On the other hand, Cleo's baby represents the voice of Mexico's youth and their future, and the baby's passing poses the question on whether there is a future for the young leaders. Perhaps Mexico has no future if this type of violence persists. Deborah Shaw declares the oppression of domestic workers and states:

*Roma* is the result of Cuarón's acknowledgement that the lives that he and other middle-class Mexicans enjoy are built on the exploitation of poor indigenous or mestiza women. Oppression is naturalised by oppressors, and the labour of domestic servants is rendered invisible by those who believe that Mexico's indigenous and mestizo class exist to serve them. *Roma* denaturalises this system and presents an anatomy of power relations between domestic workers and their employer-families. (Shaw)

In Cleo's case, if this type of treatment persists with her employer's family, with Fermín, who abandons her, or with the same society who incites violence and fear during the Halconazo, she will not obtain the same type of freedom and opportunities as the rest of the society. Thus, the violence that sparks in 1971 provokes a large sense of instability for Cleo, the domestic employee who is affected more than the family who employs her. Fortunately, because of this instability, Sofia manages to feel a bit of compassion for Cleo's pain, shifting away from the urban numbness and supporting her during several moments in the film.



The subject of domestic employees is a recurring topic in Mexico. The exclusion and the privileges allow for classism to occur, which is evidenced in many cities in Mexico, and, as a result, impedes the ability to recognize the needs of the domestic worker. This matter, as it is contemplated in *Roma*, provokes emotional instability among the domestic workers such as Cleo. Years after the Corpus Christi massacre, Elena Poniatowska published her work *De noche vienes* (1979). One of her short stories titled "Esperanza número equivocado" returns the domestic worker to her typical normalcy where her everyday life becomes, once again, a paternalistic or maternalistic relationship with her employer and where aggression arises once again.

Poniatowska begins her short story: "Esperanza siempre abre el periódico en la sección de sociales y se pone a ver las novias" (507) [Esperanza always turns to the section on social events in the newspaper and peruses the brides]. Esperanza, the family's maid, transforms the wedding and bride's section into part of her daily routine. As Esperanza reads through the newspaper, she talks to Diana, her employer's daughter, who asks why Esperanza never got married. The answer is quite simple—she is a domestic worker, and, if we delve into the situation, we can identify various reasons established in the system that hinder this group of women from advancing in their employment. For example, if they become a maid at a young age, it is likely they will remain that for most of their life due to the limited opportunities that this sector has to offer. One of the most obvious explanations behind this occurs because the employee spends the majority of her time inside her employer's house, obligated to fulfill her job responsibilities, coinciding with what can be observed in *Roma*. For this reason, this type of employment becomes overwhelming and detrimental to their mental and emotional health.

Another reason, less evident, is founded in the classism that creates a division between the men that domestic workers could potentially marry. Esperanza tells Diana that she had several boyfriends, but she stayed single and could never marry. She explains, "—uno era decente, un señor ingeniero, fíjese usted. Nos sentábamos el uno al lado del otro en una banca del parque y a mí me daba vergüenza decirle que era criada y me quedé silenciosa" (508) [—one was polite, an engineer, you see. We sat next to each other on a bench at the park and I would get embarrassed telling him that I was a maid, so I remained silent]. As a result, Esperanza expresses the embarrassment that is placed on these women who work as maids, simply because of their employment, as if it was an indecent job that should be hidden for fear of judgment.

Society has transformed the way domestic workers are viewed in such a way that maids feel embarrassed about the labor that contributes day after day to privileged families. During a typical day, families expect their maid to complete various duties, from cleaning their rooms to picking up the family's children from school. We do not realize, however,

that through this daily life a naturalization is established toward the maid's work so that her work commitment is seen as a completely normal activity without considering the exploitation and lack of labor rights. This is the everyday nature, or rather, *la vida cotidiana*, that Rossana Reguillo explains, where the daily life is converted into a space that becomes a transforming stage for social normalization (2). This type of normalization excludes the rights of domestic workers. In Esperanza's case, her job as a domestic worker and the naturalization of converting her job into something that provokes embarrassment forces her to lie about her job whenever she dates a man.

Esperanza's desire to find a husband is reflected in the peculiar way she answers the phone and the way she dials random numbers hoping she will find a husband. She meets an engineer, for example, through a long phone conversation when he calls the wrong number, which happens to be the residence where Esperanza works. Esperanza's typical answers to men who mistakenly call her work residence include, "—No señor, está usted equivocado. Esta no es la familia que usted busca, pero ojalá y fuera [. . .] No, es una casa particular pero qué fortuna..." (508) [No, sir, you are mistaken. This is not the family that you are looking for, but how I wish this were true [. . .] No, this is a private home, but how lucky I am....]. The author, thus, extrapolates the title's name with the maid's name and its double function—Esperanza's persistence in finding a husband through the calls she receives and the random calls she makes at her job is not a coincidence. Sometimes she will get frustrated with a few, but after some time, "allí está nuevamente en servicio dándole vuelta al disco, metiendo el dedo en todos los números, componiendo cifras al azar a ver si de pronto alguien le contesta y le dice como Pedro Infante: '¿Quiere usted casarse conmigo?'" (508) [there she is again turning the numbers on the rotary dial, putting her fingers on all the numbers, making up random figures to see if someone answers her call and asks her like Pedro Infante: Would you like to marry me?]. Her hopes persist and she finds a creative dialogue to interact with the men who call the residence where she works. Nonetheless, Sunday is her only day off and, as a result, this is the only day that she can go out. While she is out, she describes the people she sees as "aquella gente que tiene su casa y su ir y venir" (508) [those people who have their

home and their coming and going]. In other words, property belongs to "them," people like Esperanza's employer, but not to "them" as in people like Esperanza. The houses, the lives, the liberty, and, above all, the attempt to appropriate the agency of the domestic workers is linked to the employers, the privileged, but it is not linked to the employees themselves.

To further illustrate this idea, the short story explains that "durante treinta años, los mejores de su vida, Esperanza ha trabajado de recamarera [. . .] Ahora ya de grande y como le dicen tanto que es de la familia, se ha endurecido" (508) [for thirty years, the best years of her life, Esperanza has worked as a housekeeper [. . .] Now, much older and being told that she is part of the family, she has hardened]. Thirty years working Monday through Saturday for a privileged family limits Esperanza's ability to go out and socialize—so much so that she is chained to the family she works for, and domestic work becomes her life.

At the end of the short story, the name Esperanza, which means hope in Spanish, represents a play on words because Esperanza is hopeless in finding a husband; this is why toward the end, she responds badly to a man who mistakenly calls the residence where she works. She replies, "No señor, no, yo no soy Isabel Sánchez, y por favor, se me va a ir usted mucho a la chingada" (508) [No, sir, no, I am not Isabel Sánchez, and please, go to hell]. This short story reveals the routinization that has been naturalized throughout the thirty years working for the same family. Her free time is limited, and she is poorly paid and overworked; however, all of this is acceptable to society, so much so that the domestic workers' situation develops into an urban numbness. This is the reality for domestic workers in Mexican society that has been going on for decades.



Unlike the obedient Esperanza who comes to accept her reality as a domestic worker for a wealthy family, Andres Clariond's *Hilda* presents the power dynamics that continue to harass domestic workers. However, in the case of *Hilda*, the audience is present-

ted with a rebellious domestic worker whose emotions make it clear that she despises her work. The film portrays a wealthy Mexican woman and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. LeMarchand living in Mexico City. Their son will soon return to Mexico with his wife and baby son. As a result, Mrs. LeMarchand goes searching for a nanny that could potentially take care of her grandson. During the first minutes of the film, classism becomes evident as she boasts about her husband's French ancestry to Indigenous women who come to interview for the job. After failing to find an appropriate nanny for her grandson, she asks her former gardener if his wife, Hilda, would be interested in the job. Uncertain about the position but willing to try, he convinces his wife.

Mrs. LeMarchand's condescending beliefs about domestic workers are apparent when she tells her husband about Hilda and says, "la muchacha va a ser de ellos," [the girl is going to be theirs], implying that the maid will belong to her son and daughter-in-law. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that in Spanish the term *muchacha* translates to young girl or teenager, but it is potentially offensive and condescending when referring to a maid or a cleaner. Far worse, Mrs. LeMarchand goes on and tells her husband "se la pueden llevar" [they can take her], referring to the fact that her son and daughter-in-law can eventually take Hilda with them, as if Hilda did not have a family of her own, and thus eliminating her agency.

Hilda catches on to Mrs. LeMarchand's condescending mentality and is immediately irritated. Hilda begins replying with short answers to Mrs. LeMarchand's questions, and even when she tries to engage in a conversation with Hilda, Hilda refuses. It is important to note that Hilda is originally hired to take care of the grandson, but she ends up completing various other chores that convert her into a domestic worker for Mrs. LeMarchand. For this reason, Paul Julian Smith explains that "Power relations are exacerbated or highlighted in this exquisitely formal domestic space (the house is recognized as an architectural landmark), which is by no means a site of solidarity between women of different classes but rather one that brutally enforces further inequality" (170). Moreover, Mrs. LeMarchand begins to treat Hilda as her possession. She forces her to work weekends without letting her go to her family or ta-

ke days off. She makes Hilda spend time with her, as if they are friends, while drinking wine and eating caviar and foie gras, sleeping in the same bed, and even forcing her to dress in identical traditional Mexican dresses, pretending they are Fridas.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. LeMarchand seems to be seeking a friend, but as Smith proposes, "This is clearly a strategy of dominance that allows the mistresses to feel morally superior through their generosity while the maids are infantilized: the mistress will even cut and color her maid's flowing black hair in an attempt to match her own" (170). In a later scene, both women pose in front of a mirror wearing a huipil, an embroidered blouse, that Mrs. LeMarchand has selected for both to wear and says, "las dos Fridas" [the two Fridas].

Smith's point about the feeling of moral superiority is evident as Mrs. LeMarchand attempts to befriend Hilda while exploiting her as her employee. Ironically, Mrs. LeMarchand's past reveals that she was an active student in the protest of Tlatelolco. Nonetheless, it seems as though her yearning for social activism, as it was during college, is far gone. One day, as Hilda is cleaning the house, she finds a box with several items from Mrs. LeMarchand's past, including a book by Karl Marx. Hilda returns the box to Mrs. LeMarchand for inspection and Mrs. LeMarchand looks at it with great interest and even begins perusing the book. From this moment on, she delves into Marxist theories and invites college students to interview her about the Tlatelolco massacre. However, to her surprise, these college students quickly realize Mrs. LeMarchand's incongruent life—a woman who sought social justice during her college years but now lives an extravagant life completely detached from contemporary social justice. In other words, she idealizes Marx, social justice, and political activism, but exploits her maid Hilda at home, thus contradicting her words with her actions. Hilda, too, quickly recognizes Mrs. LeMarchand's hypocrisy given that she continues to manipulate her own maid, banning her from seeing her husband and children for weeks, while lecturing her on Marxist theories.

Hilda manages to escape this inferno with the help of various college students who protest outside Mrs. LeMarchand's home and Hilda's husband who desperately goes on looking for her. In an attempt to

voice their concerns to Mr. LeMarchand's business affiliates during a dinner party, the college students protest outside and eventually enter the LeMarchand residence along with Hilda's husband, who happens to join in during the chaos. However, not all maids are as fortunate as Hilda—rescued and set free from exploitative employers. Many are trapped in a spiral of abuse, especially if they come from a rural or Indigenous background. As a result, the classism that governs many upper- and middle-class families who employ maids is the catalyst that produces urban numbness toward them in Mexican society. The lack of empathy generates oppressive work conditions that persist throughout history, and, just like Cleo in *Roma*, maids become some of the most affected individuals in society.



Decades after *De Noche Vienes* was published and a few years after *Hilda* was released, both portraying how the life of a domestic worker is naturalized, the WHO declared a global pandemic in March 2020. In Mexico City, the virus generated great concern among female employees who had to choose between their job or their family. According to an article published by AP in the *Los Angeles Times* (*LAT*) about domestic workers in Mexico City, some employers have required their employees to continue working, many times putting more work on them and preventing them from visiting their own families. One employee stated, according to *LAT*, “Hoy me sentí muy mal y pedí permiso para ir al hospital, [. . .] Mi patrón me dijo que no podía salir. Pero ellos sí tienen visitas” [Today I felt very bad and I asked for permission to go to the hospital, [. . .] My boss told me that I could not leave, but they do have visitors at home]. The harsh reality allows us to see the lack of empathy of employers toward their domestic workers who also have families to care for and support. Having a maid in the house has become very common among families in Mexico City, *LAT* indicates, even lower-middle class families hire a maid either to clean the house or to take care of their children. The *Los Angeles Times* notes that domestic workers earn low incomes despite the long hours, some receiving as little as \$4 per day.

The employer-employee relationship between domestic workers and their employers generates economic instability for domestic workers' families in a time of crisis. Interviewed for the *LAT* article, an employee who works in Mexico City explains that she is a single mother with two children to care for. However, given the global pandemic with COVID-19, the family who employed her for seven years fired her in March 2020. Worried, she says, “Me pagaron la última semana de trabajo y ahora no tengo recursos para las necesidades más básicas de mis dos hijos pequeños. El salario que percibía solo me alcanzaba para vivir al día” [They paid me the last week of work and now I don't have the means for the most basic needs for my two young children. The salary I received was only enough to live day by day]. Given the situation with unemployment and the spread of COVID-19, she feels trapped in this dilemma because, as *LAT* points out, there was never an employment contract or some type of structured compensation with benefits such as health insurance.

Another domestic worker shares that her employers and their family left their home as soon as the stay-at-home order began in Mexico City. As a result, they do not answer the domestic worker's calls that she has made to inquire about her payment. Uncertain, she says, “No sé si regresen en cuanto termine la cuarentena, [. . .] Lo que sí sé es que me quedé sin ingresos, soy madre soltera, pago renta y por el momento estoy haciendo gelatinas y salsas para vender a mis vecinos. Pero no he tenido mucho éxito porque muchos se fueron a sus pueblos” [I am not sure if they will return when quarantine is over, [. . .] What I do know is that I am left without an income, I am a single mother, I pay rent, and for the time being, I am making Jell-O and salsas to sell to my neighbors. But I have not had much luck because many of them went back to their hometowns]. These shocking anecdotes remind us of stories in the literary and film productions that have been studied in this work, since Cuarón, Clariond, and Poniatowska project, through their characters, the lack of awareness and concern toward domestic workers.

Laura Gómez Flores and Bertha Teresa Ramírez from the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* announced on March 31, 2020, that it is the duty of employers to pay domestic workers despite the stay-at-home order

and the pandemic. According to this source, the Human Rights Commission (Comisión de Derechos Humanos, CDH) in Mexico City and the Department of Labor (Secretaría de Trabajo y Fomento al Empleo, STFE) reminded those who use domestic services about the importance to continue a punctual and complete salary during the pandemic due to COVID-19. Additionally, the STFE added that employers cover the wages of domestic workers despite the current social distancing and stay-at-home order, even when they do not go to work. Regarding the state of uncertainty, STFE also took the opportunity to provide free assistance and guidance to workers in the domestic sector and grant labor rights. Nonetheless, despite all of this support, STFE has not been clear about what would proceed if, for example, employers got COVID-19 and were unable to pay their domestic workers.

Nevertheless, on May 11, 2020, Jessica Xantomila from *La Jornada* published news about the petition from the Center for Support and Training for Household Employees (Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación para Empleadas de Hogar, CACEH) to the federal and state authorities to establish some type of unemployment insurance for domestic workers. Xantomila cites Marcelina Bautista, director of CACEH, who announced that they had received more than 200 complaints from workers claiming labor rights abuse. According to Bautista, between 50 and 60 percent were fired, had a salary cut, or were sent home without pay. The conditions during the global pandemic evidently caused an imbalance in the economy of domestic workers. Despite the pandemic, it is important to note that the domestic worker has been a victim of workplace abuse for decades—even traced back to servants who were also abused during colonial times. The lack of support provided to this labor sector is once again underscored during the crisis. Bautista indicates that the global pandemic puts us back in social inequality, as it is seen with domestic workers: “Simplemente no hay mucha consciencia de parte de los empleadores para que apoyen a las trabajadoras que tanto les han cuidado, que están cuando se enferman, cuando están solos, cuando necesitan comida, apoyo para su familia, pero hoy las abandonan” [There is simply not much awareness from the employers to support their workers who have cared so much for them, who are there when

they get sick, when they are alone, when they need food, support for their family, but, today, they abandon them].



The social normalization of the abusive treatment of domestic workers is visible decade after decade, not only during the COVID-19 global pandemic. However, it is clear that historical events have a great impact on these women, so that normalization is interrupted and understanding for the others' suffering is welcomed. In *Roma*, Cleo's life is completely naturalized by society and her employer, among them, Sofia. The Corpus Christi massacre that occurred on Thursday, June 10, 1971, however, turns the story around to give Sofia an alternative sensibility that denaturalizes the way she relates to, and treats, Cleo. For example, Sofia comes to understand Cleo's pain and suffering during her pregnancy, and she helps her during the process. In one scene at the beach, one of Sofia's children almost drowns, but Cleo manages to save him. Alarmed by her son nearly drowning, Sofia is thankful to have everyone safe and she hugs all of her children, including Cleo. This poignant scene elicits an empathetic energy that seeks to ease the pain of others. It is then when Sofia manages to offer a new meaning (resignify) to the everyday nature of domestic workers that in the past was naturalized and conducive to abusive or exploitative treatment. Nonetheless, even though Sofia suggests a slight empathetic change toward Cleo, it is important to note that such attitude is rather brief and her behavior at the end of the film returns to adopt an urban numbness toward domestic workers.

Decades later, it is evident that the domestic worker's situation is once again naturalized while reading “Esperanza número equivocado” or while watching *Hilda*. The everyday nature of a privileged family is quite established in Mexican society. To Esperanza's employers, her routine as a domestic worker and her lack of freedom are natural—so much so that Esperanza eventually loses hope of finding a husband, and she realizes that her situation will not change. To this day, this type of urban numbness is

present in Mexican society. Countless events have occurred over the last forty years in Mexico that could have given the employers the ability to embrace the pain of the employee—to offer a new meaning to their domestic employee’s life, like the college students who protested in front of Mrs. LeMarchand’s home and liberated Hilda. Nonetheless, many employers naturalize their domestic workers’ lack of freedom, like Esperanza’s case, while other employers offer a brief sense of care, like Sofia did with Cleo, but they adopt an urban numbness in the end.

Society has not offered a new meaning to the relationship and the labor of a domestic worker. Had employers challenged the status quo of employee-employer relationships, the increase in cases and complaints from domestic workers concerned about their work would not have been so evident during the global pandemic in 2020. One employee explains in the *Los Angeles Times*, “En México, y en todo el mundo, no hay una sola pandemia, hay dos: el COVID-19 y la desigualdad. Esa desigualdad que hoy me tiene más aislada que nunca” [In Mexico, and throughout the world, there is not one single pandemic, there are two: COVID-19 and inequality. The inequality that, today, has me more isolated than ever]. Today’s reality reveals similar issues that are represented in literature and cinema. The oppression toward these workers persists in a spiral manner: stable and naturalized the majority of the time, but malleable in the face of any sociopolitical situation. Although these sociopolitical issues affect the entire Mexican society, even the most privileged citizens, the issues tend to harm domestic workers even more, provoking endless instability.



### Notes

- [1] In Spanish, known as La matanza del jueves de Corpus.
- [2] All translations are my own.
- [3] The term *Fridas* alludes to Frida Kahlo’s famous painting “The Two Fridas.” The painting shows a double self-portrait of Kahlo.

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# ENTORNOS HOSTILES, DESERCIÓN ESCOLAR Y MIGRACIONES

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**S**e propone un análisis de los entornos hostiles que enfrenta actualmente la juventud, en su núcleo familiar, en el ámbito escolar y en su lugar de origen, que pueden ser factores de riesgo para que se presente la deserción escolar, el desarraigo familiar y la migración. Esta reflexión surge a partir del contacto con las personas estudiantes de educación básica y media superior en México, así como también, por el contacto con poblaciones de alta marginación en zonas urbanas e indígenas del país. Se plantea un análisis desde la experiencia pedagógica y social.

Se pretende observar con una mirada respetuosa y compasiva a la población juvenil que, desde un discurso adultocéntrico, término acuñado, por el sociólogo educador en la Universidad de Chile y especialista en estudios de las juventudes, Duarte Quappeper (2002), define el término de adultocentrismo, como un sistema de dominio y la subordinación de las personas jóvenes, por parte de las generaciones de adultos; se ha calificado al sector juvenil, como manipulable, rebelde, sin rumbo, desacreditando así, su papel en la sociedad y limitando la mirada, hacia una nueva perspectiva de juventudes con identidad propia, es necesario, estudiar a fondo las causas que provocan sus desalientos (PUC- SP, 2023), y frustraciones, así como, la deserción de sus proyectos académicos y profesionales.

Si bien, la adolescencia, es la transición a la vida adulta, es un tiempo de cambios, de formación de la personalidad, como lo menciona el psicólogo especialista en desarrollo humano Morris (2001), es la etapa del fortalecimiento de la propia identidad, no siempre se cuenta con un ambiente apropiado para que se desarrollen plenamente, en cada área que los integra: física, psicológica, emocional, social y cogni-

tivamente; entonces surge un cuestionamiento: ¿cómo esperar que, desde los entornos hostiles, en que viven, sin valores, violentos, inseguros y de alta marginación socioeconómica, puedan desarrollarse adecuadamente y formen parte activa en un tejido social que construye el sentido de comunidad, de identidad y pertenencia?

Se propone una reflexión que ayude a restablecer el vínculo social, entre la población juvenil, los educadores, los padres de familia y la sociedad; para legitimar su papel como agentes del cambio, capaces de desarrollar habilidades hacia el progreso tecnológico, científico, cultural, social y educativo, siendo “sujetos de sí mismos” como dirá la doctora Francois Dolto (1993), psicoanalista pionera en el estudio de las infancias y en el reconocimiento de las mismas, por lo que es necesario que desde temprana los/las niños/as, logren una cohesión social transformante de los entornos, cada vez menos hostiles, más democráticos y solidarios, sea en el hogar, en la escuela o en su lugar de origen.

Si bien, en la etapa de la adolescencia las personas continúan definiendo su personalidad y su propia identidad, no siempre cuentan con el ambiente adecuado para su desarrollo, físico, cognitivo, psico-emocional y social, entonces, ¿cómo esperar que, desde los entornos hostiles, donde viven, privados de respeto y valor, por el maltrato durante su crianza, (Casado, 1997), por la falta de recursos económicos para cubrir sus necesidades básicas, puedan crecer adecuadamente y aspirar a una participación social.



## Introducción

El presente artículo pretende conducir al lector hacia una reflexión, sin juicios, ni estigmas del discurso adulto céntrico dominante, que anula la opinión y la participación de los adolescentes y jóvenes en el progreso de la sociedad y que además dirige y administra los recursos de la crianza, educación y del capital humano, sin tomarlos en cuenta. Es necesario dejar atrás estos errores históricos, visibilizar las necesidades de estos sectores y sanar los bloqueos generacionales y los vínculos sociales desde la solidaridad y empatía, mirar que las nuevas generaciones, son un reflejo de todo un quehacer educativo y formativo de toda la sociedad en su conjunto, sin pretender dominar o suprimir a alguna de sus partes.

