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(ORGS.)



REINVENTAR O SOCIAL

MOVIMENTOS E
NARRATIVAS DE
RESISTÊNCIA NAS
AMÉRICAS

IMPRESA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA
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A partir de uma perspectiva de Estudos Inter-Americanos, os estudos de caso que compõem esta coleção debruçam-se sobre a definição do social, suas configurações tradicionais e reconfigurações mais recentes no contexto alargado das Américas, e sobre as crises e lutas sociais do passado e do presente, juntamente com as diferentes respostas, movimentos, narrativas e discursos de resistência que têm gerado. Através da exploração de novos territórios, este volume pretende contribuir para a criação de uma nova gramática e pedagogia do social, a partir de perspectivas epistemológicas e práticas sobre as Américas. É ainda de relevar o carácter interdisciplinar desta publicação, na qual se cruzam a história, a sociologia, a crítica literária, cinematográfica e musical.



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AMÉRICAS

in memoriam Josef Raab
(1960 - 2019)

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INTRODUÇÃO / INTRODUCTION / INTRODUCCIÓN

Isabel Caldeira
Maria José Canelo
Gonçalo Cholant

No continente americano, a hegemonia dos Estados Unidos tem sido contestada ao longo do tempo, passando pela reclamação do nome América, de que o “Colosso do Norte” se apropriou. É isso que também expressa “Nuestra América” (1891), o manifesto de José Martí, que pugnava pela descolonização das mentes enquanto resistência ao imperialismo dos Estados Unidos. Por isso este intelectual cubano foi considerado um precursor da visão hemisférica das Américas que inspira o projeto dos estudos inter-americanos.

É uma história colonial aquela que fundou este continente como o conhecemos desde a modernidade. É também uma história de lutas sociais e de resistência às elites dominantes até se conquistarem as sucessivas independências, mas, além destas, para tentar corrigir as heranças de injustiça e desigualdade que sempre atingiram os grupos mais subalternizados. Insurreições de escravos, movimentos pelos direitos das mulheres e dos afro-descendentes, revoltas de trabalhadores e camponeses, movimentos indígenas contra a discriminação e o extermínio, pela posse da terra ou acesso à água, protestos de jovens contra a guerra do Vietname no século XX, protesto contra

outras guerras, como a do Iraque ou, mais recentemente, a influente presença dos movimentos sociais reunidos dentro do mote *Black Lives Matter* e suas refrações internacionais, bem como a Marcha das Mulheres em resposta à eleição de Donald Trump como o 45º presidente dos Estados Unidos, todas estas respostas sociais confirmam a capacidade do continente americano de se reconfigurar continuamente.

Na segunda metade do século XX, novas formas de desigualdade e novas dinâmicas nas sociedades e nos meios de comunicação aumentaram progressivamente a nossa consciência sobre os diversos modos como o social continua a ser renegociado. A ideia de comunidade sofreu novas reconfigurações por parte de teóricos como Jean-Luc Nancy (“the inoperative community”), Giorgio Agamben (“the coming community”) ou Bruno Latour (“reassembling the social”); a instabilidade, a incerteza e a precariedade, expandidas pela globalização, ganharam, com Zygmunt Bauman, a metáfora da “modernidade líquida”; o imaginário sociológico de Boaventura de Sousa Santos rompeu com a hegemonia epistêmica do Norte global (“epistemologias do Sul,” “ecologia de saberes”).

Os produtores culturais atuam, muitas vezes, como sismógrafos, ao revelar fricções e fissuras, enquanto os movimentos sociais dão expressão política ao descontentamento quotidiano; os *media* criam e fazem circular ideias e imaginários e a academia reflete e teoriza sobre as mudanças do mundo social. As décadas mais recentes têm-se caracterizado por novas abordagens à relação espaço-temporal e por novas redes sociais, mediacionais e relacionais; a invenção, a invocação e a narração das tradições, da história e do património servem de elementos chave na criação de novos laços sociais com as gerações anteriores.

Com a passagem para o novo milénio, grupos sociais anteriormente excluídos têm tido um papel proeminente na reinvenção do social e das suas normas; uma sociedade civil enfraquecida tem

aberto espaço à influência dos extremismos; jovens desempregados e sem perspectivas de futuro encontram novas formas de expressão e intervenção; grupos desprivilegiados manifestam-se nas ruas e através da internet; as redes sociais abrem novos canais e formatos de expressão e também novos processos de mobilização digital em massa; a literatura e as artes promovem a consciência para causas justas, emergindo o chamado “ativismo”; artistas em diversas áreas traduzem e dão forma a estes pensamentos, sentimentos e posicionamentos ideológicos; sociólogos e politólogos oferecem novas interpretações e teorias do social. É notável também a abertura dos processos de produção de conhecimento criada por estes grupos minoritários, seja pela via da popularização das tecnologias de comunicação, ou pela ocupação das formas ditas “tradicionais” de produção de discurso crítico por corpos racializados, de diferentes origens étnicas e culturais, diversas expressões de género e sexualidade, bem como por um espectro mais amplo de diferentes classes sociais e económicas.

Enquanto em vários países, incluindo os Estados Unidos, se tem observado a decadência do modelo democrático, com eleições conturbadas, chegada ao poder de líderes populistas, como Donald Trump nos Estados Unidos e Jair Bolsonaro no Brasil, redução de espaço de intervenção cívica e ataques aos direitos humanos e direitos civis, alguns sinais se têm observado também nas últimas décadas que apontam para horizontes mais alargados (“wider horizons”, H. E. Bolton) na visão do hemisfério ocidental. Por exemplo, o Presidente Justin Trudeau foi capaz de nomear um dos governos mais amplos em termos da representação social na história do Canadá; o primeiro Presidente indígena da Bolívia, Evo Morales, e o primeiro Presidente afro-americano nos Estados Unidos, Barak Obama, conseguiram promover imaginários multi- e pluriculturais, questionando as relações sociais baseadas na colonialidade; a composição do 117º Congresso nos Estados Unidos

apresenta a maior diversidade em termos raciais e étnicos de toda a sua história. Paralelamente, discussões recentes sobre conceitos indígenas como o de *Buen vivir* reclamam e apontam para relações mais equilibradas entre os seres humanos e a natureza, enquanto vários teóricos do Sul e do Norte global olham com novos olhos para saberes ancestrais e cosmovisões indígenas para contestarem a perspectiva do mundo ocidental e advogarem a sua transformação (Latour, Deloria, Mihesuah e Wilson, Taylor, Descola, Santos e Meneses, Escobar).

Contudo, a crise financeira de 2008, com origem nos Estados Unidos, seguida da recessão económica mundial, aprofundou o fosso entre o Norte e o Sul, levou ao enfraquecimento da classe média, diminuiu os poderes da classe trabalhadora, devolveu o poder à direita em várias regiões e aumentou a tensão entre partidos políticos. Mais recentemente, a pandemia do Covid-19 desvelou as grandes vulnerabilidades sociais nos vários quadrantes, expondo, no caso da América Latina mas também dos Estados Unidos, os padrões de pobreza e discriminação mais dramáticos. Longe do restabelecimento das nossas anteriores vidas, esta crise pandémica global cavou ainda mais as desigualdades mas decerto dará azo a outras reinvenções do social que possam construir um futuro menos desigual e mais verde.

A extrema-direita neoliberal tem crescido em muitos países das Américas, como a Argentina e o Brasil. Para além dos problemas económicos e dos efeitos negativos da globalização no mundo do trabalho, a falta de eficiência política para os minimizar, a corrupção aos mais altos níveis e a intolerância social relativamente a imigrantes e refugiados inspiraram novos nacionalismos e fascismos que estão a afetar seriamente a democracia, também minada pelas “fake news” e a política da pós-verdade.

Apesar de a hegemonia dos Estados Unidos ter vindo a diminuir, a eleição de Donald Trump e o seu nostálgico chavão ‘Make

America Great Again' tiveram efeitos globais, e mais especificamente nas Américas. Agravaram-se as questões da imigração dos países mais pobres da América Central, especialmente na fronteira com o México, assim como a estigmatização das diferenças raciais, étnicas, religiosas, sexuais ou de gênero; recuou-se nos direitos das mulheres, nas políticas ambientais e nos direitos humanos em geral. Apesar de a nova Administração sob Joe Biden ter vindo a tentar contrariar este percurso regressivo, ainda é cedo para sabermos o alcance e a sustentabilidade das suas medidas.

Este volume, organizado à volta do tema “Reinventar o social: movimentos e narrativas de resistência nas Américas”, foi concebido como um contributo para uma reflexão sobre atuais tendências dos estudos inter-americanos. O impulso para esta iniciativa surgiu do 5º Congresso Bienal da Associação Internacional de Estudos Interamericanos (International Association of Inter-American Studies, IAS/EIA), que organizámos na Universidade de Coimbra, em março de 2018, sobre idêntico tema: “Reinventar o social: movimentos e narrativas de resistência, dissidência e reconciliação nas Américas”. Nessa ocasião, foi rico e intenso o debate, profícuo o encontro de sensibilidades e experiências, e estimulante a diversidade de abordagens.

A decisão de incluir ensaios nas três línguas mais faladas nas Américas – inglês, espanhol e português – teve como fundamento uma aproximação da representação da multiplicidade cultural do continente americano. Para além da interdisciplinaridade, o multilinguismo é também uma das características do território e, conseqüentemente, dos estudos inter-americanos.

Os estudos de caso que compõem esta coleção debruçam-se sobre a definição do social, suas configurações tradicionais e reconfigurações mais recentes no contexto alargado das Américas, as crises e lutas sociais do passado e do presente, juntamente com as diferentes respostas, movimentos, narrativas e discursos que têm

gerado. Através da exploração de novos territórios, este volume também pretende contribuir para a criação de uma nova gramática e pedagogia do social, a partir de perspectivas epistemológicas e práticas sobre as Américas.

É ainda de relevar o caráter interdisciplinar desta publicação, na qual se cruzam a história, a sociologia, a crítica literária, cinematográfica e musical. A própria estrutura do volume, que passaremos a descrever, enfatiza essas várias áreas e perspectivas.

A abrir a primeira secção, “Movimentos sociais e resistência”, temos Josef Raab, a cuja memória dedicamos este livro. A sua perda prematura marca a Associação (IAS/EIA) que fundou e a quem dedicou longos anos como presidente. É com muita honra que incluímos aqui um dos seus últimos trabalhos, recordando com o mais profundo respeito e saudade a sua presença em Coimbra, onde não deixou de nos brindar com a sua participação, apesar do seu já delicado estado de saúde.

O artigo de Raab, “Dissent: Lifeblood of the Americas”, constitui, aliás, a abertura certa ao tema deste volume, já que aborda uma tradição de dissidência nas Américas, com raiz nas lutas contra os poderes coloniais. Usando como exemplos de reflexão variados objetos – o poema de Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales “I Am Joaquin” (1967), o romance de Mariano Azuela, *Los de Abajo* (1915), o documentário de Patricio Guzmán, “El poder popular” (uma das partes de “La batalla de Chile”) (1979) e o vídeo musical do *rapper* Kendrick Lamar, “Alright” (2015) –, Raab demonstra como os artistas mobilizam a sua criatividade para fazer jus a uma tradição de resistência contra usos abusivos do poder, afinal o que o autor apelida de “sangue vital das Américas”.

Ana Celia Santos, educadora popular e feminista, desenvolvendo a sua militância comunitária, pastoral, partidária e, hoje, profissional no Nordeste brasileiro, traz-nos, com “Educação popular e movimentos de mulheres: resistências e novas práticas educativas”, uma

reflexão sobre a forma como experiências como as da Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”, em Teresina/Piauí, no Brasil, com o projeto de extensão “Rodas de Culturas”, podem ser traduzidas nas diferentes práticas de resistência desenvolvidas por grupos e associações espalhadas pelo Brasil. A autora demonstra como, a partir do trabalho comunitário e da economia solidária, estas mulheres se envolvem num processo de educação libertadora, anti-colonial, anti-capitalista e anti-patriarcal, e constroem uma nova maneira de ver o mundo.

Diego Matheus Oliveira de Menezes, Marina de Araújo Fernandes e Ma. Victória Espiñeira González, em “Para além da propriedade: as inovações narrativas dos movimentos sociais na América Latina”, debruçam-se sobre experiências reais de movimentos sociais na América Latina que provam como a luta pela propriedade (urbana e rural) contribui para repensar a ação coletiva e – um aspeto ainda marginal na literatura europeia e americana – a tensão entre democracia e propriedade. São três os movimentos sociais abordados neste trabalho: o Movimento dos Sem Terra - MST; o Movimento de Luta por Moradia e o Movimento de Ocupantes y Inquilinos - MOI. Os autores partem da noção de que o processo de apropriação colonial da propriedade da terra na América Latina fundou as desigualdades e as oligarquias políticas. Daí ser um elemento crucial para compreender a formação dos Estados latino-americanos e as suas dinâmicas (não)democráticas. Nos casos apresentados, a propriedade surge inicialmente como um bem a ser adquirido, sendo depois ressignificada a partir de práticas que geram um novo conceito de propriedade, a partir da gestão coletiva da terra, de experiências de autogestão, ou de ocupação de imóveis. É, por isso, “além da propriedade”, que estes movimentos abrem espaço a novas políticas emancipatórias.

Luísa de Pinho Valle, com “Ecofeminismo e *Buen vivir*: dois movimentos propulsores da expansão da racionalidade ambiental”,

traz-nos a perspectiva bem premente de uma mudança paradigmática através de teorias-práticas que pretendem construir “outro mundo possível” (Galeano 2011). Baseados na racionalidade ambiental, estes movimentos lutam contra diferentes políticas económicas que agridem a relação compartilhada entre todos os seres, esgotam os recursos naturais, expulsam povos dos seus territórios, numa lógica de exploração e desertificação. O ecofeminismo e o *buen vivir*, baseando-se numa lógica relacional ao invés de excludente entre seres humanos e não humanos, podem contribuir para novas formas de pensar e organizar a vida em comum.

A segunda secção, “Epistemologias de resistência”, agrupa diversos olhares que analisam formas e discursos de resistência relativamente às formas de conhecimento estabelecidas, da ciência moderna ao nacionalismo homogeneizador, passando pela ideologia, as representações estereotipadas de grupos minoritários e o discurso colonial.

Arturo Córdova Ramírez, em “Testimonios afroperuanos: *Erasmus, Yanacón del valle de Chancay y Piel de mujer: rearticulando lugares y memorias de los afrodescendientes en Perú*”, analisando dois testemunhos de dois autores afro-peruanos do século XX, Delia Zamudio e Erasmo Muñoz, que, segundo o autor, desafiam a instituição literária e a historiografia do Peru, a partir da sua experiência de exclusão social, desalojamento e racismo. Numa sociedade estruturalmente hierarquizada com base na raça e no género, as duas narrativas impõem a sua perspectiva contra a homogeneização de identidades e a subalternidade.

Olga Thierbach-McLean, em “From Abolitionism to ‘Slacktivism:’ The Individualist Tradition, ‘Aesthetic Dissent,’ and the Depoliticization of Political Discourses in the U.S.”, reflecte sobre uma tradição de pensamento individualista, não conformista e antiestatista nos Estados Unidos que o filósofo e escritor Ralph Waldo Emerson personifica. As transformações que a era digital tem imprimido na mobilização social ameaça corroer, segundo a autora, essa mesma tradição, ao

encorajar meros atos simbólicos individuais, enfraquecendo a ação cívica coletiva. Mas esse ativismo superficial, o chamado “slacktivism”, que atrofia o verdadeiro ativismo, revela uma tensão entre os princípios abstratos e a ação prática que Thierbach-McLean identifica também no pensamento de Emerson, sempre dividido entre a “dissensão estética” e a intervenção reformista.

Steffen Wöll, em “Spatial Imaginations and Counter-Geographies of Oregon and the Far West”, regressa à época expansionista dos Estados Unidos em direção ao Oeste. O seu artigo ressalta o papel do Oregon numa estratégia de resistência ao excecionalismo americano, apoiado na ideologia do “Destino manifesto”. Num momento fundacional de construção de uma ideia de nação, no Oregon competiam diversíssimos grupos étnicos e entrecruzavam-se experiências que formulavam uma narrativa autonómica que subvertia o processo de integração homogeneizadora daquele tempo.

Susanne Berthier-Foglar, com “The Conquest of Mexico in 1846-1847: A Social Narrative of Integration and Reconciliation”, complementa o olhar de Wöll na tentativa de refazer a história do Oeste no século XIX. Com base na análise de duas narrativas de dois adolescentes, um jovem e uma jovem – Lewis Garrard e Susan Magoffin –, que relatam as suas incursões no Noroeste, através do caminho de Santa Fé no tempo da Guerra entre os Estados Unidos e o México, a autora reconstrói as dinâmicas de integração e reconciliação, as ambivalências dos contactos entre culturas e as tensões entre classe, género e etnicidade em época de conquista de novos territórios sob a égide da doutrina do “Destino manifesto”.

Na terceira secção, “Discursos de resistência”, Chris Lippard e John Costa trazem-nos a capacidade de resistência através da música, Julio Cuevas Romo, a dos saberes indígenas resistindo contra saberes científicos, enquanto Patricia Magazoni Gonçalves e Yuwei Ge se debruçam sobre diferentes textos, o literário e o fílmico, analisando a sua capacidade de protesto e mobilização cívica.

Chris Lippard, em “Native Metal Music, Identity, and Authenticity: The Diné RezMetal Scene”, elege o *Metal* nativo, especificamente observado na Reserva Navajo – *RezMetal* –, para reflectir sobre os estereótipos que tanto têm perseguido os povos nativos nos EUA como a própria música *Heavy Metal*. O autor argumenta que é exatamente contra a fossilização e a estagnação da experiência dos povos americanos nativos e o despojamento cultural e económico que esse tipo de música tem proliferado pelas Américas, com a sua veia transgressora e de protesto.

John Costa, em “Folk Music as Protest and The Progressive Voice of Woody Guthrie”, debruça-se sobre a *Folk music* como expressão também de protesto nos EUA, especialmente ao ser influenciada pelo Marxismo e pelo Partido Comunista, veiculando os problemas da classe trabalhadora e dos mais desprotegidos. Woody Guthrie foi um ícone desta tendência que se expandiu no século XX, lançando uma nova tradição musical, e encontrou em Bob Dylan um legítimo seguidor.

Julio Cuevas Romo, em “Negociación de saberes científicos y matemáticos desde la astronomía y la cosmogonía indígena a partir del análisis del documental *El astrónomo y el indígena*”, parte da análise do documentário realizado por Sylvie Blum e Carmen Castillo, em 2002, que documenta a construção do observatório *ALMA* no deserto de Atacama, no Chile, junto de uma centenária aldeia indígena. O documentário pergunta sobre a possibilidade de coexistência de duas formas de olhar o céu, a científica (da astronomia moderna) e a mágica (da cosmogonia indígena). Cuevas Romo questiona o saber científico e matemático, que se apresenta como universal, mas se impõe como o único válido, fechando a possibilidade de diálogo com outros saberes. Apesar de a ciência e a matemática não serem excludentes em si, é na sua aplicação que a sociedade desenha as suas exclusões.

Patricia Magazoni Gonçalves, em “Mythopoetic Articulations’ of the Space: Reinventing the City in Contemporary Indigenous Literatures in Brazil and Canada”, analisa dois textos de autores indígenas, *Crônicas de São Paulo*, do brasileiro Daniel Munduruku, e *Islands of Decolonial Love*, da canadiana Leanne Simpson. São Paulo e Peterborough são os espaços urbanos que estas duas narrativas reconstroem, justapondo à sua história colonial nomes e histórias outras. Através da memória e da imaginação (“articulações mitopoéticas”), argumenta a autora, Munduruku e Simpson reclamam epistemologias indígenas (*Munduruku* e *Anishinaabeg*), que foram soterradas, e assim descolonizam e ressignificam a geografia urbana.

Finalmente, Yuwei Ge, com “(Re)Envisioning a Dystopian World: Gender and Diversity in *House of Cards* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*”, aborda a representação distópica de questões de gênero em duas séries televisivas, *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) e *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Hulu, iniciada em 2017). O fito é articular essas representações com a problemática atual dos direitos das mulheres e das minorias e o papel dos Estados Unidos nas relações inter-americanas. Ataques à democracia, sintomas de sexismo, racismo, xenofobia, homofobia, misoginia e populismo alastram na peugada da eleição de Donal Trump, enquanto movimentos como *Black Lives Matter*, *Me Too*, ou *Time’s Up* se erguem para defender os direitos em risco. A literatura distópica e as séries televisivas desempenham neste contexto um papel importante ao fornecerem às pessoas possibilidade de identificação e estímulo à mobilização.

Perpassa por todo este livro uma forte sensibilidade social, uma consciência cívica e política e um desejo de um futuro melhor, o que nos ajuda a acreditar que o “sangue vital” do pensamento dissidente que Raab identifica na tradição das Américas está também presente na comunidade intelectual que somos. Quer passe pela educação popular como espaço de produção de práticas e saberes que renovam e atualizam saberes ancestrais, como encoraja Santos; pelos movi-

mentos sociais que ressignificam o conceito liberal de propriedade privada, como documentam Menezes, Fernandes e González; pelo ecofeminismo e o *buen vivir*, capazes de (re)orientar-nos, como seres humanos, como defende Pinho Valle; pela solidariedade com os *yanaconas* negros, a tradição dos *cimarrones* e a resposta das mulheres à violência, como nos mostra Córdova Ramírez, ou com a classe trabalhadora e os mais subalternizados, como fizeram artistas através da música *folk*, como nos mostra Costa; quer pela consciência de que, apesar da tentação do cómodo “slacktivism”, o movimento alargado de protesto que se seguiu ao assassinato de George Floyd veio comprovar que persiste um ativismo presencial coletivo forte, como defende Thierbach-McLean. A resistência contra o *imperium* pode estar presente nos confins do Oeste ou Noroeste nos EUA do século XIX, contra a potência de uma ideologia excepcionalista, como provam Wöll ou Berthier-Foglar; na transgressiva música Metal produzida na recôndita reserva Navajo, como expõe Lippard; ou na cosmogonia indígena contra a invasão da astronomia moderna no deserto de Atacama, no Chile, como reflecte Cuevas Romo. E a ficção pode reclamar-se o espaço de ressignificação e de contestação, denúncia, consciencialização, e mobilização, como documentam Magazoni Gonçalves e Yuwei Ge.

Esperamos que este volume possa revivificar o diálogo do qual estes ensaios resultaram e apontar para novos trilhos a explorar no futuro, contribuindo para a causa que nos une, o desenvolvimento dos estudos interamericanos dentro e além da Europa.

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INTRODUCTION

Isabel Caldeira

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The hegemony of the United States in the American continent has been contested throughout the times, including laying claim to the name America after its appropriation by the “Colossus of the North”. That is the view also expressed by “Nuestra America” (1891), José Martí’s manifesto that called for the decolonization of the minds as resistance to United States. imperialism. For this reason, the Cuban intellectual was regarded as a precursor of an hemispheric vision for the Americas that remains the inspiration for the inter-American studies project.

Colonial history laid the foundations of this continent as we have known it since modernity. This history is also one of social struggles and resistance against the ruling elites until the winning of one after another independence across the continent. But struggles have also been there to correct the legacies of injustice and inequality that have always targeted the subordinate groups. From slave insurrections, to movements for the rights of women and Afrodescendants; workers’ and peasants’ revolts; indigenous movements against discrimination and extermination, for land ownership or access to water; twentieth-century youth protests against the

Vietnam war, and protests against other conflicts, such as the Iraqi war; or yet more recently, the powerful presence of a conglomerate of social movements under the slogan ‘Black Lives Matter’ and its international refractions; or the Women’s March in response to Donald Trump’s election as the 45th President of the United States – all of these social reactions confirm the ability of the American continent to continually reshape itself.

In the second half of the twentieth-century we witnessed an increase in new forms of disparity and new dynamics in both the societies and the media. They substantially enlarged our awareness about the manifold ways of renegotiating the social in the present. The idea of community underwent new reconfigurations by scholars such as Jean-Luc Nancy (“the inoperative community”), Giorgio Agamben (“the coming community”) or Bruno Latour (“reassembling the social”). Zygmund Bauman’s metaphor “liquid modernity” wrapped up the instability, uncertainty, and precariousness expanded by globalization. Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s sociological imaginary severed the epistemic hegemony of the global North (“epistemologies of the South”, “ecology of knowledge”).

Cultural producers often have a seismographic function in revealing social frictions and fissures, while social movements connect discontent in daily life with its political expression. The media create and circulate ideas and imaginaries; and the academia reflects upon and theorizes the changes in the social. The recent decades have featured new approaches to the space-time relation and the emergence of new social, mediation, and relational networks. The invention, invocation and narration of traditions, history and heritage became key-elements in the creation of new social bonds with previous generations.

Moving into the new millennium, previously excluded social groups gained a leading role in the reinvention both of the social and of its norms. A weakened civil society has paved the way to the influ-

ence of extremisms; unemployed youth with no future perspectives find new forms of expression and intervention; underprivileged groups demonstrate on the streets and through the internet; social media open new channels and formats of expression and also novel processes of digital mobilization *en masse*; literature and the arts promote the awareness for just causes, with the emergence of the so-called “artivism”; artists in diverse areas translate and shape these insights, feelings, and ideological positionings; sociologists and political scientists offer new interpretations and theories of the social. Also remarkable is the opening of processes for knowledge production by these minorities, either through the popularization of communication technologies, or the occupation of the so-called “traditional” forms of production of critical discourse by racialized bodies of multiple ethnic and cultural origins, diverse expressions of gender and sexuality and also by a wider spectrum of multiple social and economic classes.

In several countries, including the United States, we have been witnessing the decadence of the democratic model, with tumultuous elections, the arrival into power of populist leaders such as Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, the contraction of the space for civil intervention, and attacks to human and civic rights. But in the last decades there have also been some signs revealing broader horizons (‘wider horizons’, H. E. Bolton) in the envisioning of the western hemisphere. For instance, Justin Trudeau named one of the most diverse governments in Canada’s history, in terms of social representation; the first Indigenous president in Bolivia, Evo Morales, and the first African-American president of the United States, Barack Obama, were able to promote multi- and pluricultural imaginaries, thereby questioning social relations based on coloniality; the composition of the 117th Congress of the United States comprises the widest diversity in racial and ethnic terms in all its history. In tandem with this, recent debates on Indigenous

concepts such as *buen vivir* signal and claim more balanced relations between humans and nature. In turn, several scholars in the global South and the global the North are shedding new light on ancestral knowledges and Indigenous cosmovisions to contest the eurocentric perspective pervasive in the West and call for its transformation (Latour, Deloria, Mihesuah and Wilson, Taylor, Descola, Santos and Meneses, Escobar).

However, the 2008 financial crisis, originating in the United States and followed by a world economic recession, escalated the North-South divide, weakened the middle class, reduced the powers of the working class, returned the power to the Right in diverse regions, and increased the tension between political parties. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic unveiled huge social vulnerabilities in several sectors, bringing into view the most dramatic patterns of poverty and discrimination in the case of Latin America but also of the United States. Far from the restoration of our previous ways of life, this pandemic global crisis deepened the inequalities yet futher, but will certainly generate reinventions of the social that may build up a less inbalanced and greener future.

The Far-right has grown in many of the countries in the Americas, such as Argentina and Brazil. Beyond the economic problems and the bleak effects of the globalization of the labor sector, the lack of political efficiency to minimize those effects, alongside corruption at the highest levels and social intolerance towards immigrants and refugees have inspired new nationalisms and fascisms. These movements are seriously affecting democracies, while ‘fake news’ and post-truth politics are adding to the undermining of the democratic systems.

Despite the recent waning of United States hegemony, the election of Donald Trump and his nostalgic slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ had global effects, particularly in the Americas. Immigration from the poorest Central American countries aggravated, especially

in the Mexican border, and the stigmatization of differences in race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation aggravated as well. Women's rights took several steps back, as did environmental politics and human rights in general. In spite of the efforts put by the new Administration under Joe Biden to rebuff the regressive course, it is still early to know the reach and feasibility of Biden's measures.

This volume, put together around the theme "Reinventing the Social: Movements and Narratives of Resistance in the Americas", was designed as a contribution to a reflection on current trends in the area of inter-American studies. The urge for this venture resulted from the 5th Biennial Conference of the International Association of Inter-american Studies (IAS/EIA), which we organized at the University of Coimbra, in March 2018, under a similar topic: "Reinventing the Social: Movements and Narratives of Resistance, Dissidence and Reconciliation in the Americas". The debate was rich and intense, the encounter was fruitful in sensibilities and experiences, while the diversity in approaches was very stimulating.

The decision to include essays in the three most spoken languages in the Americas – English, Spanish and Portuguese – is justified by the intention to convey a closer representation of the cultural multiplicity of the American continent. Besides interdisciplinarity, multilinguism is also a feature of this territory and, accordingly, of inter-American studies.

The case-studies that compose this collection reflect on the definition of the social, its traditional configurations and more recent reconfigurations in the broad context of the Americas. They also delve into past and present social crises and struggles, alongside the different responses, movements, narratives and discourses they gave rise to. By means of the exploration of new territories, the present volume also aims at contributing to the creation of a new grammar and pedagogy of the social from both epistemic and practical perspectives on the Americas.

We would also like to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of this publication, in which history, sociology, literary, film and music critique crisscross each other's ways. The structure of the volume, described in the following paragraphs, stresses the diversity of areas and perspectives.

The first section, "Social movements and resistance", begins with an essay by Joseph Raab, to whom this book is dedicated, *in memoriam*. His premature loss marks the Association (IAS/EIA) he founded and to which he devoted extensive years as president. It is a great honor to include one of his last papers, remembering his presence in Coimbra with the most profound respect and longing. He did not refrain himself from presenting us with his company, despite his already feeble condition.

Raab's essay, "Dissent: Lifeblood of the Americas", constitutes, it should be noted, the right opening to the theme of this volume, since it deals with a tradition of dissent in the Americas with deep roots in the struggles against the colonial powers. Using as illustration for his reflection several objects – Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales's poem "I Am Joaquin" (1967), Mariano Azuela's novel, *Los de Abajo* (1915), Patricio Guzmán's documentary, "El poder popular" (a part of "La batalla de Chile") (1979) and *rapper* Kendrick Lamar's music video, "Alright" (2015) –, Raab demonstrates as artists mobilize their creativity to do justice to a tradition of resistance against abusive uses of power, what the author aptly identifies as 'Americas' vital blood'.

Ana Celia Santos, a popular educator and a feminist who has been developing her communitarian, pastoral, partisan and, currently, also her professional activism in the Brazilian Northeast, presents "Popular Education and Women's Movements". In this essay she offers a critical assessment of how experiences based on the outreach project "Rodas de Culturas" [Wheels of Cultures], developed by the Production Association "Mulheres Perseverantes" [Persevering Women], in Teresina/Piauí, in Brazil, may translate into

different practices of resistance by groups and associations spread around the country. The author shows how the women engage in a project of liberating, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal education which leads to a new worldview.

Diego Matheus Oliveira de Menezes, Marina de Araújo Fernandes and Ma. Victória Espiñeira González, in “Beyond Property; the Narrative Innovations of Social Movements in Latin America” approach real experiences of social movements in Latin America that convey that the struggle for (urban and rural) property plays a part in rethinking collective action. Their research also reveals a tension between democracy and property, an aspect still marginal in the European and American critical literature. They address three different movements: the *Movimento dos Sem Terra* - MST [Landless Movement]; the *Movimento de Luta por Moradia* [Struggle for Residence Movement] and the *Movimiento de Ocupantes y Inquilinos* - MOI [Occupiers and Tenants Movement]. The authors depart from the argument that the process of colonial appropriation of land ownership in Latin America established inequality and political oligarchies. Hence its importance in understanding the formation of the Latin American States and their (non)democratic dynamics. In the case studies presented, property emerges initially as an asset to be acquired and is later resignified following practices that eventually generate a new concept of property. This change occurs after experiences in collective management, self-management or occupation of real estate have taken place. These movements therefore make room to new emancipatory politics that move “beyond property”.

Luisa do Pinho Valle, in her essay “Ecofeminism and *Buen Vivir*: Two Movements Propelling the Expansion of Environmental Rationality”, presents us with the very urgent perspective of a paradigmatic shift led by theories-practices aimed at building “another possible world” (Galeano 2011). Based on environmental rationality, the movements under analysis fight against diverse economic

politics that damage the relation shared among all beings, exhaust natural resources, expel peoples from their territories, in a logic of exploitation and desertification. Ecofeminism and *buen vivir*, grounded on a relational rather than exclusive logic between human and non-human beings, may contribute to the emergence of new ways of thinking and organizing a life in common.

The second section, “Epistemologies of Resistance”, brings together different perspectives in the examination of forms and discourses of resistance regarding established forms of knowledge, from modern science to homogenizing nationalism, ideology, stereotypical representations of minority groups, and colonial discourse.

Arturo Córdova Ramírez, in “Afroperuvian Testimonial Narratives: *Erasmus, Yanacón del valle de Chancay y Piel de mujer*. Rearticulating Places and Memories of Afro-Descendants in Peru”, looks into two testimonios written by two twentieth-century Afro-Peruvian authors, Delia Zamudio and Erasmo Muñoz. According to the author, the writers challenge the Peruvian literary institution and historiography based on their experience of social exclusion, removal and racism. In a hierarchically structured society based on race and gender, these two narratives press their perspectives against the homogenization of identities and subalternity.

Olga Thierbach-McLean, in “From Abolitionism to ‘Slacktivism’: The Individualist Tradition, ‘Aesthetic Dissent,’ and the Depoliticization of Political Discourses in the U.S.”, discusses the tradition of individualism, non-conformism and anti-State authority in the United States embodied by philosopher and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. The transformations in social mobilization brought about by the digital era, according to the author, threaten to undermine that tradition, as they encourage mere symbolic individual actions and thus weaken collective civic action. Yet, this superficial activism – the so-called ‘slacktivism’ –, which emaciates real activism reveals a tension between the abstract principles and practical action. To

Thierbach-McLean, the same tension can be found in Emerson's thought, evincing a permanent dilemma between 'aesthetic dissent' and reformist intervention.

Steffen Wöll, in "Spatial Imaginations and Counter-Geographies of Oregon and the Far West", goes back to the westward expansionist era in the United States. His essay stresses the role of the state of Oregon in developing a strategy of resistance against American exceptionalism sustained by Manifest Destiny. In a foundational period in the construction of the idea of a nation, very diverse ethnic groups in Oregon competed among themselves, interweaving experiences that rendered an autonomous narrative subversive of the process of homogenizing integration in place at the time.

Susanne Berthier-Foglar's "The Conquest of Mexico in 1846-1847: A Social Narrative of Integration and Reconciliation" complements Wöll's perspective in the attempt to remake the history of the West in the nineteenth century. The essay focuses on two narratives, by a young man and a young woman – Lewis Garrard and Susan Magoffin –, which report their incursions into the Northwest through the Santa Fe trail during the United States.- Mexican War. The author reconstructs the dynamics of integration and reconciliation, the ambivalent contacts among cultures, and the tensions among class, gender, and ethnicity, at a time of new territorial conquest under the aegis of the Manifest Destiny doctrine.

In the third section, "Discourses of Resistance", Chris Lippard and John Costa bring in the power of resistance through music; Julio Cuevas Romo, the ability of Indigenous knowledges to resist against scientific knowledges, while Patricia Magazoni Gonçalves and Yuwei Ge delve into different texts, both literary and filmic, to analyse their capacity to convey protest and civic mobilization.

Chris Lippard's essay, "Native Metal Music, Identity, and Authenticity: The Diné RezMetal Scene", elects Indigenous Metal, observed in a Navajo reservation – RezMetal –, to reflect on the

stereotypes that have hunted the native peoples, and heavy metal music as well. The author argues that the proliferation in the Americas of this type of music, with its transgressive and protesting vein, reveals a need to speak against the fossilization and ruin of the Native American peoples' experience and their cultural and economic plundering.

John Costa, em “Folk Music as Protest and The Progressive Voice of Woody Guthrie”, debruça-se sobre a *Folk music* como expressão também de protesto nos EUA, especialmente ao ser influenciada pelo Marxismo e pelo Partido Comunista, veiculando os problemas da classe trabalhadora e dos mais desprotegidos. Woody Guthrie foi um ícone desta tendência que se expandiu no século XX, lançando uma nova tradição musical, e encontrou em Bob Dylan um legítimo seguidor.

In “Negotiation of Scientific and Mathematical Knowledge from Astronomy and Indigenous Cosmogony: Analysis of the Documentary *El astrónomo y el indígena*” [*The Astronomer and the Indigenous*], Julio Cuevas Romo analyses Sylvie Blum and Carmen de Castillo's documentary *El astrónomo y el indígena* (2002), which documents the construction of the ALMA observatory in the Atacama desert, in Chile, near a centennial indigenous village. The documentary debates the possibility of coexistence of two ways of looking at the sky, the scientific (modern astronomy) and the magical (indigenous cosmogony). Cuevas Romo questions the scientific and mathematical knowledge presented as universal but which is imposed as the only valid form of knowledge, closing the possibility of dialogue with other knowledges. Despite the fact that science and mathematics are not exclusive in themselves, they are used to draw social exclusions.

Patricia Magazoni Gonçalves, in the essay “‘Mythopoetic Articulations’ of the Space: Reinventing the City in Contemporary Indigenous Literatures in Brazil and Canada”, examines two texts by Indigenous writers, *Crônicas de São Paulo* [*São Paulo Chronicles*],

by Brazilian writer Daniel Munduruku, and *Islands of Decolonial Love*, by Canadian author Leanne Simpson. Both narratives reconstruct the urban spaces of São Paulo and Peterborough, juxtaposing colonial histories and other histories. By means of memory and the imagination (“mythopoetic articulations”), Patricia Gonçalves defends that these spaces make a claim to the buried indigenous epistemologies (*Munduruku* and *Anishinaabeg*), thereby decolonizing and resignifying the urban geography.

The final essay, Yuwei Ge’s “(Re)Envisioning a Dystopian World: Gender and Diversity in *House of Cards* and *The Handmaid’s Tale*”, provides us with an approach to dystopic representations and issues of gender in two television series, *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) and *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Hulu, beginning in 2017). Her goal is the articulation of these representations with the current problematic of women’s and minorities’ rights in tandem with the role of the United States. in inter-American relations. Attacks to democracy, symptoms of sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny, and populism spread widely after the election of Donald Trump, while movements such as Black Lives Matter, Me Too, or Time’s Up build up to defend the rights at risk. In this context, dystopian literature and television series play an important part in providing people with the possibility of finding identification and boosting their mobilization.

A strong social sensitivity runs throughout this book, together with a civic and political awareness, and the desire for a better future. This helps us to believe that the “vital blood” of dissident thought that Raab identifies in the tradition of the Americas is also alive in the intellectual community we ourselves are. Be it through popular education as a space for the production of practices and knowledges that renew and update ancestral knowledges, as Santos encourages us to credit; through the social movements that resignify the liberal concept of private property, as Menezes, Fernandes

and González document; through ecofeminism and *buen vivir*, that allow us to (re)-orient ourselves as human beings, as Pinho Valle advocates; through solidarity with the Black *vanaconas*, the tradition of the *cimarrones*, and women's response to violence, as demonstrated by Córdova Ramírez; or through solidarity with the working class and the subaltern, as artists exemplified through folk music, as Costa describes; through the awareness that, despite the temptation of comfortable 'slacktivism', the vast protest movement following George Floyd's murder attested to the endurance of a strong collective in-person activism, as Thierbach-McLean defends. Resistance against the *imperium* may be found in the confines of nineteenth-century United States West and Northeast, contesting the power of an exceptionalist ideology, as Wöll and Berthier-Foglar demonstrate; in the transgressive RezMetal music made in the deep Navajo reservation, as evinced by Lippard, or in indigenous cosmogony against the invasion of modern astronomy, in the Atacama desert in Chile, after Cuevas Romo's reflection.

We hope this volume will enable us to reexperience the dialogue from which these essays sprang, and point towards new trails to explore in the future. We also expect it to contribute to the cause that unites us, the development of inter-American studies in Europe, and beyond Europe.

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INTRODUCCIÓN

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Gonçalo Cholant

En el continente americano, la hegemonía de Estados Unidos ha sido disputada a lo largo del tiempo, incluida la reivindicación del nombre América, del que se apropió el “Coloso del Norte”. Esto también se expresa en “Nuestra América” (1891), el manifiesto de José Martí, que abogaba por la descolonización de las mentes como resistencia al imperialismo estadounidense. Por ello, este intelectual cubano fue considerado precursor de la visión hemisférica de las Américas que inspira el proyecto de los estudios interamericanos.

Es una historia colonial que fundó este continente tal y como lo conocemos desde la modernidad. Es también una historia de luchas sociales y de resistencia a las élites dominantes hasta conquistar las sucesivas independencias, pero más allá de éstas, en un intento de corregir las herencias de injusticia y desigualdad que siempre han afectado a los grupos más subordinados. Levantamientos de esclavos, movimientos por los derechos de las mujeres y los afrodescendientes, revueltas obreras y campesinas, movimientos indígenas contra la discriminación y el exterminio, por la propiedad de la tierra o el acceso al agua, protestas juveniles contra la guerra de Vietnam en el siglo XX, protestas contra otras guerras como la de Irak o, más

recientemente, la influyente presencia de los movimientos sociales aglutinados en el lema *Black Lives Matter* y sus refracciones internacionales, así como la Marcha de las Mujeres en respuesta a la elección de Donald Trump como 45º presidente de Estados Unidos, todas estas respuestas sociales confirman la capacidad del continente americano para reconfigurarse continuamente.

En la segunda mitad del siglo XX, nuevas formas de desigualdad y nuevas dinámicas de las sociedades y los medios de comunicación han aumentado progresivamente nuestra conciencia de las diversas formas en que lo social sigue siendo renegociado. La idea de comunidad ha sido objeto de nuevas reconfiguraciones por parte de teóricos como Jean-Luc Nancy (“the inoperative community”), Giorgio Agamben (“the coming community”) o Bruno Latour (“reassembling the social”); la inestabilidad, la incertidumbre y la precariedad, ampliadas por la globalización, han ganado, con Zygmunt Bauman, la metáfora de la “modernidad líquida”; la imaginación sociológica de Boaventura de Sousa Santos ha roto con la hegemonía epistémica del Norte global (“epistemologias do Sul”, “ecología de saberes”).

Los productores culturales actúan a menudo como sismógrafos, revelando fricciones y fisuras, mientras que los movimientos sociales dan expresión política al descontento cotidiano; los medios de comunicación crean y hacen circular ideas e imaginarios y el mundo académico reflexiona y teoriza sobre los cambios del mundo social. Las últimas décadas se han caracterizado por los nuevos enfoques de la relación espacio-tiempo y por las nuevas redes sociales, mediáticas y relacionales; la invención, la invocación y la narración de las tradiciones, la historia y el patrimonio sirven como elementos clave en la creación de nuevos vínculos sociales con las generaciones anteriores.

Con el paso al nuevo milenio, grupos sociales antes excluidos han desempeñado un papel destacado en la reinención de lo social y sus normas; una sociedad civil debilitada ha abierto espa-

cio a la influencia de los extremismos; jóvenes desempleados sin perspectivas de futuro encuentran nuevas formas de expresión e intervención; grupos desfavorecidos se manifiestan en las calles y a través de Internet; las redes sociales abren nuevos canales y formatos de expresión y también nuevos procesos de movilización digital masiva; la literatura y las artes promueven la concienciación por causas justas, con la aparición del llamado “artivismo”; artistas de diversos ámbitos traducen y dan forma a estos pensamientos, sentimientos y posiciones ideológicas; los sociólogos y politólogos ofrecen nuevas interpretaciones y teorías de lo social. También es destacable la apertura de los procesos de producción de conocimiento creada por estos grupos minoritarios, ya sea a través de la popularización de las tecnologías de la comunicación, o a través de la ocupación de las llamadas formas “tradicionales” de producción de discurso crítico por parte de cuerpos racializados, de diferentes orígenes étnicos y culturales, de diversas expresiones de género y sexualidad, así como de un espectro más amplio de diferentes clases sociales y económicas.

Si bien en varios países, entre ellos Estados Unidos, se ha observado la decadencia del modelo democrático, con elecciones conflictivas, la llegada al poder de líderes populistas como Donald Trump en Estados Unidos y Jaír Bolsonaro en Brasil, la reducción del espacio de intervención ciudadana y los ataques a los derechos humanos y civiles, también se han observado en las últimas décadas algunas señales que apuntan a horizontes más amplios (“wider horizons”, H. E. Bolton) en la visión del hemisferio occidental. Por ejemplo, el presidente Justin Trudeau ha sido capaz de nombrar a uno de los gobiernos más amplios en términos de representación social de la historia de Canadá; el primer presidente indígena de Bolivia, Evo Morales, y el primer presidente afroamericano de Estados Unidos, Barak Obama, han sido capaces de promover imaginarios multi y pluriculturales, cuestionando las relaciones sociales basadas

en la colonialidad; la composición del 117° Congreso de Estados Unidos muestra la mayor diversidad en términos de raza y etnia de su historia. Paralelamente, los recientes debates sobre conceptos indígenas como el de “Buen vivir” reivindican y apuntan a relaciones más equilibradas entre los seres humanos y la naturaleza, mientras que varios teóricos del Sur y del Norte Global proyectan una nueva mirada sobre los conocimientos ancestrales y las cosmovisiones indígenas para impugnar la perspectiva del mundo occidental y abogar por su transformación (Latour, Deloria, Mihesuah y Wilson, Taylor, Descola, Santos y Meneses, Escobar).

Sin embargo, la crisis financiera de 2008, originada en Estados Unidos y seguida de la recesión económica mundial, profundizó la brecha entre el Norte y el Sur, provocó el debilitamiento de la clase media, disminuyó los poderes de la clase trabajadora, devolvió el poder a la derecha en varias regiones y aumentó la tensión entre los partidos políticos. Más recientemente, la pandemia de Covid-19 ha puesto al descubierto las grandes vulnerabilidades sociales en diversos ámbitos, exponiendo, en el caso de América Latina pero también de Estados Unidos, los patrones más dramáticos de pobreza y discriminación. Lejos de restaurar nuestra vida anterior, esta crisis pandémica mundial ha profundizado aún más las desigualdades, pero sin duda dará lugar a otras reinvenções de lo social que pueden construir un futuro menos desigual y más verde.

La extrema derecha neoliberal ha crecido en muchos países de las Américas, como Argentina y Brasil. Además de los problemas económicos y los efectos negativos de la globalización en el mundo laboral, la falta de eficacia política para minimizarlos, la corrupción en las altas esferas y la intolerancia social hacia los inmigrantes y refugiados han inspirado nuevos nacionalismos y fascismos que están afectando gravemente a la democracia, minada también por las “fake news” y la política de la posverdad.

Aunque la hegemonía de Estados Unidos ha ido disminuyendo, la elección de Donald Trump y su nostálgico lema “Make America Great Again” ha tenido efectos globales, y más concretamente en las Américas. Los problemas de inmigración de los países más pobres de Centroamérica, especialmente en la frontera con México, se han agravado, así como la estigmatización de las diferencias raciales, étnicas, religiosas, sexuales o de género; los derechos de las mujeres, las políticas medioambientales y los derechos humanos en general han retrocedido. Aunque la nueva Administración de Joe Biden ha intentado contrarrestar este rumbo regresivo, aún es demasiado pronto para conocer el alcance y la sostenibilidad de sus medidas.

