

Broken Records: Materiality, Temporality, and Queer Belonging in Mexican Drag Cabaret Performance

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Abstract

In this article, I examine the ways in which drag queens are represented in the literature of Latin American authors, such as Carlos Monsiváis, and Severo Sarduy. I contrast these literary representations to build on what I call an *ecology of drag*, a network that looks at how material objects activate different modes of perception around queerness, such as saturation and fragmentation. I situate these modes of sensing in the cabaret performance of a drag queen from Mexico City, namely Roberto Cabral. Their performances expose how the politics of sexuality and race propose a critique of history by deploying parody, and cabaret. In this transversal approach to literature, satire, and performance, I argue that drag culture combines affect and a critique of history to foster a sense of belonging in entertainment venues so as to give shape to sexual dissidence in contemporary urban Mexico. This form of sexually dissident culture can be better understood by the notion I refer to as *broken record*, an affective drive that connects queer memory with the sonic experiences of listening to Mexican romantic ballads. By alluding to popular songs, and literature, I associate drag performance with a repertoire of queer cultural practices that seek to foster a sense of belonging under the economies of queer nightlife. Broken records complicate the linearity of time condensed in a nostalgic nationalism, intermixing temporality, experience, and queer cultural production in the era of neoliberalism, as the practices of consumption turn sexual dissidence into a cultural capital with which queer collectives negotiate everyday life. This sense of brokenness of records metaphorically illustrates historical silences, erasures, violent acts, and misrepresentations sexual dissident cultures endure for social world-making. In this sense, drag performance is a queer cultural form that alters practices of consumption by generating belonging mediated by a sonic affectivity within global queer imaginaries, satirizing a national nostalgia for the masculinization of heroic figures, while ruffling conceptualizations of Mexican popular culture.

Keywords

Drag queens; Mexico; cabaret performance; queer culture

Yo te ayudo a olvidar el pasado

No te aferres

Y ya no te aferres

A un imposible...

–Juan Gabriel, Mexican songwriter & performer

Literary, Drag!

A baroque aesthetics is often associated with the literary representation of sexual dissidence in Latin America. As one of the many dimensions of queer culture, the phenomenon of drag embodies such excess. The works of José Lezama Lima, Néstor Perlongher, Reinaldo Arenas, Severo Sarduy, Manuel Puig, and more recently, Juan Carlos Bautista, Mario Bellatín and Enrique Serna are exemplary of a cultural representation of excess, disease, marginality, fragmentation, emptiness, and oversaturation of drag symbols and metaphors. In tracing the literary representation of a drag culture, Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui notes that “[r]ather, as [Pedro] Lemebel points out, it’s a matter of engaging with a Baroque allegory, the act of extending the name of the metaphor *ad infinitum*, to twist and turn the name so that it gets baptized continuously. In other words, the drag queen’s (or the drag queer’s) name never stops signifying (or resignifying itself) until exhaustion” (122). Similarly, the architectural montage of a drag queen answers to a neobaroque aesthetics of excess, both in material and symbolic terms.

Drag can be read as a representation of *horror vacui* through which queens gravitate toward a fragmented assemblage of the temporal that, by interlayering objects, accessories, attires, and gestures, repeatedly re-inscribes itself into the script of history. In a bent on temporality, the accumulation of property in capitalist societies is further problematized through the materiality of drag accessories. Material excess in this sense exposes the contradictions of wasteful practices of consumption in economies that still function under a neocolonial siege in the global age. Drag cultures embrace, thus, a wasteful neo-baroque form of aesthetic consumption, a saturation of meaning that renders the sexual dissident difficult to identify along the spectrum of neoliberal subjectivities. Moreover, if practices of consumption within hybrid economies position subjects along the scripts of economic development, engaging in practices of recycling animates a particular temporality brought on by old artifacts, objects, and other materials that are perceived to be out-of-time. As a variety of queer cultural production, drag culture problematizes the linearity of development while activating amorous links with objects and creating alternative social ecologies; drag queens incorporate the second-hand quality of undesired

objects to stir a politics of time, that is, a conscious examination of the social contractions engendered in the embrace of developmental policies of modernity. In this accumulation of *out-dated-ness*, drag queens deploy a temporal disidentification¹ against the historic uncertainty in Mexico, while carving social spaces that outshine the opaque temporalities of progress.

From very diverse styles of writing, a plethora of literature² approaching the drag queen phenomenon in Latin America has traced genealogies of drag, their shapes and contours, their twists and turns, their cultural aesthetics, social imaginaries, and political provocations. In their article, Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp argue “that transgenderism, same-sex sexuality, and theatrical performance are central to the personal identities of . . . drag queens, who use drag to forge personal and collective identities that are . . . their own complex genders” (114). Mexican cultural critic, Antonio Marquet asserts that the terms transvestites and drag queens are interchangeable and intertwined within the world of queer performance in Mexico, and further argues that drag queens and transvestites occupy a double void. Using a psychoanalytic frame, Marquet believes that drag queens embody an art of the ephemeral while seeking to attract the gaze of the other (398). As a cultural formation, drag queens are often read as an act of transgression, of gender variance, that seeks to destabilize logics of normativity and gender dichotomies. Judith Butler’s notion of gender performativity finds in drag culture a case in point. My reading of drag queens, however, is less concerned with the politics of gender variance and their impact on normative projects that uphold a gender binary than with situating drag culture as a cultural contingency in which the sensorial, affective, and temporal overlap to animate practices of queer-world making. Here, I am also locating drag culture as a cultural practice that, sparking out of nightlife, questions the politics of authenticity and representation within cultural production.

The figure of the drag queen, as represented in a certain strand of Latin American literature, is situated at the intersection of cultural consumerism, resistance, and sexual excess. Carlos Monsiváis describes the drag queen’s (i.e., *travesti*) unwavering success in the world of entertainment as follows:

Si algo manejan con destreza los travestis es su versión de una veta esencial de las mujeres: el triunfo en el espectáculo. La meta, se dice, ya no es el ejercicio del dolor y la ternura, o la maternidad ilimitada. No, la mujer más mujer es la que atrae más reflectores, la que no tiene tiempo de estar en la cocina porque ocupa el proscenio. En contra de las suposiciones habituales, los travestis no imitan a la Mujer . . . sino a la Mujer de Éxito, categoría distinta, sujeta a las más encomiásticas parodias, creaciones y recreaciones. (280)

In this previous excerpt, Monsiváis links performance and spectacle to a characteristic of drag queens, making a distinction between the category of “woman” and “successful woman,” the latter appears to be contingent on satire and parody. By intertwining performance, economy, and consumption, the Mexican chronicler alludes to Severo Sarduy’s seminal essay *La simulación* (1982), in what seems a re-visitation of Sarduy’s neobaroque aesthetics, whose epitome rests on drag queen gowns:

El travestí no copia; simula, pues no hay norma que invite y magnetice la transformación, que decida la metáfora: es más bien la inexistencia del ser mimado lo que constituye el espacio, la región o el soporte de esa simulación, de esa impostura concertada: aparecer que regula una pulsación goyesca: entre la risa y la muerte. (13)

