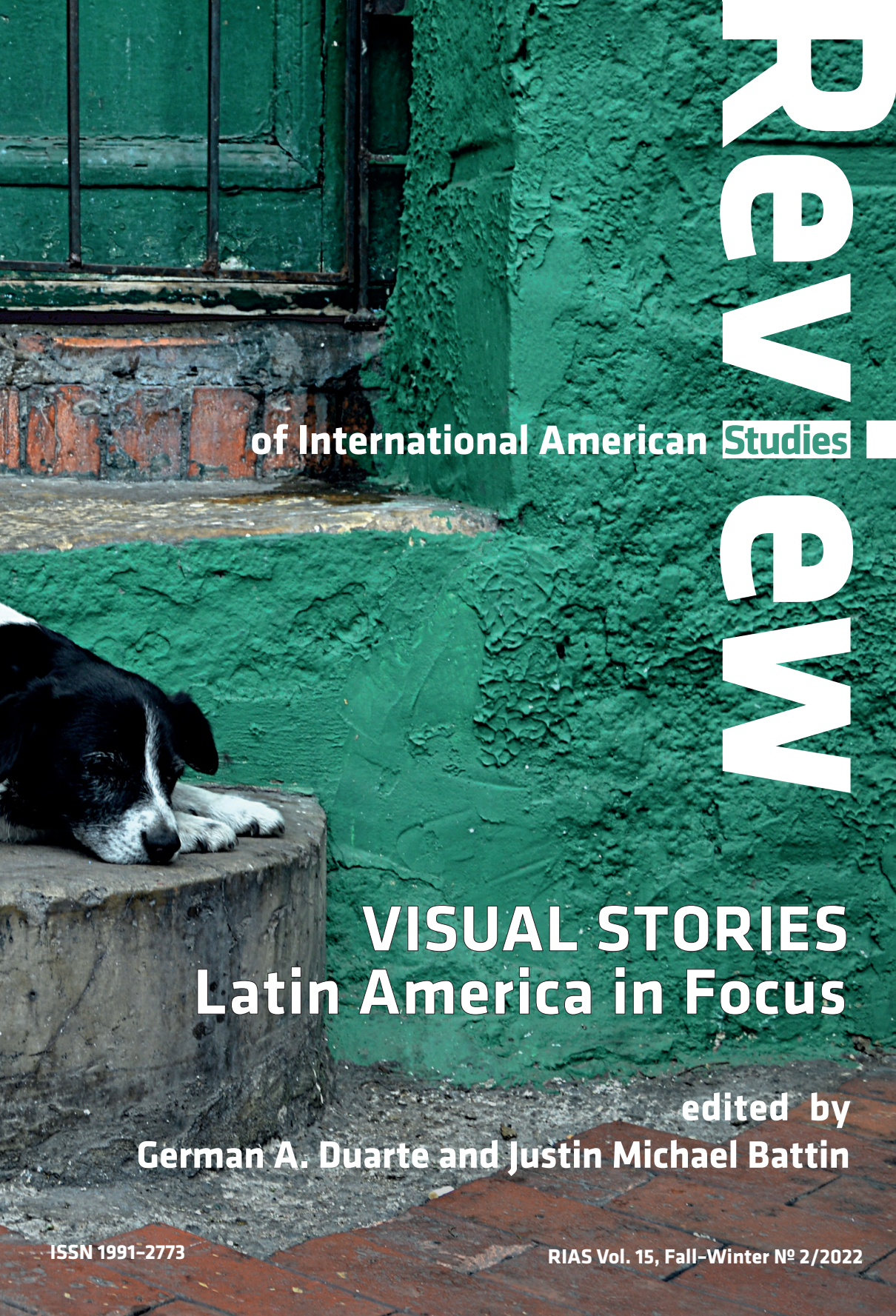

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of International American Studies

VISUAL STORIES
Latin America in Focus

edited by
German A. Duarte and Justin Michael Battin

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COVER ART: *A Colombian Impression* by Justin Michael Battin © 2022

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SNAPSHOTS

On the Value of Photo/Sensitivity

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June 1999. My first day of the Melville and the Sea International Conference of the Melville Society; the first minutes of my exploration of the Mystic Seaport Museum—the truly mystical, living Museum of America and the Sea in Connecticut, USA. Wandering in wonder, I err into one of the sheds on the waterfront, where, next to a small display of a collection of authentic harpoons and lances, hangs a reproduction of an image worth more than a thousand words:

Nantucket Sleigh Ride (ca. 1913). A photograph from the Robert Cushman Murphy Collection. Courtesy, Mystic Seaport Museum, USA, 2022 (CC-BY-NC-ND).

To an untrained eye, the photograph captures a whaleboat tossed by massive waves, manned with a crew of six, and *apparently* struggling to weather an impossible gale. The hood of spray over the bow enwraps the harponeer, who, ghost-like, holds on for dear life; the oarsmen break their backs to stabilize the puny vessel lest it is swallowed by the raging ocean; the mast and the sail, useless, rest against the bulwarks; the boat-header, almost entirely enveloped in his foul weather gear, does his utmost to fend off the overwhelming swell; the man crouching next to him frantically bails out water, that keeps pouring in over the sides. *Apparently*, again, the image is nothing short of a horrifying document of the epic battle of the human will against the inhuman fury of the ocean.

And yet, someone more inquisitive, or slightly more experienced in matters nautical will indubitably notice that the ocean *around* the whaleboat is calm, almost flat. They will see that the sail is carefully furled around the dismantled mast, and that the oarsmen actually face the boat's bow *pushing* the oars rather than pulling them. Although their boat is indeed in danger of being flooded, the whalemen, evidently, do not struggle with the *weather*. To understand what it is that the sailors fight, to fully grasp the "present" captured by the image, we must first "fancy ourselves" in the past: in the moment directly preceding the scene,

> [...] in an open boat (so slight that three men might walk off with it), some twelve or fifteen miles from your ship, and about a hundred times as far from the nearest land, giving chase to one of the oleaginous monsters. "Pull, pull, you lubberly hay makers!" cries the boat-header, jumping up and down in the stern-sheets in a frenzy of professional excitement, while the gasping admirers of Captain Marryatt and the sea, tug with might and main at the truckling oars—"Pull, pull, I say; break your lazy backs!" Presently the whale is within "darting distance," and you hear the roar of the waters in his wake. How palpitating the hearts of the frightened oarsmen at this interesting juncture! My young friends, just turn round and snatch a look at that whale. There he goes, surging through the brine, which ripples about his vast head, as if it were the bow of a ship. Believe me, it's quite as terrible as going into battle, to a raw recruit. (Melville 1847 :105)

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Horrifying as it might be to a "raw recruit," the moment of the confrontation is inevitable: the world awaits the fuel for their lamps, and the old salts, brave enough to reach for the liquid gold, work for profit. Soon, the whaleboat will sneak up close enough to the whale for the harponeer to dart his deadly weapon:

> "Stand up and give it to him!" shrieks the boat-header at the steering oar, to the harpooner in the bow. The latter drops his oar, and snatches his "iron." It flies from his hands—and where are we then, my lovelies? It's all a mist, a crash,—a horrible blending of sounds and sights, as the agonized whale lashes the water around him into suds and vapor—dashes the boat aside, and at last rushes madly through the water, towing after him the half-filled craft, which rocks from side to side, while the disordered crew clutch at the gunwale to avoid being tossed out. Meanwhile, all sorts of horrific edged tools, lances, harpoons, and spades, are slipping about; and the imminent line itself—smoking round the logger-head, and passing along the entire length of the boat—is almost death to handle, though it grazes your person. (Melville 1847: 105)

Unable to free himself of the barbed harpoon lodged deeply in his hump, the "agonized whale" makes a desperate attempt to flee his oppressors, towing the light whaleboat at an enormous speed. The whalemen must carefully observe the gigantic mammal's actions; facing the bow, they push the oars to warrant the stability of their tiny vessel until the animal either sounds, grows weary with fatigue and pain, or attacks them:

> [...] As yet, you have but simply fastened to the whale; he must be fought and killed. But let imagination supply the rest; the monster staving the boat with a single sweep of his ponderous flukes; taking its bows between his jaws (as is frequently the case) and playing with it as a cat with a mouse. Sometimes he bites it in twain, sometimes crunches it into chips, and strews the sea with them. (Melville 1847 :105)

No doubt, studying the image, we can picture "the rest," especially if we are familiar with the sea, or with maritime literature, such as Dana's or Melville's. In his above-quoted review of J. Ross Browne's *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise* (1846), published in *The Literary World* on March 6th, 1847, the future author of *Moby-Dick* finds it rather difficult to restrict his own literary ambitions, which—incidentally—makes his text so wonderful to read. Sensa-

tionalist though his review may seem, it is true that the whaling industry entailed more casualties than any other branch of business in America, especially bearing in mind that

> […] by 1833, 70,000 persons and $70,000,000 were tied up in whaling and such associated crafts as shipbuilding, sail-lofts, smiths to make toggle irons, the thieving outfitters, their agents and the whores of ports like New Bedford; […] by 1844 (peak years roughly 1840–1860) the figure is up to whaling competes successfully in attracting capital to itself with such opening industries as textiles and shoes, and the export of whale products–one-fourth of the catch–is third to meat products and lumber. (Olson 1947: 18)

Illustrative as they are, these facts plausibly explain why anyone in their right mind would put themselves (or, historically, *himself*) in the situation of the crewmen of the tiny whaling boat portrayed by Robert Cushman Murphy in the course of his naturalist expedition on board the brig *Daisy*.[1] What they *do not* explain is why the whalemen would dub the element of the hunt captured by the photographer "the Nantucket sleigh ride"–a phrase which invokes associations with enjoyment rather than fear.

While the "chivalric" contempt for danger could explain such a wording, the evident enthusiasm with which Melville paints the literary analogon of the photograph betrays a poorly camouflaged memory of the adrenaline rush that he himself, certainly not a "new recruit," may have once felt. Not unlike Melville in the first half of the 19th

1. The *Time* Editors observe that "Robert Cushman Murphy is a naturalist–one of the world's great authorities on birds. In the course of six decades of tireless devotion to nature, he has achieved an eminence that is substantiated by half a dozen medals, numerous academic honors, nine books and more than 500 articles. His monumental work, *Oceanic birds of South America*, is a classic in its field. He has been associated with the American Museum of Natural History in New York for 44 years and was the first curator of oceanic birds in any museum anywhere. […]" (Cushman Murphy 1965: ix). Cushman Murphy, who died on March 20, 1973, was "[…] Lamont Curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History. He went on numerous oceanic expeditions and […] wrote several major books on [marine birds]. He described a species of petrel which is now known as Murphy's petrel. Mount Murphy in Antarctica and Murphy Wall in South Georgia are named after him." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Cushman_Murphy, accessed 12 Nov. 2022.

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century, many a contemporary big game hunter, rock climber, expedition sailor, deep water diver, or skydiver, are ready to risk their lives because they find this profound bodily sensation worth more than the sense of safety. Yet, in all probability, the problem is even more complex than this.

Melville's "romantic" review, combined with Olson's "modernist" matter-of-fact insight into the history of whaling, allows us to see Cushman Murphy's image as a snapshot of "being-*in-media-res*," or, in other words, a photographic version of *Dasein*.[2] The *studium*, i.e. the image's potential to expand our knowledge of the world, is thus energized by the *punctum*,[3] the unique property of a given visual to derail our train of thought, to springboard us out of our comfort zone into awe or anxiety. Even a brief, critical, reflection on Cushman Murphy's photograph will make us realize that the emotions of the whalers, which we may have projected upon them as obviously negative, taking for granted that what we face is an image of a boat in a gale, are "out of focus." Or, to use a different photographic metaphor, like the absent "before" and the absent "after" of the scene, and like the absent whale towing the boat, these elusive affects, escaping the rigidity of the (otherwise) "realist" photographic frame, impose themselves on us empathically, through the experience of the *punctum*.

If, however, our experience of the *punctum* allows us to see the *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* as a portrait of *Dasein*, then one could also claim that our experience of the *studium* follows, which, in turn, allows us to interpret the same image as a unique, modernist, document of *Mitsein*. If the "bliss" of literature may become transformed into the "pleasure" of text,[4] then the painful, possibly shocking, hurtful, or otherwise traumatic *punctum* may become the *point of departure* for the widening of our knowledge of the world in terms of our perceptions of relations within it.

2. The term, now a component of the basic glossary of philosophy, cultural studies, and literary studies, has been introduced by Martin Heidegger in his seminal *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2010).
3. Both terms, familiar to cultural studies scholars, have been introduced by Roland Barthes in his *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (Barthes 1981).
4. The concept, again, is Roland Barthes's (Barthes 1975).

The reading of the image through the lens of *Mitsein* seems to be the (after)effect of the *punctum*: the thrill of the discovery of "obvious" regularities that question our initial projections. Exploring the picture, we expand our fascination with the sailors-*in-media-res* (people in a liminal situation, in which language is helpless, and in which humans vitally depend on one another) to encompass the very person witnessing and documenting their plight/merriment: Robert Cushman Murphy.

> [...] Young Bob Murphy was fresh out of college when, in July of 1912, he sailed from the West Indies aboar the half-brig *Daisy*. He was bound for South Georgia Island on the edge of Antarctica, only a few hundred miles from the end of the world, armed with a commission from the American Museum to study and bring back specimens of the birds and other animals of the South Atlantic. [...] More to the point, he was leaving behind his young bride, Grace, married to him only four and a half-months before. Urging him to make the voyage for the sake of his career, Grace had moved their wedding date forward. The *Daisy* would be out of touch with civilization for at least a year. Murphy resolved that in addition to making the scientific notes his job required, he would keep a log for Grace that told her everything he did and how he felt about it. From the raw material of that loving report–which ran to 400,000 words–*Logbook for Grace* was later distilled. (Cushman Murphy 1965: x)

Needless to say, parallel to the logbook entries came the author's photographic documentation of his expedition. Yet, bearing in mind that still photography was not invented until the third decade of the 19th century, and that before that the need to "tell the truth" about the reality ordinarily unavailable to the world could not be realized by means other than verbal or painterly, as well as remembering that the roll film was only invented at the end of the 19th century and that the world needed to wait for automated point-and-shoot cameras until the 1980s, one must conclude that Cushman Murphy's "photostory" is unique for more than just one reason.

On the one hand, the *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* and all other photographs taken (and developed!) during the expedition of the *Daisy* are now available as glass lantern slides: positive transparent photographs made on a photosensitive glass pane covered with a silver gelatin emulsion, exposed to light in contact with the negative image.[5]

5. The Author used two cameras: his own Graflex camera and a reflex camera borrowed from a friend, Jack Nichols (Cushman Murphy 1965: 87).

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Such "proto-slides" were to be shown to the audience with the aid of the "magic lantern," and, by extension, they were meant to be shared with others *along* with the verbal narrative, possibly not only in the professional context, but also in the context of cameraderie, or even intimacy. Importantly, however, participating in a whaling expedition on board the *Daisy*, Cushman Murphy had no other option but to economize on his limited stock of the photosensitive material. Therefore, out of necessity, he did not only have to carefully chose the objects worth representing, but also to decide how to fit these objects in the frame.

On the other hand, aware of the fact that his own thrill of discovery would not have been transmittable to anyone who had not physically shared his experience, he felt the gravity of his decisions to select objects and scenes that would not only be representative of the daily life aboard the whaling vessel, but also capable of *emulating the experience* by means of what today we dub *punctum*, as if aware that discursive narrative alone might not suffice to make the lived truth palpable to others.

Let us consider the point above. The carefully planned and brilliantly executed *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* photograph has its verbal equivalent in Robert Cushman Murphy's *Logbook for Grace*. The entry, "worth" 1986 words, reads as follows:

> *October 10. Evening*. This has been the most exciting day of my life. Even though the cabin lamp is a poor, dull flicker, I must pour my experiences onto paper while they are still fluid.
>
> The morning broke gray and overcast, with a strong wind whipping the ocean. About eight o'clock a squall blew up, bringing a torrent of rain which was just at its height when a school of sperm whales rose a few ship's lengths to windward. The boats were at once cleared on the davits and all hands stood by. The rain presently slackened and the weather brightened enough for us to see at least two pods of whales spouting off our quarter,[6] and others astern. When the order, "Lower away!"[7] was shouted and echoed, I slid down into the mate's boat and took stroke oar,[8] replacing a Dominican who remained with the shiptenders.

6. A ship's quarter is the rear end of the side of a vessel (all explanations of nautical terms below—Paweł Jędrzejko.
7. A command to lower the whaleboats.
8. The stroke oar is the oar located nearest the stern of a boat.

Seeing that the spouts were fast pulling to leeward, we stepped the mast, after reefing, for the wind was brisk and the sea choppy. As soon as the whales had sounded, indicating that they were foraging and not alarmed, we zigzagged and jibed[9] to hold our headway, while we lashed the line tubes to the thwarts, poured sea water over the rope, and put all gear in order. Then the blue waif[10] at the *Daisy*'s masthead signaled "whales up" and gave direction. Mr. da Lomba pulled the tiller[11] sharply; once more we jibed and made off before the wind, with the other two boats running abreast of us on either side. By this time it was raining a deluge again and we were drenched to the skin.

While we were bearing down towards the school, which was now steaming at the surface in preparation for the next dive, two good-sized bulls popped up unexpectedly just ahead and we were whisked upon them. The nearer of the pair crossed our bow and, while its gray body glided along a little under water, Emiliano drove the iron into the whale's right side, just in front of the hump. As the beast leaped forward, his whole massive head breached above the surface and his flukes grazed the keel as he cleared us and dashed to windward, making the wet line groan when it tauntened and began to rub round the loggerhead.[12]

Sail was dropped, mast lowered, and rudder unshipped, while harponeer and mate changed ends, the latter forsaking the helm for the still more ticklish business of lancing.

Our whale's run was for only a short distance. Coming up with others of the school, he joined them, and we could see him lying calmly at the surface. We four oarsmen now hauled line, the boatsteerer holding the turn around the loggerhead and coiling slack in the stern sheets[13] as it was paid in. We pulled as hard and as fast as we could and, when we neared the whale, a strange sight was presented through the curtain of rain. Our whale lay wallowing, the harpoon shaft projecting from its blueberry back; beyond him were three or four half-grown calves. On the near side lay a second bull, belly up, his jaw and most of his head out of water, and our harpoon line caught between two of his teeth.

Mr. da Lomba gesticulated frantically for the other boats to come up, and we waited silently but in a shiver of impatience. Before Mr. Vincent's boat could arrive, the bull which had fouled our line, and which had probably been puzzled by the obstacle, allowed it to slip from his jaw. We then hauled up on the whale to which we were fast and when the keel pressed his side, the mate drove in the long keen lance to the socket. Within the same instant the hump hove up, the great flukes reared into the air,

9. To jibe is to cross the line of the wind while sailing downwind.
10. A signal flag.
11. A lever connected to the shaft of the rudder, with which a boat is steered.
12. A wooden post on a whaleboat, around which the harpoon rope is secured.
13. The aft section of the open boat.

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our bow went down with a jerk, and we shipped a couple of barrels of water as the whale sounded.[14]

"Forty-barrel bull,"[15] said Mr. da Lomba.

Forty-barrel bull! I recalled then what the Old Man had told me long before, that no big sperm whale is likely to make as much excitement for a boat's crew as a lusty forty-barrel bull, enjoying the most active period of his watery life.

For a quarter of an hour we bobbed about quietly within a small area, the line snubbed round the loggerhead, Emiliano expressing the sentiment of all good boatsteerers by slackening it as little as possible and only at the last moment of safety. Then the expected burst of vapor appeared to windward, the lopsided head began to seesaw with the pointed hump, and we shot ahead on our sleigh ride.

The sun broke through the louring clouds, thawing out our goose flesh while we strained at the line and gradually gained on our unwillingly harnessed beast. But the whale had been goaded to alertness, and the lance puncture had been too far aft to affect his staying powers. Before we attained even pitch-poling distance,[16] he sounded again, jerked us about, carried us back two miles before the wind, and then, without rising to the surface, plunged deeper, tearing the smoking line after him and soon exhausting the two hundred fathoms in the large tub. When the contents of the small tub began to follow, we were in a quandary. But in the nick of time one of the other boats sailed alongside; we bent on borrowed line, and saved our forty barrels!

In the middle of this fight into which I was putting all I had, I confess to a certain sympathy with the enemy. It seemed reasonable at least that after being pricked with the harpoon that still galled him, and pierced through with the horrible lance, the whale should wish to steer clear of us. This, however, was not at all the mate's idea of good form and fair play. Standing like an armed crusader in the bow of the boat, Long John da Lomba would scratch his hear after the whale had sounded, and mutter, "I cain't understand' what make that animile so goodam shy!"

Our status, I thought from time to time, was that of the tin can on a dog's tail. We annoyed the whale, but were otherwise pretty helpless.

Time flies with a fighting whale on one's hands. The sun climbed to the zenith and its pleasant beams alternated with cold showers while we sped over the rugged, white-capped Atlantic, wearing the skin off our palms in this yet undecided tug-of-war. The whale battled nobly for his life. He tried sounding, spinning, and running all ways with respect to the wind. At one time he was towing three whaleboats, besides two

14. When a whale "sounds," he dives.
15. An adult male whale estimated to deliver forty barrels of whale oil.
16. Pitch-poling is an element of whale-hunting technique, involving an arched pitch of a long light lance attached to a rope at the animal.

drogue tubes,[17] one of which is alleged to offer as much resistance as four boats. Watching one of these tubs dragged through the water at high speed made me marvel that the single tiny harpoon was not ripped from its anchorage in the blubber.

During a midday tempest, the roughest period of our chase, the whale pulled us cross-seas through the troughs and crests so that combers slopped over the gunwales. It was then that we kicked off our oil-skin pants (I was the only man wearing shoes), so as to be unencumbered for swimming. Over and over again the bow was pulled completely under water, because a boatsteerer hates to slacken line. Three times we half swamped and had to let the whale steal line while all hands bailed; indeed, the piggins and our sou'westers[18] were employed thus more or less continuously

I have a dreamlike mental background for the day's play—the choppy, spumy water and the varying sky, the heliotrope Portuguese men-o'-war that seemed to bob past us, the bright flying fish scared up, the inquisitive Mother Carey's chickens[19] that fluttered astern; and, focus of it all, straight ahead, the rocking, shiny back of our forty-barrel bull, with an impertinent little harpoon sticking there.

The brig appeared to shunt about magically, being now abeam, now close aboard off the bow, now nearly hull down astern. Fortunately, we were moving mostly in wide circles, for otherwise we should have been towed out of sight and would have to cut the line. Time and again we slacked away and tried to give another boat an opportunity to sail upon the brute and plant a second iron, but he was all wariness. When the boats came ever so softly within three or four lengths, he would kick up his big flukes and be gone. Mr. da Lomba eventually shot a bomb lance[20] into the whale's back, but the rubber-feathered end of it broke off and went whizzing over the sea, while the cylinder failed to explode. Three more bombs from a shoulder gun were likewise vainly spent, and the mate concluded that the charges were watersoaked.

The turning point of the struggle came when the frantic whale once more fell in with a gam of his fellows. The calming influence of neighbors was soon apparent, for he allowed us to draw right toward him. We pulled ourselves through an acre of sperm whales, big bulls that we might have touched with oars, cows at arms' length, and tiny calves, ten or twelve feet long, with huge remoras clinging to their flanks. Such company lay unconcernedly awash all about us, but we paid it scant

17. A drogue tube is a device designed to slow down the movement of a vessel, or, in this case, of a whale attempting to escape the hunters.
18. A piggin is a small vessel used to bail water out of the boat. A sou'wester is an oilskin hat used by seamen; in this context, the hats are used to bail water out of the boat.
19. A stormy petrel (*Thalasidroma pelagica*).
20. A whale-hunting device containing an explosive charge, shot from a shoulder gun.

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attention because it is quite sufficient to be fast to one sperm whale at a time.

"Shush, easy, easy boys," whispered Mr. da Lomba; "trim the boat; don't shift your quids."

We hauled softly along the length of another whale and, when our line was as short as a dog leash, the mate braced his thigh in the clumsy cleat, raised his long powerful arms, and buried the five-foot shank of the lance in blubber and flesh. The tortured whale quivered and sank. We peered tensely over the side for his dark hulk, knowing that the sounding would be brief and that he might rise beneath us. The mate pounded and pried the twisted lance shaft into a semblance of straightness.

"Stern all!" Up came the whale under our keel. While we just avoided capsizing, the lance struck home twice or thrice again through the froth before the whale got under way on another lap of his race. Then everything was repeated. Once more we were drenched. Again we bailed and hauled and slackened and hauled and bailed.

Finally, the second officer's boat, which had been back to the brig, transferred to us a case of dry bombs. Late in the afternoon, when we once more entered a group of whales, the crucial opportunity was seized. A bomb was shot into the brute's lungs, where it exploded with a muffled crack. In his leap, he half filled our boat with water for the last time, but he had no longer had the breath to sound. His spout, formerly so thin and white, reflecting tiny rainbows in the rays of the low sun, now became first pink and then crimson and gouted.

"His chimney's afire!" said Mr. da Lomba, with a heartless chuckle.

Mr. Almeida's boat closed in with ours. Lances were thrust between the whale's ribs, held there, and churned, until the creature went into his ghastly flurry, all the while belching squids from his gullet until we floated in a slimy pool of their remains.

He died and turned fin out after giving us nine thrilling hours. We chopped a hole through one of his flukes, attached a line, and rested, weary but content, munching hard bread, drinking fresh water, and awaiting the arrival of the distant brig which, happily, was then to windward. After all the bluster of the day, the sun set in a calm sky. Mars, burning red, followed closely on the same track, and was hanging like a lamp on the waters when the *Daisy* bore down and gathered us in. (Cushman Murphy 1965: 124–130)

The narrative, although nominally a realistic journal entry, documenting the hunt from the moment of spotting the school of whales until the conclusion of the chase, evidently betrays the writer's literary flair. The first desciptive paragraphs, concrete and matter-of-fact, soon yield to more complex, dramatized forms of the approximation of the experience of the chase. The whale becomes "a beast" whose

head is "massive" and whose "flukes graze the keel"; the enormous power of the animal towing the whaleboat is such that the rope around the loggerhead is "smoking"; the crew of the boat "kick off" their oil-skin pants, so as to be "unencumbered for swimming," should the "frantic," "tortured" whale cause the boat to capsize ("because a boatsteerer hates to slacken line"). Petrels, following in the wake of the chase, are "inquisitive," the brig "appeares to shunt about magically," and the whole drama comes to its end under red light of Mars. Cushman Murphy skilfully builds the tension by interspersing his first-person report with Mr. da Lomba's commands (which enhances the sense of immediacy) and his dramatic, often jocular, interjections (offering the minimum of comic relief). Resorting to techniques characteristic of creative fiction, he appeals to the affective capacity of his readers, aware that even the most meticulous "facto-graphic" description of the hunt will be in vain if the audiences, especially the readers finding the nautical vocabulary foreign, fail to fill the spots of indeterminacy with emotions. And even though the narrative covers the preparation for the chase, the chase itself, and the well-deserved rest after hard work, it struggles hard to achieve what the very limited frame of the *Nantucket Sleigh Ride* allowed Robert Cushman Murphy to attain without a single word.[21]

His "freedom from excess" has proven to be most productive: out of necessity, the photographer adopted the position of responsibility. To shoot his picture, he could not afford to experiment much. Unlike contemporary photographers (equipped with high resolution digital cameras, able to afford water or weatherproof casings,

21. "*Logbook for Grace* is one of those rare books that are published to the applause and admiration of the critics and then unaccountably sink out of sight. Published in 1947, it received lavish praise from reviewers everywhere. 'A book to set on the shelf beside *Moby Dick* and *Two Years before the Mast*,' said one review; another called it a book to 'live forever in the solid and lasting literature of a civilization.' Yet by 1950 the book was out of print and apparently forgotten by the public and publisher alike. It deserves a far better fate. Logbook is the fascinating chronicle, in diary form, of a voyage of one of the last Yankee whaleships in the twilight days of sail. More than than, it is an adventure story, a travelogue, a naturalist's notebook and a charming love story all rolled into one--written, in must be added, by a man whose profession is not writing, although he has written scientific works." the Editors' of *Time* "Preface." (Cushman Murphy 1965: xi).

and having a whole gamut of high-tech lenses and memory cards taking almost no space, yet warranting the owner and almost limitless storage capacity, at their disposal), the photographer of the *Dasein* had to embrace *Mitsein* by way of careful, dedicated observation. *Nantucket Sleigh Ride*, like his other images preserved in the Mystic Seaport Museum Collections, are the fruit of *caring for*, but also *worrying about*, those, with whom he shared the deck, as well as of his care for his beloved wife, "the well-spring of [his] experiences and of all the best that have followed,"[22] who herself could not participate in her husband's expedition.

Through his glass lantern images, Robert Cushman Murphy gives his audiences the "realist" truth, employing "modernist means" to "romantically" emulate the emotions, without which no picture could be worth a mention, much less a thousand words.

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22. The full inscription to the book reads: "To Grace, The Well-Spring of These Experiences and of All the Best That Have Followed." The dedication is complemented with the fourth stanza of Robert Burns's poem "A Red, Red Rose." In the 1965 edition of the *Journal*, the author adds the following note: "December, 1965. Without Grace's clarvoyance in 1911–a trait ever since reaffirmed–the meaning of my opportunity would have gone unrealized: no voyage, no salty yarn; only different, less stimulating path towards a career. R.C.M." (Cushman Murphy 1965: title page).

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LATIN AMERICA IN FOCUS

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A key distinction of *Review of International American Studies* is its commitment to the notion that the Americas are a hemispheric and transoceanic communicating vessel. This angle provides a unique path to de-center the American Studies discipline, which has become tantamount to studies of the United States. This angle also expands the discipline beyond its traditional literary roots, inviting critical investigations into other forms of communicative media, such as cinema, television, and photography. Informed and inspired by this conceptualization of the discipline, this issue of *RIAS* is composed of several pieces specifically focused on Latin America, each of which employs a unique interpretive approach of visual media to, collectively and comprehensively, articulate how this multilayered cultural landscape manifests in our contemporary social imaginary.

The arbitrary delineation of the globe through the notion of 'the western world' has, seemingly, transformed the Latin American continent a no man's land. In its vast extension, this part of the planet seems condemned to exist between two worlds. Despite being part of the western hemisphere, and despite its deep Catholic tradition, this vast region is surprisingly excluded as a member of 'the west.' Yet, it was neither placed in 'the east,' nor on the other side of the wall, when the world was politically, culturally, and economically divided by the Iron Curtain. This land's

perpetual homelessness might be due to its consistent political instability, to the weakness of some of its democracies, or even its colonial past, one that bears no relation to the Commonwealth of Britain, a belonging that placed Australia in the *topos* of the West. These reasons, in addition to others, have fostered an understanding of Latin America as being generally alien to the 'western world.'

Being a no man's land, deprived of a hemisphere, and broadly unintelligible by the general imaginary of the western cultural industry, this continent, populated by almost 700-million people, was traditionally subjected to stereotypes formulated during the twentieth century, and that remained unchangeable in this new millennium. Latin America has become, for the global imaginary, a place of military *juntas*, a vast lowland displaying desertic features, a tropical yet savage jungle, a poverty-stricken *favela*, and a land fought over by romantic *revolutionarios*.

Certainly, the question remains if the obsolete model 'western world,' the also obsolete 'third world,' or 'periphery,' and even the in vogue 'global south' would be able to embrace and reproduce a closer image of this heterogenous and vast continent, and by extension if this generalization is able to denote a set of multiple series of social diversities. We doubt it. This doubt encouraged us to gather diverse scholars from diverse academic disciplines to contribute to this issue of *Review of International American Studies*. And this doubt, which was at a first glance only intuitive, brough us to avoid the topic of identity and representation as the main theme for this journal's issue. Our initial plan was to structure the series of contributions on some problematics relating to the photographic medium, a medium that is widely regarded as exerting an objective representation of reality, yet also places the pictorial representation on an undetermined semiotic field. The choice of photography was also a choice of intuition that we quickly abandoned since, in our twenty-first century mediascape, photography represents only one element of a fast and global visual stream that shapes and refashions the collective imaginary of the Latin American continent. Thus, we expanded our scope to include other media such as films, paintings, and any visual-oriented human expression that could provide insights

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on the complex and chaotic mechanism that formulates and constructs the imaginary on the turbulent entity that we call society.

The first contribution to the issue, a conversational exchange between German A. Duarte and Eva Leitolf, deals with the complex and problematic relationship between text and image. Through the Greek concept of *topos* (τόπος)—from which it seems to emerge the rivalry between text and image in the contemporary knowledge production—the text reformulates an interesting phenomenon raised with the development of digital technology: the spatialization of narratives. Once this theoretical framework is settled, the text proposes an analysis on the construction of social imaginaries, propaganda, and the mechanisms of meaning creation in our technological context. This first text develops arguments around a corpus composed by a series of photographic images that influenced Latin American public opinion and, at the same time, reinforced a series of stereotypes on that meridional part of the continent.

Next, Justin Michael Battin explores a series of photographs, taken in Cuba, through the lens of the "event of photography," a term emphasizing the temporal moment when a photographer, photographed subject, and camera encounter one another. With this interpretation, photographs are positioned not only as historical documents, but also as a civil and political matter, thus inviting new possibilities to read political life and issues through a visual dimension, as well as to trace different forms of power relations made evident during the 'event.' The author applies phenomenological reflection, via Heideggerian concepts, to explore the meshwork manifestation of these power relations, and articulate how they provide insights about one's place and responsibility within that 'event' in a range of relational contexts.

The third article, composed by Gustavo Racy, is an exploratory piece focused on the development of colonial visual culture. Racy argues how encounters between Europeans and Amerindians progressed from initially lacking in moral judgement to eventually serving as an apparatus to guarantee colonial control. Through Theodor de Bry's depictions of early European expeditions to the American continents, Racy suggests a relationship between visual representations of female protagonism,

cartography, and the development of early capitalism in the Latin American context.

Laura Fattori, in her reading of Laura Mora Ortega's *Matar a Jesús* (*Killing Jesus*, 2017), argues that violent and traumatic events result in not only the breakdown of language, but also the frameworks that give coherence to social worlds. Fattori demonstrates how the movie's main character, Paula, utilizes photographs as objects of memory to articulate the narrative of her father's murder. Further, by showing how the film is influenced by the filmmaker's own experiences as a victim of violence, Fattori demonstrates that recounting trauma, a recognizable practice across Colombia's mediascape, actually deepens the gap between reality and its representation.

The theme of past and memory is further explored in Bértold Salas-Murillo's analysis of *Italia 90: The Movie* (Gómez, 2014). The film, which depicts Costa Rica's first appearance in a World Cup, uses narrative tropes, visuals, and sounds to re-create the moment in such a way that invokes nostalgia in viewers. Yet, the film also 'creates' this moment by jettisoning archetypical sports tropes, such as those depicting epic triumphs, and instead conveys a more intimate story. He shows how the country, through sports, is not only united communally, but also is provided a vehicle to announce its entry into globalized society.

Diego H. Franco Cárdenas' contribution, composed in Spanish, deals with the *constumbrista* illustration in Colombia during the first half of the 19th century. Strongly influenced by the European Realism and Romanticism, this way of depicting everyday life represents a fundamental tool to better comprehend how the nation state manifested in this Andean part of the continent. Through an analysis of two illustrations authored by Ramón Torres Méndez, Franco Cárdenas highlights the appropriation, transformation, and adaptation of select European musical instruments and social practices, and how this phenomenon not only represented a fissure with colonial powers, but also determined the development of a *burgesía criolla* that owned the means of production and larger part of the national territory and the class of *campesinos* (peasant farmers). Through this analysis, Franco Cárdenas explores the presence of autochthon instruments in pictorial represen-

tations, the way these musical instruments produced the first identarian form of the independent Colombian state and how, by the end of the millennium, these same instruments, gave shape to an identarian Latin American form in the realm of rock music.

To conclude the thematic section of the issue, Beatriz Torres Insúa, also writing in Spanish, elucidates her experience in restoring *Cine Revista Salvadoreña*, a Latin American newsreel film. She offers insights into the difficulties that the cinematographic medium imposes on the practice of restoration, demonstrating the problems that a conservator faces while dealing with cinematographic documents, such as its fragility as an object of preservation, as well as the vast economic resources required, and the need for genuine social engagement. Torres Insúa shows that the conservator needs to restore and preserve not only a media object, but a whole experience, the experience of cinematography as a social practice that fundamentally shaped the world's social imaginary during the last century. From this particularity derives the large number of economic resources and the diversity of expertise involved, and especially the need to bring more attention to a field that, in non-developed countries, is almost inexistent.

The articles included in this volume merely scratch the surface of the conversations we would like to initiate about Latin America. As the American Studies discipline continues to broaden its scope, both in subject matter and methodological approaches, Latin America must be a key area of interest. This region, considered an orphan continent without hemisphere, offers a diverse series of experiences through which one could better understand the power struggle, visible in myriad synergies and cultural appropriations, between formerly colonized territories and the world's dominant cultural industries. This power struggle demonstrates how the region's multicultural essence and millenarian native American cultural expression reformulated and, in some cases, fully assimilated standard cultural expression derived from the industrial logic in cultural production. If the Americas are, indeed, a hemispheric and transhemispheric communicative vessel, then such expressions are necessary for consideration and investigation.

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THE NARRATIVES OF *TOPOS*:

Eva Leitolf's *Deutsche Bilder–eine Spurensuche* (1992–2008) and *Postcards from Europe* (since 2006)

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Fig. 1. Eva Leitolf, *Orange Grove*, Rosarno, Italy. (2010)

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ORANGE GROVE, ROSARNO, ITALY 2010

In January 2010 the price obtained by Calabrian citrus growers for their Moro and Navel oranges was five Euro cents per kilogram. They paid their mostly illegally employed and undocumented African and Eastern European seasonal workers between €20 and €25 for a day's work. Depending on the variety and the state of the trees a worker can pick between four and seven hundred kilograms of oranges in a day. The business was no longer profitable and many farmers left the fruit to rot.

During the 2009–2010 harvest there were between four and five thousand migrants living in and around Rosarno, most of them in abandoned buildings or plastic shelters, without running water or toilets.

On 7 January 2010, local youths fired an air-gun at African orange-pickers returning from work and injured two of them. The ensuing demonstration by migrant workers ended in severe clashes with parts of the local population, during which cars were set on fire and shop windows broken. Accommodation used by seasonal workers was burned and hundreds fled, fearing the local citizens or deportation by the authorities.

On 9 January, under police protection from jeering onlookers, about eight hundred Africans were bussed out to emergency accommodation in Crotone and Bari.

A Season in Hell: MSF Report on the Conditions of Migrants Employed in the Agricultural Sector in Southern Italy, January 2008; tagesschau.de, 10 January 2010; interviews with orange farmers and seasonal labourers, Rosarno, 27–29 January 2010

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Around the turn of the century, the notion of *topos* (τόπος) underwent an interesting and necessary transformation. Presumably due to the popularization of digital technology, scholars started to progressively uncover the complex nature of the word by expanding on its general meaning as it pertains to the sphere of speech. During the early years of the Digital Revolution, the word's intricate genealogy was rediscovered within the framework of human communication. In fact, in the course of the emerging technological transformation, certain academic disciplines rediscovered the word's original Greek meaning: "place" (τόπος). The process that shifted the term from the purely spatial notion to the semantic field of rhetoric—to the realm of speech and subsequently to the sphere of textual organization of information—is completely unknown. Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine that during this thousand-year semantic passage, the word became fundamental to the development of different instruments of human communication, specifically those developed in diverse technological contexts to relate events and convey experiences to future generations.

It is not by mere chance that the art of rhetoric, as a prominent technique of human communication, inextricably found its essence in the notion of *topos* (τόπος) through the figure of Simonides of Ceos. As Simonides is said to have taught, one effective technique of recall is to bring into the mind a spatial composition populated by objects from which the subject is able to reconstruct the information they wish to evoke. As described by William Atkinson:

> The system of Simonides was based upon the idea of position—it was known as "the topical system." His students were taught to picture in the mind a large building divided into sections, and then into rooms, halls, etc. The thing to be remembered was "visualized" as occupying some certain space or place in that building, the grouping being made according to association and resemblance. When one wished to recall the things to consciousness, all that was necessary was to visualize the mental building and then take an imaginary trip from room to room, calling off the various things as they had been placed. The Greeks thought very highly of this plan, and many variations of it were employed. (Atkinson 2019: 18)

The legend of Simonides' represents a very performative way of memorizing information by means of constructing a topology

of the event to recall. This art of memory, which essentially consisted of generating visualizations of spaces in the mind, subsequently represented a fundamental element of rhetoric. Known by its Latin popularization as the *Method of Loci*, this mnemonic device allows us to identify not only a technique through which one passed down information to future generations, but also the predominance of text over other forms of generating, organizing, preserving, and exchanging human experiences. As can be noted in Cicero's words, the concept of τόπος, as a purely spatial notion introduced to the art of memory, clearly acquired a textual dimension:

> [...] therefore, who would improve this part of the understanding, certain places must be fixed upon, and that of the things which they desire to keep in memory, symbols must be conceived in the mind, and ranged, as it were, in those places; thus the order of places would preserve the order of things, and the symbol of the things would denote the things themselves; so that we should use the places as waxen tablets, and the symbols as letters. (Cicero 1855: 326)

Through these words, it is not difficult to imagine the way τόπος started to become speech and subsequently was placed fully in the semantic sphere of text. The more humankind adopted writing technology to preserve and exchange information within an already complex society, the more the space (the image), as noted by Cicero, became "waxen tablets." The sequentiality and linearity of the text (above all, in its alphabetical form)[1] became our species' essential instrument of analysis and communication, and so, as posited by Cicero, the images (spaces) would be used as white pages to write upon. The space–the image–disappears and becomes text, and within this framework the notion of τόπος is uprooted from the realm of "topology" and placed fully in the sphere of the "topic." Further, the rupture from its original etymological sphere seemed over centuries to be a social necessity. The exchange of the notion of *topos* seen as a space and understood as a coordinate system belonging to the image was a necessity since *topos* was seen as a limit on knowledge

1. Through the lens of a long tradition of studies and influential works, one can assume that writing technology has a deep influence on human cognition. On this subject, see, Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to Present* (Havelock 1986).

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which had conceived the *logos* exclusively through the speech. It is not by chance that image represented for the construction of the *Polis* a problematic space in which reason is weakened. Plato's arguments against idolatry are well known, since images, by hiding the event in its mimetic process, were seen as anti-republican. Consequently, one could argue—and as diverse scholars maintain—linear writing and its irruption in Greece was a direct response to idolatry, which represented a problem for the construction of a social organization based on the *logos*. In fact, the notion of "citizenship" and the social organization of the *Polis* seemed to have directly derived from the "text" (*logos*), and, at the same time, seemed threatened by the forces of idolatry, which represented an experience of the world that was related through images. Curiously, the Platonic lesson vanished when society started its compulsive consumption of images, a mass media society that progressively imposed images in diverse forms of communication. It is certainly impossible to determine how and when the compulsive behaviour towards images began. One could argue that George Méliès, by realizing his *actualités reconstituées*, generated the social need for translating into cinematic images the whole info-sphere, which until that point had used only text (Duarte 2009). That is to say, it is possible to see in his reenactments the root of the need for translating into images, into audio-visual material, all forms of information in order for it to be experienced and consumed by the audience, an audience that has built its experience of the world on the cinematographic medium (Casetti 2015).

Nevertheless, by the end of the last millennium, human cognition, highly influenced by the linearity and sequentiality of the alphabet, started to undergo a radical change. The eruption of digital technologies resulted in the interruption of these textual-linear processes of thought. Text, as a serialized sequence embodied by the alphabetic writing system, started to acquire a hypertextual form, a non-linear form that clearly displays a spatial nature. As remarked by Bolter, from the popularization of digital technology emerged a kind of topographic writing, in contrast to the "topic" writing that had characterized literate humankind. Furthermore, according to Bolter, topographic writing—which

is not "the writing of a place, but rather a writing with places" (Bolter 1991: 25)—is not a phenomenon exclusive to writing technology, but rather embraces all former media, since the non-linear hypertextual form, being a space, could be populated by items that had previously exclusively pertained to other media. It is precisely this hypertextual form, which shaped the text into a series of multimedia links, that needed to be comprehended by means of spatial notions. Thus, this necessity placed the concept of τόπος at the centre of the discussion, but this time as a concept that had reclaimed its original meaning of "place."

Eva Leitolf's oeuvre can be analyzed through the lens of this phenomenon. In a particularly deconstructivist approach, Leitolf's *Deutsche Bilder—eine Spurensuche* (*German Images—Searching for Evidence*) (1992–2008) and *Postcards from Europe* (since 2006), fragments and disassembles the intricate notion of τόπος in its purely spatial nature and, by extension, reveals the mechanisms through which spaces become narrative, become text. In fact, by generating a geodesy of contemporaneous European social debacle, Leitolf's photographs evoke the awful events devoid of speech. Through an attempt to avoid the mechanism of representation, these series of images present *loci* populated by traumatic events that must be recalled, yet their evocation remains foreign, in its first narrative phase, to the mechanisms of speech. In a manner analogous to the method of *re*enactment, these topographic narratives become "topic" by bringing the space of the event into the collective discussion and elaboration of the social imaginary. The space, in her oeuvre, becomes a place for social discussion in which the topic seems no more than the topography of the contemporaneous social catastrophe, one built on a complete absence of empathy.

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German A. Duarte: Both works mentioned above, *Deutsche Bilder—eine Spurensuche* (1992–2008) and *Postcards from Europe* (since 2006), are built on a similar practice: you show public places that have been the scenes of tragic events, but the images themselves contain no clues, no signs, of the tragedy. You show empty spaces disconnected from the events of which they are

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the focus. Could you explain a little more your practice, and how you construct your work?

Eva Leitolf: Especially in the new part of the work *Deutsche Bilder–eine Spurensuche* (2006–2008), but also in *Postcards from Europe*, I was initially interested in structural questions: How are xenophobic and racist violence, and its victims depicted? What narratives and social discourses are sparked or fuelled by them?[2] And: for which political goals are these image narratives instrumentalized?[3] I understand both works as research projects to explore how counter-narratives can be developed using images.

In the process I abandoned completely the depiction of people and concentrated exclusively on crime scenes, alleged crime scenes, and other places connected with the subject of migration. In a way, I see these deserted, everyday places as empty spaces, as a stage. An empty space in images, the permanent and complete absence of people—of protagonists—often points all the more to the possibility of the presence of those people. Both works that we are discussing here refer to media images that most viewers already have in their heads. In this collective social imaginary, which is now predominantly drawn from images distributed worldwide and online, there are refugee women with small children shown in need of help, groups of men depicted threateningly at (European or American) border crossings, as well as overcrowded refugee boats, and skinheads giving the Hitler salute.

Deutsche Bilder–eine Spurensuche and *Postcards from Europe* provide the viewers with images and texts as tools that make it possible to question the construction, meaning, and context of an image. The aim is to address the viewers' own knowledge of images as well as their imagination.

GD: Can we say that the text belongs to the sphere of *logos*, while image belongs exclusively to the sphere of *pathos*? And is there any hierarchy (between image and text) in your approach?

2. For example, Der Spiegel, from 1989 to 1992, constructed with their headlines the narrative of "asylum seekers flooding" us, the "full boat," a "powerless state," and "Nazi kids."

3. In Germany, for example, after many years of so-called "asylum debate," and after violent and xenophobic riots, the constitution (*Grundgesetz*) was amended in 1993 to severely restrict the individual's right to asylum.

EL: The text postcards that accompany each photograph are drawn from many different sources. Media reports, police files, and press releases generally form the starting point of my research and inform the direction of my fieldwork. When travelling, I keep a diary and speak in person with people connected to the events: migrants, refugees, seasonal workers, activists, trade unionists, local politicians, border guards. These collected voices and sources later form the basis of my texts. In *Deutsche Bilder–eine Spurensuche*, these texts are made available to the viewers as a leaflet; in *Postcards from Europe*, there are text postcards next to the photographs that people can take.

For me, images and text are completely equal, what interests me is the tension between these media. I don't think of myself as a "photographer." The idea of photography as a universal language, for example as propagated in the 1950s by Edward Steichen in the MoMA exhibition *The Family of Man*, had already been impugned by Bertolt Brecht decades earlier: a photograph of a factory says nothing about the working conditions of the workers employed there. Since my studies at CalArts, I have engaged deeply with critical discourses on documentary photography and the politics of representation. Theorists and artists such as Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Martha Rosler, and also Allan Sekula have really inspired me. The exciting thing about photography for me is finding out how photography works, what spaces it can open up, where its limits are, and how dependent it is on context.

My work with images has different levels that function differently depending on the contextualization and the participation of the viewer/reader. The questioning of image and text, how they change or depend upon each other, is central to all of my works. Images change their meaning depending on the context. Text is an additional tool for reconstructing events, perhaps as an imaginary film on the "stage" of my photographs.

The idea that text generally belongs in the sphere of *logos*, while images belong exclusively in the sphere of *pathos*, describes quite well the conventional understanding of image and text in photojournalistic practice. In my work, on the other hand, clear boundaries and assignations dissolve: the image does not serve any need for "emotainment," does not allow any simple

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and thereby often relieving emotional reaction such as outrage, anger, or pity. My photographs refuse precisely an emotionalized form of articulation. Together with the texts, a tension arises that creates space for the most diverse reactions.

GD: I know we share a common admiration for Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004). The essay reminds us that the photochemical process of pictorial representation exerts, by its very nature, a force of reification: it transforms everything into an object. Sontag highlights this force by showing us that the process of photographic representation is in its very essence violent. A subject represented through photographic technology is transformed into an object, and this is an extreme exercise in violence. Do you agree that this could be extended to any form of pictorial representation? And, more importantly, do textual processes of representation exert the same violence?

EL: Yes, I agree. The reification of the subject is in itself and on multiple levels violent. People represented photographically are, through pictorial contextualisation, assigned very concrete characteristics and roles, such as perpetrator and victim. In many cases, these assignations allow the viewer to remain uninvolved: everything they see is done by others, happens to others. These images trigger emotional reactions such as fear or pity. However, one's own stance, one's own involvement, remains unquestioned.