Este volumen, organizado en torno al tema: “Reinventar o social: movimientos e narrativas de resistência nas Américas” (“Reinventar lo social: movimientos y narrativas de resistencia, disidencia y reconciliación en las Américas”), fue concebido como una contribución a la reflexión sobre las tendencias actuales de los estudios interamericanos. El impulso de esta iniciativa surgió del V Congreso Bienal de la Asociación Internacional de Estudios Interamericanos (International Association of Inter-American Studies, IAS/EIA), que organizamos en la Universidad de Coímbra en marzo de 2018 sobre idéntico tema: “Reinventar o social: movimentos e narrativas de resistência, dissidência e reconciliação nas Américas”. En esa ocasión, el debate fue rico e intenso, el encuentro de sensibilidades y experiencias fructífero, y la diversidad de enfoques estimulante.

La decisión de incluir ensayos en los tres idiomas más hablados en las Américas -inglés, español y portugués- se basó en un enfoque para representar la multiplicidad cultural del continente americano. Además de la interdisciplinariedad, el multilingüismo es también una de las características del territorio y, en consecuencia, de los estudios interamericanos.

Los estudios de caso que componen esta colección se centran en la definición de lo social, sus configuraciones tradicionales y

sus reconfiguraciones más recientes en el contexto más amplio de las Américas, las crisis y luchas sociales del pasado y del presente, junto con las diferentes respuestas, movimientos, narrativas y discursos que han generado. A través de la exploración de nuevos territorios, este volumen también pretende contribuir a la creación de una nueva gramática y pedagogía de lo social, desde perspectivas epistemológicas y prácticas en las Américas.

También digno de mención el carácter interdisciplinar de esta publicación, en la que se entrecruzan la historia, la sociología y las críticas literaria, cinematográfica y musical. La propia estructura del volumen, que describiremos a continuación, pone de relieve estos distintos ámbitos y perspectivas.

Abre la primera sección: “Movimientos sociales y resistencia”, Josef Raab, a cuya memoria dedicamos este libro. Su prematura pérdida marca a la Asociación (IAS/EIA) que fundó y a la que dedicó largos años como presidente. Es un gran honor incluir aquí una de sus últimas obras, recordando con el más profundo respeto y nostalgia su presencia en Coímbra, donde no dejó de agraciarnos con su participación, a pesar de su ya delicado estado de salud.

El artículo de Raab, “Dissent: Lifeblood of the Americas”, es, de hecho, la apertura adecuada al tema de este volumen, ya que aborda una tradición de disidencia en las Américas enraizada en las luchas contra los poderes coloniales. Utilizando como ejemplos para la reflexión objetos variados - el poema de Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales “I Am Joaquin” (1967), la novela de Mariano Azuela, “Los de Abajo” (1915), el documental de Patricio Guzmán “El poder popular” (una de las partes de “La batalla de Chile”) (1979) y el vídeo musical del rapero Kendrick Lamar, “Alright” (2015) -, Raab demuestra cómo los artistas movilizan su creatividad para hacer justicia a una tradición de resistencia contra los usos abusivos del poder, al fin y al cabo lo que el autor llama la “sangre vital de las Américas”.

Ana Celia Santos, educadora popular y feminista, que desarrolla su militancia comunitaria, pastoral, partidaria y, actualmente, profesional en el Nordeste brasileño, nos trae, con “Educação popular e movimentos de mulheres: resistências e novas práticas educativas”, una reflexión sobre la forma en que experiencias como las de la Asociación de Producción “Mulheres Perseverantes”, en Teresina/Piauí, en Brasil, con el proyecto de extensión “Rodas de Culturas”, pueden traducirse en las diferentes prácticas de resistencia desarrolladas por grupos y asociaciones diseminadas por todo Brasil. La autora demuestra cómo, a partir del trabajo comunitario y la economía solidaria, estas mujeres emprenden un proceso de educación liberadora, anticolonialista, anticapitalista y antipatriarcal, y construyen una nueva forma de ver el mundo.

Diego Matheus Oliveira de Menezes, Marina de Araújo Fernandes y M^a. Victória Espiñeira González, en “Para além da propriedade: as inovações narrativas dos movimentos sociais na América Latina”, se centran en experiencias reales de movimientos sociales en América Latina que demuestran cómo la lucha por la propiedad (urbana y rural) contribuye a repensar la acción colectiva y un aspecto aún marginal en la literatura europea y americana – la tensión entre democracia y propiedad. En esta obra se abordan tres movimientos sociales: el Movimiento de los Sin Tierra - MST; el Movimiento de Lucha por la Vivienda y el Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos - MOI. Los autores parten de la idea de que el proceso de apropiación colonial de la propiedad de la tierra en América Latina fundó desigualdades y oligarquías políticas. De ahí que sea un elemento crucial para entender la formación de los Estados latinoamericanos y sus dinámicas (no)democráticas. En los casos presentados, la propiedad aparece inicialmente como un bien que se adquiere, y luego se resignifica a través de prácticas que generan un nuevo concepto de propiedad, basado en la gestión colectiva de la tierra, en experiencias de autogestión o en la ocupación de la propiedad.

Es, por tanto, “más allá de la propiedad” que estos movimientos dan cabida a nuevas políticas emancipadoras.

Luísa de Pinho Valle, con “Ecofeminismo e *Buen vivir*: dois movimentos propulsores da expansão da racionalidade ambiental”, nos aporta la perspectiva muy apremiante de un cambio paradigmático a través de teorías-prácticas que pretenden construir “otro mundo posible” (Galeano 2011). Basados en la racionalidad ambiental, estos movimientos luchan contra las diferentes políticas económicas que atentan contra la relación compartida entre todos los seres, agotan los recursos naturales, expulsan a las personas de sus territorios, en una lógica de explotación y desertificación. El ecofeminismo y el “buen vivir”, basados en una lógica relacional y no excluyente entre seres humanos y no humanos, pueden contribuir a nuevas formas de pensar y organizar la vida en común.

La segunda sección: “Epistemologías de la resistencia”, reúne diversas perspectivas que analizan formas y discursos de resistencia a las formas de conocimiento establecidas, desde la ciencia moderna hasta el nacionalismo homogeneizador, la ideología, las representaciones estereotipadas de los grupos minoritarios y el discurso colonial.

Arturo Córdova Ramírez, en “Testimonios afroperuanos: *Erasmus, Yanacón del valle de Chancay y Piel de mujer*: rearticulando lugares y memorias de los afrodescendientes en Perú”, analiza dos testimonios de dos autores afroperuanos del siglo XX, Delia Zamudio y Erasmo Muñoz, quienes, según el autor, desafían la institución literaria y la historiografía del Perú a partir de su experiencia de exclusión social, desplazamiento y racismo. En una sociedad estructuralmente jerarquizada en función de la raza y el género, las dos narrativas imponen su perspectiva contra la homogeneización de las identidades y la subalternidad.

Olga Thierbach-McLean, en “From Abolitionism to ‘Slacktivism’: The Individualist Tradition, ‘Aesthetic Dissent,’ and the Depoliticization

of Political Discourses in the U.S.”, reflexiona sobre una tradición de pensamiento individualista, inconformista y antiestatista en Estados Unidos que el filósofo y escritor Ralph Waldo Emerson personifica. Las transformaciones que la era digital han imprimido a la movilización social amenazan con erosionar, según el autor, esta misma tradición, al fomentar meros actos simbólicos individuales, debilitando la acción cívica colectiva. Pero este activismo superficial, el llamado “slacktivism”, que atrofia el verdadero activismo, revela una tensión entre los principios abstractos y la acción práctica que Thierbach-McLean también identifica en el pensamiento de Emerson, siempre dividido entre la “disidencia estética” y la intervención reformista.

Steffen Wöll, en “Spatial Imaginations and Counter-Geographies of Oregon and the Far West”, vuelve a la época del expansionismo hacia el oeste de Estados Unidos. Su artículo destaca el papel de Oregón en una estrategia de resistencia al excepcionalismo estadounidense, apoyada en la ideología del “Destino Manifiesto”. En un momento fundacional de la construcción de la nación, Oregón compitió con diversos grupos étnicos y experiencias que formularon una narrativa autónoma que subvertía el proceso de integración homogeneizador de la época.

Susanne Berthier-Foglar, con “The Conquest of Mexico in 1846-1847: A Social Narrative of Integration and Reconciliation”, complementa la mirada de Wöll sobre el intento de remontar la historia de Occidente en el siglo XIX. A partir del análisis de dos relatos de dos adolescentes, un joven y una joven – Lewis Garrard y Susan Magoffin –, que narran sus incursiones en el Noroeste a través del Camino de Santa Fe en la época de la guerra entre Estados Unidos y México, la autora reconstruye las dinámicas de integración y reconciliación, las ambivalencias de los contactos transculturales y las tensiones entre clase, género y etnia en una época de conquista de nuevos territorios bajo la égida de la doctrina del “Destino Manifiesto”.

En la tercera sección: “Discursos de resistencia”, Chris Lippard y John Costa nos traen la capacidad de resistencia a través de la música, Julio Cuevas Romo, la del conocimiento indígena resistiendo contra el conocimiento científico, mientras que Patricia Magazoni Gonçalves y Yuwei Ge se fijan en diferentes textos, los literarios y los fílmicos, analizando su capacidad de protesta y movilización cívica.

Chris Lippard, en “Native Metal Music, Identity, and Authenticity: The Diné RezMetal Scene”, elige el *Metal* nativo, específicamente observado en la Reserva Navajo – *RezMetal* – para reflexionar sobre los estereotipos que tanto han perseguido a los pueblos nativos en Estados Unidos y a la propia música *Heavy Metal*. El autor argumenta que es precisamente contra la fosilización y el estancamiento de la experiencia de los pueblos nativos americanos y su desempoderamiento cultural y económico que este tipo de música ha proliferado en las Américas, con su vena transgresora y de protesta.

John Costa, en “Folk Music as Protest and The Progressive Voice of Woody Guthrie”, examina la *música folk* como expresión de protesta en Estados Unidos, especialmente cuando está influenciada por el marxismo y el Partido Comunista, transmitiendo los problemas de la clase trabajadora y los más desfavorecidos. Woody Guthrie fue un icono de esta tendencia que se expandió en el siglo XX, lanzando una nueva tradición musical, y encontró en Bob Dylan un legítimo seguidor.

Julio Cuevas Romo, en “Negociación de saberes científicos y matemáticos desde la astronomía y la cosmogonía indígena a partir del análisis del documental El astrónomo y el indígena”, parte del análisis del documental dirigido por Sylvie Blum y Carmen Castillo en 2002, que documenta la construcción del observatorio ALMA en el desierto de Atacama en Chile, cerca de un pueblo indígena centenario. El documental se pregunta por la posibilidad de la coexistencia de dos formas de mirar el cielo, la científica (de la astronomía moderna) y la mágica (de la cosmogonía indígena).

Cuevas Romo cuestiona el conocimiento científico y matemático, que se presenta como universal, pero se impone como el único válido, cerrando la posibilidad de diálogo con otros saberes. Aunque la ciencia y las matemáticas no son excluyentes en sí mismas, es en su aplicación donde la sociedad dibuja sus exclusiones.

Patricia Magazoni 'Gonçalves, en "Mythopoetic Articulations' of the Space: Reinventing the City in Contemporary Indigenous Literatures in Brazil and Canada", analiza dos textos de autores indígenas, *Chronicles of São Paulo*, del brasileño Daniel Munduruku, e *Islands of Decolonial Love*, de la canadiense Leanne Simpson. São Paulo y Peterborough son los espacios urbanos que estas dos narrativas reconstruyen, yuxtaponiendo otros nombres e historias a su historia colonial. A través de la memoria y la imaginación ("articulaciones mitopoéticas"), argumenta el autor, Munduruku y Simpson recuperan epistemologías indígenas (*Munduruku* y *Anishinaabeg*) que han sido enterradas, y así descolonizan y resignifican la geografía urbana.

Por último, Yuwei Ge, con "(Re)Envisioning a Dystopian World: Gender and Diversity in *House of Cards* and *The Handmaid's Tale*", aborda la representación distópica de las cuestiones de género en dos series de televisión, *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) y *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, iniciada en 2017). El objetivo es articular estas representaciones con la problemática actual de los derechos de las mujeres y las minorías y el papel de Estados Unidos en las relaciones interamericanas. Los ataques a la democracia, los síntomas de sexismo, racismo, xenofobia, homofobia, misoginia y populismo se extienden tras la elección de Donal Trump, mientras movimientos como "Black Lives Matter", "Me Too" o "Time's Up" se alzan para defender los derechos en riesgo. La literatura y las series de televisión distópicas desempeñan un papel importante en este contexto al ofrecer a la gente la posibilidad de identificarse y estimular la movilización.

Una fuerte sensibilidad social, una conciencia cívica y política y un deseo de un futuro mejor recorren este libro, que nos ayuda a creer que la “sangre vital” del pensamiento disidente que Raab identifica en la tradición de las Américas está también presente en la comunidad intelectual que somos. Ya pase por la educación popular como espacio de producción de prácticas y conocimientos que renueven y actualicen los saberes ancestrales, como alienta Santos; por los movimientos sociales que resignifican el concepto liberal de propiedad privada, como documentan Menezes, Fernandes y González; por el ecofeminismo y el *buen vivir*, capaces de (re) orientarnos, como seres humanos, como sostiene Pinho Valle; por la solidaridad con los *yanaconas* negros, la tradición de los *cimarrones* y la respuesta de las mujeres a la violencia, como nos muestra Córdova Ramírez, o con la clase trabajadora y los más subalternizados, como han hecho los artistas a través de la *música folk*, como nos muestra Costa; o por la conciencia de que, a pesar de la tentación de lo cómodo “slacktivism”, el amplio movimiento de protesta que siguió al asesinato de George Floyd demostró que persiste un fuerte activismo colectivo presencial, como sostiene Thierbach-McLean. La resistencia contra el *imperium* puede estar presente en los confines del Oeste o del Noroeste en los Estados Unidos del siglo XIX, contra el poder de una ideología excepcionalista, como demuestran Wöll o Berthier-Foglar; en la música transgresora del *Metal* producida en la remota reserva Navajo, como expone Lippard; o en la cosmogonía indígena contra la invasión de la astronomía moderna en el desierto de Atacama en Chile, como refleja Cuevas Romo. Y la ficción puede pretender ser el espacio de resignificación y contestación, de denuncia, de concienciación y de movilización, como documentan Magazoni Gonçalves y Yuwei Ge.

Esperamos que este volumen pueda reavivar el diálogo del que han surgido estos ensayos y señalar nuevas vías a explorar en el

futuro, contribuyendo a la causa que nos une, el desarrollo de los estudios interamericanos dentro y fuera de Europa.

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**MOVIMENTOS SOCIAIS E RESISTÊNCIA
/ SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND RESISTANCE
/ MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES Y RESISTENCIA**

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DISSENT: LIFEBLOOD OF THE AMERICAS

DISENTIMIENTO: SANGRE VITAL DE LAS AMÉRICAS

Josef Raab

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on a tradition of dissent in the Americas, from the moment the nations from North to South emerged in resistance to colonial powers to later and multiple movements against misuses of power. Dissent encapsulates the power of groups and individuals to express their protest and their endeavor to defend justice, equality, democracy, human rights, or the environment. Dissent is thus the lifeblood of the Americas, an ever-present reality and a necessity. The analysis of examples of artistic expressions of dissent and resistance – Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales’s 1967 poem “I Am Joaquin”, Mariano Azuela’s 1915 novel *Los de Abajo*, Patricio Guzmán’s 1979 documentary film “El poder popular” (from “La batalla de Chile”), and 2015 rap artist Kendrick Lamar’s music video “Alright” – showcase the twofold function of art as documentation and mobilization. Artists can help us recognize and expose ‘schemata’ (Paula Moya, 2015) that determine an individual’s perception or reading and that are also at work in setting up, maintaining, and defending restrictive or oppressive structures. Literature, film, and music,

along with other arts and media, thus play a pivotal role in reinventing the social in the Americas.

KEYWORDS: dissent; resistance; the Americas; the social; art as political intervention.

RESUMEN: Este artículo se centra en una tradición de disensión en las Américas, desde el momento en que las naciones de Norte a Sur emergieron en resistencia a las potencias coloniales hasta posteriores y múltiples movimientos contra los abusos del poder. El disentimiento encapsula el poder de grupos e individuos para expresar su protesta y su esfuerzo por defender la justicia, la igualdad, la democracia, los derechos humanos o el medio ambiente. La disensión es, pues, el alma de las Américas, una realidad siempre presente y una necesidad. El análisis de ejemplos de expresiones artísticas de disensión y resistencia: el poema de Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales de 1967 “Soy Joaquín”, la novela de Mariano Azuela de 1915 *Los de Abajo*, el documental de 1979 de Patricio Guzmán “El poder popular” (de “La batalla de Chile”), y el video musical del artista de rap Kendrick Lamar de 2015, “Alright”, muestran la doble función del arte como documentación y movilización. Los artistas pueden ayudarnos a reconocer y exponer ‘schemata’ (Paula Moya, 2015) que determinan la percepción o la lectura de un individuo y que también están trabajando para establecer, mantener y defender estructuras restrictivas o opresivas. La literatura, el cine y la música, junto con otras artes y medios, juegan un papel fundamental en la reinención de lo social en las Américas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: disenso; resistencia; las Americas; el social; el arte como intervención política.

The Americas, as we know them today, are built on dissent. Starting in 1776, for half a century Americans North, Central and South, immigrants and American-born colonial subjects, resisted colonial power and strove to establish their own American nation states. Although many of these nation states oppressed the indigenous populations, colonialists exulted in the calls for “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”, for ‘libertad’ and ‘liberdade.’ The revolutions that brought about American nation states were political and social movements that expressed dissent with the status quo, with colonial rule, with taxes going to a far-away mother country that was not very motherly, with European views of the New World’s alleged inferiority, with extractivism and the exploitation of resources. The Americas would not be what they are today had it not been for brave individuals who refused to accept long-established hierarchies and dependencies. Aided by Enlightenment ideals of the power to shape one’s self and society, inspired by the French Revolution, and increasingly guided by human rights, many people in the Americas have for centuries resisted abuse.

Of course not all has been well in the Americas since the establishment of nation states. Misuses of power continued in different forms, which in turn triggered dissent that expressed itself in the abolitionist movement against slavery, the Women suffrage movement, *indigenismo*, or the Civil Rights Movement. More current social activism occurred, for example, with student protests in Mexico City’s Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the fall of 1968, which led to the Tlatelolco Massacre on October 2, the protest marches from 1977 to 1983 and beyond by the *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, mothers of the so-called *desaparecidos*, the victims of Argentina’s military dictatorship, the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*, a movement for land reform in Brazil established in 1984 and geared toward making land ownership possible for rural workers, the activities of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* in Chiapas,

Mexico, since 1994, and the 2006 immigration reform protests in the United States. Increasingly, these movements rely not only on visibility in streets and plazas but also on the Internet, using websites to present their causes and employing a variety of electronic media in their campaigns.

Gendered violence and subordination sparked many instances of dissent and protest, among them the *Ni Una Menos* movement that began in Argentina in 2015, and that has meanwhile spread to most countries in Latin America. The movement, which initially organized «around the issue of *femicidio* – “the murder of women with impunity” in Argentina, Guatemala, Mexico, and elsewhere has subsequently extended its reach to confront all forms of *violencia machista*.¹ On March 8, 2018 – International Women’s Day –, this transnational movement organized its second annual women’s strike, the *Paro International de Mujeres*, as a form of feminist resistance. The U.S.-based Me Too movement that we have seen since October of 2017 is another assertion of women’s rights.

Especially in Latin America, but also in Canada indigenous groups have recently played a pivotal role in reinventing the social. In 2009 the North American Congress on Latin America reported:

Between August 9 and 20, thousands of Awajun, Wampis, Matsigenka, Shipibo, and other indigenous peoples of the Amazon mounted an unprecedented series of simultaneous, peaceful demonstrations against the Peruvian state. The protesters, organized under an umbrella group called the Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (AIDSESP), occupied oil and gas pumping stations and hydroelectric plants, staged marches and demonstrations, shut down navigation on rivers,

¹ See <https://nacla.org/news/2018/03/08/women-strike-latin-america-and-beyond>. Accessed 5 Jan. 2021.

and blocked strategically located bridges and highways along the eastern reaches of Peru's Amazonian basin.²

This political and social movement resisted the so-called 'Law of the Jungle,' i.e., the proposed Law 840, which "sought to undermine the collective-property regime of both highland Andean and lowland Amazonian indigenous communities by conceding supposedly 'uncultivated' lands to lumber companies, surrendering the nation's rights over natural resources to foreign investors". Forests and water reservoirs were to be exploited, and protected areas were to be handed over to profit-seeking agro-industries. Peruvian President Alan García tried to circumvent the subsequent repeal of the proposed law with two presidential decrees, which were, however, annulled by Congress. As remarked by Gerardo Rénique, of NACLA (The North American Congress on Latin America),

A severe blow to García's neoliberal plans, AIDSESEP's victory marked the consolidation of indigenous peoples as a pivotal actor on the Peruvian political scene. The group's forceful, sophisticated intervention also shattered the condescending attitudes harbored toward Amazonian natives by many Peruvians – including progressive intellectuals and left-wing activists. The product of more than two decades of intense organizing, the AIDSESEP's establishment as an umbrella organization for the several regional and local federations represents a turning point in the political formation and constitution of Peru's indigenous peoples as an autonomous social and political force. It also embodies the dramatic transformation experienced by Peru's popular movement during the near decade since the fall of Fujimori. In that period, indigenous peoples have

² See <https://nacla.org/article/against-law-jungle-peru%E2%80%99s-amazonian-uprising>. Accessed 5 Jan. 2021.

displaced the labor movement – devastated by the elimination of workers’ rights, neoliberal deindustrialization, and unemployment – as the central force for social transformation....

Indigenous peoples have taken over the role of the left as the most important voice in the defense of national and public resources and national sovereignty.

Such events and narratives illustrate that ‘power to the people’ is more than a 1960s rallying cry of the Black Panthers in the United States, a slogan of the anti-Vietnam War protests, and the title of a song by John Lennon. It is a reality of the Americas – and a necessity. It encapsulates the power of groups and individuals to express their dissent in their endeavor to defend justice, equality, democracy, human rights, or the environment. It confronts abuses by the ruling elites, oppressors, and profiteers. Dissent is thus the lifeblood of the Americas.

The social is in a constant process of reinvention – in the Americas and elsewhere. In the Western Hemisphere, we have seen a resistance first to European imperialism and then to United States neo-imperialism, challenges to white or European supremacy, struggles over land, water, and other resources, demands for workers’ rights and better working conditions, protests against dictatorships, oppression, and gendered violence, rallies for racial and ethnic justice, or scientists marching against a U.S. President who manipulates through fabrications rather than respecting facts. These social and political developments are accompanied, reflected upon, attacked, or supported by narratives. Narratives engage with social ills, they document social activism, and they can promote resistance and dissent. Consider the case of the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, whose rallies, conferences, sit-ins, and walkouts and whose manifesto “*El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*” were closely tied to expressions of dissent in literature and in the visual

arts. For example, Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales, one of the leaders of the Chicano movement, gave Mexican Americans a new narrative of ethnic pride, of a hybrid heritage, and of their position in what he called a “gringo society” in his long poem “I Am Joaquin”, of 1967. Gonzales starts his epic poem by taking stock of the outsider status of Mexican Americans in U.S. society:

I am Joaquin,
Lost in a world of confusion,
Caught up in a whirl of a
gringo society,
Confused by the rules,
Scorned by attitudes,
Suppressed by manipulations,
And destroyed by modern society.

Then Gonzales recounts centuries of a people’s history from early Aztec communities via the Conquest, colonialism, the Mexican Revolution, and life in the United States. He concludes:

I am the masses of my people and I refuse to be absorbed.
I am Joaquin
The odds are great but my spirit is strong
My faith unbreakable
My blood is pure
I am Aztec Prince and Christian Christ

I SHALL ENDURE!
I WILL ENDURE!

Apart from illustrating the predicament of being at the mercy of the Anglo mainstream, this poem was also a foundational narrative of

Mexican Americans and a rallying cry for the Chicano Movement. It gave Chicanos ethnic pride, it strengthened their sense of belonging to a community, and it mobilized many to join the movement. Visual artists also contributed their pictorial statements and narratives. For example, *El Congreso de Artistas Cosmicos de las Américas de San Diego*, in 1978, painted this mural entitled “We Are Not a Minority”, on the wall of a housing project in East Los Angeles, a part of the city that is home to many Mexican Americans.

Narratives of dissent and resistance have the twofold function of documentation and mobilization. They raise consciousness and they foster identification with the presented cause. I would like to address three such narratives that recall social and political injustice and that sympathize with those who take action against the depicted conditions, inviting audiences to follow the lead of activists. The texts I chose are Mariano Azuela’s 1915 novel *Los de Abajo*, Patricio Guzmán’s 1979 documentary film “El poder popular”, which is part III of his masterpiece “La batalla de Chile”, and the 2015 music video of rap artist Kendrick Lamar’s, “Alright”. All three texts – Mexican, Chilean, and U.S. American, spanning a century – focus on the common individual suffering from and then actively resisting abusive power. The depicted acts of resistance, in turn, affect audiences and garner support for the movements out of which the texts emerged. Literature, film, and music, along with other arts and media, thus play a pivotal role in reinventing the social in the Americas that goes much beyond documentation. They are creative expressions of dissent, political documents that can sway audiences, arteries for the lifeblood of the Americas.

An example of a literary text that gives a sympathetic portrait of the victims of injustice is Mariano Azuela’s 1915 novel *Los de Abajo*, translated into English as *The Underdogs*. The book is not a celebration of a social movement but it depicts a people suffering at the hands of various repressive powers during the Mexican

Revolution. Its title implies that regardless of who is in command, the common people are always the underdogs. Its protagonist, the peasant Demetrio Macías, does not have a social or political cause for becoming an outlaw, joining the Mexican Revolution, and leading a group of men in their fight against the federal army. But after stopping the sexual advances on his wife by an abusive local leader he has to flee, abandoning his family and eventually joining Pancho Villa's troops.

Mexican American novelist Ana Castillo calls the Mexican Revolution a "people's movement for land and liberty", rather "than the convergence of isolated peasant rebellions against brutal land-owners and the opportunism of a handful of greedy sloganeers", the beginning of a new government that "started its slow march toward social retribution for the poor" (vi, v, vi). Mariano Azuela places his protagonist into this tumultuous situation – the armed resistance against oligarchs and a repressive government.³ Emiliano Zapata's call for "land and liberty" was answered by his men, who were mostly indigenous, with "Better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees" (Castillo vii). This feeling is also expressed in Azuela's novel by the medical student Luis Cervantes, who deserts the federal army into which he had been conscripted and instead joins the revolutionaries, thinking to himself: "Did not the sufferings of the underdogs, of the disinherited masses, move him to the core? Henceforth he espoused the cause of Demos, of the subjugated, the beaten and baffled, who implore justice, and justice alone". (28)

³ Ana Castillo writes in her introduction to an English translation of *Los de Abajo*: "Although the revolution may very well be the protagonist in the larger sense, Demetrio Macías is the human protagonist of the novel. That is why perhaps, in an ambush, Demetrio Macías, 'eyes leveled in an eternal glance,' does not give up the fight, and Azuela does not let the reader see him die. Azuela does not endow Colonel Macías with the superhuman qualities of a war hero in a war epic. It is a small novel after all, a small glimpse into *La Revolución* that he permits us. Like most of those men who joined the fight, Demetrio Macías is brought into the revolution out of self-defense". (x)

While Macías is in the revolution almost by default and mainly wants to return to his wife and children, Cervantes preaches the ideals of the revolution and tries to convince Macías that those are also his motivation, telling him:

It is not true that you took up arms simply because of Señor Mónico. You are under arms to protest against the evils of all the *caciques* who are overrunning the whole nation. We are the elements of a social movement which will not rest until it has enlarged the destinies of our motherland. We are the tools Destiny makes use of to reclaim the sacred rights of the people. We are not fighting to dethrone a miserable murderer, we are fighting against tyranny itself. What moves us is what men call ideals; our action is what men call fighting for a principle. (56)

It is the principle of justice that Cervantes and his author propagate, “the sacred rights of the people”, the freedom from tyranny. These are the seeds of what Azuela has Cervantes call “a social movement”.

Azuela’s novel, which first came out in serial form in a newspaper in El Paso, Texas, in 1915, when the Mexican Revolution was still ravaging much of Mexico, is less a call to action and more an illustration that even in changing power constellations the poor will always be the underdogs. But it did much to indict injustice and inequality – in Mexico and elsewhere. While Azuela criticizes the revolutionaries’ propensity to violent abuse and self-destructiveness, he implies that a social movement needs an educated leader like his character Luis Cervantes, who explains the ideals for which the revolutionaries fight. The power of the people, Azuela suggests, rests on both heroic fighters and educated theorists. Despite Azuela’s bias toward the intellectual elite of his times, writes Max Parra, *The Underdogs* “effectively captures the feelings of pride and

empowerment kindled in the rural masses by the war and General Villa's grassroots mobilization [...] [The novel] is memorable because it magnificently records the overwhelming desire for equality behind the destructiveness of Mexico's ragged armies of hungry campesinos who joined the Villista movement" ("Afterword" 184). This is not a novel of triumph, but a novel of struggle. At the end, the protagonist probably faces his death, hunted down by federal soldiers. His death will, however, not mean the end of the social movement; the fruits of his struggle will eventually contribute to a more equitable nation, in which the underdogs know that they are not totally without power.

While Azuela concentrates on the power of the common people and on reinventing the social in a narrative of dissent and resistance in the genre of the novel, Chilean director Patricio Guzmán does so in the genre of documentary film. His three-part work "La batalla de Chile" (1975-79) chronicles the last months of the government of Salvador Allende in 1972, the resistance of the bourgeoisie against his socialist reforms, and the military coup of September 11, 1973, which brought Augusto Pinochet to power. Ariel Dorfman said about "La batalla de Chile": "Patricio Guzmán's heartbreaking probe of Chile's revolution, the Pinochet coup, and the long entangled aftermath will be considered in centuries to come one of the most eloquent and daring explorations of revolution and repression, hope and memory, to survive our sorry times. What Guzmán passionately and clinically observes in Chile is valid for the whole world".⁴

Although "El poder popular", the third part of "La batalla de Chile", was released last, it comes first chronologically, documenting and commenting on events in Chile in 1972 and 1973, setting in when Salvador Allende, the first Marxist to become the president of a Latin American country through open elections, had been in power for a year and a half. The film concentrates on Chilean industrial workers

⁴ Qtd. in the DVD booklet.

fearing that a *coup d'état* is imminent and resisting the efforts of employers and middle-class employees to sabotage the country's economy by closing access to factories and going on strike. Many industrial workers are interviewed in the film, which documents their attempts to take charge of the factories and to manage them themselves in a process known as "*autogestión*".

While the opening credits in white writing are still being shown on a black screen, we hear the soundtrack of a demonstration in support of Allende, whose motorcade is driving by, accompanied by military and security forces. The first slogan by protesters that we can make out is "The left, united, will never be defeated". Soon the voiceover, to the hand-held camera images of supporters, military, and Allende himself, informs viewers of the many campaign promises that Allende has already implemented and of the socialist changes that the country has recently undergone. The supporters chant: "*¡Allende, Allende, el pueblo te defiende!*" As a contrast to these moving images of support and action, shots of paralysis taken by a mounted camera follow; those show a large number of stalled trucks, a testimony to the truckers' strike instigated by the right-wing political opposition and supported by the U.S. government. The trucks are blocking the supply paths and they make it difficult for workers to get to work. But the depiction of their stasis is again supplanted by scenes of moving overcrowded buses with people hanging from them and of many workers on the backs of trucks, along with interview statements that convey admiration for the workers' dedication to their work. They make it to their site of industrial production every day despite the obstacles put in their path. Whereas the workers come across as sympathetic and genuine, the representative of employers and engineers, seen in a close-up in which his face fills up the whole screen, seems condescending. Intercutting the interview statements with images of how industrial production continues throughout the strike by truck drivers,

engineers, managers, and store owners creates an atmosphere of defiance, while the images of right-wing activists throwing explosives in the path of buses and blowing up a passenger train resonate with irresponsibility and violence.

The following clip shows that the national crisis is man-made by the opposition to Allende. The contrasting images of stockpiled essential goods taken off the market by adherents of the political right and a long line of people waiting to buy natural gas illustrates that it is the common person who is suffering from the shortages that have been intentionally created. The supplies are there; they are just being withheld from those who need them in order to weaken support for the Allende government.

The workers give testimonials and commentaries. The word '*trabajador*' or 'worker' comes up repeatedly and stresses the dignity of work, as do the images of industrial production, while the mountain of hoarded goods creates disbelief and disgust. The dignity of workers and the dignity of Chileans are presented as being under attack by Chilean capitalists and the U.S. government. Images of soldiers with rifles patrolling in Santiago illustrate the seriousness of the situation. In this standoff, the workers and the filmmaker invite the viewers to side with the president. Allende is referred to by one worker as "*compañero presidente*", which implies that he is the workers' comrade, ally, and friend. Production does not stop for any of the interviewees, as the defiant workers are doing their part in the creation of what one of them calls 'a new Chile, economically and politically free.' While the workers are associated with production, the political opposition is associated with destruction. Footage of an explosion on a railway line is followed by TV commentators reading the statements by organizations of railroad workers who denounce the attack on a passenger train as "a criminal act" by "fascist elements".

The common people and especially workers resist the old powers and try to replace them with more participatory, democratic structures. For example, they create so-called “industrial belts” in order to coordinate production and exchange between the different industrial sites. As the title of the film implies, the people take matters into their own hands and assume power. One of the interviewed workers says, “We, the people, opened our eyes and realized we aren’t like we used to be. Before they tricked us all the time”. This situation applies not only to that particular situation and site. As another interviewed worker states: “I think that throughout the world they have to understand the worker. Not just here in Chile, but everywhere”. There is a sense of a popular awakening that is captured in the slogan “*Crear, crear, poder popular*”. As the people assume power, industrial workers unite with the peasant farm workers to occupy lands not used for production and to take agricultural production in their own hands. Their dissent is productive; it defies the attempts by the bourgeoisie and by the political right to paralyze the country.

For Patricio Guzmán, documentary film is a “practice of knowledge” that allows us to better understand the world in which we live (see Ricciarelli, booklet, 4).⁵ “La batalla de Chile” is thus a political analysis with a focus on industrial workers and their peaceful and constructive rebellion against a capitalist system that was in league with the right-wing political majority against which Allende was governing and with the bourgeoisie that feared the loss of their privileges. Guzmán’s documentation of the last eight months of the government of Salvador Allende was suspicious to the Chilean military that assumed power in 1973. So Guzmán was imprisoned,

⁵ The DVD edition of “The Battle of Chile” includes a 16-page booklet including a new introduction to Patricio Guzman’s work by Cecilia Ricciarelli, and Pauline Kael’s review of the film.

his film stock was hidden at his uncle's house and then smuggled to Sweden, from where it was shipped to Cuba, and after his release the filmmaker chose exile in Cuba, then Spain, and France. The Pinochet regime had made it impossible for Guzmán to continue his work in Chile. But his three-part documentary film unfolded its power from abroad. It raised consciousness for the power of the people, the dignity of industrial labor, and the repressiveness of right-wing politics. Documenting a social movement in Chile, it inspired social movements elsewhere in the Americas and in the world.

Social movements are a dissenting intervention in politics and social practices, in the exertion of repressive power and in injustice. The literary texts, media productions, visual art, and music that accompany them help raise awareness for social ills and foster group cohesion. In the 1960s U.S.A. the folk song "We Shall Overcome" became the unofficial anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. Then 22 year-old singer Joan Baez led a group of 300,000 attendees of the March on Washington in singing the song in August 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., where Martin Luther King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

A song that has become something like the unofficial anthem of the Black Lives Matter movement is Kendrick Lamar's "Alright", which came out on the album *To Pimp a Butterfly* in 2015 and whose refrain "We gon' be alright" has since been chanted at rallies against police violence and racism. Rapper Kendrick Lamar has often spoken out against racial injustice, and he considers his song "Alright" "a message of hope" and an exposure of "the senseless acts of killings of these young boys out here" (Williams). The black-and-white music video begins with a two-minute sequence of grim scenes of Black life, fire and urban violence. It opens on a dim shot of Oakland-Bay Bridge – with affluent San Francisco on the left and Oakland, one of the poorest neighborhoods in all of California, on the right.

So we start out with a reminder of the social divide in the United States, which is often also an ethnic divide. For the next minute and a half we see apocalyptic images of life in Oakland, accompanied first by the sound of wind and then by various screams of “aaah” and a soundtrack that breaks off repeatedly. These are acoustic and visual reminders of disruption and violence. The first spoken words accompanying the grim images are:

I remembered you was conflicted
Misusing your influence
Sometimes I did the same
Abusing my power full of resentment
Resentment that turned into a deep depression

This is an expression of suffering from the status quo, an acknowledgment of abusive power, resentment, depression – the seeds of violence and destruction.

One of the following shots is of three people standing atop a police car in front of the Oakland-Bay Bridge, an illustration of “power full of resentment”.⁶ The three figures are behind a black boy who raises his fist in rebellion and whose hoodie reminds viewers of images of Trayvon Martin, who, at age 17, in another instance of “Abusing [one’s] power full of resentment”, was fatally shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Florida in 2012 – an event that triggered the Black Lives Matter movement.

Then, the camera moves to the images of a white policeman trying to handcuff a Black man whom he has slammed against a wall and pointing his gun at the man who is resisting arrest. The lyrics

⁶ The image of three figures on top of a police car comes up repeatedly in the video, also while the actual song is heard. It illustrates the force of resistance to repressive structures and racial profiling.

explain: “But while my loved ones were fighting the continuous war back in the city, I was entering a new one / A war that was based on apartheid and discrimination”. Next a gunshot is heard and, in slow motion, a bullet is seen exiting the policeman’s pistol and flying in the direction of the Black man. Fittingly, the rap song proper begins with “Alls my life I has to fight, nigga”. But fighting is not resigning; it means doing what needs to be done so that the hope expressed in the refrain can come true: “we gon’ be alright”.

Recalling a history of Black suffering in America, the song and video go on to spread hope. The singer is lifted up off the ground and when a bird’s eye shot shows him on the ground, the crowd of supporters keeps increasing from each shot to the next. At first images of community, fast motion, and rising above abound. Things change with the arrival of the policeman. But contrary to the policeman in the opening sequence, this one only pretends to shoot, he leaves his rifle behind. So the blood spewing from the singer’s body is also only pretend, as is his fall to the ground. The final smile reaffirms the refrain “we gon’ be alright”, as it defies police brutality and death. In this way the music video undermines racial violence. It expresses dissent from the opening apocalyptic images of destructiveness. This dissent is possible because the singer is not alone; he is supported by a community and is therefore not shot like the Black man in the opening sequence but instead prevails with a smile. The bird’s eye shots illustrate that a social movement has formed to bring about change and to take away the deadly police bullet.

In her book *The Social Imperative* (2016) Paula Moya speaks of so-called ‘schemata’ that determine an individual’s perception or reading and that are also at work in setting up, maintaining, and defending restrictive structures. Literature, film, music, and the arts, I believe, can help us recognize and expose such schemata;

they dismantle repressive ideologies and they confront tactics of repression; they raise awareness and they can call to action against hegemonic power and especially against abuses of power. A schema is, according to the *Webster's Dictionary*, “a mental codification of experience” that shapes perception and cognition. The schemata of repressive power thus clash with the schemata of ethnic and gender equality, workers’ rights, the dignity of the individual, and human rights. Groups and individuals, based on their own schemata, engage in social movements and often use media, literature, music, or the arts, to dissent from repressive power and try to debunk it. This is what *Los de Abajo* does with the schemata of oligarchs and abusive *caciques*, what “La batalla de Chile” does with the schemata of factory owners, the bourgeoisie, and right-wing politicians, and what “Alright” does with the schemata of racialized violence.

Dissent is the lifeblood of the Americas. Social movements are yet another example for interconnections in the Americas, for different scenarios and dynamics occurring in different parts of the Americas either along similar lines or with distinct impacts on one another. *Los de Abajo* is clearly related to the United States, the country in which the novel was published. “La batalla de Chile” impacted social movements in many parts of Latin America in the late 1970s and in the 1980s. And Kendrick Lamar’s “Alright” resonates throughout the Americas with activists against injustices.

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EDUCAÇÃO POPULAR E MOVIMENTOS DE MULHERES

POPULAR EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

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RESUMO: A Educação Popular é uma ferramenta importante no processo de construção de uma forma de ver a realidade e as pessoas, que valoriza a produção coletiva do conhecimento, resultando no protagonismo das mulheres. As experiências de Educação Popular, especificamente de mulheres e feministas, podem ser traduzidas nas diferentes práticas de resistência desenvolvidas por grupos e associações espalhadas pelo Brasil. Neste texto, discutiremos a relação entre Educação Popular e os movimentos feministas e de mulheres, a partir de estudos, pesquisas e atividades de extensão que narram as resistências das mulheres da Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”, em Teresina/Piauí/Brasil. O projeto denominado “Rodas de Culturas”, lugar de encontro entre a educação e as diversidades, constituiu-se num espaço de produção de saberes a partir do trabalho comunitário e da economia solidária. Destacamos a necessidade de construir outro mundo possível, no qual o colonialismo, o capitalismo e o patriarcado não sejam a mola mestra das relações.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Popular; movimentos feministas e de mulheres; práticas de resistência.

ABSTRACT: Popular Education, an important tool in the process of building a new form of looking at reality and people, values the collective production of knowledge and gives protagonism to women. Experiences of Popular Education, specifically directed by women and feminists, have also meant various practices of resistance developed by groups and associations throughout Brazil. In this article, we discuss the relationship between Popular Education and Women's and feminist movements. The research and outreach activities that we focus on show women's practices of resistance within the Production Association "Persevering Women", based in Teresina/Piauí/Brazil. The project called "Rodas de Culturas", a meeting place between education and diversity, involves the production of knowledge based on community work and social solidarity economy. We emphasize the need to build another possible world, where colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy are no longer the mainspring of social relations. **KEYWORDS:** Popular Education; women's and feminist movements; practices of resistance.

Introdução

Os movimentos de mulheres e feministas, em várias partes do mundo, têm trazido experiências e discussões sobre a necessidade de se reinventar a relação entre as pessoas e destas com o mundo e a natureza, concretizando essas práticas, entre outras, por meio da economia solidária, da pedagogia feminista, do ecofeminismo e

da educação popular. Reconhecer a diversidade de conhecimentos a partir destas experiências é promover a justiça cognitiva (Santos 32), porque, por via desses conhecimentos, as mulheres propõem a educação libertadora como ferramenta importante no processo de construção de uma nova maneira de ver o mundo. Neste contexto, insiro-me como educadora popular e feminista, não só como adepta dos seus aportes teóricos/políticos/metodológicos, mas sobretudo por ter sido formada num processo de idas e vindas na Educação Popular, feita e organizada pelos Movimentos Sociais Populares e pelas classes populares desde a década de 1980, no Nordeste brasileiro, por meio da militância comunitária, pastoral, partidária e, hoje, profissional. Assim, os movimentos feministas e de mulheres fizeram com que me reconhecesse como mulher, depois como feminista e, nesse processo, posso ver em que lugar no mundo estão as mulheres. A Educação Popular fez com que, reconhecendo quem sou eu, pudesse entender em que se fundamentam as desigualdades entre as pessoas, entre os territórios e, principalmente, as desigualdades cognitivas que fazem das mulheres subalternas e invisíveis. A partir do processo educativo que ocorreu com a militância, com a educação popular e no exercício profissional, entendi que podemos ser anticoloniais, anticapitalistas e antipatriarcais, pois, sem o rompimento desses três pilares do eurocentrismo, não transformaremos as relações de desigualdade que perduram até os dias atuais em nossas realidades.

Este texto tem como objetivo discutir as contribuições da Educação Popular e dos Movimentos de Mulheres e Movimentos Feministas para a construção de práticas educativas que contribuam para a libertação de mulheres e homens. Destaco a experiência da Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes” como atividade de extensão que se caracteriza pela resistência das mulheres ao subemprego e à invisibilidade e pela prática de resistência coletiva. Fundamenta-se nos Estudos Feministas e na história de luta

e organização dos Movimentos Sociais Populares, os quais denunciam o modo de pensar universalizante que produziu diferenças geopolíticas de gênero, de raça e de classe e anunciam a possibilidade de um outro mundo a partir da valorização e do respeito aos diferentes sujeitos, conhecimentos e práticas educativas e sociais existentes em diferentes contextos. Este estudo está organizado de modo a discutir, no primeiro momento, as contribuições dos Estudos Feministas para a Educação Popular, em seguida, a Educação Popular como alternativa educativa para a libertação de mulheres e homens, e por último, a experiência da Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes” – espaço de desenvolvimento de pesquisas na pós-graduação – na Educação Popular realizada por meio de projetos de extensão universitária vinculados à Universidade Estadual do Piauí.

Contribuições para a educação popular dos estudos feministas e estudos sobre as mulheres

Os movimentos de mulheres e movimentos feministas assumem uma visão crítica das contradições e das limitações das grandes transformações históricas, a exemplo das revoluções americana e francesa, que excluíram as mulheres dos parlamentos e dos governos, negando-lhes o direito básico de votarem e de serem votadas. Essa luta pelo direito ao voto emerge em meados do século XIX, no ocidente, e consolida-se na primeira metade do século XX, período em que as mulheres começaram a dar visibilidade às suas reivindicações, garantindo esse direito em praticamente quase todos os países ocidentais. Na visão de Rago, é “na luta pela visibilidade da questão feminina, pela conquista e ampliação dos seus direitos específicos, pelo fortalecimento da identidade da mulher, que nasce um contradiscurso feminista e que se constitui um campo feminista

do conhecimento. É a partir da luta política que nasce uma linguagem feminista” (28).

No Brasil, os estudos feministas e estudos sobre as mulheres nasceram, tanto na luta e organização dos movimentos sociais, quanto no envolvimento de profissionais comprometidas/os com esse campo. Para Sarti, “embora influenciado pelas experiências europeias e norte-americanas, o início do feminismo brasileiro dos anos 1970 foi significativamente marcado pela contestação à ordem política instituída no país, desde o golpe militar de 1964” (36). Esse processo pós-ditadura caracterizou-se pela luta de rua, pelas grandes manifestações, pelos embates políticos que objetivavam a melhoria das condições de vida da população, no que se refere a se criarem mais escolas, creches, postos de saúde, e ter meios de transporte eficientes. Nesses momentos, a presença das mulheres na luta partia de necessidades imediatas, daquelas ligadas ao seu cotidiano, ao seu bairro.

Na década de 1980, com o processo de abertura política brasileira, os movimentos sociais populares, inclusive os movimentos feministas e de mulheres, trouxeram para suas agendas novas temáticas como: gênero, saúde, ecologia, raça, etnia, cultura, educação, dentre outras. As demandas, ações e reivindicações, nesse período, apresentavam aspectos que vão para além da relação capital-trabalho. Questionavam a política, a forma de educar, de fazer pesquisas, de ser e estar no mundo, provocando mudanças significativas entre as pessoas, entre as instituições públicas e nas posturas e comportamentos, tanto individuais, quanto coletivos. Para Gohn, “trata-se do resgate da dignidade do ser humano, perdida sob as condições indignas de sobrevivência no meio urbano do capitalismo selvagem brasileiro”. (48)

Na década de 1990 até aos dias atuais, as ações dos movimentos sociais têm-se caracterizado pela institucionalização de suas bandeiras de luta e de sua organicidade, garantindo o desenvolvimento de

ações e agendas mais articuladas e propositivas em âmbito regional, nacional e até mundial. Nessa perspectiva, foram realizadas conferências nacionais, municipais e internacionais, com destaque para a de Beijing¹, em 1995, na qual foi elaborada uma plataforma de reivindicações, com o compromisso dos países presentes em assumir a luta pela melhoria da condição de vida das mulheres. Neste período, no Brasil, foram aprovadas cerca de 30 leis voltadas, direta ou indiretamente, para a afirmação e ampliação dos direitos das mulheres, podendo-se destacar a legislação sobre: planejamento familiar; união estável; cotas por sexo para as eleições proporcionais; proteção ao mercado de trabalho das mulheres; registro de paternidade, dentre outras (CFEMEA, 2006).