In imagining drag practices in the age of late capitalism, Monsiváis’s invocation of Sarduy maps a cultural cartography: drag performance appears as a site where transformation not only appears as a contention between bodies and objects but also as a potential force to bind affectivity and build queer conviviality in urban Mexico. At its very onset, drag performance emerges from within the bleeps and blurs of queer communities, of bars, dance floors and cabarets that connect queer night culture. These spaces for queer sociality also draw liminal zones of contact and, as Carlos Monsiváis and Antonio Marquet have argued, it is in these hybrid spaces that the verbal opprobrium directed at queers is re-appropriated, re-signified and challenged through the deployment of satire, parody, and mockery. Both, Monsiváis and Marquet envision this cultural practice as a mode of resistance against stigma and marginalization. But considered as an aesthetics, drag queens evoke a peculiar immanence and magnetism: the strokes of shimmer, shine and shadow handed by drag queens not only rely on a practice of gender insubordination but also speak of an intimate convergence between human and non-human agents that interact beyond the realm of discourse, grounding a cultural practice that mediates questions of identity, consumption and belonging in neoliberal Mexico. Under this light, drag performance combines affective charges, material objects, and bodily gestures to build sociality within sexually dissident collectives. By focusing on such cultural contingencies, I complicate textual realities in order to animate alternative modes of queer world-making as part of a queer epistemology, a queer utopia from cultural criticism. A praxis that David William Foster describes as follows:

Salir de la cárcel del lenguaje, hacia una utopía *gay* de nuevos sistemas significantes, sistemas tensados en signos resistentes al sistema-retórica vs. gramática, expresión vs. represión-donde existe un constante proceso de desplazamiento como estrategia para evadir el sistema cerrado del patriarcado. (53)

I therefore tease out the dissident theatricality, both in performative and material terms, that constitute drag queens as ephemeral aesthetics, as recycled forms of performance that are an intrinsic part of queer collectives. Drag culture absorbs heels, wigs, attires, shiny makeup, sequin garments, or music records, to forge a residual materiality through cabaret performance, intertwining sounds, and bodies under the nightlights of bars, or other spaces for queer conviviality. All of these queer locations assemble a circuit of shadow economies that emerge within the public space and that, consequently, integrate consumption as a queer formation in the era of neoliberalism.

In the context of Mexico, however, a hybrid mode of consumption emerges as the deployment of neoliberal policies unfollow the linear trajectories of modernization but that carry the sociohistorical complexities of coloniality, developmentalism, and nationalism. The concept of “*neoliberalism from below*” marks what Verónica Gago³ describes as “a set of conditions that are materialized beyond the will of a government, whether legitimate or not, but that turn into the conditions under which a network of practices and skills operates, assuming calculation as its primordial subjective frame and functioning as the motor of a powerful popular economy that combines community skills of self-management and intimate know-how as a technology of mass self-entrepreneurship in the crisis” (6). At a first glance, cultural practices within neoliberal consumerism might evoke a process of depoliticization of LGBT collectives. But, their transformation into pink products within the networks of pink market consumption also motivates queer modes of consumerism that shape sexual citizenship inasmuch these practices reveal strategies to negotiate economic policies, generating a sense of agency from queer sociality.

Towards an Ecology of Drag

In speaking about homosexuality in modern Mexico, José Joaquín Blanco notes:

Sin embargo, la homosexualidad –como cualquier otra conducta sexual– no tiene esencia, sino historia. Y lo que se ve ahora de *diferente* en los homosexuales no es algo esencial de personas que eligen amar y coger con gente de su mismo sexo, sino propio de personas que escogen y/o son obligados a inventarse una vida –pensamientos, emociones, sexualidad, gustos, costumbres, humos, ambiciones, compromisos– independiente, en la periferia o en los sótanos clandestinos de la vida social. (183-84)

In this excerpt, Blanco references a genealogy and a phenomenology of sexual difference; in other words, a way of making sense of marginalization through the dissidence of bodies within queer

culture. In this sense, Blanco evokes a queer sense of time and space. By temporal, I am referring to “historia” (i.e., history) as a do-it-yourself, queer way of life; by spatial, to the locations queer collectives occupy in order to make sense of the world. The assemblage of temporal and spatial positions can also be read as a movement of agents that establish contact (i.e., human and non-human, objects, etc.) In conversation with Blanco’s understanding of a queer phenomenology, Sarah Ahmed notes that “this way of coming into contact with objects involves disorientation: the touch of the thing that transmits some thing . . . by bringing objects to life in their “loss” of place, in the failure of gathering to keep things in their place” (165).

This loss of place evoked in Ahmed’s argument is what characterizes the queer search for life. As noted by Blanco, queers willingly forge, or are forced to embrace, other forms of belonging, of inhabiting time and relating to the world. Blanco scraps an ontology of homosexuality while insisting on the historical contingencies that give rise to a queer way of life, one that webs other imaginaries and practices. If, according to Blanco, a queer way of life means to invent one’s life, to reimagine a personal story, and rewrite a collective history, drag performance envisions collective histories through a fragmentary aesthetics. And, these histories emerge as fragmented stories, as broken records of a heterosexual straightness, that pose a challenge to vertical hierarchies of heterosexuality, patriarchy or a heterocracy, that is, the institutionalization of heterosexual culture.

Blanco further explains, “[y] el hecho concreto de que alguien viva de otro modo—mucho más si ese alguien se multiplica en cientos, miles o millones—rompe la unanimidad imprescindible para establecer una dominación vertical en la sociedad” (184). Blanco’s text points to the capacity of queer collectives to craft their own stories as a mode of resistance, to invent histories, to trace genealogies of sexual dissidence that depart from official accounts of sociality. If these are understood as practices of resistance, it is not only because the political drives their potential, but because they serve as proof of a mode of sociality that considers a different relation to intimacy in public spaces from that proposed by the culture of heterosexuality in capitalist Mexico. Drag performance also incorporates excess, pleasure, and exhaustion as ways of responding to capital accumulation within consumer neoliberalism. In this sense, if the drag queen is rendered as an outsider of official heterosexual history⁴ and instead curates a fragmented story,⁵ a collage of odds and ends, of bits and pieces, drag performance then offers a contingent force for historical reinvention and political revival articulated from sexual dissidence.

In what I read as a critique of consumerist societies, Mexican writer Salvador Novo discusses the implications of mechanical reproduction as an economic strategy for consumption and commercial

democratization: “La producción en serie nos arrebató bruscamente un afecto que comienza a fructificar en el ajuste tibio de nuestra persona, nos quita de las manos el juguete y nos deja ante el enigma de uno nuevo, frío . . . para que unos meses después el fenómeno se repita” (8-9). In spite of the seeming historical distance that separates this writer from the present moment, what is of note in this excerpt of Novo’s essay is a recognition that objects, in this case, old and antiquated ones, carry a particular material affect in social imagination. For Novo, maintaining close contact with objects generates an affective attachment to them, a form of happiness, in the space of the workshop in which the crafter, artisan or apprentice spends copious amounts of time confectioning their craft: “el privilegio de su tallercito privado, en el que hacía a mano las cosas, las hacía bonitas y buenas, lograba desarrollar un valioso amor por su oficio” (7).