The second question is more difficult to answer. Ultimately, of course, text can also exert violence, though in different ways to images. Always interesting in this context is Martha Rosler's photo-text installation *The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems* (1974–75). It seems to me that violence is already inscribed into the inadequacy of both media. The determination by images and language, the reduction inherent in both media, is in itself violent. However, both media can also be used in a more sophisticated and nuanced way: through making one's own preconditions transparent, through undertaking reasonable research, and through empowering the viewer.

GD: Would it be possible to posit that the absence of subjects, of people, in your images is an attempt at liberating the photographic process from that force of reification of the subject?

EL: Yes. As I described earlier, with the way I work, the reification of the subject disappears and the viewer finds themselves—lacking a surface to project their emotions onto—at the centre of their own focus. How does my reaction to what has happened change because of what I have read? What active role do I play in the construction of meaning?

GD: Your practice establishes an unconventional relationship between the object, its representation, and the subject. The process of representation that you have developed transforms the beholder, in my view, into an active entity. In front of an empty space, the beholder is encouraged (I would even say forced) to evoke the tragic event through and in the space represented in the image. Thus, the subject mentally reconstructs the whole tragic event and, in performing this sort of reenactment, they must draw upon to a vast series of semiotic tools and narrative forms. The process of representation, in your practice, does not aim to only produce an intelligible object for the beholder, but to trigger a whole narrative mechanism; that is to say, to trigger in the viewer's mind a kind of *mise en scene*. In doing so, your practice refers to the collective imaginary and the way it shapes the general perception of determined events.

A large part of your work deals with the social issues of immigration, discrimination, and violence. Certainly, the perception of those social issues is different in America and Europe: each continent has its own collective imaginary. Nevertheless, there is, in my opinion, a vast number of analogies. I wanted to construct our conversation around some of these analogies and divergences. This will hopefully allow us to better understand the limits of representing an event through a photograph.

My plan was to start by discussing a series of pictures that were very present in the public discourse on the two continents, but that were viewed in different ways. Firstly, I would like to discuss the image of the "*caravana de migrantes*" on its path to the US's southern border. As soon as I showed you this image, you showed me (like an answer) the cover from *Der Spiegel*. It was amazing. Can we talk about these images? Can we analyze them?

Fig. 2. A migrant caravan, which has grown into the thousands, walks into the interior of Mexico after crossing the Guatemalan border on Oct. 21, 2018, near Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico. (John Moore/Getty Images)

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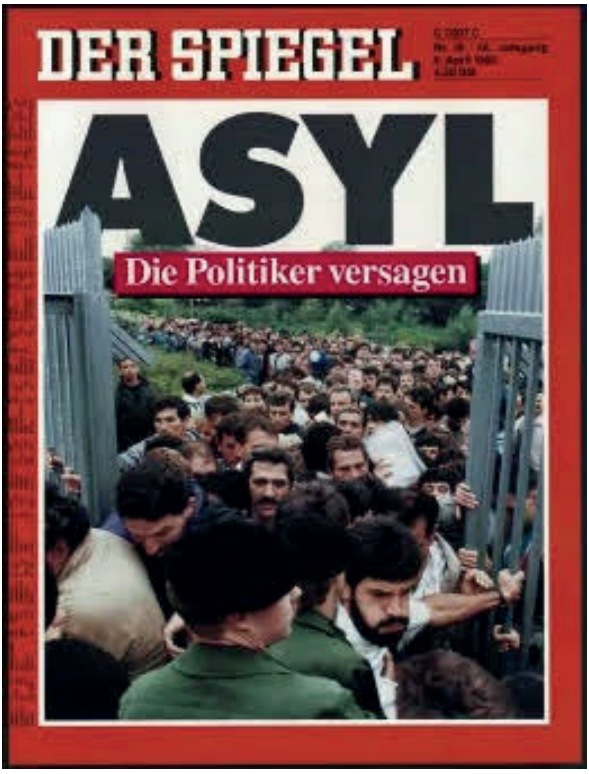

Fig. 3. *Der Spiegel* cover (1992)

EL: The image *caravana de migrantes* which circulated worldwide in the press in October 2018 can be found online in several–very similar–versions. *Roll Call* headlined on October 29th 2018 with "Trump Warns of 'Invasion' Approaching US-Mexico Border" and captioned the photo with: "A migrant caravan, which has grown into the thousands, walks into the interior of Mexico after crossing the Guatemalan border on Oct. 21, 2018, near Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico. John Moore/Getty Images."[4] DW.com had already published the image on 21 October (the date the photograph was taken) beneath the title "*La caravana de migrantes centroamericanos avanza pese a las advertencias de Trump*," and the subtitle "*la caravana de la miseria*." The photograph, taken by P. Pardo for Getty Images/AFP, is accompanied by the caption "*Vista del avance de la caravana en su camino entre Ciudad Hidalgo y Tapachula, en Chiapas*."[5]

The second image that we are speaking about was published by *Der Spiegel*–over 25 years earlier on 5 April 1992–together with the headline which is integrated into the picture and dominates the image: "ASYL–Die Politiker versagen" (Asylum–The Politicians Fail).[6]

We can discuss these images on many different levels. I would like to start by just describing the images: all three images show a long formation of people that is coming towards the viewer.

The photographs that were taken in 2018 at the Guatemalan border were shot from an elevated vantage point which suggests to the viewer a position of oversight. This perspective is also found in paintings of battle scenes such as Albrecht Altdorfer's *The Battle of Alexander at Issus* (1529) and the paintings of Louis-François Lejeune *Battle of Moscow, 7. September 1812*, (1822), among others. From this perspective, no individual can be made out; they become part of a seemingly homogenous mass that is moving towards the viewer. At the same time, the high

4. *Roll Call*, https://rollcall.com/2018/10/29/trump-warns-of-invasion-approaching-us-mexico-border/, last accessed 11 September 2022
5. DW.com, https://www.dw.com/es/la-caravana-de-migrantes-centroamericanos-avanza-pese-a-las-advertencias-de-trump/a-45978245, last accessed 11 September 2022
6. *Der Spiegel*, https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/index-1992-15.html, last accessed 11 September 2022

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angle allows a more distant outlook that suggests the possibility of cool control and surveillance. The two versions of the picture differ in their foregrounds, which, seen through the telephoto lens, is still far away. In both, the head of the *caravana* can be seen; in the photograph published by *Roll Call* a police vehicle is stopped at right angles to the approaching people.

The cover from *Der Spiegel* (actually, a photomontage) also shows the *caravana* motif from a raised vantage point. But the elevation is minimal and counteracted by the short distance to the subject. Two police officers/border guards are cropped off and can be prominently seen in the foreground with their backs to the viewer. They appear to be trying in vain to block the approaching mass of people pushing through a half-open gate, and offer the viewer the chance to identify with them. In the image, the officers are confronted with individually identifiable intruders. All are male, and stern-looking.

Both pictures have in common that no end of the *caravana* can be discerned. They reach to the horizon and appear to be lost to infinity. Both motifs couple onto the stereotypical image of the "wave" of single men flooding "us" (Europeans/ North Americans) (which stands in contrast to another motif widespread in the media: the fleeing woman/ family with a child shown in need of help). The perpetual anonymization, homogenization, and problematization of migrants in images serve an exclusive "us vs them" narrative that seems to ultimately necessitate compartmentalization as ultima ratio (Salerno 2019: 109). The then US President Donald Trump instrumentalized—in the lead-up to the midterm election—the people who had made their way from Latin America, and wrote in one of his tweets of an "invasion." Without presenting any evidence, Trump claimed that terrorists may have infiltrated the crowd, which posed a threat that needed to be countered militarily.[7] After declaring the *caravana* to be a national emergency, he deployed thousands of troops to the border with Mexico.

7. (@realDonaldTrump) "Many Gang Members and some very bad people are mixed into the Caravan heading to our Southern Border. Please go back, you will not be admitted into the United States unless you go through the legal process. This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you!" *Twitter*, 19 October 2018.

The cover from *Der Spiegel* does not exist in isolation, but can be interpreted as one of many images in the period from 1989 to 1992 in which the weekly magazine with their headlines constructed the narrative of "asylum seekers flooding" us, the "full boat," a "powerless state," and "Nazi kids." A large wave of racist and xenophobic violence in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall culminated in 1992 in massive riots in Rostock-Lichtenhagen. On the third day, 24 August, the reception facility that was being attacked was evacuated in the early hours of the morning—but not the accommodation facilities next door which at the time still housed more than one hundred Vietnamese people and who now became the target of the attacks. The Vietnamese families, along with a television crew that had been trapped with them, managed to break open a skylight and escape over the roof of the neighbouring building to safety. It was only the following night that the situation could be brought under control after reinforcements were called in from other police jurisdictions and the massive deployment of water cannons. Journalists later discussed whether political entities had planned a "controlled escalation of the mob" in order to persuade the Social Democratic Party to compromise on the asylum issue.

The dissemination of simplistic and stereotypical visual narratives through the news media has complex causes, conditions, and characteristics. Images are often only a small but nevertheless powerful component of contemporary forms of propaganda (Staal 2018).

GD: I think your analysis of the image composition is very interesting and gives us a better understanding of the mechanisms of propaganda, especially your highlighting of the fact that the point of view of these images deletes the uniqueness of the individual. This can be related to the way cinematographic propaganda in different countries structured narratives during World War II. That is to say, this was a kind of shared narrative element for all propaganda in Europe. Certainly, each propaganda machine had its specific aims, but the main goal was to "delete the subject" from the plot. And this goal was achieved by transforming the soldiers into a monolith. They (i.e. the soldiers, also: the young people) were no longer a series of pluralities but became a singular entity that embodied "the revolution," the "defence against the aggressors," "the nation," the "protection of cultural

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traditions," and so on. Propaganda films do not show the individual soldier but the multitude of men in arms. Because once you show the individual in a warlike film, you uncover the reality of war: that it is made of millions of fragments of inhuman and useless pain.

The early films of Peter Watkins clearly demonstrate this phenomenon. For example, in *The Diary of an Unknown Sol*dier (1959) Watkins deconstructs the mass on the battlefield—he deconstructs the monolithic entity—and shows the subject. And the individual is nothing more than a person who is aware that he is facing death or, at best, with a little "good luck," is destined to kill another human being. It is terrifying that this pattern, as you just mentioned, is still a part of contemporary forms of propaganda, and I am wondering if the image composition you just analyzed, which clearly shares some characteristics with this propaganda strategy, is the product of a deeper phenomenon, deeper than mere propaganda. In fact, as you noted, there is a vast series of images on the events we are discussing, like the *caravana* or the migration brought about by the reunification of Germany (I could go on), and these events are documented using the same image composition you just explained. Even though these images are produced within a democratic system that guarantees plurality, and in a media context that is extremely pluralistic, the image composition used to relate these events still predominantly employ the view from above, the removal of the individual, the creation of a monolith and, I would add, of a "menacing" monolith.

Can we say that a sort of "grammar" or a series of automatisms come into play when one composes images that perpetuate this "traditional" image composition? Would it be possible to identify the problem in these automatisms? And would it be possible to argue that we are facing not just a stereotypical image but the product of canons of image composition rooted in the Renaissance and which have colonized the contemporary mediascape? I was thinking about how one would analyze this image of a US Border Patrol agent on horseback trying to stop a Haitian migrant from crossing the US border into Texas, and how one could analyze it with respect to the stereotypes.

Fig. 4. A United States Border Patrol agent on horseback tries to stop a Haitian migrant from entering an encampment on the banks of the Rio Grande near the Acuna Del Rio International Bridge in Del Rio, Texas on September 19, 2021. Photo by PAUL RATJE / AFP VIA Gettyimages.

EL: What you just explained makes me think of Jonas Staal's essay "Propaganda (Art) Struggle" (2018) and parts of the lecture he gave at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. Images like *caravana* advance an "us vs them" narrative that allows simple dichotomies to be constructed, with the help of seemingly monolithic entities, and, ultimately, politically instrumentalized. Staal inverts the Chomsky-Herman propaganda model and argues for "Collectivity" versus "Anti-Communism," Communism having been instrumentalized as a dominant trigger for fear and a unifying element within the "us vs them" narrative when *Manufacturing Consent* was first published during the Cold War in 1988 (Herman and Chomsky). It seems now to have been replaced by Islamophobia and Anti-Migration.

If we understand propaganda as an exercise of power by particular groups to shape society in their interests and as an attempt to create a new, normative reality, then the point Staal is trying to make becomes clear: he does not believe in a society without propaganda, rather for him it is more about replacing *elitist* propaganda structures with *emancipatory* forms of propaganda.

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But to come back to your question: you are correct in that it is not a phenomenon of the repetition of individual, stereotypical images, but rather the recurrent staging of motifs deeply inscribed in our collective imaginary. What I find interesting here is that traditional images from European art history have, through the monopolization of news and image agencies, developed into globally dominant image rhetoric. How *emancipatory* forms of propaganda and counter-narratives can be effectively and subversively integrated into such a powerful communication structure is a question that preoccupies many artists.

The image that you suggest next is found multiple times in online media: in the digital edition of the *Bangkok Post*[8] and on the website of the Arabic news outlet Al Mayadeen,[9] as well as on the websites of Amnesty Germany[10] and NBC News Digital.[11] It is contextualized differently in each case. The most detailed caption for it reads: "a border patrol agent on horseback tries to stop a Haitian migrant from entering an encampment on the banks of the Rio Grande near the Acuna Del Rio International Bridge in Del Rio, Texas on Sept. 19, 2021. Paul Ratje / AFP via Getty Images file."[12] On the homepage of photographer Paul Ratje, the image is presented without any caption or description.[13]

Ratje's photograph looks like a film still, like a frozen moment in a dynamic sequence of movements. Three men are seen moving fast. The power constellation quickly becomes clear. Two black men are running and a white man is pursuing them on horse-

8. *Bangkok Post*, https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2187483/last-migrants-removed-from-camp-under-texas-bridge-us-official, last accessed 19 October 2022.
9. English.almayadeen.net, https://english.almayadeen.net/, last accessed 19 October 2022.
10. Amnesty.de, https://www.amnesty.de/informieren/amnesty-report/usa-2021, last accessed 19 October 2022.
11. Nbcnews.com, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/dhs-report-says-border-patrol-agents-used-unnecessary-force-haitians-t-rcna36992, last accessed 19 October 2022.
12. Nbcnews.com, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/dhs-report-says-border-patrol-agents-used-unnecessary-force-haitians-t-rcna36992, last accessed 19 October 2022.
13. Paulratje.com, https://www.paulratje.com/portfolio/G0000bF-P6ZsmGxYM/I0000NUyIEp.FWJo, last accessed 19 October 2022.

back. The latter displays the contemporary trappings of power: over a military-style outer garment, he is wearing a tactical belt kitted with communications equipment that clearly connects him with other border control agents. The rider appears to be brandishing a whip from which the two men are trying to duck to safety. In their hands are semi-transparent bags of take-away food; the slippers they are wearing are not suited to running. This photograph of photojournalist Ratje evokes in 2021 the image of a merciless slave driver driving his defenceless victims before him.

A day after publication of this picture, United States Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas declared that based on the scenes captured in this and similar photographs a sweeping investigation would be launched by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) within the Department of Homeland Security's US Customs and Border Authorities. He alerted the Inspector General and ordered the OPR "on site, in Del Rio, 24/7, to insure that the conduct of our personnel adheres […] to our policies, to our training and to our values […]."[14] He further claimed to have been "horrified to see these images."[15]

Almost nine months later, a 511-page report from the OPR was published stating that while mounted Border Patrol agents did not whip any Haitian migrants, they used unnecessary force to push the migrants across the Rio Grande back into Mexico.[16]

GD: What I find almost horrifying is that this image can reformulate some of the figures that built the collective imaginary about the new continent. Part of the beauty of the imaginary relating to the continent turns into horror. I'm thinking in particular of the mustang which embodies the freedom and immensity of the new continent. In the image, sadly, this wonderful animal is turned into an instrument used by a ranger (another important and, in my view, less beautiful part of the American imaginary)

14. C-Span.org, https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4977933/dhs-secretary-mayorkas-horrified-haitian-migrant-images, last accessed 20 October 2022
15. C-Span.org, https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4977933/dhs-secretary-mayorkas-horrified-haitian-migrant-images, last accessed 20 October 2022
16. *Washington Post,* https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/07/08/report-border-agents-horseback-del-roi/, last accessed 20 October 2022

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to terrorise people on the US's southern border. It is even more perturbing when one realizes that the element of propaganda is in fact rooted in the very flexible nature of the image. Being part of the same imaginary but unable to establish a clear signifier, the image, upon entering into the massive, contemporaneous communicational process, becomes just an engine of emotions, of passions. The remembrance of the wonderful, wild horses that populated the endless territory, and the freedom they brought, appeals at the same time to the beholder to "protect" that territory "against" an imaginary invasion. In the latter scenario, the mustang comes to evoke the territorial roots, the identity, and, by extension, the exclusivity of a group of people. Further, what I find problematic, and at the same time fascinating, is the way these series of signifiers appear. During the process of communication, these images are, in some way, guided or conducted onto the path of becoming text. After a certain moment, they are no longer spaces in which one can meet to discuss a shared experience or an event of social relevance; they have become text. In other words, at a certain point, these images cease to belong to the sphere of dialogue, and enter the sphere of discourse, even if, as you quite clearly explained, the image composition already is a formulation of textual statements through its spatial organization. Following the theoretical framework mentioned at the beginning of this text, at a certain point, the image, once space (*topos*), becomes topic.

I personally believe your method in *Postcards from Europe* highlights an important element of this mechanism. Above all, it disturbs what I think is the essence of all forms of propaganda: the passivity of the viewer. By facilitating a more active relationship with the viewer, your method, in my opinion, shows that once the image acquires the status of a space in which the subject can semiotically navigate, the role of the viewer is immediately translated into a more active one.

Do you think the process of encouraging viewers to take a more active role is implicit in the technological context that we live in? In other words, do you think digital technology, by radically transforming all processes of the production and consumption

of images, is naturally pushing the viewer into a more active role at the expense, fortunately, of traditional forms of propaganda?

EL: That is a very optimistic view of technological developments. I think it depends how you want to define "a more active role." Certainly many processes of production, distribution, and consumption have become more accessible—in this sense the roles of producers and consumers, especially on social media, have not been so easy to differentiate for a long time now. However, automatic imaging processes in surveillance, military, and AI technologies continue to take place for the most part without our knowledge, understanding, and most importantly, our participation. These technologies determine, often unnoticed, how we live and communicate, and therefore do not allow us to take action as engaged citizens. This is what artists and researchers like Trevor Paglen, Hagit Keysar/Ariel Caine, and Forensic Architecture are working on: only after locating and making visible "NSA/GCHQ-Tapped Undersea Cables" in the Atlantic,[17] or the so-called "Geofence," a cylindrical, digital barrier around the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem,[18] are criticism, counter-narratives, and political actions possible.

Viewers have not necessarily become more (image) literate. Access to imaging technology—without a critical understanding of images and how meaning is created—does not make you immune to more subtle forms of propaganda.

GD: Yes, that's right. I fully agree with that. There is a series of technological devices that determine different stages of the creative process. Sometimes I have the feeling that there is a programmed interface for everything, including an interface able to determine even the deepest and most private human expressions. On the other hand, I think that the rupture—or, to use Eco's concept, the *apertura*—that is inherent in contemporary narrative

17. Paglen.studio, https://paglen.studio/2020/05/22/undersea-cables/, last accessed 1 November 2022

18. Universiteitleiden.nl, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/agenda/2022/10/recntr-talk-spatial-testimonies-spatial-photography-aerial-imagery-and-photogrammetry-in-spaces-of-conflict-and-colonisation, last accessed 1 November 2022

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forms has deeply transformed the role of the viewer/reader by displacing the linearity of the text. I think your work is a clear example of that. By creating a space between the text and the image, a *seuil* emerges—the notion Genette used to identify the place in which the passage between media occurs (De Lungo 2009)—where the viewer is called upon to trigger some semiotic processes in order to give meaning to certain elements in the image. This active role of the viewer is also evident in the hypertextual form in which the text loses its linearity and acquires an additional dimension—a *seuil*—in which the reader moves.

Can we say then that these spaces in which the viewer acquires an active dimension are the spaces in which propaganda loses its efficacy? Do you think these spaces are being threatened by technological determinism? Within that scenario, how would one define propaganda? Will the technological *dispositif* produce the social imaginary? In other words, will the collective imaginary be produced, and exclusively produced, by the technological *dispositif*?

EL: Eco's concept of *apertura* fits well. Interestingly, in relation to the term "open artwork," he does not initially assume a literary work, but a musical work. In addition to the listeners, independent interpreters also come into play here whose works are realized in the moment that they are experienced. In non-open artworks, the intention of the artist dominates how it is perceived. I am interested in breaking open this one-dimensional process. Ultimately I see my photography and texts as tools that the viewer can use, in addition to concrete images and texts, to reflect on the process of the creation of meaning. The work manifests itself only, and in each case differently, through the individual assimilation by and imagination of the viewer. There is no closed narrative structure and what emerges is an open space.

Coming back to your question: yes, I believe that in spaces that viewers or listeners themselves occupy, propaganda loses some of its efficacy. Navigating this type of unstable, fluid interstitial space requires a high level of intellectual and emotional engagement. In such spaces, content cannot be comfortably digested and prejudices simply satisfied. Critical thinking requires discussion. I fully believe that these free spaces are being threatened by certain technological but also especially social, political, and economic

developments, as they have always been. Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram promote the shortening of image and text content and offer quickly consumable narratives that make it easy to have reflexive reactions. Texts, due to the character limit, easily become slogans; images, due to the limited size, have to be easily decipherable. As already discussed, there is at the same time an increasing number of artists, designers, and scientists probing these technologies to see how their very use can make it possible to observe more precisely and reflect in a more sophisticated way.

Technologies of production, distribution, and consumption give structure to and shape content and processes, but do not necessarily determine them. The social imaginary is subject to other, diverse influences. Be it the persistent concept of nation states or the normalization of social privileges: what meaning we ascribe to technologies is grounded in history and subject to economic politics. The collective imaginary is and will be produced—but not exclusively—by a technological *dispositif*.

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EXPLORATIONS ON THE EVENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Dasein, Dwelling, and Skillful Coping in a Cuban Context

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INTRODUCTION[1]

Across Latin American and Caribbean cultures, the practice of photography has been used to establish and celebrate a country's national identity (Cánepa Koch & Kummels 2016), to create commemorative cultural artifacts of Day of the Dead celebrations (Morales Cano & Mysyk 2004), and for anthropological documentations of indigenous peoples, mixed races, and criminals, categories which have been historically used as mechanisms for exclusion (Hopkinson 2001). The practice of photography, additionally, is frequently used as a means to document violence, which is typically presented ethnographically through realist and sensationalist lenses (Schwartz & Tierney-Tello 2006).

Discourses of photography have, since the medium's emergence, routinely embarked with a Cartesian character, in which links between thinking and seeing, and visual perception and certainty, are forged. This perspective has imbued the practice of photography with a certain objectivity, wherein an author utilizes a technical instrument to produce a mechanical or digital representation of something *that-has-been* (Barthes, 1981 [1980]). Through this Cartesian understanding, the author is rendered not as a subjective framer, an entity who purposely constructs

1. Versions of this text have been presented as papers at the *Mobilities, Literature, and Culture* Conference in Lancaster, United Kingdom, and the 10th World Congress of the International American Studies Association Conference New Delhi, India.

a world imbued with meaning, but rather as a detached observer who creates a notation of reality afforded by his or her technical device. Although this notion has persistently endured, it has been challenged, perhaps most prominently by Susan Sontag (1977), who argued that a photographer intrinsically possesses a certain bias, which presences in framing strategies and the chosen subject matter.

Ariella Azoulay, however, has shifted priority away from the "photographed event," or that which has been captured, and towards the "event of photography," a phase emphasizing the spatio-temporal moment when a photographer, a camera, photographed subjects, and even those with potential to be photographed, encounter one another; Azoulay attests that "photography is a form of relation that exists and becomes valid only within and between the plurality of individuals who take part in it" (2012 [2008]: 85). Her position shows that photographs lack a stable point of view or single sovereign, irrespective of whether one approaches the photographer, those occupying the shot, or those who eventually reconstruct the image for display. She challenges audiences to rethink the institutionalized discourse of photography, as well as how "it is entrapped in the hegemonic opposition between the aesthetic and the political—one maintained not only by the discourse of art but also by political discourse itself" (2010: 27). With this interpretation, she invites new possibilities to read political life through a visual dimension, as well as to trace and confront different forms of power relations.

This article commences with an exploration of a series of photographs taken during an eight-day visit to Cuba in 2016. The photographs include residents of Havana, the country's capital, and Viñales, an agricultural town roughly 180 kilometers from Havana, well known for its plentiful tobacco plantations. The purpose of this trip was to document background practices, routinely performed behaviors that, upon first glance, are seemingly of little consequence. Dreyfus (2015), however, shows that background practices are complex structures that sustain meaningful action and reveal how human beings characteristically cope with the world. A phenomenological approach, influenced by Heidegger's topographic articulation of being (Malpas 2006; 2012),

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is employed to elucidate the manifestation of the photographer, the role of the camera, as well as those who are the focus of or external to the captured image within a unique spatio-temporal context. Per Azoulay, "photography is an event that always takes place among people" (2010: 13), and thus all those present during the manifestation of the event must therefore be considered for the part they themselves play.

Heidegger has been chosen as the article's theoretical and methodological center as he provides a valuable lexicon to express Azoulay's thesis; for instance, the recognition of one's taking part in the event of photography is articulated through an intertwining of *Ereignis* and *Augenblick*, the camera as a *thing*, the photographer as *Dasein* (human being interpreted as being-there), and others populating the area of photographic interest as *mitsein* (being-with). In addition to the methodological and vocabulary affordances, using Heidegger frames photography as a topographic practice, and thus presents a unique opportunity to provide new insights and frames into Latin American-focused photography.

DASEIN, DWELLING, AND THE EVENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

In his existential account of human being as *Dasein* articulated in *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphatically counters the then-dominant Cartesian view of the world by showing how, prior to any detached or skeptical view, such as those adopted by the natural sciences and analytical philosophy tradition, one is always immersed, pre-theoretically, in a world of care (*Sorge*) and concern-for-others (*Fürsorgen)*. Care, specifically, is the fundamental constituent of human existence (Heidegger 1962 [1927]: 227). This term should not be confused with ontic states like gaiety or sadness, but rather as the structure of *Dasein* itself. Heidegger shows that since people fundamentally care about themselves and where-they-are, in an existential rather than spatial sense, they are innately driven to experience and pursue their ownmost possibilities for being-in-the-world. Moreover, as people are, also, ontologically being-with (*mitsein*) others, it is equally important to acknowledge how people tend to and nurture their fellow human beings. Through this care structure, Heidegger reveals his ethical position. Although the philosopher is rarely regarded

for commentary on ethics, Dreyfus argues for a closer look, showing that recursive, banal, yet skillful practices orient people to a shared world of meaning. These practices can catalyze a fully authentic *Dasein*, igniting the recognition of care and enabling the disclosure of whole new worlds (2017 [2000]: 27–44). Dungey (2007), further arguing the point, notes that to engage with ethics properly, like Heidegger, people must first raise the question of who they are and the way they find themselves in the world.

This line of inquiry is constant throughout the entirety of Heidegger's thought, yet in his late philosophy he demonstrates a noticeable shift (although one that is often overstated in commentaries and analyses) from *Dasein* to *Dwelling*. This shift is inspired by an urgent need to resist an omnipresent technological understanding of the world, which Heidegger refers to as enframing/the framework (*das Gestell*). Within this framework, various things, which includes the self and others, manifest as little more than manipulatable resources, objects incapable of making existential demands on us (Heidegger 1977 [1954]). By giving priority to dwelling, Heidegger is able to convey the emotional care that stimulates, coheres, and preserves the relationships that people find themselves in *as Dasein*. In his own words, "the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling […] the old word *bauen*, which says that man is insofar as he dwells […] also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and to care for" (Heidegger, 1977 [1956]: 325). The caring and looking after of dwelling provides a path for human beings to fathom how their *involvement in the world,* such as by using tools and being alongside familiar others, allows them to *inhabit a world*; as dwellers, the world becomes familiar, a home with resonance and deep existential connection; "in dwelling we stay close to things and are connected to them" (Malpas 2006: 76). In a world seemingly dominated by instrumental, technologically inspired thinking, the importance of dwelling is quite clear—it brings things and people's situations *nearer* to them. As explained by Malpas, "nearing is not just an overcoming of a purely objective spatial distance but also a 'picking out' or a 'bringing into salience' that overcomes the distance of inattention or 'not seeing' (76). Further, Dungey argues

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that that dwelling enables a person's ethical being to be revealed through the manner in which their engagement with things, people, and locations comes into presence; thus, "Heidegger's philosophy, insofar as it reveals the essential relationships that disclose and characterize human existence, is itself a form of original ethics. And, for Heidegger, access to such a way of thinking begins with reflection on the essence of dwelling" (2007: 238).

The photographs included in this reflective account all depict a person performing embodied skills in a well-known setting. The photographs of the painter, for instance, took place in his home-based art studio. In accordance with ethical research practice, all participants were informed about the project, its goals, and the likely forms of research dissemination. None seemed fussed about assisting; in fact, all exhibited bewilderment about why such rudimentary behaviors were deemed as worthy of documentation, supporting the claim that background practices are routinely interpreted as inconsequential. As the investigator-photographer, I would occasionally speak to each participant, typically for clarification about a practice. We would sometimes banter, as doing so was commonplace for each while they worked and thus would replicate their customary workplace patterns. In all other respects, however, I remained as unobtrusive as possible. For instance, the participants were never instructed on where to stand, how to pose, or how to behave as they performed their quotidian duties.

Photographing these people in their everyday environments invited a plethora of considerations. Although I would only photograph subjects who agreed to participate, it was still critical to consider how the unusual presence of a photographer could disrupt their well-established routine. Secondly, although the camera can act as a catalyst for conversation and engagement with potential participants, it can also elevate the photographer to an unequal position of power, as someone who is able to 'choose' what to document, when to document it, and how to present it. This is a particular point of emphasis for Azoulay, who writes that:

> [...] the photographed persons will not necessarily view the photographs taken at the photographic event of which they were a part, but this does not obliterate the fact that it took place [...] not all of those who take

part in the photographic event do so in the same way. Not all are even aware that this event is taking place, certainly not at the time of its occurrence; nor can all those involved view the product of this event and those who do view it are not necessarily permitted to use the product in the same way. (2010: 12)

The above suggestions further encouraged me to consider the perspective and situation of the participants. They could question my intention, as well as what might become of the visual artifacts produced through the camera. They might wonder, is he a journalist? Could these photographs be used as tools for punishment? How might he display my personal likeness, and in what context will it be explained for potential spectators? Given the digital affordances available, will any alterations occur prior to exhibition or dissemination? These considerations were particularly relevant in light of the country's authoritarian political system. Thus, to address each, my goal was to foster an environment wherein *the truth of the spatio-temporal moment* could freely manifest, one that acknowledges the role the photographer, the other parties, and how we simultaneously create an inhabitable place, albeit through different contexts and motivations. How one comprehends truth, however, is of the utmost importance. Such is where Heidegger's thinking is most valuable.

The use of Heidegger to understand photography is widespread across academic literature. Greenwald (1992), for instance, argues that photographs meet Heidegger's criteria to be considered art (as articulated in "The Origin of the Work of Art" [1950]) by way of its revealing of *original truth*, or truth as *unconcealment*, which occurs prior to a Cartesian or prepositional understanding of truth. He suggests that, like a painting, a photograph on display invites an interplay of revealing and concealing (Heidegger uses the Greek words *alētheia* and *lēthe* to elucidate this happening), through which one achieves an ephemeral attunement with the world. Although Greenwald's analysis focuses on an individual encountering a photographic image, it is possible to apply the same considerations to photographic practice. For instance, as a photographer peruses the city streets looking for possible shots, they may encounter a scene which facilitates taking a photograph. The incredible urge to engage with that scene through the camera is accompanied

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with a withdrawing from their everyday casual attitude. Suddenly the world is not one deprived of consequence, but rather is ripe with meaning and imaginative possibilities for one's ownmost being *as a photographer*. Once inspecting at the outcome, being the photographic image, the photographer might feel as though they have, through the camera and their own unique sensibilities, discovered or excavated something previously hidden. Taking this phenomenon into account, Costello (2012) has argued that the practice of photography, by way of its ability to unveil *original truth*, resists rather than conforms to the pervasive technological understanding of being. More recently, both perspectives have converged via Evans and Forrest (2018), who use Heidegger to insightfully articulate how the Hungarian photographer, André Kertész, grasps authentic dwelling. In their work, Kertész is argued as exemplary of a photographer engaged with art as *original truth*, as he demonstrates the capacity to attune himself to people and places, as well as disclose worlds by way of his prudent (and skillful) use of the camera (see also Seamon 1990).

The photographs chosen for inclusion in this article are based on how they, from my perspective, showcase each participant as uniquely synced within their world context. In accordance with phenomenological research, which is to "question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us" (van Manen 1990: 5), I was eager to understand what specific instances encouraged me to respond to each participant through the camera. I would repeatedly question–*"what is it about this moment that has impelled me to create a photographic image?"* The practice itself, the subject's stance, nor the overall composition of the image provided sufficient answers. Through reflection, it became evident that the myriad characteristics and qualities coalesced to disclose a moment *as a moment*. A nimble brush stroke from the painter's hand, the fisherman frustratedly untangling a fishing line, and a weary farmer eager for a rest, or the printer carefully adjusting a letterpress' letter blocks (see Fig. 1), best encapsulated the truth of *their* practice by way of *their* exclusive relationship with *their* world. Each was absorbed in familiar task within a familiar setting, as evidenced by a discernible flow. This dis-

play of skillful coping (Dreyfus 2015) reveals the limits of cognitive rationality; moreover, it demonstrates that a person's performed activities contribute to the manifestation of a world of meaning, one where they confidently feel their way through their tasks, driven by perceptual and embodied motivation (Dreyfus, 2015 [2005]: 117).

Admittedly, while the photographs chosen were not the most technically proficient ones taken during the trip, they are the ones that best pictorialize skillful coping. The photo of the painter (see Fig. 2), for instance, depicts him effortlessly creating a drawing that would, eventually, become an interpretation of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* (*The Little Prince*). While the in-progress rendering is of interest, the depth of the image and the narrative it tells can be grasped by how key components amalgamate to communicate the artists' practice and its local influences. As customary art supplies like canvas boards are difficult to acquire in Cuba, he employs discarded prints of *Granma*, the official daily publication of the Cuban government. His visual creations feature a combination Cuban state culture (such as Che Guevara styled propaganda), popular culture influences, and Havana's vibrant street life (see, also, Fig. 3).

Yet, in accordance with Azoulay's thesis, an obvious factor of the event is omitted. As the images indicate the photographer's close proximity to the subject(s), what of this individual? Irrespective of my distance to the subjects, my presence still mattered as we occupied a similar location. Moreover, by responding to the performed practices of each subject with my camera, I contributed to the making of the photographic moment *as an event*. To believe otherwise problematically disregards not only the various power influences stated above, but also my own embodied motivations and inclinations. Like the painter and printer, I too was immersed in an environment guided by *care*. My own interest in documenting their practices and their relationship to their being-in-the-world must therefore be accounted for. Using Heidegger, the remainder of this article offers a series of reflections about my experience photographing the subjects above as *original truth*.

Knowing the precise moment to shoot is complicated regardless of whether one is an expert or novice photographer. While collaborating with these participants, numerous ideas would emerge, yet only a few ignited an urge to meaningfully engage.

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Fig. 1. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Fig.2. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Fig. 3. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Most of these ideas, it seemed, were stimulated not by our *being-together* but rather by pre-conceived desire to obtain a specific image, a photographic rendering that adheres to conventional visual standards. Such an approach, clearly influenced by an instrumental understanding of the situation, would result in a manufactured and, ultimately, *inauthentic moment*. Thus, rather than embark with a list of shots conceived for each participant, I instead remained observant to the most minute of details, as these can invite the photographer to distinguish how a potential subject exists in a spatio-temporal alignment with other things populating the frame. The heightened focus on details bolstered my ability to be flexible, in the sense of being open to improvisation, as one cannot predict when an opportunity to shoot will show itself. In the case of the printer (see Fig. 4), although he expressed that he did not see the point of documenting his specific profession, he exhibited much exuberance when speaking about using a still operational antique German printing press and the meticulous craft of putting each letter block in its appropriate place. This photograph was taken immediately after a demonstration of the machine's functionality. While stepping back following his tutorial, the painted mural on the wall depicting a historical account of printing throughout Cuba's history drew my attention. Fidel Castro and newspapers communicating the 26th of July Movement are visible. Although the man in the photograph is not old enough to have experienced that historical moment, his profession and correlated daily practices, and maybe even this specific printing press, which is possible given its age, are forever linked to it.

The photo of the farmer (Fig. 5), taken in Viñales, occurred immediately after spending a few hours bailing tobacco leaves. Like those above, this image communicates not simply a person, animals, or rural life, but rather an *inhabited world*. The physical toll of the tobacco farming profession, as evidenced by the farmer's dirt covered clothing and labored stance, as well as the relationship shared between him and his livestock. Regarding the fisherman (Fig. 6), one of the most common sights one will find in Havana's early morning hours is myriad people fishing along the Malecón the extensive esplanade on the city's coast.

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Fig. 4. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Fig. 5. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Fig. 6. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Per my conversations with a few of these fishermen, most of them perform this practice not as a profession, but rather as a hobby and for socialization purposes. The practice also, for some, such as the one depicted in the photo, allows for tranquility prior to what will inevitably become a laborious day. The familiar sounds of seagulls, a glistening sunrise, and the smell of the ocean, none of which are overtly detectable here, but were certainly palpable in the moment of capture, are of great importance to those who repeatedly frequent the Malecón during the day's early hours.

Heidegger often used the word *Ereignis* to distinguish this sort of happening; it expresses the appropriation and belonging of *Dasein* to its immediate spatio-temporal place, in addition to the unique features that collectively establish it as such. In his commentary on Heidegger, Wrathall suggests that it is "a kind of belonging in which the things we deal with really matter, that is, they make demands on us that we cannot ignore" (2011: 204). For a photographer, sharing in *Ereignis* shows itself, most overtly, by way of the embodied compulsion one feels to capture a specific moment, to render what has come into view into a photographic image. In such happenings, photographers and the world of which they find themselves are involved in a unique mutual appropriation. The photographer experiences *ek-stasis* (ἔκστασις)—standing-outside oneself, fathoming the self as belonging within a distinctive spatio-temporal place, one that is only (and genuinely) applicable *to this specific photographer*. This belonging, however, it not any sort of cozy feeling or connection, but rather, as stated by Polt, "the way in which the givenness of given beings—including ourselves—comes into question for us" (2005: 383).

It is only once solicited with a photographic opportunity that one is able to distinguish their partaking in *Ereignis*; moreover, in part due to the keen attention to details, these moments unveil as a collaborative happening featuring an array of constituent parts. For instance, while spending time with the farmer, he would occasionally speak about the craft of tobacco cultivation and how it provided him with an enjoyable livelihood. Although the strict government requirements forced him to deliver the bulk of his harvest, impeding his economic potential, he took solace in that he could work outdoors and away from a chaotic urban center.

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In one instance, air cured tobacco hanging on wooden planks were relocated to a spot that provided better ventilation. Following the hanging of one plank, the farmer stopped for one moment to catch his breath and, unexpectedly, his eyes glanced towards the drying tobacco leaves. In this instance, the hanging tobacco leaves appeared to me not as an iconic crop (for Cuba, specifically), nor the means by which this farmer supports himself, but rather as his vast experience and an embodied expertise of his craft, realized over a near fifty-year duration (see Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

At first glance it is unmistakable that the photo is a simulacrum, a representation of drying tobacco leaves, yet to conclude with such a hasty claim ignores the spatio-temporal conditions by which that photograph came into existence, and thus eliminates its potentiality to exist within a broader yet more truthful narrative.

In the English renditions of Heidegger's work, the term *Ereignis* is translated as "event" or "event of appropriation." This interpretation, while immensely useful, can result in one inadvertently overlooking Heidegger's crucial point. Stambaugh (2002 [1969]: 14), for instance, notes that the etymological roots of the word are *er-eignen* and *er-äugnen*, which respectively indicate *own* (to come into one's one, to come where one belongs) and *eye* (to catch sight of, to see with the mind's eye, to see face to face). Thus, the happening that is *Ereignis* invites consideration of another term, *Augenblick*, which

was frequently used by Heidegger to denote a decisive, personally defining 'moment' or a 'moment of vision' (see also Grant 2015: 213–229; Ward 2008: 97–124). Whereas *Ereignis* is frequently used to accentuate a person's belongingness with being by way of mutual appropriation within a specific place, *Augenblick* speaks to its temporality. As explained by Engel, "the moment's sole purpose is initiating the transcendence of everyday time into the supposed primordiality (*a priori* temporality) that infrastructures it" (2018). In a photographic context, any moment recognized as worth capturing with a camera appears as such due to the photographer's implicit understanding of that moment's finitude. An urgency is discerned as the photographer understands that the moment, although rich in meaning and substance, and one they are very much a part of, is ultimately destined to fade, an interpretation that goes against everyday publicly derived understandings of time (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]: 412). Ward advises that the use of 'moment of vision' in the *Being and Time* translations can direct readers to consider *Augenblick* as a purely visual occurrence; therefore, as with *Ereignis*, interpreting *Augenblick* without considering its deeper implications neglects its relevance. Rather than a mere visual acknowledgement of that which transpires, "what is attained in the *Augenblick* is the 'vision' into Being which reveals *Dasein* in its ownmost possibilities of Being, and through which *Dasein* can experience an extraordinary and totalizing sense of Being" (Ward 2008: 112). This sense of urgency is illustratable with the tobacco leaves image above; the embodiment of the farmer's skills as residing within these cultivated leaves is not perceptible without a catalyst, which in this case was his transient glance. Equally as transient, however, is the elucidation of this interpretation. Thus, it was necessary to respond to this spatio-temporal moment accordingly given my interest in identifying background practices and their correlation with worldly investment.

For a photographer's world to manifest with this unique intelligibility, one where their ownmost possibilities for Being are revealed with clarity, yet another consideration is required—a comprehendible referential nexus. Once an opportunity to create a photograph is revealed, the camera is realized not as an object of indifference or void of context, but rather as *ready-to-hand* (*Zuhanden*).

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A photographer skillfully takes the camera and understands its use by way of how it relates to other *things*, such as the subjects sharing the photographic environment. If skilled, the photographer will pre-reflectively adjust the focus, zoom, and even know which position to assume to achieve the anticipated shot. In his essays on skillful coping, Dreyfus cautions that one should not regard such exhibited practices as habitual motor skills, but rather as a way of grasping the world in accordance with one's embodied proficiencies (2015). The thesis on equipmental nexuses, a central focus in *Being and Time*, is augmented in the philosopher's later turning by way of his articulation of *thingness* (1951). Edwards writes that "history washes some words clean, tumbling them along the bottom until all their edges have been smoothed and all their glitter ground to matte" (2005: 456); such a statement is certainly applicable for the word *thing*. Per Heidegger, the word *thing* conveys not an object or entity of study, such as in the natural science or metaphysical traditions, but rather, gathering; "a thing always 'gathers' the other things that belong together with it. Its being—its significance, its meaning, its sense—is always given in relation to those other things, just as their being is always given in relation to it" (461).

Using a camera not only illuminates its relation to applicable entities, it also brings together a foundation for which the nature of Being, a person's inherent position as a dweller, can draw nearer. Earlier it was stated that this nearing provides a moment of salience, but for Heidegger, it is much more substantive. Things bring people nearer to specifical locales based on how they tangibly function in the world. They facilitate an existential locale based on how innumerable elements are gathered. In a photographic context, the camera, as a *thing*, contributes to the intelligibility of the world, yet it also contributes to the conditioning of the world as photographable, one's belongingness in it (as a photographer), and the realization of the self as *Dasein* (to be a photographer *in this moment*); "to think photographically also means to see the world imaginatively and find creativity within everyday life" (Evans & Forrest 2018: 104). For people to comprehend and understand themselves as *Dasein* and their state as *dwellers*, it is important to consider the very tangible role played by the technologies they

routinely use. Without the camera, can the photographer comprehend their unique potentiality *to be* within this context? Can the potentiality of the subjects and their environments, in conjunction with the photographer, as *Dasein*, manifest as profound? Without the appropriating presence of the camera and its ability to support a photographic interpretation of the world, the photographer is impotent to consider practice-specific questions like *why this angle*, *why this subject*, and, most importantly, *why this moment*.

In Evans and Forrest's exploration of Kertész, they ask what he can reveal about the nature of dwelling and everyday life. In non-Heideggerian language, Kertész invites a closer examination of the fabric of everydayness and paths to make the invisible visible. To show this requires intimate engagement, as this facilitates an openness and nearing to being. Yet, it also requires bracketing, a phenomenological reflection on one's daily surroundings. Through an amalgamation of both, people are privileged to see how myriad interrelated parts, including their self, are woven to illuminate meaning. A photographer's use of a camera is necessary for revealing how it is involved in a mutual appropriation and constitution of world; moreover, the urge to take something, like a camera, and put it to use equally reveals that one is never in the world indifferently. Both *Augenblick* and *Ereignis*, in unification with a person's engagement with things, show an alternate path of understanding not only who they are, but also how they relate to others, as well as a path to resist technological understandings of being.

Regarding Azoulay's thesis, I acknowledge that each produced photograph is imbued with my unique being-in-the-world. It is the frame for which the subjects, their practices, and their world manifested. This reality, however, can be suitably (note, not fully) addressed by acknowledging and understanding the self as *Dasein* and its position as a dweller. While dwelling is certainly comprehended and understood from the point of view of *Dasein*, it does not definitively center *Dasein* in an ego-centric manner, given how it provides an opening for the being of those within one's relationship nexus to correspondingly manifest. This includes photographable subjects, but also the various tools that they

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infer as associated with their own *Dasein* (see Fig. 8). These tools are of particular note because, even while not in use, they have potential to be used, and thus take part in the manifestation of the moment and the founding of world.

Fig. 8. (photo by Justin Michael Battin © 2022)

Empathetically speaking with the participants was also critical, as it supports the attunement of the self to a local world, which correspondingly allows for the self as *Dasein*, and its consequences, to be realized. Moreover, it better equips a photographer to distinguish whether the subjects have been showcased truthfully and ethically. Such is indicative of both care (*Sorge*) and concern for others (*Fürsorgen*). As argued by Dungey, "to care for, and be involved with, one's life, others, and the world, are all manifestations of dwelling. As the most primordial set of activities through which our care is expressed, dwelling signifies *who* we are and the *way* of our being" (2007: 239). In the photographic moment, disregarding such considerations effectively conceals the question and meaning of being and encourages shallow representation of objects-in-space. For the subjects, their humanity is effectively truncated (Ogletree 1985: 23), reduced to objects malleable to one's instrumental wishes. Most importantly, however, is the manner in which one can preserve this status and an appreciation for that which stands forth, manifesting out of concealment and into unconcealment.

Such is critical, as, per Edwards, "to live acknowledgement of our manifold conditions, to gather ourselves to ourselves to ourselves and others through the gathering of things, is an ethical achievement; it restores us to a more truthful condition of life, a more proper being" (2005: 466).

IMPLICATIONS FOR LATIN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Latin America is notable for its diverse, rich, yet tumultuous history. It is an area of the world characterized by a consistent lack of cohesion, from the indigenous era to the variance of regional modernities in the present day. Moments during rapid regime change (Cuba), brutal dictatorships (Chile), the industrialization-driven destruction of natural habitats and cultural heritage practices (Amazon), periods of drug-related violence (Colombia), tragic natural disasters (Haiti), the loss of artistic icons (Mexico), forced migrations (Honduras and Guatemala), and waves of immigration through modernization (Argentina) have been captured by countless photographers. Collectively, these moments portray a place seemingly in a forever transition. Although the region contains a range of voices communicating through photography, too frequently these depictions apply imposing narratives, many of which include traces of colonialist convictions.

In a Cuban context, specifically, this angle can be viewed through what Ogden (2021) refers to as digital imperialism. She notes that Instagram (and other digital forms of social media-based photography) documenting Havana, specifically, must be contextualized through the tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen 2011). Users frequently employ the application's features to amend photos, specifically through 'aging filters,' to manufacture a nostalgic vision of the city untouched by global forces. Moreover, she notes that the use of captions and hashtags across the platform usurp those offering any political nuances; this is especially the case given the lack of access Cubanos have to both digital technologies and the internet.

Photographic scenarios such as these are indicative of Azoulay's concerns, as those within the city are stripped of voice and agency and effectively powerless to counter their representations. Moreover, by depicting city life through a nostalgic-driven

feigned narrative, the political realities of the country are ignored and an asymmetric gaze is reinforced. These scenarios are, also, symptomatic of the technological understanding of being. In accordance with Heidegger's thesis, the things of the world, in this case the people of Havana, the classic cars, dilapidated buildings, and pulsating street life, are represented without any independence; they exist simply to be ordered and arranged depending on the wishes of the photographer (or, in this case, Instagrammer). Even if viewing the photograph, such as through one's feed, one is not prompted to consider the humanity of the people who populate these visuals, let alone their routines and relationships. As stated by Mark Blitz, with technological thinking, "we push aside, obscure, or simply cannot see, other possibilities" (2014). The pervasiveness of this thinking (and its equivalent practices) reveals why the event of photography is so critical for consideration in contemporary photographic practice and study. The event of photography, articulated here through a Heideggerian lens, stimulates the photographer to reflect on their power, the presence of the camera, as well as the motivation of their practice. While the power dynamics cannot be completely eradicated, they are reduced through a careful recognition of how the photographer exists within a spatio-temporal *event* comprised of multiple integral parts (both living and non-living), all of which, the photographer included, are active in its creation. One clear question remaining is, how does one become attuned? Attunement to *world* ought to never be framed or interpreted as an achievement, but rather an ongoing openness to conditioning. To experience the interplay of revealing and concealing is a learning process, one that involves looking, seeing, fathoming, questioning, and reflecting. In a Latin American context, the event of photography, as *original truth*, provides new opportunities to progress beyond Cartesian understandings of photography; furthermore, it opens a path for innumerable voices, histories, political relationships, and representations to manifest beyond the restraining confines of a technological understanding of being.