É, então, nessa lógica, que os movimentos feministas se têm inserido no processo de construção do conceito de gênero, incorporando a possibilidade de alteração das relações entre mulheres e homens e delas(es) com a sociedade e com o espaço, como discute Touraine: “[...] o movimento feminista transformou profundamente a condição das mulheres em diversos países e permaneceu mobilizado lá onde a dominação masculina ainda conserva sua força”. (19)

Nessa perspectiva, as mulheres passaram a compreender que a luta por direitos e igualdade não está restrita somente a elas, que é necessário envolver diversos segmentos e, prioritariamente, os homens. A temática sobre as mulheres passa, então, a ser discutida a partir das relações de gênero, compreendidas na ideia de Saffioti como “o respeito a uma categoria histórica que pode regular não

¹ A Quarta Conferência Mundial das Nações Unidas sobre a Mulher, realizada em Beijing, China, de 4 a 15 de setembro de 1995, reuniu 189 países com representantes de cerca de 180 delegações governamentais e 2.500 organizações não governamentais para discutir várias questões relacionadas com as mulheres. Neste evento, foram abordados os temas: igualdade, desenvolvimento e paz. Nesta ocasião, foram assinados dois documentos: o primeiro de natureza política – a Declaração de Beijing; e o segundo – a Plataforma de Ação, que identifica os obstáculos que existem para o pleno desenvolvimento das mulheres e traça estratégias e ações com vistas a sua superação, dando condições para a ampliação dos mecanismos de pressão política.

apenas relações entre homem-mulher, mas também relações homem-homem e relações mulher-mulher e é uma construção social do masculino e do feminino”. (44)

Nesse sentido, para pensar na transformação das relações é preciso entender o que é e como se construiu o que, hoje, denominamos de relações de gênero. É importante compreender que a história da construção e do entendimento sobre o que é gênero está intimamente vinculada à luta das mulheres e aos estudos sobre essa temática.

No entanto, esta discussão não se configura num contexto teórico de consensos, pois os estudos e as próprias relações têm-se demonstrado complexas. Assim, as concepções sobre essa categoria de análise têm modificado seu enfoque, deslocando-se do objeto empírico, mulheres, para o objeto teórico, gênero. Colling ressalta que “a história do *gender* das norte-americanas, do *genre* francês, do *genere* italiano, do *geschlecht* alemão e do gênero português, tem um só objetivo: introduzir na história global a dimensão da relação entre os sexos, com a certeza de que esta relação não é um fato natural, mas uma relação social construída e incessantemente remodelada, efeito e motor da dinâmica social. Relação que produz saberes, como visão nova do passado, e categoria de análise que permite reescrever a história levando em conta o conjunto das relações humanas. (Colling 28)

Nas duas últimas décadas, esses estudos ampliaram-se e passaram a incluir uma variedade de sujeitos (heterossexuais, homossexuais, bissexuais, transexuais, dentre outros), na perspectiva de compreender como se dão essas relações num contexto que não é supostamente homogêneo. Para Colling, o termo gênero “tem sido utilizado para teorizar a questão da diferença sexual, questionando os papéis sociais destinados às mulheres e aos homens. A categoria gênero não se constitui numa diferença universal, mas possibilita entender a construção e a organização social da diferença sexual.

A história das mulheres e a história de gênero estão interligadas e situam-se no campo relacional”. (28)

Para compreender o processo de construção do conceito de gênero, utilizamos os estudos de Pereira (179). Esta autora discute a concepção de gênero a partir de quatro conceitos: 1) o conceito sistema sexo/gênero, que expressa o esquema de pensamento marxista das décadas de 1960, 1970 e 1980 e reforça a ideia de que o substrato biológico existe e não pode ser colocado de lado nos estudos sobre gênero; 2) o conceito de gênero como construção cultural e como categoria radicalmente arbitrária na perspectiva interdisciplinar; 3) o conceito de *habitus* em Bourdieu e os estudos da psicanálise, contribuindo para as interpretações sobre as estruturas simbólicas, fundamentando as construções subjetivas das relações de gênero; e 4) o conceito de construcionismo e desconstrucionismo de gênero, perspectiva de análise que ressalta a reprodução das estruturas socioculturais subjetivas.

No que se refere ao conceito de gênero como construção cultural, na perspectiva interdisciplinar, podemos afirmar que a categoria gênero tem vocação relacional, sobretudo cultural, trazendo outras representações sociais como as questões relativas à constituição dos valores culturais e educacionais, à instituição do imaginário social, à produção das identidades sociais e das subjetividades.

Vendo por este prisma, os aspectos culturais, sociais, econômicos e educacionais passam a ter importância significativa, pois é a partir desse olhar que várias pesquisadoras feministas passam a focar seus estudos, valorizando a interdisciplinaridade. Apresentam também a possibilidade do reconhecimento dos vários sujeitos, além de não reduzirem as discussões ao estudo da dominação patriarcal. Corroborando esse pensamento, Maturana afirma que:

[...] as diferenças de gênero (masculina e feminina) são somente formas culturais específicas de vida, redes específicas de conversações.

É por isso que os diferentes valores que nossa cultura patriarcal confere às diferenças de gênero não têm fundamento biológico [...] distinções sexuais entre homem e mulher são biológicas, mas o modo como as vivemos é um fenômeno cultural; [...] tais diferenças, próprias de nossa cultura patriarcal, referem-se ao modo como vivemos culturalmente nossa diversidade biológica, a partir de um fundamento de igualdade em nosso biológico cultural (17).

Esclarecendo essa questão, Strey considera que a construção cultural do gênero é evidente, quando se verifica que ser “homem” ou ser “mulher” nem sempre supõe o mesmo significado em diferentes sociedades ou em diferentes épocas (156). Ou seja, ser “homem” ou “mulher” depende dos costumes de cada lugar, de cada sociedade, da experiência cotidiana de cada um/a, variando de acordo com as leis, as religiões, a maneira de organizar a vida familiar, a vida política de cada povo ao longo da história. As relações de gênero e as representações de gênero também não variam apenas de um povo para outro, já que dentro de uma mesma sociedade elas também podem mudar de acordo com a classe social, com a raça, com a idade. De acordo com Lamas, “ainda que o gênero esteja inscrito culturalmente e inculcado inconscientemente, ele é transformável, alterável e reformável, não pela vontade, mas sim histórica, cultural e psiquicamente”. (20)

Nesta mesma perspectiva, Maturana propõe que construamos uma outra cultura que proporcione mudanças nas emoções, nas subjetividades, pois “o fluxo do emocionar muda com o fluir das coordenações de ações. Assim, ao mudar o significado das palavras modifica-se o fluxo do emocionar e nesse caso a cultura passa a exercer um papel de construção desse novo emocionar, pois, ao surgir uma comunidade humana, começa-se a conservar outras redes de conversações, [...] desaparecendo ou mudando quando tal rede de conversações deixa de ser preservada”. (33)

Entendemos, portanto, que, para mudarmos qualquer situação de subordinação e exclusão existente em nossa sociedade, é necessário entender que nossas emoções, e não só a razão, determinam o que fazemos ou deixamos de fazer. Nesse caso, a Educação Popular, por ser um espaço aberto, de produção coletiva do conhecimento, com respeito aos diferentes e às diferenças, tem um papel fundamental na (re)construção do nosso modo modo de ver e estar no mundo, contribuindo para a transformação das relações entre mulheres e homens e na possibilidade do surgimento de uma outra cultura.

Desse modo, a trajetória histórica construída pelos movimentos feministas e de mulheres, que se caracteriza, no primeiro momento, pelo movimento sufragista, depois pela atuação de intelectuais e acadêmicas e, em outro momento, pela atuação das organizações não governamentais, tem contribuído para a definição de um campo de estudos e pesquisas que reforçam as lutas sociais em torno destas questões. Os esforços dessa caminhada têm sido, dentre outros desafios, para romper com a lógica da ciência que exclui não só as mulheres, mas a possibilidade de nos tornamos sujeitos cognoscentes (Freire 78). Para Sardenberg, os estudos feministas sobre o androcentrismo nas ciências têm se multiplicado bastante na última década, revelando:

[...] não apenas como as categorias de gênero têm se inserido no vértice da Ciência Moderna, mas sobretudo que o suposto “sujeito universal” dessa ciência tem sido o homem branco ocidental. [...] [i]sso tem trazido consequências bastante desvantajosas para as mulheres, principalmente no sentido de excluí-las dos processos de investigação e negar-lhes(nos) autoridade epistêmica, menosprezando os estilos e modos cognitivos ditos “femininos”. Ademais, o androcentrismo tem contribuído para a produção de teorias sobre as mulheres que as(nos) representam como seres inferiores,

desviantes ou só importantes no que tange aos interesses masculinos. (96-7)

A crítica feminista parte do pressuposto de que a ciência não é “neutra” e de que sua objetividade exclui e segrega conhecimentos, como destaca Sardenberg: “[...] de fato, instrumentada por um olhar desconstrucionista, a crítica feminista tem avançado da mera denúncia da exclusão e invisibilidade das mulheres no mundo das ciências para o questionamento dos próprios pressupostos básicos da ciência moderna, virando-a de cabeça para baixo ao revelar que ela não é nem nunca foi ‘neutra’”. (90)

Em seu ensaio, Sardenberg, fazendo uma reflexão em torno das diferentes implicações da crítica feminista na ciência, salienta que “pensar em uma ciência feminista – ou em qualquer outra possibilidade de ciência politizada – requer, como primeiro passo, a desconstrução dos pressupostos iluministas quanto à relação entre neutralidade, objetividade e conhecimento científico. Requer, portanto, a construção de uma epistemologia feminista – de uma teoria crítica feminista sobre o conhecimento –, que possa autorizar e fundamentar esse saber que se quer politizado”. (91)

Assim, as contribuições da crítica feminista para a Educação Popular, construída a partir dos movimentos feministas e de mulheres, parte do pressuposto de que é imprescindível criarmos caminhos que libertem mulheres e homens do machismo, mas, principalmente, que libertem as mulheres da sua invisibilidade e submissão ao poder dos homens. Nesse caso, os processos educativos exigem o envolvimento com fundamentos teórico-metodológicos que subsidiem posturas coerentes e inspirem a construção de instrumentos e técnicas que promovam a participação de todos/as os/as sujeitos/as na produção coletiva do conhecimento e na sistematização como forma de socialização do novo saber produzido. Saber este que conteste as metanarrativas como linguagens universais, pro-

duzindo saberes, olhares e pensamentos holísticos e integrativos, contribuindo para a elaboração de um contradiscurso que valorize as formas diferenciadas de viver e estar no mundo.

Educação popular: esperanças de libertação de “mulheres e homens”

A transformação proposta pela pedagogia feminista, cujos processos educativos foram trazidos à tona pelas mulheres, pelos movimentos feministas e pelas acadêmicas feministas do Norte e Sul do mundo, tem provocado mudanças significativas, na medida em que questiona o modelo sexista que, durante séculos, orientou as teorias e as práticas educativas e sociais. Tem questionado e problematizado as instituições no que se refere ao jeito de ensinar meninas e meninos, mulheres e homens. Nesse caso, os espaços institucionalizados (família, escola, universidade, dentre outros), nos quais ocorrem processos de formação, sempre foram locais que, por intermédio de suas estruturas, práticas, discursos e linguagens, mantiveram a reprodução de modos machistas de homens se relacionarem com mulheres, conservando as relações patriarcais. Nesse processo, a pedagogia feminista propõe a discussão do papel dessas instâncias, interrogando-as sobre essa sua função reprodutora, em alguns casos, trazendo para si a responsabilidade de serem responsáveis pela construção de tais relações.

Nessa perspectiva, a Educação Popular (EP) traz contribuições importantes para a consolidação da pedagogia feminista que propõe a emancipação de mulheres e homens, constituindo-se não só num referencial político-metodológico, mas principalmente num modo de ser, sentir e agir. A EP colabora para a construção de estratégias gerais de intervenção e para a instrumentalização didático-pedagógica necessária ao processo de reaprendizagem de novos saberes, conhecimentos e práticas.

A Educação Popular, de acordo com Freire e Nogueira, é o “esforço de mobilização, organização popular do saber e o exercício do poder” (19-20). É, ainda, capacitação política, científica e técnica das classes populares para o conhecimento do sistema mundo com o intuito de transformá-lo num modo melhor de se viver. Já para Azevedo, é entendida como práxis social portadora de potencialidades libertadoras dos sujeitos sociais subalternos, submetidos a processos de exclusão. Em sua perspectiva, prescreve caminhos políticos, epistêmicos e metodológicos que possibilitam aos/às envolvidos/as, independentemente da sua escolaridade e da sua condição social, a leitura da sua realidade, o estudo do seu mundo social e cultural, por meio do despertar de uma atitude crítica e curiosa sobre o mundo que os/as cerca (Azevedo 14). Assim, a Educação Popular é o movimento de aprender e ensinar que possui vida, porque tem sentido e dá sentido, dando significados aos processos de aprendizagem, uma vez que mobiliza emoções, desejos, razões e ações, produzindo ideias desestabilizadoras e alternativas para o enfrentamento do heteropatriarcado que gera o machismo e a subordinação das mulheres aos homens (Santos, 2009, 56).

Nessa perspectiva, as práticas sociais e educativas que se pretendem emancipatórias e libertárias, definidas por Paulo Freire como “Pedagogia do Oprimido” (2005, 1-129), “Pedagogia da esperança” (1992, 1-127) e “Pedagogia da Autonomia” (2002, 1-76) e em Miguel G. Arroyo, como “Pedagogia de resistência à dominação” (1-47) e, mais recentemente, em Cecília Maria Bacellar Sardenberg (78-89) e Claudia Korol (1-256), como “Pedagogia Feminista”, trazem em seu bojo a essência da prática da Educação Popular, pois esses/as autores/as não só produzem conhecimentos e saberes sobre a luta do povo, mas estiveram na luta, fazendo e refazendo suas práticas como sujeitos que aprendem e ensinam ao mesmo tempo.

A pedagogia feminista, proposta aqui, pretende ser emancipatória e libertária, porque possibilita a conscientização, a libertação e a

transformação das/os sujeitas/os e de sua realidade. Os processos educativos emancipatórios e libertários referem-se à educação transformadora, dialógica e problematizadora, sobre a qual Freire afirma que “não pode ser o ato de depositar, ou de narrar, ou de transferir, ou de transmitir ‘conhecimentos’ e valores [...] mas um ato cognoscente. Como situação gnosiológica, em que o objeto cognoscível, em lugar de ser o término do ato cognoscente de um sujeito, é o mediatizador de sujeitos cognoscentes, [...] a educação problematizadora coloca, desde logo, a exigência da superação da contradição educador-educandos” (78). Com seu poder de recriação, a pedagogia feminista possibilita a mulheres e homens a (re) construção de identidades, tanto individuais, quanto coletivas, levando-as/os a reverem suas posturas diante de sua subordinação à cultura hegemônica

Como processos libertadores, transformadores e dialógicos, a Educação Popular deve propiciar, tanto às práticas como às relações interpessoais, a utilização de estratégias de “superação” do estado de submissão e de ausência do exercício do poder e, a partir dessa atitude, enfrentar a luta contra o machismo que atinge mulheres e homens, como assinala Louro:

[...] as relações sociais são sempre relações de poder e [...] o poder se exerce mais na forma de rede do que em um movimento unidirecional, então não será possível compreender as práticas como isentas desses processos. A construção de uma prática educativa não sexista necessariamente terá de se fazer a partir de dentro desses jogos de poder (19).

Assim, a EP tem contribuído para a mudança histórica, sociopolítica, cultural e educacional do Brasil, especialmente do Nordeste. As mudanças conseguidas até hoje, como a aprovação de leis que beneficiam as/os subalternizadas/os, as denúncias contra corrupção,

a organização da sociedade civil em diversos movimentos que lutam por questões específicas atreladas a mulheres, crianças, adolescentes e idosos, bem como por livre orientação sexual, são resultado de anos de dedicação de militantes, ONGs e, principalmente, dos movimentos sociais populares, por via da prática da Educação Popular.

As práticas de Educação Popular, que ocorrem em momentos de formação programada e a partir da formação na ação, como enfatiza Silva, “[...] são desenvolvidas como matriz educativa [...] caracterizam as perspectivas pedagógicas [...] no impulso dos processos formativos e da produção de novos aportes metodológicos e epistemológicos como perspectiva de superação da educação alienante [...]” (132-133). Neste cenário, propõe-se, através da EP, mudança do jeito de ser e estar no mundo, assim como uma nova linguagem, comportamentos, valores e, conseqüentemente, outra sociedade.

Alguns estudiosos afirmam ter sido no início do século XX o surgimento da Educação Popular. Segundo Costa, a primeira experiência autônoma de EP no Brasil aconteceu no contexto da industrialização com a chegada de italianos/as que, para manterem acesos seus valores e garantir a educação dos seus/suas filhos e filhas, criaram escolas e centros de cultura que cumpriam também o papel de propagação de suas ideias de organização junto aos/às trabalhadores/as (06).

Nas décadas de 1960 e 1970, acontecem outras importantes experiências de Educação Popular, voltadas para a alfabetização² de pessoas jovens e adultas, pois o analfabetismo sempre foi um dos maiores entraves à participação social no contexto brasileiro. Nessa experiência, destaca-se o educador Paulo Freire, que propunha, por meio da alfabetização, um processo de construção de um

² Alfabetização entendida como o processo de aquisição da leitura e da escrita e como o despertar para participação crítica da realidade própria dos/as educandos/as a fim de transformá-la.

homem novo e de uma mulher nova, capazes de escreverem suas próprias histórias, como participantes da história de seu país. Já na segunda metade dos anos 1970, conforme Santos e Brito, chegaram ao Brasil missionários/as italianos/as que, após a ditadura militar, retomam os trabalhos de Educação Popular por todo o território brasileiro e junto às CEBs (Comunidades Eclesiais de Base), estimulam a organização das lutas sociais a partir dos bairros de maior concentração de empobrecidos (33). Neste período, são gestadas novas práticas educativas no interior das organizações populares, a exemplo dos atos públicos, seminários, encontros, debates, cursos de formação, dentre outras.

A Igreja progressista, nesse período, inspirada na Teologia da Libertação, incorporou o desafio do exercício da Educação Popular, utilizando o método Ver-Julgar-Agir. Com essa concepção, provocou o surgimento de organismos de repercussão social e educacional de pensamento progressista, como: Ação social Arquidiocesana, Movimento de Educação de Base (MEB), além de organizações juvenis para leigos, com destaque para a Juventude Agrária Católica (JAC), Juventude Estudantil Católica (JEC), Juventude Independente Católica (JIC), Juventude Operária Católica (JOC) e Juventude Universitária Católica (JUC), que tiveram papel importante na disseminação dos princípios da Educação Popular, como é registrado por Silva: “[...] É inegável o papel das escolas de formação popular como instrumento de formação e de articulação das classes populares, sobretudo, no sentido de pensar a educação em outros espaços de sociabilidade e segundo as novas formas de produção e de democratização do conhecimento [...]” (140).

Na década de 1980, com o processo de abertura política brasileira, os movimentos sociais populares trazem para suas agendas novas temáticas como: saúde, gênero, ecologia, raça/etnia, cultura etc. Suas lutas e ações apresentam aspectos que vão além da relação capital-trabalho. Incorporam a possibilidade de alteração das relações entre homens e mulheres e deles/as com a sociedade e

com o meio ambiente. Esta incorporação provocou mudanças significativas entre as pessoas, entre as instituições públicas, exigindo novas posturas e comportamentos.

Nessa perspectiva, a partir de algumas lideranças desses movimentos de educadores/as ou assessores/as que desenvolviam tarefas de animação ou educação junto às lutas populares, estruturaram-se, no Piauí, entidades de Educação Popular, hoje, conhecidas como organizações não governamentais (ONGs). Dentre elas, podemos citar: o Centro Piauiense de Ação Cultural (CEPAC) (Teresina); o Centro de Assessoria ao Movimento Popular de Parnaíba CAMP (Parnaíba); o Centro de Educação Popular Esperantinense (CEPES) (Esperantina); o Centro de Educação Popular de Valença (CEPAVA), a Escola de Formação Paulo de Tarso (EFPT) (Teresina) e, em nível regional, a Escola Quilombo dos Palmares em Recife/PE. Esses Centros de Assessoria tiveram papel fundamental na organização e fortalecimento do movimento sindical e comunitário, criaram e contribuíram com a formação das lideranças da Central Única dos/as Trabalhadores/as (CUT) e da Federação de Associações de Moradores e Conselhos Comunitários do Piauí (FAMCC).

A EP, na década de 1990, busca novas formas de se consolidar e cooperar com os movimentos sociais populares para o enfrentamento dos desafios apontados para o período. Assim, no final dos anos de 1990 e início do século XXI, tem início a inclusão, no contexto da Educação Popular, de temáticas como: cidadania, políticas públicas, participação popular, conselhos de gestão, orçamentos participativos, desenvolvimento local sustentável, provocando alterações na relação com o Estado e com a sociedade, exigindo maior qualificação técnica e política de seus militantes e adeptos para propor alternativas à sociedade, bem como, a construção de um projeto popular e democrático a partir do contexto local. Para Costa, tal mudança “exige um conhecimento acerca do programa, projeto ou política pública em execução para que não ocorra uma

desqualificação no poder de barganha, despertada pela Educação Popular nos anos anteriores” (08).

Silva esclarece que o período entre 1960 e 1990 foi o ápice da difusão e da consolidação da Educação Popular no Brasil, com grande repercussão no Nordeste, pois,

[...] no país, a incidência das concepções teóricas da Teologia da Libertação e Marxista tiveram uma contribuição significativa na formação de lideranças sindicais, populares, pastorais, estudantis e comunitárias, garantindo elementos fundacionais para o desenvolvimento de novos processos coletivos de lutas por direitos e por cidadania, o que culminou com a organização social de vários movimentos e várias organizações, a exemplo da Central Única dos Trabalhadores e de outras entidades em nível nacional (141).

Nessa trajetória, constatamos mudanças de paradigma na Educação Popular. Nos primeiros anos, os objetivos estavam, predominantemente, centrados no contexto geral, na política, na estrutura da sociedade, num projeto político claro e definido. No contexto posterior, volta-se, sem esquecer a perspectiva anterior, para os indivíduos – inclusão da subjetividade – sua cultura e representação. Nesse novo paradigma, é necessário repensar a relação educador/a-educando/a-conteúdo e, ainda, provocar reação nos/as sujeitos/as de forma que eles(as) confrontem o recebido com o que possuem de sua experiência anterior e visão de mundo e o reelaborem. Essa construção é uma opção político-pedagógica que busca desconstruir ideologias que durante séculos dominaram e oprimiram as classes populares (Gohn, 98).

Sendo assim, a metodologia da Educação Popular fundamenta as experiências das práticas educativas e sociais que tenham como ponto de partida a realidade e os interesses daqueles que a compõem, buscando um processo de conhecimento e instrumentação

que aumente o poder de intervenção na realidade. Para Gohn, a prática da Educação Popular parte de duas questões: a educativa – cujo produto é realimentado de novos processos – e a pedagógica que são os instrumentos utilizados no processo (19). Contudo, compreendemos que o aspecto político da EP é o que tem dado, fortemente, sentido a sua prática cotidiana.

A Educação Popular é, portanto, uma construção histórica permanente que se dá a partir da prática dos sujeitos sociais. É uma prática que trabalha com as falas das pessoas da comunidade, valorizando elementos da sua história, das práticas religiosas e culturais, os hábitos de lazer, suas lutas, vitórias, frustrações e saberes. O conhecimento produzido nessa experiência é sistematizado e discutido com todos/as de forma crítica, traduzindo conceitos e concepções em uma nova linguagem (Azevedo 139). É um instrumento importante para construir um projeto sociopolítico-cultural e educativo alternativo, baseado nas dimensões de classe, gênero, etnia-raça, ambiente, em valores libertários, solidários, fraternos, ecológicos e na reconstrução do ideário socialista para enfrentar as estruturas coloniais, capitalistas e patriarcais. Para tanto, temos de trabalhar os aspectos objetivos e os subjetivos dos movimentos e de seus atores e atrizes e do contexto político, social, histórico, cultural e educacional em que estão inseridos(as), pois, são eles(as) que dão sentido à sua prática, como afirma Azevedo:

O conhecimento popular, a sabedoria popular, é o conhecimento produzido e apreendido na construção da existência e na produção da vida material e espiritual dos grupos sociais. Tem uma linha de ancestralidade. É o conhecimento que permite a sobrevivência do ser humano na sua relação de criação da vida, transformando a natureza com a prática cotidiana sensível, tanto no uso dos recursos naturais nas formas primitivas, quanto na sobrevivência do mundo urbano contemporâneo. (142)

Pensando dessa forma, é subjacente que, no processo formativo dos atores e das atrizes sociais, sejam trabalhados aspectos da subjetividade para reacender sonhos, utopias, significados, na perspectiva da equidade e da solidariedade; capacitá-los/as para a intervenção nas políticas públicas, ou seja, organizar politicamente os movimentos para a mobilização social, as negociações, a construção de alianças e o sentido estratégico da participação. É estratégico, também, construir alianças com os meios de comunicação alternativos e formais para obter visibilidade para as lutas e conquistas que vão sendo alcançadas.

Neste contexto, a Educação Popular, contrariamente ao projeto eurocêntrico, deve ser pensada enquanto processo articulado a uma definição estratégica de intervenção epistêmica, política e metodológica, dando-lhe um sentido ético e ideológico. Deve partir de uma leitura crítica da realidade, da construção coletiva do conhecimento, para, a partir da identificação das necessidades dos grupos e das pessoas, construir um diagnóstico do contexto onde vai ser desenvolvida a ação. A ação deve ser planejada, monitorada, sistematizada e avaliada constantemente.

O/A educador/a popular deve trabalhar com os grupos a construção de suas identidades e expressões políticas, tornando-os/as protagonistas; desenvolver sentido crítico em relação ao Estado, à cultura e suas expressões; deve ainda formar para a autonomia e para o desenvolvimento da democracia e da autoconfiança.

Outrossim, a Educação Popular, como prática política, como fundamento teórico e metodológico, situa-se no cruzamento da crítica feminista e pós-colonial, pois pretende desconstruir e refazer os aparelhos de conhecimento e de poder androcêntricos e coloniais que dominam o mundo – o Sul e o próprio Norte – visto que o conhecimento que não serve para libertar não serve para ser aprendido.

Educação popular e as mulheres: a experiência da associação de produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”

As experiências surgidas, no Brasil, fruto das práticas de Educação Popular e da organização dos Movimentos Populares, especificamente movimentos feministas e de mulheres, podem ser traduzidas, hoje, nas diferentes práticas de resistências desenvolvidas por grupos, associações e cooperativas feministas e de mulheres espalhados por todos os estados brasileiros.

Nessa perspectiva, a Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”, na comunidade Parque Eliane, localizada em Teresina/Piauí, tornou-se espaço de desenvolvimento do projeto de extensão denominado “Rodas de Culturas”: lugar de encontro entre a educação e as diversidades que se constituiu num espaço de produção de práticas e saberes a partir da Educação Popular, com foco nas necessidades e lutas das mulheres. Tinha como objetivo geral promover a troca de saberes, possibilitando discussões, reflexões e produção de conhecimento coletivo sobre a cultura, as relações de gênero, geracionais, étnico/raciais e ambientais. O desenvolvimento das ações em torno desses eixos possibilitou a integração entre a universidade e a comunidade, favorecendo a relação entre ensino, pesquisa e extensão universitária.

A Comunidade Parque Eliane é localizada na zona sul de Teresina, capital do Piauí, à esquerda da rodovia PI – 130, que liga Teresina ao município de Palmeirais. A comunidade era composta por 500 famílias, com uma média de cinco pessoas por casa, numa área que corresponde a 72 hectáres, divididos em 720 lotes. A área foi conquistada por meio de ocupação, as famílias não possuem o título da terra e o bairro não tem infraestrutura básica que propicie as condições mínimas de habitabilidade às pessoas que ali residem. Os ocupantes são provenientes de bairros como Angelim, Promorar, Comunidade Salobro, Nazária, Cerâmica Cil e de cidades do interior

dos estados do Piauí e do Maranhão. A comunidade é formada por famílias que não possuem renda fixa e a maioria tem as mulheres como chefe da família e elas não contam com nenhuma renda. Os homens trabalham como autônomos na construção civil, desenvolvendo as funções de pedreiros ou serventes de pedreiros.

Diante dessa realidade, algumas mulheres organizaram um grupo de geração de renda que desenvolve trabalhos artesanais, chamado Grupo de “Mulheres Perseverantes”, que, desde fevereiro de 2008, autodenominam-se Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”. O grupo é composto por 20 pessoas, sendo 15 as que mais frequentam, tem por objetivo organizar mulheres em torno de projetos de geração de renda para que possam, juntas, desenvolverem-se, fazendo crescer a comunidade e a si mesmas.

A Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes” do Parque Eliane tornou-se um espaço de encontro entre mulheres negras, brancas e homens de diferentes gerações, com qualificação e escolarização diversas, que almejam o aumento da renda, a melhoria da qualidade de vida e a inclusão de seus/suas filhos/as na vida da comunidade, assim como no acesso aos bens e serviços públicos. As mulheres organizam-se na Associação e as crianças na Casa de Artes e Culturas (CAC), que atende crianças e outros agentes comunitários (mulheres, homens e jovens). Todas essas atividades se desenvolveram com suportes possibilitados pelo convênio entre a Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI), a Universidade Estadual do Piauí (UESPI) e a Universidade dos Estudos de Verona (UNVR) (Itália).

Este projeto de extensão contribuiu para a “Roda de Culturas” com a discussão das relações de gênero, trazendo vivências e convivências que provocaram o questionamento das atuais práticas sociais e educativas em evidência no bairro, assim como a problematização dessas relações. Possibilitou também o questionamento sobre o estado de submissão e a baixa autoestima das mulheres mediante o processo de organização da geração de renda, fazendo

com que elas pudessem sentir-se capazes de mudar suas vidas por meio da conquista de sua autonomia pessoal, na relação com a família, contribuindo para a transformação do contexto em que estão inseridas, no caso, o Parque Eliane e, nesse processo, ir conquistando sua emancipação.

O projeto “Rodas de Culturas” viabilizou ainda a organização da Associação, que proporcionou a realização de cursos de aperfeiçoamento, discussões, debates, feiras, intercâmbios, mas, principalmente, a possibilidade de construção de um ambiente em que mulheres, crianças e demais pessoas pudessem encontrar-se, dividir angústias, alegrias, tristezas e se fortalecerem para enfrentar as dificuldades geradas pelo desemprego, subemprego, alcoolismo e falta de infraestruturas que o bairro não oferecia para o bem viver de seus/suas moradores/as. Ademais, colaborou na produção de diversos trabalhos científicos, como monografias, trabalhos de conclusão de curso, dissertações de mestrado, dentre outros, apresentados em eventos científicos e em livros.

Nesse sentido, constatamos que a experiência de organização do território Parque Eliane, que se dá num contexto marcado pela lógica de dominação masculina e de subemprego, vem demonstrando, de várias formas, como as mulheres têm alcançado seu empoderamento por intermédio da organização política e da busca da melhoria da qualidade de vida, configurando-se como possibilidade de construção da autonomia e da liberdade, aspectos intrínsecos de resistência e de ruptura das desigualdades de gênero.

Desse modo, o desenvolvimento do Projeto “Rodas de Culturas” nesta comunidade, por via da prática da Educação Popular, que se concretizou em atividades como reuniões, cursos, feiras, almoços coletivos, festas, oficinas, encontros de estudo, prática de capoeira, encontro para produção e comercialização, os intercâmbios e os momentos da vida cotidiana, proporcionou distintas aprendizagens por parte das mulheres, demonstrando empoderamento e sentimento de pertencimento a um território. Nesse caso, percebemos que os projetos desenvolvidos com

e para as mulheres têm proporcionado conquistas ao nível da autonomia e progressivos avanços políticos e subjetivos como consequência de processos de aprendizagem e organização coletiva.

No caso do Parque Eliane, as mulheres demonstraram ter mais consciência de, não apenas produzir renda, mas se organizarem, qualificarem-se, melhorarem a autoestima, construindo alternativas de resistência cotidianas. Desse modo, as práticas educativas, desenvolvidas junto à Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”, têm revelado que as mulheres envolvidas nesse processo sentem-se mais fortes, seguras e confiantes, pois, juntas, elas estão transformando a si mesmas e dando sua contribuição para transformar a comunidade em que vivem. Destacamos como relevantes ainda o cultivo e a vivência de valores como amizade, solidariedade, companheirismo, cooperação e trabalho coletivo.

Entretanto, o processo de organização e participação na Associação, apesar de ser considerado pelas mulheres um espaço de aprendizagem e de reconhecimento individual e coletivo, apresenta limites que, na maioria das vezes, estão ligados aos cuidados dos/as filhos/as e dos maridos/companheiros e da casa. Além dos que estão vinculados à comercialização dos produtos artesanais produzidos por elas. Nesse sentido, é imprescindível a divisão do trabalho doméstico, de modo que a jornada das mulheres seja menos cansativa e sobrecarregada, assim como a construção e ampliação das creches para atendimento às crianças, proporcionando às mulheres o desenvolvimento de suas atividades fora do espaço doméstico/privado com mais segurança e tranquilidade.

Algumas considerações finais

Discutir as contribuições da Educação Popular e dos movimentos de mulheres e feministas para a construção de práticas que

contribuem para a libertação de mulheres e homens é tratar da minha própria prática, é falar da teoria que embasa todas as minhas opções políticas e educacionais, porque ela me fez o que “sou”, o que “sinto”, o que “desejo ser” e o que quero que o espaço onde vivo “seja”. É falar de um desejo que não é só meu, mas é compartilhado por diversos/as companheiras/os de luta e de aprendizagem.

Sendo assim, podemos afirmar que os processos educativos sexistas aos quais nos submetemos, historicamente, que privilegiam os homens e reforçam a sociedade machista e heteronormativa, estão em desacordo com a atual realidade, haja vista a diversidade de contexto, sujeitos e saberes produzidos pelas relações de interconectividade e complexidade característica das sociedades contemporâneas.

A pedagogia feminista, proposta aqui como alternativa ao modelo segregador que oprime mulheres e homens, parte do pressuposto de que vivemos numa sociedade marcada por desigualdades nas relações e que é fundamental a construção de novas formas de se relacionar, sentir e estar no mundo, como tem demonstrado a experiência da Associação de Produção “Mulheres Perseverantes”.

Desse modo, os estudos feministas e sobre as mulheres, que nasceram, tanto na luta e organização dos movimentos sociais, quanto no envolvimento de profissionais comprometidos/as com essa temática, têm assumido um importante papel na consolidação e sistematização de um pensamento e de um campo que fortalece a luta em torno dessa questão.

Nesse sentido, os movimentos de mulheres e feministas e a Educação Popular devem continuar contribuindo para fazer a “crítica”, problematizar, indagar e propor novos modos de “ser” e “estar” no mundo em relação. Devem constituir-se por meio de um processo que colabore para a desconstrução e construção de novos paradigmas. Devem propor princípios, conceitos, práticas, metodologias e técnicas que possam romper com as estratégias epistemológicas eurocêntricas, no sentido de atender aos interesses sociais, políticos,

educacionais e cognitivos das mulheres e dos grupos, historicamente subordinados e segregados.

Essas possibilidades são inerentes ao desejo de viver com dignidade, o que passa, também, pela solidariedade planetária, pela articulação de pensamentos, conhecimentos e saberes contrários à ordem hegemônica, na qual mulheres e homens, independentemente da cor de sua pele, da orientação sexual, da espiritualidade que almejam, sejam capazes de caminharem juntos/as na certeza de que outro mundo é possível. Acreditamos que isto seja viável por meio da Educação Popular, que se concretiza nas várias experiências desenvolvidas pelos movimentos de mulheres e feministas, porque ao se fazerem, fazem seu próprio caminhar. Como assegura Freire, “ninguém caminha sem aprender a caminhar, sem aprender a fazer o caminho caminhando, refazendo e retocando o sonho pelo qual se pôs a caminhar” (1992, 42), e que, ao caminhar, pode-se encontrar no caminho o que tanto se deseja e, nesse caso, “a alegria não chega apenas no encontro do achado, mas faz parte do processo da busca. E ensinar e aprender não pode dar-se fora da procura, fora da boniteza e da alegria” do caminhar (Freire 2002, 29). Outro mundo é possível sim, vamos seguindo!

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**PARA ALÉM DA PROPRIEDADE:
AS INOVAÇÕES NARRATIVAS DOS MOVIMENTOS
SOCIAIS NA AMÉRICA LATINA**

**BEYOND PROPERTY: THE NARRATIVE INNOVATIONS
OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA**

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RESUMO: O artigo pretende, a partir de reflexões acerca de experiências reais de movimentos sociais na América Latina, apresentar como diversas narrativas relacionadas com a luta pela propriedade (urbana e rural) contribuem para repensar um elemento ainda marginal nas literaturas europeias e americana sobre ação coletiva: a tensão entre democracia e propriedade. Buscou-se compreender os valores presentes nessas práticas e seus dilemas, a partir de entrevistas e dados secundários. As experiências desenvolvidas por três movimentos sociais abordados neste trabalho (Movimento dos Sem Terra – MST; Movimento de Luta por Moradia e Movimiento de Ocupantes y Inquilinos – MOI) apontam para a necessidade de des-

colonizar teorias a partir de saberes locais que extrapolam epistemologias eurocentradas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: colonialismo; pós-colonialismo; Movimentos Sociais; propriedade.

ABSTRACT: Focusing on reflections regarding real experiences of social movements in Latin America, this article intends to present how different narratives related to the fight for property (both urban and rural) contribute to rethink an element still marginal in European and American scholarship on collective action: the tension between democracy and property. Based on interviews and secondary data it is our purpose to understand the values involved in such practices and the dilemmas faced by these practices. The experiences gathered by the three social movements focused in this article (Landless Workers' Movement – MST; Housing Movement, and Occupants and Tenants Movement – MOI) showcase the importance of learning with local knowledges to be able to decolonize theories that extrapolate eurocentred epistemologies.

KEYWORDS: colonialism; postcolonialism; social movements; property.

O discurso oficial do desenvolvimento latino-americano baseia-se em uma modernidade em que terra/propriedade são temas quase intocáveis. Contudo, nas fissuras deste modelo, movimentos sociais atuam descobrindo o outro subalterno e reescrevendo narrativas que perpassam diversos tipos de opressão. Nessa perspectiva, este artigo é resultado do diálogo de três pesquisas sobre movimentos sociais distintos, mais especificamente o Movimento dos Sem Terra – MST (Brasil), movimento de moradia (Brasil) e o Movimiento de Ocupantes y Inquilinos – MOI (Argentina). Os dados

analisados foram obtidos a partir de entrevistas e análise documental¹. O relato dessas práticas e experiências relacionadas com a luta pela terra (urbana e rural) tem como objetivo observar a superação e ampliação de narrativas que tomam como referência a relação entre democracia e propriedade. Acreditamos que esses movimentos sociais, ao enfrentarem a questão da propriedade em países com trajetória colonial, trouxeram contribuições e novas narrativas, o que significa dizer a conformação de resistência a narrativas fundantes da colonialidade.

Quijano (2009), cria o conceito de colonialidade ao afirmar que após o colonialismo histórico as formas de dominação construídas nesse período não cessaram com a independência. Como bem aponta Quijano, mesmo após os processos de independência na América Latina, a colonialidade apresenta-se como central para o padrão mundial do poder capitalista, atuando em todas as dimensões de produção da existência social. Fundamentada “na imposição de uma classificação racial/étnica da população do mundo” (73), a colonialidade organiza as noções básicas de classificação social e orienta as relações de poder desde sua formação e consolidação a partir da constituição das Américas. Sua continuidade ocorre a partir da permanência da dominação colonial no mundo contemporâneo e articula os lugares periféricos nos diferentes espaços de hierarquização (Quijano; Grosfoguel).

A colonialidade também se relaciona com a interação entre natureza e sociedade. Segundo Catherine Walsh (2017), a colonialidade da natureza descarta a relação milenar dos diversos seres, como também entre os mundos espirituais e os ancestrais. A lógica da modernidade nega a noção da terra como acordo da natureza, como

¹ Esse artigo é resultado de pesquisa dos seus três autores. O que trata do MOI é fruto de um estudo pós-doutoral. O que se refere ao movimento de moradia e o que trata do MST são produtos de pesquisas de doutorandos nos seus respectivos doutorados.

ser vivo com suas próprias formas de inteligência, sentimentos e espiritualidade.

Ao longo da modernidade/colonialidade foram construídas narrativas sobre os caminhos para o desenvolvimento dos países periféricos. A inserção desses países no que se denominou de “Primeiro Mundo” dependeria, nessa perspectiva, do emprego de técnicas de governança liberais ou neoliberais. Ao despolitizar e descontextualizar as relações de poder global, essa lógica, apresentava a questão do desenvolvimento como um problema técnico relacionado com a “boa governança”. Mignolo (2008) faz a pertinente crítica a esse processo:

Ficou aparente, lá pelo fim dos anos sessenta e início dos setenta – com a crise do Estado do Bem-estar (Welfare State) –, que “desenvolvimento” era um outro termo na retórica da modernidade para esconder a reorganização da lógica da colonialidade: as novas formas de controle e exploração do setor do mundo rotulado como Terceiro Mundo e países subdesenvolvidos. A matriz racial de poder é um mecanismo pelo qual não somente as pessoas, mas as línguas e as religiões, conhecimentos e regiões do planeta são racializados. Ser subdesenvolvido não é como ser um indígena das Américas, Austrália e Nova Zelândia? Ou um negro da África? Ou muçulmanos do mundo árabe? Ser das colônias do Segundo Mundo (ex., Ásia Central e Cáucaso) não era, de uma certa forma, ser tão invisível como as colônias do império de segunda classe, uma racialização escondida sob a expressão “Segundo Mundo”? (287).

Além disso, a retórica do desenvolvimento parte da essencialização das características que determinam o que é ser desenvolvido a partir de modelos eurocentrados. Segundo Arturo Escobar (2007), seu sentido é orientado por categorias e relações que sustentam

sua coesão a partir de uma visão hegemônica que, apesar de se adaptar e se reconstruir localmente, assegura a diferenciação entre Primeiro e Terceiro Mundo. Segundo o mesmo autor, sua prática tem resultado em profundas transformações no tecido econômico, social e cultural.

A ideia do Primeiro Mundo desenvolvido como marco a ser alcançado, mais do que fomentar uma noção eurocentrada de desenvolvimento, é essencial para a reprodução do eurocentrismo. Como parte do mito da modernidade, segundo Enrique Dussel, essa retórica ancora-se na ideia da superioridade do europeu em frente ao “primitivo”. O mito da modernidade é resumido nas seguintes palavras do autor:

1. A civilização moderna autodescreve-se como mais desenvolvida e superior (o que significa sustentar inconscientemente uma posição eurocêntrica).

2. A superioridade obriga a desenvolver os mais primitivos, bárbaros, rudes, como exigência moral.

3. O caminho de tal processo educativo de desenvolvimento deve ser aquele seguido pela Europa (é, de fato, um desenvolvimento unilinear e à européia o que determina, novamente de modo inconsciente, a “falácia desenvolvimentista”).

4. Como o bárbaro se opõe ao processo civilizador, a práxis moderna deve exercer em último caso a violência, se necessário for, para destruir os obstáculos dessa modernização (a guerra justa colonial).

5. Esta dominação produz vítimas (de muitas e variadas maneiras), violência que é interpretada como um ato inevitável, e com o sentido quase-ritual de sacrifício; o herói civilizador reveste a suas próprias vítimas da condição de serem holocaustos de um sacrifício salvador (o índio colonizado, o escravo africano, a mulher, a destruição ecológica, etcetera).

6. Para o moderno, o bárbaro tem uma “culpa” (por opor-se ao processo civilizador) que permite à “Modernidade” apresentar-se não apenas como inocente mas como “emancipadora” dessa “culpa” de suas próprias vítimas.

7. Por último, e pelo caráter “civilizatório” da “Modernidade”, interpretam-se como inevitáveis os sofrimentos ou sacrifícios (os custos) da “modernização” dos outros povos “atrasados” (imaturados), das outras raças escravizáveis, do outro sexo por ser frágil, etcetera. (30)

Produzida ao longo da modernidade/colonialidade, a falácia desenvolvimentista, ao se organizar em torno de um caminho unilinear, essencializa e invisibiliza processos de produção de desigualdade, além de ignorar, calar e destruir narrativas que apontem para caminhos e experiências autônomas. Nesse sentido, se orienta em uma noção única sobre como gerir as propriedades e as terras, negando saberes e inovações locais, além de ignorar a extrema concentração da terra como legado do colonialismo. Conforme Quijano (2005), o processo de apropriação da propriedade da terra na América Latina é um elemento crucial para compreender a formação dos Estados latino-americanos e de suas dinâmicas (não) democráticas. Ao tratar sobre o Cone Sul o autor destaca o caso argentino:

Um elemento crucial introduziu, contudo, uma diferença básica nesses países em comparação com o caso estadunidense, muito em especial na Argentina. Enquanto nos Estados Unidos a distribuição da terra produziu-se de uma maneira menos concentrada durante um importante período, na Argentina a apropriação da terra ocorreu de uma maneira completamente distinta. A extrema concentração da propriedade da terra, em particular das terras conquistadas aos índios, tornou impossível qualquer tipo de

relações sociais democráticas entre os próprios brancos e em consequência de toda relação política democrática. (133)

O papel da concentração de terra na produção de desigualdades que constroem a conformação de experiências democráticas, além da própria violência que garantiu esse processo de produção das propriedades, são fatores essenciais para a compreensão da formação e consolidação dos modelos de Estado que se conformam nessa região. Da mesma forma, o autor aponta para o processo de apropriação de terras no Brasil e a posse desigual na formação do Estado brasileiro:

Claro que esta minoria dominante se encontrava agora livre para expandir sua propriedade da terra às custas dos territórios reservados aos índios pela regulamentação da Coroa Espanhola. No caso do Brasil, os negros não eram nada além de escravos e a maioria dos índios constituía-se de povos da Amazônia, sendo desta maneira estrangeiros para o novo Estado. (Quijano 2005, 134)

Assim, a grande concentração da propriedade da terra não é somente a unidade de produção básica brasileira, mas a própria forma a partir da qual organiza-se o poder (Martins 1981; Silva 2013). A apropriação e concentração da terra, elemento primeiro a ser orquestrado pela colonização no Brasil, fundou as desigualdades e o arranjo político oligárquico brasileiro. A moderna propriedade da terra, erguida a partir da Lei de Terras em 1850 sacraliza, por fim, o acesso à terra mediante tão somente a sua compra (Silva 2013)².

² A Lei de Terras – “Em 1850, mesmo ano da abolição do tráfico de escravos, o Império decretou a lei conhecida como Lei de Terras, que consolidou a perversa concentração fundiária. É nela que se encontra a origem de uma prática trivial do latifúndio brasileiro: a grilagem de terras – ou a apropriação de terras devolutas através de documentação forjada – que regulamentou e consolidou o modelo da grande propriedade rural e formalizou as bases para a desigualdade social e territorial que hoje conhecemos” (www.mst.com.br).