En este ensayo, se hablará de los entornos hostiles, dentro de la familia, la comunidad y la escuela principalmente, donde se implementan mecanismos formativos hacia la asunción de sus liderazgos o hacia la nulidad de sus derechos. Para empezar, es necesario, definir qué es un ambiente hostil, para ello se da un acercamiento al concepto, de hostilidad. Según la RAE: Del latín *hostilitas*, hostilidad es la cualidad de hostil, que indica una actitud provocativa y contraria, generalmente sin motivo alguno, hacia otro ser vivo. El concepto permite hacer referencia a la acción hostil y a la agresión armada. La hostilidad, por lo tanto, implica una conducta abusiva y agresiva que puede reflejarse en violencia emocional o física, de mano de una sola persona, un grupo pequeño o una gran cantidad de gente y estar dirigida, de igual forma, a uno o más sujetos. La hostilidad se puede expresar en menor escala, de una persona hacia otra, lo que supone un enfrentamiento entre dos sujetos o también, a mayor escala de un país hacia otro, una situación que puede llevar a una guerra.

Es necesario analizar también, el impacto que genera en las personas las expresiones de la violencia, pues deteriora la calidad de los vínculos socio-emocionales, que las personas crean, a la hora de relacionarse y de comunicarse, los vínculos lastimados a través del tiempo van acumulando hostilidades, lo que va a dificultar la forma de relacionarse en Otredad, Ons (2006); sea entre pares o de forma gru-

pal, hasta convertirse en un espacio o un entorno hostil, convirtiéndose así el hogar, el aula o la comunidad, en campo de batalla para las agresiones físicas, verbales, las burlas, las confrontaciones, la complicidad entre pares, para la Dra. Dolto (1993), este término, se refiere a la complicidad entre pares, a la cohesión entre ellos con su líder, como el producto de una sociedad tribal constituida por violentos interdependientes que mantienen entre sí un entendimiento social, así los castigos, las luchas de poder y las variadas formas de las violencias sutiles, que no se puede encerrar en un solo término acuñado como *bullying* -el cual se deriva, de la palabra inglesa *bully*, que literalmente significa “matón” o “bravucón”, y se relaciona con conductas que están ligadas a la intimidación, la tiranización, el aislamiento, la amenaza y los insultos, entre otros (Orozco, 2014)- pues se conforma por todo un espectro o grupo de conductas hostiles que se presentan con mayor o menor intensidad y frecuencia, por cualquiera de las partes.

En un entorno hostil, donde se han lastimado los vínculos, quedan lesiones, como cuando se ejerce la violencia física, se da el rompimiento de los vínculos psicológicos, morales y sociales, afectando las relaciones entre las personas y peor aún, si los adultos o educadores son quienes ejercen violencia, se presentan bloqueos generacionales, dañando la comunicación y creando conflictos crónicos, difíciles de superar y esto debilita no solo a las instituciones, sino también la cohesión y el tejido social, como lo refiere , el sociólogo francés, Sidicaro (2022), y también investigador en transformaciones sociopolíticas de la escuela Durkheimiana.

En el ámbito familiar, también se pueden presentar actitudes violentas, como el maltrato, las amenazas y castigos, que afectan las relaciones interpersonales, causando la ruptura de los vínculos, alteraciones en el estado de ánimo; es común, el surgimiento de conductas de oposición y desafiantes, como se menciona en el Manual Diagnóstico y Estadístico de los Trastornos Mentales, el DSM V, el cual, describe y clasifica los trastornos mentales reconocidos por la Asociación Americana de Psiquiatría (APA). En él, se mencionan los trastornos asociados a los problemas relacionados con la educación familiar, como a continuación se menciona:

Son ejemplos de problemas conductuales el inadecuado control, supervisión e implicación de los padres con el niño, la sobreprotección de los padres, la presión paterna excesiva, las discusiones que se agravan hasta llegar a la amenaza de violencia física y la evitación sin la resolución de los problemas. Los problemas cognitivos son atribuciones negativas a las intenciones de otros, hostilidad o convertir a otro en chivo expiatorio, y sensación de distanciamiento sin motivo. Los problemas afectivos pueden ser sensaciones de tristeza, apatía o rabia contra el otro miembro de una relación. (DSM V-VG1.20).

Como se ha podido observar, un ambiente familiar hostil, en donde se ven fracturados los vínculos afectivos, se pone en riesgo la salud mental de los miembros (UNESCO, 2022), especialmente en los/as adolescentes y jóvenes, que han iniciado su desarrollo hacia la vida adulta. Es común encontrar padres y madres adolescentes que por sorpresa les tocó vivir su paternidad-maternidad, se observa a menores de edad criando a otros menores, así, el entorno hostil en la familia puede ser más común en los hogares encabezados por padres y madres adolescentes, Campos González (2006) y su equipo de investigación, realizaron estudios descriptivos en una muestra de 62 casos, donde pudieron constatar el maltrato ejercido con mayor frecuencia por parte de madres adolescentes, tipificándolo como “síndrome de negligencia física y emocional” (González, 2023), esto sucede, debido a la falta de experiencia, lo que puede hacer que los padres adolescentes se sientan inseguros y no estén preparados para manejar las demandas y necesidades de sus hijos. Los adolescentes también pueden enfrentar obstáculos únicos en su capacidad para cuidar a sus hijos, como el acceso limitado a recursos financieros, educativos y de apoyo social. Los/as adolescentes que son padres y madres solteros/as o que no tienen un sistema de apoyo sólido también pueden tener dificultades para equilibrar las demandas de la crianza con las responsabilidades de la escuela, el trabajo y otras obligaciones también pueden estar lidiando con su propia transición a la adultez y enfrentar desafíos emocionales y psicológicos relacionados con la identidad, la autoestima y el futuro incierto.

Todo esto puede contribuir a que el hogar se convierta en un ambiente hostil, perjudicial para el bienestar físico y emocional de los niños, niñas y adolescentes, que crecen en esas familias. Para abordar estos desafíos, es importante que los padres y madres adolescentes reciban apoyo psicológico e institucional por parte de los programas de salud pública local (Escobar 2008), donde se puede incluir el acceso a los servicios de salud reproductiva, donde puedan adquirir las herramientas para ejercer la crianza positiva – sin maltrato– y las habilidades parentales, para proveer las necesidades básicas en sus hijos y logren desarrollar una paternidad-maternidad responsable y afectiva. Por otro lado, se pueden promover programas comunitarios de participación social (Alvarez, 20019), conformado por poblaciones de padres y madres de familia adolescentes, para recibir formación sobre la crianza positiva, para compartir experiencias y estrategias de afrontamiento.

Por otro lado, también se encuentran las familias, donde los abuelos/as, se han quedado al cargo de la crianza de los y las nietas (Pinazo y Lluna, 2011), con padres y madres ausentes, ya sea porque trabajan todo el día, porque no son capaces de asumir la responsabilidad de la crianza, o porque tuvieron que migrar a otro lugar, buscando mejores oportunidades de trabajo, por consecuencia se quedan los hijos solos, sin las figuras importantes de sus padres, de forma temporal o permanente, suele crearse una atmósfera hostil en éste tipo de familias. Por una parte, las y los hijos, que se perciben abandonados, se tienen que adaptar a la crianza del adulto mayor y librar la separación con sus padres. Por el otro lado, la generación de los y las abuelas, quienes tienen que adaptarse a su nuevo rol de educadores (Villouta, 2022) y con ello, a nuevas responsabilidades, pueden tener problemas de salud y limitaciones físicas que dificultan la tarea de cuidado; además, los adultos mayores, pueden sentir que deben sacrificar su propia vida social y financiera para cuidar a sus nietos/as.

Se pueden contrarrestar las hostilidades que surgen de este tipo de familias, cerrando brechas generacionales con el apoyo profesional, por parte de las instancias de gobierno, con programas específicos, servicios comunitarios y grupos de apoyo que brinden orientación y asistencia práctica en la crianza de los nietos/as, para promover un ambiente más positivo, sin violencia y estable para estas infancias.

Por otro lado, también se encuentran familias en extrema pobreza, viviendo alta marginación económica, sin oportunidades de trabajo y ahora se ha sumado la crisis pos pandemia, las familias han sobrevivido al confinamiento producido por el virus de SARS-COV 2, o COVID 19, que además de las pérdidas humanas y las crisis que eso conlleva, ha dejado un alto índice de desempleo e inflación, estas realidades también se suman a los factores de riesgo para encontrar familias con muchos conflictos y necesidades económicas, el mismo hecho de que los y las niñas y adolescentes, vivan en situación de pobreza, es una forma de maltrato (Jonson, 2014), situación generadora de los entornos hostiles, en donde los niños, padecen hambre y no cuentan con adultos que cubran sus necesidades básicas, los adultos en estas condiciones, viven preocupaciones excesivas y frustraciones, porque sus prioridades de supervivencia los mantienen más ocupados que, establecer vínculos afectivos con sus hijos, acompañarlos en sus procesos educativos, si es que los mandan a la escuela, en ocasiones se tornan tan hostiles estos ambientes que los hijos llegan a presentar –según estudios realizados por Delgado (1987), junto con su equipo especializado en medicina pediátrica–, el “síndrome del niño maltratado”, observándose las características de un niño agredido, tales como, lesiones físicas frecuentes, hematomas, baja autoestima, retraso psicomotor, aislamiento, entre otros, los estilos de crianza poco afectivos y violentos. En estratos socioeconómicos bajos, se encrudecen las hostilidades y la desigualdad infantil, tal y como lo menciona la organización no gubernamental, internacional, encargada de vigilar los derechos de la niñez (2017). También es común, encontrar otro factor de riesgo para la creación de entornos hostiles en el hogar, el de encontrar padres y madres con problemas de adicción al alcohol y a las drogas, como lo mencionan los doctores de pediatría del Hospital Juárez de la Ciudad de México en sus estudios, Guerrero y Delgado (2012), refieren que los padres agresores son sicóticos o muestran una autoestima devaluada, aislamiento social y tensión constante, debido a la farmacodependencia, por los nexos con de la delincuencia organizada, especialmente en zonas marginadas de la Ciudad de México y en comunidades rurales e indígenas en todo el país, asociadas a una alta marginalidad (Kumate, 2010), es así como otros problemas asociados del orden social y económico, permiten observar entornos hostiles, en la familia, de origen multifacto-

rial, como ya se han mencionado: la ausencia e inexperience de los padres y madres, la crianza que ejercen los abuelos, las condiciones socioeconómicas, la alta marginalidad y acercamiento al alcoholismo y las drogas, todos estos factores por ahora analizados, van generando conductas hostiles permanentes y habituales, van formando estilos de vida y formas de vincularse, poco saludables, violentos, se sabe que en la infancia los hijos y las hijas, aprenden estas conductas de sus padres o educadores, como lo plantea el psicólogo Albert Bandura, en su teoría del aprendizaje social (1973), en la que argumenta que los modelos de comportamiento agresivos, incluyendo la hostilidad, pueden ser aprendidos a través de la observación y la imitación de modelos agresivos en el entorno social, además descubre cómo es que los factores ambientales y personales pueden influir en la expresión de la agresión y la hostilidad.

Los efectos del entorno hostil, como ya se ha mencionado, pueden incluir una variedad de problemas emocionales y del comportamiento, como depresión, ansiedad, problemas de conducta, problemas de aprendizaje, de salud física, pueden tener dificultades para establecer relaciones saludables, para confiar en los demás y socializar, lo que puede afectar en el desarrollo de su personalidad, así como su sentido de identidad y pertenencia; ya que si, en estos entornos hostiles, dentro de la familia, que representa el grupo primario de apoyo, se generan conflictos constantes, dificultades para comunicarse y una sensación de alienación e inadaptación, con mayor razón, presentarán dificultades al momento de establecer lazos “hacia afuera” con los amigos/as, compañeros/as de escuela y sociedad en general, probablemente reproduzcan la misma forma de vincularse, mostrando agresividad y violencia con sus semejantes y se conviertan en los nuevos maltratadores, disminuyendo su valor como personas, como sujetos de derechos humanos con dignidad capaz de desarrollarse armónicamente.

Pero, las consecuencias no sólo se observan en las lesiones causadas por los vínculos afectivos maltratados, que se han mencionado, sino que, con el paso del tiempo, las y los jóvenes van perdiendo su autoestima y pueden llegar a presentar en ésta pérdida de identidad, presentando frustraciones y hostilidad hacia sí mismos, causándose lesiones en sus cuerpos, como lo menciona Meza de la Luna (2019) y su equipo de investigadores sobre el Cutting, que es uti-

lizado al parecer, como medio para liberar las situaciones violentas en la familia.

El deterioro afectivo de los vínculos, llega a afectar el desarrollo de una identidad saludable, como lo menciona Sepúlveda, (1993) en sus estudios como especialista en Medicina Legal y Forense. Experta en Mediación y Orientación Familiar, al hablar del rechazo primario y secundario, después de la separación de los padres; los sentimientos de rechazo, abandono, miedo, ansiedad y tristeza, y pueden tener dificultades para establecer relaciones saludables con los demás, carecen de modelos positivos a seguir y pueden tener dificultades para desarrollar valores y creencias saludables.

A veces la ruptura de los vínculos es tal, dentro del ámbito familiar, comunitario y social que se puede observar, en zonas marginales de México, de bajos recursos económicos, aunado al aumento de la violencia en los lugares de origen, surge otro fenómeno social, la migración infantil no acompañada, como lo mencionan en sus estudios sobre flujos migratorios, Olvera, Montoya y Gonzáles (2014), en situaciones de riesgo. Finalmente es necesario mencionar otro ámbito que se ve afectado, por estos los entornos hostiles, el ámbito escolar, se puede deducir ahora, que todo empieza en el hogar, ya que es difícil que en la escuela permanezcan concentrados y motivados, hacia el logro de sus objetivos académicos.

Es importante señalar que los entornos hostiles no son inevitables y que existen recursos y programas de apoyo, para ayudar a las familias a superar estos problemas (UNICEF, 2018) , es necesaria una red de apoyo interdisciplinaria para la atención a las personas afectadas por estos entornos hostiles, de las áreas de trabajo social, psicología, psiquiatría, derecho, entre otras para encontrar soluciones para brindar apoyo efectivo (PRONAPINNA 2021-2024), y así, lograr el restablecimiento y la recuperación emocional en los/las niños/as y adolescentes y ayudarles a recuperar su identidad y sentido de pertenencia es todo un reto.

## Entornos hostiles en el aula

Todo proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje depende de factores sociales, académicos y emocionales. Estos últimos tienen un impacto en lo que se aprende y en cómo se aprende. Para los/as estudiantes, es importante que la experiencia misma del aprendizaje les genere bienestar, esto ayuda a entender por qué es tan importante el entorno escolar, tanto en el aula como en la escuela, como menciona el psicólogo e investigador, Reuven Bar-On (2000), pionero en los estudios de inteligencia emocional, al hablar del bienestar psicológico que generan las buenas relaciones sociales.

Es aquí donde surge el análisis, ¿Qué factores humanos, socio emocionales entran en juego, para que el/la profesor/a y sus alumnos/as logren un proceso efectivo de enseñanza- aprendizaje? ¿Cómo lograr la calidad educativa, si desde el factor humano, la enseñanza- aprendizaje, la realizan dos perfectos desconocidos? El entorno hostil en el aprendizaje, se observa como un fenómeno de múltiples manifestaciones que recrea patrones y modelos de relaciones violentas, se ha modificado de acuerdo con la realidad histórico – social, pero se encuentra con frecuencia como conducta habitual o formas de vincularse con el otro desde un posicionamiento de dominio, control y poder, como lo menciona Rodney y García (2014), en su artículo sobre el *Estudio histórico de la violencia escolar*, señalan cómo una vez que se surge la escuela pública hacia los siglos XVIII y XIX en Europa y América Latina la autoridad escolar asume un poder legítimo al cuál le corresponde exigir disciplina y obediencia, dándose la transgresión de derechos hacia las personas desde entonces.

Trastoca a la familia, la vida social, laboral, pero especialmente la escuela ha sido escenario donde la hostilidad se ha sofisticado, pareciera que forma parte de las herramientas psicopedagógicas con las que debe contar el docente dentro de sus procesos de enseñanza – aprendizaje, pareciera que sin disciplina, castigos, amenazas y violencias sutiles los/as estudiantes no aprenderían, de hecho Acuña Gómez (2020), en su monografía científica, utiliza el término de sutilidad, como adjetivo para identificar aquella violencia de género, que no necesariamente estará enmarcada co-



mo agresiones físicas, sino, en todo tipo de agresión verbal e incluso no verbal, que pueda llegar a afectar la esfera interna y mental de las personas.

Es necesario aclarar que se ha señalado a las **violencias** como **sutiles**, se ejercen desde una situación de poder, se han naturalizado, casi son invisibles de tanto que se han habituado dentro de las prácticas educativas a lo largo del tiempo y que se han llegado a legitimar en la esfera social, al grado de normalizarla, es necesario apreciar el devenir histórico- social, los componentes epistemológicos, antropológicos y psicosociales conocer las fuentes que llegaron a institucionalizar los entornos hostiles en el aula. No pueden faltar las implicaciones psicopedagógicas que en la actualidad se deben abordar si se quiere iniciar una práctica educativa diferente, encaminada a procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje de conocimientos no solo científicos y tecnológicos, también abiertos a procesos que humanicen los entornos escolares, se habla en concreto de personas capaces de crear vínculos sanos, solidarios, donde la cohesión social, dirija las conductas de la comunidad escolar, no solo para detener el índice de deserción en la escuela mexicana del nivel medio superior, sino para disfrutar el placer de enseñar y aprender en entornos seguros y saludables.

Es necesario indagar cómo se dan esos procesos de interacción entre estudiantes y docentes, en el ámbito educativo, es importante que la experiencia misma del aprendizaje, genere bienestar, tanto en el aula como en la, como ya se ha revisado en el pasado, el impacto y la relación entre los factores emocionales y los efectos en el aprendizaje y el impacto en el aula por Pacheco y Fernández (2003).

Estudiando cómo se conforman los entornos hostiles, en el ámbito educativo, no se puede responsabilizar solo a una de las partes, docentes o alumnos/as, ya que existe, una realidad más profunda y no se puede olvidar que a lo largo de la historia, se fueron privilegiando las formas disciplinarias aplicadas por educadores y tutores, al grado de utilizarlas tradicionalmente como herramientas educativas. A este respecto, un gran especialista, historiador y filósofo moderno, Michel Foucault (1975), con gran precisión explica, como surgen los modelos punitivos y correctivos, con el fin de vigilar y castigar, como

una nueva forma de torturar a aquellos que transgredían las leyes, “Ejerce mayor presión sobre el individuo y su capacidad para expresar su propia diferencia”, pero no solo fueron utilizados en la prisión, fueron adoptados para disciplinar, en hospitales, en el ejército y sobre todo en las escuelas, para someter los cuerpos, para dominar a “las multiplicidades humanas”.

Una vez que se somete la persona, a base de aplicar fuertes disciplinas, pierde identidad y es fácil presa de la manipulación, del adiestramiento y está lista para abrirse al conocimiento y ser educada por la Institución. A través del tiempo, se llegaron a invisibilizar y normalizar las formas de violencia dentro del aula, a ejercer el control y el poder, para mantener atento y obediente al grupo por ejemplo, todavía persisten estos mecanismos disciplinarios, adoptados e institucionalizados por la sociedad, como métodos formativos, ¿en qué momento se perdió de vista el verdadero objetivo de la educación?, ¿cómo se llegó a ser insensible a los entornos hostiles y a las aulas vacías? Desde una dialéctica sociológica se puede comprender el proceso por medio del cual se han construido patrones de comportamientos para adoptar conductas hostiles en el aula, desde la óptica del sociólogo Berger (1968), donde se explica la construcción de la realidad, el nacimiento de las instituciones y la legitimación de las conductas adoptadas por ciertos grupos sociales, se crean pautas a base de repetir las mismas conductas –castigos, disciplina, amenazas, violencias– se van haciendo habituales entre las personas, hasta llegar a naturalizarlas e institucionalizadas, así se comprende, con mayor claridad, cómo es que las conductas hostiles dentro del ámbito educativo se fueron construyendo a través del tiempo y por la legitimación diría Berger, de las relaciones de poder, donde el que somete y controla mediante el castigo, es, quien tiene el poder, para disciplinar, para decidir que conductas son aceptables o no, pero sobre todo para lograr el sometimiento colectivo. Se podría decir que una vez legitimada una conducta, por un grupo social, es irrefutable su aparición y por ende muy difícil su destitución. La naturalización de la violencia ha permeado, diversos ámbitos de la sociedad, ya se ha analizado en el entorno familiar y ahora en el ámbito escolar.

Es necesario analizar, también, desde los aportes de

la antropología social, el impacto que genera en las personas las expresiones de la violencia, pues es sabido que va deteriorando la calidad en los vínculos socio emocionales que las personas crean, a la hora de relacionarse y de comunicarse, los vínculos lastimados a través del tiempo van acumulando hostilidades, lo que va a dificultar la forma de relacionarse en Otredad, Ons (2006); sea entre pares o en la relación, educando/a- educador/a, hasta conformar en un espacio hostil, convirtiéndose el aula en campo de batalla para las agresiones físicas, verbales, las burlas, las confrontaciones, la complicidad, los castigos, las luchas de poder y las variadas formas de las violencias sutiles, que no se puede encerrar en un solo término acuñado como bullying, a todo el espectro o grupo de conductas hostiles que se presentan con mayor o menor intensidad y frecuencia, por cualquiera de las partes. En el entorno hostil, donde han quedado losvínculos lastimados, tal y como sucede cuando se imprime violencia física, se presentan “lesiones” o rompimiento de los vínculos psicológicos, morales y sociales y se observa un debilitamiento de las instituciones, que deviene en un debilitamiento de los lazos sociales y de los ideales.

Solo quien ha sido víctima de estos entornos hostiles, sabe lo que significa el hartazgo, el desánimo, como ya se mencionó anteriormente, muchas veces los agresores forman equipos, dirá también Berger (2017), ya sea, para molestar a quien consideran en desventaja, por razón del género, del color de la piel o discapacidad o para boicotear las clases de sus profesores/as, el grupo sin control, llega a ser tan frustrante dicha experiencia, para quienes la padecen, que se aíslan ante la ruptura de los vínculos con sus compañeros/as, con sus profesores/as, se deprimen, con respecto a la clase se perciben limitados, incapaces de expresar sus dudas, avergonzados porque sus procesos de atención y memoria, pueden estar afectados, se dispersan, en estas etapas del desarrollo del adolescente los procesos sociales y afectivos cobran gran relevancia al grado de convertirse en factores de riesgo del abandono escolar por lo que es apremiante modificar estos entornos y buscar rutas de solución para reducir los niveles de hostilidad en el aula, es importante que el personal educativo reciba capacitación y sensibilización para identificar y abordar los entornos hostiles en el aprendizaje, todavía existen muchos espacios que recuperar para fomentar un ambiente seguro en el aula, que permita

a los/as alumnos/as recuperar su identidad como personas, estudiantes, sujetos de derechos, con la capacidad de retroalimentar la clase, de abrirse a la experiencia de la Otredad, de vincularse de forma sana y solidaria, evitando así el alto índice de deserción escolar, (Sandoval, 2016).