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OF CANNIBALS AND WITCHES

Monstrosity and Capitalism at the Onset of Colonial Visual Culture

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INTRODUCTION

When Christopher Columbus arrived in Abya Yala, he was smitten by the barefooted, naked population he found there. 'Naked,' we must say, between high commas, since, as it is widely known, Amerindians are master of indumenta, embellishing themselves with plumes, pigments, piercing jewels and exquisite head garments. How can one be naked, dressed up in such a fashion? As Oswald de Andrade (2017) would declare in his 1925 poem *Erro de português* [Portuguese error]:

> When the Portuguese arrived
> Underneath a brute rain,
> He dressed up the Indian,
> What a shame!
> Were it a sunny morning,
> The Indian would have undressed the Portuguese.[1]

The Portuguese, and, of course, the Spanish, Venetian, and European error in general, expressed itself in the carrying of their own ways of seeing. And, with that, the long and painful visual history of the now-called America, began. The Amerindian cul-

1. Quando o português chegou/debaixo duma bruta chuva/vestiu o índio/ que pena!/fosse uma manhã de sol/o índio tinha despido o português (free translation by the author).

tural practices that, deprived, even, of such a name, were seen by the Europeans as the expression and proof of the long-imagined existence of Earthly delights, savages, wildmen, anthropophagi, and monstrous civilizations. But they acquired a particular meaning, as these practices were increasingly connected to the phenomenal, i.e., material, concrete, existence of the native body, and became tightly connected to the colonial endeavor. Initially, this is expressed in the cartographic production of the Late Middle Ages, and, later on, in the names given to the 'discovered' locations within the continent: the Caribbean, the Amazons, Patagonia (Braham, 2016; 2017), that is, the cannibals, the monstrous race of lady warriors, the big-footed giants, as well as, as we shall see further ahead, the depiction of female individuals, especially.

Monstrosity, it seems, has long lingered in the European imaginary of Latin-America. As I intend to show, this process was constructed through a visual composition and interpretation of the Amerindian reality through European ways of seeing. By this, I mean the manner and fashion through which 'we' choose, consciously or not, what to see as much as how we see it (Berger, 2008). It means, also, the way we decide to portray, register, and interpret that which is seen. We do so, for a start, informed by our own trajectory, social formation, symbolic universe, and political stance. That is the case with colonial visual culture.

IMAGES OF AMERICA IN LATE MEDIEVAL CARTOGRAPHY

Lands beyond the limits of the world known to Europeans were imagined throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages. If we are to understand how colonial visual culture was built, we must go back to the marvelous imaginary of the medieval man. Thereza B. Baumann (1992) provides us with an interesting line of thought regarding the origins of the imagery of the Americas. According to her, it is in the cartographic depictions of the world that we will find the European imagination of alterity. Tightly connected to Late Antiquity and Medieval theological thought, lands beyond the limits known by the European were dreamt of as promised lands. The Indies were, of course, a promise of Paradise, of Heaven on Earth, the proof of Christian eschatology and of eternal life, as promised by the Holy Scriptures. The *Imago Mundi* that proliferated throughout European

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culture until the late Middle Ages is the first clue to understand how the European colonizer begin to imagine 'the beyond,' and is connected to an imaginary regarding 'the other.'

In search of a terrestrial Paradise, the Europeans, especially the Iberians, set out to discover the Indies, to find the Promised Land within this our world, something long imagined and theorized by theologians. The encounter between the European and the native

> projects [...] a past time, which boundaries are the imaginary instances of the conquistador. A time that we may understand as one of gestation, during which a worldview that included the existential possibility of an "other" being, as well as of another geographic space would be built. (Baumann, 1992: 58)

Such time and space would not be erected from a concrete reality, but from an inverse process, in which the imaginary itself, the symbolic world, would oversee representation.

When one looks back at Medieval culture, specifically on the Iberian penninsula, one must bear in mind the religious character of the time. It is of course, necessary not to ignore the not-so-clear distinction between historical periods, remembering that historical transformations happen within long durations, and changes juxtapose one another not by complete rupture, but, instead, by a dialectical relation. As Max Horkheimer (2010), for instance, discusses, Late Medieval culture was marked precisely by this critical overcoming of theological political hegemony to early humanistic worldviews and proto-scientific epistemologies. That being, the dynamics of medieval society is tightly connected to religious doctrines and epistemologies, in such a way that the Medieval man sees himself and the world through the lenses of Christianity.

Pictorially, we may find the medieval worldview expressed in cartographies produced in the Late Middle Ages. As Baumann (1992) affirms, one may discern three medieval cartographic traditions that extend until the 16th century: first, the "ecumenical" type, which synthetically expressed a cohesion between the otherworld and ours; the second type would be the hemispheric, deriving from Crates' globe and presenting the world divided into two hemispheres, the North, which included the three known continents (Europe, Asia and Africa), and the South, 'terra

incognita.' The third tradition would have developed in the 11th and 12th centuries, uniting elements from the precedent traditions and inserting an ethnocentric element, as the world was elaborated from the viewpoint of the author, mixing sacred and mundane geographies, and including the unknown, 'terra incognita,' as the space of danger, Gog and Magog, perhaps, as obstacles on the way of the Promised Land. Together, these traditions expressed theological, philosophical, and cosmographical theories of the Medieval man, and would become its main iconographic source. They do not represent the world as such, the factuality of the physical world, but Creation; they represent the quintessence of the world, incorporating the mythical repertoire, yes, but progressively adjoining acquired knowledge.

In these images, the Middle Ages created the space for the marvelous. *Hic sunt monstra* is the phrase inscribed in many maps of the Late Middle Ages, meaning that "here, in this place, there is something yet to show itself," whether the color of the people, their language, their size, their sexual ambiguity, their dangerous and fabulous animal companions. The world is yet to be discovered, but the Medieval man is beware of its many dangers and obstacles, so it had been told by the fables of Aesop, the myth of Hercules, the quest for the Holy Grail, the Journey of Saint Brendan, and the Bible. In the great beyond of the known world, the "other" finds progressive representation, at first in the cartographic traditions of the Middle Ages and begins to be imagined as detainer of "fabulous riches, extraordinary beauty, horrifying ugliness, or supernatural gifts. It is both angel, and demon, monster, cynocephalus, mandragora, or, simply, 'Indian'" (Baumann, 1992: 66–67). Monstrosity, then, exists, and is transposed to Abya Yala even before the arrival of the European.

EARLY DEPICTIONS OF AMERINDIANS: THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF EUROPEAN VOYAGES

"How did it happen, that whole regions of Latin America [...] are named for the monstrous races [...]?," asks Persephone Braham (2016: 62). Having quickly discussed how unknown and imagined lands beyond the limits of European knowledge were represented, we can start to think of such matter by going back to Colum-

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bus. Upon arrival, as Colombian Anthropologist Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona (2017) shows, the European imaginary was mostly expressed through the letters written and sent by explorers. Therefore, they were textual, written accounts of the findings of the New World, descriptions of the lands and people who were long imagined, and now, known by the Iberian enterprise. As these letters were published, they were coupled with engravings that illustrated and endorsed the narratives there contained. This was, perhaps, the origin of Latin-American visual culture *per se*. From there on, textual narratives would be paired to pictorial representations, expanding the gaze of the observer, and expressing, in a broader sense, the interpretation of the reality encountered by the Europeans.

The problem with this cannot be resumed in the simple fact that, evidently, Europeans were informed by their own Judaeo-Christian ideology, imbued with moralistic tales of hellish perdition fueled by a conservative Counter-Reformation Papacy. We must also turn our gaze to the visual production of the time, which helped propel the meaning of Amerindian reality. We can begin to explore this matter once we know that the first illustrations of the European voyage to Abya Yala were made through second-hand accounts. The first artists to depict the voyages of Columbus and Vespucci, whom letters had been printed in book form, never really set foot in America.

Again, it is Chicangana-Bayona (2017), who reminds us that the first images of the New World natives relate to the description of Columbus' arrival to the island of Hispaniola, showing Taino people seemingly hiding behind trees and slopes next to two European figures, sent to disembark and make contact with the natives of the island (see fig. 1).

Upon closer look, however, it becomes evident that the woodcut image is prior to Columbus's trip, something that can be observed by the attributes within the image: first, the clearly Oriental, perhaps Turkish, shape of the hats, and the presence of a galley, instead of a caravel, which was used in the Atlantic crossing. At the same time, the banners of the kingdoms of Aragon and León, hoisted on the galley, and the superior subtitle naming the location as Hispaniola, bares the testimony that the image, though pre-existent, was readdressed and edited. This mere fact points out that the first images of the New World were, indeed, reproductions of pre-existent images, something usual in the late 15th century. Back then, one can

say that representations had no need for a similarity effect; they did not need to bare resemblance to the things represented. Even if they came closer to contextual matter-of-factness, as in the case of the Florentine edition of Columbus' letters from 1493, showing the three caravels used in the voyage, they still lacked in similarity regarding the natives, unable to depict any ethnic particularity, showing the Tainos covered in leaf skirts and bearded (the same image, by the way, was used in the Basel edition of Vespucci's letters in 1506).

This example shows us how the first depictions of the New World were, in fact, an expression of pre-existing visual conventions, as well as one of a completely different epistemology from that which would later be constructed regarding the visual representation of colonial society. It shows us, too, that the early Renaissance man was still infused with the Medieval imaginary which, on its turn, was a late representation of Antiquity, specifically translated into Christian-theological thought. That is why, for instance, we see the 1505 depiction of "Indians from the New World" represented precisely as medieval wildmen, or, in close relation to such archetype, Adam and Eve.

The trend to portray Amerindians as *homo silvestris* reflects the imaginative ethnographies of the 15th and 16th centuries, which pictured humans in a certain state of nature. One must not forget that we are temporally located in the passage of the Middle Ages to Renaissance, which dislocated the explanation of worldly life from the heavens to earth or, in other words, a passage from a theological explanation and dominion of knowledge to a humanistic and scientific one, giving rise to theories such as Hobbes' state of nature, Machiavelli's Prince, or Vico's thought on history and politics. As such, the image of the *homo silvestris* populated the Medieval and early Renaissance imaginaries as the prototypes of human savage life. It is important to note that, at first, such borrowing did not ascribe a sense of savagery as barbarity to the Amerindian, as indicated by Chicangana-Bayona (2017); the *homo silvestris* is an essentially European category, but its image, its appearance, its pictorial depiction, with the long fuzzy hair and beard, not seldom displaying a hairy body, seems to have provided enough elements for it to become a visual model for the early depiction of Amerindians[2] (see figs 2 & 3).

2. We cannot trace a robust comparative set of examples within the scope of this article, but we may cite images contained in the German edition

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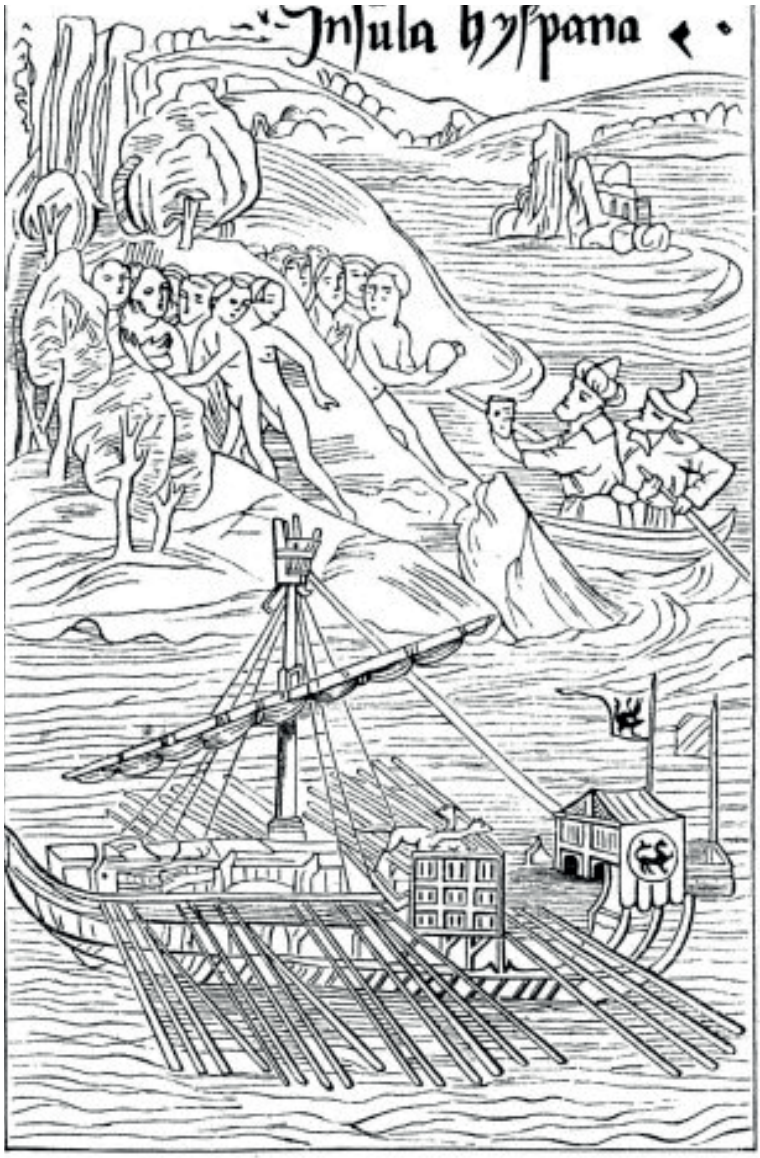

Fig. 1. "Columbus disembarks at Hispaniola." Woodcut. *Letter from Columbus*. Basel edition, 1493. Wikicommons.

of the letters of Amerigo Vespucci, at The British Library, or in the *Voyages of Marco Polo*, Bodleian Maneuscript 264, at the Bodleian Library, both of which make a pictorial connection between the wildmen and the Amerindians.

Fig. 2. Jean Bourdichon, *Les Quatre États de la Société [L'Homme sauvage ou l'État de Nature]*. XVIème siècle. Beaux-Arts de Paris, Wikicommons.

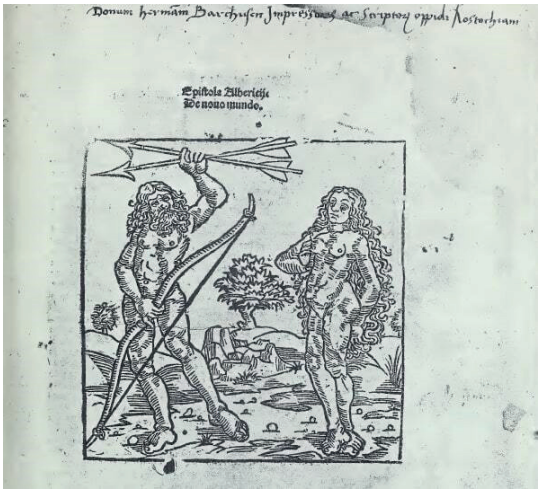

Fig. 3. "Couple of Indians from the New World." Woodcut. *Mundus Novus.* Rostock Edition, 1505.

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With the passage of time, as reports and political and theological relations with and from the Americas grew, the native started to be less and less represented solely as a sort of imagetic *tabula rasa*. Their bodies, always deprived of local specificities, started to be more particular. Women started to be depicted maternally, sometimes resembling a type of Eve, which soon would imply luxuriousness and danger, and the landscape, too, was progressively introduced within the illustration, though not in a realistic manner. An important fact would, it seems, be key for a change in the depiction of Amerindians: that of anthropophagy.

Anthropophagy was a well-known habit. In Antiquity, anthropophagi were thought to live beyond the limits of the 'civilized,' i.e., Hellenistic, world: Scythia, Ethiopia, 'the Orient.' Inherited by Latin culture, the fantastic imaginary of unknown places was populated by monstrous races of barbarous habits. The thirteenth century *Arnstein Bible* depicts the worldview of the medieval man, portraying a geographic and ethnic division of the world. The document bears witness to the ongoing teratological tradition compiled in natural histories (which were not, and are not to be taken as scientific thought), ever since Antiquity: monstrous people with no head, faces attached to their chest or back, people with earlobes long enough to cover them, people with inverted feet or with dog heads, people with but one eye, whose figures expressed their conformation contrary to the order of nature.

This conception has been, of course, changed, challenged, and negotiated throughout time, but it had been present throughout time since Classical Antiquity, in works such as in Aristotle's *History of Animals*, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, and Augustin's *City of God*. In some way, it is the same conception we see in vogue during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, both in the 1634 *Traité des monstres*, by Fortuno Liceti, and in the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (Lemire, 2017), which draw back to the Protestant enlargement of a moralizing of nature, understood as a part of the Revelation, and to Luther's idea of Monstrosity as a sign of catastrophe. In the same sixteenth century, Conrad Lytcosthenes, an Alsatian scholar, would declare monsters as "things that have an appearance beyond the course

of nature"[3] (*apud.* Lemire, 2017: sc. 376). Throughout the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, monstrosity becomes increasingly connected to the body proper, and to an accident of nature. One sees the recurrence presence of the hermaphrodite, for instance, in different medical and religious processes, connecting the idea of monstrosity not exclusively to a type of physical deformity or handicap, but to habits. Again, with Laurent Lemire (2017), one may cite cases such as those of Antide Collas, a woman with male habits, Marie le Marcis, who went through a religious and criminal process in 1601 for having the same 'behavior,' or, later, in 1761, the couple Françoise Lambert and Grand-Jean, the latter who was intersex, but judged as dominantly female by court, and forced to divorce and renounce to masculine gender performance. With these examples, we notice how, more than the physics, moral personality comes into play.

As such, the meaning of monstrosity is progressively reformulated throughout time, increasingly combining its marvelousness—physical and metaphysical—present ever since Antiquity, to its moral, religious meaning. This relationship, though only quickly presented, may explain how the visual culture of Iberian America originated; if, at first, the imaginary of the unknown world is cartographically depicted by making use of pre-existent conceptions of "the other," the arrival of Europeans to Abya Yala set forth a new articulation of sources within this same tradition. If Amerindians were depicted by a reproduction of old illustrations largely based on religious and folkloric images of Adam, Eve, and wildmen, as social relations between native and invader deepened, the morality of European culture was quickly introduced in the matter, as the depictions of these natives progressively transformed from a physical imagined monstrosity to a moral one. This is clear if we look specifically at the depiction of the Amerindian woman, especially in its connection to anthropophagy and in the ways their bodies are signified.

One may notice the changes undergone the depiction of Amerindians in the works of Theodor de Bry. Born in 1528, de Bry was a Liègeois Protestant who became known for his engravings

3. *Chose qui apparaissent outre les cours de la nature* (free translation by the author).

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of the voyage of Hans Staden to present-day Ubatuba, in the coast of São Paulo. As Chicangana-Bayona (2017) shows, he, too, used pre-existing depictions of Staden's text to come up with his images. Only, he did so by refining them, and emphasizing particular aspects of the happenings described in the report, especially the ritual of anthropophagy and the female role in it (figs. 4, 5 & 6). With de Bry, we see the Amerindian woman becoming a protagonist. Women are always present in his images: they pamper the captive who will be devoured, dance around him, clean his body, and wander about in crazy furor, biting their hands and arms, seemingly desperate for meat; one of them does so while subtly approaching one hand to her genitals. While such gestures are reproduced in the images of other artists, like Thevet, Delaune and Jean de Léry, they happen in depictions of war and battles between Amerindians, whereas in de Bry's images, they are put in the forefront of a clear, situational context.

Despite possible different interpretations, it is curious to notice that the gesture of biting one's own hand had been present before, a century earlier, in Fra Angelico's *Final Judgement* (image 7), connected to the sin of rage and, in the context of colonialism, gluttony.

The direct connection between this habit and the female figure points to the above-mentioned moralization of the human body, which, informed by Neoplatonism, implies that the body, understood as a sensible form, expresses the essence of the being. In the first century of European presence in Abya Yala, the Late Medieval imaginary started to mix with the Early Renaissance forms, which rescued Classicist epistemology by expressing it visually through mathematical anatomy and perspective. The female figure plays an important part in the emergence of this new art. Voluptuous bodies and long hair are central elements for the depiction of femininity crowned by, amongst others, Alberti's work on painting. The attributes ascribed to women endorse the Classical reference, but also the Biblical one, and the *schemata* of female images would refer both to Artemis, the goddess of love, and Eve, and, with it, the surreptitious morality of their essences. Ever since the Middle Ages, Eve, for instance, was a counterpoint to the Virgin Mary, a symbol of purity. Her image, therefore, links the long-haired, voluptuous woman to the Fall, to sin.

Fig. 4. Theodore De Bry, "Porridge Preparation." Metal engraving. In *America Tertia Pars*, Frankfurt, 1592.

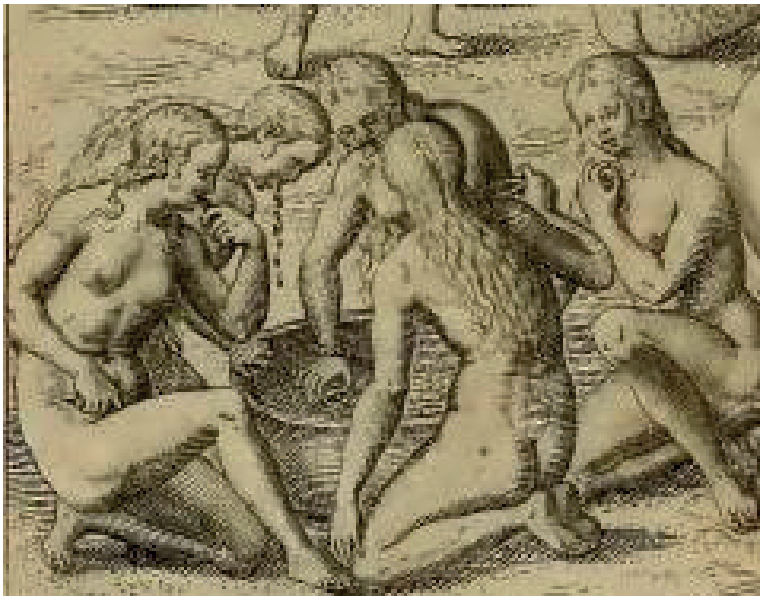

Fig. 5. "Porridge Preparation," detail.

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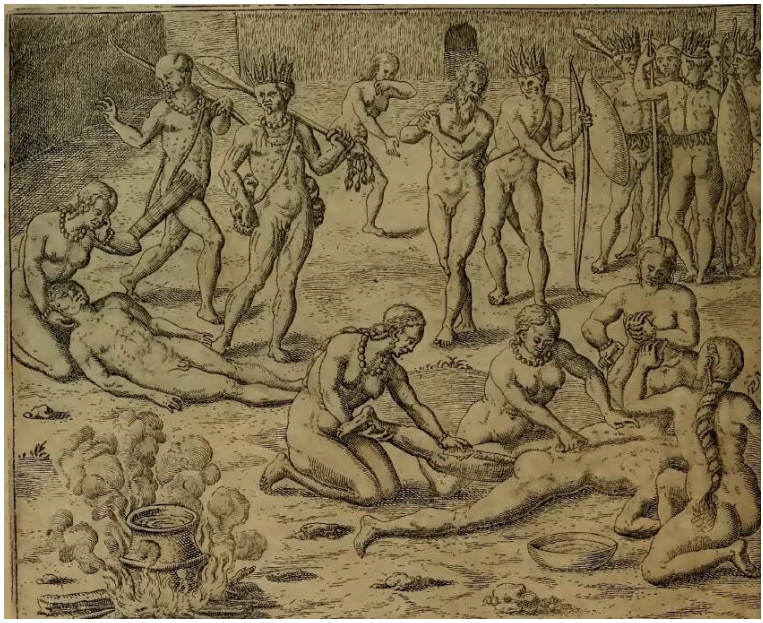

Fig. 6. Theodore de Bry, "Hans Staden watches the preparation of a victim's corpse." Metal engraving. In. *America Tertia Pars*, Frankfurt, 1592.

Fig. 7. Fra Angelico, c. 1395. *Final Judgement* (detail of the Sin of Rage) . Gemäldigegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

> [The] association between the indigenous women and Eve is not gratuitous, being connected to a negative connotation, such as temptation and luxuriousness. That is why the "new Eve" natives have an active participation in the images depicting cannibalistic rituals. (Chicangana-Bayona, 2017, p. 139)

As such, to the figure of the Amerindian woman depicted through classicist *schemata*, artists such as de Bry added a negative connotation insinuated by the biblical narrative. Yet, the engendering of political meaning within the female image did not end there. Prior to the time during which the letters of Vespucci, and Columbus were being illustrated, or de Bry, de Léry, Thevet or Delaune were structuring a more meaningful and interpretational visual culture of the colonial enterprise, the Northern European tradition had also developed a set of denotative and connotative symbolisms that ascribed a particularity to the female figure.

Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Hans Baldung (c. 1485–1545) were Northern Masters whose work involved gothic symbolism and mysticism in the passage between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In both cases, female figures were highly suggestible of eroticism, counting with great ambiguity, something that can be observed, also, in the works of Albrecht Altdorfer (c. 1480–1538) and Lucas Cranach (1472–1553). In the Northern tradition, the political and theological symbolism of the woman as a perpetual reminder of 'the fall,' incorporating the beauty and sensuality of Eve, encounters the early Renaissance revivalism of Classical standards and are transposed to the Amerindian woman. In this movement, the representation of the Amerindian woman is shifted from a sort of being living in a "natural state," to a deceptive, erotic being, beautiful as Artemis, but dangerous as Eve, in the prime of their age, until they become hexes, monstrous old ladies who keep on biting their own arm, delighting in cannibal feasts. The hex appears, then, as another form of representing the female native.

In Dürer's images, for instance, the hexes follow pictorial models that represented humankind's ages of life, and the mythological *Graces*. They are, as such, represented both young and old, sensual and erotic, in the former, and deceptive and child-eating, in the latter. Hexes were associated with luxuriousness and gluttony. Since they were devil worshippers, their beauty was, of course, deceptive,

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and, as Chicangana-Bayona (2017) observes, they were connected to Hippocrates' theory of humors, specifically the black bile, which, once unbalanced in the organism, caused melancholy, turning people who suffered from it into great minds, but also easily giving in to the worse kinds of vices. The regent planet of such melancholy was Saturn, whose nocturnal house is the star-sign of Capricorn, which representation is usually the same as that of the devil; 'the unbalance of humors would explain the vengeful fury of the cannibal and the vicious tendencies of the hex and, consequently, of the woman.' (Chicangana-Bayona, 2017: 145). In a context when women were persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike, accused of heresy and witchcraft, it seems rather logical that the meaning of "womanhood," of being a woman, could easily be transposed to colonial territories. The naked, long-haired, classically beautiful Amerindian women mirrored humanity's fall into temptation, and the decrepit, saggy-bosomed, old women were a proof of the deceptive beauty of the native which, in turn, had to be avoided (figs. 8, 9 & 10).

It is interesting to observe, however, that the depictions of both young and old Amerindian women, but especially those of the elderly, does not always match the written reports. This is the case with Staden's writings, where no difference is made between ages. Jean de Léry's, however, whose text would serve as the base for de Bry's images, makes explicit reference to the habits of the elderly women. This is the case, too, in the *Chronica da Companhia de Jesus*, written by Simão de Vasconcelos, a Jesuit priest from Porto, who even compares them to the mythical harpies (cf. Chicangana-Bayona, 2017: 147 and further). In these differences, we see the rise of protagonism in elderly women, which provides us with interesting reflections on the ideology permeating the pictorial production of colonial visual culture. There are contradictory accounts on the role of men and women in the anthropophagous rituals, and the images produced many times go against such accounts, increasingly showing women as nothing but negative. The Amerindian woman is not only progressively turned into a protagonist of colonial reality, but also increasingly connected to the sins of lust, luxuriousness, and gluttony, as well as to the image of Eve and of the hex.

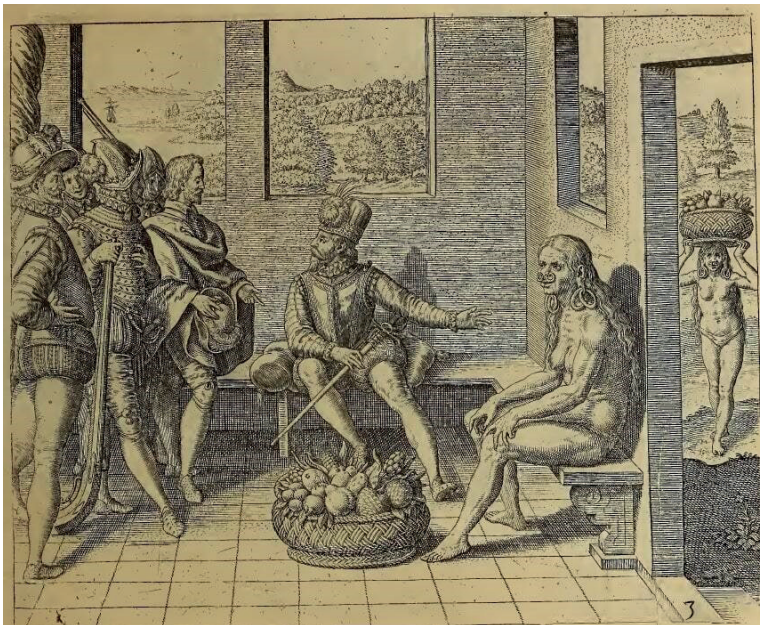

Fig. 8. Theodor de Bry, "Cumana Amerindian bringing gifts to the prefect." Metal engraving. In. *Americae Pars Quarta.* Frankfurt, 1594.

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Fig. 9. Albrecht Dürer. c. 1500. *The Hex.* Woodcut, 11 ,4 x 7,1cm. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 10. Hans Baldung, 1541–1544. *The Ages and Death* . Oil on wood, 151 x 61 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

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There are many possible examples one may look at to inquire and speculate on the origins of a colonial visual culture in Brazil. As discussed in the opening of this article, an idea of monstrosity permeated the imaginary of *terra incognita* ever since the Middle Ages and, perhaps, Antiquity, which can be testified by cartographic history. Believing to have arrived in the Indies, European man quickly began exploring the people he found in Abya Yala by portraying them according to such imaginary. At first, these were portrayed as mostly docile people, living in a state of nature that could easily be thought of as belonging to an Earthly Paradise. As time went on, the increasing amount of information and the deepening of social relations between the Amerindian and the European provided further elements for a new set of attributes and symbolisms to be ascribed to the former, who began to be portrayed not only as wild, "natural" humans, but closer and closer to the monstrosity referred to unknown people throughout European history.

Assuming that the European who arrived in Abya Yala was a man passing through a cultural shift, which convention taught us to indicate as that of the passing from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, we have taken the image of the Amerindian woman to quickly discuss how the Amerindian—and Abya Yala itself—was visually unified and conformed through negativity, as a mirror of European Judaeo-Christian morality and eschatology.

Anthropophagy, later called 'cannibalism,' a term derived from the name of the Carib people whose habit of eating human flesh was informed to Columbus by the Tainos, became a central moral reference in the accounts of travelers. It allowed Europeans to certify the Amerindians as monstrous, amoral, Godless people, much like the ancient accounts and maps of distant lands and people. The reality of this habit became present in many pictorial accounts, sometimes contradicting the written ones, and Theodor de Bry's works provides us with one interesting example of how, in the building of a colonial visual culture, cannibalism turned into a reference for the creation of an imaginary exclusively dedicated to the colonial territories. This is clear, as we have quickly discussed, by the increasing protagonism of female figures, who transpose, in their attitudes and body language, a sense of negativity, danger,

sinfulness, and death. If men were portrayed as savage Apollos, women were pictured as lustful, beauty-deceptive hexes, eager for blood and human flesh. Young or old, women became inscribed with the sign of sin and devilishness.

As a closing remark to this exploratory essay, although not being possible to retrace an overarching trajectory of colonial imagery in the first century of the Iberian colonial enterprise, de Bry's work seems to be a rich ground for exploring the beginning of a visual culture proper to colonial territories. Besides his history of the exploration of the Brazilian colony, in *Americae Tertia Pars* (1592a), his *Americae Pars Quarta* (1594a), dedicated to the voyages of Girolamo Benzoni, reinforces the meaning conveyed in the portrayal of Amerindians and, more specifically, of the Amerindian woman. The attention to cannibalism, and to the role of women in it—whether real or not—engenders a symbolism that would be endorsed over and over regarding Amerindian reality. The key, in this exploration would be understanding why it is the woman, specifically, that is progressively put in the center of attention.

The path opened by such preliminary exploration points to the relationship between the socioeconomic and cultural aspects of the colonial endeavor. How the visual expresses and produces the surreptitious ideology present in the historical development of the productive forces seems to be the key in understanding how the European created a visual culture for the colonized territories. In this sense, Karl Marx (2011) and Silvia Federici (2004) provide us with important reflections on the history of modernity and the development of capitalism, there included colonialism and gendered relationships. In his analysis of the process of primitive accumulation of capital, Marx emphasizes the distinction made in political economy between two different kinds of property: one based on the producer's own work, and one grounded in the exploitation of someone else's labor. If the process of primitive accumulation had (somewhat) ended in Europe, in the colonies reality was rather different. There, the capitalist regime stumbled upon different productive relations which allowed the capitalist to understand further the capitalist relations in their home country. In short, colonialism was in service of ameliorating the capitalist process within capitalist societies, something that could

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not have been accomplished by the exploitation of alienated work in the colonies themselves, through the creation of a massive wage class that could not be allocated in European internal market. As such, colonialism was an experiment in exploiting the surplus of salaried workers that could not find a place in the market, and it also allowed Europeans to create a new mass of potential laborers who could explore the New World, under European surveillance, bringing back the riches to the continent under the auspices of a capitalist. Colonialism was, then, an economic solution fueled and dressed by a proto-humanistic and late-theological mission of civilization and completion of the Gospels. If culturally, as it was assumed here, the colonial endeavor was comprised by a Late-Medieval culture, then, economically, this too fits, as we see in such endeavor the movement that would substantiate the completion of the primitive accumulation of capital and, with it, the consolidation of capitalism *per se*.

But there is more than purely political economy for understanding the grounding of colonial visual culture as it has been discussed here—and, again, we reaffirm the early, exploratory and speculative character of this reflection. If Marx provides us with the infrastructural settings of the colonial endeavor, it is Federici (2004) who expands this to everyday life and cultural reality of the Late Middle Ages in the onset of primitive accumulation, showing us how gender, and the erasure of women from Feudal society, was central for the beginning of the expropriation of labor in Europe, setting the foundations for the phenomena explored by Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy*. In her seminal work of historical anthropology, *Caliban and the Witch*, Federici shows how the creation of capitalist workforce was accomplished by the changes occurred within the social position of women in the Late Middle Ages, for which the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (which happened not only in Europe, but in the Americas as well) was central, adding to the expropriation of land and the colonial enterprise.

With these observations, the path opened by this preliminary exploration of colonial visual culture unfolds into an overarching question relating to the colonial process itself in light of the development of capitalism. But it does so by pointing out to the need

for understanding culture as part and parcel of the development of productive forces. The unfolding of colonial European imagery seems to mirror—in expressive correspondence (see Benjamin 1999)—the development of European colonialism not 'because of' capitalist political economy, but 'as a part of' it, retroactively produced by, and producing it. It is still necessary to further explore, under a materialist perspective, the relationship between colonialism and primitive accumulation, on the one side, and visual culture and early Amerindian-European contact, on the other. Nonetheless, in this article, I have focused on providing readers with introductory historical and anthropological sources that allow grounding a preliminary take on the issues comprising a subject that has not yet been explored to exhaustion.

As a concluding remark, the ideas developed in this short essay allow us to state that there seems to be a linear—if not evolutionary—rationale present in European epistemology, which, inheriting the imaginary of late Antiquity and Medieval marvelousness, engenders an increasingly derogatory and racialized depiction of Amerindian reality. Representing the Amerindian close to the medieval wildmen, living in a state of nature, European visual culture quickly gave central position to the female figure, moralizing Amerindian reality according to Judeo-Christian theology, imbuing such a figure with teratological meaning, a process that can be testified by de Bry's work by the late sixteenth-century. These processes seem to be tightly connected with Marxist thinking on the development of capitalism, as observed by Karl Marx and Silvia Federici, and further exploration on such topics will provide further understanding on how America was invented, not discovered; a place inhabited by and named after monsters, waiting to show themselves, for the horror of the white man.

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REMEMBERING VIOLENCE IN *MATAR A JESÚS* (2017)

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> *What are ruins? Something diminished, certainly, something demolished. But not everything demolished is a ruin. In the perception of the ruin we sense something that is no longer there, a departed guest: someone has just left when we enter, something still floats in the air and something has remained too.* (Zambrano, 2012: 114)

War ruins, destroys. It dislocates embodied experience from any possible meaning while interrupting processes of identity building and social formations. Events that are violent and traumatic in nature puncture a hole in the linguistic capacities of psychic representation. Memories that are too painful to remember or communicate come to be transmitted roughly, through silences, disjunctions, repetitions, and contradictions. Taking into account the fact that the use of symbolic tools (language, culture) is a precondition for the process in which subjectivity is constructed, the collapse of language implies as well the collapse of the conceptual frameworks that construct our social worlds. Violence as a social phenomenon concerns all matters of politics, identity, physical and psychological wellbeing, and other social activities; and, as such, it is not only defined by the specificity of the context but, in turn, it partakes an active role in the development of the notions of identity. Both in form and content, violence becomes a narrative force that gives shape to our past and, therefore,

to our notions of identity. Indeed, entire histories of countries are summarized in textbooks with timelines and descriptions of the wars they have (or not) endured. However, this belongs to a well precise practice, an academic discipline, and a scientific method: it belongs to History. Violence trespasses this collective sphere of the cultural memory of history, and shapes, deeply shapes, the singular, the individual. My contention is that narratives of violence are mediated by affectual processes of memory, which bring us intimately closer to the different forms of victimization; yet, they obstruct representation by articulating a distant image of that violence.

As a recognized foundation of the Colombian imaginary, conflict has remained for decades the most critical identifier of the nation. In this case, violence represents the dominant discursive formation of Colombian narratives, making it impossible to separate any discussion regarding art from the issue of violence (Suárez 2009). While there have been multiple and diverse attempts at identifying, classifying, and explaining all forms of violence—sometimes by tracing its origins to specific events in Colombian history—defining the roots of a conflict that has come to define a country for over half a century is no easy task, as the complexity and longevity of violence in Colombia remain transversal and are deeply engrained into all of social, cultural, and political dimensions. The history and definition of the Colombian conflict are, to this day, a site of struggle for meaning, and it is precisely such instability of the rhetoric of violence through which we narrate our stories (Barbero and Pécault in Martínez 2012) that consolidates violence as a natural component of the Colombian experience. The naturality and continuity of this violence suggests a permanent state of crisis that does not recognize the pre-traumatic nor post-traumatic experience. Indeed, as Geoffrey Kantaris reminds us, "violence is as much an effect of representation as it is a system of representation itself" (2018: 456) that permeates all national spatial, temporal, and conceptual frameworks. Regarding its discursive formation, the traumatic event is "not assimilated or experienced fully" at the time of its occurrence, but rather "belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it." (Caruth 1995; 4–5). Somewhere in between the articulation

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of embodied experience, meaning, and identity, there seems to be a fundamental/constructive tension between the building blocks with which we construct the idea of ourselves, and the broken pieces that are lost, destroyed, or taken from us. Violence then, both in form and content, becomes a narrative force that gives shape to our notions of identity.[1]

In Colombian national cinema, the exploration of warlike conflict is mostly evidenced in the narratives that are concerned with violence and the ways in which territory/land issues (the countryside/the city) influences forms of marginalization. The socio-political intersection in which *Matar a Jesús* (2017) unfolds is influenced by the history of the internal armed conflict, geo-politics of inequality and the State's peace-building and neo-liberal projects. In this work, filmmaker Laura Mora Ortega depicts a picture of an outraged (yet hopeless) contemporary Colombian society for which violence, fear, and indignation are constant emotions in face of the State's abandonment. Her exploration of violence is heavily influenced by Victor Gaviria's oeuvre, which became highly recognized by its inclusion of non-professional actors—in this case, a tumultuous youth from marginalized neighborhoods of Medellín—in the writing of the scripts as well as in other narrative processes. *Matar a Jesús*, in particular, develops its narrative at the intersection between guerrilla documentary forms and thriller narrative structures in order to explore the life experiences of the atemporal and faithless youth that is so recurrent in Gaviria's bodywork. *Rodrigo D. No futuro* (1990), for instance, was greatly inspired by Vittorio de Sica's *Umberto D* (1952). Gaviria's famous leitmotif is beautifully exemplified in the exploration of some neorealist themes, such as the social 'paralysis,' or stagnation of life, in which social dynamics come to an abrupt halt, causing characters to internalize feeling of hopelessness, loss, and a lack of purpose in all their social and personal activities.

The portrayal of forgotten and/or wretched characters (sexual minorities, the poor, the outlawed, the undereducated, the abandoned, etc.) is distinctive of 'dirty realism,' coined in Spanish

1. This seems to be a failure of narration because it will never be able to recover the past. However, importance is given to the ways in which narratives are told instead of the historical accuracy of the actual event.

as *realismo sucio*. Moreover, it is precisely through a combination of the documentary techniques of *cinéma vérité*, along with classical fiction formulas, that 'dirty realism' (as does Gaviria's work in general) presents a sober image of characters which are commonly outcast from established social systems and defined as 'marginal,' dysfunctional, and politically abject; that is, those characters which—it is believed—should be made invisible in order for society to progress.[2] Dirty realism's reinterpretation of Glauber Rocha's formulation of the aesthetics of hunger during the 1970s, displays the crisis of the modern political project by exposing the fatal costs of economic modernization.

Materializing the belief that "fatality and absurdity are the only ways to represent the experience of violence" (Gaviria 2002: 229), the youth portrayed in *Matar a Jesús* captures the despair of a marginal community in which legal authority barely exists. The indifference through which official institutions disregard marginal communities obstructs them from different forms of social life and political involvement, and points to how "the weakening of the very notion of belonging to society evidences a breakdown of the social bond and the awareness of the inability of the State to guarantee security" (Moraña 2002: 14). In front of the almost inexistent presence of police and legal institutions, the act of political re-formulation emerges, as communities articulate their own notions of truth and justice. In doing so, they are "replicating the institutional discourse transforming themselves into their traumatic image, one that is erased from consciousness but nevertheless works from within" (León 2005: 13). Indeed, the exclusion of social groups from economic and social orders also carries with it the exclusion from epistemic, symbolic, and cultural fields (León). The universality and legitimacy of the established forms of State regulation and other forms of institutionalism are then called into question as institutions "base their rational and universalist discourse on the segregation of certain marginal collectivities" (13). This implies a conception of the marginal as that which is 'traumatic' or 'abject' to the neoliberal project, "a float-

2. The protagonists in Gaviria's films such as *La vendedora de rosas* (The Rose Seller) (1998), *Sumas y restas* (2005) are a clear example of this narrative tendency.

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ing meaning that designates what was repressed by enlightened thought: the trace of postponed cultures that never spoke the language of the West" (13). Consequently, one is ventured to accept the fact that the emergence of various types of violence (whether local, individual or global and social) can be traced back to a common 'formal' and excluding system (Cervino and Cevallos, 2003).

Matar a Jesús follows Paula's journey through Medellin's underworld as she desperately—and guided by an initial will of vengeance—tries to discover the truth behind her father's murder. Paula's father, professor of political science and avid lecturer of the texts of Michel Foucault, is murdered by a man in a motorcycle who promptly disappears through the busy roads after shooting him. Paula, who witnessed his death, seeks help from the dysfunctional legal system that is a common trope in a large part of Colombian contemporary cinema: the useless local police institution, structured through the figure of incompetent and corrupt law-enforcing agent, and the reality of the poor governmental funding destined to marginal communities. The investigators of the death of Paula's father (who, the film suggests, steal the father's watch) are quick to dismiss any resolution of the case while arguing that the large volume of crimes in the neighborhood makes it almost impossible for the polices officers to investigate and find the killer. In fact, they advise Paula and her brother that the most viable course of action is for the whole family to pack their belongings and relocate. The family is unwilling to leave the father's house of which they have fond memories. However, economic matters seem to be of concern. Some days after the traumatic incident, she comes face to face with the person who shot her father. Paula, while dancing with her friends, suddenly recognizes the face of the man who escaped in the motorcycle over the loud music and hypnotic, oneiric-like lights of an underground disco bar. She slowly approaches him and asks his name: His name is Jesús. She writes his phone number down and plans to set up a date in the next days, as soon as she is able to get her hands on a gun and finally satisfy her impulse for revenge. However, buying a gun is not as easy as Paula believes and, while she finds one, she spends time with Jesús, developing an intimate bond which will later prevent her from pulling the trigger. During her experience with Jesús,

Paula bears witness of the disassociation between the social and moral structure of the marginal community he belongs to.

Here, the filmic text and personal experience are deeply interconnected. As Beverly argues, the cinema that explores themes of marginality has as one of its most important objectives to expose the irreducibility of subaltern culture by means of its testimonial effect (2004). It is important to note that the director herself seems to extrapolate her own experience with personal trauma into the narrative: her father was also the victim of a murder of political nature. While she did not see the face of the person who committed the crime, she affirms to have conceived the plot for *Matar a Jesús* after having a dream in which an unknown man walked up to her and said: "I killed your father, my name is Jesús." Paula's experience, in a way, materializes the filmmaker's personal desire and urgency of finding the answer behind the father's murder and the catharsis of recognizing (if any) meaning to the violence.

Paula's journey is a sorrowful one that reflects not only the traumatic experience of Laura Mora Ortega, but of thousands of Colombians who, to this day, do not know the details behind the death/disappearance of their loved ones. In these situations, family members and close friends are left with no answers, trying to find the proper narratives to define the stories of departed loved ones with the use of whatever objects, photos, words, or ideas that remain after the breakdown. Further, these personal memories are framed in a larger universe, a mass media universe in which the war was represented and experienced by millions of Colombian citizens. In this semiotic universe, fragments of pain become image and, through these, we recall the past and we construct our stories. Nevertheless, as remarked by Susan Sontag: "photographs that everyone recognizes are now a constituent part of what a society chooses to think about, or declares that it has chosen to think about. It calls these ideas "memories," and that is, over the long run, a fiction" (Sontag 2003: 85–86). Far from being the history of the conflict, these fragments, pictures, souvenirs, are just the collective representation of the individual pain. Such communal, social interaction completely mediated by the images is, in turn, experienced as a legitimate document of personal trauma and as the proof of history of the depicted violence.

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In the case of Paula, the traces of her father will slowly begin to disappear. The only element that remains at all times is his photo, which she carries along in her journey. Indeed, Paula is trying to uncover those unclear details of her father´s murder in order to fully determine his story. She is looking for a reason, a cause, a name and a timeline. By inspecting the ruins of his belongings, she hopes to understand exactly what happened. Here, it is important to go beyond a reading of *Matar a Jesús* as a murder thriller plot, but as the primordial objective of trauma narratives: to articulate broken fragments of memory in a way that makes sense.

Photographs are the most important elements of memory in the film. Not only because Paula herself is studying photography, but because they become an indispensable tool in the narrative development. It is noteworthy that Jesús, while deeply treasures a picture of his deceased brother, does not want to be photographed by Paula. In a very important scene where we witness them becoming emotionally intimate with each other, Jesús decides to take her to a beautiful place for her to take some photos. He walks Paula up the small mountain overviewing Medellín that he visits from time to time when he wants to clear his mind and be on his own. After being asked about how her analog camera works, Paula describes the process: you focus and you shoot. Shortly after, she points the camera at Jesús who asks Paula not to take his picture as he loathes the idea of having photos 'lying around.' Jesús' refusal of being photographed points not only to his fear of being on the other side of a shooting object, but most importantly to his refusal of becoming an object of memory. As Susan Sontag reminds us, photographs objectify, "they turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed. And photographs are a species of alchemy, for all that they are prized as a transparent account of reality" (81). Jesús only agrees to have his picture taken by Paula after she promises to give him back the photos as soon as she develops them, as if by holding the pictures in his hands granted him full control of any narrative that might be attached to him, both presently and in the future. Jesús wants the means to articulate his own story as he well knows about the fatal challenge that photography poses on memory: "whether the photograph is understood as a naive object or the work of an experienced

artificer, its meaning—and the viewer's response—depends on how the picture is identified or misidentified; that is, on words" (29).[3] Thus, he wishes to be in control of his own narrative.

Jesús' reaction to having his picture taken evidences the great influence that items of memory, such as photographs, have over reality. The traces of the past which are continuously being articulated into narratives, call into question the stability of memories themselves. Meaning appears to be detached from its specific image and only re-formulated through the narratives that affectively impact the person who is in the process of remembering and who experiences a feeling of shock. The photograph, as a physical object, remains an item bound to be interpreted by the specificity of contexts. The articulation of sense/meaning is produced when we make use of those limited fragments at our disposal in order to mentally reconstruct an event. Those fragments and remnants are recognized as documents of the event itself after one is able to reconstruct the tragic event by legitimizing and associating the broken pieces that were left behind in the aftermath of destruction and violence. Let us not forget, not even for one second, the power of an image. A single fragment is capable of breaking down entire memories and even trigger new ones. In fact, it is a single newspaper clipping which will destroy Paula's relationship with Jesús and trigger the climax of the film.

In one of the last scenes, Paula finds herself alone in Jesús' bedroom. He had taken her there after she was robbed and hurt quite badly. After helping her clean her wounds, he lets her rest and leaves. Paula wakes up later in the night to the sound of music and dancing coming from the street. Since Jesús is out, she takes a tour around the small bedroom and curiously inspects Jesus' things. The room had been previously ravaged and disorganized by some

3. During the scene in which Paula gives her statement at the police station, she is handed a photo album containing hundreds of pictures of suspected criminals. When she voices her inability of recognizing among all the faces the person who shot her dad, the police officers pressure her on picking a face. After she again refuses to do so, they intensely ask her to just choose one, "the one resembles the most." This scene evidences the need of the police to attach a face (any face, not even the correct one) to the narrative of Paula's murder. It also highlights the power of narrations when connected to photographic element that needs not be proper evidence.