Se por um lado o latifúndio é historicamente considerado o principal empecilho à construção de relações democráticas no Brasil (Silva 2013), por outro, a ordem latifundista brasileira é processualmente transformada ao longo do século XX. O capital chega ao campo e começa a se transformar em agronegócio, onde a função social da terra adequa-se ao capital. Assim, a grande propriedade é reapropriada e ressignificada sob o império da produtividade (Marés 2013).

Arturo Escobar (2005) aponta a capacidade de as experiências locais produzirem saberes que extrapolam as limitações das noções totalizantes sobre a produção do local e do global. Em diálogo com essa perspectiva, é possível pensar os movimentos sociais como construtores de conhecimentos e inovações que lidam e buscam superar as limitações impostas pelos processos da modernidade/colonialidade.

Conforme Carvalho, o diálogo do pensamento decolonial com as teorias da ação coletiva possibilita pensar os movimentos sociais como produtores de conhecimento em um contexto onde os diversos atores “... constroem sua ação no espaço de exterioridade” (Carvalho 2015, 9). Por isso é necessário abordar as tentativas de produção de modernidades alternativas a partir das estratégias, narrativas, repertórios e vivências mobilizadas, sem esquecer que estamos nos referindo a processos inacabados e contínuos.

Uma discussão relevante no pensamento decolonial refere-se a necessidade de descolonização dos referenciais de esquerda. Grosfoguel propõe a ressignificação dos conceitos surgidos a partir da modernidade, superando os limites do pensamento eurocentrado. Assim, muitos atores subalternizados mobilizam categorias construídas a partir do pensamento ocidental e os redefinem a partir das experiências presentes no Sul Global (Grosfoguel 2008). Definido pelo autor como “cumplicidade subversiva”, neste processo refundam-se noções e conhecimentos da modernidade transformando as “formas

dominantes de conhecimento do ponto de vista da racionalidade não-eurocêntrica das subjectividades subalternas” (Grosfoguel 70).

A pertinência da cumplicidade subversiva está relacionada com a noção do pensamento fronteiro na medida em que os processos de subalternização impedem a existência fora da própria modernidade (Mignolo 2003). Cria-se uma tensão entre a impossibilidade de ignorar as concepções da modernidade e a necessidade de construção de pensamentos não subjugados a ela. No pensamento fronteiro superam-se os dilemas impostos a partir de perspectivas que superam as limitações do pensamento eurocentrado.

A dominação dos saberes, vivências e experiências é uma constante que limita as possibilidades de ação. Por isso, como resposta a essa realidade, é necessário um grande esforço para a construção de tecnologias e didáticas inovadoras. Em relação aos movimentos sociais, a cumplicidade subversiva emerge como uma importante estratégia de mobilização de referenciais que, apesar de surgirem no contexto da modernidade europeia, podem ser ressignificados ganhando sentidos outros. O conceito de socialismo, por exemplo, ganha novas leituras nas experiências de mobilização do Sul global no processo de diálogo com vivências, experiências e pensamentos fronteiros.

Nesse sentido, as experiências desenvolvidas por três movimentos sociais na América latina (Movimento dos Sem Terra – MST; Movimento de Luta por Moradia da Bahia e Movimento de Ocupantes y Inquilinos – MOI) abordados neste trabalho apontam para a necessidade de descolonizar teorias a partir de saberes e experiências locais que extrapolam as epistemologias eurocentradas. Entende-se que estes movimentos detêm expressivo potencial para uma ciência social que pretenda se debruçar sobre questões relacionadas à desigualdade política e à capacidade de ação de atores políticos marginalizados. Mais especificamente, buscou-se compreender os valores presentes nessas práticas e os dilemas apresentados.

Abordaremos nos próximos tópicos cada uma dessas experiências, com o intuito de discorrer sobre contextos onde a inovação narrativa construída pelos movimentos possibilita ampliar a discussão sobre a questão da luta pela propriedade ao propor a necessidade de repensar a distribuição do acesso aos recursos e a própria lógica de produção do espaço urbano e rural.

Observou-se que a inovação narrativa dos movimentos sociais envolveu um intercâmbio produtivo entre o questionamento da ordem da propriedade na terra e a absorção de demandas que ultrapassam suas posições nas relações de produção. A questão da posse/propriedade da terra é um dos principais legados do colonialismo no Brasil, de forma que coube aos movimentos sociais envoltos a esse dilema refletir sobre seus destinos históricos e construir narrativas inovadoras. As posições de sujeito construídas na América Latina consolidam-se em uma dinâmica multifacetada, apontando à tentativas de superar a lógica colonial que se reflete nos mecanismos de perpetuação das desigualdades. Nesse sentido, as trajetórias e narrativas dos três movimentos abordados nos próximos tópicos poderão contribuir com reflexões sobre as tensões entre a democracia e a propriedade.

O Movimentos dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Brasil)

O camponês é um sujeito que perdura e adapta-se criativamente no Brasil. Trata-se do sujeito que assiste à desigualdade de fundação da sociedade brasileira – aquela de acesso à terra – e que persiste como sujeito histórico fundamental da dinâmica política do país. A campesinidade brasileira é, acima de tudo, produzida por processos de desenraizamento (Domingues 2003). Para alguns autores (Woortmann 1991; Wanderley 2005), não seria necessariamente a condição material definidora do camponês, mas sim uma

ética, um sistema de valores, subjacente à sua forma de se perceber no mundo. Assim, assume-se o conceito de campesinato a partir da compreensão de uma ética camponesa que apresenta terra, trabalho e família como valores morais e categorias intimamente relacionadas entre si e tem como princípios norteadores a honra, a hierarquia e a reciprocidade (Cardel e Oliveira 2013). Desse modo, o campesinato sempre se constituiu, sob modalidades e intensidades distintas, como um ator social da história do Brasil (Welch *et al.* 2009). Na construção da formação social brasileira, o modo de existir camponês é uma idéia-valor, orientadora de condutas e de modos de agregação familiar ou grupal (Welch *et al.* 2009). O camponês, sujeito histórico ao qual opõe-se o processo de racionalização da vida erguida a partir do advento da modernidade, apresenta um contraponto ético ao protestante ascético, na medida em que reforça valores morais diametralmente opostos à lógica exigida pela racionalização das esferas da vida.

O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) não é o primeiro movimento de luta pela terra (Comparato 2001), mas é o primeiro a consolidar-se nacionalmente e que persiste nas lutas agrárias há mais de 30 anos: o MST é fruto do processo histórico de resistência do campesinato brasileiro. É, portanto, parte e continuação da história da luta pela terra (Fernandes 2000). Trata-se, o MST, do movimento social mais forte do país (Bringel e Falero 2016).

O MST é a continuação de 500 anos de luta pela terra. São cinco séculos de luta contra o latifúndio. É uma história camponesa, de famílias que estão lutando para entrar na terra, para trabalhar, para viver com dignidade (Fernandes e Stedile 1999). Trata-se de um movimento social que incorpora em sua intersubjetividade compartilhada, desde o seu berço, a memória das lutas pela terra da história brasileira.

O processo de gestação do MST remonta às ocupações de terra no norte do Rio Grande do Sul, entre 1979 e 1985. A ocupação das

glebas Macali e Brilhante, após intensos conflitos com o governador do Estado, inaugura a gênese do MST no sul do país. Ao reprimir a luta pela terra e não realizar a reforma agrária, os governos militares tentaram restringir o avanço do movimento camponês (Fernandes 2000)³. No entanto, por causa da repressão política e da expropriação resultante do modelo econômico, nasceu um novo movimento camponês na história da formação camponesa no Brasil (Fernandes 2000).

A luta pela sobrevivência foi a marca histórica da resistência camponesa. Foi assim que em 1979, no dia 7 de setembro, 110 famílias ocuparam a gleba Macali, no município de Ronda Alta, no Rio Grande do Sul. Essa ocupação inaugurou o processo de formação do MST. As terras da Macali eram remanescentes das lutas pela terra da década de 1960, quando o MASTER organizava os acampamentos na região. Portanto, a luta pela conquista dessas terras estava registrada na memória dos camponeses, que agora participavam de uma luta maior: a luta pela construção da democracia. (Fernandes 44)

O seu nascimento, contudo, não está restrito apenas ao Rio Grande do Sul. Há um substrato político e social em ebulição em toda a região Sul do país e em partes do Sudeste e Centro-Oeste, que facilitam o surgimento do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra. Muitas outras ações dos trabalhadores sem-terra nos estados de Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo e Mato Grosso do Sul fazem parte da sua gênese e contribuíram para a formação do movimento (Fernandes 2000).

³ “O Campesinato brasileiro é um campesinato que quer entrar na terra, que, ao ser expulso, com frequência à terra retorna, mesmo que seja terra distante de onde saiu” (Martins 16, apud Fernandes 44).

De 1979 a 1984 aconteceu o processo de gestação do MST. Chamamos de gestação o movimento iniciado desde a gênese, que reuniu e articulou as primeiras experiências de ocupações de terra, bem como as reuniões e os encontros que proporcionaram, em 1984, o nascimento do MST ao ser fundado oficialmente pelos trabalhadores em seu Primeiro Encontro Nacional, realizado nos dias 21 a 24 de janeiro, em Cascavel, no estado do Paraná. Em 1985, de 29 a 31 de janeiro, os sem-terra realizaram o primeiro congresso, principiando o processo de territorialização do MST pelo Brasil. (Fernandes 2000, 46)

O acampamento da Encruzilhada Natalino no noroeste do Rio Grande Sul, erguido em dezembro de 1980, é marco central da trajetória de conformação do MST. Esse confronto tem um caráter histórico, em que a encruzilhada se tornaria o espaço político onde se encontram os sem-terra e os governos estadual e federal (Fernandes 2000), momento no qual o sujeito sem-terra, ao questionar e resistir à ordem latifundista no Brasil, articula-se para desenhar formas de ação coletivas sólidas de luta pela terra. “Em 1981, um novo acampamento surge no mesmo estado e próximo dessas áreas: a Encruzilhada Natalino, que se tornou símbolo da luta de resistência à ditadura militar, agregando em torno de si a sociedade civil que exigia um regime democrático” (Engelman, n.p.). Manifesta-se o vínculo intrínseco entre o MST e a construção democrática no Brasil, através não somente da defesa de que “sem reforma agrária não há democracia”, mas sobretudo pela interpretação formal de que “ocupação é a única solução”, conforme revelam seus documentos oficiais.

A narrativa do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra nasce sob três pilares: a luta pela terra, a luta pela reforma agrária e em defesa de transformações sociais e política no país. A defesa de uma reforma agrária clássica, baseada na distribuição da pro-

priedade da terra e na democratização da estrutura fundiária era eixo basilar de sua intersubjetividade compartilhada.

É importante destacar que ao longo dos anos a concepção do MST sobre a reforma agrária acompanha o ritmo das próprias transformações do modelo fundiário brasileiro. Nos anos 1980 o latifúndio ainda era o grande inimigo, o adversário, o “outro” a ser desafiado, tendo em vista a crítica à improdutividade da terra nele encontrada. Ao longo de duas décadas (1984-2004), o MST estabeleceu o latifúndio como o principal problema a ser enfrentado no campo. Este representava o monopólio e a subutilização da terra (Araújo 2015).

O MST foi ao longo dos anos incorporando outras agendas nacionais e internacionais – processo que Breno Bringel (2014) chamou de *demandas aglutinadoras*. A partir dos anos 2000, ainda que o eixo basilar de suas reivindicações estivesse centrado na crítica ao latifúndio, questões como educação, saúde, cultura, informação, dentre outros, começaram a surgir em sua narrativa.

Em 2007 o MST assume como narrativa oficial a “Reforma Agrária Popular”. Mais do que apenas a desapropriação e expropriação de terras, propõe-se a criação de um modelo de desenvolvimento distinto daquele erguido a partir da neoliberalização da vida (Brown 2019) e do campo. O novo modelo produtivo é edificado em bases agroecológicas em que a soberania alimentar permite uma ampla mudança da sociedade (Stédile 2005). Este projeto popular de agricultura envolve múltiplos sujeitos, entrelaça o campo à cidade e exige que o Estado promova justiça social (Sousa Santos 2016). Trata-se de reafirmar o continuum campo-cidade, abarcando tanto o percurso da roça para a favela, mas também da favela para a roça (Gianquito 2016).

No ano de 2014, em seu VI Congresso, o MST passa a adotar a concepção de uma Reforma Agrária Popular. O ponto central reside

na crítica não mais ao monopólio da terra, mas ao modelo agrícola vinculado ao agronegócio: a transformação do modelo agrícola foi reafirmada como o principal objetivo (Araújo 2015). A afirmação de um modelo agroecológico, portanto, era alternativa contraposta ao modelo do agronegócio. Trata-se, portanto, de ampliar a noção de Reforma Agrária, identificando um novo “outro” a ser desafiado.

O projeto político do MST transforma-se, altera-se, adapta-se às próprias transformações não apenas da estrutura fundiária brasileira, como ao contexto político do país. Da reforma agrária clássica à reforma agrária popular, constata-se que projetos políticos não são estáticos e que há o privilégio do trajeto como maestro da vida social.

Há transformações de sentido da ação no transcorrer do tempo, bem como a modificação mútua de sentido através da interação dos agentes. A reforma agrária clássica, inserida em um contexto de crítica ao modelo latifundista e improdutivo dos anos de 1980 dá lugar, a partir de 2004, ao questionamento sobre o modelo agrícola vinculado ao agronegócio. A ordem latifundista se altera e junto a ela, transforma-se também o projeto político. Há modificação recíproca e conjunta entre ator e contexto. O conteúdo do sentido de uma relação social não é estático: ao contrário, é altamente dinâmico e pode mudar no curso do tempo.

A Reforma Agrária Popular, com isso:

norteia a construção de um novo modelo agrícola para o campo brasileiro, indo além de um processo de democratização da terra e propondo como estratégia o estabelecimento de um sistema agrícola em contraposição ao agronegócio. E propõe como alternativa um modelo de produção baseado em uma matriz de produção agroecológica, para a produção de alimentos saudáveis e respeito à biodiversidade, sem o uso de agrotóxicos, voltado à

agroindustrialização do campo e o desenvolvimento do País. O futuro da Reforma Agrária no Brasil, na visão do MST, representa um projeto popular de desenvolvimento para o campo e a sociedade brasileira de modo geral, na medida em que demonstra o papel crucial dos assentamentos na produção de alimentos saudáveis, em larga escala e a preços justos, para alimentar a população brasileira e assegurar a autonomia da agricultura familiar e camponesa. (“A história da luta pela terra”)

Através da Reforma Agrária Popular, portanto, o MST expande o ‘outro’ a ser desafiado: o latifúndio improdutivo dá lugar ao modelo agrícola vinculado ao agronegócio como principal adversário. Trata-se, o modelo agroecológico, de uma inovação narrativa e ética do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, na medida em que amplia e reconfigura a própria concepção de reforma agrária.

O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, além disso, passa a defender a superação da dicotomia que distancia o rural do urbano, articulando experiências coletivas que entrelaçam os desenraizados e ‘sem propriedade’. O MST bombardeia pulsão de vida democrática na medida em que costura uma ampla rede de atores coletivos.

As construções da Consulta Popular⁴ e do Levante Popular da Juventude (LPJ) em 2005 estão diretamente vinculadas ao potencial do MST de articulação para além da fronteira rural. O Levante

⁴ “A Consulta Popular surgiu em 1997 em uma Conferência Nacional realizada em Itaici, São Paulo, numa plenária convocada pelo MST, tendo reunido militantes de diversas regiões do Brasil. A ideia era debater uma alternativa popular frente à investida neoliberal que marcou a década de 90, com o objetivo de retomar o ‘trabalho de base, de formação e das lutas de massas’. Sua proposta principal seria a de construir um projeto popular para o Brasil com o objetivo de promover mudanças estruturais. A Consulta Popular se apresenta no cenário político como um partido não institucional” (Lima 2017, 12).

Popular da Juventude teve sua origem nos debates de movimentos sociais de massa atrelados à Consulta, principalmente o MST, com o propósito de organizar a juventude militante de esquerda, na esteira das discussões sobre juventude do Fórum Social Mundial, no ano de 2005 (Lima 2017). Trata-se de organizar as juventudes do campo e da cidade (Ruskowski 2012), da periferia e da universidade em defesa de um projeto popular que “ocupe tudo”: as ruas, o poder, a União Nacional dos Estudantes. Sobre o surgimento do Levante Popular da Juventude, é preciso destacar: “O grupo político nacional que hoje se denomina Levante Popular da Juventude teve sua origem nos debates de Movimentos Sociais de Massa atrelados à Consulta, principalmente o MST, com o propósito de organizar a juventude militante de esquerda, influência das discussões sobre juventude do Fórum Social Mundial, no ano de 2005”. (Lima 2017, 11). Fundado oficialmente em 2005, no Rio Grande do Sul, o Levante Popular da Juventude propõe-se à organização política das juventudes rural e urbana, em defesa de um Projeto Popular para o Brasil. Trata-se de uma organização política que articula as juventudes no Brasil em plena interação com o MST. Conforme Lucio Centeno, o Levante:

[...] foi fruto de um trabalho de mobilização e da iniciativa que alguns companheiros tiveram no final de 2005, quando movimentos ligados à Via Campesina⁵, incentivados pela Consulta Popular, identificaram que era necessário naquele momento fortalecer o processo de organização da juventude, em especial da juventude urbana. No campo já havia um processo relativo de organização com os movimentos da Via, mas muito pouco no meio urbano. Alguns companheiros assumiram a tarefa de construir o que viria

⁵ A Via Campesina é um movimento internacional que coordena os movimentos sociais rurais internacionalmente, fundado em abril de 1992.

a ser o Levante Popular da Juventude. E o Levante nasce com a característica de ser uma ferramenta da juventude e não apenas de um segmento desse setor. Desde o início, se tinha a leitura da necessidade de se organizar não apenas os jovens estudantes universitários, mas também os jovens das periferias urbanas e, principalmente, articular essa juventude que não tinha um referencial de organização como tinha a juventude camponesa, organizada em torno da Via. O Levante nasce, então, com essa característica de aglutinar diferentes segmentos da juventude a partir de diferentes meios de inserção (<https://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Editoria/Politica/Levante-Popular-daJuventude-quer-renovar-praticas-da-esquerda%250D%250A/4/26268>)

A criação do Levante Popular da Juventude, portanto, é diretamente impulsionada pelo MST, pela Consulta Popular e pela Via Campesina. O campesinato, em suas mais variadas formas de articulação política tem-se constituído como polo aglutinador e criador de ação coletiva. Costuram-se laços de solidariedade social unificando o campo e a cidade, através da construção de processos de reencaixe, compreendidos como reapropriação ou relançamento de relações sociais desencaixadas, de modo a amarrá-las (conquanto parcial e provisoriamente) a condições de tempo e lugar (Giddens, 1990, apud Domingues, 2003). O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais promove, portanto, um reencantamento democrático. A construção de uma racionalidade alternativa à neoliberal que valorize a criação de laços de solidariedade social propõe-se ao preenchimento da vida democrática ao reinserir substância na já combalida democracia liberal (Dardot e Laval 2016).

Diante de situações problemáticas e incertas o MST caminha, encena, recua, briga, negocea, costura, significa a vida em sua ação. É preciso complexificar os entendimentos sobre redes e ação coletiva: o Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra é uma

incubadora de redes de ativistas (Cefaï 2009), cria e parteira (Jasper 2016) de um padrão criativo de ação coletiva. O MST nos permite pensar o novo a partir do ancestral (Santos 2016).

O movimento de moradia (Brasil)

Com destacada atuação nas últimas décadas, o movimento de moradia é um dos principais movimentos urbanos brasileiros (Trindade 2012; Gohn 2000). Ao articular a luta pela moradia digna e pela reforma urbana com práticas e formas de luta diversificadas, esse movimento possibilitou a conexão entre saberes, formas de enfrentamento e experiências de negociação no âmbito local e nacional.

Uma das principais características desse movimento social reside na amplitude de tipos de organizações, coletivos, movimentos que o conformam. Configura-se, portanto, como uma rede de atores individuais e coletivos que, apesar de intensa heterogeneidade de pautas, estratégias e práticas de luta social, constroem uma identidade comum relacionada com a luta pela moradia digna (Tatagiba, Parteniani e Trindade 2012). Entre os principais elementos aglutinadores referentes às narrativas e identidades comuns está a questão da luta pelo direito à cidade (Saule 2006).

Nesse sentido, apesar da presença de inúmeras experiências de resistência urbana ao longo da história do Brasil, a articulação dessas práticas locais a partir de uma identidade comum só ocorreu após a década de 70. A partir desse período, ocorreu um intenso processo de formação e consolidação de organizações de luta por moradia (Ferreira e Ferreira 2011) e a conexão desses grupos em redes mais amplas. Surgiu, portanto, um grande número de organizações e coletivos como, por exemplo, o Movimento de Trabalhadores sem Teto, a União Nacional por Moradia Popular, o Movimento

de Lutas nos Bairros, Vilas e Favela, a Confederação Nacional de Associação de Moradores, dentre outros. Assim, o intenso diálogo entre organizações populares, grupos autogestionários, movimentos de bairro, setores da academia, coletivos de âmbito local, grupos relacionados com a igreja católica e outros atores individuais e coletivos, possibilitou a formação de redes ainda mais complexas. O movimento de moradia, portanto, não pode ser caracterizado por um grupo isolado, mas sim como um movimento social composto por uma rede heterogênea que aglutina experiências de enfrentamento urbano das mais diversas.

Um marco temporal chave para a configuração desse movimento foi a formação em 1987 de uma plataforma por uma reforma urbana substantiva a partir da criação do Fórum Nacional de Reforma Urbana (FNRU). Aglutinando ONGs, movimentos e organizações populares, articulações de associações e entidades técnicas, profissionais e acadêmicas (Viveiros 2018), tem como finalidade “lutar pelo direito à cidade, modificando o processo de segregação social e espacial para construirmos cidades verdadeiramente justas, inclusivas e democráticas” (FNRU 2016, 1).

Decerto, a própria conexão de práticas de enfrentamento urbano construídas localmente apresenta-se como uma contribuição do processo de formação do movimento de moradia. Experiências de movimentos que lutam primeiro pelo acesso à casa, de organizações que demandam assistência para reformar as próprias casas, de grupos que ocupam terrenos ociosos, de práticas de associação de moradores, dentre outros, têm sido combinadas em torno de uma identidade e agenda comum. Esse intenso processo de diálogo de saberes e experimentações, que emergiram do nível local, trouxe um grande desafio para esses atores: construir uma agenda não totalizante que pudesse captar tanto a diversidade quanto as consonâncias.

O ideário da moradia digna, portanto, surgiu a partir da década de 70 como o referente simbólico (Tatagiba, Paterniani e Trindade 2012) que possibilitou a construção de uma identidade comum e, por conseguinte, o surgimento do próprio movimento. A noção de dignidade reconstrói o conceito de moradia, proporcionando o diálogo entre diversos horizontes e anseios. Nesse sentido, o movimento de moradia, apesar de ter surgido principalmente questionando a propriedade urbana e a distribuição da propriedade urbana, acaba por extrapolar essa questão ao ampliar a discussão em torno da luta pelo acesso à cidade. Nesse sentido, discutir o acesso à propriedade significa questionar também toda a lógica e forma de como a cidade se estrutura. Por isso, ao lutar por moradia digna, o movimento se aproximou da luta pelo direito à cidade.

Apropriando-se do conceito de direito à cidade de Lefebvre (2008), que versa sobre a reversão do valor de troca para valor de uso das cidades, o movimento aponta para uma perspectiva de rompimento da ordem capitalista que organiza a produção do espaço urbano. No documento base para o encontro nacional realizado em 2017 pelo Fórum Nacional pela Reforma Urbana é explicitado como esses atores mobilizam a ideia de direito à cidade:

O ideário do direito à cidade é um ideário anticapitalista, radicalmente democrático, fundado na justiça social, que por definição não pode ser institucionalizado em sua multidimensionalidade e radicalidade, nem plenamente realizado sob o capitalismo. O direito à cidade pode ser compreendido como um direito coletivo de todas as pessoas ao usufruto equitativo da cidade dentro dos princípios da justiça social e territorial, da sustentabilidade ambiental e da democracia. (FNUR 2017)

É importante ressaltar que a noção de direito à cidade mobilizada pelo movimento de moradia não é mera reprodução do pensa-

mento de Lefebvre. A ideia de luta pelo direito à cidade extrapola o conceito inicial ao conectá-lo com as experiências e vivências de resistência urbanas existentes na margem das cidades. Na prática, surgiu no processo de formação da FNRU, a partir da conexão de pesquisadores militantes que manejavam o ideário de direito à cidade com as práticas de luta mobilizadas pelas organizações de moradia.

Duas outras inovações e contribuições de narrativa e prática de ação coletiva nas cidades são consequência do processo enunciado: a) a ampliação da participação na gestão das cidades; b) a luta dos subalternos e marginalizados. Ao conectar a ideia de moradia digna com o direito à cidade o movimento construiu um diálogo profícuo entre a noção de função social da cidade com a ideia da gestão participativa (Saule e Uzzo 2009). O projeto político de ampliação da participação, portanto, ancorou-se na tentativa de construção de um modelo democrático redistributivo de gestão urbana que possibilitasse outra lógica de organização da vida social (Menezes e Messias 2018).

A atuação do FNRU foi estratégica para a consolidação de uma agenda de participação nas políticas urbanas. Orientado na perspectiva de defender o caráter indissociável entre redistribuição e ampliação da participação, promoveu e contribuiu para importantes conquistas como a criação do Ministério das Cidades, do Estatuto das Cidades e do Conselho Nacional das Cidades (Ferreira e Ferreira 2012).

Todavia, a reformulação desses instrumentos que possibilitam a participação institucionalizada, não foi o suficiente para a construção de uma reforma urbana efetiva. Ao longo dos anos, esses mecanismos participativos foram enfraquecidos, reduzindo sua capacidade de influenciar nas políticas urbanas. Tendo isso em vista, atores que compõem a rede com tradição de enfrentamento urbano extrainstitucional passaram a combinar a atuação nos espaços de

participação institucional com práticas disruptivas de luta política (Menezes e Messias 2018). Segundo Trindade (2014), as experiências de ocupação de imóveis ociosos, por exemplo, resultaram em um rico arcabouço de novas formas de gerir o espaço coletivo e, por conseguinte, extrapolam os limites da participação política orientada para o âmbito institucionalizado ao promover a ampliação da participação na gestão do comum.

Ao conectar experiências de negociação e de disrupção, o movimento tem conseguido ampliar sua capacidade de pressão política. Mais do que isso, ao dialogar noções de participação política com a ideia de direito à cidade, ressignificou a noção de participação a partir do seu caráter transformador, intimamente relacionado ao combate às desigualdades.

A outra contribuição narrativa do movimento está relacionada com o questionamento ao acesso à propriedade em um país de raízes coloniais como o Brasil. Nesse sentido, o movimento de moradia precisou de mobilizar a ideia de que a questão da propriedade é estruturante nas relações sociais. Como já abordado, se o ponto de partida na articulação da rede que conforma o movimento foi o acesso à moradia, ao longo de sua trajetória de luta, o movimento ampliou sua abordagem ao discutir a importância da moradia para a dignidade humana. A colonização limitou o acesso às condições para uma vida digna a um grupo social bastante restrito, com recortes raciais, de gênero e de classe bem delimitados. Nessa perspectiva, ao pensar a ideia de moradia digna como um direito, o movimento de moradia passou a ampliar suas pautas, articulando na prática a luta pela emancipação da modernidade/colonialidade do subalterno na cidade.

A segregação urbana é um traço marcante agravado pela tradição colonial. A periferação da pobreza e a intensa segregação racial resultaram em uma divisão no acesso à cidade em sua totalidade a classes sociais bem definidas. Ou seja, o acesso à moradia dos

subalternos está condicionada ao desinteresse do mercado por essas áreas. Nesse sentido, mesmo quando consegue acesso a uma moradia, o subalterno não tem garantido o acesso à cidade.

Por isso, a segregação social e racial, as condições precárias no acesso ao saneamento, a distância ao centro da cidade, o limitado acesso ao lazer, educação e saúde, a opressão, passam a ampliar o arcabouço temático do movimento (FNRU 2017). Nesse sentido, a reforma urbana emerge como uma plataforma de conexão de experiências diversas que incitam transformações referentes à forma como pensamos a vida nas cidades.

Decerto, a necessidade de lidar com os procedimentos de acesso à moradia predefinidos pela burocracia criam tensões que provocam a criatividade do movimento. Não é incomum que as organizações utilizem as brechas nas políticas públicas de acesso à moradia para lutar por sua ressignificação em um lento processo incremental. Por isso, a importância da articulação entre acesso pelas brechas e práticas disruptivas que questionam diretamente a lógica da propriedade privada.

Uma das principais formas de luta que desafiam essa realidade no espaço urbano brasileiro é a ocupação de imóveis ociosos, sobretudo em áreas centrais. Ocupar imóveis em áreas de interesse do mercado, com acesso a serviços centrais, desafia diretamente a divisão do espaço urbano (Trindade, 2012). Em São Paulo, por exemplo, a partir de 1997 ocorre um crescente aumento na ocupação de imóveis em áreas centrais, articulado por organizações do movimento de moradia (Neuhold, 2009). Domicílios vagos, terrenos, hospitais abandonados, hotéis e instalações desativadas, são ocupados por sem-tetos e moradores de cortiço ameaçados de despejo. Assim, atuando muitas vezes à margem da lei e reivindicando novas formas de acesso à regularização fundiária, a pressão contínua tem provocado mudanças legais que têm ampliado as possibilidades de efetivação da posse coletiva dos imóveis.

Essa inovação não só resultou em uma nova prática de luta, mas em uma outra forma de gestão do espaço urbano. Ou seja, ao gerir coletivamente esses imóveis, os ocupantes desafiam tanto a lógica mercadológica da cidade, quanto as formas coletivamente construídas de gestão de propriedade, desafiando inclusive a ideia de “propriedade privada”. Por conseguinte, a “propriedade coletiva”, ou melhor, a apropriação coletiva de uma propriedade urbana, exige a construção de novos instrumentos para a gestão comum. Nesse sentido, a ocupação de imóveis tem se apresentado como uma experiência com capacidade de inovação para a construção de práticas emancipatórias, possibilitando repensar a ideia de posse.

Movimento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos – MOI (Argentina)

Segundo Nestor Jeifetz, um dos fundadores do MOI, o tema da moradia está presente na universidade argentina desde a década de 1960. No período pós-ditadura a questão é retomada com a criação, no curso de arquitetura, de uma cátedra de desenho com estudantes e professores voltados para o fenômeno da ocupação vinculado à temática “direito à cidade”.

Esse dirigente defende que “[a]s ocupações de edifícios, desde a Universidade (como trabalho pedagógico), tem implicações na reflexão sobre o direito à cidade (na área central). Foi desenvolvendo a crença que sobre o direito é necessário construí-lo. Se ele não briga e constrói seu próprio direito, por mais que esteja escrito na Constituição, é uma formalidade”. Esse, aliás, é lugar comum na América Latina como apontam alguns trabalhos (Sader, 2003; Jara 2006) que tratam da necessidade de colocar em prática os avanços que foram conquistados no plano da lei.

Os movimentos de ocupação caracterizados pela ocupação de edifícios em Buenos Aires na década de 1980 eram considerados

como uma causa civil. A partir da década de 1990, com o Governo Menem, ocorre uma reviravolta e as ocupações passam a ser tratadas como uma causa penal e os envolvidos responsabilizados penalmente.

O Movimento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos na Argentina surge como ator social no início dos anos 90, com uma proposta de mudança mais ampla e uma perspectiva socialista. Essa preocupação com um escopo de atuação mais amplo decorre de sua articulação, a partir de meados de 1990, com uma organização de caráter sindical, a Central de Trabalhadores da Argentina/CTA. Esse Movimento, a nível nacional, se integrou em 1994 organicamente na CTA, como expressão de pertencimento em um marco mais geral de resistência ao modelo neoliberal, como aponta Rodriguez (2009).

Merece destaque que, na Argentina, a participação dos padres católicos nos movimentos de moradia foi influenciada de forma intensa pela Teologia da Libertação⁶, o que ocorreu também na experiência brasileira, principalmente nos anos 70 (Espíñeira 1997). Assim, a resistência a esse modelo neoliberal e a influência da Teologia da Libertação facilitam a compreensão da dominação e a recusa da lógica da mercantilização a partir de um conjunto de valores introjetados onde está presente o controle de recursos, não só materiais como simbólicos.

Possui o MOI uma gama de redes com o objetivo de fortalecer as ações. Esse movimento assume um papel importante juntamente com a FUCVAM, A Federação Uruguia de Cooperativa de Moradias por Ajuda Mútua na rede continental Secretaria Latino-Americana de Vivenda Popular – SELVIP. Através dessa rede, por meio de análise

⁶ A Teologia da Libertação, corrente da Igreja Católica atuante na América Latina a partir da década de 60, estimulou o engajamento de padres na mobilização para o enfrentamento de problemas sociais (Espíñeira). No caso da Argentina, o diálogo de sacerdotes com movimentos urbanos emergentes contribuiu na articulação de atores sociais como o MOI.

das realidades distintas, amadurecem as posições que devem ser tomadas e permite a formulação de propostas de políticas habitacionais através de troca de experiências⁷.

O MOI busca apoio financeiro complementar junto ao cooperativismo de grupos internacionais (ex. grupos suecos de auto-gestão, Igrejas, como a Igreja Católica alemã, e partidos de esquerda – o Partido Comunista e, em menor grau, o Partido Obreiro).

A formação do MOI contou com grupos populares que viviam em situação de déficit de moradia, além de profissionais de diversas disciplinas vinculadas à habitação, que possuíam um perfil militante, com práticas de conteúdo técnico político que forneceu importante base na estratégia de influência política.

Rodriguez (2009) oferece um rico quadro sobre o MOI, onde estão presentes algumas dimensões da autogestão de habitação, como a qualidade e a otimização da inversão pública; ser parte de uma proposta de gestão pública e de um projeto político, dentre outros aspectos.

No amplo material apresentado por essa autora, pode-se perceber os impactos das práticas do MOI, dos conflitos existentes com o Estado, enfim, das marchas e contramarchas na relação desse Movimento com o Estado, dentro de conjunturas políticas distintas no campo nacional e em Buenos Aires.

Sobre os êxitos, destaca-se que em 2003 o Conselho Municipal de Habitação se transforma num Instituto de Habitação da cidade de Buenos Aires, oferecendo assim a possibilidade de maior autonomia com a promoção da demanda, a sustentação de políticas autoges-

⁷ Um exemplo a ser citado, conforme entrevista com um dirigente da FUCVAM, é sobre a metragem do Programa habitacional no Brasil “Minha Casa Minha Vida”, que aumentou a metragem das suas casa com a participação do Movimento Social brasileiro vinculado ao tema Habitação (União Moradia). Deve ser destacado que no Uruguai as moradias defendidas e construídas através da FUCVAM estão na faixa de 60 metros.

tionárias participativas e a execução de políticas integrais, dentre outros pontos, passando a execução orçamentária de 29% para 42%, aumentando assim a sua capacidade de incremento (Rodriguez 2009).

Fruto da participação de vários atores e, especialmente, do MOI e dos Desalojados do bairro La Boca foi sancionada uma Lei (Lei 341) na legislatura de Buenos Aires. Ela representou um marco normativo que continha e financiava as cooperativas autogestionárias, significando um avanço pois possibilitou a compra direta do solo urbano. Propiciando também um financiamento que estava pautado em três pontos, ou seja: solo; obra; apoio à formação profissional interdisciplinar, onde está presente a disciplina: arquitetura, social, legal, contabilidade.

Essa lei permite gerar a integralidade dos que vivem na própria família, que têm que se educar e ter saúde. Na educação, segundo o coordenador do MOI entrevistado, “o trabalho foi impulsionado principalmente com as fábricas recuperadas após a crise de 2001 na Argentina, foram criados os Bacharelados populares. Apesar de não ter se conseguido que os professores fossem pagos pelo Estado já se conseguiu depois de uma briga o reconhecimento dos cursos”.

A concepção participativa do desenvolvimento da autogestão cooperativa toma como grande importância o objetivo de construção de sujeitos sociopolíticos capazes de conduzir seu processo produtivo. Por conseguinte, ocorre uma apropriação histórica dos direitos do produto de logros construídos, promovendo sua valorização positiva e uma mudança cultural a partir do aprendizado de valores relacionados com o coletivo, solidário e propositivo.

A reforma constitucional nacional de 1994, que foi promulgada em 1996, permitiu que houvesse espaço para que novos atores pudessem participar na definição da agenda política local, o que ocorreu com relação ao tema habitat. Apesar de o governo de Dela Rua ter sido marcado por uma dinâmica não participativa, nesse

período a Comissão Municipal de la Vivienda retoma sua função de executora de obras públicas.

O MOI, nesse sentido, encontra vários caminhos diante desse reflexo conjuntural de hostilidade da política local diante das organizações populares que moravam na cidade. Foi nesse quadro que ocorreram “experiências piloto” do MOI, sem vinculação com o governo local e sem visibilidade pública.

Posteriormente, em 2003, já em outra gestão governamental, houve a retomada de operações empresariais. Foi nesse ano que foi criado o Instituto de Vivienda de La Ciudad, substituindo o Conselho Municipal de Vivendas que apresenta como um dos seus objetivos “La promocion de la demanda de las politicas autogestivas y participativas; La ejecucion de políticas integrales; La implementacion de alquiler social y La creacion de um banco de inmuebles”. Entretanto, as mudanças no executivo em março de 2007, com a destituição de Ibarra, a modificação da lei orgânica e a intervenção do IVC, introduziram cortes abruptos nesse processo.

Como se vê, há um movimento conjuntural político de ir e vir no processo participativo em Buenos Aires. Ainda, o estudo de Rodriguez aponta que desde 2002 as cooperativas começaram a organizar-se, compraram terrenos e começaram a construir, integrando o total de 12% do total da produção de vivendas para o ano de 2005. Houve, assim, um considerável aumento do setor cooperativo entre o período 2003-2005. Adquiriram, no final de 2005, 75 terrenos urbanos de ótima localização, 12 projetos iniciaram obras e 1.500 famílias estavam envolvidos em essas etapas do processo.

É importante a análise de Rodriguez sobre a capacidade de redes compostas por uma multiplicidade de atores em escala local, nacional e internacional incidir na agenda política em um contexto de crise dos partidos políticos. Para Rodriguez, esse diagnóstico pode ser verificado na capacidade dessas redes de articulação local, nacional e internacional, de atuar em âmbitos institucionais, na capacidade

de manter autonomia partidária e na possibilidade de garantir apoio financeiro complementar.

Conclusão

Entendemos que esses movimentos apresentados se movem em espaços onde desenvolvem novas racionalidades, pois além da experiência cotidiana, das histórias de vida, de luta, também se gera uma trama latente com capacidade e potencialidade de construir o alternativo. Esses movimentos coletivos por determinados direitos adquirem força quando se articulam a objetivos práticos que dão sentido cotidiano à luta. Um projeto vinculado à propriedade privada, por exemplo, pode ter um papel educativo e emancipatório, como observam Bringel e Falero. Ambos têm um sentido finalístico de transformação e de mudança.

Pode-se assim afirmar que esses movimentos estudados, ao combinar práticas disruptivas (ocupações de imóveis ociosos e de terras rurais, por exemplo) com o diálogo com o Estado (em espaços institucionais e extra-institucionais), diversificam sua estratégia política, apontando para uma síntese entre conflito e cooperação. A multiplicidade de práticas possibilita contornar, por um lado, as limitações da atuação em esferas institucionais e, por outro, mitigar as sanções sofridas por práticas disruptivas. No caso do movimento de moradia houve uma virtuosa combinação entre lutas intra-institucionais por marcos legais de reconhecimento da função social da propriedade e do direito à moradia digna (Estatuto das cidades, Constituição de 88), com práticas disruptivas como as ocupações de imóveis ociosos. Nesse sentido, o ideário de participação política mobilizado pelos movimentos busca combinar o alargamento de arranjos institucionais com práticas disruptivas aprendidas ao longo da trajetória da luta política travada. Possibilita pressão constante,

apesar dos recursos limitados, convergindo na multiplicidade de sua estratégia política. Além disso, ao mobilizar projetos de futuros alternativos, reforça o caráter transformador da participação, sem reduzi-lo à institucionalidade e ampliando sua atuação às temáticas raciais e de gênero numa nova lógica no atendimento à saúde e à educação (que não se baseia na lógica do mercado).

Essas práticas de luta política, construídas em contextos específicos, enfrentam e desafiam a lógica neoliberal e o seu projeto de desenvolvimento. O desafio de questionar o modelo da modernidade/colonialidade de propriedade possibilitou a construção de novas noções sobre o lugar, o espaço e o bem coletivo. Se, nos casos apresentados, a propriedade surge inicialmente como um bem a ser adquirido, ela é ressignificada a partir de práticas que mobilizam outras formas de gerir e pensar a posse. A propriedade privada liberal passa a ser desafiada pela gestão coletiva da terra e do comum, a partir de experiências de autogestão, ocupação de imóveis, assentamentos de reforma agrária. É no além da propriedade, portanto, que os movimentos inovam, construindo novos horizontes de possibilidades políticas, a partir de suas próprias práticas e saberes.

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**ECOFEMINISMO E *BUEN VIVIR*:
DOIS MOVIMENTOS PROPULSORES
DA EXPANSÃO DA RACIONALIDADE AMBIENTAL**

**ECOFEMINISM AND *BUEN VIVIR*:
TWO MOVEMENTS PROPELLING THE EXPANSION
OF ENVIRONMENTAL RATIONALITY**

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RESUMO: Este estudo tem por objetivo analisar, por revisão da literatura, o ecofeminismo e o *buen vivir* como teorias-práticas capazes de (re)orientar-nos, como seres humanos, para a construção e o caminhar de uma mudança paradigmática: da instrumentalidade da razão consolidada no iluminismo europeu, alterarmos a rota ordenada pelo sistema patriarcal-capitalista-colonial moderno e dirigirmo-nos para outra via, a da expansão de uma racionalidade ambiental. Isto porque, compreendidos os conceitos como símbolos da realidade, (con)formadores da percepção do mundo, os ecofeminismos e o *buen vivir* apresentam outras formas de realizar a vida individual-coletiva desde uma matriz relacional, na qual a teia da vida é a mantenedora da produção e reprodução socioeconômica e política. Elaboro assim, no diálogo entre ecofeminismo e *buen vivir*, uma contribuição para fraturar

os pensamentos abissais que domina(ra)m o pluriverso das realidades que coabitam a mesma Casa-Terra.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Ecofeminismos*; *Buen Vivir*; racionalidade ambiental; Epistemologias do Sul.

ABSTRACT: The goal of this paper is to analyze, through a literature review, ecofeminism and *buen vivir* as theories-practices capable of (re)orienting humans towards the construction and the path of a paradigmatic change: from the instrumentality of reason consolidated in the European Enlightenment ordered by the modern patriarchal-capitalist-colonial system towards the expanding of an environmental rationality instead. By this I mean that the concepts ecofeminisms and *buen vivir*, assumed as symbols of reality (con)forming the perception of the world, present us with other ways of realizing an individual-collective life based on a relational matrix in which life networks sustain socio-economic and political production and reproduction. Through the dialogue between ecofeminism and *buen vivir*, this contribution aims at fracturing the abyssal thoughts that dominate(d) the pluriverse of realities coexisting in the same Home-Earth.

KEYWORDS: Ecofeminisms; *Buen Vivir*; environmental rationality; Epistemologies of the South.

Introdução

*Outro mundo possível*¹ para mulheres, homens e toda sorte de seres vivos coabitarem na Casa Comum, a Terra, traduz o pilar das

¹ Como declarou Eduardo Galeano, em uma entrevista na Plaza Catalunya, Barcelona, em 2011: "... há outro mundo na barriga deste, esperando. Que é um mundo diferente. Diferente e de parto difícil. Não nasce facilmente. Mas com certeza pulsa no mundo em que estamos", (íntegra da entrevista em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...>)

práticas defendidas no movimento orgânico ecofeminista. Isto não significa homogeneidade nos pensamentos ecofeministas, nem tampouco que as práticas desenvolvidas sob essa inspiração sejam globais, ou tenham uma fórmula universalizada para as diversas lutas e realidades presentes no mundo. No entanto, no cerne desse movimento, nas múltiplas interpretações e pensamentos que emana, há a convergência de que a centralidade da vida é a base e a força-motriz que conduz a luta pelas transformações necessárias e desejáveis para o compartilhamento humano e não-humano em cada sociogeografia terrena (Mies *et al.*, 1993; Merchant, 1990; Puleo, 2013; Salleh, 2001; Shiva, 1988; 2017; Mies, 2014; Valle, 2017; 2019a; 2019b; Warren e Erkal, 1997).

Nesta mesma direção de pensamento, da relacionalidade prático-transformadora da existência humana e não-humana nas experiências que coabitam o mesmo espaço, o *buen vivir* busca reorientar outras formas de ser, fazer e estar no mundo forjadas nas lutas humanas pela emancipação e pela vida. Em linha com Alberto Acosta e Ulrich Brand (2017), o *buen vivir* compreende, na relacionalidade entre seres vivos – humanos ou não – o referencial preponderante para conceber-se a vida. Em outras palavras, o fluxo incessante e complexo de interações e trocas, um processo interminável de reciprocidade, complementaridade e solidariedade traduz a base do *buen vivir*, para a qual a vida está acima de qualquer outra consideração (Acosta *et al.*, 2017: 198).

Para os pensamentos do *buen vivir* e dos ecofeminismos as escolhas e ações políticas que interessam são as que cuidam, garantem, produzem, geram e viabilizam a continuidade da vida, de forma

com/watch?v=IcC0_DbbiHo). Em linha com essa inspiração, Alicia Puleo (2013) propõe *Ecofeminismo para otro mundo posible*. Neste livro, além de uma análise teórico-histórica dos ecofeminismos, ela propõe pensarmos num ecofeminismo crítico (ilustrado, como denomina). Isto porque, segundo esta autora, para além de ampliar as reflexões ético-políticas sobre as relações entre humanos e natureza, o ecofeminismo deve ser orientado pela ecojustiça e pela sustentabilidade social.

digna para todos os seres e não para o capital. Por essa razão, confronto, em alguma medida², o arcabouço construído e reformulado (em reiteradas reedições) do sistema capitalista moderno que, desde o nascimento, está estruturado e amparado no patriarcado e no colonialismo (Federici, 2014; Mies, 2014; Cunha, 2015). Afinal, no desenvolvimento da expansão desse sistema econômico, a razão humana foi/é direcionada e condicionada a cumprir, exclusivamente, os interesses e as ordens do poder hegemônico movido pelo capital – hoje, pelo mercado financeiro global –, mesmo sem o dizer expressamente. É nessa compreensão que uso a expressão racionalidade instrumental e defendo em contrapartida a expansão da racionalidade ambiental.

Neste ponto, esclareço que me alinho com a compreensão do capitalismo como um sistema econômico e uma forma específica de organizar as relações entre humanos e o restante das manifestações da vida (Paredes, 2014; Patel *et al.*, 2018; Cunha, 2015; 2017; Cunha *et al.*, 2019), e que tem a pretensão de ser totalitário e universal. Hoje, os agronegócios, as mineradoras, a exploração petrolífera, o turismo, as hidroelétricas e parques eólicos são as diferentes faces da expansão econômica que expulsa e domina os povos, explora e desertifica territórios sem assumir qualquer responsabilidade sobre os seus impactos (Gargallo Celentani, 2015; Svampa, 2015).