In this practice of fondling objects, an affective echo stems from the material interaction between human touch and touched objects. In other words, the object triggers an affective memory that is later embodied. In his essay, Novo precisely reflects on the affectivity of objects that is animated with every touch. Objects affect the construction of sociocultural meaning and of belonging. The common characteristic that links second-hand buyers and antique collectors, Novo asserts, is the trace of human touch in the object, and the memory of the object in the human. Accordingly, objects carry a ghostly immanence that allows a re-structuring in the way humans interact:

Lo liga sin embargo con él, sin que los perciban unos ni otros, un hecho inherente a todos los objetos de segunda mano, ya sean útiles como un incunable o un Goya, o serviciales como un Chevrolet 1934 o unos Florsheim adquiridos en la Lagunilla: el calor humano de los anteriores propietarios, manifiesto en las huellas digitales que ostentan sus hojas, en el cómodo hundimiento de los cojines anteriores, en lo amoldado que está el calzado o el traje a las peculiaridades de una anatomía pobre a quien cualquiera le sienta bien. Sin saberlo, sin advertirlo, anticuarios y compradores de objetos de segunda mano se la estrechan en la búsqueda de una huella humana que está ausente de los productos mecánicos nuevos, pero presente ya, tibia, familiar y satisfactoria, en los usados. (11-12)

In tune with Salvador Novo’s understanding of materiality, affectivity, and tactility, drag cultural practices incorporate the use of recyclable materials, granting an excess that oscillates between shine and shadow, saturating the channels of visual meaning with every performance. This shininess however sheds a different light on the accumulation of property and capital, embodying a different relation to belonging in consumer capitalism. Under this light, drag culture thrives on a recycled

materiality that stirs the temporality of objects in the shadow economies of bars, cringing the folds of consumerism within a pink market. Recycling thus appears as a mode of breaking the linearity of heterosexual time inasmuch as a practice of resistance amidst overconsumption.

An account on the materiality and temporal fragmentation of drag cultures appears in the first pages of *La simulación* (1982). In it, Cuban exiled writer Severo Sarduy elaborates a complex treaty to understand drag queens, or transvestites, as avatars of a neo-baroque network of meaning: “La erección cosmética del travestí, la agresión esplendente de sus párpados temblorosos y metalizados como a las de insectos voraces, su voz desplazada, como si perteneciera a otro personaje, en *off*, la boca dibujada sobre su boca, su propio sexo, más presente cuando ese ícono, aunque falaz omnipresente” (13). In this excerpt, Sarduy reflects on the juxtapositions of objects and bodies that render meaning through drag. In particular, the writer alludes to make-up as a raw material for constructing an architectural glitz, a mimesis to the metallic shades of butterflies. Eye shadow, eye blush, eyelashes, shine and glitter are some of the active and transformative materials that chisel an ecology of drag queens. In this passage, Sarduy is also deploying provoking words such as, “agresión esplendente,” “insectos voraces,” or “temblorosos,” and makes reference to phallic images, to mimic certain gestures of femininity. And, with his word selection, the author is calling on a set of affective charges associated with perceiving the shiny architecture of drag queens, whose eye lashes capture their audience’s attention, as voracious insects do to their preys. The aggression referred to in Sarduy’s account is also enacted aesthetically in the fragmentary neo-baroque-ness that ruptures the linearity of time and subjectivity.

Drag aesthetics is thus a site to reflect on the latent affect that resides in the materiality of their assemblages: the plastered-on make-up, star-reaching eyelashes and immaculate wigs of drag queens, capture the imagination as these blinding strokes of glitter suspend the laws of rationality. This ecology of objects also maps “the particulars of a diva conduct to chart a method of moving the body through the world, a style that . . . particularly queens, have found essential. It is a camp style of resistance and self-protection, a way of identifying with other queer people across invisibility and disgrace” (Koestenbaum 85). Glitter as political defiance; radiance as self-protection; shine as queer resistance. Sparkles are everywhere. Sequined gowns with glitzy rings and earrings illuminate the deep nights in Mexico City.

This hypnotic state provoked by admiring their architectural performance also speaks to a type of affect that fragments normative constructions of time. In the January 2015 issue of the online art journal *e-flux*, entitled “Politics of Shine,” the editorial team reflects on the “cross-sections of power

and aesthetics in the material and immaterial discourses of shine—past, present, and future” (n.p). This conceptualization of shininess stems from a critique of temporality: the structures that allow social actors to position themselves as narratable in the annals of history and, as such, active actors in the linear progression of time. Embodying shine responds to a sparkly aesthetics that amass cultural capital from material objects. In shine, the authors also find a “paradox” in that such “surface effects, of glamour and spectacle, of bling-bling contingency” mask a looming collapse of the social order. But, entertaining shine as a concept for cultural analysis in Mexico also remits to a specific relationship to the luminosity of sexual dissidence.

Placing my epicenter at the intersection of literature, new materialism, and performance, I evoke Xavier Villaurrutia’s poem *Nocturno de Los Angeles* (1938), whose poetic voice leaves “una enorme cicatriz luminosa” (an enormous, luminous scar, 44) on the body of sexual dissidence. I am therefore interested in the diverse ways through which this “luminous scar”, or what I refer to as shine, is embodied, engendering a *performance of shine* manifested in present-day queer sociality. Shine also sparks multiple possibilities of establishing practices intertwining desire and consumption within queer collectives in the Americas today.⁶ And while these might animate an ephemeral sense of bliss, such practices reflect on a contested form of desire and capital. In their potentiality for temporal and spatial digression, however, I fathom drag performances as *broken records* of a cultural historicity that remains gendered, stratified, and neocolonial, but whose inherent shine kindles different approaches to consumptive transgression in a neoliberal aftermath.

If consumption practices of luxurious accessories and garments, such as jewellery, clothing, and other expensive goods mark an existing social divide that restricts an equal distribution of wealth, resources, and products in the global era, the glitz inherent in drag culture resists excessive practices of elitist capital accumulation by applying a different shine and shadow that comes from the recycled materials that assemble their neobaroque aesthetics. A performance of shine, therefore, activates a poetics of hope, that is, a series of cultural practices that from subcultural spaces propose a rupture to temporal projects of modernity, understood under neoliberal economic terms or neo-developmental paradigms. These subcultural practices also bring into question how new neoliberal paradigms articulate a form of subjectivity that neutralizes sexual diversity and dissidence as tolerable forms of civility.

I seek to find hope in shine, as does the editorial of *e-flux* when concluding on the potentialities of an alternative ray of light amidst political contradictions and social precarity in Mexico: “a different discourse of light and exuberance, a counter radiance that outshines the sun that shines on the

privileged, an insurgent technology of brilliance in the service of those who are doomed to do the rubbing”. Those lashes of radiance coming from the presence of drag queens unequivocally remit to a gesture of horizon, to a seduction with the unknown. It is that materiality of shininess that sheds light upon counter discourses of history through queer incandescence.

Shine emerges then from the Mexican context as a concept that traces the marks of desire on bodies. And, following Novo’s articulation of a material symbiosis, shine embodies a way of relating to the social. In the case of drag culture, material shininess is characteristic of their performance, one that appears as a potential aesthetic mechanism ingrained in queer sociality. To find the forces of queer longing in glitter points to the nonhuman agents that incite desires for a different experience of time. The glitter of drag queens activates modes of perception found in diversion, fascination, fixation as forms of consumption. In the queer space of bars and performance stages, drag culture symbolizes broken records that trace cartographies of erasure and saturation, and performative assemblages of bodies and objects, not as cultural palimpsests, but as ecologies of desire.