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unidentified people who were looking to hurt him. Paula finds the photos she took of him, along with a photo of Jesús' brother, which she gently sticks to the frame of a small hanging mirror. She continues to clean up and organize his personal items until she discovers a newspaper clipping with her father's picture and a headline that reads: CONFERENCE. After 15 seconds of silence, Paula destroys the room in anger. She throws all belongings to the ground and tramples over the mirror and the photo. Clearly, Paula is deeply affected by the newspaper clipping that remarked the day of her father´s death. The emotional trigger for Paula emerges here as a private meaning for her, which suddenly surfaces and impacts her process or remembering and what Jesús means to her. The intense emotional response that the photos and the newspaper clipping cause on Paula could be described using Barthes' concept of the *punctum*, which,

> […] (a Latin word derived from the Greek word for trauma) […] inspires an intensely private meaning, one that is suddenly, unexpectedly recognized and consequently remembered (it "shoots out of [the photograph] like an arrow and pierces me"); it 'escapes' language (like Lacan's real); it is not easily communicable through/with language. The punctum is 'historical' as an experience of the irrefutable indexicality of the photograph (its contingency upon a referent). The punctum is a detail or "partial object" that attracts and holds the viewer's (the Spectator's) gaze; it pricks or wounds the observer." (1980: 33)

Being a fundamentally narrative, yet unintelligible, element, the *punctum* allows us to better understand and highlight the narrative mechanisms of memory. In effect, an element that is part of the event or emerges from it, cannot avoid being part of its history. However, as we have seen, it is also a purely subjective fiction inasmuch as it escapes form and meaning. Paula's reaction to her father's newspaper photo elucidates much more than her personal reaction to the memory of trauma. It emphasizes the role of her own process of remembering and materializes a dangerous realization. Paula is not simply a bystander of the fiction; she is its creator and main protagonist. The intensely private meaning that Paula experiences is nothing else than a subjective semiotic dynamic.

All photographs in this scene now convey different narratives, fluctuating between different stories. The meaning of the past

is determined by how it is felt and experienced in the present and is, in consequence, the affective nostalgia for the past that which motivates us to reformulate it. The inclusion of the pictures as an important element in the plot, with the capacity to affect and influence actions, points to the importance of the tools of memory in setting in motion the flows of affect. The ruins, those remains and traces, are unstable, variable, and evidence the constant struggle over memory. Their meaning depends on the affective dynamics that negotiate their space and reform them in accordance to the needs of the present.[4] Affectivity and emotion have replaced reason as the judge of cultural significance (Reber 2012: 94). The affective map that is composed by those intense, violent "pictures we all carry around with us, on which are recorded the affective values of the various sites and situations that constitute our social worlds," (Flatley 2008, 78) becomes a way not only through which viewers relate to the narratives, but also as a way of participating in the processes of memory and of being in the world.

Violence is impossible to represent as there is no intelligible original event to narrate: it breaks the storytelling capacity, it creates gaps in memory. "Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it 'the way it really was,' it means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger," it means bringing memory into the present to re-read it, re-consider it, re-signify it (Benjamin 2010: 391). It is the impossibility of making sense of the past event, of incorporating it narratively which indicates the presence of the traumatic event. Thus, forgetting is not absence or emptiness, instead, it is the presence of that absence, the representation of something that was and is no longer, erased, silenced, or denied. These are the situations where repression and dissociation act as psychic mechanisms that cause interruptions, breaks, and traumatic gaps in the narrative. Indeed, traumatic repetitions and dramatizations are "tragically lonely," while narrative memories are social constructions communicable to others (Bal 1999). The narratives of violence articulate the frag-

4. Sánchez Prado (2012) argues that this affectivity is constituted in response to the collapse of traditional discourses of Western modernity, which has created epistemic spaces for emotions in the Latin American public space.

mented space of the ruins and the *remainings* as the foundation of memory in the process of constructing an affective map in which reason breaks down as the conceptual framework of memory and identity. Photography, with its magical capacity of creating "the illusion of consensus" (Sontag 2003: 6) and of collectively re-creating transparent images of what is real (about who we are), reminds us about something we already forgot: the innate fiction that structures our notions of reality. Memory's processes, then, stand by the collective articulations of meaning through the reassembling and repurposing of those fictions that remain forever ruined, fragmented, waiting to pierce, and to wound.

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IMAGES TO REMEMBER:

Nostalgia and Hegemonic Identities in *Italia 90: The Movie*

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HEROES OF AN EPIC-LESS COUNTRY

Miguel Gómez's portrayal of Costa Rica's first participation in the World Cup final in *Italia 90: The Movie* (2014)[1] can be seen as a fundamentally nostalgic reenactment of the country's past and, as such, it offers a way to understand the identity discourses of this Central American nation.

Using a frequent trope in sports cinema, the movie's climax is preceded by a pep talk. The Costa Rican national football team is minutes away from playing Scotland in its first ever match in a world cup and its coach, Serbia's Velibor "Bora" Milutinovic (played by Luis Montalbert Smith), addresses the players in an accented Spanish:

> Remember I asked you to observe the players of Inter [*Internazionale de Milan, a sparring rival in the preparation leading up to the World Cup*] in the tunnel, how they intimidate you. OK, today we are to do that, we are to watch the Scottish players. When they are in the tunnel, you are to see their eyes, but not to make them be afraid. I want you to smile. I want that you shout. I want that you make fun. I want that you point fingers at them. They will not understand the great joy that you have for being here. This will surprise them, and this will give you security and confidence. *I want that you remember when you were children*, you played by the sea, on the street, in the neighborhood, and that's where you are. Today you are to be happy. Don't have fear: you already won. *You already won*. [emphasis mine].

1. Translated from Spanish by Gustavo Chaves.

The actual climax is reached when the two teams meet in the tunnel leading to the playing field: to the astonishment of the Scottish players, the Costa Rican squat laughs, shouts with joy, and makes the floors flicker with the excited kicks of their boots. The players take a step onto the field and then the movie ends—that is, in terms of the movie's reenactment of the tortuous past that led to that glorious moment. There begins an epilogue that makes for the most heartwarming part of the movie: production credits accompanied by images of the actual Costa Rican delegation to the Italy '90 World Cup and snapshots of some of the most recognizable moments of the games played, such as Claudio Jara's 'taquito' (a back-heel pass) and the goals scored by Juan Cayasso, Róger Flores, Hernán Medford, and Rónald González, as well as the goalkeeping feats of Luis Gabelo Conejo.

The ending of *Italia 90* features some of the most salient narrative operations used in movies that deal with the past, from the conflation of reenacted scenes and archive images that constitute the filmic matter to the overtly emotional tone that the music and editing give to the players' faces and gestures recorded by Costa Rican and Italian television. Miguel Gómez, the director and screenwriter, has often described these players as his childhood heroes, and his own memories may well be what lies beneath coach Bora's words: "I want that you remember when you were children." Surely these words will resonate with the members of the movie's audience who were children or teenagers in 1990. "You already won," claims Bora. And indeed, these same viewers will think: "yes, they already won." Almost a quarter of a century before the movie was released, they had all won, and the heroic goals and saves displayed along the movie credits are the evidence of that.

The alleged origin of *Italia 90* is quite telling. According to Gómez, while he was working on the production of a superhero movie (*Iron Man* [2008], by Jon Favreau), he asked himself who were the superheroes of Costa Rica. He immediately thought of the football players who participated in the Italy '90 World Cup. It is worth noting how, as María Lourdes Cortés has suggested, Gómez's movie seems to be replying to Isaac Felipe Azofeifa's essay "La isla

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que somos" ("The Island We Are" [1969]), in which the author claims that Costa Rica is a hero-less and epic-less country. Who then can the heroes of this hero-less country be? What can its history be and how can it be told if it lacks an epic element? *Italia 90* is a sort of answer to these questions as it depicts Costa Rica's first appearance in the World Cup. The answer, though, is a reenactment of a historical event through the lenses of memory, and this memory is what defines a narrative in which nostalgia and images of national identity take precedence.

EVERYDAY HEROES

Back in Costa Rica after working in Hollywood, Gómez began the research and interviews that would lead to the creation of *Italia 90.* Shot in just over a month, the movie was released May 28th, 2014, two weeks before the inauguration the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. It is worth noting that the main sponsors of the movie were Volio, a coffee brand, and Televisora de Costa Rica (Channel 7 or Teletica, one of the most important television channels in the country[2]): two companies whose products rely heavily on a sense of tradition and local identity. The success of Costa Rican football in Brazil 2014, which was as unexpected as that of 1990, had a clear correlative in Gómez's movie. Just in the month of June 2014, *Italia 90* was seen by over 100,000 people.[3]

The movie begins with Costa Rica's win against El Salvador on July 16th of 1989, the final step to secure a spot in Italy. This opening passage concentrates on images and sounds from the original TV broadcast in order to recreate the mood in the stands (fans' jerseys and goal celebrations) as well as the experience of people watching from home. Nationalism and religiosity, two features of the hegemonic discourse of Costa Rican identity, appear in this first sequence through shots of a young woman emotionally singing the national anthem and another one (the mother of one

2. The very name of the channel, Teletica, uses the moniker for which Costa Ricans are known abroad: 'ticos.'

3. In December of that same year Gómez released another movie that can also be read through the lenses of a national identity discourse: *Maikol Yordan de viaje perdido*, seen by over 600 thousand spectators, making it the biggest commercial success in all Central American cinema.

of the players, Claudio Jara), who clutches the beads of a rosary without taking her eyes off the TV screen.

The excitement brought by qualifying to the finals in Italy is followed by anguish: the Costa Rican team, made up of semi-professional players with no international experience outside of the region, is not prepared for a world championship match. The sports officials, mediocre and petty, do not trust Marvin Rodríguez, the local coach who made it possible to qualify, so they hire "Bora" Milutinovic. This leads to the second conflict in the film: how will a foreigner with no knowledge of the country choose the 22 players who will participate in the tournament. The movie then proceeds to build up suspense as each one of the players awaits the phone call that will confirm their inclusion or, as in the case of household names like Enrique Díaz or Evaristo Coronado, their absence in the final list.

Next, the story shows the more human aspects of the preparations for the World Cup through a series of passages that, according to Gómez, were collected through interviews and a survey of contemporary press articles: jokes between the players, the hardships of training, the painful losses in the preparation matches, and the overall discomfort created by harsh criticism from the press. Although *Italia 90* is mainly a story about the collective team, several of the football players turn into leading characters as their motivations and concerns are more prominently displayed, as is the case with Luis Gabelo Conejo (played by Juan Carlos Pardo), the Jara brothers Claudio (Daniel Ross) and Geovanny (Javier Montenegro), Captain Róger Flores (Fernando Bolaños), Juan Cayasso (Winston Washington) and, to a lesser extent, Mauricio Montero (Ólger González). For example, Conejo is presented as a sweet man who plays ball with the children of his hometown San Ramón, but is also insecure as he fears failing in the World Cup and is incensed by the press' depictions of his performances. Claudio Jara also worries as his younger brother, Geovanny, neglects the preparation for the tournament by falling in love with a young Italian woman.

Some of the scenes in the movie come from *La gran fiesta*, the account of the World Cup adventure later co-written by player Alexandre Guimaraes and journalist Erwin Knohr. There are scenes

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showing Juan Cayasso training alone at dawn in a perfectionist gesture that coincides with Guimaraes' depiction of the player: he calls him the 'John Livingston Seagull' of the group (Guimaraes & Knohr 1990: 51). Another example of scenes derived from Guimaraes' book is when defender Héctor Marchena, one of whose tasks is to stop Brazilian star Careca, asks Guimaraes (who himself is of Brazilian origin), how to say "Calm down, bastard!" in Portuguese in order to use it against his nemesis (Guimaraes & Knohr 1990: 88).

As per Milutinovic's decision, who quickly detected the low confidence of the sports leadership and the Costa Rican press towards the players, the team travels early to Europe. This leads to new problems showcased in the movie: the anguish of the players (most of whom had never been out of the country for that long), their homesickness, the hardships they endured due to the unprofessionalism and inexperience of sports bureaucrats and, again, the poor results in their preparation matches.

Italia 90 is a sports movie, but of a peculiar kind: there are hardly any scenes showcasing the sport, be it training sessions (a commonplace in sports fiction to depict how a character develops) or preparation meetings (which in *Italia 90* are presented almost metaphorically, in sequences that resemble a music video). The first game against Scotland is not recreated, for example. The narrative seems more interested in the most intimate dimensions of the adventure: the painful longings for home, the performance and personal insecurities of the players and, finally, their courage and joy.

In the case of this movie, the intimate tone (as opposed to a more active or heroic one) does not entirely warrant Azofeifa's claim that Costa Ricans are a people without an epic. It may be that it is a subtler epic, as presented in the singular climax already mentioned with the players raising sparks with their boots, or the fact that the story offers viewers few reasons to explain the success of the team. These reasons remain 'mysterious' as they are not the usual ones in sports films: singular sacrifices, great efforts or tests, or heroic gestures. For all the popular religiosity depicted in the movie, there is an absence of divine intervention in the end results, for example. There is transformation and learning, but these virtues show remarkable simplicity. The ending of *Italia*

90 presents us with a series of everyday heroes who, as their mentor advises, stop worrying ("you already won," he tells them) and settle for the fun and audacity of perplexing their opponents with their joy in the tunnel. This does confirm, however, another one of Azofeifa's claims, namely, that Costa Rica is a country without a sense of tragedy.

MEMORY DEVICES

All the narrative tension accumulated in *Italia 90* (fear of failure, homesickness) is released at the end, when the images and audio tracks of the original broadcasts of the games confirm to the spectators what they already know: the goals, the saves, the celebration at the stadiums in Italy and on the streets of Costa Rica, all crystallized again on the screen.

Italia 90 materializes memory in a way that allows us to raise a discussion developed in America and Europe since the 1970s. These debates have led to the multiplication of terms to describe the ways in which individuals and social groups relate to their past–how different types of memory are named, such as personal/individual or collective (Halbwachs), cultural and communicative (Assmann, among others), emblematic (Stern), performative (Winter) and media-driven, among others. The same function is fulfilled by notions such as "milieux de mémoire" (memory devices or environments, another notion introduced by Maurice Halbwachs), "lieux de mémoire" (places of memory) by Pierre Nora, and memory technologies, as described by Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik.

According to Assmann, memory is the ability "that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level" (2008:109). This identity, claims the author, is created in relation to time. From this definition, Assmann distinguishes between individual memory (which he calls "internal" and could also be described as "mental"), social memory, and cultural memory. Social or communicative memory is preserved and transmitted by physical and temporal proximity (family and friends, peers and contemporaries), has a "life span" of two or three generations, and is clearly the main type of memory operating in many spectators of *Italia 90.* Cultural

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memory, on the other hand, appears rooted and even institutionalized in social groups—sometimes in relation to an absolute, mythical, and primordial past (Assmann 2008: 117). This type is also present in the film, for example, in the depiction of unprofessional football players as a modern-day, competitive-sports version of the mythical "labriego sencillo" (common peasant) exalted in the Costa Rican national anthem.

Communicative and cultural memory are forms of collective memory. For Halbwachs, collective memory makes explicit the cultural dimension of memory and how it does not necessarily operate immediately (that is, in the individual), "but through objective expressions and institutions" (Saban 2020: 382). *Italia 90* exemplifies this memory as externalized in a cultural and media product. The movie is, on the one hand, the objectification of the memories of the players through their interviews with the scriptwriter. But, on the other hand, the movie also seeks to trigger the memories of an audience who, like Gómez, witnessed the event.

The movie reconstructs the past with images and soundtracks aimed to lead viewers back to the Costa Rica and Europe of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This reenactment makes use of clothes and haircuts, cars, and music from the period to accompany certain sequences. Also, the use of contemporary press headlines, television footage, and radio broadcasts creates a believable background for the scenes of the movie. The soundtrack includes the voices of famous sports commentators of the period such as Leonel Jiménez and Everardo Herrera to accompany not only the archive images, but also the reenactments made by Gómez. The movie's soundtrack also includes songs that recreate the period: the World Cup's official song, "Un'estate italiana" ("An Italian Summer") by Gianna Nannini y Edoardo Bennato, and songs by popular Costa Rican bands of the day such as the ballad "¿Qué vas a hacer esta noche?" by Gaviota, which one of the players is listening to in his walkman, allegedly while thinking of his girlfriend back in Costa Rica.

As a cognitive activity, memory is crucial for this type of audiovisual narration of historical content, since viewers have to remember and associate faces, names, situations, and real spaces, among other types of information. All these elements can (and sometimes, must) create associations outside of the movie to the real events

remembered by the audience. This is a challenge faced by every audiovisual narrative that attempts to reconstruct the past, especially if this past is part of a communicative memory: each viewer has their 'own version' of the characters and events depicted. Regarding this, Gómez claims that physical resemblance was not a criterion to select the actors for each role. Instead, performative competence, along with the data collected during the interviews with the players, were more relevant. Physical resemblance is produced by other means such as hairstyles (in the case of the Jara brothers), or linguistic mannerisms (Milutinovic's Slavic accent and Mauricio Montero's peasant cadence).

In terms of this relationship between the past and its filmic reenactment, it is worth noting that Gómez' movie reveals little of the past to the public, and the few details that can be considered unknown do not significantly alter its communicative potential. The film relies on its emotional charge: it is a reenactment, not an unveiling of the past. As reenactment, it does not seem to aim for documentary realism, and it often verges on the parodic (for example the farcically blond wig used by actor Italo Marenco in his depiction of midfielder Óscar 'Macho' Ramírez). It is not clear whether this was a deliberate director's choice or the mere result of production limitations, or even shortcomings in the writing and acting, but the end result is often candid and this sits well with Costa Rican anti-dramatic attitudes. On several occasions the film juxtaposes realism and reenactment: the real-life Claudio Jara and Mauricio Montero play the role of parents of their filmic counterparts. Róger Flores also makes a cameo when, during a flashback, he appears as the trainer of a teenage Luis Gabelo Conejo. This can be understood as a nod to the spectators, who will recognize the real-life faces, but also as a tribute to the actual football players.

According to Erll, cultural memory is often the product of media outsourcing. This device is as old as culture, since oral communication and writing can also be said to be this type of media. Nowadays, however, media technology such as cinema, radio, television, and the Internet have modified the nature and extended the life span of our temporal and spatial memories through the easy archiving and massive dissemination of writing, photography, film,

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and many other kinds of media. More than real events and experiences, what society accumulates is a canon of events remembered transmedially (Erll 2008: 393). That is why authors such as Pierre Nora notice an unprecedented leading role for media in our culture: "ours is an intensely retinal and powerfully televisual memory" (Nora 1989: 17). Members of society rely on media archives (themselves part of social frameworks and institutions) to remember, which leads Erll to wonder: "what kinds of cultural memory, then, are produced by literature and film?" (Erll 2008: 389). *Italia 90* may offer a kind of answer to this question through its use of graphic, sonic, and visual materials from the late 80s and early 90s.

Echoing Erll, Plate and Smelik claim that "memories are not only shaped by the social context in which they are produced, but also by the material and technological means available to produce and reproduce, store, archive and retrieve them" (Plate & Smelik 2009: 2). Media tend to solidify cultural memory by creating and stabilizing certain narratives and icons from the past. These are memory technologies in which the past is evoked according to the interests of the present. As exemplified by *Italia 90,* this dialectic creates memory through mediations, but also mediations through memory.

Gómez's film makes use of media (journalism, radio, and television archives), but the connection with memory is an even closer one: the aesthetics of the movie recreate the content that shapes this memory, such as familiar sports coverage footage or the recording studio of the variety show *Fantástico*, both of which were products of Televisora de Costa Rica, a co-producer of the film. This type of image and soundtrack materializes itself as a stand-in for the larger memory of Costa Rica's first ever participation the World Cup. More than seeing reenactments or actual footage of the games, we see and remember through the media coverage of the event. This link between media and memory can be described as 'premediation,' a notion introduced by Erll to describe the relationship between memory and media that "draws attention to the fact that existent media which circulate in a given society provide schemata for future experience and its representation. […] It is the effect of *and* the starting point for mediatized memories" (Erll 2008: 392). It is not only that *Italia 90,* itself a media product,

reconstructs what is remembered, but also that it uses previous convening elements, many already mediatized, to that effect. The film binds together a set of images produced nearly a quarter of a century before on national television sets and on the Hi 8 video camera that Guimaraes took with him to Italy, and mixes them with the records produced by Gómez himself as interviewer and director.

The use that *Italia 90* makes of multiple materials of different origins, purposes, and technologies makes one think of a palimpsest. This conflation of registers exemplifies what Mariniello has described regarding the audiovisual representation of the past: the materiality of the cinematographic image is, itself, a trace of the past beyond linear models of representation that are simply linguistic or literary (1994: 41). This photographic difference (with images from sports and entertainment programs, recordings of a home camera, and reenactments made by Gómez) is one of the strategies with which the film proposes a dialectic between the past and the present, in order to question the memory of the viewer and conflate the images from 1989 and 1990 with those corresponding to the movie's reenactment of 2014.

In this juxtaposition of the past and the present, *Italia 90* risks conflating the real and its reenactment when, for example, it simultaneously features coach Marvin Rodríguez (played by Rodrigo Durán) lamenting a loss in a friendly match and the front page of a newspaper with a photograph of the real Marvin Rodríguez. Similar devices are the aforementioned meetings of characters Mauricio Montero and Claudio Jara with their parents, played by the real Montero and Jara. This juxtaposition also obviates the passage of time, as when the movie recreates the players' visit to the variety show *Fantástico*. In that scene, the familiar character Mongo Mongo appears in its famous custom of the period (an ape on roller-skates). At some point the character takes off his mask and greets the athletes, and the face that appears is that of José Manuel Masís, who played Mongo Mongo, but as he looked in 2014 when the movie was made; that is, 24 years older than the person who actually met the national team players in 1990. Many times, the mediatic nature of this dialectic between the past and the present, between the real and its reenactment,

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is underlined by the fact that these images (the football matches or the opening ceremony of the World Cup) are framed by a TV screen. Clearly, the presence of media allows for a suspension of disbelief in the audience. One after the other, different scenes in the movie attempt to dilute the difference between past reality and present reenactment, as this mostly happens through the juxtaposition of archive images and fictional representation. There is a reenactment of the players shooting the promotional video for "Lo daremos todo" ("We'll Give It All"), the song that has since become synonymous with every Costa Rican attempt to qualify for the World Cup, and there are newly produced images of the players' daily lives caught in shaky and poorly lit images to imitate the video recordings made by Alexandre Guimaraes in 1990 (and for which a camera of the same model was used).

THE OBJECT OF MEMORY

Italia 90 opens with a caption to legitimize the veracity of the story: "based on real life events." From then on, its connection with the past is twofold: one part deals with historical facts reenacted without excessive documentary fidelity and another part with the myths of Costa Rican origin in connection to a hegemonic identity narrative. The first images of the movie suggest that this second part is the central one: the hands of a woman washing the uniforms that will be used by the national team in its crucial game against El Salvador. The World Cup adventure is thus linked to the daily life of humble and common people, in this case a woman who washes clothes by hand and dries them to the sun in the patio of her house. Then, as the players walk out onto the playing field, fans rise to their feet and sing the national anthem with excitement.

Thus, we are introduced to a story strongly rooted in the institutionalized and hegemonic imagination of Costa Ricans that then pays homage to the country and its heroes. The movie confirms the deep connection (in Costa Rica as in the rest of Latin America) between football and national identity, pointed out by authors such as Sergio Villena and Carlos Sandoval. Incidentally, this is not the only time this happens in Costa Rican cinema: football is also the subject of *Hombre de fe* ('Man of Faith,' 2017), by Dinga

Haines, a movie about the goalkeeper Keylor Navas, and is also a key element in *Buscando a Marcos Ramírez* ('Searching for Marcos Ramírez,' 2017) by Ignacio Sánchez, and in *El baile de la gacela* (*The Dance of the Gazelle*, 2018) by Iván Porras.

For Villena, the performance and identity narrative of football "operates like a shattered mirror in which nationalist anxieties and passions are manifested, and axiological coordinates are built at the moral, emotional and intellectual levels" (Villena, "Del fútbol y otros demonios," 2009–10: 138; translation mine). Villena claims that, in Costa Rica, football (and especially the national football team) has become "one of the symbolic nuclei of a public sphere built around what it means to be (or not to be) a Costa Rican" (Idem; translation mine). This applies particularly to *Italia 90* since, as Villena writes:

> As attested by the deeply nostalgic tone with which the press continually recalls that performance, as well as by the ensuing popular celebrations, that event [taking part in the Italy 1990 World Cup] became the greatest event of nationalist-patriotic exaltation in contemporary Costa Rican history. (Villena, "Golbalización y fútbol posnacional" 2002: 149; translation mine)

According to Plate and Smelik, memory technologies are implicated in power dynamics: they are constituted by institutionalized discourses and cultural practices that rescue, produce, or erase memories. It is pertinent to mention now Stern's notion of emblematic memory (2000) as a kind of framework that selects which memories are to be remembered and which ones should be "pushed" to the margins. For example, in the case of Costa Rica's participation in the 1990 World Cup, this memory will invite the audience to remember the triumphs and emotions that accompanied the wins against Scotland and Sweden, but not the humiliating defeat against Czechoslovakia or the insults shouted at goalkeeper Hermidio Barrantes when he failed to replicate the heroic performance of Luis Gabelo Conejo in the last game of the tournament. The emblematic memory of the World Cup run is concerned mainly with what Costa Ricans remember, how they remember it, and, very importantly, how they see themselves in those memories. Costa Rica's first participation in the World Cup has generated what Erll calls a culture of remembrance and has become, accord-

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ing to Villena, a kind of "myth of origin" which "is continually remembered and updated by mass media with an extra dose of drama, in order to transmit it to the new generations" (Villena, "Golbalización y fútbol posnacional" 2002: 151). *Italia 90* walks the line between communicative memory, which concerns what is experienced by the spectators (themselves witnesses of what is recreated and recovered on screen), and cultural memory, which is institutionalized and includes a symbolic component. The memory of the events of the 1990 World Cup, although rooted in the particular memories of individuals, was appropriated by institutions such as the press, the government, and advertising.

According to Villena, football is a "machine" that produces meaning around the idea of nation ("Fútbol, mass media *y* nación en la era global" 2006). Gómez's movie provides a form of continuity for the supposedly descriptive images that have crystallized of Costa Rica and that have constituted an "imagined community," to use the term coined by Benedict Anderson (2006). *Italia 90* appeals to a sense of belonging in Costa Rican audiences (it is about the selected "national team;" that is, the best in the country) and consolidates its idealization of the past. What is being idealized here is the courage of a group of football players that carry the torch of the common peasants who brought the country "eternal prestige," according to the lyrics of the national anthem. Naive and provincial, but also well-intentioned, these peasant-players triumph against the odds thanks to their faith and effort. Villena and Sandoval's research on the subject shows how Gómez's film echoes the predominant journalistic narrative in the coverage of the 1990 World Cup, one in which "these heroes [the soccer players] embody not only their vocation of patriotic sacrifice but also the "true" peasant virtues, faith in God and the strength of the patriarchal family" (Villena, "Golbalización y fútbol posnacional" 2002: 156).

The making of the characters follows what Alexánder Jiménez (2002) calls a "metaphysical ethnic nationalism" in which the Costa Rican national identity is associated "essentially" with whiteness, the central valley, rural democracy, simplicity and humility of peasant life, and adherence to values of peace. Afro-Costa Rican soccer players such as Hernán Medford and Juan Cayasso

(two of the most prominent figures in the history of Costa Rican soccer) appear in different scenes of *Italia 90*, but their role is rather marginal. The narration focuses on players closer to the imagined identity of the white peasantry such as Flores, Montero, Conejo, and the Jara brothers.

Historically speaking, the 1990 World Cup coincided with the cultural, economic, and social transformations that shook the country in the 1980s as a result of neoliberal reforms, and when the 'exporting vocation' and openness to global trade became the predominant elements of the official discourse regarding national identity (Cuevas & Mora 2013: 5). This context charges the Italian World Cup, and by extension Gómez's movie, with tremendous symbolic force. Sandoval has analyzed the social role of football in the hinge years between the 20th and 21st, and claims that:

> [...] The high expectations surrounding the men's football teams have coincided with the weakening of institutions and images that were once considered landmarks for a sense of national identity in Costa Rica. In other words, football has become the quintessential form of national identification, not just because of the successes achieved, but also because other landmarks of national identity have been weakened. (Sandoval 2006: 7; translation mine)

Italia 90 takes up the figure of the common peasant but also renews it by turning this peasant, who has never left the country or been on a plane, into an international winner. The movie thus confirms the role of football as a source of optimism in a context of deterioration in the social fabric and weakening of political institutions.

THE SUBJECT OF MEMORY

Bora Milutinovic's final speech in the movie offers a significant element: "I want that you remember when you were children." This projection, initially aimed at the players, also appeals to the remembering audience: those who witnessed the matches in 1990, including director Miguel Gómez himself, who was then a seven-year-old boy. It is important to remember that memory does not arise in the past, although it refers to it: memory is generated in the present, and the present of this audience is a movie with reenacted events and recovered images from 1989 and 1990.

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It is hard to predict whether *Italia '90* will create new memories or memoirs in later generations, but it surely roused the memories of those who witnessed the actual event in 1990. For that specific audience, the movie is a 'lieu de mémoire,' as described by Pierre Nora: a "place" where "memory crystallizes" (1989: 7) as a byproduct of the interaction (and reciprocal determination) between history and memory. Covered with an aura provided by the imagination, these places (at once material, symbolic, and functional) are recognizable in the simple gesture of "being there;" they are "simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration" (Nora 1989: 19). For that operation to take place, a will to remember is necessary; otherwise, any event will end as a simple and external 'lieu d'histoire' (Nora 1989: 19).

Italia 90 is an audiovisual story created to flatter memory and desire. It allows for the recovery of the notion of performed memory, which is what operates in a cultural object like a movie that refers to the past in order to renew its memory. Winter explains that when individuals and social groups interpret a story about the past,

> [...] they galvanize the ties that bind groups together and deposit additional memory traces about the past in their own minds. These renewed and revamped memories frequently vary from and overlay earlier memories, creating a complex palimpsest about the past each of us carries with us. (Winter 2010: 11)

In the case of *Italia 90*, this performative memory is charged with emotion and affection. Viewers see their own memories turned into images and sounds, recovered by the archive and recreated through moving pictures, music, and editing.

Gómez's movie is full of details aimed at triggering the memory of those viewers who share the circumstances of the director, and that may be incomprehensible to those who do not have direct memories of the event. In this manner, the narration reveals a complicity with the part of the audience that, as the director and screenwriter, 'lived' the World Cup adventure. One clear example of this is the dialogue between Mauricio Montero and Claudio Jara

in which the former asks the latter to be disciplined and not take risks with 'taquitos' (back-heel passes): the movie does not show it, but the target audience already knows that the goal against Scotland came about through an elegant back-heel pass from Jara to Cayasso.

THE EPIC OF MEMORY

The full title of *Italia 90: la película* (*Italia 90: The Movie*) contains, in its unassuming brevity and deceptive simplicity, another element to interpret the movie's relationship with the past. A colon in the middle, as if to separate the historical fact of the 1990 World Cup in Italy and the fictionalized account of the memory of that event (the *movie*). Indeed, a Costa Rican audience is not likely to think much of the overall results of the 1990 World Cup; when a Costa Rican reads "Italia 90" they think "Costa Rica *in* Italy 90." Whatever results came after Costa Rica was eliminated by Czechoslovakia are completely irrelevant in this story. Therefore, the *movie* is about that *Costa Rican* story—and for a country still taking baby steps in movie production (a country hungry to tell its own private epic) *Italia 90: la película* offers a rare occasion for Costa Ricans to see their history reenacted on the big screen.

That separation in the title, with the added clarification that it is a 'movie,' brings back the constitutive dialectic between past and present, between reality and reenactment, that informs the story. It *is* indeed about Italy '90, but the *movie* version. The actual World Cup, as experienced by Gómez, the players, and all the people who were alive at the time, is a different matter. The audiovisual textuality of the movie expresses that much, as when it places the actors and the real football players in the same cinematographic frame, or when at the end it presents (not *re*-present; not *re*-create, but instead *exhibit* through archival material) the heroic moments of this World Cup. There is a gesture of nostalgia in this *modus operandi* and, if you will, of respect towards the event, towards the real players, and towards the children who watched the event.

The title summarizes the devices examined above and used by the director to reconstruct memory and the past. This examination included the narrative, visual, and sonic arrangements

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with which the film presents and represents this past and memory. The conflation of materials from different sources, used with different purposes, and created with different technologies (including archives and archive imitations like new footage made with old cameras) shows the palimpsest that characterizes media memory. These cases in which memory shapes the medium exemplify what Erll calls pre-mediation.

The movie is the product of the director's will to remember, and as such takes up as its objective to create that desire in others; namely, the viewers who witnessed the real event. This is a form of performative memory: an act of memory that produces new memories. Milutinovic's phrase "I want that to remember when you were children" materializes not only through the archive material, but also through the use of music (such as Gaviota's songs), and familiar images (haircut styles, cars, the *Fantástico* studio, or the character Mongo Mongo) that lead the audience back to a quarter of a century before when these events were happening.

The movie also displays a technology of memory to unfold the past in accordance with a power structure and an institutionalized discursive system. The protagonists of *Italia 90: la película* are modeled after the common peasant imagined by the Costa Rican ruling class since the end of the 19th century: a white, hard-working, and somewhat mischievous peasant (remember Marchena learning Portuguese to intimidate his rival), with more will than world (experience).

With the exception of the pep talk towards the end, *Italia 90: la película* renounces most tropes of sports cinema and is presented as an adventure of a group, rather than that of an individual. It is largely an exploration of intimate drama, and particularly of the nostalgia and the insecurities of those who face a challenge with more courage that experience. This is confirmed by the climax when the players, the common heroes, are not seen winning, as would be the case in a typical sports narration, but clapping, laughing, raising sparks from the floors, before carefreely heading off to the biggest football match of their lives. There is an epic in that, for sure; but it is an epic of collective remembrance, not of individual achievement. And it is there for all the audience to embrace.

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MESTIZAJE Y EXPRESIONES CULTURALES IDENTITARIAS EN LATINOAMÉRICA

Una reflexión sobre el costumbrismo del siglo XIX, la música tradicional y la música pop

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La ilustración costumbrista americana es el resultado del interés del europeo, en este caso español, por lo exótico, por conocer otras realidades. Es el primer género autónomo que se da en el continente americano (García 2007: 78) Durante los siglos XVII y XVIII, bajo el mandato de la monarquía española, se comisionaban ilustraciones que representaran miembros de las comunidades indígenas nativas como caciques, sacerdotes e indios; esto con el fin de instruir a las cortes europeas sobre algunas figuras que estaban emergiendo en el nuevo continente. Con el advenimiento de la independencia (en el caso colombiano se da en 1810), esta forma de representación pictórica de enfoque realista se centró en atestiguar el desarrollo de los estados nacionales que se fundaron en Latinoamérica a lo largo del siglo XIX. De hecho, el enfoque realista pobló esta expresión cultural con representaciones de hechos cotidianos, eventos culturales y sociales. En el territorio colombiano el trabajo que más se conserva es el de los dibujantes, por ejemplo, la obra del británico Henry Price, quien recorrió la región caribe. También podemos mencionar la obra del bogotano Ramón Torres Méndez, cuyo trabajo se concentró en la región andina.

En la colección de arte del Banco de la República en Colombia se pueden apreciar dos ilustraciones de este último autor: *El bambuco, Bogotá* (1860) y *Baile de campesinos en la Sabana*

de Bogotá (1860). Ambas ilustraciones pertenecen al costumbrismo americano y ambas son fechadas en 1860.

Imagen 1: *El bambuco, Bogotá; litografía iluminada*, Ramón Torres Méndez. Colección de arte del Banco de la República. Bogotá, Colombia, 1860.

En *El Bambuco*, Torres Méndez ilustra el tipo de baile que se realizaba, a mediados del siglo XIX, en ocasión de fiestas formales en la capital colombiana. De la imagen, además de la representación del movimiento, se destaca la presencia de un conjunto musical compuesto por tres intérpretes, un violinista, un clarinetista y quien parece ser un guitarrista, éste último ejecutando lo que suponemos que es una guitarra requinto.[1] A través de la disposición en forma de conjunto de cámara de unos músicos profesionales, la imagen sugiere cierto formalismo de la ceremonia de carácter privado. Además, en su organización clásica, pareciera que el conjunto de músicos estuviera rindiéndole homenaje al formato procedente de la formalidad musical europea.

1. La guitarra requinto se diferencia de la guitarra tradicional por su afinación en una relación de intervalo de quinta más agudo y una tesitura más alta, normalmente aprovechado para la ejecución de melodías. Este instrumento es el resultado de la modificación del tiple en la región de Santander y producto de la necesidad de resaltar, sobre el sonido del ensamble al que pertenece, las melodías que ejecuta como instrumento solista.

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Imagen 2: *Baile de campesinos, grabado en aguatinta*, Ramón Torres Méndez, Colección de arte del Banco de la República. Bogotá, Colombia, 1860.

Por otro lado, en *Baile de campesinos en la Sabana de Bogotá* (1860) el conjunto musical es más numeroso. En *Baile de campesinos en la Sabana de Bogotá,* el conjunto está compuesto por un guitarrista, un percusionista (quien ejecuta un pandero) y otros dos en la guacharaca.[2] Adicionalmente, a diferencia de *El bambuco*, pareciera que todos los presentes en la escena estuvieran cantando y gritando. Sin lugar a duda, la escena representada en *Baile de Campesinos en la Sabana de Bogotá* corresponde a una escena mucho más informal y de carácter más alegre. Y aunque no se logre con claridad comprender si la escena en cuestión sea una celebración de carácter privado o público, es importante resaltar una especie de jerarquía que se desprende de la figura de la mujer con mantillo (a la derecha en la composición), que fuma y observa el baile.

El contraste que se da entre las dos ilustraciones es un testigo claro de la ruptura cultural que estaba ocurriendo durante la construcción de la nueva república independiente. De hecho, las dos

2. La guacharaca, nombrada onomatopéyicamente, es un instrumento ideófono que produce su sonido al hacer rosar un raspador sobre su cuerpo estriado. Normalmente es fabricado con troncos huecos pequeños de madera o del tallo seco de la caña de azúcar.

ilustraciones representan dos fiestas que tienen lugar en la misma región, las dos a mediados del siglo XIX, y en las dos vemos cómo se empezaba a construir una identidad colectiva que respondía a las exigencias del nuevo Estado nación. Dicha identidad se consolidaba con la progresiva desaparición de la autoridad española y la paulatina apropiación de los territorios por parte de los criollos.

Desde la época de la Colonia (1555–1822), un importante sector de la estructura social nativa que colaboró con las fuerzas de conquista obtuvo como recompensa una posición social elevada. Por ello se hicieron con propiedades y con una liquides económica significativa. Este bienestar económico se traducía en un mayor acceso a dispositivos de entretenimiento que en la época resultaban bastante costosos: por ejemplo, un conjunto de cámara.[3] Los campesinos, por otro lado, habían continuado con las tradicionales prácticas populares de entretenimiento. En *Baile de campesinos*, por ejemplo, a pesar de no evidenciarse el carácter privado o público de la celebración, se puede apreciar la presencia de unos niños en la ventana. Testigos de la escena, ellos empiezan a apropiarse de ese tipo de manifestaciones culturales, y de una serie de géneros musicales que desde ese momento empezarían a esculpir una identidad nacional.

Ambas ilustraciones, *Baile de campesinos en la Sabana de Bogotá* y *El Bambuco,* vistas como un conjunto, representan el proceso de mestizaje que rodea la consolidación de la música tradicional colombiana en cada una de las diferentes regiones. Si bien la obra de Torres Méndez ilustra los procesos de mestizaje de la región andina de la actual Colombia, podríamos a su vez decir que ésta no difiere de lo ocurrido en las demás regiones del país. Además, la obra de Torres Méndez presenta una serie de analogías con algunos autores extranjeros como Henry Price y Henry Riballier, quienes

3. Al interior de este marco de la construcción de identidad, y bajo el dispositivo de lo colonial, en los sectores altos de la sociedad el término de "ensamble," "conjunto" e incluso "orquesta de cámara" se continuó utilizando como referencia a los conjuntos musicales utilizados por la monarquía europea. Pero, a diferencia de la usanza en el viejo continente, y bajo la mirada, contradictoriamente, de lo decolonial, el conjunto incluía instrumentos tradicionales o de origen, siempre interpretados por músicos de formación profesional, nuevamente, formados bajo los preceptos de la escolástica europea.

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también interesados en el proceso de mestizaje que se estaba dando en esa parte del continente, desarrollaron sus acuarelas en las regiones del Caribe.

Como observamos precedentemente, la guitarra es el instrumento que acomuna ambas ilustraciones. Se podría decir que también es el instrumento más emblemático de la cultura española. Básicamente, la guitarra era un instrumento de acompañamiento juglar que había adoptado el sistema temperado de Bach, y que bajo diversas influencias—ej. árabes, africanas, portuguesas—se había consolidado como el instrumento de seis cuerdas que conocemos en la actualidad.[4] Este instrumento emblemático jugó un papel central en los procesos de mestizaje del nuevo continente.

Imagen 3: Esquema de las rutas comerciales de esclavos durante la conquista española

Durante la conquista, puntualmente en el caso colombiano, la ruta del río Magdalena fue fundamental. Los puertos de Mompós, Honda y Girardot fueron los ejes que facilitaron el acceso

4. Producto de la configuración de la tesitura de los instrumentos en octavas y la subdivisión de esta en semitonos, la guitarra española fija los trastes sobre el diapasón. Instrumentos previos como la tiorba, la guitarra barroca o incluso el laúd, poseían trastes móviles para el ajuste de la tonalidad. Esta actualización de diseño le brindó una versatilidad que aún hoy en la actualidad le permite desempeñar roles en múltiples géneros.

de expresiones musicales, y de la guitarra. Al entrar en contacto con la población nativa al interior del territorio, este instrumento inició una transformación veloz de las expresiones culturales de los diferentes grupos que en esa parte del nuevo continente se encontraron. El río Magdalena fue el eje fluvial comercial sin el cual el desarrollo, tanto del país, como de la región, no hubiera sido posible, y por consecuencia, fue a su vez el engranaje principal del proceso de mezcla cultural. Es también en este proceso que aparece una figura indispensable para el desarrollo de una nueva identidad.

Como ya mencionado, durante la colonización, los nativos que favorecieron la conquista empezaron a gozar de privilegios. Es de esta forma que se consolida la figura del "patronazgo." Caciques, sacerdotes y altos mandos militares indígenas que ayudaron a la construcción de las ciudades eran reconocidos a través de la asignación de "solares."[5] Su papel social también les otorgaba una posición privilegiada en la forma de representación artística de esta nueva sociedad.[6] Al interior de este entramado político, los patrones entonces tenían potestad sobre la distribución de solares y de servidumbre. Es allí, al interior de los espacios de esparcimiento en el tiempo libre de indígenas, esclavos y campesinos, en donde, a partir de la imitación, y a través de la mofa del patrón español, se da origen a formas de entretenimiento y bailes. Es también ahí, en esos espacios de encuentro de diferentes culturas en donde aparecen los géneros autóctonos que de manera toponímica se llamarían, Guabina, Bambuco, Pasillo y Joropo,[7] todos recurrentes en el uso de la guitarra.

5. Durante la conquista, la traza urbanística en forma de damero generaba manzanas las cuales se dividían en solares. De manera concéntrica desde la plaza mayor de la urbe se distribuían la asignación de las propiedades en orden de importancia del rol social y político.

6. La imagen fue una herramienta importante durante la conquista. La evangelización fortaleció su significado y la aparición de figuras en la pintura con el rostro de estos caciques, sacerdotes y comandantes, como donantes, facilitó la evangelización (Gruzinski 2000: 45).

7. Por ejemplo, el baile del joropo y su particular 'zapateo' sobre el suelo, tienen su origen en los bailes campesinos en los que los obreros de las haciendas ganaderas, a manera de burla, bailaban y zapateaban haciendo una parodia del flamenco español.

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Volviendo a las ilustraciones de Torres Méndez, se puede identificar claramente la influencia colonialista mestiza. *El bambuco*, por ejemplo, nos muestra el surgir de una burguesía con clara ascendencia europea. Una burguesía que se construía sobre las tradiciones y las prácticas sociales de su continente de origen. Por el contrario, en *Baile de campesinos en la Sabana de Bogotá*, la figura colonial se ve representada en la imagen de la matrona, la señora fumando que representa en la ilustración la figura que ejerce todo el poder sobre la escena. La matrona es quien legitima las demás acciones presentes en la ilustración. En palabras de Efraín Sánchez Cabra:

> [la matrona] ejerce el gobierno dentro del cuadro. Allí Torres Méndez incursiona en el arte simbólico cuando la dibuja observando la escena, mientras que un perro flaco gira la cabeza hacia ella. El cuadro está construido para decirnos que es ella quien manda en esa casa, la que permite la fiesta, la que ha orquestado todo para que se produzca este contubernio que aún no es dionisiaco, es tanto el poder que ella tiene que se reserva el derecho de admitir personas dentro de la casa, un lugar que no sabemos si es público o privado. (1986: 22)

Como podemos ver, ambas ilustraciones nos muestran a un grupo de personas que buscan un espacio reconocido en la neo república. A su vez, ambas ilustraciones aspiran a convertirse en espacios de identificación del sujeto. Es decir, en ambas encontramos la clara aspiración de generar formas de identificación nacional. Ya sea para la neo burguesía que encontraba todo un nuevo mundo a su disposición, ya sea para los campesinos, que, una vez rechazados como súbditos de la corona, encontraron una republica capaz de acogerlos.

Es pues el mestizaje la acción natural de combinar o editar materiales existentes para producir algo nuevo quien termina por darle forma cultural a ese nuevo continente. Desde una mirada *warburgriana*, si el mestizaje y la mirada colonial se someten a una evolución genealógica, hallaremos procesos de hibridación fantásticos, como fantásticos son los procesos de adaptación que se dieron en el nuevo continente y que terminaron por crear nuevos instrumentos, nuevos géneros musicales, y por ende, una nueva visión del ser humano. Pensemos, por ejemplo, que en los territorios de lo que hoy es Colombia y Venezuela surge el cuatro llanero,

cuyo origen se entiende como la versión campesina de la guitarra. El cuatro se construía con fragmentos de madera y de cuerdas rotas que los campesinos recogían y reelaboraban en la construcción de un nuevo instrumento. Este instrumento principalmente acompañaba la sátira campesina a la ejecución de rasgueo y zapateo de la influencia flamenca. Esta burla dio origen a las formas llaneras del Joropo, el Pasaje, Seis por derecho, entre otros.

En el resto del continente, gracias al mestizaje, se dieron procesos culturales muy similares, tanto en el desarrollo de instrumentos como el formarse de géneros. Por ejemplo, en las regiones de Bolivia, Paraguay, y el norte de Chile, a partir del caparazón de los armadillos y de su similitud con las curvas en el cuerpo de la guitarra, aparece el charango, que limitado en sus magnitudes, tan solo permitió la inclusión de cuatro órdenes[8] de dos cuerdas lo que le otorga un timbre agudo y rico en armónicos.[9] Las formas musicales tradicionales resultantes como la Zamba y la Chacarera en Argentina, la Cueca chilena, Huaylas peruanas, Albazo ecuatoriano y el Pujllay boliviano, se amalgaman por estructuras rítmicas de origen indígena y africano y el sonido de la cuerda pulsada perteneciente al legado de la guitarra. Los anteriores son la esencia de las formas musicales tradicionales, y por ello representan los sonidos que identifican a la majestuosa cordillera de los Andes.

Esta apropiación sonora del territorio es precisamente la que desde el siglo XIX se ha venido consolidando con una fuerza política y social ejercida por grupos de origen europeo, por los sobrevivientes indígenas y las sufridas comunidades africanas que a la fuerza fueron traídas a este nuevo continente. De esta compleja apropiación sonora la ilustración del costumbrismo americano nos ha dejado un gran testimonio. De hecho, esta corriente artística muestra claramente que la lucha por la apropiación del territorio, de las tierras y los medios de producción de valor, no solo le dio forma a la expresión del estado nación en la zona meridional del nuevo continente, si no que este proceso social también

8. En el diseño de los instrumentos de cuerda pulsada en Latinoamérica se llama orden al conjunto de dos o tres cuerdas que se afinan en la misma nota y que enriquecen el timbre del instrumento.

9. La riqueza armónica del instrumento le permite actuar como un instrumento acompañante.

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convergía con la consolidación de los sonidos instrumentales nativos que habían resistido a la imposición de la cultura musical escolástica y occidentalizada. El costumbrismo americano es sin duda un claro testigo de la forma en que la lucha identitaria y la mezcla de culturas, una vez adquiere su dimensión popular termina por convertirse en la identidad sonora de las naciones.[10]

Un fenómeno interesante, que tiene sus raíces en estos procesos de mestizaje -y al mismo tiempo presenta características similares a los procesos identitarios- se puede encontrar en la música pop contemporánea, en especial manera en la música pop de la década de los noventa.

Hacia la década de 1990, de manera muy similar a la que Torres Méndez observó el territorio, el pop latinoamericano inicia un proceso identitario basado en mirar 'hacía adentro'. Durante la última década del milenio, se empiezan a incorporar, dentro del formato tradicional de rock, instrumentos tradicionales andinos y ritmos de origen indígena. En toda la América de habla hispana, dentro del proceso de apropiación del rock, surge un movimiento identitario que se caracteriza por introducir elementos sonoros tradicionales. Esta práctica rápidamente termina por extenderse al diseño gráfico de los discos.