### Migraciones

Cuando una familia se enfrenta por largos periodos de tiempo, a problemas diversos, como la pobreza, la violencia, la marginación social, donde las Instituciones no pueden brindar apoyos de asistencia primaria (CIESAS, 2004) y no existe una red de apoyo comunitaria, que permita contener a estas familias, además de garantizar los derechos de la niñez y la adolescencia, incluyendo a personas adultas mayores o con alguna discapacidad; las familias tienden a desintegrarse, perdiendo su identidad y el sentido de pertenencia, afectando a los más vulnerables, por el nivel de desamparo y abandono al que quedan expuestos, el entorno hostil, no solo se ha experimentado dentro del hogar, sino también, en el ámbito social, esta hostilidad social, comúnmente genera otro fenómeno asociado, el de la migración y desarraigo de la población infantil y adolescente, ya que, dejan sus lugares de origen (ITESO, 2017), para buscar por su cuenta la supervivencia y lo que es más riesgoso, es que salen solos, sin un adulto que los acompañe, (Caggiano, 2010), incluso, llegan a migrar grandes distancias y se desplazan hacia otros países, en busca de una vida mejor y oportunidades económicas, a las que todo ser humano tiene derecho. Se ven obligados/as a abandonar su hogar, su comunidad y a buscar trabajo en otros lugares para poder sobrevivir;

Las migraciones pueden tener un impacto significativo en la representación de la identidad o identidades de una persona o grupo. Cuando las personas migran a un nuevo país o comunidad, especialmente los/as menores de edad como suele suceder en México y que en los últimos años se ha incrementado según los datos arrojados por SNDIF en México (2012), a menudo, estas poblaciones se

enfrentan a nuevos desafíos y oportunidades que pueden influir en cómo se ven a sí mismos/as y cómo son percibidos por los demás. Por ejemplo, algunos/as migrantes pueden sentir la necesidad de adaptar su identidad cultural para encajar en su nueva comunidad, como lo menciona Anderson (1993), la necesidad de sentido de pertenencia es muy poderosa, especialmente en esta etapa de desarrollo, donde la personalidad del ser humano se va conformando. Esto puede implicar el aprendizaje de un nuevo idioma, la adopción de nuevos valores y costumbres y la asimilación en la cultura predominante del lugar de destino; sin embargo, otros pueden intentar preservar su identidad cultural y mantener sus tradiciones y costumbres, incluso en un entorno nuevo y diferente.

Además, las migraciones también pueden llevar a cabo la creación de nuevas identidades y formas de representación cultural. Los/as migrantes pueden desarrollar una identidad híbrida, que combina elementos de sus culturas de origen con elementos de la cultura de acogida (Mestries, 20013), lo que puede resultar en nuevas formas de arte, música, literatura, moda y otros aspectos culturales. Es importante tener en cuenta que la representación de la identidad a través de las migraciones puede ser un proceso complejo y a menudo está influenciada por factores como el género, la edad, la religión, la etnia y la clase social. Por lo tanto, es fundamental, respetar la diversidad de las identidades culturales y valorar la riqueza que pueden aportar a las comunidades de destino, es necesario considerar que las movilizaciones y las migraciones pueden desafiar el discurso identitario dominante, concepto acuñado por Smith (2020), en donde el discurso identitario dominante, se refiere a la forma en que una sociedad define y representa las identidades culturales y sociales que se consideran "normales" y "legítimas"; este discurso a menudo refleja la visión de la mayoría o del grupo, que ocupa el poder en una sociedad y puede eliminar o marginar a las personas que no encajan en esta definición. Las movilizaciones y las migraciones pueden desafiar este discurso de diversas formas, por ejemplo, las movilizaciones sociales, a menudo involucran a personas de diferentes identidades culturales, étnicas y de género, que trabajan juntas, en torno a objetivos comunes; esto puede impulsar, la creación de nuevas formas de identidad, que no encajan en el discurso dominante de identidad, del

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Sin embargo, también es importante tener en cuenta, que las movilizaciones y las migraciones, no siempre desafían el discurso identitario dominante. A veces, estas dinámicas pueden reforzar el discurso existente, especialmente si las personas que participan en ellas comparten una identidad cultural dominante o si los/as migrantes, son asimilados y aceptados, en la cultura predominante, del nuevo entorno, al que han llegado, al respecto, Bustos (2017), pedagoga, que realiza investigaciones sobre el multiculturalismo y la educación, en poblaciones de migrantes, provenientes del Estado de Guerrero, en México, señala la importancia de construir el sentido de pertenencia, en el nuevo territorio. Es importante recordar que la creación de entornos saludables en una sociedad, es trascendente, para forjar lazos de ciudadanía, por ejemplo el respeto a la diversidad cultural, es una realidad, en muchas partes del mundo, ya que los migrantes, tienen derecho a mantener sus propias tradiciones y costumbres, siempre, cuando no violen las leyes del país receptor, Tovar (2009), investigadora del fenómeno migratorio, en poblaciones indígenas en zonas marginadas, de Oaxaca, habla de éste derecho cultural, al referir que los rasgos identitarios, permanecen por mucho tiempo antes de adquirir los nuevos rasgos de la nueva cultura.

Al mismo tiempo, es importante que los/as migrantes, colaboren en esta creación de entornos de sana convivencia y estén dispuestos a adaptarse a la cultura y la sociedad del país receptor para poder integrarse de manera efectiva y constructiva en su nueva comunidad. El diálogo intercultural y la comprensión mutua pueden ser fundamentales para construir una sociedad menos hostil y dominante, mejor receptora e inclusiva y respetuosa de la diversidad cultural.

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### Conclusiones

Los entornos hostiles en el hogar, en la escuela y en el ámbito comunitario pueden tener graves consecuencias en el desarrollo y construcción de las identidades de las infancias y la juventud, quienes crecen en entornos hostiles, tienden a romper los vínculos emocionales y sociales, además de poner en riesgo la salud física y emocional, lo que puede afectar la autoestima y la confianza en sí mismos, así como generar nuevas pautas de conductas violentas, además, los entornos hostiles, pueden llevar a la exclusión y discriminación, Heatl (2017), lo que puede influir en la autopercepción y lastimar el espacio identitario. Es importante abordar las discusiones, sobre los entornos hostiles y tomar medidas para prevenirlos, tanto en los ámbitos familiares y comunitarios.

Es necesario, tener especial cuidado, para prevenir los entornos hostiles en la escuela, ya que el mayor riesgo que se presenta, es el abandono de los estudios en el nivel medio superior, el impacto es tan fuerte, que los/as estudiantes pierden la motivación, el interés en mantener su proyecto de vida; es necesario revisar la práctica docente desde las competencias y habilidades socioemocionales (Pérez y Gómez, 2016), que permitan a los/las responsables de la educación, generar ambientes libres de violencia, de maltrato y control, para mantener vínculos saludables, desde una ética docente, desde los valores, (Universidad del Norte, 2016), así como el respeto a los derechos de todas las personas, la inclusión y diversidad, solo así, se podrá alcanzar una educación de calidad y un cambio positivo en la sociedad.



### Agradecimientos

Agradezco a aquellos agentes de cambio, a las infancias y juventudes que provocan una nueva perspectiva en los/as docentes, en los/as investigadores y merecen todo mi respeto y admiración, a mis alumnos/as, a los/as niños/as migrantes que acompañe en su lugar de origen.

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# PERCEPCIÓN Y NARRATIVA: INMIGRACIÓN, ADOPCIÓN DEL DOLOR Y AGENTES CIRCULANTES EN *BIUTIFUL* (2010) Y *LA PROMESSE* (1996)

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## Introducción

Es un hecho que, a partir del inicio de la segunda guerra mundial, la inmigración en Europa ha incrementado y según cifras oficiales<sup>1</sup> desde 1950, Europa no ha dejado de ser receptor de inmigrantes. Sin embargo, cabe mencionar que las dinámicas de comportamiento migratorio son de carácter heterogéneo. Es decir, según la Unidad de Políticas Comparadas (CSIC), las regiones emisoras de inmigrantes varían en cada zona geográfica de Europa, por lo que en la zona central (Bélgica, Dinamarca, Alemania, Francia, Holanda, Austria, Luxemburgo) suele ser el foco principal de atracción a la inmigración dentro y fuera de Europa, pero en cuanto a la zona mediterránea (España, Portugal, Italia, Grecia) ha cambiado de ser emisora de inmigrantes a ser también receptora de estos, principalmente de inmigrantes procedentes de la África subsahariana. Dentro de este fenómeno de diásporas contemporáneas, la inmigración en Europa ha detectado una serie de tendencias que al ser este un derecho humano necesario, ha provocado un discurso xenófobo y racista en donde el pensamiento hacia una hegemonía cultural ha prevalecido en cuanto a las actitudes hacia las minorías étnicas en Europa.

Por un lado, la larga historia de luchas, el período franquista, el proceso de exilios, migraciones y la construcción de un nuevo pensamiento social más allá de la dictadura son algunas muestras que la España contemporánea, con respecto a la reevalua-

ción de su pasado, aún parece estar en la fase del olvido. La imagen de la España homogénea en el ámbito racial, lingüístico y cultural que el franquismo había planteado, ha ido cambiando en parte, gracias a la llegada de inmigrantes al país. Actualmente, se compone de grupos y comunidades de diferentes partes del mundo en donde, naturalmente, se crean nuevas realidades: problemas sociales, choques culturales, presiones políticas y cambios económicos. Indudablemente, estas imágenes parten a raíz del maniqueísmo dentro del discurso del inmigrante en España, es decir, de la invasión y la victimización del *otro*.

Por este motivo, los cambios mismos sobre el concepto de identidad se van dando a través de un proceso de liberación en donde el español intenta desligarse de su pasado franquista y como bien lo ha estudiado Isabel Santaolalla, este proceso está enlazado con la europeización acelerada del país a través de la ley de Extranjería causada por la incorporación de España a la Unión Europea en 1986. Con su entrada a dicha unión, fue casi inevitable la aceleración e incremento en la economía española, dando así más oportunidades de empleo y el rápido crecimiento en la demanda de mano de obra. Esto produjo que no solo los españoles dejaran de emigrar, sino que España fuera el destino de distintos grupos de inmigrantes en búsqueda de estas nuevas oportunidades. Sin embargo, estos nuevos inmigrantes están sujetos a la segregación social, mejor dicho, a la separación cultural y económica del autóctono español, plasmando esta *otredad* que se intenta invisibilizar, pero que al final termina siendo visibilizada aún más dentro de una sociedad fuertemente fragmentada.

Por otro lado, la gran heterogeneidad que caracte-

riza a la población de Bélgica al acoger inmigrantes de dentro y fuera de Europa se ha visto afectada sobretodo en las numerosas denuncias discriminatorias hacia el colectivo de inmigrantes dentro del mercado laboral. Es un hecho que Bélgica acoge a una de las comunidades más importantes de Europa (Francia, Holanda y Portugal)<sup>2</sup> y que, a pesar de los esfuerzos de inclusión por parte del Estado, el incremento en la tasa de desempleo en Bélgica genera que los autóctonos desarrollen una especie de pensamiento hacia 'el apropiamiento laboral' de los inmigrantes, lo cual provoca un sentimiento de rencor y otredad. Este discurso hacia el inmigrante y hacia la visibilización de su otredad (positiva o negativa) es repetitivo en sociedades altamente receptoras de inmigrantes como lo es también en el caso de España.

Dado a este incremento migratorio en España y Bélgica, las producciones fílmicas *Biutiful* (2010) de Alejandro González Iñárritu y *La Promesse* (1996) de Luc y Jean-Pierre Dardenne presentan una aproximación a estas comunidades migratorias ubicadas en distintos barrios de estos países que articulan cuestiones relacionadas con la otredad y género. Al situarse en un marco urbano, ambos filmes perfilan la mirada hacia el otro, (in)visibilizando la fragmentación que ya existe en el país de acogida y los conflictos que esto conlleva con la población española y belga. En este trabajo, propongo que ambas películas reformulan la presencia del otro en el espacio urbano, ya que construyen, a través del lenguaje fílmico, una narrativa migratoria que muestra la fragmentación de ambas sociedades. Examino, igualmente, las maneras en la que estos largometrajes se interpretan con relación a la inmigración y la codificación de los derechos humanos, en donde Igor y Uxbal funcionan como vía circulante de la adopción del dolor del otro para entonces pasar a la acción.



#### Primer caso: *Biutiful* (2010)

Dentro de los parámetros socioculturales en el que se encuentra el país, no se puede dejar de hablar de las

dificultades que los inmigrantes encaran sino también sobre los distintos registros a los que los ciudadanos españoles se enfrentan: cambios, encuentros y choques culturales, fobias, miedos, etc. A causa de esto y junto al recurrente fenómeno migratorio, visto desde una perspectiva universal, surge el racismo y la xenofobia. De acuerdo con Tzvetan Todorov, la llegada de inmigrantes al país ha producido un discurso en donde el otro es asociado con determinados estereotipos y en donde se le es más fácil cuestionarlos (118). Alejandro González Iñárritu en su película *Biutiful* (2010) representa este desequilibrio migratorio presente en la sociedad española, universalizando el desplazamiento migratorio dentro del contexto social y económico no solo asociado a Barcelona, lugar dónde transcurre y fue rodada la película, sino en cualquier otro contexto dentro y fuera de España. La película se centra en Uxbal (Javier Bardem), quien al saber que padece cáncer terminal de próstata, decide cambiar radicalmente su vida de corrupción al explotar y traficar inmigrantes, con el objetivo de asegurar el futuro de sus hijos Ana y Mateo. El director mexicano comenta en una entrevista realizada por *El País* que la inmigración es algo inevitable que se vive y se sufre no solo en España a causa del capitalismo y la globalización sino alrededor del mundo. El director explica:

Todos sabemos que la polarización económica que han creado la economía, el capitalismo y la globalización es algo que sufren todos los países del tercer mundo. Es intolerable la riqueza extrema acumulada en el primer mundo, en ciertas partes del primer mundo, y por otra parte la gran y extrema pobreza del otro polo, ha creado la necesidad de un movimiento humano inevitable en busca de trabajo y de dignidad. Yo creo que esta película retrata ese desequilibrio, esa injusticia que supone la explotación humana. Es algo que ocurre también en los Estados Unidos, donde yo vivo. El abuso y la utilización de los seres humanos como materia de trabajo desechable. Y en ese sentido creo que en la película retrata la realidad y no existe ninguna grandilocuencia en lo que se retrata. Es una película de una ordinariez brutal y eso es lo que la hace impactante (Iñárritu 2011).

De este modo, *Biutiful* presenta de una manera más abierta las consecuencias vividas a través de esta coexistencia cultural entre inmigrantes africanos, chinos y autóctonos españoles, como lo es en el caso de Uxbal. Los personajes inmigrantes siguen una línea paralela con relación a la del protagonista; en esta línea, Uxbal vive de la explotación de los inmigrantes. Carlos Fuentes menciona para *La Nación* que “chinos y senegaleses aquí, como mexicanos en California, turcos en Alemania, argelinos en Francia y, ayer apenas, trabajadores españoles en Francia, Inglaterra, Escandinavia. *Biutiful* toca aquí el gran problema irresuelto de la emigración. ¿Por qué, si en un mundo globalizado circulan sin trabas el dinero, los valores, las empresas, no puede circular el trabajo?” (Fuentes, 2011). Este discurso moral se ve plasmado a través de lo que Eileen J. Doll estipula como “consciencia social” en donde Iñárritu presenta a los personajes inmigrantes como personas, al final, humanos en busca de nuevas oportunidades que se les ha negado en sus países de origen.

*Biutiful* retrata esta marginalidad de una forma distinta a través de los personajes de Lili e Ige, quienes comparten un mismo espacio, pobreza y explotación. Las dos también se identifican en el filme por tener el mismo nivel de responsabilidad: el ser madres. Iñárritu plasma un sentido de humanismo por medio de estos dos personajes el cual lo universaliza y lo hace visible al espectador. Lili e Ige ya no solo son dependientes de ellas mismas, sino que tienen dependientes, precisamente esta la causa principal de la necesidad de huir de sus países de origen. No obstante, Ige está a punto de tener una nueva responsabilidad y se ve confrontada a la elección moral y humana más difícil: el cuidado de los hijos de Uxbal cuando él muera o regresarse a su país a donde fue deportado su marido. La película muestra de manera implícita que Ige ha elegido la primera en las últimas escenas del filme cuando decide regresar a la casa de Uxbal después de tomar el dinero que le ha dejado y compra un billete de tren. Esta retórica se puede ver, de nuevo, como una dependencia mutua entre ‘emisor y receptor’ y que también se discute a grandes rasgos: los inmigrantes lejos de ser una carga para el país receptor se han convertido en *una necesidad* para impulsar la economía del país. La realidad que el director quiere presentar se hace notoria frente al paralelismo que existe entre estos personajes inmigrantes y Uxbal; la imagen de un padre desesperado que hace lo imposible por no solo mante-

ner sino mejorar la condición de vida de sus hijos. Es aquí en donde la historia coincide a lo que Doll llama “the encounter with the Other, –whether gendered, sexual, racial or any other kind” (24) a través de Uxbal y el beneficio económico que obtiene de los inmigrantes quienes dependen de él por medio de las negociaciones de las que está encargado, pero a la misma vez, él y sus hijos dependen de la presencia de ellos en España.

Simultáneamente y dentro de esta línea de análisis, es notorio que también en películas como *Amores perros* (2000) y *Babel* (2006) muestran que un *leit motiv* que resalta Iñárritu en sus películas es la migración e inmigración y cómo este desplazamiento humano es parte de la realidad que nuestra sociedad vive en paralelo al primer y tercer mundo. *Biutiful* de igual forma, proyecta una realidad migratoria inherente al país receptor donde por primera vez, se atreve a incorporar con la mayor de las sutilezas el tema de la Guerra Civil y la memoria histórica, siguiendo la misma trayectoria de Guillermo de Toro y Alfonso Cuarón.<sup>3</sup>



### Segundo caso: *La Promesse* (1996)

Partiendo de esta idea en cuanto a la representación de la inmigración en Europa, *La Promesse* (1996) dirigida por Luc y Jean-Pierre Dardenne, es una de las primeras producciones que proyecta la imagen y la realidad del dolor plasmada desde la mirada de un niño-adolescente autóctono de Bélgica hacia y con los inmigrantes que trabajan para él y su padre. La *Promesse* se centra en un adolescente, Igor (Jérémy Renier), atrapado por la explotación oportunista y despiadada de su padre hacia un grupo de trabajadores inmigrantes de varios países europeos y del continente africano. Uno de ellos, un inmigrante africano, Hamidou (Rasmané Ouedraogo), cae de una escalera durante el pánico por una visita inminente de los inspectores de trabajo en un sitio donde Roger (Olivier Gourmet), el padre de Igor los emplea ilegalmente en una construcción de carácter residen-

residencial. A través de sus últimas palabras, Hamidou pide a Igor que prometa cuidar de su esposa Assita (Assita Ouedraogo) y de su bebé. A través de este accidente y de la muerte de Hamidou, el vínculo filial de Igor se debilita gradualmente a medida que invierte toda su energía que —anteriormente era malgastada, en cumplir su promesa. Dividido entre su nuevo compromiso y las continuas demandas de su padre, quien también oculta la muerte de Hamidou tanto de Assita como de las autoridades belgas para proteger su negocio clandestino, Igor se ve forzado a iniciar un despertar ético —agencialidad— que marca su paso de la niñez y adolescencia a la juventud para dar un obligado salto a la adultez.

Es claro que los directores se encargan de enumerar y denunciar los abusos hacia los inmigrantes mediante un estado de explotación y marginalidad que son percibidos, en este caso, como seres circulantes en donde los autóctonos, Igor y Roger, son la representación de la jerarquía de poder que se explora a lo largo del filme. A diferencia de Roger, sin embargo, Igor es ‘obligado’ a causa de la inesperada muerte de Hamidou, a despertar su conciencia y a tener agencia propia, independientemente de la rutinización<sup>4</sup> que llevaba junto a su padre. La trama de la película se polariza en dos vertientes: el cumplimiento de la promesa que le hizo a Hamidou y la transformación de cambio de Igor de adopción de dolor hacia el explotado (‘el otro’) a la acción. Es decir, todos los desafíos a los que Igor se enfrenta para poder cumplir su promesa se ven reflejados al intentar cambiar la percepción que Assita tiene sobre ‘los blancos’ autóctonos al ser estos quienes, en una escena durante la segunda mitad de la película, la humillan junto a su bebé en la calle mientras le orinan y destruyen sus cosas desde un puente. Ante esta acción, la recepción del autóctono belga —como colectivo— se convierte a lo que Milton J. Esman llama “unwelcome immigrants”, es decir, “the unwelcome presence of immigrants, especially immigrants of exotic ethnicity and religion, may precipitate ethnic and racial violence” (141). No obstante, cabe mencionar que dicha violencia no solo se presenta de manera explícita y física por el simple de hecho de explotarlos en el ámbito laboral como se ha visto con la construcción de la casa de Roger y entonces, el término “unwelcome immigrants” hasta cierto grado se aplica ante el discurso discriminatorio y racista ya que para los propósitos económicos y laborales de Roger, los inmigrantes son “bienvenidos” y *necesarios*

en el aspecto económico del país de acogida.

La transformación de Igor (*shifter*)<sup>5</sup> se va presentando a lo largo de la película al visibilizar su agencia mediante la toma de decisiones, derivadas por el deseo de cumplir su promesa. En este proceso de transformación, Igor funciona como el principal receptor del dolor del otro, en este caso no solo de la muerte de Hamidou —cuasi provocada al apresurarlo a dejar de trabajar debido a la auditoria sorpresa, sino de las diferentes instancias en la que Assita debe enfrentarse al racismo y xenofobia institucionalizada y sistematizada. Este hecho empieza, sin embargo, con las acciones de Roger: por un lado, el transcurso de la llegada a Bélgica, el ocultamiento sobre la muerte de Hamidou, la planeación de llevarla a Alemania para prostituirla; por otro lado, la falta de recursos en el hospital para atender a su bebé y la violencia en la calle. Esta adopción del dolor se convierte en herramienta para entrar a la fase de la acción, es decir, cada decisión que Igor toma es mediante el reconocimiento de su agencialidad. Este proceso por el que Igor se paraleliza es a lo que Elaine Scarry, en estudios de dolor, describe la percepción del dolor; dicho de otra manera, es posible ser testigo del dolor y sufrimiento del otro y no percibirlo, tal y como se mira con Igor durante las primeras escenas de la película. Sin embargo, Scarry también estipula que el acercarse y reconocer este dolor implica algún grado de adopción y con ello, un compromiso social mediante la acción. Esta postura se ve plasmada indudablemente a través de la transformación de Igor, al ser este, la representación de agente de cambio social en el colectivo autóctono.



### España y Bélgica: dos países, dos miradas, un solo objetivo

La sociedad española contemporánea se sitúa en una transformación constante dentro del contexto migratorio. En los últimos cuarenta años, España dejó de ser un país de emigración para convertirse en un país receptor de inmigrantes (Martínez-Carazo, 2018)

que, sin duda, ha revaluado la identidad española y lo que realmente significa ser español. Después de la caída del régimen franquista, España deja de ser “España una, unida, homogénea, católica y conservadora” (Doll, 17), principales bases de la identidad nacional española impuestas por Franco. Debido a los grandes esfuerzos para intentar mostrar la proyección de una realidad migratoria inherente al país receptor que reformula los nuevos discursos de identidad y otredad, ambas películas presentan distintas miradas sobre la inmigración teniendo en común la misma postura: una reconciliación con la nueva realidad española (y belga) al intentar desvanecer las fronteras sociales con el otro.