A Post-National Script: Historical Fissures and Mexican Drag Cabaret Performance

*Roberta y las otras chicas del montón*⁷ (2015) is a drag cabaret show featuring Roberto Cabral, whose stage appearances follow a similar strand of defiant performances as found in Jesusa Rodríguez, Tito Vasconcelos, Liliana Felipe, Regina Orozco, Las Reinas Chulas, and Astrid Hadad. Opening this piece, a video performance by film director Ximena Cuevas shows a playful remixing of a televised speech by former president Enrique Peña Nieto, making a direct allusion to the single-party rule institutionalized after the post-revolutionary period of the 1920s with the consolidation of the PRI, Partido Revolucionario Institucional.

Roberta y las otras chicas del montón tells the story of three women, namely Alicia, Roberta, and Susie Pussy, whose dreams of finding ever-lasting love are frustrated by a cruel reality that shatters their illusory dreams. Divided into three main acts, and through the lives of these female protagonists, the show stages a satirical revision of Mexico’s history condensed in three historical moments (i.e. the colony, the revolution, and neoliberalism). Affect, intimacy, and national history are intermeshed in this performance, providing the basis for a careful examination of the national symbols exposed in this piece. The first scene opens with a short clip of the 1951 animated movie *Alice in Wonderland*, which I read as a gesture to innocence, fantasy, and the illusion of finding ever-lasting love.

This romantic pathos as evinced in Disney’s fairy tales serves as a point of departure from which the first character problematizes elements of affect and intimacy, namely the normalization of

a romantic heterosexuality.⁸ Cabral's rendition of Alicia takes on the naïveté, candor, innocence, and, at times, obliviousness often associated with a stereotype of femininity. As the first female character in this performance, Alicia exposes the effects of fairy tales as technologies for the production of affective fantasies anchored on the idealization of a dominant form of masculinity. But her failure in finding prince charming, who is supposed to bring about sheer happiness, economic prosperity, and ever-lasting love, brings out the contradictions of waiting for utopian love, questioning the values of self-sacrifice and self-constraint upon which a better tomorrow is usually imagined.

Playing with the structures of a traditional love story, the second character, Roberta, appears dressed as a *china poblana*, a folkloric women dress from the Mexican southeast. Of note are also the nationalist elements of her attire: an embroidered national code of arms on her skirt. This second part of the performance inserts colonial violence, sexual rape, and indigeneity as elements of critique to the idealization of romantic heterosexuality. Roberta, who is read as an indigenous female from rural Mexico who migrated to the capital city in search of social mobility, narrates her journey as a domestic worker who has been a target of sexual violence, mistreatment, and silence upon entering the urban space. Humor and irony serve as theatrical tools to decry the injustices of displacement, discrimination and violent erasure indigenous populations and, in this case, indigenous women, have endured in Mexico. This displacement of indigenous populations is indirectly addressed by Octavio Paz' notion of "los hijos de la Chingada", treated and elaborated in the 1950 publication *El laberinto de la soledad*. If for Paz "la Chingada" is that violated mother who engenders a sense of Mexicanness, Roberto Cabral's performance is less interested in defining a national ethos than in showing the contradictions of believing in universalizing fairy tales of national developmentalism. Roberta's story depicts a heavily racist nationalist ideology embedded in the treatment of indigenous people.

Cabral's treatment of the relationship between domestic labor and indigeneity reveals the degree in which *mestizaje*, as an erasure of ethnicity, abjectly permeates humor and satire. Moreover, this representation of domestic labor is problematic in that it assumes that indigenous women embody a certain economic domesticity when entering the urban class structure. When talking about finding everlasting love, she alludes to her experience of rape by her boss, looping back to the image of "La Chingada." As what is performed to be a domestic worker, Roberta is seen as a disposable body that receives a salary to fulfill her boss's sexual requests.

After being pulled and pushed in a frantic dance, Roberta exits the stage for the audience to watch another video montage featuring political discourses by former presidents who represent a neoliberal turn in Mexican politics, namely Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón, and Enrique Peña Nieto.

Roberta now returns to the stage showing the signs of pregnancy and lamenting that her dream of finding prince charming has been shattered. She now faces the challenge of embracing single motherhood in a social milieu that doubly restricts her mobility not only for appearing to embody indigeneity but also for being a woman.⁹

Her bearing of a fatherless child pinpoints to an unresolved colonial legacy that not only has had sociopolitical implications but also affective consequences in the Mexican pathos. A sense of trauma emerges as a colonial legacy that stems from the logics of dispossession. This wound associated with the violence of imperialism indicates that different temporalities of emotion are also layered in the constitution of sociocultural realities. If every episode of Roberta's performance animates a particular set of affects and emotions, the lack of disposition to deal with those emotions only serves to condense the bottled-up affectivities that are inevitably intermixed in the performance. *Roberta y las otras chicas del montón* begins with the cracking of the linear model of development, showing the queer relations that incite a form of critique through which (neo)colonial trauma is satirized and brought to the surface as part of a queer hermeneutics (Muñoz 28).

In reference to the condensation of affect, I am not referring here to a psychoanalytic process of condensation and transference but to a multilayered complexity where different historical-specific affects coexist. In spite of the satirical portrayal of the birth scene, a confused Roberta ponders the emotional consequences of raising an illegitimate child in a country where inheritance, belonging, and kinship are considered essential elements for the construction of civility and citizenship. The desolation and outcry of Roberta's face when holding the child, who was delivered in an abrupt, violent birth, suggests that this affective trauma is not only rendered in the familial bonds of illegitimacy but also in temporal fissures of Mexican history.

This historical conflict between the social inferences to the fight for Independence, the armed Revolution, and the advent of Modernity in Mexico are poignantly encrypted in a parody throughout this performance. At the same time, it also suggests to the audience that carnage and violence in Mexico have historically marked bodies since colonial times as a bio-technique for shaping a modern notion of time.

Making an abrupt transition into the age of globalization, the third character Susie Pussy suddenly appears on stage. This lady with fluffy blond pigtailed and white-colored skin, aspires to embody the "American Dream," as she exerts her command of the English language with a humorous Spanish accent. Susie alludes to the need to migrate northward to the United States in search of opportunities for social mobility and economic prosperity. Her story also alludes to the incorporation

of Mexico into the NAFTA agreement in 1994 after which the country evidently embraced trading policies that favored a macroeconomic policy of foreign investment that significantly impacted local economies (Dussel Peters 64-65).

The migrant body alluded to in Susie's drag unveils the contested politics of migration within the public imaginary. Under this light, the migrant represents the unwanted body that challenges the national script of development and progress. In this sense, the migrant body challenges aspects of national containment enveloped by the dominant imaginary of progress while transgressing the space of the US-Mexican border. Under a similar sign of transgression, Cabral's drag cabaret performance teases out all borders, be it national, gender, or sexual ones, reflecting on the potency of drag performance as a critique of temporality, embodiment, and progress in a post-national era. More than recurring to a flawed, dystopian, or even "backwards" reinterpretation of the historical, the character of Susie fuses the social contradictions of embracing neoliberalism as a way of life vis-à-vis Mexican nationalism: learning English, whiteness, and mainstream American culture.