En 1994, en medio de una colección de trece canciones que se caracterizan por el uso de guitarras eléctricas y sonidos robustos de batería, el grupo de rock argentino, Enanitos Verdes, en un tímido intento de imprimir timbres de identidad local, incluyen la aparición cautelosa de una kena[11] en la canción *Lamento boliviano*. La presencia de este instrumento busca 'configurar la locación' (Davis 1998: 142), exponer, en medio de una escena ya constituida,

10. El término de música popular es definido por la *EPMOW* [*Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*] como aquella que nace en los nidos de la sociedad urbana e industrial y que en particular, la gran mayoría es difundida por los medios de comunicación. La *EPMOW* no incluye música generalmente clasificada como música clásica o escolástica. Esta definición se aplica a todas las formas de expresión que compartan naturaleza de origen, por lo tanto, puede ser aplicada a las músicas populares Latinoamericanas como al blues, el jazz o el rock en territorios anglosajones.

11. La kena se cataloga dentro de los instrumentos ideófonos de aire. Se fabrica cortando varios tubos de caña a diferentes longitudes con el fin de obtener las diferentes alturas.

el lugar al que hace alusión la canción. De esta manera se evidencia la necesidad de la banda por imprimir una firma sonora que hable particularmente de la región, o mejor, que haga hablar la región en el universo del rock. Un fenómeno similar ocurrió cuatro años atrás cuando el grupo chileno Los Prisioneros incluyó la presencia del charango en *Tren al Sur* de 1990. La presencia del sonido tanto del charango como de la kena, a nivel de arreglo musical y mezcla sonora, no tienen un protagonismo especial. Estos instrumentos apenas cumplen la función ornamental de otorgar una nueva sonoridad. En el disco *El nervio del volcán*, también de 1994, de la agrupación mexicana Caifanes, presenta como primera canción *Afuera*. De esta canción se destaca en particular la sección del solo. Éste es introducido por una pausa súbita luego de la estrofa y el coro que a este punto han sido ejecutados dos veces. El solo se introduce con una transición que inicia con el sonido de instrumentos de percusión autóctona como cascabeles y tamboras. La percusión adopta una estructura rítmica muy cercana a las danzas[12] Rarámuris o son Huichol, de las poblaciones indígenas de México. El instrumento principal del solo es la guitarra eléctrica con sonido *clean*,[13] junto con la imitación de la danza propuesta, ésta ocupa el lugar del que podría ser el violín macurawe o guarijio[14] en los formatos originales a los que hace alusión la canción. Otra guitarra y el bajo se unen en el motivo rítmico de contradanza. La sección del solo de *Afuera*, ubicado al interior de una estructura clásica de ejecución

12. El Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia de México (INAH) realizó la compilación de danzas indígenas, grabando in situ los ritos indígenas de las poblaciones vivas del país. Esta serie de grabaciones compusieron el corpus que permitió un exhaustivo análisis que identificó los elementos característicos de timbre y ritmo para cada uno de los oficios.

13. El término hace referencia al sonido que se obtiene de la guitarra eléctrica sin la intervención de efectos sonoros especiales como distorsiones o reverberaciones y ecos.

14. El violín macurawe corresponde a la evolución mestiza del instrumento indígena, arco de una sola cuerda, así llamado por los españoles, quienes al introducir el violín 'tradicional' le agregan a éste otras tres cuerdas. Sin embargo, mantienen su manufactura a partir de maderas vegetales originarias de la región. El instrumento hace parte de los formatos folclóricos mexicanos en la actualidad.

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radial,[15] hizo de la canción un sencillo de consumo masivo, no solo en México, sino en toda Latinoamérica. Esto la posicionó también en la escena del rock mundial, gracias a lo exótico de la sección.

Desde *La voz de su amo*[16] de Francis Barraud hasta nuestros días, la industria de la producción musical se ha apoyado en la imagen como herramienta de mercadeo. El uso de tipografías sobre la fotografía del artista en las portadas y afiches de discos y conciertos siempre han buscado brindar una identidad visual a la música. En el caso de la producción de rock en español, como si se tratara de una representación de los 'símbolos' sonoros presentes en las estructuras de las canciones que contienen, las portadas de los discos también incluyen elementos gráficos que hacen referencia a las culturas nativas. En otras palabras, las imágenes de las portadas de los discos buscan establecer una relación de pertenencia con la audiencia local sin dejar de ser exóticas para el público foráneo. Pensemos, por ejemplo, en Café Tacvba, un grupo que, en 1995, bajo la influencia del *punk*, transgrede la escena con el lanzamiento de *Re*.

Imagen 4: Detalle de la Portada de *Re (1994)*

Imagen 5: Detalle de la con traportada de *Re (1994)*

15. La industria de la radio, para aumentar audiencias y mantenar niveles de escucha, aspira a que el coro de las canciones ocurra en el tiempo cercano a los treinta segundos luego de haber iniciado la canción.

16. La ilustración que identifica a las empresas asociadas a la Gramophone Company muestra a un perro jack rusell terrier sentado al frente de una corneta de gramófono escuchándolo con atención. La imagen corresponde al momento en el que el animal escuchaba la voz de su amo, Mark Barraud. La escena fue recreada por el hermano de Barraud, Francis, quien vendió los derechos de imagen a la compañía de aparatos fonográficos. La imagen es un icono de la industria de la grabación musical.

La portada representa en una configuración de trama la talla azteca y maya. Sobre esta encontramos el dibujo del caparazón de una amonita, cuyo fósil es un hallazgo común de la región. En la contraportada, en una configuración de mosaico, con tonos ocres, se representa a dos figuras humanas entrelazadas en un abrazo. Se distinguen por su contrastante color de piel sobre un fondo vegetal verde coronado por un astro, al parecer el Sol. La representación nos recuerda algunas figuras del muralismo de Diego Rivera. Entendemos que este diseño –que por cierto en el álbum la 'U' del nombre de la banda es remplazada por una 'V' retomando su raíz latina- es una invitación a que el oyente revise en el disco los elementos sonoros que distinguen la identidad cultural mexicana. Contemporáneamente, en Colombia, Aterciopelados publicaba *El Dorado*. En este álbum, de manera mucho más explícita, aparecen los miembros de la banda bañados con polvo dorado haciendo una alegoría clara a la leyenda del cacique muisca Guatavita. La leyenda de El Dorado es una de las manifestaciones de la tradición oral latinoamericana más populares a nivel mundial.[17]

Imagen 6: Portada de *El Dorado,* Aterciopelados (1994)

El diseño de la portada de este grupo de rock colombiano además incorpora la imagen de una talla en madera con laminilla de oro

17. La potencia de la narrativa alrededor de la leyenda de El Dorado en su versión colombiana adquiere fuerza gracias a la evidencia que representa La balsa muisca; una pieza precolombina de orfebrería que fue hallada al dragar una laguna en Siecha, departamento de Cundinamarca en Colombia. La balsa en la actualidad hace parte de la colección del Museo del Oro en Bogotá.

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que enmarca la imagen de la banda. El marco es característico de la escuela cusqueña de talla, y fue un elemento que se usó de forma recursiva en el arte colonial de la parte septentrional del continente suramericano. En la portada del disco, podríamos afirmar que el diseño coincide con las intenciones gráficas de reflejar elementos musicales autóctonos presentes en el disco.

En cada uno de estos discos se pueden establecer relaciones simbólicas entre ambos, la música y la imagen. En *Re,* al abrir el librillo del CD, ilustrando la letra de *El aparato* se dibuja un conjunto Jarocho mexicano y con ellos la característica Jarana Jarocha, instrumento que suena en esa canción. Se establece así una relación simbólica que se fortalece en otras páginas, como en la fotografía de los pies que acompaña la letra de *Ixtepec,* el motivo mural en la página de *Trópico de Cáncer,* el mosaico de *La negrita* o el guitarrón en *Madrugal*. La recurrencia del motivo de la talla fortalece esa relación semiótica. A nivel sonoro, estableciendo la relación analógica, se pueden oír a lo largo de todo el disco sonidos como el de la melódica de *La ingrata,* la Banda Fiestera en *El fin de la infancia,* el bolero de *Madrugal*, los motivos indígenas de *El tlatoani del barrio* o el uso del violín en *El puñal y el corazón.*

En el caso de *El dorado*, *Siervo sin tierra* es la canción que presenta la mayor cantidad de elementos musicales autóctonos. En esta canción, la guitarra sugiere un pasaje llanero que es acompañado por la tambora, que a su vez reemplaza y contrasta el sonido de batería de las demás canciones. Líricamente se mencionan refranes y términos locales de la región del altiplano cundiboyacense ampliamente usados en la época. Cabe mencionar la estructura rítmica del bolero en *El bolero falaz*, así como los gestos melódicos y el estilo de canto flamenco de Andrea Echeverry en *No futuro*, sin olvidar la presencia de un fragmento de la grabación original de la canción *Soy colombiano*[18] (1964) en *Colombia conexión,* lo que evidencia una intención clara de la agrupación por hablar de lo local, desde lo local, pero buscando legitimarlo a partir de la apropiación del rock.

18. La versión de la canción que Aterciopelados utiliza es la realizada por el duo Garzón y Collazos junto al maestro Jaime Llano Gonzalez. 1967, *Soy Colombiano*.

Como podemos ver en estos ejemplos de final de milenio, el sonido de los discos se manifiesta en la imagen y las ilustraciones. Sería posible establecer una relación analógica con la obra de Torres Méndez. En ambos casos, y a distancia de más de un siglo, los elementos autóctonos de la región se convierten, tanto de forma gráfica, como sonora, en elementos narrativos capaces de ejercer una fuerza identitaria. Así como la figura de la matrona y los instrumentos en el siglo XIX, de la misma manera se comportan los diseños que resuenan en las canciones de los discos de rock del siglo pasado. Ambos juegan un papel fundamental en la consolidación de una identidad clara, ya sea en el universo del rock a nivel mundial o en un mundo que se identificaría por el surgir del estado nación y por un largo y sufrido proceso de descolonización que la humanidad se habría de arrastrar por todo el siglo XX.

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CONSERVACIÓN DE PATRIMONIO CULTURAL MUEBLE VS. CONSERVACIÓN FÍLMICA

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Aunque la conservación y restauración de los objetos que conforman el patrimonio cultural tiene por objetivo la preservación y divulgación de la materia y su contenido, la manera de acercarse a cada tipo de objeto puede variar dependiendo de la naturaleza de los materiales que conforman el bien cultural. Sin embargo, las metodologías y también los conceptos de conservación y restauración del patrimonio cinematográfico difieren de manera significativa de las maneras en las que se trabaja el resto del patrimonio cultural mueble.[1] En el caso de los bienes culturales muebles, es necesario efectuar un análisis previo de los objetos, contemplar su descripción y estudiar su contexto histórico, así como ahondar en el entendimiento de los materiales constitutivos, el conocimiento del estado de conservación de dichos materiales, el reconocimiento de los valores que los objetos poseen y su afectación por el deterioro de los materiales, el diagnóstico final del objeto y la propuesta de intervención.

Por el contrario, en el caso de la conservación de los materiales cinematográficos la forma de acercarse a los objetos es distinta. Por ejemplo, el conocimiento de una pintura de caballete se da con la observación directa del objeto, en donde materia e imagen son inseparables. En el caso del patrimonio fílmico el conocimiento total de la obra no se da observando de forma

1. Bienes que, por oposición a los inmuebles, se caracterizan por su movilidad y posibilidad de traslación, y ciertos derechos a los que las leyes otorgan esta condición. Real Academia Española, https://dle.rae.es/bien#KUKVZHp consultada 21.11.2022.

directa al objeto, sino durante la proyección donde el espectador aprecia el fenómeno cinematográfico. Entonces tendremos por un lado al objeto fílmico (rollo de película con ciertas características técnicas) y por otro lado a la obra cinematográfica (el título de la obra, que no necesariamente está ligada a un solo objeto fílmico en particular sino a varios, por ejemplo, a un negativo, a una cierta cantidad de películas positivas, a copias de trabajo, distintas versiones, etc.)

DOS DISCIPLINAS DISTINTAS

> Los bienes que integran el patrimonio cultural existen desde el mismo momento en que el hombre deja testimonios materiales de su presencia y actividades, dando lugar a objetos de todo tipo, desde obras de arte hasta objetos de carácter únicamente utilitario. Estos objetos que componen el patrimonio cultural de los pueblos han existido, por consiguiente, desde los primeros tiempos de la humanidad. Sin embargo, su reconocimiento como objetos valiosos por su naturaleza de testimonios o documentos significativos de la actividad humana es un fenómeno reciente. (González-Varas 1999: 21)

El desarrollo de los conceptos de patrimonio cultural y bienes culturales, y sobre todo la atribución de diferentes valores a los objetos creados por el hombre llevó a la necesidad de prolongar su tiempo de vida y por consecuencia a la creación de la disciplina de la conservación y/o restauración. Por su parte, los archivos fílmicos vienen a integrar este espacio de interés en un momento sucesivo y de forma diferente. Si analizamos el término "bienes culturales," encontramos que éste fue definido en la Convención de la Haya en 1954 de la siguiente manera:

> [...] se considerarán bienes culturales, cualquiera que sea su origen y propietario: los bienes, muebles o inmuebles, que tengan una gran importancia para el patrimonio cultural de los pueblos, tales como los monumentos de arquitectura, de arte o de historia, religiosos o seculares, los campos arqueológicos, los grupos de construcciones que por su conjunto ofrezcan un gran interés histórico o artístico, las obras de arte, manuscritos, libros y otros objetos de interés histórico, artístico o arqueológico, así como las colecciones científicas y las colecciones importantes de libros, de archivos o de reproducciones de los bienes antes definidos. (Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja, Convención para la protección de los bienes culturales en caso de conflicto armado (H.CP)

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El patrimonio audiovisual, en este caso no es nombrado de manera específica, aunque podría considerarse como parte de los archivos. Sin embargo, la Federación Internacional de Archivos Fílmicos, creada en 1938, reconoce la importancia de la conservación de las imágenes en movimiento en dos vertientes: como *obras artísticas* y/o como *fuentes documentales*. La primera se da por ser el resultado de un acto único de creatividad individual o colectiva que le puede conferir cualidades estéticas y aportando el estatus de obra de arte equivalente a grandes creaciones como la arquitectura, pintura, escultura, música, etcétera. (Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja) Si bien no todas las obras fílmicas poseen valores de tipo artístico, cada obra fílmica es una fuente documental. Además, todas forman parte de la expresión de una sociedad y por ello reflejan una parte importante de cada cultura. Es por esta razón que el 28 de octubre de 1980 la UNESCO emitió una recomendación para la salvaguarda y la conservación de las imágenes en movimiento. Allí, la institución las definía como la expresión de la personalidad cultural de los pueblos, y debido a su valor educativo, cultural, artístico, científico e histórico, forman parte integrante del patrimonio cultural de una nación. (UNAM- CUEC 10) En el mismo texto se definían también las imágenes en movimiento como cualquier serie de imágenes registradas en un soporte -independientemente del método de registro y de la naturaleza del soporte– con o sin acompañamiento sonoro y que al ser proyectadas brindan la ilusión de movimiento (UNAM-CUEC 12) Además, la UNESCO considera que, debido a la naturaleza del soporte material y a los diversos métodos de su fijación, las imágenes en movimiento son extraordinariamente vulnerables y deben conservarse en condiciones técnicas específicas. Por ello afirma que es necesario que cada estado tome medidas adecuadas encaminadas a garantizar la salvaguarda y la conservación para la posteridad de este patrimonio cultural , del mismo modo que se salvaguardan y conservan otras formas de bienes culturales como fuente de enriquecimiento para las generaciones presentes y futuras.

ANÁLISIS PREVIO A LA INTERVENCIÓN DEL OBJETO FÍLMICO CINE REVISTA SALVADOREÑA

Debido a mi interés por las diferencias entre la conservación del patrimonio mueble y la conservación fílmica quise aplicar el método de análisis previo a las labores de conservación y/o restau-

ración utilizado en bienes muebles a un objeto fílmico. Para realizar este trabajo me acerqué en el año 2010 a la Filmoteca de la Universidad Autónoma de México con el propósito de encontrar un objeto de estudio.

Se me asignó el título: *Cine Revista Salvadoreña.* El propósito del trabajo fue ocuparme de dicho título desde el punto de vista de "objeto" y analizarlo para llegar a determinar su estado de conservación de la misma forma que se analiza una pintura de caballete o un documento gráfico.

A continuación, se presenta en una versión editada del análisis previo a la intervención de la película *Cine Revista Salvadoreña*. La obra fílmica *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* es una película de acetato de celulosa en blanco y negro, formato 35 mm y con sonido óptico. Esta película forma parte del acervo de la Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

DATOS GENERALES DEL OBJETO

Datos de Realización	Datos Técnicos
Título impreso en la película: Cine Revista Salvadoreña	Número de rollos: 1
Título de catalogación en la Filmoteca de la UNAM: Noticiario Cine Revista Salvadoreña (No.3)	Formato: 35 mm
Año: 1954 ca. (no hay datos de fecha en la película)	Tipo de imagen: blanco y negro
Distribuidora: Circuito de Teatros Nacionales	Tipo de elemento: positivo
Edición: Lupita Marino	Tipo de sonido: Óptico área variable
Narración: Fernando Marcos	Tipo de soporte: Acetato de Celulosa
Sonido: A de la Riva, Sistema Rivatón América	Tipo de perforación: Kodak
Productores Asociados: Ángel Mario Martínez, Carlos A Méndez Manuel Miranda Pinto	Código marginal o Edge Code: Kodak +
Laboratorios: México	Pietaje: 978 y 6 fotogramas
Fotografía: José Salazar Ruíz	Aspect Ratio: 1: 1.38
Gerente: Guillermo Pinto	Idioma: probablemente español
País: El Salvador y México	Rótulos: Español

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CONTEXTO HISTÓRICO Y DESCRIPCIÓN DEL OBJETO FÍLMICO

La película *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* llegó a la Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México como parte de un proyecto de restauración llevado a cabo en el año 1998. En este proyecto, 17 rollos de películas serían restaurados, entre ellos, cinco rollos de 35 mm blanco y negro con noticieros sin título. La obra fílmica *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* pertenece a uno de los cinco rollos de 35 mm. y la obra original fue depositada en la Filmoteca de la UNAM. Debido a que cinco rollos están clasificados como "*Noticiario Cine Revista Salvadoreña,*" la Filmoteca asignó números a cada uno de ellos, en este caso se trata del número 3. Por lo tanto el título que la Filmoteca ha asignado es: *Noticiario Cine Revista Salvadoreña (No. 3).*

DESCRIPCIÓN DEL OBJETO

El objeto fílmico *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* consta de un rollo de 978 pies y 6 fotogramas, enrollado en un núcleo de plástico de 3 pulgadas. Al inicio y final de la película se agregaron aproximadamente cinco pies de cola o leader[2] (este tramo no es original y seguramente fue adherido en la Filmoteca de la UNAM). En esta sección está escrito con plumón: la palabra "positivo" y el título de la película.

Después de la cola, al inicio de la película se puede observar un tramo de cinco pies con 10 fotogramas que corresponde a la cuenta regresiva o *countdown* original. Al término de esta sección comienza el primer cuadro con los créditos iniciales y 900 pies (aprox.) con el contenido del noticiero. Transcurrido este pietaje se lee la palabra fin y otro tramo de cola con la información escrita: positivo y el título de la película. Las imágenes están impresas sobre una película cinematográfica con soporte de acetato de celulosa con una imagen positiva en blanco y negro en formato 35 mm. El rollo se encuentra dentro de una lata de aluminio de 1000 pies con tres etiquetas adheridas en la tapa. Este contenedor no es el original y fue proporcionado por la Filmoteca de la UNAM.

2. Tramo de película que no pertenece a la obra original y se agrega al inicio y fin para evitar manipular las zonas con imágenes.

La película presenta un grado alto de encogimiento por tanto no debe ser proyectada, ya que se podrían causar daños graves en el soporte. Es por ello que la observación del contenido y estado de conservación se realizó mediante una inspección fotograma por fotograma.

La observación del título: *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* y la información proporcionada por la Filmoteca de la UNAM fueron datos suficientes para deducir que se trataba de un noticiero cinematográfico proveniente de El Salvador. A continuación se enlistan los temas tratados y la duración aproximada en pies y tiempo[3] de cada segmento.

Sección de pies	Duración en pies	Duración en tiempo	Temática Identificada
	5 pies con 10 cuadros	3 seg.	La película inicia con un tramo de película que contiene la cuenta regresiva para ser proyectada (countdown), a su término se observan las palabras: Laboratorios México.
1–38	38 pies	25 seg.	Créditos Iniciales
39–116	77 pies	51 seg.	Reportaje sobre la inauguración de los Juegos Panamericanos en México en 1955 y la delegación de El Salvador
117–167	50 pies	33 seg.	Comercial de Importadora J. G. Alvarenga, S.A. distribuidores de la marca Zenith.
168- 203	35 pies	23 seg.	Reportaje de levantamiento de pesas.
204–248	44 pies	29 seg.	Reportaje de lucha greco-romana.
249–295	46 pies	30 seg.	Reportaje de fisicoculturismo.
296–314	18 pies	12 seg.	Comercial de Jabón Rey.
315–359	44 pies	29 seg.	Reportaje de una boda comunitaria.
360–373	13 pies	8 seg.	Comercial de Café, Flor de Café.

3. El cálculo de tiempo se realizó de forma automática en Film Calculator de KODAK, motion.kodak.com/motion/uploadedfiles/US_plugins_flash_en_motion_filmCalculator.swf consultada 12.05. 2011.

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374–517	143 pies	1 min 35 seg	Comercial de la empresa El Astillero de Eduardo Casanovas Gomar distribuidor de *Evinrude* (equipo de náutica).
518–605	87 pies	58 seg.	Comercial de Cremerías Delta.
606–730	124 pies	1 min 22 seg.	Comercial de la Aseguradora Centro Americana.
731–808	77 pies	51 seg.	Reportaje sobre equipo de fútbol.
809–868	59 pies	39 seg.	Comercial de electrodomésticos de la Compañía Rovira Importadores.
869–965	96 pies	1 min 4 seg.	Cortometraje titulado: *Doctor Importado.*
966–978	12 pies	8 seg.	Créditos Finales.

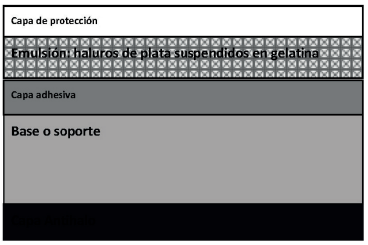
MATERIALES CONSTITUTIVOS

La película *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* es una copia de proyección (positivo) con un formato de 35 mm. Presenta un soporte de triacetato de celulosa con una imagen en blanco y negro formada por partículas de plata aglutinadas en gelatina. Fue fabricada por Kodak, y tiene una pista de sonido óptico de área variable. El tipo de perforación es para positivos de proyección.

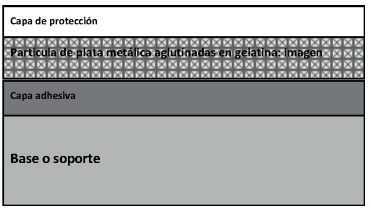
Según el *American National Standards Institute* (ANSI), una película es una tira plástica flexible que cumple con ciertas dimensiones estandarizadas y cuyo uso específico es la toma fotográfica de imágenes que al ser proyectadas darán la ilusión de movimiento. (Blasko 12) La estructura de una película sin exponer (virgen) está compuesta por las siguientes capas:

- un soporte al que se le denomina base
- una capa llamada emulsión (haluros de plata emulsionados

en gelatina) adherida por medio de un estrato intermedio o capa adhesiva, (Valverde Valdés)
- una capa antihalo en la parte posterior del soporte
- una capa protectora sobre la emulsión. (Read y Meyer 21)



Esquema que muestra la estratigrafía de la película cinematográfica virgen



Esquema que muestra la estratigrafía de la película cinematográfica ya procesada

Tras haber sido expuesta y procesada, la estructura de una película cambia y estará conformada por la base o soporte, la capa adhesiva, partículas de plata metálica aglutinadas en gelatina formando la imagen y la capa de protección.

El soporte de esta obra es de acetato de celulosa. En las marcas de las orillas de la película (marcas marginales) es posible leer la palabra "SAFETY FILM".

Marca marginal con la palabra "Safety Film" impresa.

En el pasado, las películas de acetato de celulosa fueron denominadas "safety films" o "películas de seguridad" para distinguirlas de las que tenían soporte plástico de nitrato de celulosa. Este último fue utilizado de 1889 a 1950 y es químicamente inestable, se descompone gradualmente y puede presentar combustión espontánea rápida y violenta. (Del Amo 10) En 1950 Kodak dejó de fabricar película de nitrato de celulosa y el soporte de triacetato lo sustituyó. Debido a que su inflamabilidad es menor a la del nitrato de celulosa fue llamado "safety film."

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En el soporte de la obra *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* puede observarse en la palabra SAFETY, un círculo clave que se encuentra entre la letra A y la F, el cual corresponde al país en donde la película fue manufacturada (Filial Kodak en diferentes países).

Marcas marginales impresas con la información del negativo de origen.

De acuerdo con las claves del país de fabricación proporcionadas por Kodak, esta película se fabricó en Canadá. El material también presenta marcas en la orilla con información impresa del soporte del negativo del cual se obtuvo esta copia positiva. Este último también era en acetato de celulosa puesto que incluía la palabra SAFETY. Además, presentaba el círculo clave entre las letras S y A, lo que indica que el material cinematográfico utilizado para filmar esta película fue fabricado en fábrica de Kodak de Rochester, N.Y.

ESTADO DE CONSERVACIÓN DEL OBJETO CINEMATOGRÁFICO

Los efectos de deterioro más notorios en esta obra se debieron a cambios químicos en la estructura del soporte plástico de triacetato de celulosa. Estos cambios o alteraciones fueron provocados por las condiciones ambientales (alta humedad relativa y alta temperatura) del lugar en el que la película permaneció almacenada. El deterioro observado es característico de las películas con soporte de acetato de celulosa, y se le conoce como "síndrome del vinagre." Los efectos de deterioro son: encogimiento, deformación, soporte

rígido y quebradizo, deterioro del estrato de aglutinante de gelatina/plata (emulsión), pérdidas del aglutinante de gelatina/plata (emulsión), espejo de plata y manchas de oxidación en las orillas.

Otros efectos de deterioro físico o mecánico debido al uso de la película y también relacionados con el deterioro químico son: perforaciones rotas, abrasión, rayas en estrato aglutinante gelatina/plata (emulsión), rayas en soporte y manchas de aceite.

VALORACIÓN DE LA PELÍCULA

- Valor histórico-documental

Al pertenecer al género de cine documental periodístico, el noticiero *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* es un documento histórico de importancia para El Salvador.

- Valor Social

Los noticieros desempeñaban una función propagandística tratando de influir en el modo de pensamiento de la sociedad que los observaba. La información contenida en este noticiero es valiosa ya que documenta hechos que reproducen situaciones, conductas, modelos e imágenes históricas, sociales, políticas, culturales, religiosas, deportivas, culturales y tecnológicas.

- Valor Tecnológico

Por sus características de factura y materiales constitutivos, el noticiero *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* posee un valor tecnológico importante.

DIAGNÓSTICO DE ESTADO DE CONSERVACIÓN

El estado de conservación de la obra *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* es muy grave debido al deterioro químico presente. No obstante, la calidad de la imagen es buena y no existen deterioros significativos que impidan su apreciación, pero esto no asegura su permanencia, ya que la película ha rebasado el punto auto catalítico y si no se toman medidas pertinentes, el daño avanzará impidiendo la lectura de la imagen. A continuación se exponen los principales efectos de deterioro que amenazan la permanencia, la estabilidad estructural y apreciación de esta obra fílmica:

1. En primer lugar está la degradación química del soporte de acetato de celulosa.

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2. Los efectos del deterioro químico del acetato de celulosa como el encogimiento, la rigidez, la fragilidad y la deformación (ochavado, abarquillamiento, alabeo) del soporte, no sólo dificultan la manipulación de la película, sino que impiden su proyección.
3. Al parecer la obra fue mutilada en la sección de los créditos, lo que impide conocer datos de realización importantes como el nombre del director y el año de producción.
4. Los daños físicos provocados por la manipulación y proyección de la película como daño en orillas, perforaciones rotas, abrasión, rayas y manchas de aceite, no amenazan la estabilidad mecánica de la obra, pero, deben de tomarse en cuenta para cualquier propuesta de conservación o restauración.

PROPUESTA DE INTERVENCIÓN

- Acción I: Preservación

El término preservación en ámbito cinematográfico presenta dos aserciones que pueden crear confusión. De acuerdo con la FIAF las acciones de preservación van encaminadas a garantizar la permanencia del contenido de la obra fílmica. Esto incluye la duplicación, el copiado o la migración de datos de un medio análogo o digital hacia un nuevo soporte o formato. Por el contrario, la *National Film Preservation Foundation* (National Film Preservation Foundation 4) engloba en la palabra "preservar", todas las actividades necesarias para proteger a las obras fílmicas y así compartir su contenido con la sociedad. Este concepto abarca pues la manipulación del filme, la duplicación, un almacenaje en condiciones óptimas, el acceso a los materiales y por ende engloba a los términos conservación y restauración.

- Acción II: Conservación

La conservación es la salvaguarda y protección de los materiales fílmicos originales, en su doble valoración: como objetos y como artefactos portadores de información. (National Film Preservation Foundation 4) La salvaguarda se realiza evitando el daño, la descomposición y la pérdida de las obras fílmicas. El objetivo de la preservación fílmica es conservar los materiales originales y por ninguna circunstancia éstos deberán ser alterados. El factor más importante en la conservación es el almacenaje de los materia-

les fílmicos en ambientes fríos y secos. (FIAF Technical Commission Preservation Best Practice 1).

Aunque no hay tratamientos de laboratorio con resultados satisfactorios que eliminen el síndrome del vinagre en películas con soporte de acetato celulosa, el almacenaje a bajas temperaturas logrará detener su avance. (Bigourdan 40) Las películas que ya se encuentran degradadas requerirán condiciones de almacenaje más estrictas que aquellas películas que no presentan deterioro. Estudios publicados por el *Image Permanence Institute* han demostrado que los filmes con un deterioro avanzado almacenados a temperatura ambiente se continuarán degradando de manera rápida. Por otro lado, las películas con deterioro químico en un estado avanzado que se almacenan a temperaturas bajas pueden estabilizarse y su deterioro será más lento. (Bigourdan 27) Es por ello que se propuso almacenar a la obra *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* en condiciones de humedad de entre 30 y 40% y temperaturas menores a 0° C.

Para estabilizar el estado de la obra Cine Revista Salvadoreña será necesario atender dos factores: el macroambiente y el microambiente. El primero se refiere a las condiciones del ambiente que prevalecen dentro del área de almacenaje. En condiciones ideales debería haber un equilibrio de los materiales con éste. Para ello las películas necesitan de un tiempo determinado para aclimatarse a las condiciones de humedad y temperatura. El microambiente contempla los embalajes o contenedores que proveen de protección física a los materiales fílmicos, éstos crearán un microclima que puede tener beneficios o perjuicios en la estabilidad de la película. Por lo tanto la primera acción se refiere al macroambiente. Se recomendó que la obra Cine Revista Salvadoreña sea resguardada en un espacio con condiciones de humedad relativa y temperaturas controladas. Idealmente las temperaturas deberán ser bajo 0°C, pero si no es posible, se deberá mantener a máximo 8°C y entre 35 y 40 % de humedad relativa. En referencia al microambiente, se sugirió que la obra sea colocada en una lata de metal o contenedor de polipropileno nuevo previamente etiquetado. El uso de desecantes moleculares es altamente recomendado, con su uso se puede minimizar el avance

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del deterioro químico, reduciendo el efecto autocatalítico y eliminando el riesgo de "infección" de otros materiales (Bigourdan 19).

- Acción III: Duplicación

La duplicación es una herramienta que se puede utilizar en los procesos de conservación o de restauración fílmica y consiste en realizar un copiado del elemento fílmico que se desea preservar. En el caso de la obra *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* se sabe que de mayo a junio del año 1998, Lilian Ramírez de Bello proveniente de El Salvador, realizó una pasantía en la Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Ramírez de Bello regresó al Salvador con una copia positiva de duplicación.

- Acción IV: Restauración

La restauración va más allá de los copiados de un material original sobreviviente. Su objetivo es recrear una versión específica de una obra fílmica. Idealmente, incluye la comparación de todos los materiales sobrevivientes que se conocen, basándose en documentación que fundamente la forma en la que la obra fílmica estaba compuesta. Algunas veces será necesario mejorar o realzar las cualidades ópticas y auditivas para compensar los daños causados por el deterioro físico, químico o biológico.

La restauración fílmica, a diferencia de la restauración de otros objetos artísticos o del patrimonio cultural, siempre involucra la duplicación del artefacto original. (National Film Preservation Foundation 4) Una restauración, inevitablemente involucrará decisiones subjetivas, en dos instancias: la técnica y la de contenido, es por ello que la documentación es un proceso imperativo dentro de la restauración de bienes cinematográficos.(FIAF Technical Commission Preservation Best Practice 1) En el caso de la obra *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* no se propusieron procesos de restauración.

- Acción V: Acceso

Es el fin último de la preservación mediante el cual el contenido del filme es mostrado al público. Dependiendo de cada institución o archivo cinematográfico el acceso contempla varias actividades; desde dar apoyo a investigadores hasta las exhibiciones en salas y otros medios de comunicación masivos como internet. (National

Film Preservation Foundation 4) El acceso no implica necesariamente la exhibición del objeto cinematográfico original, sino que está abierto a otros tipos de soportes y medios informativos.

En el caso del noticiero *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* se propuso la realización de un duplicado (para evitar la manipulación de la obra original).

PROCESOS REALIZADOS

Se realizó la inspección minuciosa de la obra *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* con la finalidad de conocer los datos de realización y datos técnicos. También se identificó su contenido, relacionándolo con una investigación documental, lo que permitió establecer los valores de la obra. Se observaron las características de técnica de manufactura y se interrelacionaron con el deterioro presente, para así, elaborar un diagnóstico que jerarquizó los deterioros. Finalmente se elaboró una propuesta de intervención. A continuación, se desglosan algunas de las actividades implementadas:

- Se realizó la toma de fotografías digitales para registrar el contenido, características técnicas y estado de conservación, para esto se utilizó una cámara y un cuentahílos.
- La deformación de la película se minimizó enrollando la cinta hacia el lado opuesto, es decir con la emulsión hacia arriba.

Película con deformación (arriba izquierda), detalle de deformación (arriba derecha), película después del rebobinado sin deformación (izquierda abajo).

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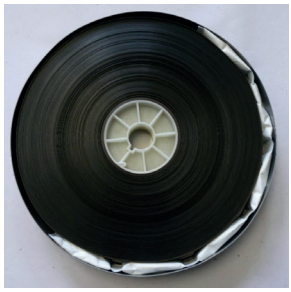
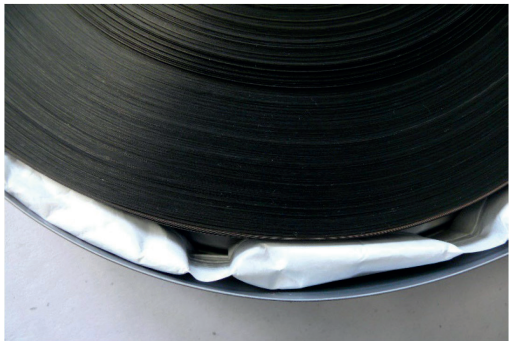
- Se utilizaron las tiras A-D para conocer el grado de deterioro químico en el que se encuentra la película.

Película con tira A–D.

- Se colocaron desecantes moleculares.





Colocación de los desecantes moleculares.

Como pudimos ver, cuando hablamos de preservación del patrimonio cinematográfico automáticamente nos basamos en conceptos desarrollados en el marco de la institucionalización de la preservación, conservación y restauración usados en la preservación del patrimonio cultural. Sin embargo, en este marco institucionalizado de preservación del patrimonio cultural, algunos elementos característicos del patrimonio fílmico no son reconocidos y/o discrepan. Nos referimos, en primer lugar, a que la preservación de objetos del patrimonio cultural (que no es fílmico) no admite el uso de la palabra duplicación, ya que esto abre la posibilidad de caer en la falsificación. Por lo tanto, la acción de duplicar no es una práctica éticamente aceptada. Sin embargo, la acción de duplicación es fundamental para la preservación de material fílmico.

La segunda discrepancia hace referencia al principio teórico que Cesare Brandi expone en su libro *Teoría de la Restauración*, en donde menciona que "*Sólo se restaura la materia de la obra de arte*" (Brandi 16). En la restauración de las obras cinematográficas sucede lo contrario, sobre el objeto fílmico original se realizarán algunas reparaciones que forman parte de las acciones de la conservación; pero la restauración se ejerce sobre la imagen y la vía para su realización es la creación de nuevos elementos por medio de la duplicación (ya sea por medios de restauración análogos o digitales).

Las obras fílmicas forman parte del patrimonio cultural de la humanidad por lo que merecen la misma atención que otro tipo de bienes culturales. Sin embargo, debido a la naturaleza de los materiales que las constituyen y a la forma en la son apreciadas y/o percibidas, será necesario, para su conocimiento total un nivel de especialización que permita la toma de decisiones adecuadas para su preservación.

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TO STAUNCHLY "REMAIN A READER" AND BUILD UP A WORLD COMRADESHIP

Reflecting with Rabih Alameddine on World Literature

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Taking J. Daniel Elam's recent work titled *World Literature and the Wretched of the World* (2021) as a point of departure, in this article I closely read and critically assess Rabih Alameddine's novel *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013) as a way to tackle questions relating to world literature, the canonization of literary texts, and the supposedly universal reach of so-called classics. The essay further calls attention to the silent complicity of the literary establishment, education programs, and knowledge more generally with authoritarian and colonial regimes and the subsequent necessity of reorganizing public libraries, private bookcases, individual and collective reading practices in antiauthoritarian and anticolonial ways. Taking British India as his case study, in the preface of his book, Elam notes the following: "the establishment of 'good European librar[ies]' across British India became the means for the British to extend their imperial project. British authorship was the mechanism of British colonial authority" (2000: ix).

Born in Amman in 1959 and raised between Kuwait and Lebanon, Alameddine's roots are steeped in the territories of three former British and French colonies; quite surprisingly though, the post-colonial concerns of his works, which are a distinguishing feature of Alameddine's writing, have partly remained overlooked. Today, he is an acclaimed though not universally recognized US novelist, who has recently won the 2022 PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction with his latest novel *The Wrong End of the Telescope* (2021). Since he writes in English—the global language par excellence—but is

of Arab descent, his texts have been alternately included under the broad and non-specific rubric of "Arab Anglophone Fiction" or "postwar Anglophone Lebanese Fiction," as the works of Tasnim Qutait's *Nostalgia in Arab Anglophone Literature* (2021) and Syrine Hout's *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction* (2012) demonstrate. Both his location as a writer and literary endeavors are difficult to pin down. *The Hakawati* (2008), for instance, is an epic narrated through the ancient Arab art of storytelling; *Koolaids* (1998) shatters the novelistic form and recomposes the text as a disordered assemblage of news reports, diary entries, personal memories, short plays, and dreams; *I, the Divine* (2001) is a radically innovative (auto)biography, narrated in the first and third person through aborted first chapters. Because of this formal complexity and genre irresolution, critical work on Alameddine's writing has mainly focused on thematic issues, which are somewhat easier to handle, such as home and diasporic space (Fadda-Conrey 2009), the Lebanese Civil War (Awad 2016), dislocation and hybridity (Garrigós 2009). An exception to this trend is Michelle Hartman's critical essay "Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine*," which offers a reading of his 2001 novel within the wider framework of world literature. As Hartman explains:

> The novel is written largely in a fast-paced American English and deals with themes and issues ranging from the Lebanese civil war to Lebanese/Arabs in the Diaspora to Arab American life to exile more generally. It is a feminist story that both includes important gay and lesbian characters and questions the values and norms of traditional Lebanese society. *I, the Divine* explores elements of Druze history and faith as well as the life of a seemingly rootless, nomadic Lebanese American woman. This broad reach is partly why the novel readily lends itself to interpretation within the framework of "world literature." (2013: 339)

According to Hartman, by containing a multitude of perspectives—feminist, Druze, Lebanese and otherwise—and by moving intermittently between the American and Lebanese context, the local and the global dimension, Alameddine's novel offers readers the possibility to engage, in David Damrosch's words, with "worlds beyond [their] own" (qtd. in Hartman 2013: 342). This is why Hartman considers *I, the Divine* an exemplary, although very peculiar, case of a world literature text. A similar reading,

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I suggest, can also be applied to the novel discussed in this article, which interrogates the role and value of books and literature, and of humanistic knowledge more generally, while also promoting reading practices guided by radically egalitarian, anticolonial, and antiauthoritarian principles.

Inspired by Alameddine's fascinating portrait of Aaliya, the memorable protagonist of *An Unnecessary Woman*, I ask: how does world literature look from the perspective of a reclusive and rather static woman who engages in daring acts of reading, translating, and circulating books, which are carried out secretly and behind closed doors in a society that considers Woman still "a second-class citizen, a second-gender offspring" (Alameddine 2013: 70)? What does Aaliya's furious act of storage, preservation, and linguistic transfer tell us about individual and collective agency and the possibility to reverse the bloody logic of the war, which lays waste on everything and for which nothing counts, not even human life? Finally, how does Aaliya reinvent reading and translating practices so that, in Elam's words, readers may be encouraged to imagine "an egalitarian world, rid of its murderous drive for purity, defined instead by hospitality, heterogeneity, and improvisational assemblage" (4–5)?

Aaliya is a solitary woman, who has lived her entire life in Beirut and has never abandoned the city of her birth. Despite her physical immobility, her inner world as well as her perspective on the planet at large are extremely rich and informative. They are indeed steeped in reading habits that are heterogeneous, contingent, independently established over and over again. I suggest that this reading practice brings the fictional character of Aaliya in close proximity to the 1920s and 1930s anticolonial thinkers celebrated by Elam in his work, such as the little-known S. R. Ranganathan and the more famous Frantz Fanon, as well as with German Jewish philologist Erich Auerbach, who wrote his masterpiece *Mimesis* out of fragments during his exile in Istanbul as a response to the inhumanity he had witnessed in Nazi Germany.

In open contrast to a vision of world literature as a field that either pretends to cover the whole world by reading a strict selection of masterworks in translation or accepts losing single units in order "to understand the system" as a whole (Moretti 2000), in *An Unnec-*

essary Woman, reading is staged and performed as an intimate, critical, and imaginative worldly practice, performed by individuals who voluntarily renounce mastery and dominion and build up a nonviolent world comradeship. This unique vision, which abhors hegemony and promotes a sense of egalitarian and nonviolent comradery that knows no boundaries, is what world literature should promote. In the visionary words of Fanon quoted by Elam: "now comrades […] let us leave this Europe which never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every one of its street corners, at every corner of the world…. come, comrades, the European game is finally over, we must look for something else" (2021: 113).

This "something else," which Fanon urges his comrades to look for, is unfortunately nowhere to be found in recent conceptualizations of world literature, revolving around a "planetary system" made up of direct or indirect loans and debts (Moretti 2000) or a World Republic of Letters that considers Paris its undiscussed gravitational center (Casanova 2008). Partly departing from these mainstream theorizations, Alameddine joins the ranks of postcolonial critics, such as Aamir R. Mufti and Lorna Burns, who have called into question the "'one-world' reality" of world literature (Mufti 2016: 3) as well as its tendency toward abstraction. I argue in this article that in *An Unnecessary Woman*, Alameddine intervenes in key postcolonial and world literature issues, although in an unusually covert and confidential manner, which is in tune with the overall spirit of the novel. He indeed celebrates a staunch yet solitary Lebanese woman, who runs a bookstore as the war rages around her and boldly engages in reading and translating practices, which she conceives as acts of maladroit beginnings rather than as ends in themselves. Aaliya selects her works according to arbitrary decisions, improvisational adjacencies, and awkward connections instead of slavishly following norms of literary greatness, religious veneration or neoliberal market idolatry. Her acts of literary preservation and transmission are carried out secretly for the benefit of the communal and even the planetary; yet, none except Aaliya is aware of that. I contend that by celebrating Aaliya's strenuous attempts to gather and protect the shared texts that make up our communal world library and by praising her radical decision "to remain a reader, and thus perpetually abjure self-mastery"

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(Elam 2021: xii), Alameddine not only thematizes a world ravaged by the logic of colonialism, authoritarianism, patriarchy, fanaticism, and nationalism but also "performatively enact[s]," quoting Pheng Cheah's *What is a World?*, "the possibility of another world" (2008: 38), one that welcomes plurality and encourages the practice of egalitarian, anticolonial, and antiauthoritarian modes of living. I share with Cheah and Alameddine the conviction that the emergence of this other world is what world literature should promote.

BOOKS AS MATERIAL OBJECTS, COMPANIONS-IN-ARMS, AND CULTURAL TREASURES: WORLD LITERATURE AS A TOOL TO REVEAL THE BLIND SPOTS OF THE WORLD

In "Unpacking Sa'dallāh Wannūs' Private Library," Sonja Mejcher-Atassi reflects on the furtive removal and clandestine transfer of Wannūs's private collection from Damascus to Beirut, a relocation that took place covertly after his death and has both "garnered praise and sparked controversy" ("The Daily Star"). On November 1, 2015, 4,500 books belonging to the Syrian playwright and pioneer of modern Arabic theater, who had always regarded his art as "an expression of civil society, but also a necessary condition for its establishment and growth" (Swairjo "Sa'dallah Wannous"), crossed the Syrian-Lebanese border "as refugees in the back of a truck" ("The Daily Star"). Prompted by this rather exceptional circumstance, Mejcher-Atassi asks in her article: "can we compare book collecting, the act of rescuing a book, to the act of rescuing a life? Do books, too, have lives and freedoms that can be put at risk or lost? If yes, then book collecting is not merely a personal affair; it has political and ethical implications" (2019: 2).

In *An Unnecessary Woman*, Rabih Alameddine addresses similar questions but from a different, fictional angle. The protagonist of his novel—Aaliya Saleh—reads, translates, and collects a vast array of books in war-torn Beirut, a place where even human life, let alone books and literature, have been quickly discarded as unnecessary. As a way to rebel against this cruel and heedless logic, at the beginning of each year, on January 1st, Aaliya starts a new project and translates one of her favorite books into Arabic, by comparing a pre-existing English and French translation. Her translations are thus removed from the original of at least

one level and privilege works that are not written in the two quintessentially colonial languages. Her translations, as she herself admits, are translations of a translation; yet, they retain a very specific quality, as these words clearly suggest: "my translations aren't champagne, and they're not milky tea, either. I'm thinking arak" (2013: 105).

Crates and boxes, containing her translated manuscripts and displaying the French and English versions of the original book on each side of the box, fill her apartment. Like Aaliya herself, the books gathered in her apartment have witnessed the brutality of the war and are damaged goods bearing onto their bodies the traces of those tragic occurrences. As she explains: "there's another relic on the desk, though not as ancient, a souvenir from the war years in Beirut: a copy of Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, scorched in the lower right corner, but just the back cover and the preceding twenty-two pages. The front isn't damaged. I was reading the book by candlelight while people killed each other outside the window" (26).

Conceived as an imaginary travelogue in which the Venetian traveler and explorer Marco Polo describes to the Mongolian general and statesman Kublai Khan the 55 odd-cities he has encountered on his way to China, Calvino's *Invisible Cities* is a collection that defies standard categorizations (is it a travelogue?; a work of the imagination?; a divertissement?), since it contains a detailed description of fantastic cities meant to delight the isolated Kublai Khan and make him evade from his condition of confinement. For Aaliya too, Calvino's book represents a form of escape, while she is segregated in her house and witnessing the tragic destruction of her beloved city.

Besides offering companionship and evasion in troubled times, books represent for Aaliya functional objects with a practical value. Accordingly, from the main characters of Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (1993), Aaliya learns how to survive in an inhospitable environment, while from the sea stories of Joseph Conrad and *The Ashley Book of Knots* (1944), she learns how to make sailor knots to use in dire situations.

Far from being just digital data that can be counted, graphed, and mapped (Moretti 2005) or disposable goods ready for con-

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sumption, books for Aaliya are tangible, material objects invested with affects and delivering both knowledge and practical abilities. Thanks to her passion for books, Aaliya is well-versed rather than oblivious to anything occurring outside her forcibly limited world. For example, by reading Alberto Moravia's *The Conformist* (1951), which portrays the gradual and inexorable moral downfall of the Fascist bureaucrat Marcello Clerici, Aaliya partly understands Ahmed's unexpected and sudden metamorphosis from a young Palestinian refugee with a passion for books into a merciless militia man. His life story elucidates with extreme clarity how the logic of superiority, domination, machismo, and conformism typical of fascism can corrupt, pervert, and destroy an individual plagued by material needs and the desire to be like everyone else.

The promotion of an alternative reading practice, which reveals the blind spots of authoritarian and imperial regimes, abandons the security and comfort of the familiar, wanders off and goes astray, is what world literature should strengthen together with forms of kinship that are not narrowly conceived but cosmopolitan in spirit. This idea is confirmed by Cheah who writes: "this sense of the infinite opening onto a world is the unique contribution of world literature as cosmopolitanism. It tells us that we can belong in many ways, and that quivering beneath the surface of the existing world are other worlds to come" (2008: 38). To the vibrations of these other worlds, detected by Cheah and enacted by Alameddine, we will now turn.