*Biutiful* juega con la estética social a través de los inmigrantes en cuestión, la imagen de una Barcelona oscura y las historias entrelazadas que giran alrededor de Uxbal. Como anteriormente lo mencionaba Doll, Iñárritu asocia ciertas características del *otro* que permite al espectador realizar conclusiones directas sobre el estatus legal de los inmigrantes y cómo bien lo argumenta Santaolalla, “la división de la comunidad de extranjeros en España entre los denominados ‘legales’ y los ‘ilegales’[...] contrasta al ideal identitario euro comunitario de la sociedad española” (17). En este caso, Iñárritu se encarga de seguir los parámetros del *otro* en sus personajes Lili, Ige y Ekweme, jugando con los registros del otro a través de Liwei y Hai. Estos personajes reflejan de manera muy directa la condición en la que se encuentran en España; por un lado, Lili, quien físicamente se podría juzgar como una niña, es a su vez madre al igual que Ige. El director les ha dado el perfil de inmigrantes marginalizadas por la sociedad y por las circunstancias; ambas reflejan el mensaje moral que Iñárritu quiere proyectar.

De igual manera, Bélgica es un país que constantemente está cambiando en cuanto a la mirada y percepción *del otro* y *hacia el otro*. A medida que se van generando productos culturales para la formulación y/o reformulación de la presencia del inmigrante en Bélgica, la dicotomía entre *insiders* y *outsiders* como lo estudia Kinder,<sup>7</sup> ha abierto la necesidad de replantear el discurso de la otredad no solo en Bélgica sino en el resto de Europa, como lo es en el caso de España. Dentro de la cinematografía belga, *La Promesse* es una de las primeras producciones que presenta una trama dentro de la retórica migratoria en el país. Los directores logran

proyectar la imagen de una comunidad de inmigrantes que residen en un barrio controlado por Roger, o, mejor dicho, dentro del espacio urbano. El incremento de la población inmigrante en Bélgica ha sido objeto de distintos estudios en cuanto a su recepción; sin embargo, Jean-Pierre y Luc Dardenne han logrado incorporar una imagen visual de los nuevos habitantes del país dentro de un espacio que no ha sido altamente reconocido por los medios de comunicación o por la cinematografía nacional, internacional o transnacional. Sin crónicamente, los directores incluyen también de manera artística y crítica la perspectiva de la sociedad receptora como colectivo con el afán de dialogar las dos miradas y de esta forma lograr replantearse el significado de la pluralidad cultural en Bélgica y en el resto de Europa.

Paralelamente, la fuente de trabajo, o más bien, la falta de este es fundamental para que *La Promesse* muestre ambas perspectivas: la del inmigrante y la del país receptor. Esta dicotomía es el motivo principal por la que la realidad del discurso migratorio se percibe de manera negativa en la sociedad belga contemporánea. Los personajes emergen y se definen principalmente a través de los movimientos –como agentes circulares, mediante el trabajo, ya sea legal o ilegal, regular u ocasional, colaborativo o solitario, formal o informal. El estudio de Philip Mosley sobre la trayectoria cinematográfica de los directores Dardenne “revela la influencia de los propios antecedentes de los hermanos donde el trabajo físico duro era fundamental para crear la identidad y la unidad de su región” (78). Gran parte de la verosimilitud e intensidad de *La Promesse* se deriva en retratar a las personas, en este caso, a ambos inmigrantes y autóctonos, cuyas crisis de vida son causadas por la necesidad de hacer casi cualquier cosa por dinero para sobrevivir. Sin embargo, esta película es prometedora dentro del campo ya que esta nueva subclase urbana es ignorada o tratada como una causa caritativa por gran parte del cine y la televisión, por lo que es evidente cómo los directores han evitado cuidadosamente colocar a sus personajes negros o blancos, extranjeros o belgas, en un discurso que los marca simplemente como víctimas. Es decir, a través de esta modalidad cinematográfica y discursiva, *La Promesse* permite al espectador derivar interpretaciones sobre la realidad social a la que inmigrantes en Bélgica se enfrentan, y a través de esta técnica, iniciar una conversación sobre la situación actual de los inmigrantes en el resto de Europa.



### A modo de conclusión y reflexiones finales

La incorporación del discurso migratorio en producciones culturales inevitablemente indica que la sociedad europea se sitúa en transformación constante dentro del contexto político, social y migratorio reflejándose mediante la literatura, el cine y las artes en general. Estas incorporaciones se reflejan en las dos películas analizadas para este trabajo, por un lado, en *Biutiful* (2010) muestra la mirada del inmigrante a través de la pobreza y marginalidad y *La Promesse* (1996) proyecta la necesidad de denunciar las injusticias a las que se enfrentan los inmigrantes. Ambas producciones se vinculan a través de sus personajes: la mirada cuasi paternalista de los protagonistas Uxbal e Igor, la representación de la voz del inmigrante a través de sus contribuciones en la vida de los protagonistas y la revaluación del concepto de la inmigración como un derecho humano básico. Estas películas intentan abrir un nuevo panorama en cuanto a la recepción del inmigrante en Europa, así como mostrar las dificultades y realidades a las que se enfrentan por el deseo de mejorar sus vidas en el nuevo país de acogida.

La hibridez en la que el cine de Iñárritu se caracteriza y sobresale del resto, es, por un lado, la libertad de interpretación que el director otorga al espectador. Por otro lado, las diferentes vertientes de análisis que surgen de sus películas. Como lo menciona Shaw, *Biutiful* retrata perfectamente la “transculturation, border crossing, transnationalism and translation’ in terms of storylines and themes, score, and cast and crew...and the star system to make and sell the film” (139). El desequilibrio migratorio que Iñárritu proyecta en *Biutiful* no solo se da a través de las diferencias entre el explotado (inmigrantes asiáticos y africanos) y el explotador (Uxbal y la policía catalana) sino a través de las reparaciones de éstos en distintas escenas de la película. El constante regreso de ‘los fantasmas’ de su pasado que se da dentro de toda la trama, es un registro que Iñárritu ha elegido proyectar para retratar metafóricamente los ciclos que aún la sociedad española no ha logrado cerrar. Dentro de estos pará-

metros se encuentran los no tan lejanos espectros de la guerra civil que continúan reapareciendo de una u otra forma en la contemporaneidad. El director utiliza el recurso de lo gótico como recurso estilístico para representar las conexiones con la memoria histórica en España a lo que previamente se ha visto en películas transnacionales como *El espinazo del diablo* (2001) de Guillermo del Toro. En *Biutiful*, el director busca conectar la explotación y sufrimiento que viven los inmigrantes en el presente de España con la memoria que no deja de estar enterrada en los ataúdes embalsamados de la Guerra Civil española esperando un día ser parte de la esfera de la sociedad del presente.

Igualmente, *La Promesse* tiene varios temas interrelacionados como el amor, honor, deber, lealtad, esperanza y responsabilidad *hacia y con el otro*. Todos estos temas giran alrededor de la promesa de Igor, sin embargo, no hay un cierre o un final concreto en la película, sino solo una sensación de que Igor ha reconocido y asumido su responsabilidad moral mediante la adopción del dolor de Assita y del resto de los inmigrantes para entonces, seguir con su rol de activista social. El hecho de que el que debe cumplir una promesa sea un chico confuso en plena etapa de la adolescencia y juventud, hace que la situación sea aún más conmovedora y se abra a interpretaciones en cuanto a las futuras generaciones frente a los cambios sociales: inmigración y cambio de narrativa hacia la misma. Al final de la película, vemos un camino de esperanza de cambio personal que en la que, gracias a un despertar moral tardío del protagonista, *La Promesse* ofrece una nota *alentadora* a una historia *desalentadora* de otra manera. En otras palabras, el final de la película produce en el espectador la sensación de que existe un futuro prometedor en la sociedad contemporánea. La figura y representación del inmigrante en el imaginario colectivo español y belga, por medio de la literatura y de la cinematografía –solo por dar un par de ejemplos, ha ido adquiriendo cierta importancia que se traduce a través de la reformulación de su ‘otredad’. Dicho de otra forma, para lograr estas representaciones, deben estar en constante diálogo con las realidades de los inmigrantes en cuestión.

*Biutiful* y *La Promesse* cumplen con su propósito de formular un discurso intrínseco sobre su propia visión de la inmigración en España y Bélgica respectiva-

mente, con el objetivo de crear una reconciliación con el espectador y los protagonistas, mostrar dos caras distintas del proceso migratorio y sobretodo, normalizar y universalizar la relación de poder y jerarquía entre sujeto y cámara. En este caso, en ambos largometrajes se marca claramente esta dualidad de europeo-inmigrante e inmigrante-inmigrante. Estas narrativas expuestas desde la perspectiva de cada director(es), promueven las responsabilidades como sociedad receptora de la inmigración, visto como un proceso interactivo y no estático, como todo un desafío ya que, para poder llegar a un giro del discurso migratorio, es indispensable empezar por analizar la fragmentación de España y Bélgica como países no solo emisores de inmigrantes sino como receptores de inmigrantes en la sociedad contemporánea.

[4] Adriana Bergero presenta la idea de rutinización mediante la idea de que “ninguna vida cotidiana es universal”. Sin embargo, Rossana Reguillo sugiere que el sujeto extrae su agencialidad de evaluar lo adecuado y lo verdadero (Bergero, 2020).

[5] Resignificación, agente de cambio.

[6] En base a los comentarios dados a la entrevista de Jorge Volpi a Iñárritu que *El País* le hizo en el 2011.

[7] Marsha Kinder afirma que algunas de las producciones cinematográficas más relevantes de los últimos años en Europa tienen una clara función respecto a la identidad nacional: descentrarla, flexibilizarla y mostrarla como una entidad plural, distinta de sí misma.



## Notas

[1] Leticia Delgado Godoy en su estudio explica de manera cuantitativa la relación de los países emisores de inmigrantes dentro y fuera de Europa poniendo en tela de juicio el discurso político europeo en cuanto a la estipulación de discursos migratorios en países de la Unión Europea. Ver más información en: <http://www.fudepa.org/Biblioteca/recursos/ficheros/MI20060000124/europa.pdf>.

[2] Ver lista completa en: <http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/mundo/Revista/Revista121/176.pdf>

[3] Denominados ‘los tres amigos’ por su extensa trayectoria juntos en el cine mexicano y en el cine transnacional. A esta relación que los tres directores han cultivado se le atribuye el nombre de su productora Cha Cha Cha, haciendo alusión a su denominación “the three amigos”, “the three musketeers”.

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*I* dentity

and

*L* anguage

# A Linguistic Perspective

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In this issue, researchers explored the multifaceted relationships between language and the heterogeneity in personal, cultural, and collective identity(ies). Our primary objective is to examine how language shapes and plays a fundamental role in identity construction across various contexts and historical periods. Researchers in this section applied a wide range of qualitative/quantitative methodologies to dissect how language, in its multiple expressions, influences identity-related discourses.

In line with our commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship, researchers evaluated how identity representations challenge fixed notions of language, belonging, and citizenship within a range of disciplines, including but not limited to Sociolinguistics, Language Acquisition, Heritage Language Expression, Translation Studies, Linguistic Anthropology, and others.

Undoubtedly, the study of language and identity holds tremendous value as it enables us to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying identity construction and address the current issues faced by multilingual and historically marginalized communities in Latin America and the United States. By illuminating how language echoes one's identity, this research equips us with the tools and knowledge to continue fostering social inclusivity across various spaces.

Secondly, promoting intercultural understanding is paramount in an era of increased global interactions and migrations. Research in linguistics and identity fosters empathy and respect among individuals and communities with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In order to foster deeper cross-cultural connections and better understand how identity is constructed, it's important for researchers and educators to critically examine their own beliefs and ideological systems, as well as those of the institutions they represent. This process of self-reflection can help identify and address any implicit biases or assumptions that may be hindering cross-cultural communication, and can ultimately lead to positive change at a structural level. For example, in the field of language education, this work can help shape inclusive teaching practices that value and appreciate linguistic diversity. Recognizing the significance of students' linguistic identities allows instructors to establish an environment that promotes learning and equitable teaching practices.

# BOTIFLERS AND BETRAYAL: HERALDIC SEMIOTICS AND THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF CATALONIA'S NATIONAL DAY

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The secessionist movement in Catalonia known as *el Procés* reached a climax in 2017 with an independence referendum in which over 90% of voters supported breaking away from Spain. The referendum was declared unconstitutional by the Spanish Constitutional Court, however, and the Catalan Parliament was dissolved soon thereafter. Key secessionist politicians and activists were imprisoned or exiled. Dell’Orto (quoted in Juarez Miro) posits that “dramatically escalating tensions” (xii) of the past decade have solidified “the construction of distinct, irreconcilable, even inimical identities” (xi) between Spaniards and Catalans. In a tense post-referendum climate in which Spanish and Catalan identities are perceived as divided (Oller et al. 11) and incompatible (Schnaudt, Walter, and Popa 164), and disagreements abound among pro-independence political parties, secessionist sympathizers wonder how best to move forward.

When attempting to measure independentist sentiment in the post-referendum context, some have looked to participation numbers in the annual celebration of Catalonia’s National Day (*la Diada* in Catalan). Held on September 11, this day commemorates the anniversary of Catalonia’s loss at the siege of Barcelona during the War of Spanish Succession in 1714 (Anguera, *L'onze de setembre* 19). Spanish / Catalan tensions date back to this loss, which resulted in the elimination of Catalan political, legal, and economic institutions and the imposition of the Castilian<sup>1</sup> language under Philip V, the French monarch ruling in Spain (Juarez Miro 4). These issues remain polemical to this day and are motivations for pursuing independence.

The foundation was laid for selecting September 11 as Catalonia’s National Day around the turn of the 19th century. Catalan nationalist associations started leaving a wreath at the monument of Rafael Casanova to the tune of “Els Segadors”, the newly developed Catalan national anthem. During the September 11, 1901 iteration of this tradition, around two dozen young people were arrested for the act, provoking public outcry. Shortly after their release, there were calls for a public march and demonstration through the streets of Barcelona to continue the tradition of laying the wreath at Casanova’s statue. Over 10,000 people participated, thereby “fixing the date of 11 September in the collective imagination as the most important anniversary in the history of the Principality” (Cattini 453). As part of the 2012 *Diada*, over a million Catalans held the largest pro-independence demonstration in the region’s history. This was in response to a 2010 ruling from the Spanish Constitutional Court that declared parts of Catalonia’s updated 2006 Statute of Autonomy to be unconstitutional, including all articles that defined Catalonia as a nation. The 2012 demonstration marked the first time that the Catalan government openly embraced secessionist claims (Juarez Miro 55).

In modern times, interested participants are bussed in for *la Diada* from many different areas for the main rally in Barcelona, Catalonia’s capital. The key event is a march put on by the Catalan National Assembly (henceforth “ANC”) that starts precisely at 17:14 in the afternoon in homage to the year of the siege of Barcelona. The 2022 *Diada* was held just prior to the five year anniversary of the 2017 independence referendum. Participation estimates ranged from

150,000 – 700,000 depending on the reporting source. Many news outlets considered the former figure provided by Barcelona’s Guàrdia Urbana police force to be a gross underestimate. While these estimates were still far from peak numbers of around 1.8 million in the mid 2010s, the 2022 march proved that independence fervor is far from dead.

Catalan heraldic imagery abounds in *Diada* festivities. Participants also create an ephemeral linguistic landscape during the day with a proliferation of posters, banners, and graffiti. In order to analyze the sentiments of current independence supporters as regards *el Procés* and the best path forward, the author carried out an ethnographic study in which she participated in all of the day’s events in Barcelona. She documented 1,477 examples of heraldic emblems and signs<sup>3</sup> to answer the following research questions:

1. How are different variations of Catalan heraldry incorporated into the 2022 *Diada*, and what roles do they play?
2. What are the implications of key themes that appear in the LL of the 2022 *Diada*?



### Background: Catalan Heraldry

Important heraldic emblems are commonly used to manifest Catalan identity and secessionist sentiment. The earliest of these is the *senyera* (see fig. 1), known as the flag of the Catalan nation and culture, “the most pre-eminent of Catalan symbols” (Cattini 448), and a key emblem of Catalan identity (Anguera, *Les Quatre Barres* back cover).



Fig. 1. The *senyera*, hung from a balcony in *La Ciutat Vella*, Barcelona’s old town.

The *senyera* was adopted as the coat of arms for the Counts of Barcelona in the 12th century (Albertí 75), though theories and legends surrounding its origin date back to the 9th century. One common hypothesis is that the Aragonese dynasty was inspired by the red and yellow colors used in the Vatican’s papal bulls (Albertí 42). Another is that Ramon Berenguer III, a 12th century Count of Barcelona, incorporated the red and yellow bars as a salute to common shield designs from Provence, the homeland of his wife Douce I (Albertí 45–46).

The most repeated legend about its origin comes from the *Crónica general de España* by Valencian historian Pere Anton Beuter (ch. 13). It involves Wilfred the Hairy, who was the Count of Barcelona from 878–879. According to legend, Wilfred was wounded while fighting alongside Louis II of France against the Normans. He asked the king to give him arms for his shield. In response, the king touched Wilfred’s wound and traced four blood-stained lines across the golden shield, stating that this would be his coat of arms (Albertí 86–87). The veracity of this legend is questioned by scholars (Cattini 449). In the first volume of his *Heràldica catalana*, for example, Martí de Riquer shows it to be a largely plagiarized adaptation of a different legend (58). Despite being debunked, the story inspired writers and intellectuals during the 19th century Catalan *Renaixença*. They spread the legend and, in so doing, made the *senyera* “into a symbolic touchstone of the Catalan nationalist movement” (Cattini 450).

The dubious nature of this and other legends surrounding the origin of the *senyera* situate them as apt examples of Pastoreau’s *heraldique imaginaire*, which has as its object of study “coats of arms attributed to characters who never existed or who lived in times prior to the appearance of coats of arms” (261, author’s translation). In a sense, the veracity of an origin story is not the main priority in the dissemination of heraldic symbols, whose purpose is to serve as emblems worthy of pride. Indeed, Slater contends that Juan de Palafox redesigned the coat of arms of the Spanish Habsburgs in order to inspire awe while serving as the bishop of Puebla in Mexico (113). He posits a recursive idea that the power of the heraldic sign must reflect the majesty of the monarch, and in turn, the monarch can induce greater obedience with more majestic heraldry (125).

The majesty of the Spanish State’s coat of arms serves as an appropriate juxtaposition to Catalan heraldry, which intentionally rejects any monarchical family crest and tries to oppose itself in myriad ways to the central government.

In the early 20th century, a new flag was developed to reflect growing sentiment and organization surrounding the prospect of Catalan independence. After living through the Cuban victory against Spain, Vicenç Albert Ballester returned to Catalonia and designed the definitive version of this new flag in 1918. The *estelada* (see fig. 2), from the Catalan *estel* (star), contains a star design inspired by the Cuban flag that accompanies the *quadribarrada* pattern of the *senyera*. According to Albertí, “it is raised by those who defend the independence of Catalonia” (245, author’s translation). It is also known as the *estelada blava* (blue *estelada*).



Fig. 2. The *estelada*, carried during the ANC’s 2022 *Diada* march.

Another variation of the *estelada*, known as the *estelada vermella* (red *estelada*, see fig. 3), was developed by the Socialist Party of National Liberation (PSAN) in 1968. The colors of the star and triangle were changed to red and yellow, respectively, in order to highlight the radical leftist character of the party and the flag (Albertí 254). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the *estelada vermella* has lost most of this leftist symbolism and now simply represents another version of the traditional *estelada* (Albertí 256). Still other variations of the *estelada* exist, such as the *estelada blaugrana* (blue and maroon *estelada*) seen in fig. 4, which displays the colors of the FC Barcelona football club.



Fig. 3. The *estelada vermella*, carried during the ANC’s 2022 *Diada* march.



Fig. 4. The *estelada blaugrana*, carried during the ANC’s 2022 *Diada* march.

To commemorate the tricentennial of *la Diada* in 2014, Jordi Avià and Joan-Marc Passada designed the *bandera negra* (black flag), as seen in fig. 5. The designers explained in an interview that this new pro-independence flag represents the “all-out political combat position” of *el Procés*, a “fight without truce” for separatist ideals (Rocalva, author’s translation). Avià and Passada go on to describe, “The cross is the cross of *Santa Eulàlia* [co-patron saint of Barcelona], worn by soldiers in the War of Spanish Succession, and the star is that of the *estelada*” (Rocalva, author’s translation).

The designers thus achieved a synthesis of the historical importance of 1714 and the Catalan independence project. In this way, the *bandera negra* further highlights the importance of Catalan folklore and cultural elements in their heraldry.



Fig. 5. The *bandera negra*, carried during the ANC's 2022 *Diada* march.

Finally, the *creu de Sant Jordi* or Saint George's cross (see fig. 6) was the official coat of arms for the Generalitat de Catalunya from its founding in the 14th century until 1714 (Albertí 57). It has always been a distinctive emblem for Barcelona, and remains a part of Barcelona's flag to this day. Though *Sant Jordi* is a figure of great importance in Catalonia, the flag bearing his cross did not evolve into a greater symbol of Catalan identity like the *senyera* because "historically, it became accredited only for the city of Barcelona" (Albertí 76, author's translation). Its relative frequency in this study's sample was small (N = 10), but its continued presence in *la Diada* speaks to its significance.



Fig. 6. The *creu de Sant Jordi*, carried during the ANC's 2022 *Diada* march.



### Theoretical Framework: Transgressive Discourse in The Public Sphere

The use of non-official language in the public sphere as a form of socio-political commentary dates back thousands of years. Newsome notes examples of illegally appropriating public space with non-official discourse as far back as the 4th century BC when Gnaeus Flavius published confidential details about legal procedures (71). He also describes pasquinades, poems and messages affixed to the Pasquino statue group in Rome from the 16th-21st centuries, as "attractive form[s] of social commentary" (65). Their placement in a busy, public space provided ample exposure for the messages, and the temporal element of posting messages at night provided anonymity for messages that were critical of authority.

Hillard discusses the role of graffiti in the Late Roman Republic, describing it as "the weapon of those politically less empowered in institutional terms" (115).

Many linguistic landscape (LL) scholars point to a seminal paper by Landry and Bourhis from 1997 as the work that solidified the LL as an important branch of sociolinguistic research. In their work, Landry and Bourhis maintain that the LL serves both informational and symbolic functions (25) and has a strong correlation with ethnolinguistic vitality (24). In the same year, Solé Camardons and Romaní Olivé published a paper on linguistic uses in commercial signage in Barcelona. Other early LL studies from Catalonia include Solé Camardons (1998), who examined how the language of commercial signage varied according to the type of structure signs were placed on, and Leprêtre Alemany and Romaní Olivé (2000), who investigated variation in the representation of Catalan in commercial signage across six different cities. As noted by Professor José Franco Rodríguez in a keynote address attended by the author at the *primer Congreso Internacional sobre Paisaje Lingüístico*, despite being published in the same year and highlighting similar assertions regarding how the LL may serve as an indicator of “la vigoria i l’ús social” of a language (58), Solé Camardons and Romaní Olivé’s 1997 paper has often been eschewed in favor of Landry and Bourhis’s publication when considering foundational studies of the discipline, for the mere reason that it was published in Catalan. Whereas the former has been cited fewer than 20 times as of the time of writing, the latter has been cited more than 3,400 times.

Per Landry and Bourhis’s classic definition, the LL includes public and commercial signage such as street signs, road signs, shop signs, and signs on government buildings. Since their 1997 publication, the definition of LL has evolved in ways that emphasize the wider social context (Gorter 3). For instance, Scollon and Scollon distinguish four LL discourses (167): *regulatory* and *infrastructural* artifacts are those produced by official bodies, *commercial* artifacts come from businesses, and *transgressive* artifacts are displayed by independent actors whose texts disrupt official discourse, similar to Newsome’s definition of *non-official* texts (67). The transgressive discourse present in the signage of *la Diada* is the appropriate focal point for the present study, as it represents the autonomous and creative expressions of the day’s participants.