Drag, in this context, crucially embodies the politics of citizenship. Susie's wardrobe choice resembles an exaggerated style of kitschy Americana that brings out the contradictions of "dressing up" as a tactic for socioeconomic camouflage, evident in her over-ornamentation of clothing when attending her visa appointment at the U.S. embassy. This dragging of social class signals a performative potency that alters social categories through costume while reading class as a structure that relies on an on-going performativity. Cabral indirectly reflects on the flux of migration into the U.S. But Susie's performance highlights a motive seared in the dominant national imaginary: the migrant represents a displaced body that abandons the nation, and through such distancing from its geographical demarcations, critiques the shortcomings and structural failures impinging on social mobility, economic retribution, and paid labor. This critique of Mexican economic policy challenges the national script of modern development and time. In this sense, the migrant body challenges aspects of national containment enveloped by the dominant imaginary of progress while transgressing the space of the US-Mexican border.

Making a direct reference to the complex relationship between history and violence in forming Mexican belonging, Cabral's performance exposes the historical traumas glossing over some critical conflicts that have emerged through colonization, modernization and globalization and that have left traces of a genealogy of violence. Through the satire of cabaret, this performance challenges the sediments of a monolithic nationalism, layering out the disposability of indigenous bodies, the institutionalization of misogyny, and a well-structured class system tinted with colonial overtones.

Cabral's performance further complicates this anxiety of national identity in a critique of national history through a drag aesthetics of saturation, fragmentation, and ephemerality. From this reenactment of Mexican history emerges an alternative approach to sensing historicity through the body of the performer. The constant re-inscription of exploitation, marginalization and violence that is associated with the experiences of the indigenous body performed by the drag queen not only highlights the twist and turns of temporal dispossession, or the feeling out of time, but also makes the audience complicit in the consumption of violence through her performance.

A critique of history performed by the body of the drag queen permits the audience to redirect the images of temporal dispossession and violence as themes approached through the satire of the cabaret genre. In *Teatro de cabaret*, Gastón A. Álzate provides an exemplary analysis of the body politics and aesthetic that shape the genre of cabaret as a theatrical space to propose a critical reading of society via satire (33). Drag cabaret exposes the contradictions of aspiring to an irresolute fantasy of progress, a utopia that does not seem to respond to contextual needs but seems to be a temporal imposition of an economic model.

If drag queens are socially read as ungovernable anomalies that threaten gender uniformity and the sanity of the nation, the cabaret genre, and particularly certain forms of satire, mediate the representation of such marginalized bodies. Marginalization thus becomes a part of drag satire. Carlos Monsiváis describes this drag satire (i.e., "sarcastic representation.") not only as a strategy to respond to discrimination and gender violence but also as an act of resistance:

Son, sí, los que peor la han pasado y la pasan, y para llegar a la mínima aceptación debieron renunciar a cualquier identidad personal. Son la apropiación constante de lo que no son, son la actuación incesante, el interpretar lo femenino con ironía reverente o respeto sarcástico, el estudio científico del maquillaje, la supremacía en el bordado, el depositar las revelaciones del sueño en los vestidos, los zapatos de tacón alto, los postizos, la observación a la vez exacta y satírica de voces y andares y miradas . . . Y detrás de cada escenificación, del fasto y el delirio en las noches de las discos, están las historias personales, marcadas por las humillaciones y golpes y vergüenzas familiares y acentuación de la diferencia por la marginalidad de toda índole. El travesti se arriesga en demasía, son legión los asesinados y torturados y golpeados. A ellos se les dedica el torrente de burlas y menosprecio, y para sobrevivir deben asumir a fondo la visión degradada que se les impone. (281)

Following his description, the drag queen renounces to any signs of identity. The drag performer embodies a void of national identity. In understanding Cabral's performance, drag queens embody a rupture of the patriarchal structures that permeate Mexican social historicity. As a transgressor of any "original" space, this drag queen performs temporal dispossession and fills in the silences of history with allusions to indigeneity and a material pastiche of wigs, gowns, and glitter. What Cabral's performance brings to the front is a form of resistance against displacement, erasure and dispossession of indigenous female bodies while reincorporating their trauma and violence more explicitly into the national imagination. This segmentation of Mexican history (i.e. the colony, the revolution, and the era of globalization) is reinterpreted through the embodied experience of an indigenous or mestiza woman. The national script of modernity is embedded in the search for everlasting love: the nation, in this sense, the virile nation, must satisfy the affective needs of the abused indigenous woman by her erasure. The image of the Mexican nation as a site for belonging and affective fulfillment also turns into a site of violence. The temporal condensation of Mexican history shown in three pivotal moments through the performance, emerges as a deep fissuring of the modes in which the temporal scripts of the nation are written.

With a broken spirit of national belonging, the performance nonetheless welcomes a critical vision of time, progress and historical becoming. The figure of the drag queen exhibits the contradictions of development as queens, by its own assemblage, portray the bits and pieces of their fragmentary subjectivity, aesthetics, and shine. This fragmentation far from just being an acerbic critique of traditional renditions of historical time, must also be read as a reinterpretation of the mechanisms of resistance within sexually-dissident practices. In spite of the symbolic violence, semantic maleficence, and fractious temporality, *Roberta y las otras chicas del montón* is invested in a renewal of the forms of sociality by representing the cruelty of modernity, bringing into question the neo-developmental paradigms that have become fossilized as the bedrock of Mexican belonging, which graft individuals against a social grid to form an exclusionary mode of citizenship.

In recognizing the cruelty of utopia, the performance artist seeks to evoke the audience's empathy through the pain that transcends from the misfortune experienced by the three characters. Along this conceptualization of pain as critical affect, cultural critic Sayak Valencia asserts, in *Capitalismo gore* (2010), that pain and suffering need to become political strategies from which a carnal politics of belonging emerges:

Por ello, pensemos el dolor como un recurso político que no debe confinarnos a la inacción sino a la elaboración de un proceso reflexivo que nos lleve a una identificación

con el sufrimiento mismo y a tejer redes intersubjetivas que sean capaces de exigir un redireccionamiento en la forma que entendemos la economía y de enfrentarnos a sus consecuencias distópicas que tienen como blanco nuestros cuerpos. (197)

Néstor García Canclini, in *Hybrid Cultures* (1990), argues that temporality in Latin America can be understood as a multilayered assemblage of historical periods that allows the coexistence of multiple signs and cultural practices engendering the social. Canclini's argument resonates with Diana Taylor's assertion that, "in Mexico we have always been queer" (210). By contrast, both views sustain an inherent *queerness* in the temporal formations of Mexican reality, that is, a convoluted assemblage of time in relation to the teleologies of progress associated with modernity. A notion of queerness from Mexico, as proposed by Cabral's performance, regards sexual dissidence as a political position that actively challenges neoliberal and neocolonial logics. As equally important are the strategies that sexually dissident collectives devise through performance and other cultural practices in response to neoliberal consumerism but that, at the same time, create spaces outside the discourse of state regulation. This fine line between the mixed presence and absence of market consumerism and state interventionism also delineates sexual dissidence as a cultural capital. In this sense, a queer decolonial critique would mediate this cultural capital as a situated, embodied knowledge in the face of global oppression, disarticulating the paradigms of modernity, neo-developmentalism, and neo-interventionism.