OPPOSING RELIGIOUS VENERATION AND NEOLIBERAL MARKET IDOLATRY: WORLD LITERATURE AGAINST CULT CLASSICS AND POP IDOLS

Through the figure of Aalilya, Alameddine critically interrogates the logic of authority and the blind reverence that regulate the classical Arabic literary tradition with its cult of the ancestors and the veneration of foundational texts such as the holy Qur'an. On the one hand, Alameddine celebrates a mythic past in which people showed strong appreciation, great care, and deep respect for the written word, as suggested by the mythical story of the seven mu'allaqat, the Suspended Odes of pre-Islamic time that, according to the tradition, "were once written in gold on Coptic linen and hung on the drapes of the Kaaba in the sixth

century" (2013: 84). On the other, however, he opposes dogmatic conceptualizations of literary greatness, particularly the construction of religious texts as bearers of absolute authority and truth and of canonical works as unattainable and inimitable masterpieces. As Aaliya painfully recalls:

> Yet only in Arabic class were we constantly told that we could not master this most difficult of language, that no matter how much we studied and practiced, we could not possibly hope to write as well as al-Mutanabbi or, heaven forbid, the apex of the language, the Quran itself. Teachers indoctrinated students, just as they had been indoctrinated when younger. None of us can rise above being a failure as an Arab, our original sin. (7–8)

Aaliya contests here acts of indoctrination, especially those that inculcate in the younger generations the belief that Arabic is an essentially impervious language, therefore crippling from the start any promising élan aimed at overcoming the tradition, innovating the language, and experimenting with theme and form.[1]

Besides contesting the obligation contracted by young Arab readers vis-à-vis a strict selection of 'great' books, which literary history has in part contributed to mummify, Aaliya looks with contempt also at transitory works that blindly follow the neoliberal logic of the market, are of little substance, and promote a narcissistic and self-absorbed viewpoint. As she sarcastically observes:

> Books in and of themselves are rarely boring, except for memoirs of American presidents (No, No, Nixon)—well, memoirs of Americans in general. It's the "I live in the richest country in the world yet pity me because I grew up with flat feet and a malodorous vagina but I triumph in the end" syndrome. Tfeh!
>
> Books into boxes—boxes of paper, loose translated sheets. That's my life. (4)

It is precisely to oppose the logic of commercial publishing, which flattens meaningful differences, endorses standardization, and fol-

1. On the humble yet powerful ability of classical Arabic writers such as al-Ma'arrī and Abu Nuwas to exceed their predecessors, see Abdelfattah Kilito's lecture "Why Read Arabic Classics?" As Kilito has shown, these authors are now considered to be canonical yet their contemporaries judged them incapable of measuring up to their literary predecessors.

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lows the volatile tastes of the market, that Aaliya voluntarily produces through her translations a work that is not palatable, non-marketable, non-competitive; hers is a derivative work, a translation of a translation done in a minor language. Inspired by Aaliya's resistant translating practice, which renounces any authorial/authority claim and is carried out in the intimacy of her home, I invite world literature scholars and teachers to welcome in their syllabi public icons together with less-known authors, so-called authorities in the field together with less luminous stars. Most important, besides spreading an awareness of global circulation and transnational reception, practitioners of world literature should critically interrogate the hindrances, blockades, and changing fates that literary works and their authors have encountered along the way, due to the repressive force of sexism, racism, neoliberalism, religious fanaticism, and authoritarianism.

If an oppressive power determines what counts, what is valuable, and worth preserving, then Aaliya prefers to define herself as *de trop*, to be identified with the unnecessary woman of the title. The episode narrating how the Jewish artist and intellectual Bruno Schulz was first exploited and later killed by Gestapo officers is indicative of the ways in which authoritarian regimes have first made use of and later carelessly discarded and liquidated whom they had previously judged necessary:

> In 1941 Drohobycz fell to the Germans […].
>
> The Gestapo officer in charge of the Jewish labor force, Felix Landau, decided that Bruno was no ordinary Jew, but a necessary one.
>
> Think of the term for a moment.
>
> What is a *necessary* human? What saved Bruno's life, or, I should say, what delayed his death, was that Landau fancied himself a lover of art. He forced the necessary Jew to paint murals for his son's bedroom depicting scenes from beloved fairy tales. Landau kept Schulz alive until one day in November 1942, when Karl Günther, a rival Gestapo officer, killed Schulz to get back at Landau, who'd killed a dentist Günther favored—a necessary dentist, one presumes.
>
> Günther said to Landau, "You killed my Jew—I killed yours." (182–3)

Schulz, who was in the end considered an unnecessary human being according to the opportunistic and egotistic logic of the Gestapo officers, is one of the first writers that Aaliya convokes in her apartment together with other poets, writers, and philosophers

but also ordinary men and women who have cultivated beauty in dark times and a confident, expansive outlook. Among these, Aaliya mentions the following: "Tolstoy, Gogol, and Hamsun; Calvino, Borges, Schulz, Nádas, Nooteboom; Kiš, Karasu, and Kafka; books of memory, disquiet, but not of laughter and forgetting" (63). The ones favored by Aaliya are historically displaced literary figures, men and women who have nowhere to go; they are wanderers, outcasts, writers who have renounced exclusive affiliation to one single nation or group and have preferred instead to concern themselves with the human condition at large without forgetting, however, the precise historical circumstances and the local contingencies that impact on each single life. This is a great lesson also for practitioners of world literature, whose ambitious project of covering the whole world is often done at the expense of what Vilashini Cooppan has called "a reading of literature that is temporally deep, historically informed, textually sensitive, and culturally nontotalizing" (2009: 37). A reading, as Cooppan makes patently clear, that "stages both an ethical obligation to imagine the other as other and a historical obligation to locate the other in space-times not our own" (39). In *An Unnecessary Woman*, Alameddine trains readers to imagine a life different from their own, one that is located in a space and time far from the familiar. I believe that this is also the kind of practical training that world literature should encourage.

HIGH-LEVEL ERUDITION AND EMBODIED ART OF LIVING: WORLD LITERATURE AS *ADAB*

Aaliya does not only dive deep into the works of liminal authors such as Kafka and Karasu, who belong to a space and time not her own, but also reads widely and unsystematically. As she selects her books, she refuses to follow what Elleke Boehmer has called "the oppressive linearity and rationality implied by colonial European historiography" (2010: 202), with its strict categories of genre and form and its chronological order, as well as what Wai Chee Dimock has termed the "automatic equation between the literary and the territorial" (Dimock 2001: 175). It follows that ancient Roman poets Virgil and Ovid are mentioned along Proust and Nabokov; contemporary novelists, such as Lampe-

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dusa, Murakami, Molina, and Sebald, share the same space with premodern Berber poet Ahmad al-Tifashi (1184–1253), who composed a twelve-chapter anthology of Arabic poetry interspersed with jokes about erotic and sexual practices (both heterosexual and homoerotic), and who achieved world fame with a bizarre and for today's standards rather unclassifiable genre, the lapidary *Book of the Flowers of Thought on Precious Stones* (1242).[2] I see Aaliya's rather mismatched and anomalous connections as an encouragement to world literature scholars and teachers to daringly jumble together in their syllabi texts that go over the top, such as a lapidary, a poem with erotic jokes, and a novel that overturns the conventions of fiction. In Aaliya's unstable and unpredictable congregation, comrades Robert Bolaño and Danilo Kiš rub shoulders with medieval scholar Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, a prolific writer in theology, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics, whose major scientific findings in astronomy would have an enormous influence upon early modern European astronomers such as Copernicus.[3] Finally, in mentioning al-Tūsī's exceptionally wide erudition, Alameddine indirectly reinvigorates the Abbasid concept of *adab* as a historically broad and inclusive category denoting (humanistic) knowledge with all its nuances, ranging from the social aspect of "good conduct," "civility," and "courtesy" to the quality of "being erudite" not only in matters of literary and scientific knowledge but also in the concrete, embodied, and down-to-earth art of living. By underlining the fact that books are not detached from but rather deeply enmeshed with historical and socio-political occurrences as well as with the quotidian practice of sustaining oneself, Alameddine disrupts the artificial division between "high art" and engaged literature, which has produced an antagonism and hierarchy between the two. Among others, Burns has criticized Pascale Casanova's division staged in *The World Republic of Letters* between "a privileged, pure literary realm detached from the infringements of political, social and historical forces, on the one hand, and on the other, an overdetermined, unimaginative literature which, like all postcolonial literatures, by Casanova's account, maintains too close a relationship to its sociopolitical

2. See more on this author: Levey (1973).
3. For more information on Nasir al-Dīn al-Tūsī, see *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

context" (2019: 77). *An Unnecessary Woman* contests this artificial and unproductive schism by celebrating a widely-read yet down-to-earth woman who responds to the catastrophes of her own time. She engages in resistant reading and translating practices and congregates in her apartment a new (literary) community of planetary size that defies the divisions, hatred, and violence propagated by colonial, patriarchal, and authoritarian powers.

AGAINST ENTRENCHED IDENTITIES AND MYTHS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY: CONVENING A COMRADESHIP OF PLANETARY SIZE

Throughout the novel, Aaliya brings back to life and gathers in her apartment an eclectic group of writers, such as Al-Mutanabbi, Rilke, Tacitus, Márquez, Balzac, Munro, Faulkner, Yourcenar, Farah, Ondaatje, Malouf, Borowski, Levi, Milton, and Kassir, but also a crowd of ordinary men and women who have rose up against oppressive powers. Although today most of the writers mentioned by Aaliya are recognized as authoritative literary figures within their own national literature, during their lifetime these same writers have been harshly criticized if not socially ostracized by their communities because of their nonconformist and anti-parochial views. As Aaliya explains: "I like men and women who don't fit well in the dominant culture, or, as Alvaro de Campos calls them, strangers in this place as in every other, accidental in life as in the soul. I like outsiders, phantoms wandering the cobwebbed halls of the doomed castle where life must be lived" (2013: 195).

The intellectuals and ordinary people who secretly gather in Aaliya's house can hardly be considered as representatives of a single nation; even less, they can be regarded as repositories of patriotic or sectarian memory and knowledge. Precisely because they have held themselves apart from the majority and have occupied the margins of the nation, these men and women have seen things differently and more clearly than the rest of society, an ability that has helped them forge an alternative world (at least in their works) freed from the yoke of religious dogma, parochialism, fanaticism, and xenophobia. The story of Spinoza is emblematic in this sense:

> The philosopher I feel the most kinship with is Spinoza; I identify with his story and life. The Jewish elders of Amsterdam issued a cherem—a fatwa, for you non-Hebrew speakers—against my kinsman when

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> he was a mere twenty-three. He was excommunicated for his heresies. He didn't fight it, didn't rebel. He didn't even whine. He gave up his family inheritance and became a private scholar, a philosopher at home.
>
> In paintings and drawings he is portrayed with big brown eyes (and a big Semitic nose like mine, of course), inquiring eyes that penetrate the darkness surrounding us, and the one within us, by looking unblinkingly—intense, shining eyes that disperse mists and miasmas.
>
> He worked as a lens grinder until the day he died at forty-four, of a disease of the lungs, probably silicosis, exacerbated by the glass dust he inhaled while plying his trade.
>
> He died early trying to help people see.
>
> [...]
>
> Now, if he hadn't written *Ethics*—if he hadn't developed the concepts of religious freedom, freedom of the press, democratic republicanism, and a secular morality detached from theology—I wouldn't claim him. The fact that he wrote that masterwork is what makes him a genius. (211)

Spinoza appears to occupy here a marginal position within the nation and religious group to which he is expected to naturally belong; it is precisely his nonconformism and detachment that guarantees him the intellectual freedom that Aaliya so much admires in him. In a similar way, Aaliya herself (whose Arabic name means "the elevated") rises high above the clamor made by warlords and contenders, who spread a divisive and polarized vision of the world relying on the construction of barbaric enemies, entrenched identities, and myths of self-sufficiency. Clearly opposing this narrow-minded and deleterious ideology, Aaliya shows a genuine curiosity towards others, is extremely open, and cultivates an interest towards anything occurring outside her comfort zone. A similar desire to wander off the beaten track and build up an innovative world comradeship is what world literature should promote, as I will attempt to demonstrate in the last section.

BETWEEN ELEGY AND ANTICIPATION: A RUINOUS WORLD REPLACED BY "THE TIME AND IMAGE OF ANOTHER WORLD"

The crisis that closes the book—the flood that from the neighbor's bedroom upstairs menaces to destroy Aaliya's life work—is indicative of the necessity for Alameddine to overcome one's insularity and to spread awareness on the fragility of intimate archives (particularly those of women, often viewed as private and therefore

as irrelevant)[4] as well as of the cultural heritage at large. This is how Aaliya's neighbors, so far mentioned in the text as "the three witches," hastily inform the protagonist of the incumbent threat posed by the water pipe leak:

> Haphazardly soggy, the witches surround me, orbit me like planets on Dexedrine, talking, talking, talking. A water pipe—maid's bathroom upstairs in Joumana's apartment—flood—no danger anymore—plumber's been called—they hope I don't have anything valuable stored in my maid's room.
>
> Anything valuable? Valuable? My crates, my crates and crates, my life—they know nothing of that. (264)

The new calamity, causing sudden damage and distress, paradoxically offers Aaliya the opportunity to see her neighbors differently, not as distant and hostile enemies but as close and sympathetic comrades, and for them to see her for the first time as a valuable person and an ally. Most important, from now on, Aaliya's apartment stops being a place of confinement and isolation and becomes instead a social space within which the four women engage in a collective act of rescue. This is how Aaliya describes the ways in which the four women—now a collective engaged in a quiet yet impressive struggle against time—use what is at hand to save the manuscripts stored away in the maid's room: "we work all morning. I run the iron in one corner of my reading room. Fadia and Marie-Thérèse blow-dry. The three of us form a triangle, or three points on a circle, within which Joumana moves. She performs triage: she organizes the piles, decides what needs resuscitation first, which page for ironing and which for hot air" (286). The realization that the shared works of literature they had personally read and cherished may disappear does not leave this group of women indifferent and pushes them into direct action. Their tacit recognition of those books as valuable and treasured goods fosters their immediate engagement in what they perceive as a struggle against time.

Aaliya and her neighbors' frenetic attempts to save her books and the memory they embody acquire even more significance

4. On this issue, see among others Maryanne Dever et al., *The Intimate Archive: Journeys Through Private Papers*.

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given the context in which this act of rescue is being carried out. The inhabitants of Beirut have indeed not only witnessed a bloody civil war, which lasted fifteen years and provoked innumerable material destructions and human losses, but have also been impotent bystanders of the demolition of the city's prewar architectural heritage, particularly of its lively and cosmopolitan city center—al-Burj—during the state-sponsored, amnesiac plan of post-war reconstruction carried out by the joint-stock company Solidère.[5]

In open contrast to the corporate power of neoliberalism, which views ancient buildings as not worth preserving and orders their demolition to make room for the new, Aaliya stays put, remains firm in her beliefs, strong and principled, her integrity untouched by the corruption of power and the lure of easy money. Echoing Czeslaw Milosz's important endeavor, Alameddine thus indirectly deals in his novel with what Milosz considered the central issue of our time: "the impact of history upon moral being, the search for ways to survive spiritual ruin in a ruined world" (Terrence Des Pres, *The Nation*). This one, it appears to me, is among the most urgent tasks that scholars, teachers, and students of world literature should engage in: to spotlight the ruins produced by this world regulated by the logic of profit, exceptionalism, and dominance, and imagine a valid though unguaranteed alternative. In Cheah's own words: "to contest this world by offering the image and timing of another world" (2008: 36).

The description of the crumbling Ottoman house in the closing pages of the book, which refuses to collapse and stubbornly reminds Beirutis as well as foreign visitors of the silenced atrocities of the war, points to this kind of moral obligation, one that tenaciously refuses to condone violence and keeps the memory of the past alive as a form of admonition and as a springboard to envision more sustainable and less violent futures:

5. On the highly contested reconstruction plan of the downtown in Beirut, see Saree Makdisi, "Laying Claim to Beirut;" Samir Khalaf, *Heart of Beirut*; Jens-Peter Hanssen and Daniel Genberg, "Beirut in Memoriam;" Paola Ardizzola and Roula El-Khoury, "From the Port City of Beirut to Beirut Central District: Narratives of Destruction and Re-Construction."

> Amid the proliferation of unsightly buildings, this crumbling Ottoman house with its triple arcade and red tile roof stands out as starkly as a woman in parliament. […]
>
> Pockmarked and perforated, disemboweled, roofless and doorless, it allows entry to all manner of trash, yet it appears majestic, to my eyes at least. Encroached upon by bigger, taller, mightier armies, it is poor, infirm, weak, and despised, but unlike Lear, it remains defiant, remains regal, probably till the end. It stands alone. (238)

I see world literature as promoting this kind of project, one that that defies the gradual erosion and supposedly final collapse of the humanities, by engaging in a task of historical excavation, rigorous critique, and fierce imagination. Anyone involved in this task should not be afraid of but consciously delve into what Elam has called "disorderly histories, promiscuous modes of thought, impossible transformations, and improvisational adjacencies" (2021: 8), even if that means taking into account the risk of precariously standing alone, in ways similar to the crumbling Ottoman house.

WORLD LITERATURE IN A CATASTROPHIC TIME: "BUILDING UP WORLD-FELLOWSHIP" AND REMAINING A "PERPETUAL NOVICE"

In *An Unnecessary Woman*, Alameddine offers readers the opportunity to regard closely what we lose—in terms of difference and richness but also of shared patrimony and inheritance—when books (and human beings) are easily dismissed as unnecessary.[6] Alameddine refuses to consider Aaliya's precarious condition as unique and exceptional, widening instead the sphere of trauma and catastrophe across geographical borders and historical periods, thus showing that what may appear as specific local conditions—vulnerability and loss confined to a turbulent buffer zone such as that of Lebanon—are in fact common conditions across the globe and unfortunately increasingly widespread.

The novel is a fine and nuanced rendering of one woman's life, as she attempts at everyday activities under siege. Hence, for Aaliya walking down the street, for instance, constitutes significant action; her quiet and unassuming daily struggles to keep

6. On the material destruction of libraries around the world in times of war, see James Raven, *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections Since Antiquity*.

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a literary, humanistic culture alive in such a barbaric time represent defiant counteracts to contrast a vision of the world that rests on hate, domination, and xenophobia.

The novel is disseminated with occasional encounters that become a binding and whose eventual break is caused by the sudden and traumatic irruption of violence in the characters' daily life. I suggest that by privileging unorthodox forms of alignment, such as Aaliya's friendship with the charming Hannah, Alameddine affirms the value of affiliative rather than filiative forms of attachment, thus voluntarily undermining the family, the clan, one's ethnic group, religious sect, or nation. I believe that this emphasis on innovative connections and affiliations represents one of the most valuable contributions that world literature could make. To quote Ngũgĩ wa Thiong' o: "to seek connections in phenomena even in the seemingly unconnected" (2012: 20).

Aaliya, as Alameddine makes patently clear, has not reached amiability with her maturity; she stubbornly continues to refuse to ingratiate herself with official authorities or individuals in power. In doing so, she joins the group of writers she has silently and surreptitiously congregated in the rooms of her apartment. By narrating the exceptional story of this apparently "unnecessary woman" then, Alameddine makes us become aware of the value of an inwardly focused life, who voluntarily chooses detachment rather than complicity with power yet remains an active participant and a crucial witness of the tragic historical occurrences of her time. His original novel reads like an invitation to cultivate beauty through disobedient acts of reading, translating, disseminating, and preserving books, which emerge here not as trivialities but as the only possible antidotes against cyclically resurgent social ills, such as hatred, religious extremism, and bloody wars. Instead of destroying communities as weapons do, shared books and communal reading practices, which are guided by antiauthoritarian and anticolonial principles, contribute to the establishment of a collectivity of planetary size constantly in the making. In Elam's words: "[Anticolonial reading] represents an anticolonial politics that does not seek dominance and mastery but rather attempts to remain perpetual novice, in the service of a world after colonial rule" (2021: xiv).

A "perpetual novice" himself, Alameddine does not represent Aaliya as a snobbish old lady living in an ivory tower, but rather as a neophyte; he further locates her in a very tragic historical moment and in a very hazardous geographical location, one of the most difficult to inhabit. The writer moves smoothly from a mundane world described in its material, and often brute, reality to a poetic, almost etheric world made of love for literature, fading memories, fragile affective attachments, and elective affinities that are by their very nature cosmopolitan. Once again then, not an abstracted and privileged world of belles lettres contrasted to a painful reality plagued by socio-political constraints and historical disasters but an aesthetic realm that is, quoting a famous passage by another lifelong amateur, "always enmeshed in circumstances, time, place, and society—in short [it is] in the world and hence worldly" (Said, 1983: 35).

By and large, the novel reads like an elegant and erudite investigation of the relationship between life and literature, historical occurrences and fictional reconstruction, and of the ways in which books help endure hardships and illuminate, albeit intermittently, the absurdity of life. Indeed, as Umberto Eco writes: "This is the consoling function of narrative—the reason people tell stories, and have told stories from the beginning of time: [...] to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience" (qtd. in Bondanella 1997: 165). It is important to note, however, that literature has not only a consoling function in Alameddine's novel but is also the medium through which Aaliya abandons her isolation. As the narration proceeds, readers see Aliya gradually knitting composite, both (literary) and real, connections that enable her to be simultaneously a passionate citizen of Beirut but also of the world at large; they magically transform her from a reclusive woman into a cosmopolitan globetrotter, one who actively "build[s] up world-fellowship" (Elam 2021: 37).

The spontaneous tone of the narration should not overshadow Alameddine's attentive craft and complex formal choices. In fact, the flavor of the oral narrative, the surprising turns and nuances of the spoken voice destabilize the rigid dichotomy separating orature from literature, orality from writing, which is yet another residue of colonialism, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o reminds us laconically:

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"writing and orality were natural allies, not antagonists; so orature and literature" (2012: 72). The intricacy of orality and writing in Alameddine's novel has not only the merit of breaking up yet another colonial dichotomy and its ensuing hierarchy but also of creating a sense of participatory immediacy that directly implicates the readers, who cannot consider themselves untouched by the catastrophes they hear, see, and ultimately witness thanks to Aaliya's confidences. Finally, the continuous flashbacks provoke an erosion of the chronological order and together with it a disruption of the narrative order, aesthetic devices that disrupt the tyrannical linearity of colonial historiography, while also pointing to a catastrophic time. Indeed, as Edward Said writes with reference to Ludwig van Beethoven's late compositions, which are characterized by a constitutive fragmentation that finds no resolution, these tragic musical pieces are "about 'lost totality,' and are therefore catastrophic" (2006: 12–13). Distrustful of any form of totality, Alameddine is intransigent when it comes to impose coherence and wholeness to its narrative design. Aaliya too appears in this book as a figure of lateness itself, a "scandalous, even catastrophic commentator on the present" (Said, 2006: 14). From her marginal position, Aaliya comments with shocking clarity on the disastrous effects of the Lebanese Civil War and on the ways in which colonial hegemony and divisions, sectarian entrenchment and polarization, neoliberal greed and corruption provoke irremediable damage. Her mocking spirit, however, undoes the spectacle of violence and breaks its sensationalistic effects through an emphasis on memory, mourning, and loss.

The novel closes with yet another moment of crisis. The unfavorable circumstances, the disaster that risks ruining and destroying Aaliya life's work may have, however, a liberatory potential. The novel situation despite its catastrophic weight seems in fact to harbor latent promise. It offers Aaliya the possibility, on the one hand, to connect with her neighbors, gain visibility, and be recognized for her worth but also to join a real rather than imagined comradeship and get her hands dirty, as the following poetic line suggests: "Aaliya, the above, the separate, can step in the mud" (2013: 290). Most important, this new catastrophe represents for her a new beginning, a favorable circumstance to leave behind old habits

and self-imposed, imprisoning rules as well as to revitalize her status as a "perpetual novice" (Elam 2021: xiv). As she explains: "this destruction is an opportunity to break free from the rules I've set for translating, or from some of them, at least. Like a teenager, I too can rebel. Maybe I can translate a book written in English for a change" (Alameddine 2013: 289).

If beginning and beginning-anew, as Said teaches us, is "a consciously intentional, productive activity, […] an activity whose circumstances include a sense of loss" (1983: 372), then we may indeed consider the catastrophic event that knocks at Aaliya's door as a new beginning and an opportunity for her to remain what she always wanted to be: a lifelong apprentice. We may, however, hesitate a moment and worryingly ask: will Aaliya's precious work survive this new calamity? Will she regain her regal composure and find the force to collect once again the dispersed fragments of her life and the soaked pages of her cosmopolitan bookcase? Alameddine does not offer a final, reassuring answer to these questions; he withholds, in other words, a happy ending. He avoids an easy resolution, handing over the problem and its ensuing responsibility to the reader. An end, as his novel suggests, may sometimes represent a new beginning and therefore an opportunity to staunchly cultivate one's inexpertness and non-mastery; other times, however, as Judith Halberstam notes, "an end is not a new beginning: an end is an end is an end" (2011: 118).

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FROM KNIGHT ERRANT TO EXPLORING PIONEER

The Influence of Medieval Romances on the Depiction of Human and Non-Human Others in John Filson's "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon"

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INTRODUCTION

Entering the age known as the Anthropocene, humankind has been progressively gaining awareness of the impact that its constant striving for progress and the exponential growth of its ability to transform the world around it have on the environment in which it lives. Climate changes are a direct consequence of invasive human actions such as deforestation, the burning of fossil fuels, industrial activities, intensive agriculture, and livestock farming. If on the one hand, humans have always attempted to impose themselves over nature, at the same time they not only crave a connection with it, but are, in fact, a part of it. This should lead to a reconsideration of human beings' place in the world, from ruling planetary species to only one among many, tied together in complex and delicate ecosystems. This awareness should also entail a further reflection on human nature in order to understand the mechanisms behind the relationship between people and nature. Myths from time immemorial have represented the way humans consider themselves and the world around them, have influenced the ideology of nations, and have reflected and affected people's system of beliefs and actions. As Richard Slotkin argues, "a people unaware of its myths is likely to continue living by them, though the world around that people may change and demand changes in their psychology, their world view, their ethics, their institutions" (1973: 4–5). It is thus crucial to analyze more in depth the patterns that can be traced in myths and literary

works as "[w]hat people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them" (White 1967: 1205). Only by becoming aware of the narrative filters through which they tell their own story and history can humans gain a better understanding of their actions and hope to change their course in a way that is more respectful to the environment surrounding them.

In this light, this article aims to analyze, through a comparative approach, a narrative that lies at the foundation of American mythogenesis, John Filson's "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon" (1784), in close relation to major works of medieval chivalric romances from an ecocritical perspective. Through this analysis, the article seeks to explore the way in which medieval patterns have been employed in the American mythopoeic process, especially concerning the myths of the frontier and the wilderness, which have had a lasting impact on national ideological discourses. In this context, medievalism has been often employed to support and justify an anthropocentric and expansionist agenda with grievous consequences on the way in which Americans engage with the land, constantly romanticized while being conquered. At the same time, this article will also pay attention to how this tendency is also accompanied by an androcentric and ethnocentric rhetoric, which has contributed to the marginalization from dominant national discourses of significant sections of the population due to their race and/or gender. By investigating how narratives develop, evolve, and circulate across time and space, it will be possible to reveal the harmful logic they carry, and stress the importance of shifting the narrative toward more sustainable intra- and inter-species relations.

My approach, although focusing on notions of the wilderness in early American literature, distances itself from first wave ecocritical approaches that left unquestioned the nature/culture divide, celebrating the idea of pristine, uninhabited wilderness. Rather, the stance of this article is alligned with second wave critiques of these concepts, in tune with figures such as Latour (1993), Chakrabarty (2009) and Haraway (2003) who argue for blurring the demarcation between nature and culture. At the same time, this article also acknowledges the need for an intersectional

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approach, neglected by early ecocriticism, that takes into consideration not only the otherization of nature, but also that based on gender and race. Indeed, attitudes toward the nonhuman can reflect and bear an impact on those toward other humans. While frontier narratives have been extensively commented upon in terms of the harmful logic they put forward (Slotkin 1976; Smith 1978; Kolodny 1984; White 1991; Limelick 2000; Hallock 2003; Ray 2013), a recent shift in environmental humanities toward an attention placed on temporality and scale (Nixon 2011; Morton 2013; Clark 2019) suggests the relevance of looking further at the roots of mankind's attitudes toward nature: "we need this longer view [...] not only to understand our species but more firmly to secure its future" (Wilson 1996: x). In this sense, analyising a frontier narrative by tracing within it influences deriving from previous times, specifically medieval, emphasizes the endurance of certain narratives, and through them, the mindsets that have led to the current climate crisis.

ATTITUDES TOWARD NATURE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE AND EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY

Western thought has always been characterized by an ambivalent attitude toward the natural world, torn between a desire for conquest and a need for a harmonious connection with nature. Both perspectives are represented in literary works, even though the former outlook appears to prevail in literary narratives and in dominant national discourses. Lynn White, Jr. argues that a changed relationship between humans and nature began toward the end of the seventh century as "[m]an's relation to the soil was profoundly changed. Formerly man had been part of nature; now he was the exploiter of nature" (1967: 1204) due to agricultural developments. He further links the separation between humans and nature with Christianity, seen as an anthropocentric religion that "not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends" (1205). He argues that thirteenth century natural theology ceased to focus on the decoding of the physical symbols of God's communication. Instead, it started to interpret God's mind by discovering how creation functions, thus stimulating the scientific

and technological advance that eventually led to the current climate crisis. While his theory has received various critiques, his "comments about the Judeo-Christian tradition are based upon late-classical and medieval interpretations of scripture" (George 2010: 33). Indeed, Mark Muldoon shows that Thomas Aquinas's system of thought, for instance, revolved around an anthropocentric view, where "[n]ature is seen more as an object for human use which satisfies biological needs and serves spiritual knowledge rather than a subject of spiritual importance in its own right" (2003: 86).

A utilitarian attitude towards nature can be actually found much earlier, for instance in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where the narrative dramatizes the nature/culture divide. Nonetheless, it is in the Middle Ages that great changes in perception appear to have taken place, sedimented, and laid the foundations that have influenced later historical periods. According to David Herlihy, medieval society's position toward nature between the sixth and tenth century was mainly 'adversarial,' characterized by a "fear or awe of nature as the abode of mysterious monsters, spirits and powers inimical to men" (1980: 101). In this context, "religious traditions of Judeo-Christianity reinforced this fear of the wilderness […] presented as the opposite of Paradise" (108). Then, in the 'collaborative' stage between early eleventh century and early fourteenth century, society experienced a sustained growth, during which people moved in surrounding forests and wastelands, enlarged the cultivated areas, and increased their confidence in the ability to use natural resources. It is in this period that "[t]he truly aggressive ethic toward the environment, which has remained for the better or worse part of the Western culture" (116) appears to have begun. At the same time, there existed alternative views that valued nature for its ability to channel the spiritual and supernatural realms, mainly shared by monks retreating in forests to find spiritual renewal. The Middle Ages thus presented an ambivalent attitude towards nature. While the dominant position was mainly one that perceived the natural world as a threat or as a material resource, this was counterbalanced by a need to feel a connection with nature.

This ambivalent perception is one that persisted in subsequent periods of history, recurring continually, and that can also be seen

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in the Puritans' view of nature after arriving on the New World's shores. Indeed, the attitude of the New England settlers towards the American wilderness was one of fear mingled with hope. On the one hand, their religious beliefs led them to see nature as a threat that could lead the community's members to indulge in earthly impulses and to recede into a savage state. Their depiction of a "hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men" (Bradford, 1898: 167) reflected their sense of isolation and the material hardship of settling in a new foreign land. At the same time, the land was also seen with eyes full of hope and promise for the future. The wilderness was perceived as a temporary condition "thro' which we are passing to the Promised Land" (Mather 1998: 22), a trial to endure in order to finally build the 'city upon the hill.' Yet, as their experience progressed, the settlers' necessity to adapt and expand in the new territory grew. As a consequence, while still influenced by Puritan and European culture, the pioneers who engaged in the relentless exploration of the frontier also adapted their narratives to new contexts.

Both in the Middle Ages and in early American history, the ambivalent relationship between humans and nature was explored in literary texts. Among the archetypal places that medieval literature has developed and established, the forest—while not absent from classical literature—became in chivalric romances a central, symbolic place, one that left an indelible stamp on Western imagination (Boitani 2007: 63). While recurring as a literary *topos* of great symbolic value, in reality medieval forests were not a pristine wilderness. In fact, many forests had already come under the jurisdiction of law and were mainly used as royal preserves. Forests were also an economic resource, a place for hunting, collecting wood and for pasture. Finally, they were a space where outsiders—outlaws, hermits, fugitives, and madmen—found refuge from the laws of society. Despite this reality, within chivalric romances "the wilderness was mostly a literary landscape, an environmental imaginary" (Bolt 2015: 21). The forest was thus a space of distinct otherness in relation to the civic world, one of adventure, spiritual growth, madness, temptation, enchantment. Indeed, medieval romances "portrayed the forest in both positive and negative lights, presenting either thrilling

opportunities for adventure and redemption or else posing sinister threats of violence and madness" (Aberth 2013: 128). If on the one hand it is a perilous place filled with adversaries both human and nonhuman to defeat, where knights venture to test their honor and masculinity, the forest is also a place of refuge, where one can escape from a society that contrasts with one's own individual will, as in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, or that is corrupted, as in Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*.

However, gradually, a different kind of wilderness starts to dominate the Western imagination, that of the New World (Boitani 2007: 68). Yet, the knight has never stopped setting forth into the wilderness. However changed his appearance and the context surrounding him, the pattern established in chivalric romances can still be found in the stories of the American pioneers. The same ambivalence towards nature is presented in narratives of the frontier, which has been typically seen as the "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Turner 1894: 200). If the wilderness represented a material obstacle for the frontiersmen, who had to face hardship and perilous situations, it also embodied a promise of freedom, renewal, and the pathway toward progress. Even though the American wilderness appears as highly different from medieval forests, the trajectory of the knights to and from it are closely paralleled in frontier narratives. Here, the pioneers are presented as heroes who set forth into the wilderness, defeating wild animals and indigenous people to pave the way of civilization in the name of Providence. Yet, there also existed another counter-current centering around primitivism and the cult of the wilderness. While many were affected by it,

> [s]uch a mood of refined hostility to progress [...] could hardly strike very deep in a society committed to an expansive manifest destiny. A romantic love of the vanishing wild West could be no more than a self-indulgent affectation beside the triumphant official cult of progress [...] For such people—and they were the vast majority—the western hunter and guide was praiseworthy [...] because he blazed trails that hard-working farmers could follow. (Smith 1978: 52–3)

While the similarities between chivalric romances and frontier narratives may be seen as coincidental, specific parallelisms between them would lead to believe that their affinity goes

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beyond the sharing of universal archetypal patterns. Indeed, "[w]hen America became conscious of herself, she strove to acquire the cultural inheritance of Europe [...] The American conquest of the Middle Ages has something [...] of that deep sentimental urge which we might expect in a man who should set out to find his lost mother" (Curtius 1973: 587). Thus, while drawing from autochthonous sources, the early American writers also attempted to appropriate European literature, transforming it, and making it their own. As Slotkin suggests, "the evolution of American myth was a synthetic process of reconciling romantic-conventional myths of Europe to the American experience" (1973: 17). The pattern of medieval romances, in particular, not only reflected the ambivalence felt toward the American land, but also offered a historical and mythical analogue to describe the experience of the settlers in familiar terms. It created a direct line of continuity with heroic enterprises and allowed for the creation of rhetoric of renewal and regeneration of a glorious past embodied in the frontier exploration.

THE PIONEER'S QUEST: JOHN FILSON'S DANIEL BOONE

In America, the first figure to achieve a nationwide mythlike quality is Daniel Boone, first appearing in John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucky* (1784). His character, based on a real pioneer, received such a wide-spread appreciation and became so influential for subsequent literary works possibly because he embodied the notion of Manifest Destiny, the American mission of progress, and the nation's relation to the land. Indeed, America was looking for hero-figures who could represent the nation's unique experience, and the pioneers of the frontier offered just that. The writing of *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucky* was originally motivated by Filson's personal interest, as a land speculator, in advertising and encouraging further settlement in Kentucky. The work thus portrays the area as a paradisiacal land of bounty and fertility, a "second paradise" (Filson 1784: 44). At the same time, it also depicts it as an untamed wilderness where the hero, Boone, and his toil to settle the land determine the destiny of Kentucky as "one of the most opulent and powerful states on the continent of North

America" (62), and that of America as a nascent imperial republic. While drawing from autochthonous sources, Boone's narrative also presents numerous features that link it to chivalric romances, appropriating and 'Americanizing' them. The similarity was also noticed by figures such as William Gilmore Simms, who claimed that "in an age of chivalry—during the Crusades—Boon would have been a knight-errant, equally fearless and gentle" (1962: 150). In the section "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon," the narrative itself is structured "to read like Arthurian romance" (Faragher 1990: 375), presenting a series of immersions into the wilderness and emergences back to the civilized world.

Yet, the similarities are not limited to the general trajectory of knight and pioneers. In fact, Boone decides "to wander through the wilderness of America, in quest of the country of Kentucke" (40). Here, the language vividly calls to mind the beginning of many chivalric romances. Furthermore, the main motivation for his journey is said to be "curiosity," which "is natural to the soul of man […] in time the mysterious will of Heaven is unfolded, and we behold our conduct, from whatsoever motives excited, operating to answer the important designs of heaven" (39). Thus, the hero is moved to explore the wilderness by a desire of adventure and exploration, placed within the providential framework of destiny. This is not only true for Boone, but also for Arthurian knights. It is in fact very common as a plot device for the knight, guided implicitly by destiny, to enter the forest in order to prove his skills and prowess through adventure. For instance, in Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* (late twelfth century), Perceval, raised in a forest by his mother to avoid that he may become a knight, meets his destiny anyway by encountering some knights in the woods who lead him to begin his own adventure.

Furthermore, Boone's narrative displays ambivalent attitudes towards the natural world, presenting it both as beautiful and bountiful, and as a treacherous and threatening obstacle to his mission. Indeed, while describing the landscape as a "howling wilderness, the habitation of savages and wild beasts" (39), he also admires its beauty: "nature was here a series of wonders, and a fund of delight" (41). Moments of ecstatic contemplation, in which God seems to make himself apparent, seem to imply the notion of nature

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as an "integral part of the divine plan for the regeneration of man" (Slotkin 1973: 279). Similarly, in *Perceval*, nature is not only seen as delightful—"He entered the forest, / And the heart deep inside him / Leapt with joy at the sweet / Season and the happy sound / Of birds singing from trees" (Chrétien lines 85–89)—but also as the setting of his spiritual journey of atonement and growth. At the same time, it is also filled with continuous trials, tests, and wild beasts that Perceval must overcome. In the fourteenth century Middle English chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* "the contrast between the security of the court, and the discomfort and danger, real and supernatural, of the quest landscape plays a central role" (Saunders 1993: 148). Unlike most romances, the description of the landscape presents here marked mimetic qualities that highlight the hardship and danger of Gawain's journey. As chivalry can only be proven through adventure, "[t]he forest thus becomes necessary, a landscape both delightful and dangerous in its offering of this adventure," which "becomes the chosen destiny of the knight" (Saunders 1993: 80).

In facing the wilderness, the hero must possess heroic qualities dictated by a moral code of honor. Boone is presented as "an American knight errant venturing afar to battle the infidel [...] [H]e, like the heroes of Scott's historical romances, participated in a 'medieval' fantasy" (Herman 1998: 445). He showcases qualities such as chivalry, composure, and self-restraint, saving damsels in distress and companions taken captive. Indeed, knights were required to adhere to a rigid set of behavioral rules, the wilderness being the setting where to learn and improve them: "a true romance knight has great physical strength, skills, and courage, yet also excels at certain virtues, such as honor, charity, and courtesy. It is a knight's duty to use these qualities to serve and fight for his lord and, most importantly, to defend the weak" (Lupack 2007: 85). However, while noble birth is the first condition for a man in chivalric romances to become a good knight, for Boone nobility of behavior is not given by noble blood but is inherent within his nature, showcasing a democratization of the figure of the knight that best fits the context of the young nation. Despite the fact that Boone was a poorly educated backwoodsman, Filson presents him with a natural gentility and eloquence. In this respect, the knights

and the pioneer are both highly romanticized. The real Boone, in fact, complained that "[m]any heroic actions and chivalrous adventures are related of me which exist only in the regions of fancy" (Boone qtd. in Faragher: 384). Similarly, in medieval times, "out of the need for a specific representation of the desired shared culture, the myth of the knight took root and flourished within the national imagination," although historical evidence "does not support the popular literary representation of the knight as romantic, chivalrous figure" (Moskowitz 2006). The gap between reality and fictional narrative in both cases seems motivated by the necessity of creating a mythology that reflects and supports the ideology and interests of the culture to which they belong: "the symbiosis between America and the medieval world grows from the central fact that each has been invented and that neither in its mythic form corresponds very closely to historical scrutiny" (Rosenthal and Szarmach 1989: 4).

An essential aspect, among the heroic qualities a hero must possess, is the display of virility and masculine prowess: "cultures typically express and enact their views of power and heroism by the ways in which they construct ideals and norms of masculine identity," which "are absorbed by a culture through its stories [...] From the Dark Ages until today [...] King Arthur is arguably the secular hero of medieval and post-medieval Western civilization" (Wheeler 1992: 1). In the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1136), Geoffrey De Monmouth's depiction of King Arthur, where he is portrayed as a conqueror of Europe and a Christian protector against the idolatrous Saracens, shaped much of the subsequent Arthurian tradition. Here, the king is presented as a model of masculinity, associated with action, physical dominance, and expansion. Western culture seems to have adopted through time a similar concept of masculine authority, a "leadership of the heroic style: aggressive, invasive, exemplary, risk-taking" (Keegan 1987: 10). A similar narrative can be traced in the American discourse of Manifest Destiny, depicting the nation as charged by Providence with the mission to expand its model of democracy and Christianity, one also embodied by Filson's Boone. In the period directly following Boone's own time, when Americans were concerned over notions of their own masculinity in the context of urban middle-classes

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(Herman 1998: 439), the pioneer provided a model of masculinity to which aspire in order to restore the Americans' threatened virility. In fact, most frontier narratives present a strongly androcentric perspective. As Brigitte Georgi-Findlay assesses, "what has come to be defined as the quintessential American plot […] reveals itself as a story based on a rigid dichotomy of sex roles that not only denies women active, heroic roles but defines them as obstacles to the male hero's freedom" (1996: 6). Indeed, women were relegated to the domestic environment, where they occupied the role of the wife, the mother, and the lady in need of saving. In fact, numerous have been the women writers who have made their voice heard by showing their perspective on the frontier life. Many of these works consist in personal narratives which can be "effective sources of counter-hegemonic insight" (Personal Narratives Group 1989: 7), contributing to creating alternative myths to the dominant ones. Despite this, the power and influence of this myth remains powerful, however far from being historically true.

Hunting plays an especially crucial role in the expression of masculinity. Indeed, the hunt represents in many cultures a rite of passage deeply linked with the cultural constructs of manhood. Further, stories of hunting also provide a way to cope with the fear triggered by the wilderness and wild animals by imposing one's dominance over them through prowess and violence. Through this act, the hunter's identity is restored, providing a justification for the violence exerted upon the nonhuman. As Slotkin assesses, "the consummation of his hunting quest in the killing of the quarry […] gives him full possession of the powers of the wilderness" (1973: 551). This is guaranteed by the accompanying of an ethic of self-restraint that minimizes the implicit negative consequences of the act. Indeed, the violence of the hero in general, not only in the context of the hunt, was justified and celebrated as long as it respected what was believed to be God's will, both for pioneers and for knights: "chivalry was a code of violence in defense of a prickly sense of honor […] just as thoroughly as it was a code of restraint […] Prowess […] is a gift of God" (Kaeuper 2000: 99–100, 105). In Boone's narrative numerous instances of hunting sessions are described: "we began to hunt and reconnoitre the country. We found everywhere abundance of wild beasts of all sorts,

through this vast forest. The buffaloes were […] fearless, because ignorant of the violence of man" (Filson: 40).

The importance placed on hunting is also present in medieval romances. Indeed, the hunt was not only crucial for knights to refine their martial prowess and skills, but was also strongly linked to chivalric values. Especially in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, "hunting scenes" are used "as a primary organizing principle" (Stuhmiller 2005: 230), furthering the emphasis of Gawain as an embodiment of civilized society versus the wilderness. The importance of the hunt in medieval times is also stressed by the fact that the royal preserves were expressly created for the preservation of the wildlife, "which in turn would insure the survival of a fundamental royal ritual—the hunt" (Harrison 1992: 69). Indeed, "[t]he hunt ritualizes and reaffirms the king's ancient nature as civilizer and conqueror of the land" where "the chase may re-enact, in a purely symbolic way, the historical conquest of the wilderness" (74). This is exactly what, less symbolically and more materially, Filson's narrative celebrates, showcasing a strongly anthropocentric mindset, where the nonhuman is only seen as an obstacle to the hero's mission and as an instrument for him to prove his manhood.

Another way for Boone to prove his masculinity is by defeating enemies, in his case, Native Americans. This also allows him to display a courteous and chivalrous behavior by defeating Indian opponents who had taken some girls captive. This event, while drawing from captivity narratives, calls to mind the rescuing of the damsel in distress motif present in countless chivalric romances from *Sir Orpheo* to *Yvain*. The Indian, in Filson's account, represents the Other, the embodiment of savagery in opposition to Boone's civilizing power. Indeed, most cultures and societies construct their identity by defining it in relation and contrast to other cultures and societies "as we are dealing with a fundamental epistemological phenomenon that characterized both the medieval world and our own" (Classen 2004: 21). Boone perceives Native Americans as savages and dangerous threats to the values he embodies and his mission: "We were […] exposed daily to perils and death amongst savages and wild beasts, not a white man in the country but ourselves" (Filson: 42). Placing Native Americans on the same level as animals suggests and reiterates a common

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prejudice that perceives them as akin to beasts, a level below humanity, and therefore less worthy of respect. While admitting condescendingly that "Indians are not so ignorant as some suppose them," Filson portrays them in a strongly stereotypical way: "they are very hardy, bearing heat, cold, hunger and thirst, in a surprising manner, and yet no people are more addicted to excess in eating and drinking" (76). However, Native Americans are not depicted in an entirely negative light. After taking him captive, they treat Boone with respect, and adopt him as one of their own. Yet, the pioneer is always carefully presented as superior to them, as he purposefully tries not to exceed them in hunting (50), and he "received as good treatment as prisoners could expect from savages" (49).

The presentation of Native Americans in frontier narratives eerily parallels that of a figure who recurs frequently in the medieval imagination, typically seen as Other and as an embodiment of savagery, that is the wild man. Charles Long describes the wild man as "a child of nature" (1986: 81), a definition often associated to the perception of Native Americans as 'noble savages.' Wild men are usually depicted as uncivilized creatures displaying both human and animal features, potentially "violent, aggressive and lustful" (Bernheimer 1952: 3–4, 34), who live in forests and show hostility toward the hero or the court. When confronting these wild creatures, "the heroes antithetically assert themselves as courteous. Many examples of this are presented in the Arthurian corpus" (Ferlampin-Acher 2017: 244). Numerous features of this figure are similar to those associated with Native Americans in the depictions of early American settlers, both presenting a relationship of peaceful cohabitation with the wilderness and considered as a threat to society's dominant values. At times, however, the wild men are presented as friendly and helpful. For instance, in *Yvain*, Calogrenant meets a "a fellow, black as mulberry, full / hideous, massive beyond measure" (Chrétien: lines 286–7), who, despite possessing great physical prowess, kindly gives the knight directions to a magic fountain, similarly to native guides who helped pioneers find their way in the American wilderness. However, the figure of the Other in chivalric romances is most often associated, like in the case of the Native Americans, with the abduction

motif, where a damsel is taken away into the forest by wild men or supernatural beings (Bernheimer: 126).

At times, the knight himself, taken by a temporary madness caused by either grief, loss, shame, rage, or love-ache, runs away in the woods becoming a wild man. However, he eventually regains sanity and re-enters society, achieving a higher order of moral balance (Salisbury 1993: 160). This is the case, for instance, of Lancelot, Yvain, and Sir Orfeo. According to Harrison, as the knight temporarily loses himself, he confronts the shadows of his own wild alienated nature, from which his prowess derives, in order to subsequently reaffirm and regenerate the forces that defend the social order (1992: 67). Similarly, while being presented by Filson as a civilizing force, certain features of Boone, from his love of nature to his ability to survive in the wild, have produced perceptions of the pioneer as 'Indian-like.' Yet, Boone still believes that Native Americans are to be substituted by white settlements: "thus we behold Kentucke, lately a howling wilderness, the habitation of savages and wild beasts, become a fruitful field; […] where wretched wigwams stood, the miserable abodes of savages, we behold the foundations of cities" (Filson: 39). What can be drawn from both medieval knights and Boone is that, to defeat the wilderness, one must partially adopt some of its features. The wild man, typically endowed with undisputed masculine raw prowess, seems to respond to a persistent urge "to give external expression […] to the impulses of reckless physical self-assertion which are hidden in all of us, but normally kept under control" (Bernheimer 1952: 3). In this perspective, the hero defeats him either within himself or without in order to reinforce his own masculinity and sense of self. By presenting the Native American as a wild man, Filson replicates racial stereotypes that allow for the autochthonous population to be seen merely as an obstacle to overcome in the quest for the expansion of civilization, thus presenting a strongly ethnocentric perspective.

The quest structure also dramatizes, along with the relationship between civilization and wilderness, that between individual and society. In fact, while the hero undertakes an individual quest, confronting alone the forces of nature, "to serve their society is the sole object and destiny of these heroes" (Heilbrun 1973: 21).

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Both in Arthurian romances and Boone's narrative, there is a double focus on the hero as an individual, exploring the psychology and the spiritual and moral growth of character, and as representative of society as a whole. Indeed, the last step of the journey is one of return to the order of civilization, regenerating and improving it thanks to the hero's experience. For Boone, his individual quest in solitude has "value only insofar as it contributes to the ultimate creation for a better society" (Slotkin 1973: 310). Similarly, "chivalry discussed in romance was an active social force, not merely a gossamer veil of escapism" (Kaeuper 2000: 98–9). Indeed, chivalric romances provided cultural models for maintaining a set of values for the ruling class, where the knight's adventure is the "means by which [courtly virtues] are proved and preserved" (Auerbach 1946: 134–35).