Em oposição a essa dinâmica predatória e antívida, ecofeminismos e *buen vivir*, como já dito, sustentam a relacionalidade prático-transformadora humana nas ações cotidianas. Estas práticas-transformadoras buscam realizar um exercício equilibrado de formação, expansão e criação constituídas em polirracionalidades para as quais o ambiente não é o entorno onde seres humanos

² Digo ‘em alguma medida’, porque não é minha intenção analisar o universo contido no capitalismo moderno.

vivem e exploram seus recursos, indiscriminadamente, mas sim a matriz pluriversal e vital, sem a qual a existência não seria possível, nem teria sentido (Valle, 2019b; Cunha *et al.*, 2019). Assim é como entendo e desenvolvi juntamente com Teresa Cunha aquilo que designamos por racionalidade ambiental (Cunha *et al.*, 2019).

Esclareço que trago à evidência o pensamento ecofeminista com a compreensão de que são muitos e diversos os movimentos e teorias feministas presentes no mundo. Inclusive, graças a muitas das teóricas feministas, o ecofeminismo, como movimento teórico-prático orgânico, é fruto das muitas fontes de inspiração trazidas pelos feminismos: radical, ecológico, pós-colonial, popular, comunitário, socialista, decolonial. Além disso, a cada dia, o ecofeminismo ganha mais coletivos defensores de seus valores-princípios, mesmo sem o denominarem expressamente.

Também cabe aqui esclarecer que as lutas, os valores-guia e as resistências que os seres que se representam e se pensam como mulheres vêm travando em todo o mundo não significam um movimento novo, ou inaugurado a partir da modernidade. Como Federici (2014) elucida, os processos de dominação e violência suportados por seres-mulheres é milenar e por essa razão suas lutas e enfrentamentos contra a opressão, violência e dominação, exercidas pelo sistema patriarcal ao reger a vida socioeconômica e política individual-coletiva, devem ser privilegiados (Cunha, 2017). Há milênios que o patriarcado impera e, desde o nascimento da modernidade, foi apropriado pelo regime capitalista-colonial (Mies, 2014; Federici, 2014; 2018; Cunha, 2014; 2017) para a manutenção do controle e exercício de poder sobre os corpos, primeiramente das mulheres, mas também daqueles outros considerados não-seres e da terra. Cabe, assim, trazer à baila a seguinte convicção de Lorena Cabnal: “ ... el patriarcado es el sistema de todas las opresiones, todas las explotaciones, todas las violencias, y discriminaciones que vive toda la humanidad (mujeres, hombres y personas intersexuales) y

la naturaleza, como un sistema históricamente construido sobre el cuerpo sexuado de las mujeres” (2010: 16).

Desta maneira, faz sentido fomentar, em linha com Teresa Cunha (2014, 2018 *et al.*), uma hermenêutica feminista das Epistemologias do Sul (Santos, 2014) para demonstrar que as linhas abissais que dividiram e dividem radicalmente o mundo entre seres e não-seres, metrópoles e colônias, humanos e sub-humanos somente serão desarticuladas, até à exaustão, por meio de racionalidades outras que reconheçam, *a priori*, a ecodependência da vida e a sua centralidade para todo e qualquer sistema de valores e formações políticas e socioeconômicas. As Epistemologias do Sul questionam a lógica do sistema patriarcal-capitalista-colonial moderno que reconhece(u) exclusivamente uma monocultura do saber e do rigor científico, ao mesmo tempo que desconsidera, e muitas vezes marginaliza, o contexto situado dos saberes que estão operativos nas inúmeras práticas sociais em curso no mundo. Na base teórica desenvolvida nas Epistemologias do Sul encontro a compreensão de que todo o conhecimento é incompleto e, a partir dessa premissa, é aberta a possibilidade de diálogos e construções epistemológicas outras, entre diferentes formas de saber, conhecer, fazer, ser e estar no mundo. Este exercício dialógico entre seres e conhecimentos diferenciados, situados e contextualizados em espaços concretos, onde a vida real acontece no plano das existências, humanas e não-humanas, emerge sobretudo no Sul. Esse Sul metafórico que não guarda relação com os imaginários dos cartógrafos modernos, mas sim naqueles espaços da existência onde as lutas contra a ordem heteronormativa dos “colonialismos sem fim e dos capitalismo sem fim” (Santos, 2018: 10) são enfrentadas no corpo-a-corpo diário, a fim de transformarem seus espaços e realidades de vida.

Há décadas que muito é questionado e analisado sobre a crise sem precedentes em curso no planeta: uma crise humanitária, chamada por muitas/os de crise civilizatória (Lander, 2010; 2012;

Estermann, 2012; entre outras/os). Vandana Shiva (2013) declara que vivemos, contemporaneamente, em pleno *eco-apartheid*. Mas, ao mesmo tempo, identificamos em muitas realidades do mundo, experiências, (re)existências e lutas que trazem possibilidades outras de ser, estar, pensar, existir, produzir e organizar a vida individual-coletiva; essas experiências são, majoritariamente, protagonizadas por mulheres (Federici, 2018; Mies, 2014; Gargallo Celentani, 2015; Cunha, 2014; 2015).

Para encontrarmos um novo *paradigma de vida frente ao atual paradigma de morte* – aproveito aqui a expressão de François Houtart (2016) –, a racionalidade ambiental, impulsionada pelas transformações práticas dos movimentos ecofeministas e do *buen vivir*, contribui para pensarmos em outras formas de organização da vida comum. Nesta perspectiva, por meio de revisão teórica pluriépistemológica, passo à análise anunciada e divido o trabalho seguindo a compreensão de que, primeiramente: encontramos-nos, nós, seres humanos, numa encruzilhada e privilegio o caminho da/pela vida *versus* o continuar na via da/para morte. Na sequência, apresento os ecofeminismos como manifestações teórico-práticas de relacionalidade equilibrada pela e para a vida. Na terceira parte, sustento que o *buen vivir* apresenta experiência de/para construção da vida compartilhada entre todos os seres (humanos ou não). Na quarta parte defendo a racionalidade ambiental ecofeminista para um *buen vivir* no planeta. Acrescento, ainda, algumas considerações sobre o nosso contexto planetário atual³, face à realidade pandêmica da COVID-19.

³ Esclareço que desenvolvi a ideia-base trazida para análise desse trabalho, primeiramente, entre os anos de 2016/2017, como pode ser identificado em “El ecofeminismo como propulsor de la expansión de la racionalidad ambiental” (Valle, 2017). Posteriormente, em 2018, ao participar da 5th Conference of the International Association of Inter-American Studies, “Reinventing the Social: Movements and Narratives of Resistance, Dissension and Reconciliation in the Americas”, voltei à análise da racionalidade ambiental por meio das contribuições dos movimentos-

A título de conclusão, apresento algumas considerações no entrelaçar das teorias debatidas, a fim de impulsionar o debate e incentivar as transformações necessárias para construirmos e impregnarmos, nas ações cotidianas, práticas geradas desde uma racionalidade ambiental. Ainda deixo, por fim, algumas palavras para arrematar as ideias desenvolvidas na parte final deste trabalho, acerca do cenário mundial deflagrado pela COVID-19, e para pensarmos no agora a urgência da expansão da racionalidade ambiental ecofeminista para o *buen-vivir* no planeta.

1. Ponto de partida: vida *versus* morte

A humanidade encontra-se hoje em uma encruzilhada. Um caminho leva à continuidade, até à exaustão, da extinção de inúmeras espécies, humanas e não-humanas e suas manifestações de vida; e o outro é o da incerteza-esperança de alterarmos a rota destinada pela monocultura do pensamento moderno, insculpido em um sistema globalizado que é a um só tempo patriarcal, capitalista e colonial. Este declarou, e mantém em inúmeras reedições/versões, prática de guerra permanente contra a vida. Não é à toa que Vandana Shiva (2013) fala em *eco-apartheid* e ecocídio sobre a nossa realidade planetária, há certo tempo.

Contrário a essa dinâmica de guerra permanente, muitos povos que habitam esta Casa Comum vêm – em diversas realidades –

-pensamentos aqui debatidos. Defendo que tanto os ecofeminismos, como as filosofias do *buen vivir* convergem numa força propulsora capaz de expandir um racionalismo ambiental que sustenta, garante, protege, cuida, gera e organiza a vida, em toda a sua dimensão e manifestação. Ocorre que, da origem desse texto até a sua edição, o planeta evidencia uma pandemia originada por um vírus com capacidade de mutação desconhecida, e dispersada por todo globo terrestre numa velocidade nunca antes vista. Desta maneira, aproveito a revisão do trabalho para a consequente edição, e acrescento alguns comentários sobre o cenário planetário atual, durante e pós COVID-19.

resistindo e buscando na cotidianidade de suas vidas realizar a produção, reprodução, proteção, manutenção e gestão da vida individual-coletiva a partir de onde estão. Nestas práticas, a centralidade da vida é o eixo orientador do ser e estar em ação no mundo. Neste sentido, ao retomar a sociologia *sentipensante* de Fals Borda (2009), Arturo Escobar (2014) propõe e afirma a urgência de um *sentipensar* com a terra no espaço-tempo atual. Ele identifica inúmeros movimentos de transição. Sob a preocupação e constatação dos mecanismos antivida em desenvolvimento, situação agravada desde as políticas do mercado do capital hegemônico pós-Segunda Guerra Mundial, Escobar propõe que para compreender, sentir e realizar a vida é fundamental que a vida, em toda sua dimensão, esteja na centralidade das relações – sejam socioeconômicas e/ou políticas – e não, exclusivamente, a sociedade, como concebido no modelo da modernidade, de natureza antropocêntrica. E, continua o antropólogo colombiano, para a (re)construção relacional do mundo deve-se pensar e buscar *o fazer um mundo* onde se reconhece a existência de pluriversos (não mais a ideia de um universo que por si só é excludente, autoritário e violento), para que humanos e não-humanos coabitem em harmonia o espaço Terra.

Como práticas atuais de transição, Escobar (2014; 2017) elucida que, dentre outras existentes nas diversas sociogeografias terrestres, o *buen vivir* e os movimentos feministas são formas que vêm contribuir para a ativação política de relacionalidade desde outras gramáticas, conceitos e categorias. A partir de diferentes discursos de transição, a transformação social profunda, diz Escobar, passa, obrigatoriamente, pela transformação de valores de ordem cultural, político-econômica, ecológica e espiritual: “Al cambiar las formas como estos ámbitos han sido concebidos y desplegados, incluyendo su separación, los DT⁴ adquieren un carácter ontológico. Estos ámbitos son re-tejidos

⁴ Discursos de transição.

de nuevo gracias a una profunda preocupación por el sufrimiento humano y por el destino de la vida”. (Escobar, 2017: 250)

Na mesma esteira de preocupação e proposição, contrária ao sistema dominante de poder, para outra (con)formação de *fazer um mundo* capaz de abraçar a pluriversidade existente no território Terra, Patricio Guerrero (2010) afirma ser necessário tecermos uma rede para a vida numa tapeçaria gigantesca de conhecimento e sabedoria, com a inclusão e participação de cores variadas, cores essas que reflitam a riqueza da diversidade e a diferença da própria vida. Ou seja, é necessário tornar visível todo o potencial afetivo, epistêmico e ético-político das sabedorias insurgentes de todos os diversos povos que habitam o mundo. Realizar, equilibradamente, a teia da vida não significa pensar a formação de rede tecida *pelo poder das aranhas*. Explica Guerrero que, como ensina a sabedoria dos povos andinos, a despeito das teias representarem verdadeiras obras de arte, caracterizadas pela beleza e maestria das aracnídeas, essas teias são – sempre – armadilhas para a morte:

[...] son redes a las que nos atraen y en las que nos atrapan para aniquilar la vida. Esas son las redes que hoy se tejen desde el poder del imperio a nivel planetario, que se tejen desde la globalización, son las redes virtuales del poder; las redes que se tejen en forma de ALCA o Tratados de Libre Comercio, redes tejidas por el FMI (Fondo de la Muerte Internacional), o por las grandes empresas transnacionales, que controlan las redes globales del mercado, que como hábiles y perversas arañas están tejiendo redes en las cuales buscan que nuestros pueblos queden atrapados, para tener el control total de la vida (2010: 14).

Assim, em linha com Guerrero, é urgente tecermos uma rede entrelaçada de diferenças que nos “irmaniza”. Guerrero propõe tecedura de uma trama que nos “hermane” (2010: 16); que potencie

o encontro com a diversidade, que reconstrua o tecido da alteridade e da força coletiva que nos é inata (de sermos humanos), e que vem de tempos ancestrais, de processos de luta, de resistência e insurgência material e simbólica ao longo dos séculos. A realização do *corazonar* é a prática epistêmica, socioeconômica e política por ele defendida, estreitamente ligada ao *sentipensar* dos povos originários da Colômbia, como também à filosofia uBuntu, da África subsaariana, que mantém como princípio vinculativo de toda manifestação da vida a afirmação de que *eu sou, porque nós somos* (Praeg; Magadla, 2014: 96), dentre tantas outras filosofias-epistemologias para a compreensão da vida individual-coletiva existentes em nosso diverso planeta.

A partir de outras formas de ser, estar, conhecer e fazer o mundo, como as acima demonstradas, e diante do cenário desolador no qual estamos, humanos e não-humanos imersos na atual realidade planetária, faz sentido trazer à baila movimentos em coconstruções presentes no mundo e que despontam outras concepções político-socioeconômicas, para tecermos redes pela vida e não mais pela morte. Parto da compreensão de que a forma-pensamento, profundamente desenvolvida e consagrada no curso da modernidade, em especial com o iluminismo europeu, que direciona e impõe formas e possibilidades de vida, culmina na crise multifacetada presente no mundo na atualidade (Lander, 2010; 2012). Desta forma, é minha intenção aqui analisar ecofeminismo e *buen vivir* como movimentos-possibilidades de mudança. Em especial, direciono para a alteração do sentido de nossas manifestações e práticas de/e/na vida. Pois inúmeras vezes reproduzimos as mesmas fórmulas e compreensões que foram construídas ao longo dos últimos séculos, impregnadas de sentidos, incutidos em nossas mentes pelo modelo de um racionalismo antropocêntrico e androcêntrico, que foi e é instrumentalizado pelos interesses, normas e imposições do sistema patriarcal-capitalista-colonial moderno. Erigir pontes de passagem

pode levar a outras lógicas e práticas de vida inspiradas e desenvolvidas desde um racionalismo ambiental.

Passo, assim, a elucidar os conceitos escolhidos a fim de, seguindo uma tecedura harmônica, mas não de construções iguais ou similares de caminhos/origens e sim caminhos/origens possíveis que conduzam a (con)formações agregadoras de ideias-práticas, trazer, ao final, um mosaico de vivas cores, aberto à coprodução da racionalidade ambiental.

2. Ecofeminismos e a defesa da relacionalidade equilibrada entre toda a manifestação da vida

Da confluência entre ecologia e feminismo, desde a década de 70 do século XX, os ecofeminismos suscitam projetos teóricos diversificados, mas que reconhecem em comum a finitude da vida e a interdependência entre todos os seres, humanos e não-humanos. Carolyn Merchant (1990) ao analisar a transformação do pensamento científico e a condução da construção social ocorridos na modernidade, em relação ao que se convencionou chamar de natureza – especificamente desde a agressividade do sistema capitalista-industrial do século XVII –, inspirou Vandana Shiva (1988) a aprofundar a crítica sobre o desenvolvimento tecnocientífico ocidental-contemporâneo. Além de expor que não existe um abismo ontológico entre seres humanos e natureza, pois a vida é indivisível, Shiva ressaltou que a globalização neoliberal reeditou a ordem do sistema capitalista-patriarcal-colonial com agravamento da miséria/fome no mundo, das práticas de exclusões-marginalizações raciais, da dominação-exploração sobre mulheres e natureza e do imperialismo monocultural. Toda essa realidade, seguindo a análise de Shiva, encontrou e encontra suporte de legitimação e autoridade no racionalismo reducionista moderno (1988, 2005).

Os pensamentos ecofeministas objetivam recuperar o sentido da feminilidade perdida nas bases falocêntricas do sistema hegemônico do poder moderno (Irigaray, 2004) tanto para homens, como para as mulheres. O falocentrismo é compreendido como o sistema no qual o falo é o único ponto de referência e meio legítimo de validação da realidade; ou seja, a dominação masculina sobre todas as manifestações da vida, sobre os corpos, é única e soberana. Utilizo “corpos” na concepção de que ontologicamente o protagonismo feminino é negado (Irigaray, 2004; Cunha, 2017). Irigaray explica que, na economia do mesmo – do pensamento assimétrico – onde homens são sujeitos e a mulher é a outra do/a outro/a, só há um sexo; o outro, o/a sem falo, é o não-ser (2004). Para a mulher se aproximar da condição de sujeito deve se submeter aos aspectos, valores e referência da masculinidade: dominando, excluindo e autoidentificando-se superior, dentro de uma hierarquia preconcebida na diferença (Valle, 2017).

Neste sentido, a igualdade entre os sexos, pressuposta nos códigos da razão ocidental que separam e dominam homens, mulheres, cultura e natureza, reproduz, em verdade, a lógica antropocêntrica e androcêntrica de organizar o pensamento e as relações humanas, assim como delimita direitos a grupos sociais específicos e também rechaça diferentes culturas. O ecofeminismo vai além do essencialismo da luta por igualdade entre os sexos. A coisificação dos seres humanos e do que se convencionou chamar natureza está inserida na lógica e dinâmica sistêmica da ordem estruturada no racionalismo moderno, combatidos nos ecofeminismos (Merchant, 2005; Valle, 2017; 2019a).

Assim, o pensamento ecofeminista articula teorias e práticas inclusivas que lutam pela reapropriação da interação entre a vida, seja ela humana ou não e o conhecimento inscrito na rede das relações sociais e naturais presentes no encontro de seres diferenciados, na diversidade cultural e na pluralidade de conhecimentos

existentes no mundo (Mies e Shiva, 1993; Merchant, 2005; Puleo, 2013; Valle, 2017; 2019a).

Dada a articulação prática-teórica presente na atividade cotidiana realizada por mulheres, em muitas realidades do nosso pluriverso terrestre, faz sentido também defender que elas engendram pedagogias ecofeministas (Cunha *et al.*, 2019) em suas práticas de cuidados, por exemplo. Seja o cuidado com as pessoas, seja o cuidado com a terra, que são realizados majoritariamente por mulheres (Cunha *et al.*, 2019; Svampa, 2015; Pérez Orozco, 2006; 2017). Outro exemplo que faz sentido expressar como pedagogias ecofeministas são as práticas agroecológicas levadas a cabo por mulheres (Shiva, 2017; Siliprandi, 2015; Zuluaga *et al.*, 2018; Hillekamp; Nobre, 2018; dentre outras). Isto porque entendo por pedagogias as diferentes articulações entre métodos e técnicas de criação e passagem de conhecimentos com, ou sem, intencionalidade educativa. Dito de outra forma, as pedagogias imbricadas em qualquer prática social são, de alguma maneira, normativas, pois têm, em si mesmas, uma visão do mundo e de como ele pode e deve ser transformado (Cunha, 2018; Cunha *et al.*, 2019). Defendo que estas pedagogias são conhecimentos em ação, logo, implicam tanto epistemologias, como políticas que dizem o mundo e a vida (Cunha *et al.*, 2019).

Práticas e pensamentos ecofeministas, desta forma, a um só tempo buscam organizar socioeconômica e politicamente o contexto donde estão, a partir do respeito e reconhecimento dos conhecimentos próprios e coletivos que impulsionam as transformações sociais que entendem ser adequadas e desejáveis à vida e à sua indivisibilidade. Estas práticas e pensamentos partem da premissa da ecodependência que nos atravessa (humanos e não-humanos), da certeza da finitude e vulnerabilidade da vida e a da violência histórica que perpassa séculos sobre e contra os corpos de seres-mulheres, em violências cultuadas e impostas pela cultura patriarcal, de regramento heteronormativo que sustenta e insiste em manter as

dinâmicas do sistema capitalista-colonial moderno. Desta maneira, os ecofeminismos abrem dinâmicas relacionais que colocam a vida no centro das atividades e realizações cotidianas em conjunto com as lutas diárias antipatriarcal, anticolonial e anticapitalista, a fim de semear outros valores/princípios-guias para formação e gestão comum da vida.

Discuto, a seguir, o *buen vivir* para ampliar o argumento de análise e somar forças existentes nestes movimentos que promovem a expansão de outras maneiras de ser, compreender e realizar a vida individual-coletiva, respeitadas as realidades e desejabilidades presentes em cada território do macro-espço comum, a Terra.

3. *Buen Vivir* e a compreensão de vida compartilhada

O conceito do *buen vivir* surge na América Latina, nomeadamente, nas Constituições recentes da Bolívia, em 2009 e no Equador, em 2008. É trazido como proposta contra o pensamento linear e homogeneizado ocidental-moderno que tenciona transformar as sociedades humanas e também a relação dessas sociedades com o que se convencionou chamar de natureza. As terminologias *vivir bien* (Bolívia) ou *buen vivir* (Equador), traduzidas para a língua espanhola, não alcançam a magnitude dos conceitos *Sumak Kawsay* (em quechua e kichwa), *Suma Qamaña* (em aymara) e *Ñande Reko* (em guarani). Para a cosmovisão dos povos originários da América Latina, a vida está no centro das relações de harmonia e equilíbrio. Fernando Huanacuni explica que *Qamaña* é aplicado a quem sabe viver, no entanto *Suma Qamaña*, traduzido como viver-bem, não traduz toda a dimensão que a expressão verdadeiramente manifesta:

Es mejor recurrir a la traducción de los términos originales en ambas lenguas.

Desde la cosmovisión aymara, “*del jaya mara aru*” o “*jaqi aru*”, “*suma qamaña*” se traduce de la siguiente forma:

- Suma: plenitud, sublime, excelente, magnífico, hermoso.
- Qamaña: vivir, convivir, estar siendo, ser estando.

Entonces, la traducción que más se aproxima de “*suma qamaña*” es “vida en plenitud”. Actualmente se traduce como “vivir bien”.

Por otro lado, la traducción del kichwa o quechua, (*runa simi*), es la siguiente:

- Sumak: plenitud, sublime, excelente, magnífico, hermoso(a), superior.

- Kawsay: vida, ser estando, estar siendo.

Vemos que la traducción es la misma que en aymara: “vida en plenitud”. (2010: 7)

Reconheço, assim, a incompletude do significado da expressão aqui utilizada, mas para maior alcance de compreensão sobre as terminologias originárias e para não privilegiar uma em detrimento de outra, escolhi repetir nesse trabalho o termo convencionado como *buen vivir*.

Na base da construção do *buen vivir* estão presentes valores para a convivência comunitária, respeitando-se a interculturalidade e as relações compartilhadas e horizontais de poder, além de se confrontar os impactos negativos do modelo capitalista de organizar a vida. Esse sistema antivida, identificado na concepção do *buen vivir*, alimenta o consumo baseado na exploração dos recursos naturais compreendidos como infinitos, na espoliação e dominação indiscriminadas de corpos humanos e não-humanos, em prol da maximização do lucro. O *buen vivir* propõe, então, contrariamente à lógica predatória e violenta do modelo capitalista, relacionamentos harmoniosos e equilibrados entre seres humanos e não-humanos, haja vista a interdependência presente na constituição da vida (Acosta, 2016; Houtart, 2011).

A filosofia e o conhecimento ancestral indígena latinoamericano não segue, nem tampouco guarda relação, com a lógica do pensamento instrumental moderno. Sentir, perceber, agir, produzir, experimentar, viver estão compreendidos no mundo físico diretamente experimentado no dia-a-dia comunitário que se relaciona com outros mundos da existência. Ou seja, os mundos em manifestação são orquestrados para a formação de uma teia da vida – não da morte, como as elaboradas pelas aranhas. (Guerrero, 2010)

Neste sentido, a autonomia comunitária está inter-relacionada com as diversas autonomias coletivas que são (re)conhecidas pela cosmovisão indígena. O conceito de autonomia é compreendido na articulação entre o projeto de vida das comunidades e o projeto político de organização socioeconômica coletiva. Ou seja, autonomia é a capacidade de toda a comunidade de definir-se a si mesma, de fixar suas normas de existência e convivência, seus modos de (r)existência e, em última instância, de desenhar-se em toda sua pluriversidade entrelaçada com os demais mundos (Escobar, 2014). Não se trata por isso de autonomia no sentido indivíduo-unidade isolada, do modelo estruturado no sistema capitalista moderno, mas sim do uno que existe porque é coletivo. À semelhança da filosofia uBuntu: *eu sou porque nós somos*, o *buen vivir* traduz um conceito organizacional da vida que contém em si um estado e uma ação que são complementares e reconhecem a interdependência entre toda a manifestação de vida, entre todas e todos os seres vivos.

O outro, ou a outra do outro, compreendidas/os como sujeitas/os hierarquizadas/os e antagonicamente concorrentes levou à sistematização de nosso pensamento moderno (fundado no medo), direcionado para excluir, marginalizar e destruir toda vida diferente da consagrada na ordem hegemônica de poder (econômico, social e político). A diferença é entendida como expressão do/a inimigo/a, é aquela que ameaça a homogeneidade do pensamento e da própria

percepção de si: a pessoa humana reconhecida e legitimada pelo e para o sistema capitalista que é suportado pelo patriarcado e pela prática de dominação colonial. Esta dinâmica de pensamento levou e leva a humanidade a esquecer-se da própria existência, que é o pertencimento à vida: começo, meio e fim, que deve ser medida de princípio e valoração para a produção, gestão e manutenção das múltiplas manifestações da vida em todas as formas e espécies existentes.

Em linha com Amaia Pérez Orozco (2006), defendo que o pensamento científico moderno foi firmado no princípio hierárquico-antagônico que estrutura uma série sem fim de dualismos, no qual cada termo vem definido a partir da relação com o seu oposto:

La relación entre los miembros de cada par es de oposición, por lo que no se permiten los espacios intermedios, las interacciones mutuas o las dobles causalidades. Por tanto, en esta estructura de pensamiento, la afirmación siempre requiere de la negación de lo diferente. Y aquí viene la segunda característica, la diferencia no se integra en el discurso más que como oposición y en una relación de jerarquía..... En cada par, hay un término que encarna la normatividad y la normalidad, frente al opuesto que encarna la desviación. (2006: 27)

Assim, a cada par é definida uma oposição, na qual a relação travada é hierarquizada e um termo heteronormativo encarna como universalidade totalitária, dominante, que impõe autoridade às dicotomias. Estas dicotomias, construídas ao longo da modernidade e fortalecidas na estruturação do pensamento científico iluminista europeu, foram (e são) a sustentação das bases divisoras do sistema-mundo moderno (Wallerstein, 1974; Arrighi, 2003) que formam as linhas abissais contemporâneas (Santos, 2014).

Em contrapartida, compreender harmonia e equilíbrio como elementos indissociados da formação da vida, que é una-dual, é um dos fundamentos da filosofia do *buen vivir*. Isto porque, se a vida humana não estabelece seu outro complementar, não possui um ponto de inflexão e reprodução harmoniosa e equilibrada, logo, toda relacionalidade cai em extremismos que impossibilitam a continuidade da vida orgânica dos mundos da existência (Oviedo, 2014). Este é o valor da *cosmoconsciência andina*, como designa Oviedo a integração e complementaridade do *sentipensar* do/no mundo.

O *buen vivir* não oferece uma “receita de bolo” exata, aplicável a toda e qualquer realidade geopolítica planetária (Acosta, 2016). Também importa não idealizar as práticas e experiências das comunidades andinas, mas sim discuti-las e analisá-las para buscar a melhor convivência e equilíbrio entre os entes vivos, nas diversas e múltiplas bioexistências concretas do mundo. A certeza é a de que mudanças estruturais e conceituais em todos os âmbitos da vida são urgentes e que valores firmados numa relacionalidade da diferença de natureza uno-dual, complementar e recíproca, que abraça o todo indivisível (a teia da vida), podem abrir espaços de passagem para a expansão de práticas organizacionais socioeconômicas e políticas construídas, assim, numa racionalidade ambiental.

4. Racionalidade ambiental ecofeminista para um *buen vivir* planetário

Partindo de um entendimento da vida como matriz pluriversal e vital sem a qual a existência, humana ou não, não é possível nem faz sentido, defendo a construção de pensamentos (con)formadores de conhecimentos multifacetados para a conjunção de modos e experiências de produção, gestão, manutenção e organização da

vida; a essa construção chamo racionalismo ambiental. Entendo, nesta mesma direção, que os ecofeminismos geram e viabilizam a produção de narrativas, símbolos e conceitos capazes de expandir, num diálogo harmônico entre distintas realidades e conhecimentos, polirracionalidades forjadas na compreensão da ecod dependência da vida. Assim, sob a inspiração da filosofia relacional, complementar e autônoma-dual do *buen vivir*, uma racionalidade ambiental ecofeminista pode alterar a direção do caminhar humano, no presente momento planetário.

A racionalidade ambiental surge, então, no horizonte como abertura epistêmica para uma política da diferença e da ética nas relações sociais, mas não somente. Sabendo-se que as sociabilidades influenciam e ditam as organizações econômicas e políticas que queremos, a mudança paradigmática perseguida aqui está na harmonia e equilíbrio conjugados como condição da continuidade da vida: não só humana, mas de toda a manifestação e significados da existência (Leff, 2004; 2006; Cunha *et al.*, 2019).

O antropocentrismo moderno, acrescido do falocentrismo e do logocentrismo constituem o projeto cultural de ordenar o mundo de acordo com os princípios racionais da perspectiva exclusiva da consciência eurocêntrica do homem branco, heterossexual, burguês moderno, em linha com Escobar (2003). Ou, como nomeou Irigaray (2004), o projeto da *economia do mesmo*, aquele que autorizou e autoriza ao homem moderno construir-se a si mesmo como objeto e sujeito de todo o conhecimento (Haraway, 1988). Ao contrariar tal ordenamento, a racionalidade ambiental consiste em pensamentos emancipatórios dessa norma instituída historicamente e que autodetermina um saber imposto e instrumentalizado pelo ordenamento do poder do capital, procurando reabrir possibilidades e potencialidades inscritas no mundo. O saber ambiental é solidário da política do ser, da diversidade e da diferença (Leff, 2009, 2004).

A construção de um futuro que ainda não é vislumbrado, mas que agrega a biodiversidade do planeta, demanda um diálogo aberto de saberes capaz de acolher visões diversas e negociar interesses conflitante sobre a organização da vida humana e não-humana. Para isto ocorrer, importa não mais produzir consensos baseados nas visões homogêneas e unidirecionadas do pensamento moderno, ou limitar-se a negociar conflitos emergentes. Uma política da diferença, construída no diálogo de saberes (Leff, 2004), ou uma ecologia dos saberes (Santos, 2014), entre os conhecimentos – autóctones, tradicionais, locais, populares – que contribuem também com as próprias experiências vivenciadas e o conhecimento científico (ou especializado), deve romper com a lógica utilitarista, heteropatriarcal, colonial e racista do capitalismo moderno. Trata-se de uma abertura capaz de inserir a *cosmoconsciência andina* que reconhece a indivisibilidade da vida, em toda dimensão e significados que abarca. Esta capacita as fraturas nos pensamentos abissais contemporâneos (Santos, 2014). A racionalidade ambiental emerge, assim, como conceito de uma razão razoável que transcende a racionalidade condicionada ao positivismo de um presente sem futuro, de uma utilidade sem valor e de um mundo mercantilizado sem sentido e sem vida (Leff, 2004; Santos, 2002; Valle, 2017).

Esta política da diferença está inscrita nas práticas e valores ecofeministas e na base da filosofia andina, traduzida aqui por *buen vivir*. Pensar o mundo para além do modelo concebido na modernidade e reeditado em inúmeros ciclos da história compreendida até aos dias atuais e que conduziu a humanidade para a presente encruzilhada entre vida ou morte, demanda *mudarmos nossos olhos*, como muitas feministas defendem e realiza(ra)m. Trata-se de mudar a nossa lente e os nossos mecanismos de ver, editar, produzir e reproduzir o mundo. Para sairmos do labirinto desta concepção antívida inscrita no modelo capitalista-colonial moderno e regido pela heteronormatividade contemporânea, é minha convicção que necessitamos

enxergar outras formas de ser e estar no mundo. As experiências marcadas pela complementaridade, reciprocidade e solidariedade individual-coletiva – para e entre toda diversidade de manifestação da vida – estão abrindo possibilidades para e pela vida humana e não-humana coabitarem, em harmonia, no mundo das existências. Nestas experiências, a base das relações é desenvolvida e construída a partir de conhecimentos, necessidades e desejos capazes de manter, produzir e organizar uma vida individual-coletiva na qual a política da diferença fortalece laços e amplia o horizonte do amanhã para mulheres, homens e toda a sorte de manifestação da vida, permitindo-lhes ressignificarem as suas existências no planeta.

4.1. Algumas considerações acerca da pandemia global provocada pela COVID-19 e o caminho para o *buen vivir* planetário ecofeminista

Como expressei na primeira parte desse trabalho, parto da convicção de que nos encontramos – nós, sociedades humanas – numa encruzilhada: de um lado, rumamos à morte, a cada dia mais acelerada e em larga escala; e do outro, temos a possibilidade de caminhar sobre outras estradas, algumas já abertas e outras por vir a despontar em nossos horizontes.

“Vivemos em um mundo que tem limites ecológicos”, afirma Yayo Herrero (2020b: 19), dentre outras/os cientistas contemporâneas/os. Esta ideia guarda uma infinidade de significados e conteúdos que, a despeito de parecerem óbvios, muitas vezes, em nossas sociedades humanas, em especial as que foram e são forjadas pela monocultura do poder capitalista nortecêntrico⁵, permanece distante

⁵ Uso aqui a expressão nortecêntrica como contraponto aos conhecimentos e experiências em curso nos Suis das existências e resistências que Boaventura de Sousa Santos defende, na sua teoria das Epistemologias do Sul (2014).

de uma compreensão prática. A fim de esmiuçar um pouco mais a afirmação acima reproduzida, me alinho a Yayo Herrero (2020b) e passo a expor os nove limites planetários que estão a interferir e alterar os processos biofísicos da Terra: 1) mudança climática; 2) ritmo acelerado da extinção da biodiversidade; 3) ritmo acelerado da extinção dos ciclos de nitrogênio e fósforo; 4) a redução da camada de ozônio na estratosfera; 5) acidificação dos oceanos; 6) indisponibilidade de água doce, contaminações e desertificação dos aquíferos; 7) mudanças violentas no uso do solo; 8) contaminações atmosféricas pelo uso de aerossóis e 9) contaminações químicas pelo uso indiscriminado de plásticos, metais pesados, alteradores hormonais, resíduos radioativos etc. Dentre os nove limites indicados, os quatro primeiros já excederam o que o planeta suportava. Hoje, nós, humanos, não mais podemos contar com diversos recursos produzidos, milenarmente, por ecossistemas inteiros. Pelo contrário, além de não termos mais acesso a inúmeros bens e recursos, os ciclos naturais de geração e regeneração que eram presentes nos ecossistemas do planeta não mais existem. Tudo em razão da proliferação do extrativismo em larga escala, da mineração indiscriminada, do uso e exploração de combustível fóssil descontrolado e da desertificação de biomas milenares, além da devastação das florestas para a pastagem animal e o monocultivo de alimentos geneticamente modificados. Deve ser compreendido que toda essa destruição da vida é realizada, exclusivamente, para benefício e sobrevivência de 1% da população mundial⁶, detentora da riqueza do capital global.

⁶ Sobre a distribuição e concentração da riqueza mundial, ver: Antônio Luiz M. C. Costa, “A concentração de riqueza no mundo é hoje semelhante à da Inglaterra de Charles Dickens ou da França de Victor Hugo”, *Carta Capital*, 05/01/2016. Disponível em: <http://www.cartacapital.com.br/revista/873/no-mundo-de-os-miseraveis-5584.html> (Acesso em 30 Ago. 2016).

Ressalto ainda que, a todo esse arcabouço destrutivo da vida natural somam-se violências sistemáticas contra os povos, coabitantes desses espaços de histórica espoliação, bem como sobre os corpos dos seres-mulheres, nos quais recaem tantas outras violências diretas e derivadas da mentalidade utilitarista que tudo transforma em mercadoria a ser explorada e descartada, aquela mentalidade que aqui contestei sob a expressão *racionalidade instrumental moderna*. Alerta Herrero nesse sentido, ao afirmar que

[p]recisamos construir horizontes de desejos condizentes com as condições materiais que os possibilitam. E se não o fizermos por bem, com base na igualdade e nos direitos, outros o farão montados no cavalo da exploração, da desigualdade, do racismo e da ofensiva misógina. O relato distópico começa a se tornar normal. Filmes, obras de teatro, documentários transmitem em tempo real as imagens do ecocídio, do avanço a formas de sociedade mais violentas e insustentáveis, do suicídio em câmera lenta da espécie humana. Penso que é preciso sair do confinamento dos relatos distópicos, que começam a se tornar conservadores, para pensar, imaginar e sonhar as utopias cotidianas e viáveis no mundo real em que vivemos. (2020a: 14)

A esta distopia normalizada, como lhe chama Yayo (2020a), eu acrescento o elemento patológico da normalidade até hoje desenvolvida e experimentada em nossas sociedades capitalistas. Este elemento agrega um conjunto de comportamentos, atitudes e hábitos de consenso social distribuídos em diversas dimensões de gravidade patogênica. A essa patologia social Pierre Weil, Jean-Yves Leloup e Roberto Crema (2003) chamaram *normose*. Numa perspectiva holocêntrica, ou seja, que reconhece os sistemas interdependentes da existência, não me parece viável voltarmos às ilusórias e perversas normalidades que nos assolavam antes da pandemia de COVID-19.

Antes pelo contrário, esse episódio duro e de proporções desconhecidas, deve sim ajudar a romper com a *normose* coletiva que impregna as nossas sociedades humanas.

Nossas sociedades contemporâneas suportam pandemias há décadas! (Isto para não voltarmos à análise sobre as inúmeras contaminações e extermínios de comunidades inteiras, provocados pelas doenças levadas por europeus, primeiramente espanhóis e portugueses, para as terras da chamada América Latina). Como salienta Teresa Cunha:

Ao longo dos últimos 50 anos, apareceram 300 novas patogenicias. Está amplamente documentado que 70% das patogenicias que afetam o ser humano hoje em dia, entre os quais estão o HIV, o ebola, a gripe, a síndrome respiratória do Oriente Médio (MERS, na sigla em inglês) e a síndrome respiratória aguda grave (SARS, na sigla em inglês), surgem quando os ecossistemas florestais são invadidos e os vírus se transferem de animais para pessoas e quando se amontoam animais em megaprojetos de produção industrial para maximizar os lucros, afloram novas doenças como a gripe suína e a aviária. (2020)⁷

A principal diferença trazida pelo corona vírus, a meu ver, é a capacidade de *ultrapassar a barreira do som*, quero dizer, a velocidade com que o vírus se alastra e se metamorfoseia desde que foi identificado, em dezembro de 2019, na China, até hoje não tinha sido realizada no cenário mundial. E, diferentemente das patogenicias anteriores, a COVID-19 atinge as diversas camadas de

⁷ Teresa Cunha publiciza essa narrativa no ciclo de seminários *on line*: *Conversas Desconfinadas*, organizado pelo Centro de Estudos Sociais, da Universidade de Coimbra, na sessão de 23 de junho de 2020. Disponível em <https://ces.uc.pt/pt/agenda-noticias/agenda-de-eventos/2020/para-la-de-todas-as-pandemias-a-vida-e-o-trabalho>. (Acesso em 31 dez.2020).

nossas sociedades de uma só vez. Ressalvo que as probabilidades de as populações mais vulneráveis e marginalizadas por nosso arcabouço sistêmico do capitalismo serem condenadas à morte traduz a perversa realidade de nosso contexto planetário. Em linha com Teresa Cunha (2020), verificamos que as epidemias, pandemias e toda destruição levada a cabo pelas atuais mudanças climáticas são antropogênicas. E também acredito, como Cunha e outras/os cientistas de diferentes formações e origens, que a sucessão de pandemias passará a ser crônica. Talvez a normalidade desse século. Mas alternativas e experiências comunais, solidárias, compartilhadas e fora dessa rota para a morte, como foi e é traçada pelos sistemas socioeconômicos que regem nossas vidas em prol do mercado, estão, também, operativas no mundo. Cabe a nós, humanos, a realização das transformações necessárias que sejam marcadas pela defesa, proteção, manutenção, organização, gestão, cuidado e geração da vida – nas mais diversas formas de manifestação que apresentam –, em nossos meios de existência.

A fim de corroborar com a urgente e necessária ruptura para com o modelo de racionalidade fabricado pela razão ocidental, trago à evidência *O Ponto de Mutação*, de Fritjof Capra (1982). Nesta obra, Capra demonstra como a mecanicidade moderna foi ativada nas mentes humanas pela razão instrumentalizada, a fim de servir a uma ciência sem vida, ressignificada nos processos de dominação e exploração do sistema capitalista contemporâneo. Isto porque a razão instrumental desequilibra nossas mentes, já que dá valoração, exclusivamente, unilateral quanto à e sobre a existência. Ou seja, ser útil e bom é pensado somente para o indivíduo-unidade, isolado. Nesta construção, não há possibilidade para pensarmos o indivíduo-coletivo, como presente na filosofia de *buen vivir*. Os pressupostos mecanicistas separam corpo e mente e concebem o Universo como uma máquina (Capra, 1982). Nesta lógica, não somos partes *sentipensantes* do mesmo evento vida. Somos engrenagens

mecanizadas que alimentam a máquina universal de sobrevivências. E, com isso, “a visão fragmentada, mecanicista, do mundo, que se estendeu por toda parte, e o sistema de valores unilateral, sensu-alista e de ‘orientação yang’, que constitui a base dessa visão de mundo, redundaram num profundo desequilíbrio cultural e geraram numerosos sintomas doentios”. (Capra, 1982: 214)

Neste momento planetário de pandemia provocada pelo corona vírus, reforço minha convicção ecofeminista de que o que me afeta alcança a todas as demais criaturas, direta ou indiretamente. Neste sentido Vandana Shiva aponta os dois caminhos existentes para que possamos decidir em qual direção seguimos:

Podemos vincularnos en todo el mundo a través de la propa-gación de enfermedades como el coronavirus, cuando invadimos los hogares de otras especies, o cuando manipulamos plantas y animales para obtener ganancias comerciales y codicia y propa-gamos monocultivos. O podemos estar conectados a través de la salud y el bienestar para todos mediante la protección de la diversidad de los ecosistemas y la protección de la biodiversidad, la integridad y la autoorganización (autopoiesis) de todos los seres vivos, incluidos los humanos.... La ilusión de la tierra y sus seres como materia prima para ser explotada con fines de lucro está creando un mundo conectado a través de la enfermedad. (2020: 2)

Além do pensamento ecofeminista que suscita racionalidades outras, contrárias à lógica utilitarista e instrumental da razão moderna, Shiva compartilha com Capra a crítica sobre a visão meca-nicista do mundo, que, enraizada nos sistemas de valores antívida, levou e continua a conduzir a espécie humana a cíclicas enfermi-dades/pandemias que nossos sistemas de saúde não comportam responder, nem tampouco o aparato estatal imbuído dos valores do mercado e imerso em políticas pró-capital financeiro:

[q]uanto mais estudamos os problemas sociais do nosso tempo, mais nos apercebemos de que a visão mecanicista do mundo e o sistema de valores que lhe está associado geraram tecnologia, instituições e estilos de vida profundamente patológicos. Muitos desses riscos para a saúde são ainda mais agravados pelo fato de que nosso sistema de assistência à saúde é incapaz de enfrentá-los adequadamente, por causa de sua adesão ao mesmo paradigma que está perpetuando as causas da saúde precária. A atual assistência à saúde está reduzida à assistência médica dentro da estrutura biomédica, isto é, concentra-se na medicina de base hospitalar e dependente da orientação dos grandes laboratórios farmacêuticos. A assistência à saúde e a prevenção de doenças são tratadas como dois problemas distintos, e, por conseguinte, os profissionais da saúde pouco fazem no sentido de apoiar a política ambiental e social diretamente relacionada com a saúde pública. (Capra, 1982: 241)

Também Vandana Shiva é categórica quanto ao cenário pandêmico atual, quando afirma:

[u]n enfoque de sistemas para el cuidado de la salud en tiempos de la crisis de la corona abordaría no solo el virus, sino también cómo se están propagando nuevas epidemias a medida que invadimos los hogares de otros seres.... [D]ebemos descartar “políticas y prácticas que conduzcan a la degradación física y moral del sistema alimentario mientras destruyen nuestra salud y ponen en peligro la estabilidad ecológica del planeta, poniendo en peligro la supervivencia biogenética de la vida en el planeta. (2020: 2-3)

O caminho para bem-vivermos no planeta reaparece como possível se seguirmos com atenção as experiências e conhecimentos

indígenas, por exemplo; ou as práticas de agricultura ecologicamente equilibradas com seus biomas – que são realizadas, repito, majoritariamente, por seres-mulheres em todo o mundo (Shiva, 2017; Federici, 2018). Muitas são as lutas e resistências postas em marcha, em diferentes espaços do planeta e essas estão operativas continuamente, no vai e vem de epidemias e pandemias desenvolvidas em nossos tempos modernos.

Considerações finais

A construção do pensamento iluminista europeu, ao impor a razão ocidental como a única forma de conhecer e descrever a realidade, fragmentou a nossa humanidade e tornou invisíveis muitas formas de conhecimento. Desta forma, os conceitos, compreendidos como símbolos da realidade e que nos dão formas de entendimento do mundo, foram também fragmentados, além de hierarquizados e classificados antagonicamente. Estes, enquanto construídos, consolidaram formas de conhecer, de ser e estar no mundo limitadas a um pensamento unidirecional (falocêntrico) e desde uma racionalidade reduzida à homogeneidade-instrumental da existência dos mundos e da vida. Todavia, para além desse modelo sistêmico, as experiências que entrelaçam diferenças e que buscam *irmanar* seres humanos e não-humanos estão presentes nas realidades do mundo e costuram redes capazes de privilegiar políticas da vida e não mais da morte.

Neste sentido, foram discutidos, neste trabalho, os pensamentos e práticas ecofeministas que, na sua diversidade, convergem no reconhecimento da interdependência da vida, da sua finitude e vulnerabilidade. Dentre a diversidade de pensamentos que abraçam, os ecofeminismos congregam seres-mulheres e seres-homens e defendem que estes devem se relacionar de maneira a coconstruírem

e corealizarem, nas práticas cotidianas, política da diferença que possa compreender interações harmônicas e equilibradas – avessas às reproduções hierárquicas, assimétricas e antagônicas – com o meio em que estão, a fim de que as relações humanas e não-humanas coabitem e redirecionem o *ser* no planeta.

Com igual sentir, do *buen vivir* destaquei a inspiração que emana de seus valores e potencialidades para a construção de processos emancipatórios (re)formulados na tensão dialógica entre conhecimentos diferentes, que introduzam nas relações humanas outras formações estruturantes das sociabilidades, da economia, da política, do ser e estar no mundo. O respeito e a prática da reciprocidade, da complementaridade e da integralidade da vida reconhecem que somos a um só tempo indivíduo-coletivo que produz efeitos reais na vida, no meio material e imaterial onde vivemos. O *sentipensar*, o *corazonar*, o *uBuntu* foram filosofias rememoradas no presente trabalho para mostrar abertura à dialogicidade entre diferentes conhecimentos do mundo aptos a oferecer novas estruturas de organização, pensamento e realização da vida que habilita uma *cosmoconsciência* da existência, seja humana ou não.