Sexual dissidence and cultural practice challenge a politics of national identity while questioning sexual citizenship. To this effect, Cabral's drag cabaret performance makes apparent the fissures of national subjectivity by showing the temporal contradictions of Mexican belonging, anchored in ethnic dispossession, forced displacement, and racial assimilation. A post-national script emerges from the stage clearing the hologram of national unity—a project based on the lettered culture of a Mexican elite. This decolonial critique is articulated within a larger axis of queer cultural analysis, in which performance, cultural practice, and embodiment converge to inspire collective ways of knowledge formation that respond to a contextual specificity while building coalitions on a global scale. In this performance, the staged critique allows the audience to experience a short-lived sense of collectivity, one that is activated through the performatives of satire, laughter, and cabaret. This act is also an intimation with the audience. It is here that drag performance in Mexico offers the potential to foster an alternative notion of belonging through which audience and performer become complicit in reimagining a different kind of belonging and collective sense of history.

As cultural strategies of survival, marginal spaces for performance also rely on the force of the collectivity and its affective immanence. When commemorating the 60th anniversary of *Teatro La Capilla*, a theatre venue founded in 1953 by poet and playwright Salvador Novo (1904-1974) who also made his home out of this space, Jesusa Rodríguez, a prominent performer, director, and now senator, noted “[e]s inconcebible imaginar este lugar sin el amor; esto sólo se sostiene por amor, si no tienes un cómplice amoroso que te acompañe, está del carajo.”¹⁰ During the 1980s *Teatro La Capilla* and its neighboring performance stage *El Hábito* were combined to house a larger cultural forum for cabaret performance and theater. Mainly integrated by three stages (i.e. *Teatro-bar El Vicio*, *Sala Novo*, and *Teatro La Capilla*), this cultural oasis in the Southern end of Mexico City celebrated its sixty-sixth anniversary in 2019.¹¹

Similarly, *El Foro A Poco No*, *Teatro Cabaret*, where Cabral’s performance debuted during the May-July 2015 season, has become a venue that not only houses alternative, emerging plays that intertwine cabaret and other experimental techniques of performance, but has become an intrinsic space within the resurgent constellation of queer nightlife venues along the downtown strip of República de Cuba.

Partially funded by Mexico City’s Culture Department, *El Foro A Poco No*, *Teatro Cabaret* is strategically located steps away from gay nightclubs such as *El Tabúr*, *El Marrakesh*, *La Purísima*, *La Sacristía*, *El Oasis*, and a couple of blocks away from the iconic *Cabaret La Perla*.¹² This nightly circuit of bars, cabaret stages, and shabby downtown streets in Mexico City point to a spatial politics of the public within sexual dissidence as these spaces open up possibilities for social belonging and affectivity. Carlos Monsiváis retells this intersection between urban spatiality and queer sensibility in carving a site of resistance among queers in Mexico City:

El gay que se urbaniza atraviesa el espacio secreto y público a la vez donde “la raza maldita” se reconoce gracias a la mirada posesiva y la mirada braguetera, y a partir de allí, se palpa febrilmente, sitúa su identidad con el apoyo inevitable de la burla y el choteo, se asegura de su lugar en la sociedad atendiendo a los atropellos policíacos, usa el melodrama como intermediación literaria y si no va hasta el límite es porque, en los convenios de su cultura formativa, el límite ha sido su punto de partida. (136)

It is from this margin, from the limits of Mexican cultural production, that *Roberta y las otras chicas del montón* debunks incisively the official discourses of history, mediating the affective distance created from the interaction between a nostalgic nationalism and an irresolute future. More than harping on the neo-developmental strategies toward futurity, Cabral’s performance is interested in

activating practices of queer relationality in the ephemeral stage of their performance. Moving beyond a national script for citizenship, their proposal of a queer melodrama offers a re-reading and restructuring of trauma as a modality to create bonds of intimacy and belonging through cabaret performance. Their representation of violence and pain are reminders that shine is embodied as a way of responding to the contradictions of history.

Broken Records: Queerness and Musical Memory

Establishing that night culture is a spatial and temporal consignment of drag queens and sexually-dissident bodies, the notion of *broken record* becomes more pertinent to my discussion of a queer social temporality. The simile invoked by this cliché in English is frequently used to denote a certain annoyance at someone's constant repetition of an opinion or statement. In Spanish, a similar slang term is used: *disco rayado*. Both phrases, however, are very similar in their allusion to music. The nocturnal space of drag queens acquires a very meaningful tone because music resonates in these queer nightlife spaces, be it bars, dancing floors, private parties, or block parties (i.e., *sonideros*). The power of queer music in Latin America, not only refers to an underground history in the representation of difference, but also to a sense of queer belonging. On the liberating tones queers found in noise, Tareke Ortiz and Nayar Rivera explain that music,

Es el poder de la voz, de la música humana, el grito de los presos políticos, las consignas de todas las marchas. Es el cuerpo que resuena con el movimiento de todos y la voz común se extiende en el tiempo y el espacio, inabarcable, conquistado, es el espacio de libertad. . . . Este momento que forma parte de todo gusto musical sugiere una búsqueda última detrás de cada canción o pieza instrumental y es fundamental para explicar el papel de la música como vehículo de la identidad que comparte y construye un grupo humano que se define como comunidad. (188)

In this sense, the interaction between drag queens and music plays a paramount role in carving spaces for an alternative mode of sociality. The subcultural practices of performing a well-awaited playback song, situate drag queens as carriers of an intimate knowledge and history that is transmitted orally and offers solace to the disillusionment, sadness, melancholia, and oblivion imposed upon sexual dissidence by normative discourses of time. Tareke and Rivera further add,

Pocos de nuestros travestis, agrega Tito [Vasconcelos], conocen el valor de su trabajo, en tanto estudios e hiperrealizadores de la feminidad, de una feminidad que imponemos los hombres, dicho sea de paso . . . El maquillaje y los senos, la melena,

las piernas, todos los rasgos exteriores de la feminidad de Amanda Miguel, de Thalía, de Paty Manterola, de Gloria Trevi, de Cindy Lauper. La voz es el sentimiento, la revelación . . . Joyas de nuestro patrimonio en materia de inteligencia emocional. (192)

In the excerpt above, the authors also reflect on the materiality of drag queens: make-up, wigs, implants, foam padding, as constitutive forms of a femininity that, although normative in shape and gesture, maintains an irresolute contradiction through its performance, juxtaposing masculine elements and thus fusing the gender binary in the construction of identity. But the drag queen is part of a more radical politics of belonging that takes places in nightlife spaces, where popular music becomes a carrier of an oral knowledge that shapes an emotional education. For instance, the music of Isabel Pantoja (1956-), a Spanish music diva, whose 1988 music record *Desde Andalucía*,¹³ written and produced by epic songwriter and performer Juan Gabriel (1950-2016),¹⁴ illustrates the affect contained in the lyrics often performed by drag queens. I bring the lyrics of “Así fue,” a song that was featured in Pantoja’s 1988 album:

Soy honesta con él y contigo

A él lo quiero y a ti te he olvidado

Si tú quieres seremos amigos

Yo te ayudo a olvidar el pasado

No te aferres

Ya no te aferres, a un imposible

Ya no te hagas ni me hagas más daño

Tú bien sabes que no fue mi culpa

Tú te fuiste sin decirme nada

Y a pesar [de] que lloré como nunca

Ya no seguía de ti enamorada

Pero te fuiste

Y que regresabas, no me dijiste

Y sin más nada, ¿por qué? No sé

Pero fue así, así fue

Te brindé la mejor de las suertes
Me propuse no hablarte ni verte
Y hoy que has vuelto ya ves, solo hay nada
Ya no puedo ni debo quererte
Ya no te amo

Me he enamorado, de un ser divino
De un buen amor
Que me enseñó a olvidar
Y a perdonar

This song echoes a queer sensibility in that the lyrical subject's gender comes into question. In a misogynist and patriarchal culture, such as Mexico's, a man is excused from breaking a woman's heart following the convention of social gender norms. The lyrical subject in this song is showing empathy amidst a suffering associated with heartache. Writing this emotionally-charged song for a female singer only problematizes the relationship between the lyrical subject and the affect alluded to in the lyrics. "Pasado," "nada," or "imposible" are words choices that denote a particular temporality in dealing with the issue of queer love, while "olvidar," "culpa," or "perdonar" evoke a pain in remembering such emotion. Love and pain, the latter also associated with a catholic tradition of understanding erotic desire, are conjured as similes of the impossibility of queer intimacy, and, in this case, of expressing same-sex desire. Whether the song is performed by Isabel Pantoja, or Juan Gabriel, it highlights the ambivalence of the lyrical subject's desire. Under this light, this song can be interpreted as an ode to an absence that mediates the emotional distance between a long-departed loved one and the emergence of a new lover suddenly. The lyrical voice is torn in between having to choose between two romantic prospects. Beyond its affective charges, this song also speaks of the impossibility of queer belonging: "no te aferres a un imposible."

In a temporal invocation of the past, "así fue," the lyrical voice is also claiming a time where the impossible is left behind, evoking "un buen amor," that goes beyond the scope of heterosexual possession, a time that is rendered possible amidst the impossibilities of the present, a queer utopia (i.e., "un ser divino"). Consequently, this song becomes part of a queer musical repertoire that not only carries a very powerful affective charge through its lyricism but also voices an intimate form of knowledge that is collectively chanted in bars, dancefloors, and nightclubs. This sense of absence is queerly felt when attending to the performance of drag queens, who interpret this song as an emotional

response to dealing with absence, and yet fostering queer bonding. In such spaces, the emergence of subcultural practices brings about a sense of bliss in the present. These are hymns chanted from the margins, giving voice to a queer affectivity that remains unreadable and unidentifiable. These are chants that critique a heteronormative notion of romantic love as a model to inhabit the present and imagine the future.

I am therefore eschewing the negative connotation attributed to the term *broken record* to infuse it with the musicality of a space of freedom, and an epistemological tool to debunk the traditional methodologies of historiography that fail to give away an alternative account to linear conventions of progress and history-making. *Broken records* are material and performative archives that contain queer modes of world-making invested in a musical repertoire, transmitting affective sensibilities and knowledges, that ensure the existence of sexually dissident cultures. In their display of material shininess, drag queens are at the core of these subcultural practices of resistance in which glitter, music, and affect animate a sense of bliss to imagine a time away from the logics of development. They presently inhabit a utopia that is felt in the intimacy of others, owning the night while playing with time.

Drag queens embody a material fissure in the spectrum of linear temporality, articulating a critique while also animating other modes of sociality that will help blur the dichotomies erected in the discourses of nostalgic nationalism in Mexico. The practice of lip-syncing is at the core of drag performance, as it involves the superimposition of a voice onto that of a musical recording. Musical performances of drag queens often intercalate music tracks of different singers, creating a musical medley. The marginal subjectivities and subcultural practices embodied in drag culture activate a temporal resistance against an illusion of temporal coherence rooted in past dreams. I read this bodily inscription of drag queens as a *broken record* not only to name the allegory of a musical medley, but also as a concept to highlight the assembling of material drag culture. A *broken record* is assembled by the broken pieces of residual objects and marginalia, and the tempo animated through such materiality layers, ruptures, and obliterates straight time. As a *broken record*, drag performance offers a temporal deployment of imaginaries and practices that, like Roberto Cabral in *Roberta y las otras chicas del montón*, dances away with the night, sparkling a queer epistemology that resists and challenges the cruelties of modernity in Mexico.

Notes

¹ Here, I am resorting to José Esteban Muñoz' concept of dissing identity: "These identities-in-difference emerge from a failed interpellation within the dominant sphere. Their emergence is predicated on their ability to disidentify with the mass public and instead, through this disidentification, contribute to the function of a counterpublic sphere" (7).

² In Mexico, the figure of the transvestite was originally used to refer to the deviant practice of cross-dressing. One of the most commemorated cases is the incident of *Los 41*, a police raid that irrupted a private party in the social elite of Mexico City in 1901. The novel under the name, *Los 41*, was published by Eduardo Castrejón and served as one of an early 20th-century representation of drag culture in Latin America. In literature, the representation of drag queens, transvestite, and transgender people is often intermixed as those gender and performative categories were not even in used until the last decade of the twentieth century. Such categories however denote a gender transgression and delineate a politics of sexual dissidence. For instance, José Donoso's *El lugar sin límites* (1966) marks a strong protagonist associated with the transgressive image of the transvestite. An adaptation of that movie under the direction of Mexican film maker Arturo Ripstein in 1978 popularizes the image of "la vestida." Carlos Montenegro's *Hombres sin mujer* (1928), and Manuel Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976) situate the transvestite in the prison system as a problematic space of virility, violence, and disaffection. Severo Sarduy's essay *La simulación* (1982) elaborates a complex aesthetics treaty on drag queens, that appeared as protagonist of his previous novels, *De donde son los cantantes* (1967), and *Cobra* (1972). Sarduy's essays could mark the beginning of a drag culture that merge performativity, materiality, and gender transgression to craft a nightly queer icon in Latin America. Toward the end of the 20th-century, Pedro Lemebel's *Loco afán: crónicas de sidario* (1996), and Mario Bellatín's *Salón de belleza* (1999) have depicted the struggle of transvestites during the AIDS pandemic while Enrique Serna's *La doble vida de Jesús* (2015) weaves the stereotypical representation of a trans sex worker into a narco-detective novel that exposes, in a masculinist prose, a political crisis amidst a corrupt Cuernavaca. In Cuba, Leonardo Padura's *El cazador* (1991) describes a melancholic protagonist in search of love. Both, drag culture, and transgendered categories, although different, have been intertwined in the realm of cultural representation. Nonetheless, a more complex and sophisticated characterization of this strand of sexual dissidence has emerged in other forms of Latin America cultural production. In television, the night show *Desde Gayola* (2002-2013) hosted by Horacio Villalobos became a media sensation in Latin America during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In it, drag queens and transgender artists orchestrated a parody and satire of conservative institutions of Mexico, and other Spanish-speaking countries. More recently, *La Más Draga* (2018-2019), a Mexican drag competition show streamed on YouTube two years in a row has concluded its second season, captivating audiences across the Americas with its Mexican twist on drag reality shows.