While the pioneer Boone has been often perceived as the bearer of civilization, in other instances he has also been portrayed as "a fugitive from civilization who could not endure the encroachment of settlements upon his beloved wilderness" (Smith 1978: 57). Timothy Flint's biography of him (1847) reflects this confusion of attitudes. Indeed, Boone appears proud to be a part of the accomplishment that "the rich and boundless valleys of the great west […] and the paradise of hunters, had been won from the dominion of savage tribes and opened as an asylum for the oppressed, the enterprising and the free of every land" (Flint 1847: 226–7). Yet, he also laments that "the tide of emigration once more swept by the dwelling of Daniel Boone, driving off the game" (246). However, even while the pioneer himself is claimed to have manifested a discontent with civilization and a preference for a solitary life in the woods, he also seemed in the course of his life to have acquired an awareness of his historical mission. Indeed, he claimed in an interview to be "a creature of providence, ordained by heaven as a pioneer in the wilderness, to advance the civilization and the extension of his country" (Sparks 1847: 188). Thus, the image of the pioneer of the Wild West could serve both as a spokesman of nostalgic primitivism and as a champion of civilization. Yet, the vision that prevails, both historically and mythologically, is the latter, one that celebrates the advancement of progress and male-oriented civilization at the expenses of the natural

world and the inhabitants of a land, both human and nonhuman, in the name of Providence and Manifest Destiny.

THE LEGACY OF FRONTIER NARRATIVES

The prevailing perception mentioned above is also confirmed by the resonance of these myth-like heroes in later literary and cultural expressions. Indeed, Filson's narrative has had a great impact on successive literary works. Among them, James Fennimore Cooper modelled Natty Bumppo "from the effigies of old Daniel Boone" (Bakeless 1823: 232). Like Filson, Cooper draws from both autochthonous sources and chivalric romances mediated by Walter Scott's historical romances. As in Boone, "[i]n Natty […] we have a carefully crafted representation of a heroic ideal" who embodies "the notion of American exceptionalism that of course informs expansionist philosophy and the progressivist thinking of manifest destiny" (Frye 1999: 38). Bumppo became one of the most influential characters in American culture, and a precursor of figures such as Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, and Buffalo Bill. The pattern present in Arthurian romances and traced by characters such as Boone and Bumppo extends itself with numerous ramifications throughout the American literary tradition and beyond the literary sphere.

This kind of narrative, which heavily relies on medievalist tropes, has had an effect not only on the nonhuman Other, as it justified the exploitation of the wilderness in the name of progress, but also on the relation between the land and the gendered and racial Other. In this light, nature appeared as a place which could be enjoyed and exploited only by white American males. The cult of the wilderness that developed with the closing of the frontier in the 1890s, heavily relying on frontier narratives for inspiration, implied that nature was the *locu*s where white middle-class members of the male sex could temporarily escape the civic world to prove their manhood and be regenerated in their strength and power, just like medieval knights. On the contrary, non-whites such as Native Americans and African Americans were associated with traits that linked them to savagery, making so that they were seen as part of that same nature that was to be conquered

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and owned, with a similar treatment applied to women as well. Lawrence Buell argues:

> The orthodox versions of American literary naturism [...] have been based on texts by Anglo-American males; [...] their representations of nature contain misogynist and racist elements (such as the disparagement of settlement culture as feminine, the euphemization of slavery in nostalgic plantation and frontiersman tales, the manipulation of romantic scenery in the service of a gospel of expansionism). (1995: 16)

While romanticized as a place far away from civilization and humanity, the wilderness appears as a cultural product of that very civilization, which attaches to it its desires and fears, and uses discourses about nature to include or exclude sections of the population. This mindset, nourished by the wilderness and frontier myths, perpetuates and reinforces the binary between nature and culture, wilderness and civilization, leading to distorted views of humans' place on earth, and preventing adequate intervention on environmental problems (Cronon 1996).

Medievalism, then, has been used throughout American history in numerous contexts, aimed at perpetuating the marginalization and mistreatment of nonhumans and entire sections of the population coinhabiting the American territory: from the justification of the exploitation of the land and of the violence exerted on animals and native inhabitants on the part of frontiersmen seen as heroic knightly questers; the perception of women as helpless and forever in need to be saved by "our American Sir Gawain [...] who rescues fair ladies [...] riding into the sunset with the woman left behind" (Rosenthal and Szarmach 1989: 7); the romantic, pastoral pretensions of Southern plantation owners envisioning themselves as lords; to Ku Klux Klan members portraying themselves as knights and crusaders. However, far from being a phenomenon with a circumscribed effect on the past, this ideological and mythological framework that employs medievalism continues to have a lasting impact on the twenty-first century. It does not seem a coincidence that President George W. Bush's statements in reaction to 9/11 not only employed Wild West imagery, but also that of medieval crusaders: "this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while" (qtd. in Nicholas 2019: 34). Even more recently, in 2016, after his proposition of building a wall across most of the US-Mexican

border has been ironized as 'medieval', former President Donald Trump responded that "[Democrats] say it's a medieval solution, a wall. It's true, because it worked then and it works even better now" (Gabriele, 2019).

Indeed, the notion of the frontier, while implying constant expansion, also presupposes a border for those who are not seen as protagonists in the dominant narrative. The mythical framework that identifies the American hero in the frontiersman and his evolutions in time, thus transforming history in a story, also entails that only a restricted section of Americans, that of middle-class white males, may embody the spirit of the hero. Instead, everyone else will inevitably be cast in secondary roles, such as that of the helper or the enemy to be overcome, marginalizing them as either peripheral or antagonistic to the main trajectory of the hero. In fact, the language that employs notions of honor and chivalry also implies the necessity of someone to defend against, which is often found in the racial other. This rhetoric is often sustained by claiming an Anglo-Saxon descent traceable to heroic knights of the Middle Ages. Noël Sturgeon has noticed the ongoing impact of the frontier myth in more recent times:

> As the United States became involved in projecting power beyond its initial borders [...] elements of the frontier myth were extended to apply to Third World peoples and natural resources. Seeing Third World people as primitive populations [...] conceptualizing natural resources in the Global south as available to "development" and presenting ideologies of the "free market" as a narrative of inevitable and desired evolutionary progress are all ways of expanding the frontier myth to have global relevance. (2009: 82)

Furthermore, this myth was also subsumed in discourses advocating for the expansion of militarism into the "next frontier" of outer space, which rely on "a notion of space exploration as an evolutionary pinnacle, naturalizing and justifying US militarism on and off the planet." This results in environmental damage with uneven social consequences on planetary population (Sturgeon: 81). The perpetuation of the frontier myth has served then to justify constant American expansionism and neo-imperialist tendencies up until recent times, signaling the impact and legacy of the myths and narratives that lie at the nation's foundation.

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CONCLUSION

Both Boone and Leatherstocking have grown to reach mythlike proportions. Their endeavors in the wilderness are also surrounded by a quality of myth, assuming, like in the case of Arthurian knights, heroic dimensions. The risk, with very real consequences on history, of the narrative they embody is that "myth buries unresolved tensions in the safety of distance. Accordingly, responsibility for the rape of the wilderness, for the genocide of the Indians, and for the aggressive expansionism of European culture belongs only to the past" and, while producing a nostalgic sentiment for a lost pastoral world, it "makes no claim on us" (Swearingen and Cutting-Gray 1992: 267). Presenting the setting forth into the wilderness in heroic terms does not alter history. Rather, it confounds its reality and the responsibility of human actions over the environment. In this perspective, environmental issues are to be regarded "not only as central to the projects of European conquest and global domination, but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism on which those projects historically [...] depend" (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 6). As long as the myths and stories Americans tell themselves affirm that the delight people take in nature goes hand in hand with the violence exerted upon both nonhumans and certain humans, these narratives will continue to have an influence on everyday reality. Indeed, the idea that they are relegated in the safe realm of literature ignores and forgets that the power of fiction is not confined to a reflection of reality, but is capable of refiguring the world around, and impacting its course. It is for this reason that analyzing the patterns that validate the human expansion without physical nor ethical boundaries on the environment, from the European Middle Ages to America, is more important today than ever.

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ORIGINAL PRONUNCIATION AND THE UNITED STATES

The Case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Paul Meier (2010, 2012)

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INTRODUCTION

In 2004 *Romeo and Juliet* in OP–Original Pronunciation–was staged at the Shakespeare's Globe over a weekend, inaugurating what David Crystal would later define as "the OP movement" (Crystal 2013; 2014; 2016: xxxix). Although OP refers to "any period of phonological reconstruction in the history of a language," it is mainly associated with the reconstructed pronunciation of Shakespeare's works (Crystal 2016: ix), whose plausible sounds stem from internal and external evidence (Crystal 2005). Among the characteristics of OP are rhoticity and different vowel and diphthong sounds conducive to rhymes or stylistic effects nonexistent today. For instance, in OP the word "loins"–to be found in *Romeo and Juliet*'s prologue–has the same pronunciation as "lines" due to the sharing of [əɪ], thereby originating a wordplay otherwise absent (Crystal 2005: 88).

The success of the performances at the Globe resulted in the staging of *Troilus and Cressida* in OP, which ran for an entire season in 2005 (Crystal 2016: xl). Although this spectacle was not fully appreciated (see Lahr 2005), the unenthusiastic reactions did not hinder the adoption of OP abroad: the latter travelled to countries such as the US and Sweden.[1] Eventually, Shakespeare's pronunciation[2] returned to England, where the Sam Wanamaker

1. For a full list of the productions in OP see the section "Archive events and links" (Crystal, "Original Pronunciation").

2. OP does not coincide with Shakespeare's personal pronunciation; rather, it is a reconstruction of the sounds attributable to his works. This does not mean that Shakespeare's own pronunciation–the pronunciation

Playhouse staged *Macbeth* and *Henry V* in 2014 and 2015 respectively (see Crystal 2015: 42); yet, in hindsight, those were the last landings of OP on the British stage.

If Shakespeare's reconstructed pronunciation no longer inhabits British theaters, it continues to be resorted to in the US. In 2007 director Alex Torra staged *As I Pronounced It To You: Shakespeare as it Originally Sounded* at the Playwright Tavern in New York (Crystal 2021: online): this would become the first of a series of productions mounted at festivals (e.g., extracts at Shakespeare in Clark Park in 2011), universities (e.g., *Hamlet* at the University of Nevada in 2011) and American theaters (e.g., Orlando Shakespeare Theater's *Twelfth Night* in 2018). The latest staging, *King Lear*, was performed at Baltimore Shakespeare Factory in 2021, an institution staging one play in OP a year since 2015.

Having determined the disuse of OP in the UK and its adoption in the US in broad lines, this paper proposes to consider the possible rationale behind the latter. Therefore, I will first outline the backdrop and hypothesis of my investigation and then move on to the discussion of the methodology and results of my pilot study concerning the staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2010) by professor, voice coach, and director Paul Meier and his subsequent radio production of the play (2012). The motivations behind both productions will be scrutinized by qualitatively analyzing interviews with the director and two actors, as well as promotional and non-promotional articles. It is worth emphasizing that, due to its limited scope, my research does not aim to provide any ultimate answer; rather, it offers an opportunity to start reflecting on a relatively unexplored phenomenon.

OP IN THE US: THAT IS THE QUESTION

As shown in the Introduction, while in Shakespeare's home country the playwright's reconstructed pronunciation seems to have fallen into disuse, the US still provides fertile ground for OP, where Baltimore Shakespeare Factory annually gives voice to Early Modern sounds. This raises the question of why the pro-

of the man—might have been radically different from Crystal's reconstruction since the underlying sound system, or phonology, was the same. For the sake of brevity, OP will sometimes be labelled "Shakespeare's pronunciation."

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nunciation attracts directors and institutions on the other side of the Atlantic or, to put it differently, of what persuades theater practitioners to embrace the sounds of a past era and a country which—itself—does not appear to show any theatrical interest in them at the present stage. Investigating all the possible reasons for the American use of OP would prove impossible here due to limited time and resources, so my intention is to begin to look into the phenomenon through a pilot study, aimed at the identification of the rationale behind the theatrical production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2010) and the subsequent radio production (2012).[3]

Before giving way to the methodology and results of my research, I wish to introduce the premises on which the present study is based. In a promotional video of his staging, the director Paul Meier claims:

> I wanted to do it here, in America, because, well, you think about the Mayflower folks. This [the Shakespearean pronunciation] would have been the accent that the first Americans spoke, and it sort of reconnects America to their linguistic roots. You know, we feel a little alien in America from Britain, you know that's where Shakespeare happened, but this reclaims Shakespeare for us (KU Theatre, 2010).

According to the director, OP is not simply Shakespeare's pronunciation but also that of the "Mayflower folks," that is, the Pilgrim Fathers or "fathers of America" (Bryant 2020), who arrived in the New World in 1620 and allegedly laid the foundations of the Unites States. Therefore, reconstructed pronunciation enables Americans to explore their own "linguistic roots" and expunge the vestiges of Shakespeare's perceived alienness.

In all likelihood the pronunciation of the playwright and that of the Mayflower passengers were not identical, but a very strong resemblance is presumable.[4] That said, Meier's words link OP

3. Barrett (2020) claims that Meier "has done a great deal to popularize OP in America, particularly through his production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the University of Kansas."

4. Although the settlers and the playwright were contemporaries (Shakespeare died in 1616 and the Mayflower left in 1620), before travelling to the New World, some of the Mayflower passengers—the Separatists—had taken refuge in Holland for about 12 years (see Remini 2017: 33; Jones 2005: 32–33). Unfortunately, documents do not render it possible to establish whether

to a rhetoric of appropriation: Shakespeare, felt as non-domestic, is portrayed as American due to the linguistic or, more precisely, phonological association with the alleged founders of the nation. One might argue that, given the American centuries-long relationship with Shakespeare (Vaughan and Vaughan 2012) and the fascination with his language and works (Blank 2018), tying Meier's productions to appropriation might be equated with a hasty conclusion. Yet the relation between Shakespeare and the country during its days as a colony and as an independent state can provide a valid framework for my hypothesis.[5]

Contrary to expectations, early settlers like the Mayflower passengers were not responsible for the playwright's importation in the American territory. Although they might have had some familiarity with Shakespeare, early settlers essentially eschewed thespian practices and regarded theater practitioners as "undesirable distractions" due to their prioritization of "survival and a modicum of prosperity" and to religious and civil "objections" (Vaughan and Vaughan 2012: 9). It was only in 1696 that Shakespeare landed in America—in printed form—and then in the 18th century that the first stagings of his plays began taking place (15), with pro-

their language was affected by the Dutch residence (Dillard 1985: 52), but linguistic change, albeit minor, cannot be excluded due to the migrants' fear that their children were assimilating to local life (see History.com Editors, 2010–20) or even that they were losing their language (see Dillard 1985: 52). In addition, it should be borne in mind that the Mayflower passengers were not a monolithic group, but, as pointed out by Wakelin, the future settlers differed in terms of "age, education and social class"; hence, there would not have been a single variety spoken, in spite of reciprocal influence (1986: 30). Considering this and Shakespeare's idiosyncrasies, it can be argued that the playwright's pronunciation only resembled the language of the early colonists rather than being identical to it.

5. The days of the American nation first as a colonized land and then as an independent country evoke the specter of postcolonialism, problematic with regard to the US. If in 1999 Cartelli deemed it necessary to justify his inclusion of the US in the field of postcolonial studies, today the New World's postcoloniality might appear less anomalous (see Younger 2020). Though "postcolonial" and "colonizing" are not mutually exclusive terms (see Hulme qtd in Schueller, 2004: 163–164), the US's status remains complex, and "postcolonial" is still a hazardous concept when applied to the country, so it will not be used in this text.

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fessional English companies contributing to the enhancement and modernization of the American stage (16).

One might assume that, after their independence, the colonies would ultimately reject Shakespeare as an emblem of the former mother country. On the contrary, Shapiro claims that the playwright "won over America in the early nineteenth century" (2020: 10) and ties the embracement of Shakespeare to the fact that "he spoke to what Americans cared about" (12). However, the playwright's success might also be better understood in relation to the persistent economic and ideological reliance of the new-born country on the UK (Hopkins 2020: 2). Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that, after the revolution, the US was essentially appropriating the writer thanks to, among others, productions in the West, national burlesques, and black minstrelsy (Vaughan and Vaughan 2012: 72–73, 94, 101). At some point in the second half of the 19th century, as William Cullen Bryant's words reveal, the playwright was even considered both British and American: "we Americans may […] claim an equal property in the great English poet with those who remained in the Old World" (qtd in Vaughan and Vaughan 2012: 62).

Yet, despite the integration of Shakespeare into the American culture signaled by festivals, clubs and numerous cultural initiatives (see Vaughan and Vaughan 2012), the influence of the former mother country never vanished completely. For instance, in 1979 British television films relating to Shakespeare's works started supplanting American ones (175). It can even be argued that to this very day the playwright continues to retain and be filtered through his Englishness, at least in matters of language. In fact, according to Paterson, American actors often adopt a version of English "which embraces some of the sounds of English RP while still retaining many national characteristics" (2020: 111). The expression "[f]airly common" (Paterson 2020: 111), used with reference to this mixed pronunciation, begs the question of how much—precisely—RP or its traces are widespread in Shakespearean stagings in the US.

In light of this, the country's long relation with Shakespeare—originating in the colonial days but growing after Independence—still seems affected by the author's Englishness, and Meier's words

could be interpreted as an attempt to further appropriate Shakespeare by claiming his Americanness, particularly in terms of pronunciation. Crystal suggests a link between the appeal of OP on Americans, and the greater resemblance of the pronunciation to American English (rather than to RP) "in several respects" (2018: 72). Yet one cannot help but wonder whether the similarities between the two pronunciations do not only flatter the ear but also speak to a desire for independence from the playwright's perceived Englishness and, ultimately, to a search for greater closeness to Shakespeare—a further appropriation of the writer, so to speak. As will be seen, this will be the main point of reference for the discussion of my research.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (2010, 2012)

1. Methodology

To conduct my study, I carried out interviews with the director Paul Meier, and two cast members, Matthew Gieschen, playing Theseus, and Margaret Hanzlick-Burton, interpreting Mustardseed. In addition to being a voice and speech specialist, Meier worked as a professor at the University of Kansas (Meier 2018: 109–110), where, with David Crystal's linguistic advice, he staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2010), involving the then students Geschien and Hanzlick-Burton.

In the case of Meier, an oral semi-structured interview was scheduled. For the performers, structured interviews were preferred out of convenience. A qualitative analysis of the answers provided by the director and the actors has been performed, complemented by a secondary examination of promotional and non-promotional articles aimed at better apprehending and contextualizing the words of Meier and the performers.

About the interviews, the questions mainly revolved around the genesis of the staging and the radio production, the relation between Shakespeare and the US, the use of OP and its resemblance to American English. The aim was to retrieve the reasons behind the two productions, and to shed light on the value of the association between Shakespeare's pronunciation and that of the first colonists. Expected was a rhetoric of appropriation, echoing Meier's words in the promotional video of the staging (Sec. 1).

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2. Results

For the sake of clarity, I have grouped the results into three categories: a) Theatrical production, b) Radio production, and c) Linguistic issues.

a) Theatrical production (2010)

The theatrical production (Meier 2013) was put on at the University of Kansas in 2010 and advised by the OP expert David Crystal. The staging was "extremely well received," highly successful (Meier 2011: 217, 220), and its value recognized even beyond the University of Kansas.[6]

The data at my disposal stress the role of Meier's appreciation of the playwright and of vernacular languages in his decision to stage a production in OP. In fact, the director claims: "my two passions, Shakespeare and dialect, sort of collided when I opened that little book of Shakespeare's pronunciation by David [*Pronouncing Shakespeare*] and I thought: 'ohh, I've got to go down this road'" (Meier 2021).[7] Yet, apart from personal interests, some qualities of Shakespeare's reconstructed pronunciation have contributed to Meier's decision to mount a production in OP;[8] the director insists on "speed" and "vernacular swiftness."[9]

Interestingly, another quality or implication of the pronunciation—the retrieval of rhymes—is highlighted when the voice coach recounts the selection of the play: "MEIER: […] I said, 'Well, let's do a Shakespeare play in OP together. Which one should we choose?'. And he [Crystal] said, without a shadow of a doubt, 'It's gotta be *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because of all the rhy-

6. See Targeted New Service, 2011.
7. Meier's words echo Meier 2018: 112.
8. "[…] people often cite the recovery of lost rhymes. And that's certainly attractive too. To be able to hear it [Shakespeare's theatrical output] with those rhymes falling as expected, but then there's also the speed and vernacular swiftness" (Meier 2021).
9. MEIER: "[…] you shave 10,15, 20 minutes off of a production just by doing it in OP because of all those weak forms," MEIER: "But you know, you drop down to that vernacular very r-flavoured sound with all those weak forms," RUSSO: […] how would you just describe OP yourself?" MEIER: "Yeah, it is vernacular, it's more swiftly spoken, it's more casual […]" (Meier 2021).

mes'" (Meier 2021).[10] What emerges is that Crystal's involvement determined the Shakespearean work that would be staged, making the specific recovery of rhymes come into the picture.

An additional retrieved element—"word play" (KU News Release 2010; Science 2010)[11]—is mentioned in the interview when discussing OP in general: "it [OP] has distinct side benefits of restoring the lost rhymes, restoring the wordplay, the puns. Speeding the production" (Meier 2021). However, any mention of wordplays or puns regarding the specific production is absent, which might be attributed to their scarcity—Crystal finds only three occurrences (Meier 2011: 219–220)—but also to Crystal's rather than Meier's prioritization of them (see Meier 2011: 212).[12]

Conversely, Meier's association between the Mayflower passengers' speech and Shakespeare's pronunciation is not absent from the director's answers in the interview, not even before targeted questions are posed. The voice coach was actually the one to bring up the topic:

> […] I suppose that the way we sold it to our audiences was that they would be hearing English spoken as it would have been by the first American settlers from Europe and then […] giving American audiences back the Shakespeare they think was English. But no, Shakespeare was almost American in those terms. (Meier 2021)

Meier uses the verb "sold" and, in so doing, suggests the commercial value of the connection between the early colonists' speech—now generic "first American settlers"—and OP. Also worth noticing is the use of the plural personal pronoun "we," which might reflect a communal decision rather than an individual one. Lastly, in spite of any intervening factors, Meier's claim that "Shakespeare was almost American in those terms" might be read as the attribution of an American value to OP and as pointing to appropriation.

10. This echoes an interview in which Crystal highlights the restoration of "rhyming couplets" (Meier 2011: 211).

11. "Meier said audiences will hear word play and rhymes that 'haven't worked for several hundred years (love/prove, eyes/qualities, etc.) magically restored, as Bottom, Puck and company wind the language clock back to 1595.'" (KU News Release 2010; Science 2010).

12. As for the qualities of OP, Meier (2021) also hints at the impact on actors but without going into any detail.

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Yet this attribution does not correspond to a priority in the use of Shakespeare's reconstructed pronunciation:

> MEIER: [...] I wouldn't say it was the principal reason, I think it has its own merits in its own way, regardless of the audience and regardless of the audience's own accent, but it was certainly one of the selling points when we were trying to get perhaps reluctant audiences to come. It was one of the publicity points that we emphasized and it proved true: it was the most well attended Shakespeare production I've ever done. We had to extend it as I recall because it was sold out. So, it's a good way to sell the concept to a perhaps nervous audience. (Meier 2021)

Not only does the director recognize that the connection between the two pronunciations was not "the principal reason" for the staging but he also renders explicit its derivation from a commercial strategy: he defines the connection between OP and the settlers' pronunciation as "one of the selling points" and "one of the publicity points" of the production, and the several occurrences of the verb "sell" ("sold out" and "to sell the concept") seem to lexically underline the marketing operation behind the association. Worth considering is again the use of "we," which can be seen as confirming the collective determination of the American value of OP. As Meier's nationality is originally British (Meier 2018), the highlighting of the American significance on the part of, say, the marketing team would not come as a complete surprise.

So far, the closeness between the Pilgrim Fathers' and Shakespeare's pronunciation as presented by the director appears as a marginal reason—if an authentic one—in the staging, and, going further, it does not match the postulated rhetoric of appropriation. In fact, the actors do not make any reference to the link between OP and the speech of the Mayflower passengers, or, although they recognize the special nature of the pronunciation, they do not connect it with their American roots. Furthermore, Meier himself seems to oppose the very idea of appropriating the playwright, since, in addition to stressing the use of American English in performances, he emphasizes Shakespeare's integration into the US by claiming that "every one of the 50 states has at least one major Shakespeare festival" (Meier 2021).

Yet, if one takes into account the marketing strategy pointed to by the coach, it allows for some reflections concerning audiences

and appropriation. The performers do not confirm the publicity operation, but this can both be linked to the study's absence of specific questions—at the time the interviews were sent, the marketing strategy had not emerged yet—and to the lack of involvement of the actors in this regard. On the other hand, the association between OP and the Mayflower passengers' pronunciation is corroborated by promotional articles. Apart from the video highlighted earlier, the link is also suggested in press releases:

> Thanks to the work of Paul Meier, audiences can get a sense of what it might have been like to eavesdrop on opening night of "Hamlet" or "Romeo and Juliet" at the Globe Theater in London or to listen in on a shipboard conversation on the Mayflower as it approaches the shores of the New World (KU News Release 2010; US Fed News 2010; Targeted News Service 2010; Science X 2010).

The Shakespeare's Globe and the Mayflower are juxtaposed, equating the pronunciation of Shakespeare's works with that of the passengers aboard the ship for the New World. Hypothetically, this connection, read along Meier's words in the video, taps into the desire—publicity usually addresses needs or desires—to do without the author's perceived alienness and make him fundamentally American. Less famous expeditions to the US such as the one in 1607 (see Remini 2017: 27) might have been connected with OP and Shakespeare, but that of the Pilgrim Fathers was chosen, thereby associating the playwright to the alleged fathers of the American nation. It would be necessary to verify the success of the production, but based on what Meier reports, and on the turnout spotted in the filmed version I had access to, it can be assumed that audiences were drawn to the production, and that the marketing strategy might have played some role in this. In other words, the association between Shakespeare's speech and the Pilgrim Fathers' pronunciation might have resonated with the American audiences' wish to construe and perceive Shakespeare as American.

At this point, one might contend that Shakespeare has been "naturalized" in the US (Sturgess 2013: 259), which renders implausible the perception of his alienness and the desire to further appropriate him, on any level. Yet, the traces of Englishness still surviving in American productions of Shakespeare might account

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for an underlying perceived foreignness, and suggest that there is still an interference in the American relation with Shakespeare. In addition, by claiming that "many Americans view Shakespeare as academic, elitist, out of touch, and irrelevant" (2021), the actor Hanzlick-Burton invokes a widespread alienness to Shakespeare originating from the insertion of the poet into high culture; yet one wonders whether the term "irrelevant" might also stem from a sort of perceived unrelatedness of Shakespeare to American society.

To conclude, "multiple reasons," as Meier (2021) himself claims, are attributable to his use of OP, although they do not come into existence at the same time nor carry the same weight. Some—the director's interest in Shakespeare and in dialects—were his original reasons which then came to interact with others concerning qualities of OP, that is, its "vernacular swiftness," "speed" and, secondarily, the restoration of rhymes. The willingness to appropriate Shakespeare, however, does not seem to have brought about the theatrical production, but it might have attracted audiences.

b) Radio production (2012)

Moving on to the radio production, it was recorded after the staging under the supervision of Paul Meier, who cooperated with Ryan McCall (music) and Jason Slote (sound design and post production) (KU News Release 2012). The program was broadcast in 2012 and starred the same actors as the theatrical production, but, despite its germane relation with the latter, the former resulted from the appreciation of OP.

In the interview, Meier tends to portray the radio production in conjunction with the theatrical one without highlighting any particular reasons for its making,[13] but the KU News Release of the staging reads as follows: "after the stage production closes, the cast will spend several days in the recording studios at Kansas Public Radio, creating a radio drama production, complete with music and sound effects, *to ensure that the performance is available*

13. In this regard, Meier claims: "It was always supposed that we would do a radio production as soon as the stage production closed before the actors forgot their lines and so forth" (2021). He also suggests that in all likelihood "they [the radio production and the staging] were conceived at the same time" (2021).

to everyone through radio broadcast, netcasts and CD" (2010; italics mine). The director's willingness to increase the availability of the performance is confirmed by the actors, who emphasize the advantages of OP:[14] if Geschien limits himself to mentioning the "unique" character of the recording thanks to pronunciation, Hanzlick-Burton equates OP with the original vocal rendition of the play, and claims that Meier might have been eager to show the effects of adopting OP ("tone, meaning and feel of a Shakespeare play"; Hanzlick-Burton 2021).

Given their close cooperation with Meier, the performers can be regarded as key informants, and the greater accessibility of the radio production taken as rooted in the specialness of OP (Geschien 2021; Hanzlick-Burton 2021) and the sharing of its qualities (Hanzlick 2021). The value of these aspects is corroborated by the words of the director himself in the KU News Release (2012),[15] in which Meier gives importance to the adoption of the plays' original pronunciation and stresses the recovery of devices—rhymes, puns and other wordplay—as well as the vernacularity of OP. But, if the source of the press release is deemed not completely reliable, one can still take into account the several references of the director to the characteristics of OP, pointed out while discussing the staging and pronunciation.

14. GESCHIEN: "[…] Professor Meier arranged to have the production recorded at the Kansas Public Radio studios nearby for the radio production, since our production was so unique in utilizing OP. He had hoped the radio production would allow us to reach a broader audience" (Gieschen 2021). HANZLICK-BURTON: "I believe that the stage production was converted into a radio production so that more people and more listeners would have the opportunity to hear a Shakespeare play the way that it was intended to sound. I believe Paul Meier wanted as many people as possible to hear how the pronunciation impacts the tone, meaning, and feel of a Shakespeare play" (Hanzlick-Burton 2021).

15. "If the simple fascination of hearing the text spoken as the opening night audience heard it over 400 years ago isn't enough, consider that OP restores scores of lost rhymes, puns and other wordplay that the intervening centuries have erased," Meier said. "Add to this the down-to-earth, vernacular nature of OP that instantly vanquishes the lingering idea that only really posh speech is appropriate for performing The Bard. All this adds up to something very intriguing to all with more than just a passing interest in Shakespeare" (KU News Release 2012).

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Consequently, the radio production seems to derive from a desire to make the theatrical production accessible to a wider public, springing from some qualities of OP—suitable for an aural medium like the radio. On a final note, if it is no surprise that Meier nor the actors hint at the Mayflower, it is instead startling that no passing mention of the passengers is provided in the radio press release (KU News Release 2012), which might suggest a change of strategies—probably due to the medium?—in the marketing campaign.

LINGUISTIC ISSUES

Although the characteristics and implications of OP have a strong link to both productions, they seem to be at the heart of the radio production. Now linguistic issues will be considered in that they may allow for further considerations on appropriation.

The resemblance between OP and American accents is presented in promotional articles of both the staging and the radio production (KU News Release 2010; Barkhorn 2010; US FED News 2010; Science X 2010; KU News Release 2012).[16] Meier foregrounds the similar elements of American English[17] and OP—informal tone and rhoticity—while detaching Shakespeare's original language from "precise and polished delivery," referring to standard British English. In a BBC text about OP and Americans, the voice coach goes even further by claiming that OP is "so much more American" than the preferred RP (qtd in Ro 2018).

On the other hand, in the interview I conducted—perhaps due to its scientific nature as part of a research project—the director does not indulge in generalizations and carefully draws parallelisms between OP and General American or GenAm, the standard variety of American English:

16. "American audiences will hear an accent and style surprisingly like their own in its informality and strong r-colored vowels," Meier said. "The original pronunciation performance strongly contrasts with the notions of precise and polished delivery created by John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier and their colleagues from the 20th century British theater" (KU News Release 2010; Barkhorn 2010; US FED News 2010; Science X 2010; KU News Release 2012).
17. American English is "not a singular dialect but a family of different regional dialects" (Alley-Young 2020).

RUSSO: If you have as a point of reference OP and then we try to understand if it's more similar to American English or RP, what would you say?

MEIER: [...] It's a *difficult fact to quantify* but I would say that OP and General American are more similar than OP and RP are.

RUSSO: Does it have to do with r sounds?

MEIER: I would say so. *I think that's a huge part of it, the fact that OP and GenAm are both rhotic accents. I would say that that is the dominant similarity* (Meier, 2021; italics mine).

Relying on precision, the voice coach does not make a comparison between OP and the broad label of American English, but prefers focusing on the resemblance between reconstructed pronunciation and General American. Meier claims that the similarity is stronger than that between OP and RP, and attributes it to the rhoticity of the former, but only after the researcher's initial prompt. On discussing OP later on, an additional similarity emerges, "vernacularity," which is often referred to by Meier: "RP vowels are much more muscular and pointed whereas in GenAm and OP the vowels are richer and there's less muscularity with diction. So more vernacularity with OP and GenAm" (Meier 2021).

The comparison between American English and OP, however, is not obliterated: the director recovers it when discussing the accent used in Shakespearean stagings in the US. Starting by maintaining the widespread adoption of American English in Shakespeare theater and indirectly rejecting the need for linguistic appropriation, the director states that "OP, the OP experiment or the OP world is certainly confirmation that American English is perfectly adequate and more than adequate to do a very, very fine Shakespeare production" (2021).[18] In other words, the voice coach sees OP as further evidence of the suitability of American accents for Shakespearean stagings. However, the very fact that the adequacy of American English is called into question might elicit further reflection on its adoption and significance in the panorama of Shakespeare's American productions.

Analyzing the relationship between American English and Shakespearean stagings is beyond the scope of this paper, but in view of Meier's words, the performers' stances are worth

18. OP relies on the natural accents of actors (see Crystal, 2005).

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mentioning. Both actors stress the fact that RP is common when performing Shakespeare, or that if American English is adopted, it corresponds to a "heightened" version of the language (Gieschen 2021), "a sort of Mid-Atlantic accent" (Hanzlick-Burton 2021), characterized by traces of British English. This contrasts with Meier's words, so one wonders whether the influence of the English pronunciation might hinge on the type of stagings—e.g., more traditional vs. experimental.

With reference to the relation between OP and American English as depicted by the actors, it appears either as cautious or non-existent. When presented with the supposed greater closeness of OP to American English, like Meier, Gieschen adopts a prudent attitude:

> In some respects, yes, it is closer to American English than to RP. OP is a rhotic dialect, which it shares in common with American English (for the most part). RP is a non-rhotic dialect, and that missing "R" sound really makes a difference. I'm just guessing here, but to me, that rhotic quality is what really distinguishes the "earthiness" of OP compared to the "airiness" of RP (Gieschen 2021).

If Gieschen recognizes a partial resemblance between OP and American varieties, Hanzlick-Burton rejects it by claiming that she "would describe OP as being the most closely related to the Scottish accent" (2021).

In summary, the similarity between OP and American English or, in the case of the director, General American is not striking, and a linguistic appropriation of Shakespeare is clearly not pursued nor contemplated by Meier—the playwright's works are already integrated into the American linguistic fabric. Nevertheless, the adequacy of American accents, and the use of RP or the Mid-Atlantic accent as suggested by the performers require careful investigation, in that they could shed light on the relation between Shakespeare and American English and even on the perception of the playwright in the US.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2010, 2012) reveals the intervention of several factors—varying in importance—in the use of OP, whose common denominator ties in with some

qualities of Shakespeare's reconstructed pronunciation. Furthermore, contrarily to my expectations, the study shows that the association between the playwright's and the Pilgrim Fathers' pronunciation does not stem from the pursuit of further appropriation of Shakespeare on the part of Meier, a British director. Rather, the association between OP and the speech of the Mayflower passengers is portrayed as having commercial value and stemming from a successful marketing strategy. Although the correlation between theatrical turnout and this strategy is in need of greater evidence also in light of its absence from the publicity for the radio production, appropriation and some targeted alienness of Shakespeare are suggested.

As regards the relation between OP and American English, the two varieties, extraneous to the rhetoric of appropriation, are not seen as remarkably similar, but perceived analogies emerge: they derive either from technical characteristics (e.g., rhoticity) or impressionistic terms (e.g., vernacularity). Thus, in view of the appeal of OP to Americans, it cannot be excluded that the similarities between the two pronunciations might have been experienced as totalizing by some and drawn American institutions to Shakespeare's reconstructed pronunciation. If this were the case, it would be worthwhile to examine the significance of any perceived resemblance as affecting the process of staging performances in OP.[19]

This being said, appropriation, albeit not validated by the director nor the actors, cannot yet be ruled out when it comes to the use of OP in the US. Before proceeding with more investigations, it would be desirable to carry out a deeper exploration of Shakespeare's relation with the US through a linguistic lens, with the aim of shedding light on the actual interference of the author's Englishness, the value of RP, and the use of American accents in Shakespearean performances. If appropriation is sought after and derives from perceived alienness, the latter should be clearly identified and, given Paterson's words and the testimony of the per-

19. Specifically, it would be worth exploring why it is that the commonalities between the reconstructed pronunciation and American English are capable of persuading organizations to invest in productions in OP.

formers on RP and the Mid-Atlantic accent, the pronunciation used for the playwright's works might be a good starting point.

Owing to its nature as a pilot study, such research probably raised more questions than it answered. Further investigations into the two productions—particularly into the motives of the University of Kansas for supporting Meier's initiative and those of audiences—and into other American performances will be needed to shed further (and clearer) light on the use of OP in the US.[20]

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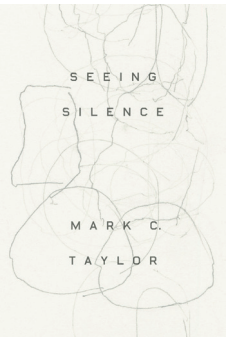
SEEING SILENCE

by Mark C. Taylor
(A Book Review)



Silence, yes, but what silence! For it is all very fine to keep silence, but one has also to consider the kind of silence one keeps.

–Samuel Beckett, "The Unnamable"

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As with many meditations on the powers of silence, Mark C. Taylor's *Seeing Silence* begins with photographs. Clearing his parents' house in the months after his father's death, Taylor discovers "in a dark corner under the rafters […] unmarked boxes stuffed with pictures" (2020: 4). The first few boxes are easily identifiable, "family snapshots" of recognizable faces, but then come "dozens of nameless faces taken by nameless photographers" (2020: 5). Taylor is troubled by their mute testament to relations that were once alive, articulated, and above all incomplete, awaiting a response. The photographs bring his attention to "what [he] heard in what [he] couldn't hear" (2020: 10): not only the subject and the photographer (both, importantly, nameless, unknowable, silent), but also answers to questions he can no longer ask of the past. *Seeing Silence* begins with a return to these questions. Specifically, it is the task of listening to images which Taylor takes up: "it was what I heard in what I couldn't hear that arrested my attention" (2020: 10). The photographs he finds present a breach in language because they seem to stand

in for something unsaid or unsayable, something like memory and its failings but with the uncanny sharpness of presence added to the mix. It is as if the photographs *do* 'speak,' and the questions in Taylor's opening chapter would attest to this, but this speaking is lost on us. Should this loss mark a limit of sorts, within which there is only silent contemplation? Is it, more acutely, a confrontation with the dead, a meeting, as Barthes put it, with those who were "then *already* dead (yesterday)" (1981: 96)?

These questions extend themselves across Taylor's twelve chapters, each organized around an attitude or approach to silence in art: "Without," "Before," "From," "Beyond," "Against," "Within," "Between," "Toward," "Around," "With," "In." There are also three 'chapters' marked only with ellipsis, providing knowingly blank intervals in a text that remains rigorous in its inquiry and open in its style, and which provides not answers but an eclectic series of frames for thinking through silence as it relates to space and the visual field. The photographic image is a departure point (fittingly, given Taylor's own interest in photography from childhood), whilst the rest of the book occupies itself with a series of writers, architects, and artists, for the most part twentieth-century American, each one notable for his (and they are all men) engagement with silence. In structuring his inquiry around a series of encounters with art works, Taylor's argumentation is both philosophically dense and at times close to memoir, ending with(in) his own sculptures on Stone Hill, in the Berkshires, which he began in August 2006. The book so moves, in an overtly redemptive arc, from the disquieting stillness of the photograph to the "[f]leeting grace-full presence" (2020: 259) of the rock garden.

As well as this autobiographical journey, which Taylor conceives as "[r]eversing while at the same time repeating the *Via Dolorosa*" (2020: 26), *Seeing Silence* testifies to its author's long and varied dialogue with major currents in twentieth-century and contemporary philosophy, critical theory, and theology. There are reflections on the status of silence as it relates to linguistics, literature, visuality, architecture, phenomenology, epistemology, mysticism, divinity, frequently prompted by Taylor's readings of artists. Chapter one—"Without"—begins with John Cage's *4'33"*, placing it within the context of twentieth-century avant-garde artistic practices

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which responded to the proliferation of noise in urban spaces. Here Taylor gestures towards what is otherwise the book's most significant omission: a convincing account, or an extended consideration of, the historical conditions which might give rise to a preoccupation with the possibilities (and the impossibility) of silence. How is it that post-war art converged around ideas of abstraction, negation and absence, and lined these up against expression, affirmation and representation? Susan Sontag, writing in 1967, situated these trends within a prolonged decline of spirituality's traditional outlets (religion, myth, mysticism) and the rise of a post-psychological conception of consciousness. The emergence of art as an alternative spiritual site, a "form of mystification," in turn gave rise to the myth of anti-art, the assailing of that spiritual site by the heroic artist, and the pursuit of silence became one prominent mode of driving towards the "abolition of art itself" (Sontag 1969: 7). Taylor quotes Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence" in his introductory "Chapter Zero," citing her distinction between "loud" and "soft" silence (2020: 18), and yet Sontag's own attempt to historicize her dialectical claim is not fully taken up.

In place of an account of how it was that artists like Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt, and Barnett Newman came to be prized by post-war critics for their distinctive resistance to representation and moves towards the unrepresentable ("silence is so accurate," goes the gnomic Rothko phrase), Taylor leans in to the spiritual textures of their lives (Newman's commitment to "penetration into the world-mystery" [2020: 71], for example, or Reinhardt's interest in medieval mystics [2020: 105]). Each chapter thereby structures itself as a miniature of the book itself, tracing the development of an artistic sensibility through a series of aesthetic and philosophical encounters. Beneath the central thesis (that urbanized modernity has generated a need for silence), there emerges a more elaborate claim: that the mid-twentieth- century artist was acutely, entirely, and perhaps heroically sensitive to this need, and that abstract expressionism and its various aftermaths were a means of responding to it. The relationship between artistic making and writing is fundamental here: the artist (or the philosopher) resolves to make something which cannot be expressed in writing, or writes something which cannot find expression in their art.

The gap between the two, and the capacity of any given artwork to heroically render an idea through its making, and to thereby subtract this idea from language and reformulate it in a *silent* form (be it a painting, a sculpture, or a building), is what interests Taylor. In part, this represents a recapitulation of familiar readings of American art in post-war New York. It is an echo of the idea that these artists were vacating the "active self" in pursuit of "cosmic identifications" with a "tragic dimension," as Irving Sandler wrote of Rothko in *The Triumph of American Painting* (1970: 183). That this 'triumph' was received and promoted as distinctly *American* is a subject for the most part eschewed by Taylor, who pulls together a more transnational and transhistorical narrative which can absorb influences from Zen Buddhism to the thirteenth-century Flemish mystic John of Ruysbroeck.

Seeing Silence is nonetheless an account of artists who lived and worked much of their lives in America, and it is clear that Taylor's interest in the kinds of silence they produced is to be weighed against the 'noise' (which Taylor glosses for its etymological connection to nausea [2020: 28]) of contemporary culture in the United States: "[o]ne of the most pressing problems is that in today's high-speed, noisy word, people have forgotten how to listen" (2020: 261). In one of the book's later chapters, Taylor cites a beautiful passage from Jean Baudrillard's *America*, which documented the theorist's road-trip across the country:

> The silence of the desert is a visual thing too. A product of the gaze that stares out and finds nothing to reflect it. There can be no silence up in the mountains, since their very contours roar. And for there to be silence, time itself has to attain a sort of horizontality; there has to be no echo of time in the future, but simply a sliding of geological strata one upon the other giving nothing more than a fossil murmur. (1988: 6)

Baudrillard, Taylor writes, discovered in the desert "an ecstasy that was no longer human" (2020: 192). It was, however, an 'ecstasy' which Baudrillard then reversed in the book's exhaustive critique of what he described as "American primitivism": the endless seeking after a "sublime natural phenomenon," such as Death Valley, finds its mirror in "the abject cultural phenomenon" of Las Vegas (1988: 65). The search for origin, Baudrillard maintained, was made possible by the "secrecy and silence" on which the United States

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had constructed itself: "[this] obsession with finding a niche, a contact, precisely at the point where everything unfolds in an astral indifference" (1988: 8). The desert, in others word, is not 'more real' than the culture that intrudes on it, nor does it have something interpretable, useful, meaningful to give. Rather, the culture that intrudes on the desert finds itself without fixity or form, and tipped likewise towards an indifferent, meaningless expansion. The noise of modernity comes out of the desert because it is, in some way, provoked by this antinomy. Silence, in this context, is far from the contemplative and ultimately positive sense of presence that Taylor arrives at towards his conclusion. Silence here is instead precisely that which upends the very possibilities of self, thought, and their communicability.

In response to Baudrillard, Taylor "decided [he] had to return to the desert" and he headed towards Marfa, Texas, an hour's drive north of the Mexican border (2020: 192). Here he considers the legacy of Donald Judd, artist and collector who left New York in the mid-seventies to work on permanent installations in the desert town. Taylor's biographical sketch of Judd is instructive for the questions it raises about the aestheticization of this desert silence. Judd came to work in Marfa because, as quoted by Taylor, "the continuous noise in some cities, especially New York, is thoughtless" (2020: 195) and the desert provided a place in which his spare and precise minimalist constructions could be set against the vast emptiness surrounding them. As Taylor notes, a remarkable number of artists loosely associated with minimalism and environmental art—Judd, as well as Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, and Robert Irwin—were drawn to the West:

> The desert rather than the city was the preferred setting for their work. As post-World War II consumer culture heated up, these artists cooled on the city and, like monks fleeing the corrupt world, headed to the desert. (2020: 193)

But what remains striking is that these installations were conceived of both as responses to and bold intrusions upon the blank canvas of the desert. In the case of Judd, his two major works at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa are designed "[t]o make this space for others to see" (Taylor 2020: 199). The surrounding

desert is a suitable backdrop, but what's really evoked is a question of space as it is generated by and within the parameters of the installations themselves. Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977) included four hundred steel poles installed in western New Mexico. Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969) involved shifting over 200,000 tons of sandstone to clear a 1500-foot-long trench in the Nevada desert. For Taylor, these works heighten our awareness of the "astral indifference" that Baudrillard described. But it is also possible that they present an interruption of just that indifference, an attempt to allay it and speak over the silence that these artists were first drawn to. Do these works not enact a spilling over of the city's dreaded noise to the desert? Can they encourage their spectators to 'see' silence, as Taylor believes they can? Or is the desert, in his own telling phrase, nothing more than their "preferred setting"?

Seeing Silence tends to smooth over such difficulties because of its interest in an aesthetic reformulation of theology's *via negativa*: a conscious process by which works and writings that negate and subtract, end up reinstating, rather than diminishing, our sense of presence and openness to the world. The desert artworks exemplify this because they help us see the reality of the space around them, rather than masking it or obliterating it. Yet it is also true that many of the works discussed by Taylor might just as well be experienced as declarative, loud, *noisy*. A broader frame of reference may have changed this impression. Even remaining in the US during the same time period, the illuminated canvases of Mary Corse, for example, would have shed some light on the monumental and overpowering tendencies of James Turrell's works. Or the grid paintings of Agnes Martin, which whilst everywhere concerned with "experience that is wordless and silent" (Matin 1992: 89), seem nothing like as intrusive or bombastic as, say, Heizer's *Double Negative*. This, naturally, is in part a question of taste, and Taylor presents a very personal walk through the artists and thinkers who have accompanied him for years. The threads drawn together across the work give the impression of marginal notes brought to the center: silence as a motif that lines the edge of many major theoretical frameworks that Taylor knows intimately and which he can expertly draw our attention to. The questions remain: what

silence is kept, who keeps it, and for what purpose? *Seeing Silence* is mostly monochrome and happily repetitive in answering this: silence relates to presence; the artist accesses it through work; the purpose is contemplation (or the artwork *is itself* a contemplative space). The move of Taylor's narrative from photography to land art in part reflects this, with the latter ultimately preferred for its presumed depersonalization of spectatorship, an escape from the noisy questions which the photograph's unnerving silence can too readily arouse.

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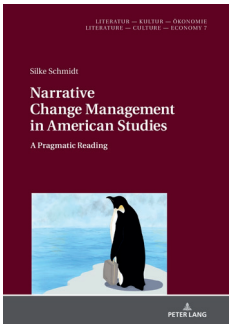
NARRATIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN AMERICAN STUDIES: A PRAGMATIC READING

by Silke Schmidt
(A Book Review)



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The question is not whether the humanities—or more specifically, those disciplines taught at universities—are in a state of crisis, as that seems to have been long since answered. Books like Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon's *Permanent Crisis: The Humanities in a Disenchanted Age* (2021) argues that the notion of crisis is in fact as old as the humanities themselves, as scholars today approach their current predicament in ways that are notably similar to their German counterparts in the nineteenth century. Their book grapples with the issue of whether the humanities field is now irrelevant for modern careers; with departments starved of funding by governments, they have become prey to the forces of technology and modernity, and have since had to prioritize finding grant money and helping heavily indebted students into well-paid jobs. In the midst of this is a sense that something valuable and unique is being lost. The book's authors, like many others who have weighed in on the crisis discourse, adhere to a belief that the humanities are more than just a "set of disciplines" or "bureaucratic arrangement of departments," but encompass a set of norms, practices, ideals and virtues—in short, "a way

of life"—which stands to preserve "something sacred or valuable against forces that threaten their very existence" (5).