Assim, os ecofeminismos e *buen vivir* não representam conceitos encerrados, concluídos nas inspirações teórico-práticas existentes. Pelo contrário, significam movimentos em construção, fundados em práticas cotidianas, em espaços concretos, que consideram as necessidades e desejos de cada realidade presente no mundo. A partilha criativa de diferentes conhecimentos abre espaço para a fertilização e fecundação da vida em toda sua potencialidade. A compreensão do compartilhamento da existência mostra que o diálogo pode alcançar outras possibilidades para a vida, desde um horizonte cognitivo aberto à inscrição e lugar a outras narrativas e outros resultados inesperados, ou sequer imaginados, pelas convenções socioeconômicas, culturais e políticas estabelecidas na racionalidade instrumental moderna. No exercício deste diálogo,

fraturam-se os pensamentos abissais contemporâneos e tecem-se caminhos coloridos que semeiam a expansão de práticas impulsionadas pela racionalidade ambiental.

Notas inconclusivas

No momento em que escrevo, o corona vírus já infectou mais de 9.2 milhões de pessoas no mundo⁸. No continente europeu, ocorreram 140.000 mortes causadas pelo vírus, somente nos meses de março/abril de 2020 e uma nova onda de contaminação já é anunciada; na África Austral, cresce exponencialmente o número de infectadas/os e há ainda projeção para todo o continente de que, nos próximos meses, se multiplicarão os números de contaminação. Somente em Pequim, capital chinesa, um novo surto causado pela COVID-19 ressurgiu no último mês de abril. Na Índia, o número de casos confirmados gira em torno de 460.000, na presente data. Na América Latina, o Brasil é o epicentro da contaminação, onde já ultrapassou o número de 50.000 mortos, na última semana (em torno de 1.200.000 infectadas/os). Sem falar nos Estados Unidos da América, que somam mais 2.400.000 casos confirmados⁹.

Não é minha intenção enumerar todos os territórios, países, ou regiões deste planeta com seus respectivos registros pandêmicos, nem tampouco quantificar as/os infectadas/os e consequentes mortes ocorridas. Isto é um facto que podemos evidenciar diariamente em nossas esferas de vida. Todavia, para ultrapassar os discursos sanitário, epidemiológico, econômico e duramente trágico desta

⁸ V. *El País* – Brasil, 24 de junho de 2020. Disponível: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-06-24/ao-vivo-noticias-sobre-o-coronavirus-e-a-crise-politica-do-governo-bolsonaro.html> (Acesso em 24 jun. 2020).

⁹ *Google Notícias*. Disponível: <https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=pt-PT&mid=/m/02j71&gl=PT&ceid=PT:pt-150> (Acesso em 24 jun. 2020).

realidade concreta que presenciamos, volto à proposta apresentada nesse trabalho. Num exercício de imaginação sociológica e política criativas, desenvolvido nas bases de uma racionalidade ambiental ecofeminista para nosso *buen vivir* planetário, repito as palavras do Ailton Krenak: “para combater esse vírus, temos de ter primeiro cuidado e depois coragem” (2020: 6). E assim, deixo umas palavras finais, na fala do próprio Krenak:

Tomara que não voltemos à normalidade, pois, se voltarmos, é porque não valeu nada a morte de milhares de pessoas no mundo inteiro. [...] As mudanças já estão em gestação. Não faz sentido que, para trabalhar, uma mulher tenha de deixar os seus filhos com outra pessoa. Não podemos voltar àquele ritmo, ligar todos os carros, todas as máquinas ao mesmo tempo. Seria como se converter ao negacionismo, aceitar que a Terra é plana e que devemos seguir nos devorando. Aí, sim, teremos provado que a humanidade é uma mentira. (2020: 11)

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**EPISTEMOLOGIAS DE RESISTÊNCIA
/ EPISTEMOLOGIES OF RESISTANCE
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**TESTIMONIOS AFROPERUANOS: ERASMO,
YANACÓN DEL VALLE DE CHANCAY Y PIEL DE
MUJER. REARTICULANDO LUGARES Y MEMORIAS
DE LOS AFRODESCENDIENTES EN PERÚ**

**AFROPERUVIAN TESTIMONIAL NARRATIVES: ERASMO,
YANACÓN DEL VALLE DE CHANCAY AND PIEL DE MUJER.
REARTICULATING PLACES AND MEMORIES
OF AFRO-DESCENDANTS IN PERU**

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RESUMEN: El presente estudio se centra en el análisis de dos textos testimoniales de afroperuanos del siglo XX. La particularidad de dichos textos radica en su desafío a la institución literaria y a la historiografía en el Perú, que han excluido como agentes históricos a diversos actores, en el presente caso, a los afrodescendientes. Basándonos en ciertos postulados de la microhistoria y la articulación de voces subalternas, reconocemos a los testimonios como dispositivos de conocimiento histórico representados como narraciones de vida. In sus testimonios, Delia Zamudio y Erasmo Muñoz no sólo constatan la continuidad de una larga y dolorosa experiencia de desplazamiento y racismo, sino también pugnan por articular sus experiencias en diversas genealogías histó-

ricas subyacentes a narraciones a nivel macro, como las del *yanaconaje*, el *cimarronaje* y la historia de las mujeres, que reclaman un reconocimiento social.

PALABRAS CLAVE: microhistoria; testimonio; afroperuanos; articulación histórica; racismo.

ABSTRACT: The present study focuses on the analysis of two testimonial narratives of Afro-Peruvians in the 20th century. The particularity of these texts represents a challenge to the literary institution and to historiography in Peru. They have systematically excluded diverse actors: in the present case, Afro-descendants. Based on certain postulates of microhistory and the historical articulation of Afro-descendant subaltern voices, we regard testimonios as sources of historical knowledge represented in the form of life narratives. In their testimonies, Delia Zamudio and Erasmo Muñoz not only confirm the continuity of a long and painful experience of displacement and racism, but also strive to articulate their experiences with various historical genealogies underlying macro-level narratives, such as those of *yanaconaje*, *cimarronaje* and the history of women, that demand social recognition.

KEYWORDS: microhistory; testimonio; Afro-Peruvians; historical articulation; racism.

Historiografía literaria en el Perú. Una dialéctica cultural excluyente

A grandes rasgos, se puede afirmar que la historiografía literaria peruana ha sido construida en base a una relación dicotómica, una dialéctica entre dos espacios culturales que, a lo largo de nuestra

historia colonial y republicana, han sido planos de proyección de visiones, fantasías y narraciones vinculadas a proyectos sociopolíticos que a su vez emprendieron la tarea de instaurar una identidad nacional. En dichos espacios, la costa y los Andes, se fueron reproduciendo diversas antinomias como *escritura/oralidad*, *moderno/tradicional*, *hispanismo/indigenismo*, que pretendían explicar la particularidad de esos espacios culturales y cómo su interacción había determinado el devenir de nuestra tradición literaria y cultural. Dichas dualidades son al fin y al cabo representaciones metonímicas de dos actores, reconocidos como agentes históricos nacionales: el sujeto andino y el criollo. El mestizaje será visto en gran medida como el resultado – a veces idealizado, otras veces indeseable – de ambas herencias culturales¹. En dicho proceso, otras colectividades y genealogías serán excluidas como partícipes de la constitución de la nación. Así, por ejemplo, José de la Riva Agüero, historiador y ensayista aristocrático de inicios del siglo XX, en su libro *Carácter de la literatura del Perú independiente* (1905) interpreta el carácter nacional de la literatura peruana a partir de una composición binaria: “dos razas, aunque en diverso grado, han contribuido en el Perú a formar el tipo nacional: la española y la indígena” (65). En dicho diagnóstico literario y cultural del Perú, Riva Agüero – influenciado de forma implícita por las ideas del racismo científico de cambio de siglo – niega alguna tradición afrodescendiente argumentando

¹ En relación al discurso del mestizaje, David Sulmont y Juan Carlos Callirgos mencionan a Víctor Andrés Belaúnde como uno de los primeros intelectuales que se aboca a construir una idea de identidad nacional mestiza que supere las dicotomías mencionadas: “on the surface, it seemed to transcend the limitations of both Hispanista and indigenista discourses, generating a notion of a shared and reconciled Peruanidad produced by a history marked by the encounter between the races and cultures that generated Peru [...] and the dialectic of their contradictions that ensued” (138). Sin embargo, en dicha narración que exalta el mestizaje como identidad nacional, existe una desigualdad jerárquica en torno al rol que debe cumplir cada componente, ejerciendo, por ende, el lado hispánico y occidental un rol modelador del componente andino.

la carencia de un carácter literario específico: “Por lo que toca a la raza negra, como no puede reconocérsele nada que se asemeje siquiera a un ideal literario, y como sólo por excepción y en débil grado ha influido por la herencia sobre los que en el Perú han cultivado la literatura, parece innecesario ocuparse en ella”. (72)

Del mismo modo, en las reflexiones sobre la sociedad peruana y su devenir, intelectuales de inicios del siglo XX como Clemente Palma y Luis Alberto Sánchez desarrollan la misma lógica dual, adjudicándole un carácter exótico, incipiente o negativo a otros grupos “raciales”². Incluso José Carlos Mariátegui, en su ensayo “El proceso de la literatura” (1952), desconoce el aporte cultural de los afrodescendientes, según él, por estar aún vinculados a la cultura colonial criolla: “El negro, el mulato, el “zambo” representan, en nuestro pasado, elementos coloniales. El español importó al negro cuando sintió su imposibilidad de sustituir al indio y su incapacidad de asimilarlo [...] El negro ha mirado siempre con hostilidad y desconfianza la sierra, donde no ha podido aclimatarse física ni espiritualmente [...]” (357). Y más adelante anota: “Cuando se ha mezclado al indio ha sido para bastardearlo comunicándole su domesticidad zalamera y su psicología exteriorizante y mórbida” (357-358). Dichas representaciones esquemáticas y dualistas dominan las discusiones sobre nación, cultura y sociedad las primeras décadas del siglo XX en el Perú, desconociendo así otras prácticas literarias complejas que son resultado del entrecruzamiento de

² Cuando aquí se emplea la categoría “raza”, se hace críticamente o, en su defecto, para contextualizar la concepción que se tiene de dicha categoría ideológica a inicios del siglo XX en el Perú. El caso de Clemente Palma es paradigmático para entender la influencia de las teorías racialistas europeas en la intelectualidad limeña de cambio de siglo. Su tesis *El porvenir de las razas en el Perú* de 1897 es el manifiesto más radical de un proyecto racista eugenésico en el país: explica el atraso del país como consecuencia de la degeneración racial producida por el mestizaje y propone una política de “blanqueamiento” como solución a ello. Al respecto, ver Quiróz, 2010.

diversas genealogías culturales a lo largo de la historia colonial y republicana.

Antonio Cornejo Polar será uno de los primeros intelectuales que se dedican a explorar las zonas de contacto de espacios culturales que han producido discursos híbridos y heterogéneos. En su libro *La formación de la tradición literaria en el Perú* (1989) invoca a estudiar producciones discursivas provenientes de sectores marginales y populares puesto que en ellos se consolida un espacio de representación donde se manifiestan discursividades históricamente marginadas por la institución literaria hegemónica y letrada³. De allí a esta parte, la profusión de estudios que se centran en el estudio de las tradiciones asiáticas, afrodescendientes y de otras minorías en nuestra literatura es una labor que ha experimentado un gran crecimiento, pero que aún se encuentra en construcción.

Por ello, nuestro interés gira en torno al acercamiento a discursos heteróclitos en el Perú que, bajo la sombra de homogéneas narraciones nacionales, han sido prácticamente devaluados como elementos constitutivos para la construcción de una historia nacional. Precisamente esas narrativas disruptivas desafían espacios estratégicos y reclaman el derecho a la representación bajo nuevas relaciones hegemónicas de poder, donde a su vez nuevos movimientos sociales sean capaces de desafiar los procedimientos narrativos canónicos para así articular esas historias heterogéneas o subalternizadas y, a través de un proceso dialógico, mostrar las cisuras y limitaciones de las grandes narraciones nacionales. En ese sentido, la inserción y el reconocimiento de memorias colectivas – en este caso, la de los afrodescendientes peruanos – tendrían como fin, por un lado, reivindicar a una colectividad específica entendiendo su particular

³ En el caso del estudio de una literatura afroperuana, es importante mencionar a Carazas con su libro *Estudios Afroperuanos*. Asimismo, en torno a las relaciones entre poder, pertenencias étnicas, nación y su representación dentro de la literatura, ver Velázquez (2002) y Manrique (1999).

trayectoria histórica dentro de la sociedad peruana; por otro lado, en el plano social, esta reivindicación histórica contribuye al fortalecimiento de una noción de ciudadanía más equitativa y plural tanto a nivel nacional como transnacional.

A modo de ejemplo, se pueden mencionar dos importantes libros como *Afro-Latinoamérica 1800-2000* de Georg Reid Andrews y *Afro Latino Voices. Narratives from the Early Modern Ibero-Atlantic World, 1550-1812*, editado por Kathryn McKnight y Leo Garofalo. El primero plantea entender una historia contemporánea del siglo XIX y XX de América Latina desde la perspectiva afrodescendiente, destacando cómo este grupo contribuyó con la formación del Estado-Nación, la democratización y las reformas políticas y sociales que transformaron la vida de la región; el segundo libro recupera las voces y experiencias desde los archivos judiciales, religiosos y administrativos para probar fehacientemente que los afrodescendientes, esclavos y libertos, no sólo se apropiaron de los códigos e instituciones de los dominadores, sino que las permearon y modificaron de acuerdo a sus propios intereses durante el período colonial.

El presente artículo pretende inscribirse en esa línea de estudios y, por ende, se centra en el análisis de los testimonios de afrodescendientes *Erasmó*, *Yanacón del valle Chancay* y *Piel de Mujer*. Ambas historias si bien individuales son colectivamente ejemplares, puesto que en sus trayectorias se ven reflejadas notoriamente grandes transformaciones socioeconómicas de la historia del Perú durante el siglo XX. Sus destinos individuales están marcados además por una particularidad insoslayable: el ser “negros” en una sociedad en la que las prácticas de ciudadanía son influenciadas aún por complejas y jerárquicas percepciones racistas que, tal como lo afirma la antropóloga Marisol de la Cadena, más que ser definidas biológicamente, son concebidas como esencializados atributos culturales y geográficos (12ss). Dichos procedimientos, si bien influenciados por el racismo científico y su impronta en

las políticas públicas – como en el caso de la llamada república aristocrática (1895-1919) –, remiten además a la llamada “herencia colonial”, que evoca un orden social basado en rígidas diferencias estamentales y económicas vinculadas estrechamente a impuestas atribuciones raciales durante la Colonia. En dicho orden, tal como lo describe el sociólogo Aníbal Quijano, “raza e identidad racial fueron establecidas como instrumento de clasificación social básica de la población” (202). Dichos regímenes mentales de orden socio-racialista perduran hasta el día de hoy.

Articulación de microhistorias de afrodescendientes

Microhistorias designan el estudio histórico de lo particular como contrapartida a la focalización en procesos históricos epocales, es decir, es el cambio de escala de lo macro a lo micro lo que caracteriza a estas investigaciones historiográficas⁴. Esta focalización de los estudios históricos y culturales sobre actores concretos, por lo general anónimos, y sus espacios cotidianos no deja de tomar en cuenta procesos y estructuras sociales a largo plazo; por el contrario, su articulación es necesaria para revelar las contradicciones y diferencias de dichos grandes relatos desde la perspectiva de actores históricos específicos, enfatizando así ciertas inconsistencias y la complejidad de la historiografía como teoría y práctica. Desde esta perspectiva, se pretende contrastar y criticar patrones normativos macrohistóricos de una historiografía ordenada por una causalidad convencional o enfocada en elementos cuantitativos, reconociendo así en estas historias soterradas la agencia individual como ele-

⁴ Para una visión más profunda sobre el trabajo metodológico, los logros y convergencias con otras perspectivas como la historia de la vida cotidiana (*Alltagsgeschichte*) consultar los textos en Lüdtkke (ed.) *Alltagsgeschichte*, el artículo de Levi y el estudio sobre la obra de Ginzburg de Serna y Pons.

mento constitutivo del devenir histórico, en oposición al “papel de los sistemas de reglas y los procesos mecánicos del cambio social” (Levi 136).

Cuando hablamos de la necesidad de *articular* las microhistorias de afrodescendientes, resulta necesario esclarecer primero qué entendemos por articulación y cómo este concepto nos permite organizar experiencias y narraciones dentro del campo cultural y social. Para ello, existen diversos estudios y marcos conceptuales en torno a una antropología de la articulación⁵ que, para nuestros fines, resultan de gran interés. En un sentido general, articulación señala un proceso continuo entre el individuo, su experiencia física y subjetiva, y lo social; mediante una materialización coherente que otorgue sentido a dicha experiencia y la fije en un espacio de relaciones intersubjetivas (Schlette y Jung 15). Según Katrin Arnold, procesos de articulación representan – en relación con la filosofía de las formas simbólicas de Ernst Cassirer – objetivaciones concretas y simbólicas de experiencias y percepciones que poseen una dimensión de identificación subjetiva e intersubjetiva:

subjetivo porque los procesos de articulación se basan, por un lado, en una experiencia individual irreducible y, por otro lado, son actos creativos en los que se produce un sentido nuevo [...] no son marcas accidentales de contenidos presimbólicos, sino actos de individuación. En ellos se construye la identidad [...] La formación de identidad puede describirse entonces como un proceso en el que las configuraciones creativas y subjetivas del individuo se integran en una estructura social identitaria y, por lo tanto, se tornan significativas y efectivas. (Arnold 98-99)

⁵ Para el presente artículo, se ha empleado sobre todo los estudios incluidos en Schlette e Yung. Las citas que a continuación se refieren a dichos artículos son traducciones mías.

Asimismo, Matthias Jung define la articulación como un proceso complejo de objetivación de experiencias humanas mediante la performatividad de actos simbólicos – en gran medida, actos de habla (*Sprechakte*) – en las que una forma implícita y cualitativa de experiencia subjetiva se transforma en una forma explícita y semántica de una configuración simbólica concisa que adquiere un sentido a través de su fijación material y medial en el campo social (Jung 2005, 105-106).

Matthias Jung toma en cuenta cinco procesos que forman parte del acto de articulación de experiencias individuales: estructuración, explicación, corporeización, simbolización concisa y discusión⁶. Esos procesos pueden darse de forma continua o diferenciada; en el caso de los testimonios de afrodescendientes peruanos que es tema de nuestro trabajo, destaca la articulación como explicación, entendido como un proceso donde actos y enunciados inscritos en el ámbito político o social materializan necesidades, voluntades y actitudes, tanto individuales como colectivas (Jung 2009, 19). Por otro lado, la articulación como corporeización manifiesta la necesidad de la materialización física de experiencias y expresiones específicas, sean estas en forma de textos, documentos, monumentos, imágenes, etc. Se considera que la significación siempre está acoplada a su forma material y, en última instancia, es esencialmente indistinguible de las formas que lo encarnan (22). Por último, articulación como discusión implica en un primer momento, una separación del yo respecto al mundo que lo rodea. Ese extrañamiento entre el yo y el mundo es la condición previa para un proceso de confrontación y discusión con el medio social, que incide en el proceso consciente y constituyente de identidad (27).

⁶ En original: *Gliederung, Explikation, Verkörperung, Prägnanzbildung und Auseinandersetzung*.

Discursos testimoniales

En el contexto latinoamericano, el género del testimonio ha sido tema de diversos estudios y controversias, tanto por su composición como por su inserción y recepción dentro de la institución literaria⁷. Concebido como discurso híbrido que, por un lado, recuperaba las voces de marginados y oprimidos en las sociedades latinoamericanas y, por otro, desafiaba la concepción misma de literatura entendida hasta aquel entonces como una práctica cultural excluyente, las posibilidades de este tipo de narraciones no han sido agotadas y manifiestan una gran potencialidad como generador de espacios de apertura para la indagación de microhistorias en el marco de la construcción de memorias colectivas⁸. John Beverley en su artículo “Anatomía del Testimonio”, ofrece una definición compacta de este tipo de textos:

un testimonio es una narración [...] contada en primera persona gramatical por un narrador que es a la vez el protagonista (o el testigo) de su propio relato. Su unidad narrativa suele ser una “vida” o una vivencia particularmente significativa [...] La situación del narrador en el testimonio siempre involucra cierta urgencia o necesidad de comunicación que surge de una experiencia vivencial de represión, pobreza, explotación, marginalización, crimen, lucha [...] nace de esos espacios donde las estructuras de normalidad

⁷ Reveladores y bien fundados estudios respecto al tema son Beverley (2004) y Skłodowska (1992).

⁸ En el contexto peruano, los textos testimoniales han generado vitales discusiones sobre agudos problemas de nuestra sociedad. Recientemente, numerosas historias de violencia y masacre del conflicto armado interno (1980-2000), que tuvo como víctimas en su mayoría a ciudadanos quechuahablantes de zonas rurales, fueron recogidas en testimonios colectivos dentro del *Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación*. Asimismo es notable la autobiografía de Lurgio Gavilán que retrata desde una perspectiva individual la complejidad del conflicto armado en el Perú y sus devastadoras consecuencias.

social comienzan a desmoronarse por una razón u otra. Su punto de vista es desde abajo. A veces su producción obedece a fines políticos muy precisos. Pero aún cuando no tiene una intención política explícita, su naturaleza como género siempre implica un reto al statu quo de una sociedad dada. (9)

El testimonio posee – en la mayoría de los casos – una estructura sinecdótica en la medida que el narrador se asume como conciencia de una clase, etnia o grupo específico al que representa. Eso diferencia al testimonio de una autobiografía o de una novela tradicional de aprendizaje (*Bildungsroman*) que ponen énfasis en el triunfo o hallazgo personal frente a situaciones adversas. Asimismo, el testimonio apela a su condición de discurso verídico, aún cuando la estructuración y la selección de acontecimientos narrados obedezcan a estrategias narrativas propias de los textos ficcionales. En el plano literario ha cuestionado también la institución literaria como espacio de articulación del poder, donde la irrupción de la voz testimonial, entendida como el retorno de lo oral al ámbito letrado, permite, en palabras de Beverley, “el acceso a la literatura [...] de personas normalmente excluidas de ella, que anteriormente tuvieron que resignarse a ‘ser representados’ por escritores que no pertenecían a su clase, etnia o subcultura” (12). En ese sentido, los testimonios pueden ser definidos como dispositivos de conocimiento histórico que articulan microhistorias de sujetos que han sido subalternizados y han padecido bajo grandes transformaciones políticas y conflictos sociales. Por esa razón, los testimonios que abordaremos a continuación poseen notables potencialidades con miras a la reescritura y articulación de la historia de los afrodescendientes en el Perú.

Yanaconas negros: un caso de heteroglosia cultural. Erasmo. *Yanacón del valle de Chancay*

El testimonio de Don Erasmo Muñoz fue publicado el año 1974 por el Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP). Este trabajo surge en el marco de una investigación dirigida por el antropólogo José Matos Mar sobre el sistema de yanaconaje en el área de producción agrícola de exportación de los valles de la costa norte de Lima. Las entrevistas a Erasmo y a otros miembros de su familia las realizó Jorge Carbajal, entre Agosto y Diciembre de 1963. El testimonio de vida de Don Erasmo, que lamentablemente no ha sido reeditado, presenta un amplio universo de costumbres, valores, saberes e historias cotidianas del campesinado afrocosteño en un momento de grandes cambios originados por el proceso de reforma agraria que afectará no solo los modos de producción agrícola de los latifundios en el Perú, sino también marca el fin del Yanaconaje, grupo social al cual Erasmo y su familia concientemente se adscriben.

El testimonio ha sido elaborado como descripción densa⁹ y estructurado en cinco partes y un epílogo. La primera parte presenta la historia de los padres y la genealogía familiar de Erasmo, todos ellos campesinos afrodescendientes de las provincias de la costa norte del departamento de Lima. La segunda parte da cuenta de la vida social de los pueblos algodonereros de Caqui y Aucallama, dando énfasis sobre todo a la descripción de fiestas religiosas, comidas y la tradición oral en mitos y décimas de los pueblos

⁹ Encontrándose a medio camino entre un trabajo histórico sobre el Yanaconaje como institución económica-social y una historia de vida cotidiana, el presente testimonio vincula diversos niveles que forman parte del método del *thick description* de Clifford Geertz (*The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973): a nivel empírico, representa las acciones, las relaciones sociales y los saberes de Erasmo y su familia de manera detallada; a nivel de la contextualización y significación, se articulan dichos saberes y sucesos cotidianos dentro de los rasantes cambios políticos y económicos que experimenta el sector agrícola en el Perú en la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

afroperuanos. La tercera parte relata la historia familiar nuclear de Erasmo Muñoz. En este capítulo ocurre una variación estilística que podríamos denominar polifonía, puesto que las voces de la mujer y de un hijo de Erasmo se insertan en la narración. En el cuarto capítulo, Erasmo informa del trabajo de los yanaconas tanto en el presente como en el pasado, su relación laboral con los patrones de las haciendas y las preocupaciones ante transformaciones en las estructuras sociales y económicas. La quinta parte («un día con los Muñoz») es una descripción minuciosa sobre la rutina diaria de la familia y las actividades laborales de cada miembro de ella, marcadas por tradicionales roles de género. En el epílogo se presenta una observación de los dramáticos cambios sociales ocurridos en la zona aldonera tras la implantación de la reforma agraria del General Velasco Alvarado y se describe cómo la familia de Erasmo Muñoz, quien para aquel entonces ya ha fallecido, se enfrenta a las nuevas condiciones sociales y económicas.

El testimonio de Erasmo Muñoz no es de aliento crítico ni denunciante. Su voz es en cierto sentido conservadora: surge de la necesidad de preservar la memoria de los yanaconas afroperuanos del valle. Aquí nos enfocaremos en esa interesante trayectoria de la comunidad afrodescendiente, esto es, en su enraizamiento dentro de la institución de origen andino llamada yanaconaje.

El yanaconaje es una institución social y económica de larga data en el Perú y que se remonta a la época prehispánica. Su perduración hasta mediados del siglo XX se debió a su adaptabilidad, primero, al modelo económico latifundista de la época colonial y, posteriormente, a la aparición de un incipiente capitalismo en la época republicana. Durante el Tawantinsuyo, los yana asignaba a un grupo social que desempeñaban el rol de servidumbre. John Murra explica que existe un común denominador de los yanaconas a pesar de lo complejo de dicho orden social, esto es: “Todos habían perdido su condición de campesinos, miembros de un grupo étnico

y de parentesco; ya no se les enumeraba en el quipu, y formaban parte del creciente sector de la población que recibía su sustento completo de los depósitos del estado, pues dedicaba todo su tiempo a éste”. (245)

El no pertenecer a un ayllu ni poseer tierras les otorgaba una identidad desarraigada: esta condición se transformará dentro del nuevo sistema colonial, donde el yanacón mantiene su condición de servidumbre, mas será vinculado a la tierra o hacienda. Así Juan de Matienzo en su obra *Gobierno del Perú* (1567) define a este grupo de la siguiente manera: “Hay en este Reino del Pirú otra manera de indios, que se llaman yanaconas: estos son indios que ellos, o sus padres, salieron del repartimiento o provincia donde eran naturales, y han vivido con españoles sirviéndoles en sus casas, o en chácaras y heredades, o en minas” (Capítulo VIII “De los indios yanaconas”).

Por otro lado, el oficio de yanacona configurado dentro de una serie de relaciones organizadas por categorías raciales será otra novedad del período colonial, como lo sugiere las referencias jurídicas del texto de Matienzo: “Iten que ningún mulato, ni negro horro, ni mestizo que no sea vezino ó hijo legitimo de vezino ó hombre rico y aprobado, pueda tener ni tenga yanacona, sin licencia de la Justicia mayor de qualquiera ciudad ó de la audiencia” (Capítulo VIII “De los indios yanaconas”). La proliferación de yanaconas durante la Colonia será un proceso continuo y lleno de complejos matices, en muchos casos resulta ser un hecho estratégico, a fin de escapar de las terribles condiciones de trabajos forzados en la mita minera (Zanolli 116).

El desarrollo del yanacónaje en la época republicana tendrá una interesante manifestación en las zonas costeras, donde el cultivo de exportación, primero de caña de azúcar, aunque más decididamente el cultivo de algodón, permitirá su adaptación a un modelo de producción insertado ya en un comercio capitalista. Esto se debe:

[al] rol que tuvo en la acumulación de capital y valorización de la tierra en favor del sistema de hacienda, permitiéndole ganar [a los hacendados] áreas de cultivo y disponer de mano de obra en una inversión que no le significaba riesgo alguno. Desde esta perspectiva el yanaconaje adopta una versión moderna y se resume en una asociación entre la hacienda, que aportaba capital (tierra, agua, dinero, insumos, maquinarias y servicios) y un campesino – el yanacona – que aportaba fuerza de trabajo y experiencia agrícola. (Matos 16)

Esta transformación histórica del yanaconaje como institución económica y condición social será interesante de observar en las haciendas costeras ya en el siglo XX. Su composición no será exclusiva, llegando a incluir a descendientes de chinos y japoneses. Por lo general, fue un grupo campesino no asalariado “con actitudes empresariales y aspiraciones de propiedad en el seno de una estructura capitalista» (Matos 181). Su posición social era más cercana al sector dominante cumpliendo roles simbólicos en celebraciones o en clubes auspiciados por los patrones (Matos 182). Sin embargo, su homogeneidad y estabilidad dentro de las haciendas exportadoras de la costa era solo aparente:

[...] este grupo, como cualquier otro del país no había escapado al pluralismo característico de la sociedad peruana. Esta heterogeneidad implicaba lógicamente distintas posibilidades económicas, las que al ser puestas en práctica daban lugar a la reproducción de la multiplicidad y diversificación y, por ende, a la agudización de contrastes en una misma situación estructural. En el yanaconaje esto significaba que los menos pudientes debían buscar economías complementarias, mientras que los más prósperos podían canalizar excedentes a otros circuitos. (Matos 196)

El lingüista y teórico literario ruso Mikhail Bakhtin ha desarrollado un concepto que nos es de gran ayuda para entender este proceso sociocultural tan heterogéneo y que en el testimonio de Erasmo Muñoz se vincula con el grupo afrodescendiente. Dicho concepto es *heteroglosia* y hace referencia a la composición híbrida de muchas expresiones y palabras dentro de una lengua. Las palabras nos son objetiva materia lingüística, ellas evocan un trasfondo que está marcado por interacciones entre sujetos sociales distintos y por relaciones de poder. En ese sentido, condiciones básicas para la formación de expresiones y conceptos híbridos en un lenguaje son las relaciones de dialogismo, proceso que implica la presencia irrefutable de una alteridad con quien se negocia, redefine, refuta o adapta el sentido de ciertas expresiones (Bakhtin 2002, 126). Esa alteridad dentro de las relaciones dialógicas genera una polisemia que es producto de la colisión de dos o más concepciones dentro de una palabra¹⁰.

La palabra Yanacona pertenece entonces a dos lenguas (quechua y español) y se relaciona con diversos regímenes de poder y conocimiento que históricamente se enlazaron en tensas relaciones de dominio. Yanacón es así una palabra híbrida y polisémica. En la voz de Erasmo, esa palabra señala primero una relación netamente económica: “SOY YANACÓN porque estoy trabajando esta tierra de la hacienda con la plata que me habilita la misma hacienda, y todo el algodón que produzco se lo tengo que vender al patrón” (Matos y Carbajal, 107). Sin embargo, a lo largo del testimonio surgen otras genealogías y significados. Yanacón, en la voz de Don

¹⁰ “[R]elaciones dialógicas no solo son posibles entre expresiones (relativamente) íntegras, sino que se pueden establecer en cada parte significativa de una declaración, incluso en una sola palabra, siempre y cuando dicha palabra no sea percibida como objeto impersonal del idioma, sino como signo de un punto de vista ajeno, como representación de una expresión extranjera, cuando escuchamos una voz extraña en ella”. (Bakhtin 2002, 126, traducción mía)

Erasmus, posee fronteras no fijas en la manera de definir pertenencias o marcar espacios semánticos. Si, como señala Bakhtin, detrás de las palabras han dejado huella el oficio, el género del discurso de poder, el contexto sociocultural, las generaciones y sus intereses, todas ellas están impregnadas de intenciones y conflictos que trascienden lo individual (Bakhtin 1979, 169-170). Este complejo entramado de la palabra yanacona se manifiesta en una explicación que Erasmus ofrece, insertando su historia particular a un devenir histórico nacional:

Antiguamente las haciendas eran casi la mitad de lo que tienen ahora. En Caquí, por ejemplo, se cultivaba la tercera parte de lo de ahora [...] en la época de los españoles, aquí había muchos indios que eran los dueños de estas tierras y ellos cultivaban bien estos terrenos. Después los españoles empezaron a matarlos y a quitarles sus tierras y los indios empezaron a acabarse y entonces grandes extensiones de terreno quedaron sin cuidado. En las huaquerías que abundan en el valle están enterrados los indios que murieron. Después trajeron negros esclavos para que trabajaran pero así y todo no lograron recuperar el terreno que se perdió [...] Pero con las yanaconas las haciendas empezaron a crecer porque éstos ganaban tierra al monte y al río. Y otra cosa que había es que empezaron a llegar peones de la sierra. ¡Estos cholos son muy fuertes! [...] Tampoco debemos olvidar, sobre todo en Caquí, que Okada ganó bastante terreno. Este japonés sabía trabajar, por algo ha sido el mejor agricultor del valle [...] Claro que los negros hemos sido mejores trabajadores que cualquiera, pero los patrones prefieren más a los que cobran menos y así eran los chinos. (Matos y Cabajal, 119-120)

De forma interesante, los procesos históricos con que Erasmus explica la existencia y el valor de los yanaconas negros no sucede de

manera lineal, sino de forma discontinua, donde hechos macrohistóricos remiten y se vinculan con sus historias locales. Las diferencias étnicas y culturales entre los campesinos adscritos a estos sistemas de producción agrícola de las haciendas fueron también un factor básico en la construcción de su identidad diversa: “Los yanacóns eran cholos costeños, chinos, japoneses o negros y en menor grado migrantes serranos. Hablaban castellano, tenían generalmente instrucción primaria y estaban en cierta forma ‘integrados’ a la cultura urbana” (Matos 48). La identidad de los yanacóns, como se aprecia en el relato, es el resultado de interacciones sociales que complejizan esa primera definición económica. Así la palabra en el testimonio de Erasmo señala algunas veces a campesinos de los Andes y otras a migrantes japoneses, en otras muchas yanacón es equivalente a criollo y negro, estableciéndose así una exclusividad identitaria cultural:

Yo estoy contento aquí y una de las cosas que más me gustan son los gallos. En Caqui y en todo el valle existe una gran afición a la jugada de gallos **entre el elemento criollo, no así entre los serranos**. Mi tío Polo, que es yanacón, es uno de los mejores careadores que ha habido en el valle (Matos y Carbajal, 144, resaltado mío)

No me quejo, después de todo uno la pasa bien aquí en la hacienda. Solamente lo que me molesta es que haya tanto paisano. **Esos serranos son gente hipócrita. No son criollos**, no son gente, no se puede confiar en ellos. (145, resaltado mío)

Una de las estrategias identitarias, como se puede apreciar, es la cadena de significantes: *pertenencia étnica/cultural – procedencia geográfica – características morales*. Matos Mar afirma que un rasgo fundamental de los yanacóns afrodescendientes del valle de Caqui fue el lugar de procedencia y la identificación étnica, que

les permitía prolongar sus relaciones económicas y sociales (43). De esta manera, en dicho contexto el yanacón aparece como un sujeto conservador y conforme con el sistema de dominio que se establecía en las haciendas – en comparación con las constantes sublevaciones campesinas que aparecían en las haciendas de la zona andina sur por aquellos años. Sin embargo, más allá del a primera vista sentimiento de exclusividad cultural y de la reproducción de categorías racistas en las palabras de Erasmo y algunos miembros de su familia, sus prácticas culturales como yanaconas negros exhiben una extendida composición híbrida y transcultural. “Afroandinos” sería una definición adecuada, por ejemplo, cuando Erasmo relata tradiciones como la fiesta religiosa de la Virgen del Carmen, con la escenificación de la danza de “moros y cristianos”, danza de origen ibérica que se escenifica predominantemente en el área andina.

Resulta interesante indagar más esa genealogía que presenta la palabra yanacón en su entroncamiento con la cultura afroperuana¹¹. El testimonio de Erasmo Muñoz muestra claramente la complejidad de dicha palabra, palabra que encierra muchas historias y rastros del encuentro conflictivo de diversas alteridades. Aun cuando el espacio de representación de la identidad de los yanaconas negros en este testimonio se vincula siempre a los valles algodoneros de Caqui y Aucallama, Erasmo intenta siempre articular su historia a la de la sociedad peruana en general:

El Perú es un país muy grande y también hay bastante gente diferente. Me han dicho que más adentro de la sierra está la montaña que es un sitio lleno de árboles y puros ríos y los que viven allí se llaman chunchos y hasta se comen entre ellos. Lo que pasa es

¹¹ Un valioso estudio histórico sobre las relaciones de poder e interdependencia entre yanaconas, campesinos y hacendados en otra zona algodonera (los valles de Ica, al sur de Lima), desde la perspectiva de los estudios subalternos, se encuentra en el libro de Peloso.

que éstos no son cristianos. Por eso toda la gente del Perú no puede comprenderse porque son diferentes. Los serranos son bien fregados, y los blancos lo mismo. Esto se ve aquí en la hacienda que siendo tan pocos no pueden llegar a una comprensión, porque los serranos son unos fregados. Lo mismo pasa en Lima, en donde en algunos sitios los blancos le tienen cólera a los negros y tienen vergüenza de ser sus amigos, pero en fin esos son problemas de los gobernantes y de los señores que se dedican a la política. (Matos y Carbajal, 133-134)

En la voz de Erasmo se pueden reconocer extendidas etiquetas raciales que vinculan pertenencias geográficas con aspectos morales y culturales, y que a lo largo de la historia del Perú han sido herramientas de un régimen de clasificación y subordinación social. Sin embargo, la necesidad del diálogo cultural y político como único camino en una sociedad de profundos conflictos étnicos-culturales está presente en esta interesante explicación de cómo ve Erasmo la situación política y social del país con la que cierra su testimonio.

Piel de Mujer. Huellas de violencia étnica y de género

El testimonio de Delia Zamudio surge en el contexto de una serie de talleres promovidos por la ONG PROVIDA para dirigentes populares de los barrios periféricos de Lima. El interés inicial por su trayectoria sindicalista se convierte luego en historia de vida. Tras constantes entrevistas con la comunicadora social Maritza Gonzales, se logra recopilar la información que luego será revisada en compañía de la testimoniante. Delia Zamudio contempla la publicación del testimonio como parte de su actividad política.

Su testimonio se remonta a sus primeros recuerdos de infancia en Lima, ciudad a la que migra junto a su madre y hermana. La

precariedad económica la lleva a trabajar desde pequeña junto a su madre; además, debe asumir la responsabilidad de cuidar de sus hermanos menores. Aún siendo niña consigue su primer trabajo como empleada en casa de una familia adinerada de Lima donde recibe constante maltratos – aunque siempre resalta el hecho que fue gracias a ese trabajo que logra aprender a escribir y leer. El relato de Delia nos lleva al recuento de su adolescencia y juventud, donde empieza a trabajar como obrera, experimenta sus primeras relaciones amorosas, un matrimonio fallido y años de esfuerzos por acabar la escuela. Al llegar a la adultez, su vida está marcada por la lucha sindical, política y, posteriormente, por su participación como activista en organizaciones feministas. El común denominador de la vida de Delia Zamudio son las relaciones violentas, tanto en el ámbito privado como laboral.

A diferencia del discurso de Erasmo Muñoz, la voz del presente texto es una voz que ya ha tomado conciencia de las injustas relaciones socioeconómicas predominantes en el país y justificadas por impuestas pertenencias étnicas y de género. Estas relaciones de poder son naturalizadas en el campo social impidiendo así un equitativo acceso a educación, salud y trabajo a los integrantes de ciertas minorías. Entonces, una triple discriminación – “ser mujer, negra y pobre” (9) – recorre todo el testimonio de Delia Zamudio. El inicio de su relato se articula a uno de los momentos cruciales de la historia del Perú moderno: la masiva migración interna, hecho que transformará definitivamente la conformación física y social de grandes ciudades como Lima. Delia es una mujer afroperuana procedente de la provincia de Chíncha (provincia del departamento de Ica), lugar que en la época colonial concentró a una importante población negra, obligada a trabajar en condición de esclavos, y que el día de hoy es un sitio representativo de la cultura afroperuana.

El discurso de Delia Zamudio establece desde un principio una dicotomía entre Lima y Chíncha para poder articular su experien-

cia migrante, llena de sucesos traumáticos y violentos. Lima será representada como el lugar de la violencia: un sitio hostil marcado por la desigualdad y la desintegración social y donde la precariedad se manifiesta cotidianamente. Por el contrario, Chíncha es representada como un lugar idealizado: “En Chíncha, aparte de su buena música, existe mucha alegría y sinceridad en su gente” (24). Un estrecho entrelazamiento entre género, clase y raza condiciona ese ambiente violento, de relaciones jerárquicas, racistas y violentas donde ella crece. Como afirma la antropóloga Jeanine Anderson en el prólogo al libro, el hecho que las experiencias de mujeres y de ciertas minorías sean ignoradas e invisibilizadas, “ha hecho que nuestra visión de la sociedad peruana subestime notablemente la presencia de la violencia” (Zamudio 16) en dichos grupos e incluso que se legitime, indirectamente.

Resulta necesario reconocer entonces cuáles son las estrategias discursivas y las genealogías que Delia Zamudio intenta articular con su historia de vida para poder contrarrestar dicha violencia. La voz testimoniante reconoce, en un primer momento y a lo largo del texto, la vida como una lucha constante, en la que la responsabilidad para salir adelante recae exclusivamente en el individuo:

Algo que influenció en mi carácter, fue ese deseo que siempre mantuve por estudiar. Asimismo, ver que las puertas se me cerraban, tener que forzar las cosas. Realizar las cosas sola, tener conciencia de cuánto cuesta eso, me mantuvo de pie. Creo que eso a uno lo va haciendo más fuerte. Siempre me decía, “por qué voy a dejarme vencer. Sólo porque ella tiene la piel blanca va a lograr eso y porque tú, Delia, por ser negra, te vas a quedar atrás”. No, los golpes que uno tiene en la vida; el ver que la gente muere; el saber que uno tiene que valerse por sí misma, es un desafío permanente. (Zamudio 152)

Los sucesos en la vida de Delia Zamudio derivan en una noción de vida entendida como lucha: individualmente debe sobreponerse a las violentas relaciones racistas y de género que logra reconocer como injustas, mas a las que adjudica una solución individual – y esto puede sonar contradictorio a su activa y ferviente participación sindical. Sin embargo, es necesario considerar que dicha actitud confirma la ausencia de representaciones y políticas públicas para y de dichas minorías en la sociedad peruana, situación que condiciona directamente la idea de una responsabilidad individual en la solución de injusticias sociales como el racismo y las prácticas desiguales de una ciudadanía exclusiva y excluyente que el testimonio confirma.

Por otro lado, uno puede reconocer paulatinamente en el testimonio de Delia Zamudio la aparición de dos historias que asoman para configurar su mundo social. Esos regímenes, si bien se vinculan estrechamente, son de naturaleza distintas: uno aparece como resistencia y potencialidad; el otro como opresión y residualidad. Ambas historias no son determinantes en el sentido que prescriben el devenir de Delia Zamudio, sino más bien constituyentes: reorganizan y actualizan una cadena de experiencias e historias que conforman ese “anómico” y dislocado mundo social.

La primera genealogía es el esbozo de una tradición a la que ella apela para poder otorgarle un sentido histórico a su lucha individual: cuando relata momentos difíciles, cuando las fuerzas declinan ante experiencias de injusticia y de dolor físico, evoca un pasado común que posibilita una identidad social positiva a lo largo de la historia: estamos hablando del cimarronaje. Así, al comienzo de su testimonio, relata lo siguiente:

A los ocho años regresé a Chíncha para conocer a mis padrinos. Me gustaron las campiñas verdes, el aire fresco, la buena gente

y el sol alegre [...] En El Carmen, para mi asombro, conocí a una familia cuyo hijo era un cimarrón. Se llamaron así a los negros que no aceptaban la esclavitud y escapaban del patrón para formar su propia comunidad, hacían respetar su palabra. Los otros negros, los no cimarrones, los respetaban por sus conocimientos, por eso eran siempre consultados. Hasta ahora hay negros que se reclaman cimarrones, porque no dejan de creer en nuestros ancestros. Mi padre fue descendiente de cimarrón y nos contaba muchas historias. (Zamudio 24)

Ese puente entre pasado y presente aparece como posibilidad de articular su experiencia individual a una historia subrepticia, en oposición a una “historia oficial” que la somete e invisibiliza cotidianamente. Al articular positivamente al cimarronaje, enuncia la necesidad de un reconocimiento de los afrodescendientes como actores históricos. El cimarronaje como fenómeno social ha sido ampliamente estudiado. Aquí quisiéramos destacar una reflexión de Carlos Aguirre, quien interpreta el cimarronaje como un rechazo fundamental a la legalidad que los clasifica como seres maquinales a disposición absoluta de sus amos (140), en la medida que “la fuga de un esclavo representa[ba] una eficaz respuesta a la dominación: priva al amo de su aporte como fuerza de trabajo y recupera para sí la capacidad de decidir su destino, aunque, ciertamente, tal capacidad se ve severamente limitada por la configuración discriminatoria de la sociedad entera y los peligros que acechan al fugitivo”. (Aguirre, 140)

El accionar de los cimarrones se ve reflejado en la vida de Delia Zamudio y en las acciones que toma para poder resistir una historia de violencia. Si los cimarrones fugaban en especial por “un cansancio frente a los malos tratos de los amos, o al excesivo trabajo que se imponía sobre ellos” (Aguirre, 146-147), varias acciones de Delia Zamudio reflejan dicho accionar:

Palizas, de quién no habré recibido cuando niña. Un día la madrina me dio una tanda que hasta ahorita la recuerdo. Ella me pegaba siempre. Me castigó porque tenía que planchar mucha ropa y me venció el sueño. Estaba cabeceando y planchando y quemé un fustán muy bonito. Creo que era la una de la mañana. Ella, para despertarme, me puso la plancha sobre mi mano y luego me pegó cruelmente por haberme quedado dormida.

Esa noche esperé que se duerman y salí, calladita, como a las dos de la mañana rumbo a mi casa. (40)

Si coincidimos con Walter Benjamin en que la historia es objeto de una construcción, cuyo lugar no es el tiempo pasado y homogéneo, sino que se ancla al presente, sus necesidades y peligros¹², entonces la evocación a los Cimarrones es el reconocimiento de una genealogía histórica que se rebela al sometimiento y al abuso. Pero establecer dicha genealogía histórica nos remite a otra que aparece como su contraparte y opresor remanente. Nos referimos a las prácticas y discursos del sujeto esclavista colonial, como lo propone el investigador Marcel Velázquez (2005). Tal sujeto se asume en la posición de otorgar roles sociales, oficios y lugares a los afrodescendientes. Dichos discursos y prácticas perduran como estructuras residuales hasta la actualidad. Aníbal Quijano sostiene que los afroamericanos, alienados de su propia identidad histórica, fueron confinados a una identidad racial colonial negativa, esto es, llegaron a ser “negros”, convirtiéndose de pronto, bajo un esquema cultural de orden racista, en el pasado y lo primitivo (221). Marcel Velázquez hace alusión al espacio regulado y vigilado al que son adscritos los afrodescendientes en la época colonial. Dichas restricciones socioculturales perdurarán tras la Colonia, en la medida que

¹² “La Historia es objeto de una construcción cuyo lugar no constituye el tiempo homogéneo y vacío, sino el tiempo colmado del presente (*Jetztzeit*)”. (Benjamin XIV, traducción mía).