³ In *Neoliberalism from Below: Popular Pragmatics & Baroque Economies* (2017), Gago explains the hybrid nature of Latin American popular economies and the complex microeconomic systems that are propelled as a response to the extractive logics of neoliberal accumulation *from above*. In making reference to baroque economies, the author notes that "the baroque persists as a set of interlaced modes of doing, thinking, perceiving, fighting, and working; as that which supposes the superimposition of nonreconciled terms in permanent re-creation" (14).

⁴ According to queer theory in the US, Elizabeth Freeman's *Time binds* (2010) and Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time & Place* (2005), articulate a critique of temporal linearity, or straight time, within the neoliberal practices in post-capitalist contexts and their impact on the development of a queer culture of resistance. José Joaquín Blanco's essays precede a similar argumentation regarding the neoliberal and capitalist logics set in place in Mexico during the 1990s, while warning against a depoliticized act of sexual dissidence.

⁵ At the intersection of materiality, history, and glamour, Wayne Koestenbaum passionately reflects on a series of codes that constitute what he calls an "opera queen": "Diva gowns tell stories. Narratives arise from the seams and the turbans and the fine threads of many colors. Each part of the gown of the coiffure carries with it a period reference, a vanished code . . . The secret that the diva gown conceals is a lack of taste, or too much taste, taste grown grotesquely independent of its context" (122). This capacity of objects to narrate and transmit knowledge is an element of what I refer to as *broken record*.

⁶ In the context of the Americas, situating queer epistemologies that consider the contradictions between cultural practices of consumption and queer desire in a neoliberal era, requires activists, writers, and scholars to question the sites from which the very concept of queerness and its several manifestations are articulated. Although the term *queer* per se respond to a slur in English, its localization, translation, mediation, and politicization have reignited a debate on the cultural contingencies of sexual dissidence across the Americas. In the context of Latin America, the term finds its equivalent in words such as *joto*, *marica*, *pájaro*, *maricón*, *tortillera*, *bollera*, *cuir*, among others. The term *travesti* not only highlights the

contradictions of a sexual identity, but also insists on a performative practice of gender insubordination. Adopting an intersectional approach, the work of Jaime Manrique, *Eminent Maricones* (1999), intertwines homosexuality, diaspora, queer writing, and autobiography in order to unveil a kind of engaged writing that “defies the definition of what a maricón is supposed to be” (113). Manrique’s contribution also pinpoints to a necessary political positioning and an ethical commitment to the cultural criticism around sexually dissident cultures. As in the case of several authors situated in the U.S., including José Esteban Muñoz, Laura G. Gutiérrez, Juana María Rodríguez, Marcia Ochoa, Deborah Vargas, Larry La Fountain-Stokes, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba, cultural criticism, ethics, and politics intersect to inform a theoretical and methodological framework. A queer analytic in the Americas has benefited from hemispheric dialogues with critics, such as Diego Falconí Travéz, Sayak Valencia, Julieta Paredes, Yolanda Arroyo Pizarro, Leticia Sabsay, Giuseppe Campuzano, Antonio Marquet, Norma Mogrovejo, Richard Miskolci, Rodrigo Parrini, to name only a few. In resonance with David William Foster’s invitation to move beyond the tyranny of patriarchal textual criticism, queer epistemologies from Latin/o America can establish generative engagements with popular, digital, visual, and mass media subcultures, from urban, rural, and transnational spaces. In the case of Mexico and drag cabaret performance, the work of Carlos Monsiváis, Antonio Marquet, Paul Julian Smith, Miguel Capistrán, Oswaldo Calderón, Michael K. Schuessler, or Antonio Bertrán, and Rodrigo Laguarda, have been pivotal in tracing and mapping out a queer subculture in urban Mexico.

⁷ Of note in Cabral’s performance is the stark allusion to Pedro Almodóvar’s film, *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980). In particular, the performance title signals the countercultural ideology and aesthetics commonly associated with *la movida madrileña*. Even if Cabral’s performance does not include an Almodovarian plot, its title foretells a transgressive theme.

⁸ Denis de Rougemont, in *Love in the Western World* (1939), traces the historical basis for the mythical construction of romantic love. The author argues that the practices of courtship, the marital ceremony of ring exchanging, and monogamy, were misappropriations of secret religious customs of the Cathars, who were accused, chased, and persecuted in the Cathar heresy during the thirteenth century. In spite of the original purposes of such religious practices, de Rougemont’s account serves to historically trace the association between intimacy, progress, and development, especially when considering that courtship practices are understood under a teleology of transcendence. In this sense, the social bonding that leads to finding love is framed within a structure of temporal ascension and would be irrupted and flawed if such structured is jettisoned.

⁹ On September 10, 2016, various conservative groups of a catholic-based ideology marched out on the streets in 19 Mexican states, including Aguascalientes, Jalisco, and Chiapas, to express their opposition against Enrique Peña Nieto’s proposed bill for equal marriage, and adoption rights for same-sex couples across the country. The so-called *Marcha de la Familia* served as a precedent for the official spokesperson of the archdiocese of Mexico, to claim that a homosexual dictatorship was on the rise. The incendiary claim, “Imperio gay en México,” took a different turn when it became a social media phenomenon that backfired at the Catholic church in Mexico with a series of memes by LGBT collectives, including the tag name “#imperio gay.”

¹⁰ These quotes from the original newspaper article in Spanish can be found in “El amor, único bastión del teatro La Capilla: Jesusa Rodríguez”. *Periódico La Jornada*, 25 de enero de 2013.
<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/01/25/cultura/a03n1cul>

¹¹ During the month of August, this performance venue houses, annually, The International Festival of Cabaret, as one of the few cultural spaces to promote the popular genre of cabaret in Mexico. *Las Reinas Chulas*, an all-female cabaret troupe formed in 1998 by Marisol Gasé, Cecilia Sotres, Ana Francis Mor and Nora Huerta, regularly perform at *Teatro-bar El Vicio*. Their cabaret performances also play with political satire and incorporate drag into their performances. For more information about this cabaret troupe, visit: <https://lasreinaschulas.com/webreinas/nosotras/>

¹² The International Festival of Cabaret has also chosen *El Foro A Poco No*, *Teatro Cabaret*, as part of its performance venues during this annual festival in Mexico City. All of these venues are located along the street *República de Cuba*, in downtown Mexico City. In August 2017, an envoy of local government authorities closed a series of downtown bar, including *El Oasis* and *Bar Viena*, on the premise that such venues lacked the proper official documentation that certified their functioning. The LGBT collectives in Mexico City read this closure as a radical measure to dismantle a gay corridor in the downtown core, deploying the principles of social cleansing to minimize queer night life in the city:
<https://www.excelsior.com.mx/comunidad/2017/08/18/1182469>

¹³ *Desde Andalucía* released in 1988 was a success on Latin Music charts, such as the 1988-1989 US *Billboard* for Latin Pop Albums. In 1989, the album was awarded the “Lo Nuestro” Award by Univisión.

¹⁴ Carlos Monsiváis argues that Juan Gabriel acquired a mythical presence that forged a very unique market in the constellation of Mexican popular culture: “Un ídolo es un convenio multigeneracional, la respuesta emocional a la falta de preguntas sentimentales, una versión difícilmente perfeccionable de la alegría, el espíritu romántico, la suave o agresiva ruptura de la norma” (266).

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