These forces have also been studied by scholars of higher education such as Stefan Collini, whose book *Speaking of Universities* (2017) further darkens the picture of what is happening to the academic humanities at present. The immense global surge in the numbers of students and universities in recent years has forced the latter to behave more like business ventures in a commercial marketplace than independent centers of learning, as they have steadily evolved into profit-hungry enterprises more concerned with student enrolment numbers and alumni networks than ensuring the educational quality or fair working conditions for their employees; "at present, the received wisdom in the policy-making world is that the only criterion with undisputed legitimacy across the board is that of contributing to economic prosperity" (Collini 2017). Collini maintains that the focus on quantitative metrics has both harmed academic humanities but also negatively impacted society in general. This general distrust of business ties in with a belief that the humanities' focus on ethics, values, and self-reflection can counteract the dehumanising influence of managerialism, unfettered capitalism, and neoliberal policies. It is a belief that has also been expressed in street protests calling for the liberation of the humanities from the dictates of economic usability; in the blogs of disillusioned, job-hungry post-docs; in the panels and papers of international conferences devoted to deconstructing the crisis narrative (see Cvejić et al. 2016); and in the seemingly endless series of articles and monographs lamenting the humanities' decline and inevitable downfall (e.g. Jay 2016; Schmidt 2018).

Yet few, if any, have proposed solutions as new or as radical as those presented in Silke Schmidt's *Narrative Change Management in American Studies: A Pragmatic Reading* (2021). The book is neither new nor radical in its form, nor in the way that it affirms and interrogates the nature and effects of the crisis, but rather in the author's approach to finding practical and feasible ways to overcome it. What makes the book different, and also refreshing, is its lack of polemic, positive outlook, and conciliatory tone. Schmidt's aim is to lay out a pragmatic approach to interdisci-

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plinary dialogue, with the disciplines in question being American Studies and Business Studies respectively. Schmidt frequently acknowledges that it is an ambitious project, and her optimism is tempered by a realistic assessment of its potential to bring about lasting change—a subject to which she gives an honest and sobering account in the prologue. Her main audience is American Studies in Germany, with the discussion of the roots of the humanities and liberal arts teaching in America seen very much from a German perspective.

The book is divided into two parts, which encompass twelve detailed and well-researched chapters. It is structured in such a way that it forms a "scholarly narrative" where the findings of each chapter are used for further reflection in the following one. Part I looks at the disciplinary divide between Business and American Studies from a pragmatic perspective, with an aim to establish and facilitate dialogue between them. Part II seeks to develop "a pragmatic approach to solving the problem and testing the method" (S. Schmidt 2021: 31). There is a strong emphasis on communication and dialogue throughout, and the book is written in a way intended to make it accessible to scholars from both fields. The book's practicality is readily apparent; its clear, jargon-free analyses are interspersed with definitions, examples, and summaries aimed at encapsulating and clarifying the discussions and arguments that preceded them. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the book is its self-reflexive quality. The author is constantly observing and commenting on her methods and approach, and the work of the reader is made easier by the inclusion of these summaries, as well as graphs, diagrams, anecdotes, and cartoons which help to illustrate and enliven the ideas that are being discussed. The practical nature of the book makes it seem more aligned with Business rather than traditional American Studies scholarship. Given the author's background and current research interests in Management, one feels that this impression is entirely intentional.

The book's primary aim is expressed in its title, namely working to change the narrative surrounding the academic humanities. Schmidt argues that the way to go about this is not to "mourn the state of the field," nor to accept the prevailing tendency to "value

crisis as a way of life," but rather to "move towards pragmatic solutions to these challenges" (24). Schmidt addresses the developments that have impacted higher education, and identifies three main issues. First, there is digitalization, and how technology has irreversibly changed how knowledge is obtained, produced, and disseminated. Second, there is differentiation, by which she means the way knowledge has become fragmented across the various disciplines, along with the ever-increasing specialization within the respective subjects. Third, there is a need for a communication that can cut through the growing complexity in order to offer greater clarity for those in other disciplines and for non-academic audiences. All of these challenges must be met if the humanities, and American Studies in particular, wishes to remain a relevant part of the university. While she points out that the broad scope and unique disciplinary culture of American Studies are beneficial when it comes to innovation or identifying and diagnosing problems, the problem lies with implementation. This means transferring thought into action, and that action is required on two different levels: the academic, meaning research and teaching, and that of organization or administration. Schmidt argues that American Studies "can benefit from management methods that enable the field to strategically expand its strengths in the competition for research innovation and academic talents" (25).

Schmidt is well aware that this is easier said than done. If the resulting culture clash is the result of deep-rooted differences in methodology and epistemology and how they relate to problem-solving, then how could the two disciplines help one another? She looks to bring about change by bridging the knowledge gap between them, and she rightly infers that the main difference between the "Two Cultures" is that, unlike the sciences, humanistic study tends to yield uncertainty rather than certainty, the kind of knowledge "that solicits its own revision in an endless process of refutation, contestation, and modification [...] hence, the very nature of the knowledge produced by the humanities is inseparable from crisis as an uncertain and immediate threat" (37). Yet rather than seeking to 'normalize' the crisis as a permanent state of affairs in the manner of Reitter and Wellmon (2021), she makes the point that crises in general tend to be driving forces behind innovation.

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The current crisis should therefore be seen as an opportunity, though she remains focused on first establishing communication between the disciplines and with non-academic audiences as well. Schmidt's view of the humanities is thus very much aligned with its conventional discourse, insofar as it offers ethical awareness and critical reflection, which are increasingly in demand by society and industry; "whenever managers are responsible for steering large organizations, they need clear thinking and a moral compass in order to make responsible decisions" (Schmidt 2021: 26). Schmidt casts doubt on whether Business Schools in their current form, with their emphasis on quantitative methods and scientific objectivity, can be expected to teach these qualities. Yet where she breaks with the conventional outlook of the humanities is by arguing that, far from being the source of its problems, Management and Business are in fact the best place to look for ways to solve them.

The benefit of exchanging methods and practices is that it offsets a major imbalance between American Studies and Business in terms of practice and theory. Business and Management studies, Schmidt argues, are heavily practice-oriented, while American Studies "seems to miss any access to practical learning" (29). Her goal of developing a model of pragmatic reading looks to bridge this gap between theory and practice, and she uses the philosophy of pragmatism as a means by which both might benefit from mutual engagement and interdisciplinary dialogue. Pragmatism is a key term that recurs throughout the book and provides further theoretical support for the interdisciplinary exchange she prescribes. Schmidt draws on the ideas of William James and Richard J. Bernstein, and defines the concept as follows: "pragmatism follows inductive empiricism and values experience as the source of learning. The goal of pragmatic inquiry is change-oriented action" (27–28). Her aim therefore is to take the knowledge gained through research and experience and turn it into something tangible, something that can be applied to create sustainable change. Though Schmidt admits that as a theoretical approach pragmatism is no longer fashionable, she suggests its resurgence is a sign of changing times, though it is above all a tool

that "encourages one to use creative problem-solving skills to find new methods for tackling old problems in new alliances" (28).

Furthermore, a crucial similarity is that both fields "value narrative as a means of teaching" (400). In the opening chapters, she works out a theoretical language with which to 'read' the two disciplinary cultures and thereby elucidate their value to each other, primarily through the method of Narrative Organization Studies. This focuses on narrative and storytelling which is easily accessible to those involved in both Business and American Studies. Schmidt identifies the main benefit of this method insofar as it broadens the concept of literature, so that 'reading' can also encompass management literature of any kind. It is by broadening the concept of critical reading that she lays the book's theoretical foundation, and which also unites its two parts into a coherent whole. The book's later chapters give American Studies scholars quick and easy access to some key ideas and narratives of Business and Management Studies by supplying historical information as well as insights into renowned theorists and practitioners such as Mary Cunningham, John P. Kotter, and Peter F. Drucker, though Schmidt also intends Business Studies scholars to "see their own field through the prism of my reading" (29).

Schmidt strives for a balanced approach throughout the book, with the various strengths and weaknesses of both disciplines examined in considerable detail. She identifies the causes of the interdisciplinary conflict, which she claims is primarily due to a lack of adequate knowledge of American business history, as well as its methods and outlook, on the part of American Studies. In the face of such difficulties and potential skepticism regarding her project, she puts forward her own experience, which has shown her that there "has never been a reason why humanistic training and methodology should stand in opposition to management thinking and practice in a social sciences environment" (30). She also cites the example of Peter Drucker and the roots of Business Studies in the liberal arts in America, which "combines knowledge from the arts *and* sciences" (30). Schmidt also echoes the popular argument that the "coexistence of machines and humans will rely on people who understand humans even better than machines" (30). The only way humanities

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can truly make an impact on contemporary society is by connecting with the "social reality" and the issues that are relevant for the world outside academia, which is what students, in her view, are being prepared for anyway. So, the desired impact of the book goes beyond the university, as it is for the those who think about education in a digital world.

That world, Schmidt argues, "is coming to appreciate the humanities more and more as the basis of holistic knowledge and transferable skills" (41). Yet so far those in American Studies, with a few exceptions, have shown little interest in engaging in any form of exchange with Business Studies, despite the potential rewards of putting their skills on the market. This a point that Schmidt addresses in her introduction. When it comes to uniting the two disciplines, she claims that "the stress is on methods, not on mindset," as she is not advocating a change in the overall outlook of those engaged in the humanities, as in her view "understanding and practicing management is not the same as adopting a business-oriented value system" (25). Schmidt recognizes that there must be a mutual desire to engage in this kind of dialogue, as one "cannot unite parties that do not want to be united" (30). She also acknowledges the "hostility" felt by American Studies towards any business-related content, which runs throughout the crisis discourse discussed above. This, one feels, is the crux of the matter upon which the success of her project ultimately rests.

Given the nature of her project, it is understandable that she focuses on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems, yet there are some important issues relating precisely to the humanities "mindset" that would have benefited from further development. First and foremost, there are deep ideological differences between the two disciplines that have set them at opposite ends of the political spectrum. It would be hard, for instance, to reconcile Marxist theory or the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, or anti-globalist discourse encountered in many American Studies courses with the dictates of business, however mutually beneficial the eventual outcomes may be. The movement in the humanities toward tackling inequality, racial discrimination, and environmental issues has only deepened the divide between those judged to be on the 'liberal' or 'conservative' side of these debates, not to mention

the longstanding veneration of countercultural figures who have preached outright rebellion against America's business as usual mindset and the status quo. So, can Business and American Studies fully adopt the methods and practices of the other without also absorbing the mentality, habits of thought, and worldview? It goes back to the old debate on how much mastering cultural practices also depends on adopting cultural values, and what compromises and sacrifices must be made along the way. It is easy to sympathize when one hears the frustration and exasperation of humanities scholars who feel compelled to justify and defend their work, and by extension, their livelihoods; yet underlying these sentiments is a deep anxiety that their very identity is in danger of being stripped away.

Still, that is not to say that these same scholars would not be wise to read Schmidt's book and to heed its message. While it might make uncomfortable reading for some, its level-headed, action-oriented outlook is exactly what is needed to shake the humanities out of its downward spiral into inertia and despair. Desperate times, it would seem, call for drastic measures.

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DEPARTURES: AN INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL REFUGEE STUDIES

by the Critical Refugee Studies Collective
(A Book Review)

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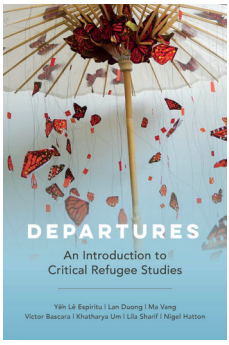

Red monarchs made from Chinese funeral paper, tied to long threads of horsehair, fall gently from underneath the spokes of a white umbrella. This detail of *Our Hearts Beat as One* (2016), an art installation by Priscilla Otani, graces the cover art of *Departures*, the freshly released introductory volume to the interdisciplinary field of Critical Refugee Studies, penned by the Critical Refugee Studies Collective and published by the University of California Press. Otani's statement on this installation is partially quoted in the credits on the back of the book's title page. According to the San Francisco-based media artist, the butterflies nesting under the "fragile shelter" (iv) of the paper umbrella are meant to represent "the shared desire of migrants for survival and regeneration." Intriguingly, however, if one reads the rest of the statement on Otani's website, one will not fail to make an additional connection. The monarchs, she claims, were chosen to draw a parallel to human migration: "Entire generations die [...] but the will to reach a destination is borne by the next generations." Three years after that Otani affixed the last origami butterfly on her installation, Ocean Vuong's rousing prose debut *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) was published

by Random House to wide critical acclaim. Browsing the pages of Vuong's novel, one will find the very same parallel, this time expressed in words rather than through hand-craft visual art: "The monarchs that fly south will not make it back north. Each *departure*, then, is final. […] Monarchs that survived the migration passed this message down to their children. The memory of family members lost from the initial winter was woven into their genes" (11; 15; my italics).

Not incidentally, two key passages of *Departures* specifically revolve around Vuong's novel. In fact, Vuong's art as a whole could be seen as a prime example of what the seven scholars that form the collective define as "refugee *re-storying*" (89). That which is, the work of those refugee authors who "revel in beauty and survival, even when refugee lives are edged with precarity," dismantling the tropes and the narratives that "reify condescending and depleted images of refugees" (89). In this respect, *Departures* presses ahead on multiple fronts. Its manifold nature is made explicit by the title itself, intended both as an allusion to the action of leaving and to that of deviating from a regular path. Highly readable and sharp-edged, tailor-made for an audience that includes (and transcends) colleges and universities, this text will likely find its way into many class syllabi and reading lists. Located at the crossroads of theory and resistance, advocacy and academia, *Departures* oozes rage, energy, and optimism, and is unapologetically political. Partly a guide, partly a manifesto, the book dutifully performs its pre-set task of introducing the general reader to the field of Critical Refugee Studies, all the while engaging with larger issues and challenges. CRS, the authors state in the "Introduction," is "a way to seize control of image and narrative, by and for refugees, centered in refugee epistemologies and experiences" (15). As a community-engaged critical field, it postulates the necessity of moving past pre-existing humanitarian narratives and frameworks, exposing the underlying threads that tie militarism and migration, power and memory, empire and race. As one of the founding members of the collective, scholar Yến Lê Espiritu, had already put it in her pivotal essay *Body Counts* (2014), CRS as a field "conceptualizes 'the refugee' not as an object of investigation but rather as a *paradigm* […] with the premise that the refugee, who inhabits a condition

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of statelessness, radically calls into question the established principles of the nation-state and the idealized goal of inclusion and recognition within it" (10). Refugee lives, as per Espiritu, can thus help illuminate "the interconnections of colonization, war, and global social change" (11).

Departures carries out these same tasks, albeit in a radically changed world scenario. In fact, right from the opening lines of the volume, the book is presented as a snapshot of a moment in time. The post-pandemic, post-Trump, post-George Floyd United States, in the process of grappling with newfound social and racial reckonings, are the chaotic backdrop against which the concerns and the approaches explored in the essays are laid out. To get to grips with them, the seven contributors claim to have got rid of the "neoliberal" (8) binds of self-reliance and individualism to embrace "critical, collective energies" (8). Indeed, *Departures* is no mere collection of essays: one will find seven names on the front cover, but no name under the chapter headers, as to emphasize the community-driven nature of CRS as a critical field. The reader is presented with a multi-faceted, multi-voiced array of perspectives that seemingly come at them from all directions, as if they were Otani's paper monarchs dropping smoothly from under the umbrella. For most members of the Collective, war is "not merely a metaphor" (7): there are among them those who sought refuge and experienced displacement as a consequence of the "militaristic and racist enterprises" underpinning America's "empire building." Channeling Somali British and Palestinian poetry, Syrian visual art, and Vietnamese American independent cinematography, the authors call for new methodologies and approaches, as well as for new stories that go beyond the simple "formula of […] escape, despair, and rescue" (147) embedded in mainstream refugee narratives. CRS' aim is to break that mold, underscoring the "invisible relations of power that broker how we see and consume the refugee subject" (123); that is to say, to radically twist the ways in which the latter is defined by the law, by the arts, and by the collective conscious.

It goes without saying that such stakes are high. In the first two chapters of *Departures*, the Collective grab the wolf by the ears by advocating nothing less than a complete rethinking of the legal

definition of refugees as per the "limited and limiting language" (72) of the 1951 UN Convention. CRS' redefinition of 'refugee' notably omits the "double-edged" vocabulary of fear "embedded in a legal structure in which states expect refugees to demonstrate fear to gain entry but also regard them as those who are to be feared" (57). Moreover, the Collective argues that the UN's outdated definition of a refugee as 'someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted' does not consider the ever-increasingly complex circumstances that produce modern global mass displacement—for one, climate change. Such requests are reiterated in the "Epilogue," an open letter to the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Human Rights, addressed in English, Vietnamese, Somali, French, and German, in which the authors ask the UN to "[k]eep the lens caps on [the] cameras […] and find new ways to envision […] policies […] that better value and emphasize refugee knowledge" (148).

In Chapter 3, the conversation turns to humanitarianism and rescue narratives. The chapter shows how refugees, in such narratives, are at once invisible *and* hypervisible, infantilized and exoticized, pitied and dehumanized, and generally expected to always *perform* gratitude. This last aspect is one of the cruxes of *Departures* and of CRS as a field of study—the notion of "*refugee refusal*" (96). Which is to say, the act, on the part of the forcibly displaced, of opting out of the frame of the redundant 'crisis-rescue-gratitude' storyline so prevalent in mainstream depictions of mass displacement. This implies the rejection, as Dina Nayeri would put it, of "sugary success stories" (98) meant to please the receiving countries—in the name of what Mimi Thi Nguyen defines as the "gift of freedom," that is, "the name for liberalism's difference from coloniality, but also its linkage to it—through which freedom as a 'thing, force, and gaze' re-creates modern racial governmentality for a new age" (22). This very much applies to the diasporas resulted from the war in Vietnam, from which several members of the Collective directly stem. Such diasporas were born under the auspices of a "Cold War logic" that guaranteed protection "only to those fleeing left-wing […] persecution,"

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to show America's "moral obligation as the perceived leader of the free world" (44). The gift of freedom, indeed.

As per the Collective, televised images of orphans and caravans reminiscent of biblical iconography, and of threatening masses of brown bodies stacked along fences and borders, equally strip the forcibly displaced of their humanity and agency, actively vitiating the public discourse on refugees. The center of attention, they argue, must be shifted away from the statistics to focus on the stories. Refugee desires, instead of refugee needs; words, instead of pictures of corpses; refugee agency, instead of 'trauma porn' and victimization—must all concur to a new paradigm. The seven scholars call for a reimagining of archival practices and for the formation of a "new critical community" (143) armed with fresh methodology lenses. But above all, what they do hope for is that "economy of narrative plenitude" advocated by Viet Thanh Nguyen regarding the "ethnic and racial others" (203) squeezed to the fringes of the American literary market. The underlying idea, as Yến Lê Espiritu once put it in a public lecture, is that "refugee stories [themselves can constitute] a site of theory-making" (2021). Refugee re-storying, the Collective argues, is the one tool that can dismantle the "hyperobjectification" (106) of the forcibly displaced, effectively turning the objectified individual into a producer of knowledge. Similarly, the Collective postulates the need to engage in a brand-new mode of analysis called Feminist Refugee Epistemology, or FRE. FRE is a means to "examining the intersections between private grief and public commemoration […] and the looking for the hidden political forces within the site of intimate domestic and familial interaction" (23), gravitating towards refugee art focused on "private moments of grief, interiority, and reflection" (112), rather than around (white) savior narratives of rescue, or around the revanchist rhetoric of "refugee nationalism" (Nguyen 2017, 135) prevalent in some diasporic communities. By way of example, Chapter 4 examines three instances of visual refugee art—among which stands out Lan Duong's analysis of *Nước*, an experimental short film by Vietnamese American filmmaker Quyên Nguyen-Le focused on the bond between a genderqueer teen and their refugee mother.

In conclusion, *Departures* works on many levels and can be read in as many ways. As a compendium/introduction to CRS, it lets the general reader get a firm grasp on the subject, dropping breadcrumbs along its way to better help them navigate the field. Similarly, it proves to be an excellent starting point for students and undergraduates engaging in literary studies or in community-driven memory-work. As an academic text, the book does not fail to provide original points of discussion—one needs to look no further than the juxtaposition, attempted in Chapter 3, between a passage from Ocean Vuong's novel and the notion of 'strategic performativity.' Ultimately, however, *Departures* works best as a critical manifesto "by and for refugees." Bold and provocative, it will not fail to spark conversations in the coming years. At its core, to use an apt—if unpleasant—metaphor, lies a call to arms. "Let us be clear," the authors state, "we are asking for those plentiful stories that would constitute an arsenal to decolonize and wrest power from the powerful" (140). Not an easy task to achieve; but looking at the state of the world and appreciating the growing "narrative plenitude" of refugee storytelling and refugee critique it produces, there is no doubt that such a call will be soon answered by many.

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IASA EMERGING SCHOLARS

The Position of the IASA Executive Council on the Inclusion of Emerging Scholars in the Leadership of the Organization

Visual Stories: Latin America in Focus
RIAS Vol. 15, Fall–Winter, № 2/2022

Over the 22 years since June 1, 2000, when IASA came into existence, the world has changed drastically, and so have the goals and the means of the discipline.

In the face of a corporatization of the Academia, combined with blatant anti-intellectualism in the political rhetoric by national governments aimed to justify the radical financial cuts that the humanities world-wide have witnessed in the recent decade, the future of American Studies depends heavily upon those who fall victim to the engineered decline of academic humanities: our Emerging Scholars. The increasingly bleak prospects of tenured positions, the shift towards a more easily controlled adjunct workforce, the meager salaries for junior faculty, are among many factors demotivating brilliant individuals from joining, and more importantly, staying within Academia.

Aware of this, IASA has expanded its goals. Today, not only are we responsible for the building of a reliable, politically non-partisan knowledge base and for the distribution of critical insights in the Open Access formula to whoever in the world needs them, but also for the future of our Emerging Scholars when Universities do not always guarantee the space for them to grow.

Fully recognizing the value of experience and documented achievements of the Senior Colleagues, IASA, as a truly 21st cen-

tury, socially responsible Organization, is critical of the "traditional" strategies of leadership selection based solely on international recognition and age-related seniority of degree. Appreciating the intellectual merit, leadership skills, commitment, and responsibility of our younger scholars, IASA encourages the involvement of our Emerging Scholars in the running of our Organization, side by side with their Senior colleagues.

Committed to the support of the intergenerational connections within the International American Studies Association, we recognize that scholars in their thirties and forties are not only fully shaped, excellent researchers, equipped to identify the needs of the discipline and its goals today, but also that–granted proper tools (such as an established, SCOPUS-listed journal and a functional network of international scholars) they can become visible as academics and teachers before their frustration with the policies and practices of the academia in their own countries drives them towards seeking jobs outside of it, to the detriment of learning world wide.

We wish to reiterate that in IASA, senior, managerial, and leadership positions are at not restricted to established professorship only. Our Organization recognizes that many of our Emerging Scholars, often denied permanent positions at their own universities, have made ground-breaking contributions to the present-day state of knowledge, despite which many of them remain invisible. To help remedy the situation, IASA aims to be the space in which Emerging Scholars can thrive. Gradually, but without delay, younger colleagues with exemplary leadership skills and excellent professional record will assume leadership positions in our Organization: first, shadowing our current leaders, and then taking over their responsibilities. The thus rejuvenated International American Studies Association will certainly be in good hands for decades to come.

With such a goal in view, the Executive Council proposes to call into existence a cohort of the "IASA Early Career Fellows" for two year appointments, assuming that this title will enhance our younger Colleagues employment

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prospects, or–if they are already employed–help increase their visibility. This cohort could be offered opportunities for mentoring in areas they desire, and for active engagement with the organization. In addition, they could be the source of planning for events that would serve their particular interests, and potentially, put together webinars as well as other events that would enhance their own and their cohort's visibility. IASA Early Career fellows could thus highlight their work while building ongoing engagement with the Organization. Monthly online meetings, in shifting time zone calculations, could facilitate getting to know one another within the cohort, as well as energize building cross-national and cross regional connections that are one of the great joys of the in-person Congresses. Many other projects, including podcasts, publications, promotion of special issue ideas developed by the cohort, would then have a chance to develop.

If a new group of 40 is inaugurated every two years, in just three cycles there would be 120 early career scholars connected to IASA and to each other, especially if there is a cross-cohort "alums" connection that could be maintained, along with the intergenerational connections that will help support the building of careers in the earlier stages.

With such an aim in mind, the International American Studies Association invites all of the IASA Early Career Scholars to subscribe to the new section of the Organization's website, the "IASA Emerging Scholars" section, in which all of the information concerning the IASA Emerging Scholars' Forum and the IASA Early Career Fellowship Programme will be provided and systematically updated.

Please, visit:
https://iasa-world.org/iasa-emerging-scholars/

IASA Executive Council
30 Dec. 2022

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JOURNEYING (THE) AMERICAS THE PARADOXES OF TRAVEL (AND) NARRATIVES

IASA 11th World Congress 2023
Call for Contributions (first circular)

Visual Stories: Latin America in Focus
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UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA IN KATOWICE

International American Studies Association is delighted to announce the Call for Contributions for the 11th World Congress of IASA titled *Journeying (the) Americas The Paradoxes of Travel (and) Narratives*. This time, the organization of the IASA World Congress has been entrusted to our excellent Colleagues from the Institute of Cultural Studies, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The Congress, organized and hosted both on the University premises and on line, will be held between September 7th and 10th, 2023.

JOURNEYING (THE) AMERICAS
THE PARADOXES OF TRAVEL (AND) NARRATIVES
11TH WORLD CONGRESS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA IN KATOWICE, POLAND
07–10.09.2023
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The phenomenon of travel has been fraught with paradoxes since the times immemorial. Perhaps the most striking of the travel-related controversies is the fact that although it is one of humanity's earliest experiences, journeying has never been available to all. Regarded as one of the elementary and universal social practices, it was–and still is–the share of the few. Equally paradoxically, despite the archetypal status of the very concept of the journey, in the social and geographical sense, traveling itself is a rela-

tively new phenomenon: the onset of leisure travel comes as late as in the 19th century, when modern means of mass transportation became popularly available and affordable. Unsurprisingly, then, many of those craving the knowledge of the distant lands, used to depend, and still largely rely on, mediated reports: texts, images, and other narratives representing fragments of experienced (or imagined) reality that always require voluntary suspension of disbelief.

Notably, in the past, journeying was largely driven by economic or political compulsion (escaping persecution, wars and conquests, trade, or search for greener pastures) or by the sense of religious duty (peregrinations and pilgrimages). It therefore comes as no surprise that along with the expansion of the intellectual horizons of the Old World that the invasion of the Americas brought, travel writing, especially in its non-fictional dimension, became particularly important. Realities described in early narratives of exploration, early epistolography, histories, personal diaries, or represented in etchings, have inspired countless "American dreams" worldwide, energizing colonial expansion and faith-based-initiatives alike. Intriguingly, however, although several centuries have passed since the Spanish Conquest, in the perceptions of billions of people across the Atlantic and the Pacific, the Americas remain, by and large, imaginary Americas.

Just as importantly, the two Oceans, simultaneously connecting and separating continents, serve as hermeneutic lenses for the Americans who "read" the world outside of the Americas. The paradoxes of travel (and) writing continue to loom large in narratives created by poets, prosateurs, filmmakers, visual artists, and musicians, or simply leisure tourists, who inhabit the Americas from the North-West Passage to Tierra del Fuego, and who have explored Europe, Asia, Australia and Oceania, or those who have been experiencing the Americas hemispherically. Like in the past, also in the present, travel has been generating vivid interest owing to the ecstatic promise it carries. To many inhabitants of the Americas to whom voyaging remains unattainable, the world is, by and large, an imaginary world.

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Over time, mythical, religious, ideological, and metaphysical senses have layered upon the practical dimension of the voyage, rendering it, in almost all cultures, one of the universal metaphors of human condition. The journey, involving the existential experience of change, has gained the status of a symbol of the human lifespan; it became the figure of the philosophical exploration of oneself, and a favorite trope for the search for knowledge. In its fundamental sense, as a process of discovering real spaces and unfamiliar communities, voyage, for millennia, has been considered instrumental to the exchange of knowledge, dissemination of ideas and exportation of cultural values. Acknowledging the immense complexity of the phenomenon at stake, the Organizers of the 11th World Congress of the International American Studies Association invite papers representing such disciplines as ethnology, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, literary studies, linguistics, religious studies, history, or cultural geography focusing, but not limited to, the following issues:

HEMISPHERIC AND TRANSOCEANIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE HISTORY OF TRAVEL WRITING

- Imaginary Americas: Non-American Transoceanic Travel Narratives
- Imaginary Worlds: American Transoceanic Narratives
- Imaginary Americas: American Hemispheric Travel Narratives
- The World's Americas/The American Worlds in Cinema and Television
- The World's Americas/The American Worlds in Art
- Mapping and Remapping: Cartographic Imagination vs. Hemispheric and Transoceanic Travel
- Representing the Americas/the World in Social Media: Travel Vlogs and Travel Blogs

TRANSOCEANIC/HEMISPHERIC TRAVEL AND VALUE TRANSFERS

- Travel and Directionality of Value Transfer: Donor Cultures, Acceptor Cultures
- Travel and Export/Import of Cultural Values: Laws, Customs, Aesthetics
- Travel and Imposition/Appropriation of Cultural Values
- "The Far Away" as the "Long Ago": Primitivist Fantasies in the Face of Reality
- Travel as a Medium of Power

THEORETICAL CONVERGENCES

- Hemispheric and Transoceanic American Studies in the Lens of Travel Studies (Luis Turner, John Ash, Dean MacCannell, John Urry).
- Dennison Nash and Others: Ethnocentrism, Functionalism and Journeying Americas in the light of the Theory of Travel
- *Facta-Ficta* and Historical Fictions in the Context of Transoceanic and Hemispheric Travel Narratives
- From Picaresque Novel to Evening News: the Evolution of Travel Genres in the Light of Hemispheric and Transoceanic American Studies

MIGRATIONS IN HEMISPHERIC AND TRANSOCEANIC TRAVEL NARRATIVES

- Exile/Expulsion/Extradictions
- Peregrinations/Pilgrimages/Awakenings
- In Search of Greener Pastures: Migrations and Opportunities
- The World/the Americas in the Eyes of Expats/Temporary Expats/Diasporas
- Life-Writing/Biography/Autobiography

THE TOURIST'S EYE

- Grand Tours: American Travel Literatures and the World Legacy
- In Search of Roots: Travels to the Lands of Forefathers
- The Tourist Industry: Packaging Experience
- The Tourist Gaze
- Hemispheric and Transoceanic Travel Narratives in the Age of the Pandemic
- The Americas and the World in post 9/11 Travel Narratives
- The Ethics/Aesthetics/(An)aesthetics of Travel
- "When in Rome…": Travel and Protocol

NOMADLAND: AMERICA ON THE WHEELS

- Tourism/Colonization/Decolonization
- Traveling/Touring Combat Zones
- Humanitarian Travel
- Travelling and Emotions
- Faces of Hospitality
- Race/Class/Gender on the Road

HEMISPHERIC AND TRANSOCEANIC ACADEMIC MOBILITY NARRATIVES

- Preconceptions/Postconceptions: Travel and Learning
- Overcoming Privilege: The Role of International Mobility Programmes
- Hemispheric and Transoceanic Circulation of Knowledge
- Knowledge-Based Economy and Hemispheric and Transoceanic Travel
- Academic Mobility and Narratives of Public Diplomacy

POST-HUMAN JOURNEYS

- Hemispheric/Transoceanic Travel in Ecocritical Perspectives
- Travel/Technology/Tempo
- Between Real and Hyperreal AI and Online Journeying
- Traveling/Networking/Rhizomatic Subject
- The World, the Americas, and Traveling Avatars

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: MARCH 30TH 2023

- Submission proposals must be submitted via: www.iasa-world.org
- Confirmation of acceptance: by April 15th 2023
- Submissions MUST include:

1) First Name and Family Name of the Author/Auther
2) Institutional Affiliation of the Author/Auther
3) Author/Auther's ORCID number
4) Author/Auther's email address
5) If the Author/Auther wishes to receive an invoice, the exact name and address of the institution, including its Tax Identification Number.
6) The title of the presentation
7) A 350 words' abstract of the presentation
8) A 250 words' biographical note on the Author/Auther
9) Keywords
10) Disciplines represented (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_academic_disciplines)

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Non-obligatory annual IASA Membership Fee:

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- Tenured Faculty (Non-IASA Members) on site: 160 EURO
- Non–tenured Faculty Members and PhD candidates (Non-IASA Members) on site: 100 EURO

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- The Conference Participatiom Certificate
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ALL UPDATES WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE CONGRESS SECTION OF THE IASA WEBSITE:
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ABSTRACTS
AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JUSTIN MICHAEL BATTIN
RMIT University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
RIAS Associate Editor

Explorations on the Event of Photography: Dasein, Dwelling, and Skillful Coping in a Cuban Context

In the summer of 2016, the author traveled to Havana to begin preliminary work on an interdisciplinary visual ethnography project. While venturing primarily on foot, he took hundreds of high-resolution photographs and interviewed people at random across several localities about their daily routine, their neighborhood, and their expectations about what was to come following the [then] normalizing of relations with the United States. Of the utmost importance to this work was the special attention granted to the inhabited locale where each photograph and interview took place. This article explores these photographs through the lens of the "event of photography," a term emphasizing the temporal moment when a photographer, photographed subject, and camera encounter one another. With this interpretation, photographs are positioned as historical documents and the practice of photography as a civil and political matter, thus inviting new possibilities to read political life through its visual dimension, as well as to trace different forms of power relations made evident during the 'event.' This paper uses phenomenological reflection to explore the meshwork manifestation of these power relations, and articulate how they provide insights about one's place and responsibility within that 'event' in a range of relational contexts.

Keywords: Photography, Latin America, Cuba, Heidegger, Skillful Coping

Justin Michael Battin is Senior Lecturer of Communication at RMIT University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. His research intersects strands of phenomenological and existential philosophy with the everyday uses of mobile media technologies and mobile social media. He is the author *of Mobile Media Technologies and Poiēsis: Rediscovering How We Use Technology to Cultivate Meaning in a Nihilistic World* (Palgrave Macmil-

lan, 2017) and co-editor of *We Need to Talk About Heidegger: Essays Situating Martin Heidegger in Contemporary Media Studies* (Peter Lang, 2018) and *Reading Black Mirror: Insights into Technology and the Post-Media Condition* (transcript, 2021).

GERMAN A. DUARTE & EVA LEITOLF
Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy

The Narratives of Topos (τόπος): Eva Leitolf's *Deutsche Bilder–eine Spurensuche* (1992–2008) and *Postcards from Europe* (since 2006)

Around the turn of the century, the notion of topos (τόπος) underwent an interesting and necessary transformation. Presumably due to the popularization of digital technology, scholars started to progressively uncover the complex nature of the word by expanding on its general meaning as it pertains to the sphere of speech. This phenomenon granted to narratives some spatial characteristics, and at the same time brought into the light an old and critical relationship between text and image. In the form of a conversation, this article deals with this critical relationship between text and image, and the way this conflictual relationship shapes social imaginaries, propaganda, and automatisms when representing social events. The article addresses these questions through an analysis of a series of pictures that had a great impact on Latin America's social imaginary.

Keywords: propaganda, text–Image relationship, Latin-American collective imaginaries, photography, Critical Media Studies.

German A. Duarte is Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. His research interests include history of media, film history, cybernetics, cognitive-cultural economy, and philosophy. He is the author of several publications, including four books, edited volumes, essays, and papers in international journals. Among them, he recently authored the monographs *Reificación Mediática* (UTADEO–2nd Edition 2020), *Fractal Narrative: About the Relationship Between Geometries and Technology and Its Impact on Narrative Spaces* (transcript, 2014), and co-edited the volumes *Transmédialité, Bande dessinée & Adaptation* (PUBP 2019), *We Need to Talk About Heidegger: Essays Situating Martin Heidegger in Contemporary Media Studies* (Peter Lang, 2018), and *Reading Black Mirror: Insights into Technology and the Post-Media Condition* (transcript, 2021).

Eva Leitolf studied communication design with a focus on photography at University GH Essen. She earned her MFA at the California Institute of the Arts and taught at international art schools and universities before becoming full professor at Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in 2019. Critical examination of the practices of image production and contextualisation is a central thread running through all of Eva Leitolf´s work, which explores contested societal phenomena such as colonialism, racism, and migration.

DIEGO H. FRANCO CÁRDENAS
University of Bogotá–Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Colombia

Los procesos de mestizaje de la música tradicional latinoamericana y su presencia en el pop; a través del lente del dispositivo colonialista

La ilustración costumbrista del siglo XIX en Colombia se concentró en la representación de las expresiones culturales nacionales. Desde el análisis iconográfico de dos ilustraciones representativas, realizadas por Ramón Torres Méndez en ese periodo, identificaremos elementos que sirvieron para la construcción de una identidad cultural. Los elementos que conforman dichas expresiones, sin embargo, son el resultado de una mezcla de otras formas de expresión cultural; europeas, americanas y africanas. Este mestizaje, siempre presente, se extiende hasta nuestros días y se puede apreciar en manifestaciones más contemporáneas como el pop, en particular, el movimiento del rock en español en la década de 1990.

Palabras clave: música, mestizaje, decolonial, identidad, cultura

The *costumbrista* illustration of the 19th century in Colombia, after independence, focused on the representation of national cultural expressions. From the iconographic analysis of two representative illustrations, made by Ramón Torres Méndez in that period of time, it is possible to identify elements that contribute to the construction of a cultural identity. The elements that make up these expressions, however, are the result of a mixture of other forms of cultural expression, namely European, American, and African. This miscegenation, always present, extends even today and can be seen in more contemporary manifestations such as pop, in particular, of which is the key focus of this article.

Keywords: music, miscegenation, decolonial, identity, culture

Diego H. Franco Cárdenas is Assistant Professor at University of Bogotá–Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in the Film and Television Program. He holds a Master of Music with an emphasis on sound engineering from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, a Specialist in Business Management, Services and Music Products from the EAN University, and a Master of Aesthetics and Art History from the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University.

LAURA FATTORI
Independent researcher, Colombia

Remembering Violence in *Matar a Jesús* (2017)

Events that are violent and traumatic in nature entail the breakdown of language and, with it, the conceptual frameworks that construct our social worlds. The inability of reason to articulate this rupture and to conventionally construct meaning implies that the reality of misery and violence can only be suggested (or formulated) through acts of narration that formally and affectively articulate memory

into an imaginary. This dislocation of the event from its representation can then only be mapped through the generation and stimulation of affect—which has come to substitute reason as tool for remembering, narrating and, consequently, of mediating our reality. In the present article, the author studies the role of elements that evoke memory and generate the affective dynamics of a traumatic event. Specifically, the author explores the interactions of memory and affect in the process of narrating violence by analyzing objects of memory (such as photographs) that Paula, the protagonist of *Matar a Jesús* (*Killing Jesus* [2017] by Laura Mora Ortega), utilizes in order to articulate the story of her father's murder. Further, she claims that the incorporation of filmmaker Laura Mora Ortega's own personal experience as victim of violence points to the fact that the incessant necessity of reformulating trauma and stylizing misery widens the gap between reality and its representation, thus rendering violence unimaginable.

Keywords: violence, Latin America, Colombian cinema, *Matar a Jesús*, Laura Mora Ortega

Laura Fattori holds an MA in Film and Moving Image Studies from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Her current research interest deals with the role cinema plays in the Colombian 'post-conflict' society. Her essay "Narratives of Post-Conflict: Memory and the Representation of Violence in Colombian Contemporary National Cinema," earned her a Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema Award 2020–21, as well as a Concordia Graduate Mobility Award 2020–21, which allowed her to broaden her research. Her undergraduate dissertation, "Narratives and aesthetics of the Database" was granted an honorary thesis mention from University of Bogotá—Jorge Tadeo Lozano. Her work engages with the representation of violence and trauma in cinema, and argues for the cultural mediation of images, particularly as it concerns the processes of memory during the contemporary peace-building efforts of a post-conflict Colombian society.

GIULIA MAGRO
Sapienza University of Rome, Italy & University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

Knight Errant to Exploring Pioneer: The Influence of Medieval Romances on the Depiction of Human and Non-Human Others in John Filson's "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon"

This article analyzes, through a comparative approach, a frontier narrative, John Filson's "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon" (1784), in relation to selected medieval chivalric romances from an ecocritical perspective, exploring the way in which medieval patterns have been employed in the American mythopoeic process, especially in relation to the frontier and the wilderness myths. In fact, medievalist narratives have been often employed to justify an anthropocentric, expansionist, and imperialistic agenda with grievous consequences on the way in which Americans engage with nature and with nonhuman species.

At the same time, this tendency is often accompanied by an androcentric and ethnocentric rhetoric, contributing to the marginalization from dominant national discourses of significant sections of the population due to their race and gender. For this reason, attention will be also given to how attitudes toward the nonhuman can reflect and bear an impact on those toward other humans. By investigating how narratives develop, evolve, and circulate across time and space, it becomes possible to reveal the harmful logic they carry, and stress the importance of shifting the narrative in the direction of more sustainable intra- and inter-species relations.

Keywords: medievalism, frontier narratives, Early American literature, ecocriticism

Giulia Magro is a PhD student in Studies in English Literatures, Cultures, Language and Translation (Literary and Cultural Studies curriculum) at the Sapienza University of Rome and at the University of Silesia in Katowice. She graduated with a Master of Arts in Linguistic, Literary and Translation Studies at the Sapienza University of Rome, with a dissertation titled "The Knight Keeps Setting Forth: An Analysis of the Continuity of Medieval Chivalric Romances in American Literature." During her Master of Arts degree, she studied abroad at the University of Cambridge in the U.K. for nine months, thanks to the Erasmus Plus program. In May 2021, she participated to the masterclass "Key Concepts in World Literature and the Environmental Humanities," organized by the Sapienza University of Rome. During the first year of her PhD, currently in progress, she has taken part in multiple seminars at Sapienza University of Rome and attended the course "Intellectual Property Law" organized by the University of Silesia (Katowice). Her research interests include the impact of medievalism on American literature and culture, focusing in particular on speculative fiction and science fiction, and ecocritical and posthumanist approaches.

LISA MARCHI
University of Trento, Italy

An Intimate, Cosmopolitan Bookcase: Reflecting with Rabih Alameddine on (World) Literature

What is a classic? To what extent are books and book collections endangered goods? What is the role and meaning of literature and translation in times of hardship? In *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013), Rabih Alameddine addresses these questions, while also indirectly contesting traditional canonical practices based on rigid hierarchies and the logic of national and linguistic purity. Alameddine highlights the violence inscribed in the practices of book selection and canon formation. In doing so, he troubles perceived notions of the canon, the classics, and especially of world literature, offering an alternative conceptu-

alization of this long-debated category as an intimate, cosmopolitan assemblage of worldly texts.

Keywords: world literature, intimacy, cosmopolitanism, decolonial praxis, anti-authoritarianism

Lisa Marchi teaches US Literature at the University of Trento, Italy, with a special focus on global interconnections, particularly between the US, Europe, and the Arab world. Lisa has published articles in international peer-reviewed journals, such as *Comparative Literature Studies*, *Canadian Literature*, and *Ácoma*, as well as essays in edited volumes. She is the author of *In filigrana. Poesia arabo-americana scritta da donne* (La scuola di Pitagora, 2020), the first monograph written in Italian on contemporary Arab-American poetry. Her latest book *The Funambulists: Women Poets of the Arab Diaspora* was released by Syracuse University Press in September 2022.

GUSTAVO RACY
University of Antwerp, Belgium

Of Cannibals and Witches: Monstrosity and Capitalism at the Onset of Colonial Visual Culture

This article provides preliminary insight into the creation of colonial visual culture. Using visual examples, the author shows how the encounter between European and Amerindian was, at first, apparently deprived of moral judgement, later being increasingly signified through moral and physical monstrosity, especially the female body, which served as an apparatus to assure colonial dominion. Looking mostly at the works of Liègeois artist Theodor de Bry, the author shows how increasing female protagonism may have helped to coin a proper visual culture that mirrored the development of productive force in early capitalism. Assuming that the European colonizer in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was still highly informed by Medieval culture, the author quickly retraces how the New World was imagined through cartography, following to the first depictions of the Amerindian and, finally, focusing on de Bry's work and an argument on capitalism and how visual culture may help us understand its process.

Keywords: cannibalism, hexes, monstrosity, capitalism, Theodor de Bry, Brazilian visual culture

Born in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1988, Dr. Racy holds a BA in Social Sciences and in Philosophy. He was awarded his PhD in Social Sciences in 2018 by the University of Antwerp, funded by the Ministry of Education of Brazil. His research interest is the intersection of historical materialism, visual culture, social anthropology, and the philosophy of social sciences. He is currently preparing a post-doc proposal on the role of images in contemporary culture, aiming to explore several cases, from analog to digital culture, from photography to ethnographic cinema, and from literature to cinematic adaptation. His latest research focused on the relation between the city, photography, and modernity,

approached in two distinct 19th century cases: the works of Edmond Fierlants in Antwerp and of Militão Augusto de Azevedo in São Paulo. The study invites important considerations on the role of visual technology in the building of meaning for the social world, specifically in a materialist perspective. The study articulates the relation between economy and culture, knowledge, and power.

EMILIANA RUSSO
Sapienza University of Rome, Italy & University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

Original Pronunciation and the United States: The Case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Paul Meier (2010, 2012)

In 2004, *Romeo and Juliet* in Original Pronunciation (OP) was staged at Shakespeare's Globe, inaugurating what Crystal would later define the OP movement (2016), which aimed to restore the original sound of both the literary and non-literary works of the past. While academic literature suggests an irregular theatrical interest in the Shakespearean OP in the UK, it also demonstrates that such restoration projects have proven increasingly appealing to US audiences. The reasons why North American theatergoers are attracted to the Shakespearean OP remain unclear. Based on a qualitative analysis of interviews with Paul Meier, the director of the theatrical and radio production *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2010, 2012) and two of his cast members, and complementing the findings with the study of promotional and non-promotional articles concerning the productions, this paper sheds light on the rationale behind the North American fascination with the Shakespearean OP. As Meier's reflections gravitate towards the identity of the US as a former British colony, this study, relying extensively on literature review, is carried out both through the lens of literary/cultural history and of historical linguistics. Finally, though limited in its scope, this paper paves the way for further studies on the relationship between the allure of the OP and American culture, and thereby to enrich the area of investigation concerning Shakespeare's reception in the US and his role in American culture.

Keywords: Original Pronunciation, theatrical production, radio production, Paul Meier, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare studies, Transatlantic American Studies

Emiliana Russo is a PhD student at Sapienza University in Rome and at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. She holds a BA in English and German Languages and Literatures from the University of Naples L'Orientale, and an MA in Translation, Linguistic, and Literary Studies from Sapienza University of Rome. In 2016, she was granted a research scholarship with the Globe Theatre in London. In 2018, she was a recipient of the FLTA scholarship (Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program) and, between September 2019 and May 2020, she was a Senior Language Fellow at Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania. Her main interests are Shakespeare's reconstructed pronunciation, literary linguistics, and L2 Italian.

BÉRTOLD SALAS-MURILLO
University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica

Images to Remember. Nostalgia and Hegemonic Identities in *Italia 90: The Movie*

The reconstruction of the past and memory is examined in the feature film *Italia 90: The Movie* (2014) by Miguel Gómez, which depicts the first participation of a Costa Rican team in a World Cup. The analysis includes the narrative, visual, and sound operations with which the past and memory are recreated (... or created), as well as the ways in which the story involves the viewers, particularly those who remember the episode. It is explained that, although the story resorts to certain topics of sports cinema, it is presented more as an adventure of the community, which would eventually include an entire country, and favors the exploration of the intimate over the epic. *Italia 90: The Movie* appeals to nostalgia, through recognizable images and sounds, as well as figures anchored in the hegemonic Costa Rican imaginary (such as the "common peasant"), to narrate an episode that, in addition to being central in the history of sports in Costa Rica, it is among the events that symbolically mark the country's entry into the globalized world.

Keywords: football, national hero, memory, nostalgia, Costa Rican cinema, identity

Bértold Salas-Murillo is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Costa Rica. He has a Masters in Cinematography from University of Costa Rica and a PhD in Literature and Arts of the Stage and the Screen (Littérature et arts de la scène et de l'écran) from Laval University, Canada. He is the assistant director of the Postgraduate in Arts of the University of Costa Rica. His recent publications include "Forging Her Path with Her Own Fists: Autonomy and Contradictions of Age, Class and Gender in Florence Jaugey's La Yuma/Yuma (2010)," "La intermedialidad: las oportunidades y los riesgos de un concepto en boga," "Un hoy que se narra a la sombra del ayer. El cine costarricense y la inquietud por el tiempo," "Los subterfugios digitales de Jafar Panahi," and "Entre la scène et l'écran. Le parcours intermédial dans l'euvre de Robert Lepage," among others.

BEATRIZ TORRES INSÚA
Independent Scholar, Austria

Conservación de patrimonio cultural mueble vs. conservación fílmica

Los conservadores están preparados para tratar diferentes tipos de objetos; sin embargo, se necesita un grado de especialización particular para trabajar con determinados artefactos. Las películas cinematográficas requieren determinados conocimientos, herramientas y equipo para su manipulación. A diferencia de otros objetos del patrimonio cultural, su aprehensión no se da únicamente mirando

el objeto fílmico, sino viendo la película proyectada y viviendo la experiencia cinematográfica. El propósito de este proyecto fue dictaminar el estado de conservación de una película aplicando la metodología utilizada en la conservación de objetos del patrimonio cultural "tradicional" como: documentos gráficos, fotografías, pinturas, esculturas, etc. El objeto cinematográfico se titula *Cine Revista Salvadoreña* y pertenece al acervo de la Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Palabras clave: patrimonio cultural, objeto fílmico, conservación fílmica, estado de conservación.

Conservators deal with different kind of objects; nevertheless, a particular degree of specialization is needed to work with certain artifacts. Motion picture film requires determined expertise, tools, and equipment for its manipulation. Unlike other objects of cultural heritage, apprehension does not occur only by looking at the film object, but also by seeing the projected film and living the cinematographic experience. The purpose of this project was to assess the state of conservation of a film by applying the methodology used in the conservation of objects of "traditional" cultural heritage, such as graphic documents, photographs, paintings, and sculptures. The film object is titled Cine Revista Salvadoreña and belongs to the collection of the Filmoteca of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Keywords: cultural heritage, film object, filmic preservation, conservation.

Beatriz Torres Insúa was born in born in Mexico City and since 2011 has been located in Austria. She works in the area of photo, film, and paper conservation and restoration. She has experience in the cultural, governmental, and private sector.

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