“la sociedad impedía su inclusión mediante mecanismos coercitivos que garantizaban la correlación entre trabajo manual subordinado y actividad económica del afrodescendiente”. (2005, 74)

Esos mecanismos coercitivos pueden ser simbólicos, como el uso obligatorio de un mandil, asignándole con ello un lugar inferior en una sociedad clasista, hecho que a Delia la marca profundamente:

[...] Siempre vestía con un mandil de tela a cuadritos. Nunca más he querido comprarme esa tela, ni siquiera a mis hijas cuando les pidieron en el jardín. Con ese bendito mandil me mandaban a todo lugar, no les preocupaba que siempre lo usara [...] Era un mandil con dos pinzas adelante y un cinturón para amarrarlo atrás. Esa era mi vestimenta, de siempre, con zapatillas [...] Así, con esas penas, llegué a cumplir catorce años. (Zamudio 38-39)

Esas mismas restricciones las experimenta cuando es retirada de la escuela. Bajo esa lógica dominante y racista, no es necesario que aprenda más si su función siempre está vinculada con la servidumbre: “Cuando cumplí los catorce años mi madrina me retiró del colegio. Decía que ya sabía deletrear y podía ir al mercado a hacer las compras. Es decir, ahora podía servirle para otras cosas [...] Por eso sólo estudié hasta el tercer año de primaria a pesar que yo quería seguir estudiando. Esto me causó resentimiento, por eso decidí escaparme de la casa”. (40)

Gran parte de la identidad de Delia está marcada por las relaciones dentro de la esfera doméstica de sus patronos y las negociaciones que ella emprende dentro de dicha esfera para alcanzar una autonomía fuera de esos espacios de control y represión. En ese sentido, se reconocen continuidades respecto al rol de la mujer esclava urbana en la primera mitad del siglo XIX que «transcurría en tres ámbitos diferentes: en el servicio doméstico en la casa de sus amos; en la calle, como jornalera, pero como residente en la

casa de los amos; y como mujer jornalera que vivía fuera de la casa de los amos» (Hünefeldt 6). Aspectos que están presentes en el devenir de la vida de Delia Zamudio. Quizás la manifestación más evidente de dicha delimitación y asignación de espacios y roles serviles la experimenta cuando es obrera. Al momento de asumir el rol de presidenta del sindicato de la empresa farmacéutica, serán sus compañeros hombres quienes rechazan con vilipendios dicha aspiración: “En este momento los compañeros hemos acordado renunciar al sindicato porque en la vida vamos a aceptar ser dirigidos por una mujer y menos si es negra” (Zamudio 90-91). Delia Zamudio al trasgredir ciertas normas y convenciones asignadas por el entramado de raza, clase y género, es compelida a regresar a su “lugar natural” como mujer y negra; con ello se le niega una auto-identificación múltiple – sea esta obrera, feminista, trotskista, marcas que posteriormente repite en su discurso –, al ser reducida a su corporalidad o a un espacio alienado y residual: “Negra de mierda, primero tú te vas para el África... allí de donde nunca debieron traerte” (102), es lo que le grita el señor Ernst, presidente alemán de la empresa farmacéutica donde trabaja, por liderar una huelga de dos días debido a pésimas condiciones de trabajo.

Interesante resulta también el constatar que, tras un largo proceso de empoderamiento y autoconciencia, esa triple discriminación sucede también en el ámbito de la organización feminista. Ella relata una experiencia en Brasil, donde su condición como mujer obrera es también invisibilizada en una conferencia feminista:

También recuerdo que del Perú asistimos algunas mujeres trabajadoras; una campesina, una minera y una obrera de confecciones. Todas buscábamos el taller de mujer y trabajo; pero éste no existía. Habían talleres de fotografía, sexualidad, lesbianismo, arte; pero no lo que nos interesaba. Entonces conformamos ese taller, en donde también participaron las mujeres negras. (Zamudio 120)

La reproducción de imágenes y estereotipos que naturalizan roles serviles de afrodescendientes en la sociedad esconden relaciones de poder que operan para negar un acceso equitativo a recursos económicos, sociales y culturales en una sociedad que se asume discursivamente como moderna, plural y liberal. El testimonio de Delia Zamudio, en ese sentido, muestra la necesidad de articular una historia de mujeres afrodescendientes como una de las historias que se engarzan con la de los afrodescendientes en general – de allí su alusión a los cimarrones. Por otro lado, es también una demanda contra esas prácticas y discursos hegemónicos que insertan a las mujeres afrodescendientes en una continuidad de roles y oficios serviles, pero sobre todo, que legitiman la violencia física y sexual contra ellas.

Conclusión

Entre los testimonios que hemos abordado en nuestro estudio se puede encontrar una continuidad histórica: el mundo estable, no libre de tensiones sociales y económicas, del yanacón afrocosteño reflejado en la vida de Erasmo se ve disuelto por la reforma agraria, generando no solo la necesidad de reinsertarse al nuevo sistema agrícola cooperativo, sino también una crisis en torno a su identidad: “lo que más los afecta es que habiendo nacido allí y considerando a Caqui como su comunidad de origen, ya no tengan ninguna ubicación social destacada y que aun sean discriminados” (Matos y Carbajal 166). Se esboza un cambio generacional donde los miembros más jóvenes de la familia Muñoz van abandonando el mundo rural e ingresando a una cultura urbana (Matos y Carbajal 168). Dicha transformación es el punto de partida de la vida de Delia Zamudio: ella representa a esa generación que migra del campo a la ciudad como consecuencia de los efectos contradictorios de la

reforma. Su identidad en la ciudad se devela primero como enajenación a causa de la pobreza y el racismo, y luego como afirmación histórica – mujer obrera afroperuana – al ir articulando experiencias individuales de opresión y violencia a horizontes de sentido trascendentes (el cimarronaje, por ejemplo) y a su activa participación política dentro de movimientos sindicalistas y feministas.

Como se ha visto, los textos testimoniales contribuyen a la articulación intersubjetiva, social y cultural de memorias de sujetos subalternizados, vistas como relatos paradigmáticos y colectivos, que insertos dentro de grandes procesos históricos relativizan la soberanía significativa de algunas narraciones normativas y plantean como tarea ineludible el reconocimiento de esas otras historias. En ambos testimonios encontramos asimismo entrecruces entre narración e historia, manifiestas en la relación de prácticas cotidianas como en las reflexiones y significaciones de estas mismas por parte de sus protagonistas.

Walter Benjamin en su libro *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, contempla la historia no como una acumulación lineal de acontecimientos que llenan el tiempo homogéneo y que siempre pueden ser evocados objetivamente. Articular el pasado no significa conocerlo como realmente sucedió, sino apropiarse de un recuerdo y reconocer su pleno sentido ante un momento de peligro (VI). La tarea de la Historiografía sería entonces rescatar las facetas del pasado oprimido, que solo en relación con el momento actual adquiere un significado redentor y revolucionario. Con ello, se lograría explotar el curso continuo de la historia que funge como medio de opresión. Mi interés en los testimonios afroperuanos se enmarcan en dicho afán. Ellos mismos, tanto en la narración de sus vidas como en su percepción de los acontecimientos históricos, desafían en mayor o menor medida una visión histórica que les impone una identidad homogénea y roles subalternos. La historia transcultural de los yanaconas negros, la tradición de los cimarrones y la necesidad

de enunciar una historia femenina como respuesta a la violencia, aparecen más bien como discontinuidad, potencialidad y urgencia respectivamente, desafiando así nuestra percepción histórica de la sociedad peruana. Los estudios y movimientos sociales de y sobre afrodescendientes tienen la tarea entonces no sólo de transformar el presente para hacerlo más equitativo, sino también redefinir el pasado y que afloren en ella otras historias oprimidas, solo de esa forma veremos como “en la obra se halla conservado la vida, en ésta toda la época y en la época el curso entero de la historia”. (Benjamin XVII, traducción mía).

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**FROM ABOLITIONISM TO “SLACKTIVISM”:
THE INDIVIDUALIST TRADITION, “AESTHETIC
DISSENT”, AND THE DEPOLITICIZATION
OF POLITICAL DISCOURSES IN THE U.S.**

**DEL ABOLICIONISMO AL “SLACKTIVISMO”:
LA TRADICIÓN INDIVIDUALISTA, “DISIDENCIA ESTÉTICA”
Y DESPOLITIZACIÓN
DE LOS DISCURSOS POLÍTICOS EN EE.UU.**

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ABSTRACT: With its strong individualistic and non-conformist national ethos, the U.S. has spawned many momentous reform movements throughout its history. In the digital age, predominantly U.S.-based campaigns such as *Black Lives Matter* or *Me Too* continue to set the agenda for global political discourses. But while interactive social media have created unique opportunities for political mobilization, there is also mounting concern that peer-to-peer online communication corrodes civic culture by encouraging isolated acts of private expression at the expense of orchestrated public initiative. Contrary to a commonly raised point of criticism, this article argues that the deemphasizing of concrete action in favor of purely symbolic gestures is not novel to the digital age.

Rather, it is the digitally amplified version of the old conflict between aesthetic and physical protest which is deeply rooted in U.S. intellectual history.

KEYWORDS: U.S. political culture; individualism; U.S. reform movements; online activism: Ralph Waldo Emerson.

RESUMO: Con su fuerte carácter nacional individualista e inconformista, los Estados Unidos ha generado varios movimientos de reforma a lo largo de su historia. En la era digital, las campañas predominantemente basadas en los Estados Unidos, como *Black Lives Matter* o *Me Too*, continúan estableciendo la agenda de los discursos políticos globales. Pero si bien las redes sociales interactivas han creado oportunidades únicas para la movilización política, también existe una creciente preocupación de que la comunicación digital individualizada corroe la cultura cívica al alentar actos aislados de expresión privada a expensas de la iniciativa pública orquestada. Contrariamente a un punto de crítica comúnmente planteado, este artículo argumenta que la falta de énfasis de la acción concreta en favor de los gestos puramente simbólicos no es novedosa para la era digital. Más bien es la versión digitalmente amplificada del viejo conflicto entre la protesta estética y física que está profundamente arraigada en la historia intelectual de los Estados Unidos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: cultura política de Estados Unidos; individualismo; movimientos de reforma de Estados Unidos; activismo en línea; Ralph Waldo Emerson.

“Rebellious” is a word that is often used to characterize the cultural climate in the United States. As a country that was conceived in a revolt against colonial power, its intellectual and political life is

imbued with a strong anti-authoritarian and anti-statist ethos. Already in its political founding documents, civil liberties are specifically defined as the right of the individual to contest state authority. In contemporary political culture, this defiant spirit manifests in various different phenomena such as the proliferation of self-administrating communities, tax resistance movements, sovereign citizen extremism, or the remarkable tendency of ordinary U.S. citizens to simply ignore unpopular government decisions.¹ American literature, from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* to Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, is populated by protagonists whose craving for authenticity and self-possession leads them to break with society, and U.S. popular culture shows an ongoing fascination with figures operating outside of societal orthodoxy, whether they come in the shape of the Lone Ranger, Philip Marlowe, or Dexter.

All these cultural features are the expression of the ideal of non-conformism that has taken root in the national psyche as a part of the country's strong individualistic tradition. As early as 1782, French-American writer J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur took note of the new society's strong emphasis on personal initiative and autonomy. Half a century later, in 1835, French author Alexis de Tocqueville produced his seminal work *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, wherein he observed that Americans are much more prone to challenging authority and following their private conscience

¹ For example, Seymour Martin Lipset has pointed out that, despite repeated legislative initiatives, the U.S. government has never been successful in introducing the metric system (21). Tellingly, respective legal regulations, like the Metric Conversion Act of 1975 and the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, did not meet with major public protests. Rather, they were tacitly ignored. While in Canada corresponding measures resulted in a general transition to the metric system, in the U.S. the old measurement units of miles, inches, pounds, and ounces keep being used. The same pattern became apparent when, with a view to inflation, Canadian and U.S. governments decided to replace the one-dollar bill with the one-dollar coin. In Canada, the one-dollar bill has by now disappeared. By contrast, it still circulates in the U.S., while the use of one-dollar coins is largely restricted to the gambling cities Las Vegas and Atlantic City (93).

than their European counterparts. Following in Tocqueville's footsteps, modern sociological and political scholarship has identified the dominance of individualistic values as a key aspect that sets U.S. political culture apart from that of other Western democracies (Bellah et al.; Kohut; Lévy; Lipset).

By thus encouraging challenges to the status quo, U.S. culture has provided a fertile substrate for various protest and reform movements, from the religious revivals of the Great Awakening to the reform frenzy of the Antebellum Period and the great liberal reform campaigns of the twentieth century. Even as the latter – most notably the civil rights, feminist, anti-war, gay rights, and environmental movements – have widely ramified intellectual roots that are not exclusive to the U.S., they developed a particularly strong momentum in the context of an intellectual tradition that celebrated the right to self-realization and perceived the individual as an “accountable unit of consciousness” (Fox-Genovese 155). As sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset has argued, the dynamic nature of U.S. reform culture can in large part be attributed to the fact that Americans feel the “need to assuage a sense of personal responsibility for [collective moral] failings” (Lipset 65).

In the digital age, predominantly U.S.-based reform campaigns such as *Me Too*, *Black Lives Matter*, or *Occupy Wall Street* continue to set the agenda for global political discourses. But while the Internet and interactive social media have created unique opportunities for political outreach and mobilization, there is also mounting criticism that this kind of “mass self-communication” (Castells 248) corrodes civic culture by sponsoring isolated acts of private expression at the expense of orchestrated public action. Online crusades like the *Red Equal Sign Profile Picture* (RESPP), *Help-Portrait*, or *Kony 2012*, though runaway viral successes, have been widely charged with substituting hands-on political action with ephemeral symbolic gestures.

Recent research has taken a keen interest in the transformative effects of digital media on political expression and involvement, albeit arriving at widely diverging conclusions. While some scholars celebrate the immense capacity of digital communication to incite political debate, provide public platforms for previously marginalized groups, strengthen collective identities, and lower the barriers to political participation (Dahlgren; Bakardjieva; Fung & Shkabatur), others have expressed concerns over the dissipation of political potential as superficial “slacktivism” threatens to atrophy civic culture (Fenton & Barassi; Morozov; Gladwell).

True enough, a communicative environment which is prone to framing the act of e-signing a petition or clicking a *Like*-button as active political dissent makes it all too easy to feel active without any real effort. Besides, media predominantly designed for on-the-fly usage have a propensity to reduce political discourses into easily digestible soundbites. But emojis, snappy slogans, and eye-catching imagery intended to capture attention based on strong emotional responses are inadequate when it comes to conveying complex political realities or sustaining a level-headed, balanced discussion. They are also of little informative value when it comes to devising effective responses within the existing political infrastructure.

But contrary to the commonly raised point of criticism that advocacy efforts based on peer-to-peer online communication tend to deemphasize concrete action in favor of merely symbolic expression, this token-based style is in fact not novel to the digital age. Rather, it is the digitally amplified version of the old American conflict between aesthetic and physical protest, between the ideal of moral suasion and the need for pragmatic action. As I will go on to show, this binarity is deeply rooted in the country’s individualistic tradition – and has been haunting American reform discourses long before the advent of social media.

In fact, the best place to see this friction play out is in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), the “American Confucius” (Warren 24) and arch-rebel of American literature. As the national prophet of individualism and dominant moral voice of his time, Emerson’s radical revision of the relationship between self and society provided a paradigmatic intellectual framework which future generations of reformers would refer to, build on, and challenge.² Thus, “Emerson’s revolution is an orbit in which we continue to exist” (Stauffer xi). As Stanley Cavell has observed, due to the prevalence of Emersonian tenets in U.S. culture, Americans are still a “half-Transcendental, half-pragmatic people” (qtd. in Mudge, “Introduction” xix). It is this scission between abstract principle and pragmatic action that lies at the core not only of Emerson’s own struggle to find his role as a social reformer, but also in the legacy he left for subsequent generations of American dissenters up to the digital present. Thus proceeding from the understanding that the “debate over the meaning of individualism in America is, in effect, a debate over the meaning of Emerson” (Mitchell 11), in what follows I will first provide an outline of Emerson’s social vision, and then go on to show how it still resonates in contemporary U.S. political culture.

Antebellum Reform and Emerson’s Aesthetic Dissent

In the history of U.S. reform and protest movements, the Antebellum Period stands as a pivotal era. As the young democ-

² Already for his contemporaries, Emerson stood as the epitome of everything American. Thus, in 1838 Harriet Martineau wrote to her European audience that “without knowing [him] it is not too much to say that the United States cannot be fully known” (3, 228). John Jay Chapman described him as “a colossus ... towering like Atlas over the culture of the United States” (657). In fact, at the 1867 World Fair in Paris, the American exhibit comprised a portrait of Emerson prominently placed between paintings of the Rocky Mountains and the Niagara Falls.

racy was in the process of defining its own cultural and political identity, it was seized by an idealistic fervor for societal amelioration. Virtually every aspect of public life came under intense scrutiny by reformers urging such varied causes as female education and suffrage, temperance, the abolition of capital punishment, pacifism, school reform, prison reform, vegetarianism, homeopathic medicine, and the humane treatment of animals. But it was the fight against slavery that arose as the most divisive social issue of that time.

Among those who profoundly shaped antebellum culture, Emerson takes a prominent position. His emergence as a cultural icon and America's leading public intellectual coincided with the transition of the U.S. to an industrial mass society, when the basic formulas for modern discourses on identities and rights were established. As the "inaugurator of a new cultural start for the country" (Mudge, "Dialogues" 119) he galvanized the nation with his individualistic philosophy. While up until the late 1980s, Emerson scholarship was dominated by the image of the "Bard of Concord" as a decidedly apolitical thinker whose lofty quest for spiritual truths unfolded far away from the world of politics, more recent scholarship has underscored Emerson's role as an involved cultural critic and active social reformer. In 1986, Irving Howe still wrote that "it is hard to suppose that [...] anyone could find him very helpful in understanding the span of Western history between the time of his death and the present" (Howe 14). By contrast, today Emerson has been recognized as a formative intellectual force in the evolution of U.S. political mentality. His status as the "source of American wisdom" (Mitchell 69) makes him a revealing reference point when it comes to understanding idiosyncratic U.S. cultural phenomena, and particularly the ways in which the American public approaches controversial topics. Hence, his individualistic precepts implicitly still provide the basic outline for many contemporary reform debates.

For Emerson, who believed in the “infinite of the private man” (*Journals* 7, 342), social reform was a deeply personal process of introspection and self-cultivation. As he argued in his many lectures and essays, individual reform was an indispensable prerequisite for collective amelioration since “society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him” (*Collected Works* 3, 154). Just like the properties of a material substance are determined by the characteristics of miniscule individual molecules, he perceived the moral fabric of society to arise from the sum of the inner attitudes of its members. Based on this strictly bottom-up conception of social change, unjust laws and discriminating collective practices do not constitute the actual evil but are just side-effects of a deeper spiritual crisis. Proceeding from the assumption that all social wrongs – whether it be poverty, misogyny, or slavery – are ultimately traceable to a lack of empathy and respect between individuals in their one-on-one interactions, Emerson declares the private sphere to be the actual origin of positive social change. He reasons that

the man of ideas [...] judges of the commonwealth from the state of his own mind. ‘If,’ he says, ‘I am selfish, then is there slavery, or the effort to establish it, wherever I go. But if I am just, then is there no slavery, let the laws say what they will. For if I treat all men as gods, how to me can there be any such thing as a slave?’ (*Collected Works* 1, 178)

Accordingly, to create a just society, Emerson advocates the “reliance on the sentiment of man, which will work best the more it is trusted; not reliance on numbers, but, contrariwise, distrust of numbers, and the feeling that then are we strongest, when most private and alone” (*Collected Works* 1, 176). This confidence in the ameliorative power of private soul-searching is based on Emerson’s

unreservedly optimistic view of basic human nature. In a sharp departure from thinkers such as John Calvin and Thomas Hobbes, who regarded humanity as intrinsically sinful and in need of being checked by strong collective institutions, Emerson's liberal Unitarian background fostered his belief in the inherent virtuousness and perfectibility of all human beings. Following Scottish moral philosophers like Francis Hutcheson and David Hume, he was convinced that every single person had a direct connection to the divine spirit and therefore an innate ability to discern between good and evil. Thus, the Emersonian paradigm is based on the axiom that "the self-reliant individual gained strength not from external social approval but from inner resources – spiritual trust and recognition of the moral sentiment – that built and sustained character" (Robinson 100). In other words, the main catalyst for inner advancement is unfettered self-scrutiny, not the immersion in the social environment.

In view of this creed, any attempts to enforce moral principles by means of normative political instruments are not only destined to remain superficial but are ultimately detrimental in that they result in the curtailment of individual freedom and block individuals' inner pathways to their higher selves. Even if a gapless spectrum of single-issue reforms was to address every single social issue, this would only yield a precarious cosmetic solution that is not backed by long-term wholistic regeneration. For this reason, Emerson felt "that there is somewhat ridiculous in his tenacious oppugnation of some one merely local and as it were cutaneous disorder" (*Early Lectures* 3, 91), causing him to take a critical view of political instruments in general. "For Emerson, as perhaps for no other, to will social change through pragmatic action is to indulge the imperial overstepping of personal boundaries that is [...] of a piece with the oppressive history of governments" (Wolfe 67).

In order to avert such debilitating intrusion, Emerson endorsed an abstract or “aesthetic” mode of dissent.³ As he concluded, “I must act with truth, though I should never come to act, as you call it, with effect, I must consent to in-action” (*Collected Works* 1, 177). Reflecting on the bustling reform culture around him, in 1841 he wrote:

Besides, why should we be cowed by the name of Action? It is a trick of the senses, – no more. We know that the ancestor of every action is a thought. The poor mind does not seem to itself to be any thing, unless it have an outside badge, – some Gentoo diet, or Quaker coat, or Calvinistic prayer-meeting, or philanthropic society, or a great donation, or a high office, or, any how, some wild contrasting action to testify that it is somewhat. The rich mind lies in the sun and sleeps, and is Nature. To think is to act. (*Collected Works* 2, 94)

A full-fledged Romantic idealist, he believed that the mere act of discerning beauty and truth had a deeply regenerating effect on people’s inner as well as outer lives. As processes that determine our actions in the world, he ascribed the most powerful reality-forming potential to perception and reflection. For, as the intellectually active individual gains new insights and shares them with their environment, the opportunity for intellectual reorientation is offered to others without infringing on their personal freedom. Therefore, the medium of language becomes the primary instrument of reform. Words and symbols can reach people in their private world without

³ I borrow the term “aesthetic dissent” from John Carlos Rowe who defined it as “the Emersonian tradition [the] romantic idealist assumption that the rigorous reflection on the process of thought and representation constitutes in itself a critique of social reality and effects a transformation of the naïve realism that confuses truth with social convention” (Rowe 1).

overstepping personal boundaries. They have the power to directly impact psychological attitudes and transform the behavior of individuals in a more direct and lasting manner than coercive political methods. As Richard Poirier explains with regards to Emerson's philosophy: "Language is [...] the place wherein we can most effectively register our dissent from our fate by means of troping, punning, parodistic echoings, and by letting vernacular idioms play against revered terminologies. Through such resistances, more than through directly political ones, sporadic evidences might emerge of some truer self or 'genius'." (72)

This means that the revolutionary spark that initiates revolutions does not originate in spectacular mass action, but in the unconventional ideas of independently thinking individuals. Based on this outlook, the key to solving societal issues does not lie in pragmatic action aimed at immediate results, but in the private cultivation of an abstract moral sentiment. Accordingly, it is not powerful politicians, military heroes, or entrepreneurs, but poets who are the protagonists of Emerson's reformative vision. Proclaiming them to be "liberating gods" (*Collected Works* 3, 17), he describes them as demiurges who, by breaking linguistic conventions and projecting new meanings onto the world, create their own universe, and in doing so reveal the path towards inner emancipation to others.

But despite repeatedly casting the "Poet" and the "Man Thinking" as the supreme model of selfhood, Emerson was torn between the ideal of aesthetic dissent and the need for pragmatic action. Nowhere did this become more evident than in his ambiguous stance towards the abolitionist movement. On the one hand, he kept espousing a strictly individualistic approach as the ideal path to achieving the liberation of slaves, anticipating that morally reformed slaveholders would voluntarily abandon their inhumane practice. In reality, however, the hoped-for mass epiphany failed to

occur.⁴ To the contrary, troubling political developments like the enactment of the *Gag Rule* in 1836, which outlawed the countrywide distribution of abolitionist literature, or the *Fugitive Slave Law* of 1850, which dictated that slaves who had escaped to free states be returned to their previous owners, undermined Emerson's optimistic belief in history as a constant progression towards ever more universal freedom and justice – and brought him into deep conflict with the fundamental values of his philosophy. It became increasingly untenable for him to insist on “solitude and inaction, which proceeds out of an unwillingness to violate character” (*Collected Works* 1, 177) while human beings continued to be exploited, tortured, and killed. In 1837 he recorded in his private journal: “When a zealot comes to me & represents the importance of this Temperance Reform my hands drop – I have no excuse – I honor him with shame at my own inaction.” Then a friend of the slave shows me the horrors of Southern slavery – I cry guilty guilty!” (*Journals* 5, 437).

As in particular Len Gougeon has shown, this inner dilemma caused Emerson's reluctant but steady movement towards a more pragmatic approach to reform. When in 1844 he delivered his speech on the “Emancipation in the British West Indies”, wherein he applauded the collective efforts of abolitionists, it was widely considered a significant ideological shift in his attitude towards social action. And yet, he never completely abandoned his radically individualistic principles. In fact, the same year that he delivered “Emancipation in the British West Indies”, he privately wondered, “Does not he do more to abolish Slavery who works all day steadily in his garden, than he who goes to the abolition meeting and makes a speech?” (*Journals* 9, 126) While at times conceding that “ideas

⁴ However, individual instances of such spontaneous moral insights did actually take place, for example in the cases of Moncure Conway and Mattie Griffith, both slave owners who released their slaves voluntarily.

must work through the brains and the arms of good and brave men, or they are no better than dreams” (*Complete Works* 11, 289) and even proclaiming that “[i]t is so delicious to act with great masses to great aims”, he also kept insisting that “solitude is more prevalent and beneficent than the concert of crowds” (*Journals* 7, 408). It is tempting to theoretically resolve this contradiction by arguing that he believed so firmly in the power of ideas and ideals that the “disjuncture between antisocial theory and socially engaged behavior” (Buell 184) is suspended. However, in practice this rift remained; in Emerson’s own experience as well as in that of subsequent generations of dissenters who were inspired by his thinking.

Putting Aesthetic Dissent to the Test: From the Civil Rights Movement to Cyberactivism

After the freedom of slaves had been attained and reformative energies shifted towards the “women question” and the civil rights of African Americans, the “voices of blacks and women in the twentieth century once again built upon the ideas that Emerson had championed a hundred years before” (Gougeon, “Pragmatic Idealist” 203). As for the American feminist movement, it was Transcendentalism that provided the main intellectual framework for the articulation of women’s rights. “Feminism as an ideology developed in interaction with the development of individualism and cannot be understood apart from it” (Fox-Genovese 138). The notion that public life is shaped by the conditions within the private sphere encouraged women to take their personal experiences as a starting point for pondering social questions. This in turn put the focus on the asymmetrical power relationships between the sexes in their daily interactions with each other, and brought to the fore the necessity for realizing equality on a personal level.

Likewise, from its very inception, the civil rights movement drew heavily on individualist tenets, and in particular on Emersonian principles of selfhood. Already Frederick Douglass was “taken with Emerson’s idea of self-reliance and applied it to the black slaves’ struggle to become free men” (Gougeon, “Pragmatic Idealist” 174). Moorfield Storey, a founding member of the NAACP and its first president from 1910 to 1929, has been described as an “Emersonian idealist who often quoted from Emerson’s antislavery addresses in his own campaign for social justice” (Gougeon, “Emerson and the Reinvention of Democracy” 173). Likewise, both W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, though ideological rivals, elaborated on Emersonian models of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency.⁵ While Du Bois conceived of these ideals in terms of intellectual and political freedom, Washington interpreted them in the sense of material autonomy, insisting that it had to precede the political and social equality of African Americans.

Viewed in the context of Emerson’s writings on culture or self-cultivation and social reform, the famous disagreement between Washington and Du Bois regarding the best means of accomplishing the task of racial uplift devolves upon their different interpretations of Emerson’s dualistic notion of “culture” [...] Thus, in their ongoing debate over the problem of reform, Washington and Du Bois were simply emphasizing different sides of the same Emersonian coin. (Patterson 172).

⁵ Du Bois’ influential concept of “double consciousness” is often traced to Emerson’s 1860 essay “Fate”. Emerson offered it as a strategy for balancing conflicting private and public identities. Du Bois applied this notion of inner fission to the specific situation of African Americans, describing it as a “two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body” (Du Bois 9).

As the most prominent figure of the American civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. turned to Emerson as an intellectual resource, frequently quoting him in his speeches and sermons, and in particular engaging with his concept of aesthetic dissent. In his famous sermon “Transformed Nonconformist”, King casts the fight against racist structures as the resistance of the individual against the conformist values of society. He explicitly refers to Emerson in the address, which is filled with Emersonian motifs. In a rhetoric that is strongly reminiscent of “Self-Reliance”, King calls on his audience to give up the “anesthetizing security of being identified with the majority” (King, *Papers* 6, 467). He also concurs with Emerson that the rebellion against the status quo must be grounded in a deeper spiritual insight. And very much like Emerson, he points to transcendental truths as the main moral compass, also stressing the necessity for “inner spiritual transformation” (King, *Papers* 6, 474) as a precondition for lasting outer reform.

The quest for truth and moral integrity in defiance of societal conventions also provides the main theme for his influential *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*. Therein, King maintains that “[i]ndividuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but [...] groups are more immoral than individuals” (King, *Letter* 8). However, he also challenges traditional individualistic reform recipes by rejecting the idea of a preordained positive trajectory of history. Based on experience, he thinks it unlikely that the privileged will relinquish their prerogatives voluntarily: “We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation”. (King, *Letter* 18-19)

Thus dismissing purely intellectual opposition as counterproductive, King asserts that “we had no alternative except that of preparing

for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community” (King, *Letter 5*). Even though here he does not explicitly set his arguments against Emerson’s, this call to active physical resistance in the face of racism and segregation can be read as a direct dialogue with Emerson’s intellectual legacy: Both reformers share an aversion to conformism and rely on the private moral insights of independently thinking individuals as the best hope for a just and inclusive society. But while Emerson endorses abstract expression as the superior strategy, King claims that inner dissent must be accompanied by physical acts of non-violent protest.

As a matter of fact, the success of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s with its mass marches, sit-ins, voter registration drives, and freedom rides was largely based on its public visibility and strategic use of protesters’ bodies. Had it adopted a strictly individualistic approach these powerful instruments would have remained unused. As Anita Haya Patterson has pointed out in this context, “[w]hat is most striking and paradoxical about [Emerson’s] strategic personalizing of our obligation to resist conformity is that it ultimately results in a reactionary vision of reform as ‘inaction’ or ‘sublime prudence,’ a view that ultimately dismantles any real possibilities for visible public protest”. (Patterson 81)

Today, as the ubiquity of networked digital media has significantly lowered the barriers to participation by providing “open-mike access to a wide audience” (Bucy & Gregson 375), the challenge of visibility has become considerably less acute. Or rather, nonconformist visibility is less than ever tied to physical manifestations of protest in the form of demonstrations, rallies, or hunger strikes, but is instead strongly associated with viral momentum. Arguably, this new virtuality has provided the ideal venue for realizing the kind of non-coercive, expressive dissent that Emerson once envisioned. When Poirier described the Emersonian construal of language as an

aesthetic “world elsewhere” where individuals are free to channel some “truer self or ‘genius’” and engage in non-hierarchical, authentic, and spontaneous expression, this applies even more obviously to cyberspace. In this autonomous realm, users can create identities and communicate with each other completely beyond the exterior restrictions and pressures of their offline lives. In fact, the modern online strategies of “creating visibility” and “raising awareness” are entirely congruent with Emerson’s ideal of reforming society by winning over one person at a time through the appeal of words and artistic expression.

But interestingly, despite the many ways in which new technologies have altered the nature of communication, contemporary reform discourses keep revolving around the same dichotomy of expressive versus active principle that Emerson wrestled with in his own lifetime. Still, the central question is how “voice” relates to “influence”, and “whether the figure of the deliberator or of the advocate better captures the citizenly ideal that should animate our political ethics in the digital age” (Allen & Light 12). While, with a markedly Emersonian sentiment, some commentators celebrate the capacity of electronic advocacy to “slowly win over the hearts and minds of millions” through “positive portrayals of [marginalized groups] in entertainment media” (Zuckerman, “Understanding Digital Civics”), others caution against its disengaging and disempowering effects.

For instance, journalist and LGBTQ rights advocate Brian Moylan dismissed the 2013 RESPP campaign in support of same-sex marriage as “just another form of passive activism that isn’t advancing the cause” (Moylan). As he contended, simply changing one’s profile picture to the red equal sign symbolizing marriage equality is nothing more than a feeble surrogate for more traditional – and more demanding – forms of political mobilization, opinion making, and exercising of electoral power:

Do you know what would be helpful? Actually picking up a sign, heading down to the Supreme Court, and joining the throngs of protesters. Do you know what would be useful? Instead of just downloading an image and clicking a few buttons, going to the website of a gay rights organization [...] and giving them some money so *they* can fight for gay civil rights on your behalf. Do you know what would really matter? If you had done this back when Prop 8 was being voted on and had actively lobbied everyone you know in California to vote the right way so this thing didn't have to go to the Supreme Court in the first place. (ibid.)

As another notable example of social-media based activism, *Help-Portrait* has invited a similar kind of criticism. The movement was initiated in 2008 by American photographer Jeremy Cowart as a way for “photographers, hairstylists and makeup artists to use their skills, tools and expertise to give back to their local community” (*Help-Portrait*) by making professional portraits available to people in need. While the mission statement of utilizing artistic skill to boost people’s sense of self-worth is doubtlessly commendable, there is a conspicuous absence of the political dimension in *Help-Portrait*’s ambitions to alleviate the problem of poverty. Instead of using its online platform to systematically encourage collective debate about the structural ways in which society fails the poor, what is put forward as the ultimate solution is “help[ing] people see the beauty of who they are” (ibid.). Ergo purely aesthetic abstraction is applied as a countermeasure to an essentially material crisis. Granted, the *Help-Portrait* promo video does suggest that “[m]aybe, along the way, you could give: meals, blankets, conversation, books”, but this is mentioned only as a brief aside, an incidental prop in a scenario centered on the emblematic image of the photographer as a modern-day Prometheus who, armed with just his goodwill and his camera, brings light and hope to the disen-

franchised below. Indeed, the website's repeated mentioning of how one can "impact someone's world with a click" raises the suspicion that this activist model may be more about edifying the helper than taking time to think about the most pressing needs of the would-be beneficiary.

Similar charges of inefficiency have also been directed at the #*Kony2012* campaign, *the* social-media sensation of 2012. Launched by the California-based organization "Invisible Children", its declared goal was to bring to justice Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army which is known for using child soldiers. The campaign sparked a heated public controversy, with some crediting it for increasing the U.S. government's commitment to the search for Kony (Gettleman 2012) and others perceiving it as mass egocentricity posing as social action. Not only has the campaign been faulted with painting a grossly simplified and distorted picture of African politics, but also with promoting the somewhat quixotic and implicitly colonialist attitude that "raising awareness" among the Western public is ultimately all it takes to come to terms with the issue. As Ethiopian-American novelist and journalist Dinaw Mengestu has objected, the crusade seems to be driven by the self-centered perception "that nothing in the world happens unless we know about it, and that once we do know about it, however poorly informed and ignorant we may be, every action we take is good, and more importantly, 'makes a difference.'" Pointing out that "[c]hange has never come with a click, or a tweet; lives are not saved by bracelets", he partly attributes the campaign's failure to attain its objective to the fact that – in a communicative scenario in which online avatars have become a vital instrument for personal identity construction – "the real star of *Kony 2012* isn't Joseph Kony, it's us".

Indeed, it has now become a commonplace to describe the world of social media as a playground of the self-obsessed. In a "digital

body where individuals must write themselves into being” (Boyd 129), even political expression is quickly reduced to a fashion accessory of one’s projected online persona, with figurative “virtue signaling” taking precedence over well-founded argument. The mere fact that “social justice warrior” has become a pejorative term connoting a person who is incessantly engaged in “raising awareness” and “creating visibility” for one hashtagged cause after another without any deeper commitment or understanding speaks to the vulnerability of liberal reform culture in its modern online environment.

By contrast, the political right’s efficiency in mobilizing online is not least grounded in its ability to go beyond the individualist-expressive paradigm. For, despite the fact that U.S. conservatives are more likely to adhere to anti-statist interpretations of personal freedom, they also show a greater ideological affinity for hierarchical infrastructures and top-down organizations. As sociologist Jen Schradie has found in her research on liberal and conservative approaches to online activism, the left was more committed to “getting a lot of people out in a very participatory way” while on the right there “was a bigger focus on national issues [...] There was less emphasis on grassroots mobilizing. This was a drastic difference” (qtd. in Illing). Even as conservatives’ coordinated – and in many cases well-funded – use of the internet is frequently dismissed as inauthentic and manufactured, the thriving right-wing digital ecosystem shows that it has been highly successful. “Organizations still matter”, observes Schradie. “More, not less, organization fueled digital participation. As such, I found that very little has changed in organizational theory in the digital era, despite the excitement over digital networked individualism” (Schradie 19). In view of such findings it is particularly concerning that the techno-optimistic enthusiasm for individuated expression often encourages psychological disengagement from the body politic, so that even activists

themselves sometimes fail to grasp the political nature of their campaigns:

At the 2012 Futures of Entertainment conference at MIT, a panel entitled, From Participatory Culture to Political Participation gathered together four young leaders of digital associations or new media efforts [...] The panelists were engaged, respectively, in support of marriage equality, the dissemination of Hayekian economic ideas, and efforts to claim space in the public sphere for American Muslims. When asked whether they thought of themselves as political, however, all said no. (Allen & Light 2)

This response seems to validate the concern that with “an increased reliance on expressive politics, political actors will cease to develop full understanding of the differences between voice and influence, perhaps contenting themselves with expression itself when they might also have achieved influence if they had focused on more traditional mode of political involvement” (Kane 51). Such an apolitical take on participation has also been observed by Joel Penney in his research on the motivations of *Facebook* users who partook in the RESPP campaign. He found that “only a handful of the respondents (3 of 22) mentioned an interest in directly influencing the Supreme Court decisions on DOMA and Proposition 8”, with “a cultural theory of change [being] generally favored over a legislative (or in this case, judicial) theory of change by the respondents” (58). Strikingly, directly amending the laws that exclude same-sex couples from the institution of marriage was perceived as less appealing than “subtly shifting public opinion in favor of marriage equality” (ibid.).

This is rather baffling given the fact that the normative power of legislation has been proven time and time again throughout history. For instance, it is difficult to imagine that without the hard-won legal victories of the civil rights movement that provided the

jurisdictional backing for African Americans to claim their place in U.S. educational establishments and the workplace, the country would have seen its first black president in 2009. As it was, even the 1954 landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* did not put an immediate stop to educational segregation, but had to be enforced by repeated appeals to state power. Given this fact, it seems highly unlikely that persuasive gestures would have been sufficient to efficiently promote social equality for black U.S. citizens. With that in mind, the heavy reliance of present-day digital campaigning on expressive tools may give cause for alarm regarding the future of civic dissent.

However, as we have seen, in the U.S. with its “tradition of infinitude and privacy since Emerson” (Marr 210), the tendency to eschew the political category is neither new nor restricted to e-activism. Already in 1998, when the commercial Internet was still in its infancy, political sociologist Nina Eliasoph documented in her study on the motives and strategies of U.S. activist, *Avoiding Politics*, that Americans are culturally prone to voicing public matters in the language of self-interest and personal growth. This, she argued, tied into the culturally ubiquitous thought pattern “that healthy individuals create a healthy community, but not that healthy community life also creates healthy individuals” (55). With this strong collective preference for bottom-up instead of top-down modes of social action, thinking about social change often comes in the shape of thinking about changing personal feelings on a one-by-one basis. The concomitant tactic of relying on the inspirational power of merely symbolic gestures – which, more often than not, have no pragmatic causality to the targeted cause – is a central aspect common to both online and offline activism. It applies to pre-Internet campaigns like *Just Say No*, which typically included activities such as running obstacle courses to boost teenagers’ self-confidence so as to indirectly brace them against the temptation of drugs (ibid.), as it does to web-based activism prompting people to

add profile pic frames as a way of furthering the latest social crusade, or to grow a mustache in “Movember” in symbolic support of prostate cancer patients.

Something Old, Something New: A Brief Outlook

Just as I am finishing this article, another seismic event has occurred in the history of U.S. activism. In the wake of George Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, protests against racism and police violence are erupting all across the globe. Once more, it becomes clear how much the dichotomy of street versus cyberspace, physicality versus virtuality is still under public negotiation. Thus, when Civil Rights icon Al Sharpton delivered the eulogy at Floyd’s memorial service in Minneapolis, he repeatedly stressed the importance of sustaining physical visibility and announced a new March on Washington. When crediting other activists, he introduced rapper T.I. as someone who “does not just put his name on somebody’s petition. He puts his body on the line” (Sharpton). Indeed, the powerful impact of this new wave of the *Black Lives Matter* movement can in large part be attributed to the remarkable fact that people are taking to the streets even in the midst of a global pandemic and in defiance of recurring police brutality. This is a powerful indicator that online campaigning has not replaced but rather just supplemented traditional forms of in-person activism. As Barack Obama stressed in his statement about Floyd’s death: “I’ve been hearing a little bit of chatter [on] the internet about voting versus protest, politics and participation versus civil disobedience and direct action. This is not an either or, this is a both end. To bring about real change we both have to highlight a problem and make people in power uncomfortable, but we also have to translate that into practical solutions and laws that can be implemented [...]” (qtd. in Thrush)

In the era of highly individualized online expression, such a combined approach has become more feasible in some aspects and more challenging in others, since the separation between private and public spaces has diminished and increased at the same time. While personal access to a wide audience is as fast, easy, and cheap as never before, the nature of digital communication also involves the danger of getting trapped in “echo chambers”, cut off from broader discourses, and alienated from traditional avenues of civic agency. Most importantly, in the milieu of an intellectual tradition that has historically promoted a division between communicational and political domains, privatized expressive modes threaten to deepen the conceptual disconnect between political arena and private experience.

However, this is in no way to deny that symbolic gestures are a powerful means of reinforcing political claims, and much less to blanketly dismiss the liberal language of privacy as shallow self-display. Rather, it is to emphasize that democracy relies on the synergies of public and private sphere, with the most powerful potential for viable reform being generated by combining private and formal networks, emblematic signal effects and pragmatic strategies. Thus, the core problem with many recent online campaigns is not that they choose to take a symbolic and estheticized approach to a social problem, but rather in their tendency to do so by habitually fading out the political. This does not mean that political dissent is only valuable when voiced within the realm of formal politics. Neither does it imply that nonconformist discourses always have to be ‘earnest’, or, for that matter, always have to lead to concrete policy initiatives.⁶ Yet, what remains crucial for the quality of po-

⁶ In this context, Tommie Shelby has asserted the value of “the non consequentialist political ethic” (61) of what he terms the “impure dissent” of U.S. hip hop music. Based on Albert Hirschman’s famous model of the three categories of political response, *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty*, Shelby proposes “a fourth option – open and prin-

litical life is that citizens are empowered to reflect on their personal circumstances within the broader societal context and make strategic use of democratic practices, including formal institutions.⁷

With the relative newness of digital media, the communicative conditions they provide for social activism are dynamically changing, and it remains to be seen what shape public advocacy efforts will take in the future. But while scholarship on this subject has been paying much attention to the purely technological parameters that are transforming communication and mobilization, it is also important to recognize the ideological and psychological constants that drive online behavior. As for its specifically American setting, to understand contemporary e-activism it is essential to contextualize it within the broader intellectual history of U.S. discourses on rights, identities, and social reform. Such a synoptic view suggests that the discrepancy between autotelic private gesture and concrete political outcome – so often identified as an unprecedented challenge posed by the new digital age – is just the latest incarnation of the ongoing societal negotiation of the meaning of social responsibility, and of the timeless question of the individual's place in society.

cipld dissent without fleeing and without expecting or fighting for change" (78). He suggests that this type of symbolic protest "is not a tactic to effect reform, since its messengers have lost hope for meaningful social progress", but rather provides the option of symbolic exit. However, Shelby stresses that such deliberately non-instrumental expression is not "merely cathartic, escapist, or some other way of 'coping' with oppression" (79), but ultimately serves the political function of public criticism and expression of solidarity with the oppressed.

⁷ Sometimes, these opportunities emerge in unexpected ways. For instance, in what Zimmerman calls the Cute Cat Theory, he describes how non-political social media routines have turned out to provide leverage for political dissent: Innocuous content, epitomized by the myriads of cute cat images that are shared online, is often the collateral damage of government Internet censorship in countries such as China and Tunisia. As a result, people who are not involved in activism are also cut off from their more prosaic Internet activities. In this way, "censorship of inoffensive content can alert non-activist users to government censorship" (Zuckerman, "Cute Cats" 132) – and thus inadvertently advertise the dissenters' cause.

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**SPATIAL IMAGINATIONS
AND COUNTER-GEOGRAPHIES OF OREGON
AND THE FAR WEST**

IMAGINACIONES ESPACIALES Y CONTRAGEOGRAFÍAS
DE OREGÓN Y EL LEJANO OESTE

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ABSTRACT: During the first half of the nineteenth century, the integration of the Oregon Country into the framework of the United States presented a profound challenge for American writers and policymakers. This paper proposes that the nation's expansion into the Pacific Northwest and Asia-Pacific hemisphere was undermined by spatial practices, ideas, and imaginations that located Oregon within counter-geographies and resisted the homogenizing assumptions of American exceptionalism. The paper examines literary themes that address these outcomes by looking at popular works by Washington Irving and Francis Parkman, contrasting them with divergent views found in previously unstudied travel journals and memoirs of contemporary immigrants and travelers.

KEYWORDS: space; Oregon; geography; American exceptionalism; resistance.

RESUMEN: Durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX, la integración del país de Oregón en el marco de los Estados Unidos presentó un profundo desafío para los escritores y formuladores de políticas estadounidenses. Este documento propone que la expansión de la nación hacia el noroeste del Pacífico y el hemisferio de Asia-Pacífico se vio socavada por las prácticas, ideas e imaginaciones espaciales que ubicaron a Oregón dentro de las contrageografías y resistieron los supuestos de homogeneización del excepcionalísimo estadounidense. El documento examina temas literarios que abordan estos resultados al observar obras populares de Washington Irving y Francis Parkman, en contraste con opiniones divergentes encontradas en diarios de viaje y memorias no estudiadas de inmigrantes y viajeros contemporáneos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: espacio; Oregon; geografía; excepcionalismo estadounidense; resistencia.