Graffiti, in particular, has acquired an increasingly prominent role in LL scholarship. Backhaus describes

it as the most prominent type of transgressive discourse (*Linguistic Landscapes* 37). Blackwood and Tufi argue that graffiti can be seen more as an act of identity than transgression (11), with the representation of non-standard languages in graffiti increasing their legitimacy. In addition to establishing particular types of identity (Pennycook, “Spatial Narrations” 148), graffiti also reflects the cultural values of community members (Phillips 335). Moran calls on researchers to frame graffiti as the product of economic, social, and ideological factors in its surrounding environment (55). He further claims that graffiti serves as a faithful source of information for knowing about those who produce them (59). For this reason, graffiti is a valuable resource for examining the wider socio-political discourse of a community (Debras 460). This is particularly important in the politically tense context of present-day Catalonia (Byrne and Marcet 2).

As a result of two municipal ordinances that have criminalized graffiti and street art, Barcelona’s transgressive LL has shifted over the past 25 years from detailed and meticulously crafted artifacts to quick, ephemeral objects such as posters, stencils, and stickers (Vilaseca 18–20). Furthermore, much of the LL of *la Diada* is displayed on banners and posters because the day’s main event is a mobile march. Therefore, these objects will be the primary items of analysis in this investigation.

A major point of emphasis in the LL literature is how minority language signage indexes language ideologies (Hornsby and Vigers 57). Shohamy adds that the presence (or absence) of a language, “sends direct and indirect messages with regard to the centrality versus the marginality of certain languages in society” (10). As in other minority language contexts, the choice to speak in Catalan or Castilian in Catalonia is rarely arbitrary. Language choice in this nation has been described as “ideologically invested in a fundamental way” (Pujolar i Cos 247) and “a key symbol of ethnic identity” (Woolard 1). The ANC *Diada* march takes place in Barcelona, where there is traditionally a lower usage of Catalan than in the rest of Catalonia (Davidson 4). Given that Woolard has identified use of the Catalan language as the most legitimizing factor for claiming Catalan identity (40), language choice among Catalan, Castilian, and other languages in signage will be an additional focus.

With a focus on transgressive messages on a day of socio-political significance, the current research aims to add to the body of work that examines the LL in areas of ongoing conflict and social transformation. Seloni and Sarfati surveyed the LL of the Gezi Park protests, a series of demonstrations that erupted in opposition to an urban development plan for a park in Istanbul. They noted the role of graffiti as a tool to contend against an authoritarian government (23). Themistocleous offers an in-depth analysis of the LL of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus and a crossing-point between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot sides of the island. This border was finally opened in 2003, and she notes the strategic use of language choice to index varying voices and ideologies (18). In another study of interest, Byrne and Marcet examined the socio-political and socio-cultural meanings of semiotic resources in the LL of Girona shortly after the 2017 referendum. They noted graffiti’s role in promoting resistance, reclaiming public spaces, and reconstructing identity amidst the ongoing push for independence (20).



The Study: Data and Methodology

The survey area consisted of *El Barri Gòtic* (Barcelona’s Gothic Quarter), where a historical reenactment of the ending of the 1714 siege took place, followed by the ANC march route from *Avinguda Paral·lel* to *Parc de la Ciutadella*, and finally post-march festivities by the *Arc de Triomf*. The author traversed the entirety of the march route on foot. She started from the back of the crowd before the march began and continually moved forward through the marchers so as to capture artifacts displayed by as many unique participants as possible. All artifacts visible to the author that either included one of the heraldic emblems mentioned in Section 2 or contained a written message related to *la Diada* were photographed. In many cases, but not all, signs with written messages also incorporated heraldic imagery. Backhaus’s definition of a sign was endorsed for this study, that is, “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (“Multilingualism in Tokyo” 55). In line with Blackwood and Tufi, this approach was deemed suitable for the large size of the corpus (12).

To interpret the data, a symbiotic approach was used that combined elements of both the qualitative and quantitative arms of LL research. Blackwood and Tufi contend this strategy is essential to take full advantage of the data available in the LL (7). Similar to Savela (35), all data were imported into Adobe Lightroom Classic, which offers a function to create and apply tags to each photograph. Tags were accordingly added for a number of factors for each artifact visible in the corpus of photos. These factors served as nominal variables for both the descriptive and the inferential statistical analysis. Table 1 presents the factors along with their associated factor levels.

Table 1  
Factors and Factor Levels Considered in the Statistical Analysis

Factor	Factor Levels
Type of Artifact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flag</b></li> <li>• <b>Accessory</b> (bag, bag tag, food, megaphone, pin, ribbon, sticker, voting urn)</li> <li>• <b>Clothing</b> (t-shirt, handkerchief, hat, headband, bandana)</li> <li>• <b>Classic Signage</b> (banner, giant letters, graffiti, pamphlet, postcard, poster)</li> </ul>
Level of Anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Anonymous</b>- an artifact not held by anyone, such as a flag hanging from a balcony or graffiti left without a tag or group label</li> <li>• <b>Identifiable, individual</b>- an artifact held or displayed by one individual, such as someone carrying a sign, walking with a flag, or wearing a backpack or shirt with a heraldic emblem</li> <li>• <b>Identifiable, group</b>- an artifact displayed by a group, such as members of an organization walking with a large banner or graffiti signed with an organization’s name</li> </ul>

Table 1 (continued)

Factor	Factor Levels
Heraldic Imagery Type (if present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Senyera</i></li> <li>• <i>Estelada</i></li> <li>• <i>Estelada vermella</i></li> <li>• <i>Bandera negra</i></li> <li>• <b>Other</b></li> </ul>
Color(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes <b>yellow</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>red</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>blue</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>black and white</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>purple</b></li> <li>• <b>Other</b></li> </ul>
<p>In addition to the above, for artifacts containing written messages:</p>	
*Message	<p>*Not a nominal variable; recorded and analyzed qualitatively to derive categorical themes present in signage</p>
Language(s) of Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Includes Catalan</b></li> <li>• <b>Includes Latin</b></li> <li>• <b>Includes Castilian</b></li> <li>• <b>Includes English</b></li> <li>• <b>Ambiguous</b> or includes <b>Other Languages</b></li> </ul>
Theme(s) of Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes <b>Catalan cultural identity</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>independence</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>betrayal</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>feminism</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>socialism</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>repression</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>solidarity</b></li> <li>• <b>Other</b></li> </ul>

A qualitative content analysis was conducted “to identify themes, topics, or issues for systematic examination” (Ben Said and Kasanga 74). Potential factor levels for the “Theme” variable were derived inductively by analyzing the semantic material of each written message. Tags for potential themes were added to each photograph in Adobe Lightroom Classic. Categories emerged organically as semantically-similar tags were grouped together. This analysis was rooted in Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss), in that the themes developed out of “emergent categories (...) from successive levels of analysis” (Charmaz 155) instead of starting from preconceived hypotheses. By the third stage of analysis, these emergent categories had evolved into distinct themes based on conceptual patterns across the corpus. Each artifact was coded according to one or more of the finalized thematic tags (see Table 6 in the **Results and Discussion**). Signs that contained multiple themes were coded with multiple thematic tags so as to most accurately reflect the presence of that theme in the corpus. Stand-alone items that did not fit with any of the finalized themes were tagged as “Other”. While qualitative thematic discussions have been prevalent in recent LL scholarship (see, e.g., Debras; Byrne and Marcet), to the author’s knowledge, a systematic thematic coding of such a comprehensive corpus related to *la Diada* has not yet been attempted.

Upon completion of the coding process in Adobe Lightroom Classic, filters were run on the tags for relevant variables to find the necessary counts for various aspects of the quantitative analysis. First, the relative proportions of heraldic imagery types and signage languages and themes were calculated. Then, correlations of interest between key variables were assessed. Chi-squared tests with post-hoc pairwise comparisons in R (v4.2.2; R Core Team 2022) evaluated significant differences in the presence of certain types of heraldic imagery by the level of anonymity of the artifact, the type of artifact, and, in the case of signage, the thematic content. These relationships among heraldic symbols, level of anonymity, artifact types, and themes were examined closely to shed light on how different variations of Catalan heraldry are incorporated semiotically into the 2022 *Diada*, as well as what the principal themes of messages in the LL imply about Catalan socio-

political sentiment five years after the independence referendum. Another point of interest was how thematic content was integrated with other multimodal characteristics such as color. In this way, the data were treated as semiotic aggregates (Scollon and Scollon 12) or semiotic assemblages (Pennycook, “Linguistic Landscapes” 79). Below is a discussion of the results, where the choice of examples reflects the most salient data.



Results and Discussion

Upon careful examination of each photo in the corpus, 32 artifacts were excluded because it was determined that they were not created or displayed for *La Diada*. The 1,477 remaining artifacts form the sample of this study. Of these, 1,313 artifacts displayed a heraldic emblem, 629 included a written message, and 465 contained both. The first research question asks how different variations of Catalan heraldry are incorporated into the 2022 Diada, and what roles they play. Regarding the 1,313 artifacts that displayed heraldic emblems, Table 2 reveals a breakdown of the relative proportions of heraldic imagery types.

Table 2

Prevalence of heraldic imagery types in the corpus

Heraldic Imagery Type	Prevalence N (%)
<i>Estelada</i>	773 (58.9%)
<i>Bandera negra</i>	322 (24.5%)
<i>Estelada vermela</i>	81 (6.2%)
<i>Senyera</i>	69 (5.2%)
Other	68 (5.2%)
Total	1,313

Notably absent throughout *la Diada* was the Spanish flag. The author only documented one instance of it on an administrative building during the march. The 1988 Spanish “Flag Law” requires the presence of the Spanish flag on state, administrative, and military buildings. However, hundreds of Catalan municipalities have joined the “*una nació, una bandera*” (one nation, one flag) campaign over the past 30 years (Albertí 233). As a part of this campaign, the *Ajuntament* (City Hall) of participating municipalities raises only the *senyera* and not the Spanish flag on *la Diada*, “as the only symbol of our nation” (Albertí 233, author’s translation).

Of the 1,313 *Diada* artifacts that incorporated heraldic imagery, nearly 90% (N = 1,176) included either the *estelada*, the *bandera negra*, or the *estelada vermella*. As explained in Section 2, these three symbols have explicit connotations of support for secession in the collective consciousness. The *senyera*, on the other hand, is generally known as the flag of the Catalan culture and nation, and does not necessarily proclaim an express desire for Catalan statehood in the way the other heraldic types do. This finding speaks to the importance of displaying independence-oriented symbols in the 2022 *Diada*. This idea is further supported by various correlations that exist among the nominal variables presented in Table 1. For example, Table 3 shows the prevalence of heraldic imagery types by level of anonymity. For the sake of analytic relevance, the three independence-oriented symbols have been grouped together.

Table 3 in next page

Table 3

Prevalence of heraldic imagery types in the corpus by level of anonymity

Level of Anonymity	N (%) of <i>senyeres</i>	N (%) of independence-oriented heraldry ( <i>Estelada</i> , <i>estelada vermella</i> , or <i>bandera negra</i> )
Anonymous	36 (52.2%)	23 (2.0%)
Identifiable, individual	21 (30.4%)	1044 (88.8%)
Identifiable, group	12 (17.4%)	109 (9.3%)
Total	69	1,176

As seen in Table 3, over half of the *senyeres* present in the corpus were displayed anonymously, such as the *senyera* hanging from a balcony in fig. 1, whereas independence-oriented heraldry was overwhelmingly displayed by individuals or groups who knowingly presented themselves in public on a day with extensive media coverage alongside these symbols. When the “identifiable, group” and “identifiable, individual” factor levels are considered together, a chi-squared test in R confirms that the proportional mix of *senyeres* versus pro-independence heraldic types is significantly different between anonymous and identifiable artifacts ( $p < .0001$ ). In the non-anonymous acts of carrying a flag or holding a sign,

the data suggest that it is important to display some variation of the *estelada* or another independence flag in order to “belong” in the contemporary Diada. When considering flags alone, less than 0.3% of individuals carrying flags were carrying *senyeres*. Of 726 flags of the four types mentioned in Table 3 that were held by individuals in the corpus, only two were *senyeres*, and one of these was part of an FC Barcelona flag and had an *estelada* blaugrana directly below it (see fig. 4). The other 724 flags held by individuals were one of the independence-oriented variations. This is in stark contrast to a few decades prior, when images of la Diada were filled with *senyeres*. Figs. 7 and 8 exhibit this temporal contrast.



Fig. 7. A sea of *senyeres*, la Diada 1977 (photo source EFE/ $\gamma$ v, reproduced from Albertí 222).



Fig. 8. A sea of *estelades*, la Diada 2022

In a similar way, there appears to be a greater preference for one heraldic type over others depend-

ing on the type of artifact. Table 4 shows a comparison of heraldic imagery prevalence by artifact type.

Table 4

Prevalence of heraldic imagery types in the corpus by artifact type

Artifact Type	N (%) of <i>senyeres</i>	N (%) of independence-oriented heraldry ( <i>Estelada, estelada vermella, or bandera negra</i> )
Flag	37 (53.6%)	754 (64.1%)
Clothing	13 (18.8%)	267 (22.7%)
Accessory	11 (15.9%)	32 (2.7%)
Classic Signage	8 (11.6%)	123 (10.5%)
Total	69	1,176

Table 4 shows that independence-oriented heraldry is relatively lower in accessories than in other artifact types, which is not the case for the *senyera*. A chi-squared test with post-hoc pairwise comparisons confirms that the proportional mix between *senyeres* and independence-oriented heraldic emblems is only significantly different in artifact type pairs that include accessories. The respective p-values obtained from comparing the mix of the two heraldic categories between flags and accessories, clothing and accessories, and classic signage and accessories are  $p < .0001$ ,  $p < .0001$ , and  $p = .00214$ . In contrast, the proportional mixes between the two kinds of heraldry are statistically similar when comparing flags with clothing ( $p > .999$ ), flags with classic signage ( $p = .838$ ), and clothing with classic signage ( $p = .838$ ). A potential interpretation of this finding is that *Diada* participants may feel that independence-oriented heraldry is more important for acts directly connected to the body, such as wearing clothes and holding a flag or sign, whereas the *senyera* is more appropriate

for accessories that typically are one or more levels removed from the body. For example, the *senyera*-topped cheesecake in fig. 9 was made for *la Diada* and sold near the march route. However, the object itself was unrelated to the march, suggesting that this was a more appropriate context for an emblem that is not explicitly pro-independence.



Fig. 9. Cheesecake topped with *senyeres*

The second research question asks what implications can be drawn from the key themes that appear in the LL of the 2022 *Diada*. There were 629 artifacts in the sample that included a written message. In addition to the classic signage formats listed in Table 1, written messages also appeared on less conventional LL artifact types such as bags, voting urns, and ribbons. Table 5 shows which languages were most frequent in signage documented

by the author. Table 6 shows a breakdown of the most common themes from signage, both overall and, in cases where signs incorporated heraldic imagery, according to a dichotomy of *senyera* versus independence-oriented heraldry. All languages and themes that applied to a message were coded. As such, the percentages shown reflect artifacts that at least included the languages and themes listed, even if others were also present.

Table 5

Prevalence of languages used in artifacts with written message from the corpus

Language	Prevalence N (%)
Includes Catalan	594 (94.4%)
Includes Latin	23 (3.7%)
Includes Castilian	17 (2.7%)
Includes English	12 (1.9%)
Other Languages / Ambiguous	4 (0.6%)

Table 6

Prevalence of themes expressed in artifacts from the corpus with written messages

Theme	N (%) of all signs that express theme <sup>5</sup>	N (%) of signs with <i>senyeres</i> that express theme	N (%) of signs with independence-oriented heraldry that express theme
Includes Independence	488 (77.6%)	7 (36.8%)	384 (91.0%)
Includes Betrayal	62 (9.9%)	2 (10.5%)	8 (1.9%)

Table 6 (continued)

Theme	N (%) of all signs that express theme	N (%) of signs with <i>senyeres</i> that express theme	N (%) of signs with independence-oriented heraldry that express theme
Includes Solidarity	30 (4.8%)	0	13 (3.1%)
Includes Catalan Cultural Identity	26 (4.1%)	9 (47.4%)	6 (1.4%)
Includes Repression	24 (3.8%)	1 (5.3%)	2 (0.5%)
Includes Feminism	11 (1.7%)	0	6 (1.4%)
Includes Socialism	6 (1.0%)	0	2 (0.5%)
Other	2 (0.3%)	0	1 (0.2%)

As can be seen in Table 5, Catalan was unsurprisingly the dominant language in the written landscape, used in over 94% of artifacts. Castilian was only seen in three unique artifacts, two produced by participants from the Canary Islands, where Catalan is not spoken. In fact, there were more artifacts written in Latin than in Castilian. The author’s examination of the soundscape of *la Diada* estimates Castilian usage in conversations to be around 20%, suggesting that it is more acceptable in the oral modality, but might cause judgment in written artifacts.

Regarding the thematic analysis, Table 6 shows that the ongoing fight for **Independence** was the most dominant theme. The ANC’s official motto for the 2022 *Diada* was “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*”. (Let’s come back to win: Independence). This motto appeared on banners, T-shirts, bags, stickers, and other merchandise (see figs. 10–12), and was accompanied by a white and black version of the *estelada*. Chromatically, official rally merchandise resembles the *bandera negra*, which further projects pro-independence sentiment and conveys the idea of fighting without compromise until **Independence** is achieved.



Fig. 10. Bag, “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*” (Let’s come back to win: Independence).



Fig. 11. T-Shirt, “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*” (Let’s come back to win: Independence).



Fig. 12. Banner, “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*” (Let’s come back to win: Independence).

The latin motto “*Donec perficiam*” (Until I succeed) was also present throughout the LL. This phrase was the motto of the Catalan Royal Guard during the War of Spanish Succession, and similarly conveys the *bandera negra*’s message of no surrender. Fig. 13 shows this message incorporated into the *República Catalana* flag. This new flag has *senyeres* in the four corners of its design and proclaims that the Catalan Republic was founded on the date of the independence referendum (October 1st, 2017). “*Donec Perficiam*”, shown in detail in fig. 14, appears on this flag surrounded by the design of the *bandera negra* (an independence star and the cross of *Santa Eulàlia*). Fig. 15 shows a fusion of the *bandera negra* and the *República catalana* flag. The incorporation of the *senyera*, the *bandera negra*, and the star of the *estelada* into the new *República Catalana* flag shows the importance of honoring past heraldic emblems in modern semiotic displays of support for **Independence**. The *senyera* in particular serves as a reminder that the existence of a unique Catalan identity and nation, separate from Spain, is a principal motivator in the **Independence** struggle.



Fig. 13. *República catalana* flag.



Fig. 14. Detail of “*Donec perficiam*” (Until I succeed) from the *República catalana* flag.



Fig. 15. Fusion of the *bandera negra* and the *República catalana* flag.

The presence of a woman on the *República catalana* flag is also noteworthy. Some **Independence** messages appeared alongside messages of support for **Feminism** (see, e.g., figs. 16 and 17). Both artifacts incorporate an *estelada*<sup>6</sup> indicating that part of the platform for promoting an independent Catalan Republic involves greater support for women’s equality. Additionally, a star, whose semiotic link to **Independence** was established with the creation of the *estelada*, appears at the bottom of fig. 16 and inside the female gender symbol in fig. 17. A chromatic semiotic element in fig. 17 is the use of the color purple, the color of women’s equality. Over a third of the artifacts that include **Feminist** thematic content incorporate the color purple, and 100% of the artifacts that have **Feminism** as their exclusive thematic focus do so. The use of purple is significantly higher in **Feminist** artifacts than in artifacts related to other themes ( $p < .0001$ ). The conflict between borders and identity also appears in

in fig. 16. Though the bulk of the Catalan Countries<sup>7</sup> lie within French and Spanish borders, Catalan national identity does not adhere to these borders.



Fig. 16. “Ni França ni Espanya: Països Catalans. Independència, Socialisme, Feminisme” (Neither France nor Spain: Catalan Countries. Independence, Socialism, Feminism).



Fig. 17. “Construïm la república feminista” (Let’s build the feminist republic).

Another principal theme in the LL of the 2022 *Diada* was **Betrayal**. Of note, these messages were generally not directed primarily against the Spanish state, but rather toward the pro-independence politicians whom Catalan secessionists had elected to represent their interests. Essentially, pro-independence voters are fed up with politicians who promised to fight for independence, yet appear to be compromising too much with the Spanish State at the *taula de diàleg* (negotiation table). As stated on one poster, “Aragonès<sup>8</sup> (ERC)<sup>9</sup> no us vam votar per fer una taula de rendició. Mentiders i covards, traidors al poble” (Aragonès [ERC] we didn’t vote for you to convene a negotiation table. Liars and cowards, traitors to the people). Dozens of other artifacts also criticized key pro-independence parties and their leaders of being cowards and abandoning the populace who had bolstered their political success (see, e.g., figs. 18–20).

Use of the term *botifler*, as seen in fig. 20, was particularly frequent. *Botifler* is yet another nod to the War of Spanish Succession. It was used in the early 18th century to refer to supporters of the Bourbon

royal family, who were fighting against the Principality of Catalonia during the war (Cattini 451) and remain on the Spanish throne to this day. The term has reemerged during *el Procés* as an insult against those who do not support independence. Therefore, its use to describe the leaders of the pro-independence parties is striking, and speaks to the high level of disillusionment among those in the populace who are partial to secession.



Fig. 18. “Polítics, sou el fracàs del procés independentista. Heu ‘cremat’ [e]l poble i les seves il·lusions” (Politicians, you are the failure of the independence process. You have burned the populace and their dreams) atop an *estelada*.



Fig. 19. “Els partits ens heu traït” (Political parties, you have betrayed us) with an *estelada* and *República catalana* flags.



Fig. 20. “Botiflers, la història us jutjarà” (Traitors, history will judge you) with many *estelades* and *estelades vermelles* in the background.



Fig. 22. “Catalunya Nord també és Catalunya” (Northern Catalonia is also Catalonia) with *estelades* and *Intersindical Canaria* flags in the background.

The third most frequent theme is **Solidarity**. Sympathetic compatriots from other Spanish autonomous communities who also have secessionist aspirations joined in *la Diada* celebrations, with their own heraldic imagery on full display. Such was the case for the *Intersindical Canaria*, an organization that advocates for independence of the Canary Islands from Spain. Their flags were accompanied by T-shirts proclaiming “*Autodeterminación*” (Self-determination), with the *Intersindical Canaria* flag and the *estelada vermella* joined in a heart (detail seen in fig. 21). Heraldic emblems were also present from the Basque Country and Biafra, where there are also secession movements. *La Diada* participants from Northern Catalonia (the Catalan-speaking region of France), the LGBT+ community, and various neighborhoods and cities of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area also showed Solidarity with Catalonia’s cause (see, e.g., figs. 22 and 23). Fig. 22 demonstrates how Catalan identity is not contained within Catalonia’s borders.



Fig. 23. “*Alliberament afectiu, sexual, de gènere, de classe, nacional. Crida LGBTI: Vine a lluitar amb nosaltres*” (Affective, sexual, gender, class, national liberation. Shout LGBTI: Come and fight with us) with an *estelada* at the top and the chromatic spectrum from the pride flag on bottom.

In terms of the relationship between theme and heraldic imagery, Table 6 shows that whereas 91% of LL artifacts that incorporate independence-oriented heraldry express messages related to **Independence**, only 37% of written artifacts with *senyeres* pertain to this theme. Figs. 24–26 show examples of *estelada* variations in **Independence** signage.



Fig. 21. “*Autodeterminación*” (Self-determination) with the *Intersindical Canaria* and *estelada vermella* flags joined in a heart.



Fig. 24. “*L’únic que ens salvarà de tanta demència: La independència*” (The only thing that will save us from so much insanity: Independence), with an *estelada*.



Fig. 25. “Lluitem i guanyem la independència” (Let’s fight and win independence), with an *estelada*.



Fig. 26. “Ni un pas enrere, independència!” (Not a single step back, independence!), with an *estelada vermella*.

Fig. 27 shows a noteworthy example of a rare *Independence* artifact with the *senyera*: a replica of the voting urns used during the 2017 independence referendum with a message saying “Votarem” (We will vote). The real urns used during the referendum did, in fact, contain *senyeres*. In the context of an official referendum, it would not have been reasonable to show bias toward independence with an *estelada*.



Fig. 27. Voting urn, “Votarem” (We will vote).

The only theme for which the *senyera* was more frequent than independence-oriented emblems was **Catalan Cultural Identity**. Considering the significantly lower presence of *senyeres* as compared to pro-independence heraldry in the corpus (see Table 2), this finding is striking. Nearly half of the written signs with *senyeres* dealt with this theme (see, e.g., figs. 28–29).



Fig. 28. T-shirt, “No vaig escollir ser català, només vaig tenir sort” (I didn’t choose to be Catalan, I just got lucky).



Fig. 29. Poster, “Venim de Ponent. Catalonia is not Spain” (We come from Ponent).

A chi-squared test with pairwise comparisons confirms that the proportional mix of *senyeres* and independence-oriented heraldry was significantly different between signs with themes of **Independence** and **Catalan Cultural Identity** ( $p < .0001$ ). Figs. 30–31 show additional artifacts related to **Catalan Cultural Identity**. These signs, as well as fig. 29, characterize Catalan identity as being in opposition to Spanish identity. The use of English in fig. 30 could suggest that participants want to make this distinction clear to foreigners in the touristic center of Barcelona or those reading international news coverage of *la Diada*.



Fig. 30. “I am not Spanish, I am Catalan”.



Fig. 31. “*Mai no ens fareu espanyols*”  
(You will never make us Spanish).

A final point of interest from Table 6 is that while the majority of artifacts for the **Independence**, **Catalan Cultural Identity**, and **Feminism** themes incorporated some form of heraldic imagery (80.1%, 57.7%, and 54.5%, respectively), as well as a near majority of **Solidarity** artifacts (43.3%), only 16.1% of **Betrayal** artifacts did. Given that **Betrayal** artifacts were generally directed at Catalan politicians whom participants believe have acted in opposition to the values represented by those emblems, a possible interpretation is that *Diada* participants believe that it would be incoherent to place those negative messages alongside Catalan heraldic imagery.

## Conclusions

Data from the heraldic and linguistic landscapes of the 2022 *Diada* suggest that in the post-referendum context, Catalonia’s National Day remains more focused on secessionist ambitions than on celebrating Catalan culture. The overwhelming presence of *estelades* and *banderes negres* in comparison to *senyeres*, as well as the dominating theme of Independence in signage, indicate that participation is fueled by a desire to express support for this specific cause. Though the *senyera* continues to be an indispensable emblem of Catalan identity, it would seem that its presence alone is no longer sufficient to achieve acceptance in the context of *Diada* festivities. Participants strongly favor emblems that are explicitly pro-independence for their flags, signs, and clothing, while the *senyera* appears to be more amenable for accessories.

The designers of the black and white *bandera negra* stated that the message they want to convey with the flag is one of no surrender (Rocalvalva). Chromatically, then, the dominance of black and white in the 2022 *Diada*, particularly in the official merchandise designed by ANC, indicates that a policy of no surrender must be adopted in order to achieve independence. In a sense, independence is a black and white issue that cannot be achieved through compromise. It is therefore fitting that black and white were the predominant colors of signs about betrayal. Participants are communicating to politicians that they have failed to meet their expectations in the five years following the referendum. To redeem themselves, they cannot surrender or compromise on independence. Thus, while fervor surrounding the prospect of independence is still alive in Catalonia, supporters of secession have communicated that political leaders must change course in order to make it possible.

## Notes

- [1] Throughout this paper, “Castilian” is used to refer to the Spanish language, as it is generally known as such in the Iberian Peninsula. “Spanish” is used as an adjectival form related to Spain as a state.
- [2] Commander in Chief of Catalonia during the Siege of Barcelona
- [3] Unless otherwise noted, all images come from the author’s photographs from the 2022 *Diada*.
- [4] Examples include graffiti or banners about unrelated themes such as English movie quotes about friendship or keeping noise down in the neighborhood at night.
- [5] The percentages shown reflect the percentages of artifacts that include that theme or language. Some artifacts include multiple themes or languages, which is why the total N sums to more than the total of 629 artifacts with written messages.
- [6] In the case of fig. 13, an *estelada vermella* appears as part of the logo for the Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP), a left-wing pro-independence political party.
- [7] The Catalan Countries refer to territories where Catalan is spoken, including Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, the Valencian Community, and parts of Aragon and Murcia in Spain, as well as Andorra, the department of Pyrénées-Orientales in France, and the city of Alghero in Italy.
- [8] President of the Government of Catalonia as of the time of writing.
- [9] The Republican Left of Catalonia, a pro-independence political party.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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# IDENTITY THROUGH GAMING IN THE L2 CLASSROOM: CONTEXTUALIZATION AND NARRATIVE

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From my first moments of teaching French, I have held a deep desire to motivate learners and to connect them with the language. The bond built between a student and a language creates and supports a special kind of motivation, paving the way for learning and growth not just linguistically but also as an individual. As the trimester moves forward, too, we instructors see this growth and, in tandem, the student's sense of self or identity. After all, identity and language meet each other hand-in-hand. For example, I have been observing the use of nonbinary and gender-neutral forms of words so that students who don't conform to the binary feel welcome. In French class, this might look like a student using words like the subject pronoun 'iel' (instead of using the binary 'il' or 'elle') or like nouns such as 'acteurice' (instead of using 'acteur' or 'actrice'). Similarly, in a Spanish class, perhaps a student from Argentina chooses to use the term 'latine' to describe themselves rather than latino/latina. In addition to providing and supporting linguistic modes of self-expression, it is also worth exploring ways in which students can explore identity in the classroom.

One avenue that I have found to be quite fruitful in this arena and that I would recommend to other language instructors is the use of video games as an outlet for identity creation and discovery. This is due to the fact that the students, as players, can make more space for themselves (both inside and outside of the classroom) through embodied and contextualized experiences. A video game has the natural ability to drop players into a created digital context. Perhaps they are positioned as a disruptive goose, causing havoc among the locals (*Untitled Goose Game*). They could be tasked with trying to covertly take over the world as an evil mastermind (*Evil Genius*), or maybe they're handed infinite tools to create a virtual avatar and home of their own design, monitoring the intended success or failure of their creations (*The Sims*).

No matter the content, the virtual world requires the player to discover their character as well as their surroundings conceptually and spatially through creation, decision-making, and storytelling.



## Experiencing New Identities

Each game offers a unique experience for the players. One game may provide opportunities to become something which they might not otherwise find to be immediately accessible. In this way, video games offer players the chance to explore identities which they might not initially consider themselves to be aligned with. They put themselves in the position of someone who has certain life experiences, challenges, and characteristics. In other words, they take on the identity of the character that they play as. This exposure to various ways of life and cultures offers an introspective comparison of how players perceive or experience the world and how others do the same. James Gee, in his book *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2007) offers some more insight via his Cultural Models Principle which states, "Learning is set up in such a way that learners come to think consciously and reflectively about some of their cultural models regarding the world, without denigration of their identities, abilities, or social affiliations, and juxtapose them to new models that may conflict with or otherwise relate to them in various ways" (p. 226). It is precisely this juxtaposition that provides players (or students) the opportunity to understand others. Recently, Arienne Ferchaud et al. conducted a study which aimed to reduce the stigma around mental health by attempting to build a sense of identification with an avatar/character with psychosis (Senua) within the carefully researched and constructed (in reference to the creators' constant work with mental health professionals) video game *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (2020).

During the study, participants either played or watched others play the first 45 minutes of the game and were asked for their perceived sense of identification with Senua as well as their desire to distance themselves socially from those with mental illnesses. Consequently, after playing the game or watching others play, participants showed a lower desire to socially distance from those with mental illnesses. This demonstrates that by taking on certain identities and learning how others live, we can empathize with them, and it affects how we engage with people within a certain community. Similarly, in 2018, Ali Soyooof and Mohammed Jokar conducted a case study that focused on Iranian EFL students' acquisition and acceptance of English language and cultural differences after having them play various video games in English. It was discovered that the students were more accepting and understanding of English customs and practices, and the culture shock the students felt was reduced.



### Extending One's Identity to the Virtual Space

Experiencing identities different from one's own is certainly powerful. Just as powerful, however, is the way in which video games allow players to project their own identity into a virtual space and live more freely and, perhaps, more safely. Many video games, usually those in the genre of RPGs (Role-Playing Games) grant players the space to express themselves in ways that they want to explore more and/or might not otherwise feel safe expressing (e.g., creating a non-binary character in a safe video game space). Some games could provide them with a relatable protagonist and/or setting such as being a heritage speaker of Spanish in a bilingual and multiracial household (Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales). If we can recognize these valuable tools of contextualization in video games and use them to create a space for all students' identities to be built and cared for, we can also motivate students and develop a deeper connection with them in the language classroom. This arena is relatively new in the field of language learning and video games. Because of this, there are many studies that can be performed to fill in the gaps. While I will shortly offer a study of my own to help understand the place of video games for ident-

ity creation in language classrooms, it is important to know what kinds of identification there are.



### Types of Identification

In the realm of game-studies and psychology, the concept of identifying with your avatar (or any observed character), which will be referred to as player-avatar identification, has been studied and broken down into various categories. The most relevant ones to be discussed here are similarity identification, embodied identification/presence, wishful identification. Each of these evokes a sense of identification that will impact the player's experience in a meaningful way.

Originally described by Hoffner and Buchanan in 2005, Van Looy et al. describe *similarity identification* as a feeling that "relates to the experience during the time of media exposure and refers to the process whereby an individual puts themselves in the place of a character and vicariously participates in their experiences" (2012, p. 202). It is essentially the feeling of becoming one with the avatar or that the avatar is an extension of the player whenever they experience something in the game. This seems to be an expansion of Biocca's theory in 1997, which focuses on a physical similarity, that "graphic visualization of the self in a digital environment would allow an individual to construct both a physical and mental model of the self that could be reflected on". No matter the model, though, what is crucial here is that the players equate the avatar with themselves and adopt the experiences and characteristics of the avatar as their own or vice-versa. This is especially the case when it comes to non-competitive games or genres (e.g., Trepte and Reinecke, 2009 and 2010; Klimmt, Hartmann, and Frey, 2007) like simulation games, sandbox games (a game which encourages free play with minimal to no rules) and the like.

*Embodied identification* or presence is "the emotion of being embodied in the character" (Van Looy et al., 2012). They experience the gaming world through the eyes of their avatar, and they develop a mental connection to the virtual space. It is the feeling of existing in the virtual environment. This concept is made obvious to those who play VR games or watch



## Gaming and Narrative

users of VR reacting to the experience. As they navigate the virtual space, many users will express emotions appropriate to the VR setting, even if the virtual space does not reflect their immediate, physical surroundings or experiences. For example, VR rollercoasters that make users believe that they are hundreds of feet above the ground will cause them to scream even though they are mere feet from the floor. Horror VR games cause players to scream and fall to the ground in fear. It is presence that deals with gamers believing (or not) that what they are experiencing in the game is happening to them in real life. VR can make a user believe that something not actually occurring is real, dangerous, exciting, and personal.

An extension of embodied identification is wishful identification, which “designates a process that can extend beyond the viewing situation and that involves a desire of the audience member to be (more like) the media character” (Konijn et al., 2007). It is not farfetched to suggest that many people have found a character in one medium or another whom they feel they want to be more like. In the case of wishful identification, this “likeness” can refer to the physical sense (e.g., copying a haircut seen in a video game set in the year 2077, *Cyberpunk 2077*) or in a way that reflects a desire to share a likeness to someone’s character (e.g., Captain America’s ethical or moral values). This is akin to similarity identification, but instead of comparing the similarity between the observer and the observed, it is the desire of the observer to become more like the observed.

Identification formation is one of the strongest characteristics of video games. No matter the category, identification leads to some of the most meaningful gains for this medium. Games can connect you to other players, give you a sense of identity among groups, with certain portrayed characters, encourage changes in behavior to match someone you admire, and it helps to build community outside of the game as well. Pulling video games into the L2 classroom, therefore, gives us the potential to provide safe spaces in which our students can represent themselves or see some part of themselves represented.

Video games’ inherent skill for empowering players comes from contextualization and game mechanics, but more specifically, it ties closely with the game’s narrative. A player’s ability to engage with a story is what brings feelings of connection and motivation to life. To understand the effects of narrative on a gamer’s experiences, it is necessary to introduce a game’s intrinsic forms of narration. According to Salen and Zimmerman, who do not choose to separate narrative from video games, stating that it is not “*if* games are narrative but *how* they are narrative” (2005, p. 379), there are two types of narrative we should take note of. The first of these is ‘embedded narrative’, which “is pre-rendered narrative content that exists in a final form before a player’s interaction with the game” (Neville, 2010, p. 455). These are commonly, and more recently, characterized by cutscenes, not unlike the image above taken from a scene from *Death Stranding*. However, in older games, where the technology afforded to companies was not as advanced, not utilized, or simply not invented yet, this embedded narrative was created through written (and occasionally dubbed) dialogue. Nevertheless, despite the form of the embedded narration itself, the point remains the same: a story has been created for players, and it delivers an undeviating narrational experience. Put differently, as explained by Neville, it “provides the kind of narrative experiences that linear media forms such as cinema provide” (2010, p. 455).

In contrast to embedded narrative, which essentially disallows users to impact or alter said story, ‘emergent narrative’ grants players the chance to create and/or build a narrative of their own. Neville describes it as a form of narration that “occurs in unexpected and uniquely different ways when the player interacts with the underlying rules of a game system” (2010, p. 455). Within the video game industry over the last few decades, we have begun to see increasing quantities of video games that implement this style of narration. There has also been a diversification of the ways in which it fulfills its obligation to provide dynamic narrative. Now, the player may choose how to respond to other characters or, through textual choice, how to (re)act. They are given the opportunity to improvise or fulfill one of many possible outcomes.

Some games, such as the interactive drama horror game *Until Dawn* (2015) count on this function (a function which allows for the game to implement what is commonly known as the ‘butterfly effect’) to build suspense and to improve or decrease the player’s chance of survival in various dangerous trials.

Embedded narrative has the capacity to immerse players into a character’s life and world. *The Legend of Zelda* series is a good example of an embedded narrative game which provides Link’s (the protagonist’s) backstory, lays out a storyline, and requires players to complete that storyline to complete the game. Despite the linear mode, however, the game provides cutscenes and dialogues between characters which aid the player in understanding Link’s identity as well as his relationship to those around him.

While embedded narrative can certainly foster a sense of identification via taking on the identity of the protagonist, the emergent form of narration in video games empowers the player by granting them the ability to construct an identity that they wish to build themselves instead of having it handed to them. Additionally, this sense of identification can be achieved whether or not certain choices or actions are representative of the player and their innermost selves. In fact, direct similarity between avatar and player may not be as essential for identification in the world of video games as it is to have those choices available to the player in the first place. Bowey et al. (2019), in their study on identification through dialogue, indicated that a player’s moral choices, when opposing each other (moral vs immoral), resulted in the highest amount of identification and transportation whether or not those choices reflected the participants’ day-to-day personality (p. 1). This is because players desire the opportunity to develop different kinds of avatars and to build unique identities within the game world.



### Classroom Application / A Pilot Study





Bringing the discussion back to the classroom, we can ask ourselves what opportunities we are giving our students to engage with a story or to create a story of their own.

If identification and self-expression are empowered through storytelling, how can we maximize student’s exposure to various narratives or, at least, their capacity to create their own narratives.

I accidentally stumbled across the answer to this question in March of 2020 which was the month when I had intended to begin a study where students would use The Sims Mobile app in addition to their textbook to help learn French vocabulary and grammar. Of course, this was also the month during which much of the world went into isolation due to COVID. While I collected the data for the study as best as I could given the circumstances, I quickly discovered that a quantitative study would not do and that I would need to shift the study’s focus to reflect interesting qualitative findings. While this pilot study’s purpose was not to answer questions about identification and narration, it nevertheless resulted in interesting findings regarding how students chose to create their avatars in the game and create a narrative for them. The related findings are presented in one of the in-class activities in particular (Sims App Activity 1), where students were required to make their sims complete a list of actions, take photos of the sims performing the actions, and then write a few sentences to construct a story of their sims’ daily routine. Below, we will see two students’ work. We will call these students “Jane” and “John.” Jane’s work will be presented first.

Jane’s work provides an example of how players of a video game will often build an avatar that is similar to who they are in the “real” world. While there is no recorded data of the physical characteristics of the participants to corroborate any matching aesthetics, there is, at the very least, a matching name (which has been altered here to protect the participant’s identity) and a sim whose given gender matches Jane’s stated gender (according to her background information). “Jane” matched her name and gender to her avatar, demonstrating her interest in visualizing herself in a virtual form. For Jane, similarity between her avatar and herself was key, so *similarity identification* was the feeling and the objective. We can observe from her matching details that Jane wanted to see herself projected in the game, completing various tasks. For her, video games are a tool for experiencing things.

Image 1: Jane’s Sim Narration

	<p>Mon sim, Jane, se couche à onze heures du soir.</p> <p><i>My sim, Jane, goes to bed at 11 o'clock at night.</i></p>
	<p>Après, elle se lève à six heures du matin.</p> <p><i>After, she gets up at 6 o'clock in the morning.</i></p>
	<p>À dix heures du matin, elle prend une douche. Dans la douche, elle se rase les jambes et les bras.</p> <p><i>At 10 o'clock in the morning, she takes a shower. In the shower, she shaves her legs and arms.</i></p>
	<p>Puis, elle s'assied sur le canapé. Après vingt-cinq minutes, elle s'endort sur le canapé dans le salon.</p> <p><i>Then, she sits on the couch. After 25 minutes, she falls asleep on the couch in the living room.</i></p>

Below, we will observe John’s work which is starkly different from Jane’s. For his gaming experience, John chose to replicate the fictional character “Shrek” from the Shrek movie franchise. He designed the avatar to match Shrek physically, presenting as a being with green skin and no hair with a larger build. His writing also focused on detailing those physical characteristics, stating for example, “Il ne se brosse pas les cheveux parce qu’ il n’a pas des cheveux” (He doesn’t brush his hair because he doesn’t have any

hair). This shows a user’s potential desire to see themselves represented in a whole new way, or rather, a way in which they explore what it would be like to look or act like someone or something else (in this case, as a fictional, green ogre). In other words, John held a sense of wishful identification as he imagined a day in an ogre’s life. John’s perspective is one of identity exploration as opposed to one of identity reflection.

Image 2: John's Sim Narration

	<p><b>Mon sim, Shrek, se réveille à six heures du matin.</b></p> <p><i>My sim, Shrek, wakes up at 6 o'clock in the morning.</i></p>
	<p><b>Après, il se douche pour dix minutes. Il n'oublie pas se laver derrière ses oreilles.</b></p> <p><i>After, he showers for 10 minutes. He never forgets to wash behind his ears.</i></p>
	<p><b>Ensuite, il se brosse les dents. Il ne se brosse les cheveux pas parce qu'il n'a pas des cheveux.</b></p> <p><i>Next, he brushes his teeth. He doesn't brush his hair because he doesn't have any hair.</i></p>
	<p><b>Puis, il s'habille. Il ne porte rien sur sa tête parce qu'il a une belle tête verte.</b></p> <p><i>Then, he gets dressed. He doesn't wear anything on his head because he has a beautiful green head.</i></p>

Whether a student decided to build an avatar based on who they present as or wish to present as, with the help of this video game, they were given a chance to create something of their own and to write about their sim's imagined life (emergent narrative). While this study was not primarily intended to capture a complex look into identification through video games, it certainly poses an interesting question concerning the potential future use of video games to capture and reflect on students' identity in the language classroom. Video games, after all, have afforded players (and teachers alike) tools to contextu-

alize learning and explore a potentially new sense of self or a "self" that can be explored safely in a virtual space through avatar and narrative design. The field of video games and language learning is relatively new, but it is certainly changing as the field progresses, especially given the creation of virtual reality, new gaming technology, and new games, the possibilities for L2 classroom incorporation seem endless, and the hope to see an increase in students' motivation and self-expression appears to be fruitful in the future.

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# USING NEARPOD FOR PRONUNCIATION TRAINING IN ELEMENTARY SPANISH COURSES

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## Introduction

Teaching pronunciation using computer and mobile-assisted technology has steadily increased over the past two decades (Olson 49; Kochem 21138; Tseng et al. 1245; Lan 1560). Furthering our understanding of the impact that teaching pronunciation using technology has on students is vital to continue developing tools to support student-oriented pronunciation goals, especially since prior research elucidates the role that pronunciation has in maintaining the flow of interactions in communication, increasing students' confidence, and even in the process of bi-/multilingual identity-construction (Jenkins 110; Chapelle 97; Foote and Trofimovich 78; Almusharraf 129). While several studies have investigated the efficacy of pronunciation training remotely or via distance (Engwall et al. 506; Rogerson-Revell 189), little is known about how students feel about using these tools to perform pronunciation drills. Since pronunciation instruction is slowly becoming a staple in second language curricula (Cihat 98), research evaluating students' attitudes and reactions to pronunciation activities has the potential to provide valuable insights into students' willingness to participate in pronunciation training and the overall efficacy of pronunciation interventions in the classroom which harness technological advances for teaching.

Thus, the current qualitative study examines the first impressions of 18 second-language learners of

Spanish to an online pronunciation activity completed during class. The activity was created using *Nearpod*, an interactive classroom platform for teachers to facilitate teaching both in and out of the classroom. Furthermore, *Nearpod* has built-in features that permit the implementation of an array of multimedia tools (e.g., visual, verbal, recording software), which have been shown to enhance instruction and support student learning by taking into account their preferred method of learning (Jones 273). Having this type of flexibility for students has proven to be beneficial in other studies that use CAPT (computer-assisted pronunciation training) for teaching pronunciation (O'Brien 375).



## Literature Review

### Pronunciation Research

Most research surrounding pronunciation instruction to date has centered on whether or not training has any significant effect on L2 pronunciation and, if so, to what extent. A large number of studies on pronunciation have examined the promising results of both explicit instruction and output practice (Bjarkman 77; Elliott 530; Zapini 2019; Derwing, 217; Archibald 189; Kissling 724; Lord 560; Thomson 164; Lee et al. 350; Saito et al. 655). While such findings have been subject to some variation based on how pronunciation is evaluated (e.g., global versus specific constructs, subjective versus objective measures, controlled versus sponta-

neous knowledge), there is general consensus on the fact that explicit classroom instruction on L2 pronunciation can lead to improvements in this area and that there is great value in promoting activities which encourage students to engage in pronunciation and output practice actively.

Moreover, choosing what aspects of pronunciation to teach has also prompted much debate. There is a plethora of research investigating the relative importance of segmental (e.g., isolated sounds) and suprasegmental (e.g., stress and intonation) properties in L2 pronunciation (Anderson-Hsieh et al. 530; Derwing et al. 400). There is now a general consensus that both are important and should be implemented in the classroom in order to improve pronunciation (Derwing et al. 385; Tseng et al. 1226). Several studies have attempted to ascertain how various aspects of speech can impact listeners' ability to process certain utterances, which in turn may alter or hinder communication. As a result, researchers have turned their attention to other characterizations of speech, such as speaking rate, lexical stress, fluency, intonation, and prosody (Crowther et al. 163; Isaacs & Trofimovich 262; Kang et al. 520; Munro 430; Field 400; Rossiter 395). Additionally, various models and strategies have been suggested to comprehend better how to teach pronunciation to language learners effectively.

### Theoretical Models, Teaching Strategies, and Principals for Pronunciation Training

Over the past three decades, researchers have investigated how explicit language teaching approaches could be applied to pronunciation research in SLA. Much of the related scholarship has been conducted using models such as the Perceptual Assimilation Model (Best 175), the Native Language Magnet Model (Kuhl 262), the Speech Learning Model (Flege 235), the Ontogeny-Phylogeny Model (Major 92), and more recently The Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML), which states that humans build new knowledge by first choosing relevant verbal and visual cues, organizing them in working memory, and then integrating them with already-known information (Mayer 200). All of these models elucidate various aspects of the nature of pro-

nunciation training and the mechanisms underlying phonological acquisition in the L2. Furthermore, these models often account for fundamental SLA work regarding language processing and learning by reporting on the learners' need for explicit 'nudges' throughout their language learning experience in order to notice the gaps in their L2 knowledge, preventing them from employing strategies that only work in their L1 (Ellis 19; Blake 115). However, these models can present limitations and have also been criticized for having a narrow scope regarding L2 pronunciation development (Fraser 360). Some of these models have been the foundation for developing pedagogical strategies to teach pronunciation. For instance, Bill VanPatten's psycholinguistic theory of *Input Processing* discusses the role of attention in second language acquisition (60). He argues that second language learners cannot attend to both forms and meaning simultaneously and that L2 learners' primary objective during the early years of L2 development is to decode meaning from the input. Learners can only notice and process overt grammatical elements that carry semantic weight initially. Once L2 learners are able to integrate a higher number of syntactic elements, have a better sense of meaning to form mapping, and can process words with a certain level of automaticity, they are finally capable of paying attention to other fine-grain differences between their L1 and L2 such as pronunciation differences (VanPatten 60). The author argues that raising awareness exercises is needed to stimulate L2 learners' attention to decrease the opacity of form-meaning connections. Years later, VanPatten developed a pedagogical strategy known as Processing Instruction (755) in which the goal "is to alter processing strategies that learners take to the task of comprehension and to make better form-meaning connections than they would if left to their own devices" (60). This pedagogical approach has proven to be a highly effective teaching strategy for the development of grammatical knowledge (Cadierno 180; Cheng 156; Farley 80; VanPatten and Cadierno 230; VanPatten and Oikkenon 495; Sanz and VanPatten 270) and most recently has been adapted to teaching pronunciation in the classrooms (González-Bueno 65; Counselman 46).

Nowadays, current research on pronunciation teaching has shifted away from models that are mainly concerned with explaining how a learner's L1 influences speech acquisition in an L2 to more holis-

tic approaches. Traditional models of pronunciation theory have often failed to address their overall utility and potential pedagogical implications. Likewise, these models have tended to uphold unrealistic standards for L2 learners and instructors alike. For instance, teachers with accented speech are sometimes perceived as less qualified or intelligent, even though language variation is one of the most notable characteristics of human language (Butler 731). Such restrictions have propelled new ways of thinking about pronunciation research in recent years.

Consequently, more contemporary frameworks have bloomed to address these gaps in the literature. For example, frameworks inspired by cognitive grammar have focused on providing insight into how L2 learners conceptualize pronunciation instead of only discussing “issues” of rule/sound transfer from their L1s (Langacker 7). Notably, this framework can be adapted to pedagogy, as it provides insight for developing innovative ways of targeting and thinking about acquiring phonological systems. The Willingness to Communicate Framework (WTC) (MacIntyre et al. 545) and MacIntyre (570) also reflect this notion. WTC offers a comprehensive explanation for why individuals choose to engage in communicative acts in the first place, as well as characterizations of various communicative contexts with other speakers. Even though it was not explicitly intended for pronunciation training, it has been used to further our understanding of language use and motivation rather than reporting on issues of L1 transfer (Thomsom, 2014). Further, John Levis’ (370) definition of the *Intelligibility Principle*, in opposition to the *Nativeness Principle*, also captures the new direction pronunciation instruction has taken. Levis argues that pronunciation research and instruction should primarily be concerned with helping learners attain their own pronunciation goals rather than teaching them to sound “native-like” in the target language. (Levis 277; Thomsom 327). Adopting this framework for instruction and research purposes is crucial because it embraces the heterogeneity in L2 varieties. It allows for new ways of thinking about communication and the role of ‘being understood’ and ‘feeling comfortable’ with one’s own bi-/multilingualism in real-life interactions. Additionally, adopting such a framework propels teachers to assess pronunciation regarding general goals and intelligibility and discourages the reproduction of dangerous linguistics ideologies in

the language classroom where monolingualism and the idealized monolingual speaker are seen as the “norm” (Hall and Cook 307; Ortega 25). Additionally, future research should seek to problematize what it means to “teach” or “correct” pronunciation to beginner language learners and raise concerns about the ideological underpinnings of this practice, particularly when dominant standard and raciolinguistic ideologies remain prevalent and unquestioned in language classrooms and curricula (Quan 447). While this research did not directly address the ideological component of pronunciation training, I argue that pronunciation instruction and corrective techniques in language classrooms also require a critical approach. By adopting a critical lens, both instructors and students can engage in reflective practices, allowing them to challenge any implicit biases and dominant ideologies that perpetuate racial inequities and linguistic discrimination both in and out of the classroom.

### Language Learning and the Use of Technology in the Classroom

Lastly, the increasing use of speech technology is particularly noticeable in the area of foreign language education, which has led to the development of new disciplines, such as Computer-assisted language learning (CALL). CALL’s contribution to linguistic research and its advantages have revolutionized the world of language teaching. Within this domain, subgenres have emerged in order to address pronunciation instruction. Areas of study known as Computer-assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) and Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) offer a viable alternative to traditional ways of teaching pronunciation that is often too restrictive to incorporate pronunciation training (O’Brien 375; Tseng et al. 1245). These restrictions include constraints of classroom time, a lack of materials and tools to assess pronunciation practice, and a lack of teacher training (Derwin 390; Kochem 1140). The use of CAPT and MALL in and outside the classroom fulfills a number of pedagogical goals. It is reported that its appeal relies on the autonomy it provides students regarding their own learning (O’Brien 377).

Using technology to teach pronunciation has a cascade of positive effects. Among its strengths, CAPT and MALL allow students to work at their own pace, track their progress, and access several additional materials such as visualizations, recordings, and animations, and they provide students with customized feedback and eliminate stress related to the fact that the learner is being listened to or judged by their classmates (Neri et al. 442; Chun 8; Tanner 65; O' Brien, 380). In addition, there is now a plethora of evidence demonstrating that L2 pronunciation teaching and learning through the use of CALL and gamified pronunciation training results in higher pronunciation gains (Barcomb and Cardoso 140; Tseng et al. 1246). In particular, Nearpod falls under the umbrella of gamified tools for learning called multi-featured Student Response Systems (SRS) (Tornwall, Lu and Xied 104342). These technological tools combine the assessment features of popular software like Kahoot! and Quizlet with the collaborative and synchronous interaction of software like Padlet, Jamboard, and Google Workspace to create a cohesive virtual environment for learning purposes. A study by Tornwall, Lu, and Xied reveals that Student Response Systems (SRS) were once called "clickers" and were replaced by Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) systems in various educational settings (104342). These tools have created new ways of learning, reviewing, and retaining information in classrooms. Furthermore, research on this topic has shown that SRS tools foster positive classroom dynamics and enhance student participation and engagement (Sheng et al. 25). For instance, a study done by McClean and Crowe demonstrated that *Nearpod* served as a viable tool to enhance interaction and collaboration in lectures delivered to pharmacy and bioscience students (5). Similar findings have been reported by studies done on the implementation of *Kahoot!* in which researchers concluded that these interactive tools can be fun and effective for reviewing course content and gauging student knowledge (Dell et al. 383). While SRSs show promise in improving learning gains, more empirical evidence is required to confirm their effects on student learning experiences and academic outcomes. To date, a significant emphasis has been placed on understanding SRS's effectiveness in various educational contexts. Nevertheless, its efficacy for language learning remains limited. In addition, little is known about how students feel about using these technological tools in the classroom, especially those

aimed at practicing pronunciation.

The present qualitative study evaluates the responses of 18-second language learners of Spanish to an open-ended question about the utility and overall experience of completing an in-class pronunciation activity using *Nearpod*.



## Methods and Procedures

### Participants and materials

Eighteen (n=18) college students enrolled in an introductory Spanish course at the University of California, Davis, were asked to complete an in-class pronunciation task called "*A Pronunciar*" using an online interactive classroom tool called *Nearpod*. This activity was a one-time intervention that lasted 25-30 minutes for most students on average. The activity was carried out during class time, and the instructor was present in case students had questions or needed help troubleshooting the *Nearpod* application.

### Participants and materials

During this part of the activity, students listened and paid close attention to prerecorded audios (made by their instructor) of words and phrases containing pre-selected target phonemes. The sounds selected for pronunciation training were the Spanish mid-vowel /o/ and low-vowel /a/ (e.g., *hombre* vs. *hambre*) (see Figure 1). The audios were paired with two other visual stimuli embedded in each *Nearpod* slide. The visual stimuli consisted of the written text of the target word and a picture, allowing students to map the labels more quickly to the words and gain semantic information. Additionally, the target phonemes were highlighted in red to make L2 learners pay close attention to them. Using an explicit approach to teaching pronunciation, this focused activity was designed to raise students' awareness about phonemic differences between minimal pairs in Spanish and think about sound transferring effects

from English to Spanish. Students were allowed and encouraged to listen to the target words/sounds as often as they liked.

After practicing independently, they were asked to record themselves producing the target sounds in longer phrases.

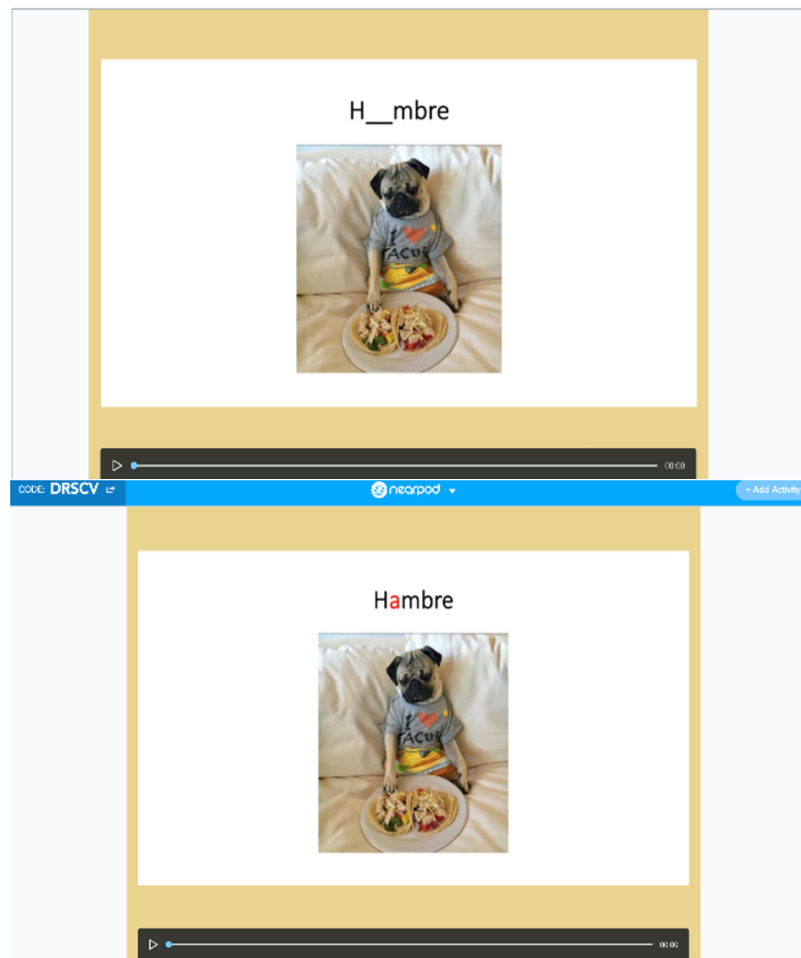


Fig. 1. Sample exercises for pronunciation drills

Self-evaluation phase

This section was created to allow students to reflect upon their performance and their own pronunciation goals. The first multiple-choice question asked students to see if they noticed a difference between the target phonemes (e.g., do you notice a difference

between the vowels “a” and “o”?) and the second one to rate their pronunciation based on their own pronunciation goals (see figures 3 and 4). In addition, students had the option to ask for feedback from their instructor if desired.

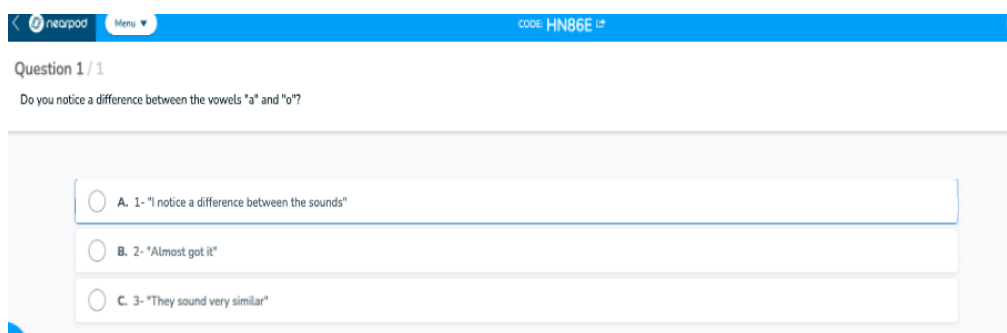


Fig. 2. Sample question from the *Nearpod* activity to raise phonological awareness

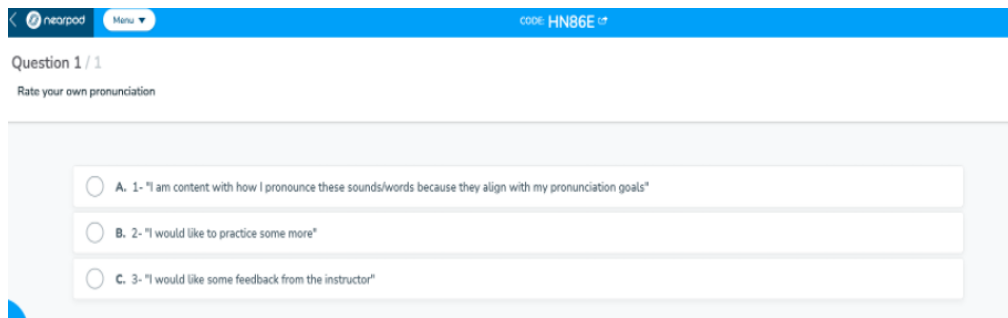


Fig. 3. Sample question from the *Nearpod* activity to self-assess pronunciation

Self-evaluation phase

Lastly, students were asked to complete a short questionnaire with the following open-ended question:

- *How was your overall experience practicing pronunciation in class?*

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using MAXQDA 2020 and following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for using thematic analysis (78). A thematic analysis was deemed appropriate for this qualitative study, given the paucity of work written on student views regarding in-class pronunciation training and the study's exploratory nature. Using the 6-phase thematic analysis guidelines, student responses were first thoroughly read, and notes were written down about initial ideas for potential codes. Second, a preliminary coding system was developed based on word frequency in student responses. For example, the word "helpful" was found in a large majority of student responses. This information formed themes and made patterns come to light. Third, during this part of the process, codes were collated into potential themes. Next, another researcher refined and reviewed the selected themes to ensure reliability.

Themes	Raw counts
Overall effectiveness and utility for raising phonological awareness	12
Apprehension towards in-class pronunciation practice	3
Impractical at improving pronunciation	3

Table 1. Overall themes and raw counts from student responses to the exit questionnaire

In the end, three major themes were identified (see Table 1.). The following table shows students' attitudes and impressions towards the implementation of *Nearpod* for pronunciation training.



## Findings

## Theme 1: Overall Effectiveness and Utility for Raising Phonological Awareness

Most students in this study report that the activity improved their pronunciation and would like to see this type of activity implemented in future Spanish classes. They use words like “helpful” and “useful” to describe their overall experience.

(1) *“I liked the example sentences given, and I found this very helpful. This is definitely something that would be helpful in the future or even in Spanish 1 classes.”*

(2) *“I found the activity to be useful. I would have loved to have started out learning Spanish especially focusing on the pronunciation, which I think benefits both listening and speaking.”*

(3) *“This activity was extremely helpful. I would encourage this activity for future classes.”*

Additionally, students reported on the task’s capacity to raise phonological awareness in Spanish and noticed subtle differences in how vowels are produced. Their awareness seems to increase because of the various focused and controlled questions throughout the activity.

(4) *“The difference between the pronunciation of “a” and “o” is something I don’t think I’ve played much attention to so this activity was helpful in getting me to better distinguish the two.”*

(5) *“I liked the exercise. It made me really aware of how to make the pronunciation different. I never really thought about it before, but after practicing I feel confident. The last section where we were asked to describe the difference had me thinking about it the most. Describing the difference between “o” and “a” was a good exercise. In English,*

*he o and a sound can be interchangeable. I carried this over into Spanish and didn’t realize. Now I feel confident that I can tell someone I am hungry “hambre” vs I am a “hombre.”*

(6) *“This exercise made me a lot more conscientious of properly pronouncing the “a” and “o” in Spanish. I feel this helpful. However, there are still many other sounds in Spanish that are much more difficult.”*

While some students focused on describing their experiences completing the task, others explicitly commented on the *Nearpod*’s utility and interface. As some students report, one of the app’s strengths is its ability to use pictures and sounds to be integrated into the task of practicing pronunciation. However, some students commented on the app’s limited capacity for audio recording.

(7) *“Overall, I liked this study and focusing on the sounds because now I am more likely to pay attention to them. I liked the pictures, and I like how the sentences contained the same sound to reinforce it. I would like a different recording app (or screen on nearpod) to display the sentence we are saying because I personally struggle with remembering the whole sentence when I’m focusing on the sounds. I think this would be a good study to do in a computer lab (I participated in a study at the SSH where they had tons of computers and headphones) instead of at home, if you continue it. I would also like it for consonants, even though I would fail at rolling r’s.”*

(8) *“I thought the nearpod exercise was helpful. You don’t usually just sit down and think about the difference in pronunciation. I think it will help improve my pronunciation.”*

(9) *“I’ve done Spanish homework in high school where we had to record ourselves talking in Spanish so this experience wasn’t unfamiliar to me. I wouldn’t mind doing this type of activity since it makes me more conscious about how I pronounce words.”*

### Theme 2: Apprehension towards In-class Pronunciation Practice

Although many participants felt that they benefited from this activity and the use of technology in the classroom, others believed that the in-class setting could have been more optimal and had reservations about practicing pronunciation surrounded by other students. These results suggest that it is necessary to carefully evaluate the differences between practicing pronunciation at home versus in a classroom setting.

(10) *“I did enjoy the pronunciation practice, maybe not around everyone but I think it could be very useful to help get comfortable when saying certain words. I am not sure if the second one is the right sentence, I couldn't remember what the actual sentence was and it wouldn't let me see it! But I do think this could be a great exercise.”*

(11) *“I thought it was fun and helpful but I knew people were apprehensive to be the first one to record so in the future maybe doing this activity in class isn't the best setting. Always a fan of pronunciation help though.”*

(12) *“Overall, I thought that the experience was cool, it was different from what I've done in Spanish classes in the past. I think that it was a little awkward and people were doing their best to say it more quietly. I think that if we were able to do this at home, results would have been better and people would have said the phrases with more confidence.”*

### Theme 3: Impractical at improving pronunciation

A portion of the learners who participated in the activity reported that they found neither the assigned task nor the *Nearpod* app to be helpful. The reason for this was two-fold. Firstly, they felt that the task assigned to them was too simplistic and did not provide any significant learning outcomes. Secondly, they experienced technical issues with the *Nearpod* interface that interrupted their engagement with the activity. These technical issues created difficulties for

them in navigating through the app and completing task efficiently. Despite these shortcomings, students regard this article as “engaging” and somewhat enjoyable.

(13) *“I felt that I was able to pronounce these sounds before this activity, so for that reason I did not find it that helpful. However, the concept of the activity was good, and I feel like it would have been more beneficial to me with more difficult sounds. The formatting of the activity was clear and user friendly and I do not think any changes need to be made there.”*

(14) *“It was pretty engaging and fun. It was a bit unhelpful when the recording prompt came up but the sentence we were suppose to record was not on screen.”*

(15) *“I liked the activity but think it would be more effective if it was just an in class activity where we conversed with each other.”*



### Discussion & Implications

Central to this study was addressing the gap in current research concerning students' views surrounding pronunciation training via technological tools. In our study, we found that students generally see both the pronunciation task and the use of *Nearpod's* app as beneficial, and they perceive technology as a viable tool for pronunciation training. Our findings align with current SRS research, showing that technological tools like *Nearpod* can potentially improve student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Romero 199). Moreover, as some students pointed out, the most useful aspect of this task and the *Nearpod* is their capacity to draw students' attention and make them more consciously aware of subtle phonological differences in the target language.

Research has repeatedly shown that this type of explicit, formed-focused training results in pronunciation gains for L2 learners. Another essential remark of this study is that it sheds light on how students feel about practicing pronunciation in the classroom. Some students reported feeling “awkward,” “apprehensive,” and “confident” toward completing the task during class time. A potential explanation for such resistance could be that some students feel self-conscious about performing live pronunciation drills in front of others. This information is particularly salient for instructors, given that such negative emotions or mental states may cause or exacerbate pronunciation anxiety in some students, a well-documented phenomenon in the SLA literature (Szyszka 978). Future studies need to delve deeper into the affective side of pronunciation training in the language classroom. Finally, some students found this activity to be engaging despite encountering technical issues while using technology.

Furthermore, exploring students’ reactions to newer and more technologically sound ways of learning pronunciation is advantageous for several reasons. First, it provides valuable insight into the global utility of an in-class pronunciation task, which has become more prominent in the language classroom in recent years. Second, it informs us about students’ willingness to participate in these activities, their levels of engagement, and even their emotional states, as demonstrated by some student accounts in this study (e.g., “...after practicing, I feel confident”). Third, it provides blueprints for instructors looking to implement pedagogies that harness technology for language learning. Further, qualitative research of this nature has been used to interpret social factors present in the process of second language learning and how they relate to pronunciation, such as the construction of identity with L2, language attitudes towards linguistic variation, and motivation for accent choices (Taguchi et al. 85; Park 585; Rindal 248; Bucholtz and Hall 612).



### Limitations

Although this study offers detailed insights into the use of technology for pronunciation instruction, it has some limitations. Firstly, the activity students carried out in this study was not intended to measure language gains. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the activity or the technology itself contributed to the students' perceived improvement in pronunciation. Second, this study evaluated only segmental features (e.g., minimal pair drills). However, suprasegmental pronunciation aspects are equally important and should also be considered in future investigations. Third, as I briefly argue, pronunciation training should actively engage students in discussions related to language and raciolinguistic ideologies. By doing so, we can encourage students to become more cognizant of the ways in which language intersects race and power, how it is used to perpetuate racial stereotypes and biases, and how these attitudes negatively impact various identities and communities. Instructors can achieve this goal by incorporating critical approaches such as translanguaging and Critical Language Awareness (CLA) into their curricula, which seek to interrogate hierarchical structures, deconstruct ideologies, and equip students to enact change (Quan 449). Lastly, due to the low number of participants and the exploratory nature of this study, we are unable to draw any generalizations about how other participants or classes may react to pronunciation training using technological tools.

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# *I*nterviews

# THE VISUAL POETICS OF THE BORDER

## A CONVERSATION WITH SALVADOR DE LA TORRE

Verónica García Moreno  
Montana State University



**S**alvador de la Torre is a Mexican-born Texas-raised artist, educator, and storyteller based in Southern California.

Their drawing and performance work invokes the power of personal experience and family history to create artworks that exist at the intersection of activism, art production, and praxes of self-acceptance. Their work engages the politics of migration, memory, queerness, and gender in ways that remind us of the power and solidarity that can exist in quotidian gestures. De la Torre's production opens channels for theorizing vulnerability, intimacy, and proximity as radical undertakings in the space of the borderlands and beyond. In doing so, their work forges complex narratives of joy, struggle, adaptability, exhaustion, and tenderness, as counternarratives that assert the wholeness, nuance, and humanity of immigrant communities, and queer subjectivities.

Salvador earned an MFA from California State University, Fullerton, and a BA from Texas A&M International University.



*Verónica García Moreno:* I would like to begin this interview by emphasizing the coherence and internal harmony in your artistic trajectory. There is an almost poetic characteristic in your work, in the sense of the ability to integrate audacity, strangeness, and delicacy. Can you explain to us in broad strokes your artistic evolution, your starting point, and your influences?

*Salvador de La Torre:* By colonial standards one would not consider my parents, and the household I grew up in, as intellectuals or educated people. My parents only completed up to 9th grade of school and they worked as bus driver, caretakers, dish washer, farmworkers, cashiers, stockers, janitors, etc.

However, my mother is a huge influence in my art practice as she is rich in ancestral knowledge and culture and knows all about plants and agriculture. I've derived a lot of my work from her history and stories because she is such a rich storyteller, and in many ways an artist herself. A lot of my influences also come from the art of the catholic church. The drama and the intensity of the religious paintings and sculpture is something I was always exposed to and had a deep impact on my perspectives on life.

My traditional training as an artist didn't start until I took my first art class in 7th grade. Since then, I've been extremely serious in pursuing artistic knowledge. I applied and was accepted into an art magnet program at a high school and took every possible art class in my time. I got a bachelor's degree in Art and a Master's degree in Fine Art and have continued to make and exhibit art since then. I've developed many bodies of work around queerness,

self acceptance, the borderlands and beyond. I work in a vast variety of media and modalities from performance art, drawing, tattooing, bookmaking, and photography.

**VGM: Salvador, you have defined yourself as a “fronterizo.” Apart from the obvious elements of being latinx, member of the LGBT community and bilingual, what are your personal borders, how do you define them and how does *la frontera* enrich you artistically?**

*SdLT:* I identify myself as such because I also grew up on a literal *frontera*, in Laredo, Texas, and lived there for nearly two decades. And, yes, I also face the physiological borders of being queer and transgender and because of generational trauma and existing under capitalism, I also struggle with debilitating anxiety and depression. I feel that all of those borders are my art because I don't believe art and life are separate, my art is my life, and my life is my art. Also, the process of creating art helps me process my trauma and gives me a reason to live.

**VGM: The concept of liquid borders has been explored in sociology and anthropology in recent years, opening the field to a new nomenclature that implies the creation of interior homelands, and the concept of "transterrado" versus exile or emigrant. The acquisition and appropriation of one identity over another takes on a new dimension in these recent years of technology and multiverse. How has this fluidity and permeability influenced your conception of the material and artistic production, the time of production of the work, its diffusion, or the space where it is exhibited?**

*SdLT:* My work is based on my life and my familial history, and nothing about that is fixed especially as I have been coming to terms with my fluid gender identity. I've worked with a variety of art modalities and mediums throughout my career, and I'm always existed to try new mediums and experiences. I usually pick a medium or modality that is best going to work to help me produce the concept I am after. I love giving artist talks. That's been consistently my favorite way to “exhibit” my work because I love storytelling and it truly allows me to embody my mother's energy and spirit.

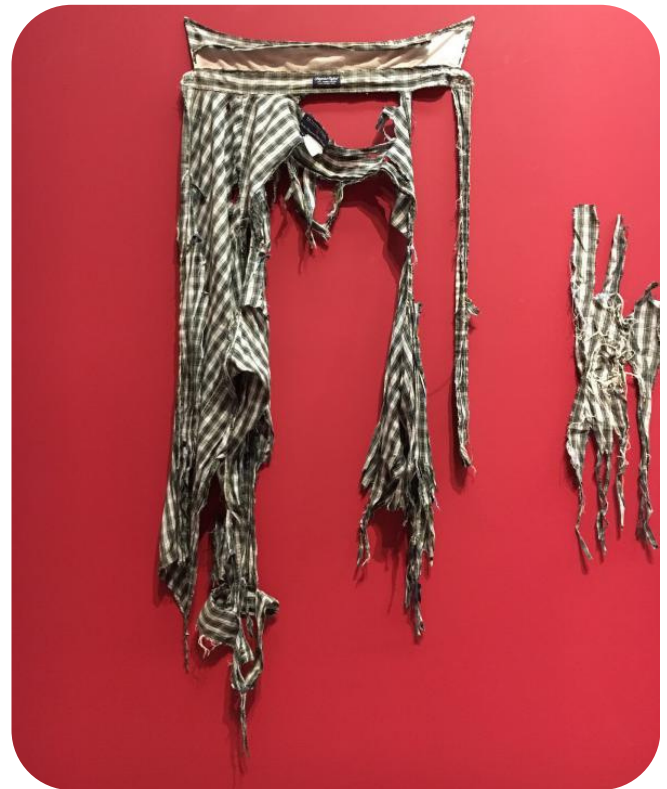
**VGM: The pandemic has pushed artistic spaces beyond the museum space. What do you think can be saved from this experience? Do you think that the museum as a space of encounter with art is part of the past?**

*SdLT:* I love this question. Museums and my relationship with them is complex and contradict itself. On one hand, I love museums and dream of being part of my exhibitions while I'm alive. And on the other hand, I believe museums are exclusionary and problematic places. I'm thankful for the time I had during COVID shutdown because it gave me the time to learn how to tattoo and since then I've tattooed hundreds of people with my original drawings. This journey has allowed me to present my artwork on people's bodies forever and not just in private collections, galleries, and museums.

**VGM: One of your most celebrated and impactful works is “365 Days in an Immigrant's Shirt” in the exhibition *Universal History of Infamy*, by Latinxs artists at LACMA. *La frontera* as a space of separation and encounter has such a powerful narrative that it runs the risk of being trivialized as an artistic excuse, but your piece is heartbreakingly intense, and never makes us forget the human drama it hides. Tell us the story of this piece.**

*SdLT:* I truly understand that the *frontera* has a powerful narrative and that artists and individuals have trivialized it. But it's not something trivial to me, the borderlands are my home, and I deeply resonate with the liminality of the space. I could write an entire book on my “365 Days in an Immigrant's Shirt” piece. It was an entire year of my life, and I still constantly reflect on that time and how it changed me. The performance piece started off as a political action to protest unjust and inhumane border policies. (Mind you I did this project in 2014–2015 before the Trump era and his xenophobia rhetoric that fueled all closeted racism across the nation and world.) I had the intention of sharing with people that witnessed my performance that there was a human behind the shirt I wore and that humans including unaccompanied minors risk their lives every day in the desert to migrate to the United States. This was a fact that made people really upset or uncomfortable around me because of how conserva-

tive Orange County is. I chose to start the performance on November 20th, because that is the day of La Revolución in Mexico and it was the day President Obama signed DAPA, or Deferred Action for Parents of Americans, as an executive action. That was my only intention at the beginning of the project, but it ended up being a much richer and layered piece. I never really know how long I would wear it and I certainly didn't ever intend to wear it for an entire year. I started with 30 days, 6 months, 280 days or a Mayan year, then I decided I would do the entire solar year because of how inspired I was by performance artist, Tehching Hsieh. The shirt lived on my body and there was no way I could separate the performance from my everyday life, as much as I fought against that in the beginning. My life was messy, I was young and naive and even though my parents and most of my family members had crossed the border "illegally" it is an experience I would never truly understand because I came into this country as a resident. At some point, I realized that everything was my piece, the desert, the human that originally owned the shirt, his journey at the border, water stations, activism, protest, my dignified rage, my parent's immigration story, my positionality as a now "citizen", the loss of the male gaze in the deterioration of the shirt and of my own body, me coming out of the closet as queer for the first time in my 25 years of life, me teaching, me traveling, me sleeping, and me dealing with one of the worst mental illness patches of my life. All of it was the art of the piece.



**VGM:** An important part of your life is teaching young people. What does your daily work as a teacher for students from 12 to 18 years old contribute to your art? What do you find inspiring in this facet?

*SdLT:* Teaching young folks is a huge part of my life. I've devoted the last 10 years to it. I love this generation's energy and how so many of my students are unapologetically queer, something I never was in my youth. I've designed many of my assignments based on my own art practices I've had students do 30 days performances inspired by my yearlong performance, and I've had students embroider words that are hard to process like in my "Hilando Relaciones" project.

**VGM:** What have been your latest projects and what are you working on now?

*SdLT:* I've been working on a lot of different things lately but mostly been focusing on drawing flash cards for my tattoo work, and a lot of ceramics as well. Ceramics are new for me and I am in love. I really want to learn as much as I can and hopefully one day have a full body of work in ceramic sculpture. I've also been taking a lot of self-portraits in film and want to make a zine soon with the images of my body in my medical transition.



# TÁNGER MULTIPLICADA EN LOS ESPEJOS

## LA OTRA ORILLA DE ROCÍO ROJAS MARCOS

Verónica García Moreno  
Montana State University



Alcántara de Poesía y el premio de Creación literaria El Drag (2020). Entre sus publicaciones están los cuatro poemarios *Habitada por palabras*, *GMTT*, *Y si supieran*, *Anoche soñé que regresaba a Manderley*. Además de diversas colaboraciones literarias en Antologías y revistas como *Revista Litoral* y *Big Sur Series*.

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*Verónica García Moreno:* El concepto de fronteras como un espacio agencial y generador de discurso es esencial en los estudios sobre identidades nacionales. Pero ese espacio de negociación que implica la frontera ya se forjó de forma natural en el mundo mediterráneo que mantiene con “la otra orilla” una enorme permeabilidad cultural, de préstamos, y también de apropiaciones indebidas. Este fenómeno no sólo es diacrónico, sino que juega en la actualidad un papel nodular en la construcción de una nueva Europa globalizada. En ese sentido, la ciudad marroquí de Tánger, sobre la que tú has estudiado y publicado libros y docenas de artículos, es un ejemplo de ese microcosmos, como un Aleph mediterráneo que soñaba Borges, desde donde se reconstruye y semantiza el imaginario cultural europeo. Cuéntanos de tu relación con Tánger, y a qué hallazgos intelectuales y creativos te ha llevado la relación que esta ciudad.

**R**ocío Rojas Marcos es Doctora en Literatura y Estética en la Sociedad de la Información, Máster en Escritura Creativa y Licenciada en Estudios Árabes e Islámicos.

Entre sus publicaciones destacan: *Tánger ciudad internacional* (Almed, 2009), *Tánger segunda patria de la literatura española*, (Almuzara) Sanz de Soto y Buñuel. *La tercera España transfretana* (Khbar Bladna, 2012) y *Carmen Laforet en Tánger* (Khbar Bladna, 2015) y la biografía *Mohamed Chukri. Hambre de escritura* (Zut, 2021)

Su investigación explora la literatura marroquí contemporánea y el plurilingüismo literario, además de la presencia española en la ciudad internacional de Tánger desde finales del siglo XIX hasta mediados del siglo XX.

Su producción intelectual se compagina con la participación en los proyectos de ciudades intermedias en la Fundación Andaluza Gordion, así como con la poesía. Recibió el Premio Manuel

*Rocío Rojas Marcos:* Mi relación con la ciudad de Tánger está trenzada con mi infancia, con los recuerdos más antiguos que puedo tener de los días de verano cuando las luces de la ciudad iban apareciendo en el horizonte al anochecer. Desde Tarifa la distancia con la costa de enfrente es tan pequeña que a veces parece que la ciudad está al otro lado de una bahía. Es un efecto óptico esencial para entender la cercanía de esta ciudad en el imaginario histórico y literario tangerino. Con los años y sin una decisión previa que marcara ese camino, mi formación a medio camino

entre el arabismo y la literatura española me fueron llevando, casi de una forma natural, a centrarme en los estudios en torno a la ciudad de Tánger, la presencia española y la literatura que allí se fue gestando.

En cuanto al concepto de frontera relacionado con la ciudad de Tánger, es tal vez uno de los debates más interesantes y frutíferos en los que podemos meternos, pues la confusión y la hibridación son características de la evolución de esta ciudad y por tanto el concepto de frontera resulta complicado de aplicar en estado puro. Las fronteras son miedos, son barreras que levantamos físicas y metafóricas. No hay nada más humano que levantar una pared para dejar al otro lado aquello que nos devuelve una imagen distorsionada de nosotros mismos y que, por tanto, queremos apartar, de ahí que las fronteras en torno al espacio y el tiempo tangerino sean casi una imposibilidad.

Recientemente he leído un ensayo muy interesante que reflexiona acerca de estos asuntos, *Lugares fuera de sitio* de Sergio del Molino. Entender que hay lugares que no *rompen la armonía de los mapas*, como dice Del Molino, por no respetar la continuidad igualitaria que imaginamos para nuestras propias fronteras es fundamental para entender el espacio del Estrecho de Gibraltar como un lugar de hibridación cultural, un lugar donde las culturas del mestizaje de las que habla Glissant son una realidad.

**VGM:** Uno de los aspectos de tu investigación sobre Tánger es el estudio de la comunidad de exiliados liberales perseguidos durante la dictadura franquista en España. Pero esa relación de la cultura hispana con Tánger va más allá de un mero destino de exiliados. De hecho, hay escritores norteafricanos que escriben en español. Eso abre una interesante línea sobre la literatura en español no peninsular que habitualmente sólo se asocia con los países hispanoamericanos. ¿Qué puedes decirnos de estos escritores? ¿Son experiencias creativas individuales o hay una conciencia de grupo literario en la elección de la lengua? ¿Cuál es su relación con España?

**RRM:** Efectivamente es un fenómeno minoritario pero interesante. Por ahora a medio camino entre las apuestas individuales y la idea de grupo, pues no son muchos los autores que podemos sumar. A lo largo del siglo XX, especialmente desde la época del

Protectorado español en Marruecos se fue formando una élite cultural en español que escribía en esta lengua, pero la realidad del español en Marruecos es mucho más interesante que eso, pues al hilo de lo que hablábamos antes, la confluencia de personas y vidas compartidas en el Estrecho han hecho que el español sea lengua vernácula en Marruecos, no lengua impuesta por el colono. Ahora bien, es innegable que la fuerza apabullante de Francia para imponer el francés como lengua cultural en África y del inglés como lengua de comunicación básica internacional han hecho una mella en el uso del español en Marruecos, de ahí que los escritores que a día de hoy escriben en español lo hacen siguiendo la teoría que Deleuze y Guattari propusieron para analizar la obra de Kafka, es decir, se trata de una literatura menor, no de un modo despectivo, sino haciendo referencia al reducido grupo de autores que lo cumplen y que se basan en un deseo de emplear una lengua con la que trascender sus fronteras, por tanto un herramienta política, así lo exponen ellos.

Uno de los ejemplos más interesante de esta literatura es la del tangerino de ascendencia española Ángel Vázquez. Cuando en 1976 publicó su extraordinaria novela *La vida perra de Juanita Narboni*, ya apuntaba en la introducción que acompaña la obra que: *Si recibimos con respeto y admiración el castellano que nos devuelve Hispanoamérica, sobre todo el recreado y renovado por sus grandes poetas y novelistas ¿porqué no este del otro lado del Estrecho de Gibraltar? No por menos brillante es menos auténtico. Al menos eso pienso.* Añadiría yo, que la realidad es que esa lengua que nos viene devuelta del otro lado del Estrecho no es en ningún caso menos brillante, tal vez menos numerosa simplemente.

**VGM:** El concepto de la América latina como una Nueva al-Andalus que ya se empieza a gestar a principios de siglo XX está teniendo resonancia en los estudios transatlánticos, como ese orientalismo horizontal del que habla el autor mexicano Alberto Ruy, donde se establece un diálogo de Sur a Sur. En esencia, la España árabe es una España desde la que establecer una nueva relación entre la península y los países y comunidades latinoamericanas, más allá de los parámetros post colonialistas. Cuéntanos de tu experiencia en este tipo de encuentros en los que has participado tanto en México como en Perú.

*RRM:* Pues ambas han sido experiencias fructíferas e interesantes. Es innegable que estableces esos lazos sur-sur era una necesidad imperiosa para la realidad cultural de la que estamos hablando. Rastrear las conexiones y las concomitancias culturales y literarias es una labor ardua, pero muy necesaria para aprender a conocernos. Pero, por otro lado, es una tarea complicada o al menos trufada de minas, pues en la concepción de España como país, en el conjunto de elementos que identificado como características identitarias nacionales está la idea de país europeo siempre orientada hacia el norte. Hay en el consciente colectivo (en el subconsciente también, por supuesto) un deseo de parecernos a algún país norte europeo con el que no tengamos ni frontera. No deja de sorprenderme que queramos parecernos a Noruega y neguemos la esencia mediterránea que nos atraviesa sin solución de continuidad a lo largo de nuestra historia, de ahí que los lazos sur-sur sean tan necesario para encontrar por fin nuestro lugar en el espacio que nos ha tocado vivir.

*VGM:* El debate sobre la trascendencia del elemento árabe islámico en la construcción de la identidad nacional peninsular ha desarrollado un mito (el mito de al-Andalus) que es usado por opuestas líneas ideológicas para dignificar sus discursos. Podríamos decir que el mito de la España árabe es un espacio maleable y con un profundo poder de evocación que es continuamente reinterpretado y reapropiado. ¿Cómo crees que afecta el recuerdo (o el peso) de al-Andalus en la relación de los escritores árabes con España?

*RRM:* Al-Andalus pesa demasiado, pesa en la historia de España y por eso se ha eliminado de los currículos académicos de los estudiantes y pesa fuera de las fronteras, como dices, para dar forma a una suerte de paraíso perdido al que volver, aunque sea a través de la palabra. Ambas percepciones son una manipulación burda y casi peligrosa de la realidad histórica y el peso específico que efectivamente al-Andalus debería tener en nuestra identidad. Como decía, los planes de estudios han ido eliminando de los programas al-Andalus, parece un intento de eliminar de nuestro recuerdo el pasado más glorioso que imaginemos. En vez de hacerlo formar parte esencial de lo que somos, la intención es convertirlo en *el otro* de nuestra historia para ponerlo en el mismo plano de igualdad y

desprecio que *los otros* que hoy tenemos a nuestro alrededor y para los que levantamos vallas. Es un disparate se mire por donde se mire.

*VGM:* Además de tu labor como orientalista, has desarrollado un perfil como poeta. En tu poesía la ciudad árabe aparece como un espacio agencial y generador de discurso. ¿Cómo interacciona tu faceta poética con tu faceta investigadora, en qué modo se fecundan una a la otra?

*RRM:* Como decía al principio, Tánger está tan íntimamente relacionada con mi vida que es casi indisoluble de mis recuerdos de infancia, de mis veranos, de mis primeros viajes fuera de España. Hay mucho de Tánger en mí y por tanto cuando escribo poesía es inevitable que aparezca, tal vez no siempre de un modo explícito, pero sí como escenario de los versos. El poemario GMTT (Golf, Mike, Tango Tango) está dedicado a la ciudad de Tánger, a mis recuerdos, a su peso específico en lo que soy cuando me miro al espejo, tanto desde un punto de vista profesional como personal. Es un vínculo difícil de romper.



Rocío Rojas-Marcos

# Notes on Editors and Contributors

Biographical notes in alphabetical order

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**MARÍA CLAUDIA HUERTA VERA** es Licenciada en Historia por la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú y candidata a doctora en Literatura y Cultura Latinoamericana por la Universidad de California, Davis, con un énfasis en Derechos Humanos. Sus intereses de investigación abarcan la narrativa latinoamericana de los siglos XX y XXI; los estudios de memoria; los derechos humanos en América Latina; y las representaciones de los periodos de violencia y dictadura en el Cono Sur, de manera particular las representaciones en la literatura y el cine del conflicto armado interno peruano. Actualmente está escribiendo su disertación sobre las representaciones del conflicto armado interno peruano en el cine documental.

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**KYLE PATTERSON** is a lecturer in French at Northwestern University. He graduated from UC Davis with a Ph.D. in French and Francophone studies, choosing to focus his research endeavors on the implementation of gameful and theatrical practices in language-learning spaces. He enjoys making the language learning space a more “playful” place for learners. Kyle's intersectional research stems first from 18th century French theatre, analyzing Diderot's take on what it means to be a “grand comédien” and, simultaneously, a “spectateur”. He then ties in practices from gaming and Virtual Reality to understand how acting, spectatorship, and “play” have changed over the centuries, impacting not just theatregoers and gamers, but also our language students. Tying everything together with the support of related Second Language Acquisition theories, he has recommended a playful approach to language acquisition and has conducted a study on the impact of gaming on identity creation and expression in the language classroom.

**LOGAN ALLEN KRISHKA** is a PhD student in Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Logan received a BA in Anthropology, Portuguese, and Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies from the same institution. Logan's work focuses on how locally and historically specific constructions of science interact with the other-than-human, specifically in bioremediation efforts being carried out in Brazil. He explores how culturally contingent meanings about "the environment" are constructed, maintained, and challenged today, but he is also interested in how these ideas are represented in Brazilian literature, art, and media across different time periods.

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se centra en el estudio de las poblaciones vulnerables, migrantes, mujeres, indígenas menores de edad, personas con discapacidad y estudiantes, que viven en entornos hostiles, enfrentándose a diversos fenómenos sociales, donde se pueden analizar los mecanismos adaptativos para mantener sus raíces culturales, sus vínculos sociales, sus identidades reconstruidas y su sentido de pertenencia.

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**VERÓNICA GARCÍA MORENO** is a Spanish scholar, journalist, and award-winning writer. She has been faculty in several universities in the USA and she is a Teaching Assistant Professor at Montana State University. Verónica obtained a Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature at UCLA, a MA in Applied Linguistic Cyberpragmatics at the University of Leon, and a MA in Islamic Studies at the University of Sevilla. Her research explores the Islamic Arab element in the articulation of the Hispanic identities and peripheral nationalisms, the liquid frontier of al-Andalus, and the power of the image in the configuration of Arab otherness. Her current research focuses on the works of Rafael Cansinos as a translator of the Persian poets into Spanish and his influence on Borges' orientalism. Verónica is an active member of the Spanish Iranian Society and the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society-Latina.

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ISSN 0160-2764 | Vol. 52