*I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from
Folsom cave to now.
I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy.
It is geography at bottom, a hell of wide land from the beginning.*
Charles Olson

At the onset of the nineteenth century, Americans often used the term Oregon Country as a general reference to the Far West: a space that covered the northwestern Pacific coast of the continent but lacked clearly defined boundaries. While early historical records by Spanish explorers and *conquistadores* imagined the region as the northern extension of a trans-American gold economy, it became

the nexus of trade and cultural networks that developed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With its presumed wealth in natural resources and connections to lucrative Asian-Pacific trade routes, the Oregon Country gained the attention of colonial powers. As Washington Irving writes in his widely-read book *Astoria* (1836):

While the fiery and magnificent Spaniard, inflamed with the mania for gold, has extended his discoveries and conquests over those brilliant countries scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit and buoyant Frenchman, and the cool and calculating Briton, have pursued the less splendid, but no less lucrative, traffic in furs amidst the hyperborean regions of the Canadas, until they have advanced even within the Arctic Circle. (1)

Entering the region in the early nineteenth century via the famous Corps of Discovery, the United States was one of many imperial players that staked out claims to the region. Great Britain asserted her right of ownership based on similar expeditions made alongside the Pacific coast by David Thompson and other adventurers, while the claim of the Spanish Empire harked back to the fifteenth-century Treaty of Tordesillas. Czarist Russia in turn referred to its own expeditions and commercial hubs north of the fifty-first parallel. During the Anglo-American Convention of 1818, British and American policymakers agreed to a joint occupancy of the area between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 finally established the 49th parallel as the political boundary between the empires. However, next to this seemingly straightforward process of Oregon's political partition, this article showcases that a wealth of spatial imaginations and mental geographies collided but also synthesized in Oregon while its colonial owners attempted to integrate the region into their nations' cultural

semantics and build imperialistic narratives like manifest destiny around the settlement of Oregon.

Like other ambivalent spaces that lay between the Pacific Northwest and the organized states in the East, ethnically and culturally diverse populations inhabited Oregon. This fact put already doubts in Americans who asked themselves whether they could – or should – become part of a nation whose elites and middle class were overwhelmingly white. Irving’s description of Oregon is representative for such doubts, fears, and racial insecurities that viewed the region as

a lawless interval between the abodes of civilized man, like the wastes of the ocean or the deserts of Arabia [...] Here may spring up mongrel races, like new formations in geology, the amalgamation of the ‘debris’ and ‘abrasions’ of former races, civilized and savage [...] by the transfer of whole tribes of savages from the east of the Mississippi to the great wastes of the far West. (Irving 1836: 200)

In *The Oregon Trail* (1849), Francis Parkman suggested that Oregon was inhabited by “half-breeds, a race of rather extraordinary composition, being [...] half Indian, half white man, and half devil” (407). As was the case in the Louisiana Territory, these depictions mirrored the attitude of American contemporaries regarding the far western spaces that were geographically and culturally removed from the country’s urban centers on the eastern seaboard. Adding even more uncharted territories and unknown populations to the nation’s already overstretched geography hence evoked “a fear of boundlessness and a need to impose form on space” (Baker 27). Prior to its opening up via the Oregon Trail as one of the key spatial signifiers of American nation-building through westering, Oregon was deemed too difficult to access by land due to its isola-

tion by the Rocky Mountains that complicated communication and travel. The only viable alternative to crossing scorching deserts and rugged mountain paths was passage by ship. With the Panama Canal a hundred years in the future, ships had to circumnavigate the storm-swept Cape Horn, bearing the risks and costs associated with this mode of travel, which precluded settlement and made it commercially viable merely in view of the fur trade. Instead, historically grown social structures and trade networks connected the Oregon Country to Central American and Asian markets, as well as archipelagic spaces like the Sandwich Islands, today's Hawaii. While some have perceived the penetration of these markets and creation of an American Empire in the Pacific as expressions of the nation's manifest destiny to expand on a global scale, others envisioned, and continue to envision, the autonomous existence of a Pacific Republic independent from the United States and embedded in an Asian-Pacific hemispheric matrix.

During the early 1800s, tensions flared up between competing imaginations and ambitions of Canadian and American settlers and representatives of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company, whose trade monopoly had *de facto* ordered the territory for two hundred years in the absence of governmental structures. But conflicts were not limited to questions of political ordering; Catholic Jesuits from Canada and American Methodist and Presbyterian ministers, for instance, competed over Oregon's spiritual landscape and the right to convert Native Americans. In the East, nationalistic commentators framed Oregon as one of the final pieces in the puzzle of the predestined continental expansion of the United States. John Louis O'Sullivan, a New York lawyer and editor of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, coined the key phrase for this expansionist spirit in an essay titled "Annexation". "[O]ur manifest destiny", he wrote, is "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (5). But

the semantic clothing of colonial ambitions into a thinly veiled piety had less in common with the democratic values supposedly championed by O'Sullivan and more with *deus le volt* as the zealous battle cry of the first crusaders who plundered 'heathenish' lands on their route to reconquer Jerusalem. Nevertheless, integrating the Oregon Country into the United States' spatial metanarratives, as O'Sullivan intuited, required discursively repositioning the nation into the Asian-Pacific matrix and thus unhinging the core premises of American exceptionalism that thrived on fundamental differences between progressive United States democracy and retrograde European politics.

Many historiographies suggest that the discursive transposition of the United States into the Pacific hemisphere became possible through sociocultural code-switching towards the metanarrative of manifest destiny. Hailing the nation's fate to overstretch the continent, as is commonly argued, became the pivotal narrative and political strategy and rhetorical fig-leaf that justified violent excesses and racial injustices. What is rarely considered, however, are the interplays, negotiations, and collisions between manifest destiny and the processes that took place parallel to the semantics of settlement and statehood. These issues came to the surface when the Oregon Country's federal incorporation required relocating the nation's exceptionalist spatial narratives from the Atlantic to the Pacific hemisphere. This relocation, however, did not commence as organically and successfully as is oftentimes assumed. Positioning Oregon and California as the seats of an American Empire in the Pacific hemisphere not only clashed with opposing views of other colonial powers as well as that of an independent Oregonian Republic but also permanently destabilized the pillars of the nation's identity. As a result, the shifting of hemispheric paradigms came into full swing in the guise of the New Imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century with the Spanish-American War and the

annexation of overseas territories like Guam and the Philippines. At this point, the forcible opening of new markets, religious proselytizing, and racial ‘obligations’ like the White Man’s Burden became the narrative cornerstones that undergirded the nation’s imperial ordering of the Pacific as a spatiotemporal extension of a continental heartland. In the poetic yet concise phraseology of Charles Olson, the Pacific became the American “HEART SEA, twin and rival of the HEARTLAND. The Pacific is, for an American, the Plains repeated, a 20th century Great West [...] With the Pacific opens the NEW HISTORY” (114; original capitalizations).

Attempts to synchronize the Pacific hemisphere’s colonization with nineteenth-century continental expansion by envisaging it as the “20th century Great West” and thus as subject to manifest destiny resulted in spatial imaginations that range from the Yellow Peril of Chinese immigration to currently perceived threats for domestic economies as a consequence of the global integration of Chinese and American markets. The increasingly difficult separation between domesticity and foreignness in the spatial narratives of the United States was, and continues to be, a source of conflicts and constant reconfigurations. Looking at some of the first narrative encounters of American authors and immigrants with the Oregon Country and its transpacific circuits thus becomes instrumental in understanding these ongoing issues and their underlying historical themes. At the close of the eighteenth century, Native Americans, British, French Canadians, Russians, Spaniards, Americans, and people from the Sandwich Islands found themselves in close competition in the Oregon Country. Regional economies revolved around trapping beavers and sea otters and shipping their valuable pelts to interior trade hubs such as St. Louis, the European-connected East Coast, and Asian marketplaces like the Chinese port of Canton, today’s Guangzhou. Oregon’s etymology already hints at this contentedness. Whereas British subjects referred to the region as Columbia District,

Americans used the term Oregon Country whose “meaning and origin [...] have always been mysteries [...] Many fanciful etymologists have attempted derivations from languages as far scattered as Mohegan, Mohawk, Shoshone, Santee, French, and Spanish” (Steward 115; original emphasis). Zenas Leonard, the American mountain man, trader, and explorer stressed the region’s political and economic disjointedness yet also its future significance for the United States:

The Spaniards are making inroads in the South – the Russians are encroaching with impunity along the sea shore to the North, and further North-east the British are pushing their stations into the very heart of our territory [...] Our government should be vigilant. She should assert her claim by taking possession of the whole territory as soon as possible – for we have good reason to suppose that the territory *west* of the mountain will some day be equally as import to the nation as that on the *east*. (192-193; original emphases)

While ships from the empires and companies that competed in the maritime fur trade frequented the coastal waters north of the Columbia River, Oregon’s interior remained largely untouched, except for dispersed trading stations and insular forts. These outposts of the extractive fur economy became venues for a multicultural assemblage of traders, trappers, and pioneers, as well as native suppliers and guides who attempted to align commercial relations with whites with their own longstanding trade networks. Despite their function as multiethnic points of exchange and encounter, several adversities continuously threatened the existence of these commercial hubs. The seasonal nature of beaver trapping meant that the animals’ summer coats were considered inferior quality; as a result, the occupants of trade posts faced supply shortages and starvation during summers. This precarious position forced Euroamerican entrepreneurs to depend on trade with natives, which

in turn hinged on their (oftentimes limited) knowledge of complex intertribal alliances and rivalries, as well as the spatial practices and imaginations that regulated the allocation of property rights and the bordering of territories among Native American communities.

On the shaky grounds of this vulnerable order, not only the competition for scarce resources but also diplomatic ineptitude and inadvertent affronts sparked hostilities that threatened the survival of important economic nodes and thus the profitability of leviathan corporations like the Hudson's Bay Company. For instance, unlike the French inhabitants of the Louisiana Territory, British and American entrepreneurs and officials in Oregon often disregarded the customary notion "that gift-giving was part of the cost of doing business with Indian fur-suppliers" (Aron 8). Finally, the extinction of local wildlife populations required not only the continued abandoning and relocation of trading posts into ever more remote backwoods but also added longer travel times over more difficult, uncharted terrain. Effectively communicating the location of trading posts was fraught with similar difficulties that excluded opportunities in the Oregonian fur business from the grasp of outsiders. As a result, commercial success in this spatial order was closely connected to the geographical knowledge, leadership skills, and survival expertise of 'exceptional' individuals who were able to navigate the region's complex cultural and physical landscape. American pathfinders, trailblazers, and mountain men became the mythicized and often hyper-masculine characters that dominated the Oregon Country, both in real life and in contemporary writings that recorded their exploits or tragic mishaps in the Pacific Northwest. This new breed of land-based entrepreneurs eventually supplanted the canoes and water-locked modes of transportation traditionally used by French Canadian *voyageurs* with individual mobility on horseback. For Irving, this increase of spatial agency made "them physically and mentally a more livery and mercurial race than the fur traders and

trappers of former days, the self-vaunting ‘men of the north.’ A man who bestrides a horse must be essentially different from a man who cowers in a canoe” (Irving 1904: 27-28).

At the same time, the prospective members of this “superior” breed who crossed the Rocky Mountains and entered Oregon were seldom driven by pure idealism and love for the nation-state, but primarily to do business in the fur trade and get a slice of its staggering profits. In *Astoria*, Irving notes that during the exchange of furs for cheaply manufactured goods between indigenous suppliers and Euroamerican buyers “a clear profit of seven hundred per cent” was no exception (Irving 1836: 5). Conversely, Zenas Leonard points out that the profitability of doing business was hampered by the ‘temporal mentalities’ and hedonistic tendencies of white entrepreneurs. “Scarcely one man in ten”, he noted, “ever think of saving a single dollar of their earnings, but spend it as fast as they can see an object to spend it for. They care not what may come to pass to-morrow – but think only of enjoying the present moment” (248). As proof, Leonard included a transaction receipt between the free trapper Johnson Gardner and John Jacob Astor’s American Fur Company, which shows that of the total amount “nearly one-third was [spent] for liquor and feasting” (247-248). But Leonard also stresses the American trappers’ lack of patriotism and sense of a greater destiny in their colonizing activities as “neither geographical knowledge, nor the honor won by making new discoveries for the use and benefit of mankind in general, but a mercenary motive – the commercial value of the harmless and inoffensive little beaver” motivated entrepreneurs to enter the Oregon Country (8).

Jesse Applegate, an early pioneer who established the Applegate Trail as an alternative route to the Oregon Trail, explains in his memoirs that while they “were Americans and American in sentiment [they] were wholly dependent upon the HBC for their presence and protection in the country. They were not the class of men who found

states and extend empires [but were] more for themselves than for their country” (Applegate 32). Still, the performances of “patriotic entrepreneurs” such as Nathaniel Wyeth, William Sublette, and Benjamin Bonneville play pivotal roles in widely read books like Parkman’s *Oregon Trail* and Irving’s semi-fictional novels *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.* (1837). By the mid-1830s, however, some authors already felt nostalgia for the Oregon Country’s hyper-capitalistic, hyper-masculine, and anarchic-individualistic social order. Irving ponders that

the gay free trapper and his steed, decked out in wild array and tinkling with bells and trinketry; the savage war chief, plumed and painted and ever on the prowl; the traders’ cavalcade, winding through defiles or over naked plains, with the stealthy war party lurking on its trail; the buffalo chase, the hunting camp, the mad carouse in the midst of danger, the night attack, the stampado [sic], the scamper, the fierce skirmish among rocks and cliffs – all this romance of savage life, which yet exists among the mountains, will then exist but in frontier story, and seem like the fictions of chivalry or fairy tale. (Irving 1904: 352)

While the Oregon Country as a part of the mythical Far West initially entered the consciousness of broader audiences through the journals of the Corps of Discovery and their distribution in eastern newspapers, the region remained sparsely populated. Ten years prior to Lewis and Clark, the Scottish-Canadian explorer Sir Alexander Mackenzie had reached the Pacific in 1793 and became the first Euroamerican to cross the entire continent on an overland route. Demonstrating that commercial expansion and land-bound settlement of the Far West were possible, his achievement stirred the imagination of American policymakers and especially Thomas Jefferson who obsessively perused Mackenzie’s *Voyages*. For Jefferson, reading the

journals of Mackenzie's "gigantic thrusts into the unknown" (Gough xviii) became a key experience that expanded his mental conception of the nation beyond the deserts and mountain ranges that marked the western boundaries of the recently acquired Louisiana Territory. While the exploration of this formerly French and Spanish space was the task officially given to Lewis and Clark, Jefferson's off the record addendum to the Corps of Discovery's mission was to penetrate and survey the Oregon Country and determine "whether the Columbia, the Oregon, the Colorado, or any other [river] might offer the most direct and practicable water communication across the continent for the purposes of commerce" (Parkman 15). Mackenzie's trailblazing physical and literary efforts thus supplied the mental blueprint that reformed the transcontinental spatial imagination of Americans on the highest level of government.

Against the background of this reformed vision of the intercontinental nation-state, prevailing insecurities about the incorporation of the Louisiana Territory, together with its opaque social hierarchies and cultural epistemologies, could be mitigated and narratively reframed. By setting sights on the Oregon Country, Louisiana no longer seemed like a geopolitical *cul-de-sac* that threatened to shatter the nation's unity and subvert its nascent postcolonial identity which, as Paul Giles explains, during the Early Republic "was as uncertain, as provisional, as its cartography" (5). Instead, policymakers now could envision Louisiana as the key to Oregon and thus the springboard to a greater and more unified geopolitical order that would eventually congeal into the spatial metanarrative regarding the nation's manifest destiny to reach the Pacific Ocean. As a result, the Far West was no longer, as George Catlin believed, a mere "phantom, traveling on [the] tireless wing [of] the *West*, the simple *West*" (155; original emphasis). Despite the Corps of Discovery's failure of finding a convenient trade route that readily gave Americans access to the resources of the Oregon Country, its descriptions of the region's human and natural geographies added

substance to the popularity of manifest destiny as well as ensuing territorial claims to the region.

While this change in thinking took hold in the minds of politicians, its scaled-down dynamics become visible in the performances of the actors tasked with opening the Oregon Country and thus prepare its integration into the nation's transcontinental future. Not only did Lewis and Clark carry with them a copy of Mackenzie's *Voyages*, they used it as a travel guide and template for their own placemaking practices in the service of their country. One such practice was the carving of names and dates into freestanding trees and other landmarks. At Cape Disappointment, the extreme western headland at the mouth of the Columbia River, Clark deliberately recreated an inscription in the way he saw it formatted in Mackenzie's travelogue, noting that "I also engraved my name, & by land the day of the month and year, as also several of the men" (qtd. in Isserman 132). In addition, the journals of Lewis and Clark, until today a literary centerpiece of American exceptionalism, unabashedly "emulated, and even plagiarized, many textual passages" they had read in Mackenzie's journals (Nicandri 171). In this manner, the United States' first encounter with the Far West, and what was later mythologized into an exceptionally patriotic performance, emulated the spatialization strategies of the Early Republic's geopolitical nemesis and alleged polar opposite, the British Empire. But what motivated American explorers to appropriate the placemaking practices of their colonial adversaries was not least the economic potential of the fur trade. Profit margins on Asian markets were immense and the Oregon Country was soon viewed as the commercial window to the Pacific. As John Floyd, the Governor of Virginia and passionate advocate of Oregon's federal organization expressed:

We must govern the Canton trade. All this rich commerce could be governed, if not engrossed, by capitalists at Oregon, making it

the Tyre of America, to supply the whole coast below, and thus obtain the silver and gold of those rich countries on that coast [...] The ginseng of the Oregon, the fur trade of that river and that sea, with sandal wood, and other valuable productions of the [Sandwich] Islands, will purchase all we want, not only to supply our own wants, but to dispose of in Europe, and return the proceeds to our own country. (qtd. in Eue 81)

Despite Floyd's hemispheric vision of a commercial empire in the Pacific, for the time being Oregon's commercial landscape was no "Tyre of America" but remained firmly under the control of British-controlled enterprises. But regional culture also engendered multilateral and intercultural economies and social structures. Traders and buyers of all nationalities and ethnicities came together during month-long trade fairs called rendezvous. Irving's Benjamin Bonneville describes the yearly meeting at Pierre's Hole in today's Wyoming as a "wild and heterogeneous assemblage, amounting to several hundred men, civilized and savage" (Irving 1904: 64). But the meetings also became examples of how actors and groups that were subsequently historicized as opposites could share placemaking practices. The rendezvous were modeled after the time-honored tradition of intertribal Native American congregations that took place at symbolically charged locales and served important functions for diplomacy, but also in communicating and upholding an overarching, spiritually informed common order. While they emulated indigenous practices of integrating local trade into expanding commercial networks, Euroamerican companies transformed the meetings into spaces of fierce competition. "The company that can first open its tempting supplies of coffee, tobacco, ammunition, scarlet cloth, blankets, bright shawls, and glittering trinkets", Irving noted in *Captain Bonneville*, "has the greatest chance to get all the peltries and furs of the Indians and free trappers. It is able [...] to

get the start of its competitors, and to have the first dash into the hunting and trapping grounds” (26).

For immigrants like Esther Belle Hanna, the time-honored dignity and ‘civilized’ adaptation of native traditions left a positive impression. “These Indians”, she wrote in her travel diary, “are the finest specimen of the race that I have seen, they are intelligent, finely formed, well clad and very cleanly in their appearance” (18). At the same time, Hanna’s mental landscape preoccupied itself with violent stereotypes that anticipated bloodthirsty savages lurking behind every tree in the far western wilderness. “Am afraid we will have trouble with Indians”, she noted. “[T]his morning after we started we discovered 8 or 11 among the sage brushes. Three or four of them came to us pretending to be friendly, but we could see treachery all the time” (20). While white immigrants constantly suspected malicious intentions of Native Americans, they hailed their own shortchanging and exploitation as normal business practices, whose profits became a source of personal pride. “We got a very fine [salmon] weighing about 21 pounds for an old shirt belonging to one of our young men”, Hanna boasts and adds “we could have gotten half a dozen for almost nothing” (21). In an interview with H.H. Bancroft, Elijah Lafayette ‘Lafe’ Bristow claims to be the son of the first white settler in Oregon’s Lane County, a man also named Elijah. Bristow alleges that his father’s violent reputation became the mechanism that cleared the indigenous county for Euroamerican settlement. After members of the Klickitat tribe allegedly killed one of his oxen, he relates,

“[f]ather spoke to one of them & said ‘I do not want to kill you’, but got a handspike & struck one Indian, & struck a horse across the neck & knocked him down dead. [...] They told their story of what old man Bristow had said & done, & left that part of the country. He did not see a Klickitat [...] for two years”. (5-6)

After his death in 1887, the Salem *Statesman Journal* published Bristow's obituary. "He died as he had lived", it stated, "an honest and honorable man, against whose name was never even whispered the taint of scandal" (*Daily Statesman* 3). In contrast to Lafe Bristow's violent performance, the autobiography of the Canadian ex-revolutionary Francis Matthieu highlights a different mode of dealing with frictions between settlers and natives. Working for the American Fur Company in Louisiana, Matthieu grew increasingly disillusioned as he witnessed the proliferation of alcoholism and violence among Native Americans, encouraged by his company's policies (Clarke 2). "The Indians got drunk", he writes. "As long as they had plenty to trade it was all right and we had peace; but when their buffalo robes got scarce their appetite was so great for liquor that they would beg of one another and finally kill one another" (5). Instead of exploiting the situation for his own ends, Matthieu decided to quit his job, explaining "[t]hat is what induced me to go to Oregon. I did not know what kind of a country it was but if I did not like it I knew I could go to California" (5-6). Of course, fundamentally different imaginations accompanied the colonization of the Oregon Country from the perspective of its indigenous inhabitants. In a speech held in front of Oregon's governor Isaac Stevens in the 1850s, the Suquamish and Duwamish chief Seattle (Si'ahl) painted a gloomy picture for the future of the whites who had appropriated his territory:

When the last dead man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only a story among the whites, these shores will still swarm with the invisible dead of my people. And when your children's children think they are alone in the fields, the forests, the shops, the highways, or the quiet of the woods, they will not be alone. [...] At night when the streets of your towns and cities are quiet, and you think they are empty, they will throng with the returning spirits that once thronged

them, and that still love these places. The white man will never be alone. (qtd. in Gastil & Singer 19)

Seattle's warnings aimed at the colonization of people and exploitation of nature as spatial practices that stood in strong opposition to native belief systems that assume the consonance between natural and human epistemologies. It thus can be understood as a protest against the dehumanizing top-down allocation of policies that clashed with the shared understanding among many indigenous societies that "[t]he twisting boundaries of tribal units are provisional demarcations determined by language, culture, and natural features rather than by abstract governmental designations: the whole is a loose confederacy of biocultural locales" (Kowalewski 16). In the context of its time, Seattle's speech addressed aggressive settlement policies, reckless parceling, widespread illegal squatting, and various other land grabbing practices. In 1855, conflicts between settlers and natives escalated in the Rogue River Wars fought by United States federal troops and local militias against a tribal confederacy in the southern parts of today's state of Oregon. Mass immigration on the Oregon Trail had set in and was greatly accelerated by several gold rushes towards northern California. The prospector James A. Cardwell was one of thousands that traversed the region on their way to the mines. In his journal, he nonchalantly mentions having "the pleasure of shooting" a Native American man who had supposedly disrespected him, although to his disappointment the bullet "did not kill him" (16). At the same time, Cardwell was aware of the desperate situation of Oregon's indigenous peoples, whose habitats were rapidly appropriated, sometimes simply through speech acts of miners and squatters:

A great many miners came in, and people began to take up land for ranches all over the country, and have them surveyed. While the surveying was in progress, the indians seemed to bee [sic] at

a great loss to know how it was that the White men would take compass & chain and go round and cry *stick stuck* and set up a few stakes and call the land thair [sic] own, when the government had not paid them for the land. (22; emphasis added)

Responding to these illicit actions, natives developed resistance strategies that sometimes took advantage of the greed of miners and settlers. Cardwell relates that his group employed Indian “gides [sic] to show where we could find [gold] in [...] large lumps [...] scattered all over the surface of the earth for sevel [sic] miles”. After being guided to the legendary Humbug Creek, Cardwell becomes “acquainted with a man by Name of Jones that took out 95-thousand dollars on one day that summer” (8). To the miners’ dismay, however, it turns out that their guides purposefully misled them by inventing a tall tale that was supposed to cure their gold fever. When the group arrives at what they imagine to be the golden land, they find themselves stuck in a dusty gulch devoid of water and resources. Taken aback, they turn to their guide but “the indian said he could not account for the absence of the gold and [...] that the last time [he] was there was great quantities in sight [...] we discharge[d] him and wen[t] gold hunting on our own book [when] the indians began to show themselves in large numbers on the hills above us and they would yell horribly and roll stones down as if to try to frighten us”. (Cardwell 11)

Unfazed by such acts of resistance, mass immigration to the region kicked off in the aftermath of the Panic of 1837 and following John Charles Fremont’s 1842 discovery of a practicable route to the Far West. After embarking from St. Louis on her arduous, half-year-long journey across the Great Plains, Hanna together with her husband and company reaches her destination in the fall of 1852. With palpable relief, she notes: “My heart arouse in gratitude to God that we were spared to reach this land. [...] [A]fter having passed

through dangers seen and unseen, sickness, trial and difficulty, toil & fatigue, we are here safely landed on the Pacific shores” (20). Before reaching the actual shores, however, her company traverses the Powder River Basin, located between today’s southeastern Montana and northeastern Wyoming. Hanna is surprised to find the valley bustling with economic activity, which leads her to readjust her preconceived notions of Oregon as a space that now seems to her “more like the noise and haste of a city than a remote spot far removed from civilization” (26). What she saw were the offshoots of a newly developing economic macro-region. Agriculture with its hotbed in the fertile Willamette Valley began to supersede beaver trapping as the economic mainstay of the Oregon Country. But this paradigm change was not the result of Jefferson’s advocacy for an agrarian republic of virtuous yeomen; it was also not solely caused by the growing demand for foodstuffs in accordance with the territory’s demographic growth. In a more mundane reality, shifting fashion trends in Europe dictated that headdresses made from Asian silk instead of rustic beaver pelts were now *en vogue*, leading to the breakdown of the multinational fur industry and to Oregon’s agrarian respatialization. Immigrants such as Esther Belle Hanna partook in these changes, that not only involved political and economic factors but also a reframing of spatial imaginations and expectations. “About noon we hailed the Columbia [River] for the first time”, she writes, but also admits that “[i]t was with varied emotions that I gazed on its broad bosom”:

Little did I think in my school girl days as I traced out this river that ever I should stand upon its shores or drink of its clear cool water. But so it is, here I am after months of toil & fatigue permitted to see this noble & far-famed river. There is something grand & sublime in the scenery around it, yet I must say that I was disappointed in the scenery, instead of trees with luxuriant

foliage, you see massive rocks, pile upon pile which have stood the wreck of time for centuries. (Hanna 28)

The top-down triumphalism of reaching the destined land is curbed by the disparity between idealized, nationalist imaginations and their adverse, 'grassroots' equivalents. Following the shores of the river, Hanna laments: "I never could have imagined such a road nor could I describe it for it beggars description!" Implicitly, this statement establishes a metaphor for the rocky path both of her transcontinental journey and the shifting spatial imaginations that led and accompanied her to Oregon and which she retained in her diary. Along the way, arriving for Hanna often seemed anything but manifest. She hence views her arrival not as a triumph on either a personal or ideological level, but rather as her entering another, even more challenging road that leads "over roots & branches, stumps, rocks, fallen trees and logs, over streams, through sloughs & marshes, up hill and down hill – and in short everything that could possibly tend to make it intolerable." (Hanna 29)

In 1848, politicians in Washington, D.C. assessed the definite borders of the Oregon Country. Eleven years later, the nation's manifest destiny seemed to fulfill itself when the organized territory became the thirty-third member of the Union with its capital in Salem. The historicized sequence of Oregon's ordering, however, did not mean that the sense of place – both of longstanding inhabitants or new arrivals like Hanna and Cardwell – readily adjusted to the populist narrative of preordained expansionism. In contrast to the newcomers from the East, many established Oregonians had little or no knowledge of the United States. For some, the country in fact appeared more unfamiliar and unpredictable than the neighboring California, Russian Alaska, or the Sandwich Islands. Shortly after his arrival in Oregon, the former Canadian secessionist and gun-runner Francis Matthieu "got acquainted with a man called Etienne

Lencier who came here with Lewis and Clark. [...] He knew a good deal about this country, but not much about the United States. Sometimes he would get me to sit up all night to tell him about it” (13). Additionally, Matthieu concedes that “[m]any of the emigrants, in fact nobody knew anything about” Oregon (9). In contrast, the Pacific hemisphere seemed more accessible to some Oregonians. In her memoirs, Anne Abernethy notes that her “husband was not in the country when he was first elected Governor [of Oregon]. He had gone on a trip to the Sandwich Islands, & did not know that he was Governor until he returned”. (n.p)

Looking at the Oregon Country from the perspective of its geopolitical ordering makes apparent that the mental scope of its diverse populations rarely respected the – however vaguely defined – spheres of influence and borders staked out by the United States, Britain, France, Russia, or Spain. Despite these various drives towards its spatial ordering, the Oregon Country from a United States perspective became a benchmark for commerce and settlement in the Pacific Northwest as the general area enclosed by the Pacific Ocean in the West, Rocky Mountains in the East, Californian deserts in the South, and the Yukon’s snowfields in the North. Although these natural barriers appeared like clear-cut boundaries, they were in fact vague and highly contested points of contact to other spatio-cultural networks that overlapped, for instance, with northern Mexican territories and the southern parts of British Columbia. While nineteenth-century politicians, immigrants, and authors were mindful of Oregon’s colonial contentedness, they regularly imagined the region in terms of its embeddedness between topographical barriers. In *Astoria*, Irving describes “the stern barriers of the Rocky Mountains” as “the limits, as it were, of the Atlantic world” (1836: 199). Even after his victory in the Mexican-American War, president Zachary Taylor believed that “California and Oregon [were] too distant to become members of the Union” and that it would be better for

them “to be an Independent Government” (qtd. in Meinig 159). In fact, the war that brought massive territorial gains did not consolidate the nation in a sweeping performance of unifying patriotism. Conversely, it further entrenched sweltering conflicts between free and slave states in the East and over the extension of the nation’s ‘peculiar institution’ into its (far) western territories.

Even in today’s hardly disputed Canada-United States border regime, spatial imaginations that view Oregon as a part of a greater Pacific Northwest continue to undermine the region’s political (b) ordering in terms of the nation-state. For example, some scholars propose “that the Pacific Northwest refers to the land drained by the Columbia River, a definition that would include parts of British Columbia as well” (Kollin 415). As part of this vision, Oregon merges in the Pacific Northwest as a bioregion that exists independent from legal borders but also respects the historical fact that “the region’s history and character have been determined by the boundary” (Coates 3). Even before its incorporation into the body of the Union, the bioregional formatting of Oregon served to detach it from the perplexing system of antithetical policies and bilateral treaties between colonial powers, which did more to disorganize and alienate than to order and integrate the Far West into the national framework. Regarding the human placemaking dynamics that take place within them, environmental studies scholar Michael Kowalewski explains that “[b]ioregional definitions of healthy communities rely on [...] local relationships with the land, seeing identity as bound up in a specific terrain defined by natural boundaries rather than abstract governmental designations” (16). But imagining the Oregon Country through the ‘natural semantics’ of its ecosystems also allocates an epistemic groundwork that makes the region accessible both mentally and physically through practices of commerce, agriculture, and settlement. It positions Oregon as yet another place of doing business ‘the American way’ by emphasizing the universality and

boundlessness of democratic and economic networks that could be transplanted anywhere. Oregon, in other words, could be envisioned as a space that was destined to be Americanized not despite but precisely because of the challenges presented by its topographical insularity and contested imaginary regimes. Surmounting these barriers to entry in this manner could be discursively framed as a symbolic performance of the nation's geographic mission that was metaphysically undergirded by the manifest progression of destiny itself.

In terms of nation-building, formatting Oregon alongside bioregional parameters hence represented a double-edged sword. It engendered subversive counter-imaginings that understood the region as a topographically and ecologically autonomous space that was destined to become an independent republic. This push and pull between Oregon's nation integration and regional separation shines through in a speech given by John Quincy Adams in 1846: "I want the country for our western pioneers", he professed, "for them to go out to make a nation that is to arise there, and which must come from us as a fountain comes from its source, of free, independent, sovereign republics" (qtd. in Meinig 160). In this quixotic situation, some called for the region's annexation under the ordering umbrella of the United States. Others proposed that the organization of Oregon as an independent republic, possibly in coalition with California, was the 'natural' choice. Calls for autonomy have emerged in various historical contexts from the Civil War to the humanitarian and environmental crises of late capitalism, and most recently the policies of the Trump administration that revitalized separatist movements such as CascadiaNow.

The nation's triumphalist arrival at and incorporation of the Far West, it becomes clear, was undermined by alternative spatialization processes that viewed Oregon as a pivot of antithetical geographies, for instance as the easternmost part of Asian-Pacific hemispheric

networks or as located to the South of a northern frontier with Russian Alaska, while others derived the region's independence from its embeddedness in the Pacific Northwest's unique bioregion. At their core, discourses of utopianism and westering that energized the narratological integration of western regions were predicated on the tensions generated by transatlantic mental geographies that separated but also connected the United States and Europe. The West became the physical and mental arena in which the postcolonial nation could transcend the binary that had separated the world into European colonizers and colonial subjects on other continents. The revolutionary act of breaking through this cycle meant that the United States were able to mythologize themselves as exceptional during the westward expansion. As a result of Turner's theorizing of the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century, the nation *ex post facto* integrated itself within an alternative mental cartography that was neither driven by European imperialism nor by the inactions of colonial subalterns.

Instead, contemporaries understood the West's spatial and socio-cultural dynamics as historically unprecedented processes that in a kind of a spatiotemporal ontogenesis gave birth to a new and unique national character. In the realms of literature, this American Adam became synonymous with the emergence of the American Renaissance with authors like Whitman, Melville, and Cooper that codified the myths of America's spatial identity. Embracing myths like manifest destiny, however, made the nation's identity path-dependent on a specific geographic trajectory that linked progress to the transformative westward movement of people and ideas, first on the continent and later in the transpacific and global arenas. Likewise, nation-building through westering was closely intertwined with the transatlantic spatial imaginary: the more Americans contrasted themselves with the autocracy and corruption of Old-World traditions, the more the stability of spatialization processes in the

New World became fixed to ideas and practices that epistemically revolved around the transatlantic hemisphere. This correlation led to paradoxical effects like the notion that the difference of the American space could best be observed not from the nation itself but from a European perspective. As D.H. Lawrence mused, “it is perhaps easier to love America passionately, when you look at it through the wrong end of the telescope, across all the Atlantic water” (54).

Against the background of this continual affinity of transatlantic epistemologies, the discursive incorporation of the Pacifically embedded Oregon Country and its adjustment to the nation’s Europe-centric narratives became obstacles that reflected themselves in deviating spatial imaginations of authors and regional actors. Engaging with these ongoing alternative spatialization practices and their discursive origins is important because it demonstrates how they provided people with tools that enabled them to point out and criticize injustices of nationalistic narratives and political ordering processes. In the light of current debates, it also puts emphasis on the significance of regional placemaking practices within seemingly globalized macro-cultures and the sustained importance of local identities. In other words, the notion that regionalism and local differences are rapidly becoming outdated as they are merged into homogenous and streamlined compounds of universal, constantly repeated, and ultimately disposable sites of global culture. Despite these axiomatic claims and as hinted at by the plethora of alternative imaginations of the Oregon Country, more attention must be afforded to the complex ways in which literary and cultural discourses imagined and continue to imagine the interplay of regional and national identities.

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**THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO IN 1846-1847
AND THE NARRATIVE OF INTEGRATION SEEN
THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF SUSAN MAGOFFIN
AND LEWIS GARRARD**

LA CONQUISTA DE MÉXICO EN 1846-1847 Y LA
NARRATIVA DE INTEGRACIÓN VISTA A TRAVÉS DE LOS
ESCRITOS DE SUSAN MAGOFFIN Y LEWIS GARRARD

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ABSTRACT: Two teenagers from the United States, Susan Magoffin and Lewis Garrard, one female and one male, travel independently on the Santa Fe Trail during the 1846 war between the United States and Mexico. Both write – a diary by the young woman, and recollections by the young man – about their impressions in Mexican territory. Their texts were not meant as political statements despite the fact that both authors are linked to powerful commercial interests. It is nonetheless noteworthy to read their opinion about the expansion of the United States and about the culture of the conquered peoples. They are precursors of a narrative of integration that will become popular in the late 20th century.

KEYWORDS: Mexican-American War; territorial conquest; New Mexico; Santa Fe Trail; Taos rebellion.

RESUMO: Dos adolescentes de los Estados Unidos, Susan Magoffin y Lewis Garrard, una mujer y un hombre, viajan de manera independiente por el sendero de Santa Fe durante la guerra de 1846 entre los Estados Unidos y México. Ambos escriben, un diario para la joven y recuerdos para el joven, sobre sus impresiones en territorio mexicano. Sus textos no pretendían ser declaraciones políticas a pesar del hecho de que ambos autores están vinculados a poderosos intereses comerciales. Por lo tanto, es sorprendente leer su opinión sobre la expansión de los Estados Unidos y sobre la cultura de los pueblos conquistados. Son precursores de una narrativa de integración que se hará popular a fines del siglo XX.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Guerra mexicano-estadounidense; conquista territorial; Nuevo México; sendero de Santa Fe; rebelión de Taos.

Lewis Garrard and Susan Magoffin were both teenage travelers from wealthy Anglo-American backgrounds when they undertook their trips from the United States to Mexico during the 1846-1848 American war of expansion. They both wrote about their adventures, the former a diary, the latter just recollections, but I consider *adventures* a moniker belittling the actual scope of their endeavors. Both authors traveled with groups related to business and military interests of the United States and did not, at first, exhibit strong political views of their own. The politics of conquest were not their main preoccupation and it is all the more unexpected to realize their awareness of racial injustice concerning both Mexicans and Indigenous peoples, a cultural concern that does not conform to the interests of their class and their white Anglo-Saxon ethnic origin. Therefore I argue that their writings present a narrative of

integration of the Mexican territories occupied by the United States. Added to this, the gender of both authors – one being male, the other female – offers an appraisal of a transnational society through gendered eyes and experiences and shows that both authors adhere to a narrative of integration.

Lewis Garrard and Susan Magoffin are both changed by their displacement and what started as an adventure becomes a serious endeavor as the young man is confronted with the Taos rebellion against American rule, and later participates in the Indian wars on the Plains, and the young woman ventures into the war zone, in her own words, as an American ‘traderess’ (Magoffin 119) dealing with Mexican and Indian customers, ready to defend her economic assets as well as her life. Both comment upon other societies from the point of view of the colonizer, while being destabilized by their own criticism. They participate indirectly in the war of conquest as Susan Magoffin’s caravan supplies the army, and Lewis Garrard has to take arms in Taos to quell the insurrection. Both are immigrants into Mexican territory. While their seemingly off-hand commentaries were not meant to be social or political statements, they can be read as such, especially since the events taking place during their trips represent a vast territorial accretion to the United States. The two texts that have been selected are minor classics (Myres xvii, Foster 31, Homes 2-5). During the period of Manifest Destiny, such sources were abundant as travelers on the overland routes were conscious that they were participating in an event illustrating American ‘exceptionalism’ and felt the need to keep a written record of their extraordinary journey across the continent (Faragher 4-13). Thus, the two texts selected for this paper participate in history written from the bottom up.

The publishing history of both texts, as well as the critical approaches they have attracted, shows a constant public interest in their narrative. Susan Magoffin’s journal, a text she entitled *El Diario*

de Dona Susanita Magoffin, despite the fact that she did not speak Spanish at the onset of her journey, was edited with extensive footnotes by Stella Drum and published as *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico, The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847*, in 1926 with a 1982 reprint. The text is a journal with dated entries, not originally intended for publication but as a memento of her trip. Lewis Garrard wrote and published his story shortly upon his return to the States in 1850, using his field notes, the letters he sent home and his memory, capitalizing on the fashion of travel literature, under the lengthy title *Wab-to-yah and the Taos Trail: or Prairie and Scalp Dances, with a Look at Los Rancheros from Muleback and the Rocky Mountain Campfire*. An undated facsimile reprint has been published by the British Library.

This paper investigates the narrative of integration as it is produced, during the period of Manifest Destiny, at the time of the war with Mexico, in the liminal space of the border, as it is crossed and viewed through class, ethnicity and gender. Today, as the permeability of borders is being discussed (Otto & Berthier-Foglar), it seems fit to inquire into the disruption caused by the American conquest of the Northern provinces of Mexico. The location of the narratives is the Santa Fe Trail, from Independence, Missouri, to the West.

The *adventures* of the two young authors

The two young authors refer to the starting of their trip as an *adventure* without mentioning the armed conflict between the United States and Mexico, underway since April 1846. Lewis Garrard was barely 17 when he left home for the first time from Cleveland, Ohio, for a 3-month trip to the South: “In February 1846, being then in my 17th year, I tossed away school books, and glided down the Mississippi River [...] visiting friends, riding horses, and shooting

alligators, duck and rail, from the bow of long canoe in the cypress swamps [...] Returning home, the glowing pages of Frémont's tour to the Rocky Mountains in 1842-43 were so alluring to my fancy, that my parents were persuaded to let me go westward" (Garrard 1). Thanks to letters recommending his good character, he is allowed to join the Bent & St Vrain trading outfit specialized in the route from Kansas to Taos, New Mexico.

Susan Magoffin was the 18-year old wife of Samuel Magoffin, a 45-year old veteran of the Santa Fe trade, who took her with him on a trading expedition along the Santa Fe trail, on the heels of the Army of the West advancing into Mexico in the summer of 1846. She starts her journal in a playful manner and announces that the journey into Mexico is her second honeymoon: "My journal tells a story tonight different from what it has ever done before. The curtain raises now with a new scene. This book of travels is Act 2nd, literally and truly. From the city of New York to the Plains of Mexico is a stride that I myself can scarcely realize" (1). She comes from a privileged background and married into a wealthy family. She considers her voyage as a pleasurable activity and sees herself as a "wandering princess" (11).

At the onset of their narrative, none of the two teenage authors mention the context of Manifest Destiny's most obvious element, the territorial expansion of the United States. However, as is the case for most diarists on the trail, a pervasive feeling of exceptionality led them to write about their daily experiences to keep a memento of their life on the trail. The extraordinary expansion of the United States from the Mississippi to the Pacific happened within two generations and Americans saw their country grow in leaps before their eyes. Only 63 years separate the onset of the war with Mexico from the 1783 Treaty of Paris granting the United States a swath of land on the west of the Appalachians to the Mississippi River. Meanwhile, the 1803 Louisiana Purchase added the central portion

of what is today the continental United States, including the Great Plains and the eastern portion of the Rocky Mountains. Stories of territorial growth must certainly have been told in both authors' families and pushed the two travelers to witness first-hand the latest territory in the process of being conquered. One of the tenets of the conquest of the New World – since the 17th century – was the healthfulness of the endeavor, the sea voyage granting access to a boundless continent with an abundance of food resources. The crossing of the Great Plains in the 19th century participated in a similar reality. Despite the obvious hardships of all-weather traveling on horseback or in a covered wagon, good air and the invigorating physical exhaustion were part of the health trip. Lewis Garrard's parents could thus be convinced that the trip would be beneficial for their son's health (5), and for Susan Magoffin crossing the Prairie is exhilarating as there is "so much free uncontaminated air" (10). Since the obvious territorial conquest is overshadowed by the quest for a healthful environment and activity, both travelers omit to mention the dangers of traveling into the war zone. The conflict had begun a few weeks before Susan Magoffin's departure on the trail with a caravan of traders on the heels of General Kearny's army of the West, and Lewis Garrard travels with transnational traders into territory that had just been conquered, largely thanks to the efforts of the traders themselves. While the authors were traveling, the occupied territory still belonged to Mexico but had been mentally integrated into their colonizing view.

The inevitably negative side of the war appears later in both texts, when Susan Magoffin mentions meeting soldiers on the trail, and later describes war-torn landscapes, or when Lewis Garrard relates news from Taos and the murder of the recently appointed American governor and has to participate in the hanging of the rebels. While one may think that the two authors would thus take sides and defend the right of conquest by the United States, it is not the case. Other

political statements, mainly concerning race, gradually appear in the worldview of both authors but do not overpower their discourse. Lewis Garrard had strong feelings against the immigration of free slaves from Kentucky to Ohio (Meyer 272), and was racially prejudiced. Susan Magoffin traveled with a maid – and since her family lived on a Kentucky plantation, the maid was most certainly black, although her skin color and status are never mentioned. Susan Magoffin’s comments about having to whip her maid because she became “[i]ll-tempered”, and gave her “insolent answers” (174-175) is reminiscent of slavery. Despite the fact that both authors started their journeys as an adventure, they gradually give their readers a deeper insight into the reality of territorial conquest. Their voyage becomes the catalyst of a narrative of integration of the colonized land and people into the fabric of the United States.

Gender and ethnicity on the overland trails

Traditional Anglo-American gender roles were upset due to the necessities of trail life as we can see in numerous examples from the two journals. While both authors attempted to maintain social decorum and elements of their previous settled life, they also experimented with different social habits. We may wonder whether the dynamics of trail life lastingly affected their worldview and if they both participated in the same way in the narrative of integration. Gender is the main difference between both travelers as their age and social origin are similar. On the Santa Fe Trail, at the time of the War with Mexico, Susan Magoffin is the only Anglo-Saxon female voice (102-103) and while there were other male voices (travel book author Josiah Gregg, British explorer George Ruxton, Doniphan company volunteer Frank Edwards), Lewis Garrard is the only person to leave a written eyewitness record of the 1847

Taos trial of the rebels against the occupation by the United States. Both authors are indirect participants in the territorial conquest as they symbolically occupy the space as civilians. The fact that one is a man and the other is a woman gives their commentaries about the Manifest Destiny of the United States to conquer the continent a more balanced aspect and counters the concept of solely male frontier figures (Limerick 21). In 1979, John Mack Faragher published his seminal *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* with a content analysis of 169 diaries and identified differences in style and concerns in the writings of women and men (3-14). The present essay concurs with his findings that women are more introspective and men group-oriented; women are also more inclined to write about domesticity and males about violence (Faragher 128-133; Riley 1-13; Lawrence 1-5). The texts are also examples of female concerns such as Magoffin's views on childbirth (68) and managing a marriage (212), and Garrard's male concerns such as his wish to emulate famous frontier figures whose motto is "Better to reign in hell than to serve in Heaven" (63-66).

Moreover, diaries were mainly written by white travelers and the voices of the non-whites often have to be read through the lens of white authors, as is the case of the two examples chosen here. It will thus be interesting to see how ethnic otherness is considered by Magoffin and Garrard at a time when the conquest of Mexico was achieved by a country with an implicit white ethnic domination. Garrard relishes describing the exotic otherness and presents a variety of colorful characters of diverse ethnicities, with their tall tales and their extraordinary achievements, while Magoffin writes about non-white others, especially women, in relation with the phases she goes through in her own life whether childbirth, social events or warlike action on the trail (Magoffin 28-29, 119-121; Scharff 43-44). Both authors follow the dominant gender rules. On the trail, Garrard becomes a frontiersman, in the Turnerian sense,

selecting his garments according to their convenience, whether American, Mexican, or Indigenous, using a coat to make a blanket, processing animal skins and replacing boots with indigenous moccasins, much appreciated for their practical aspect. Obviously, women did not have the same freedom (Myres 147). Despite their unpractical aspects on the trail, long skirts, petticoats, narrow waists, and mutton sleeves were the norm in mid-19th century and Susan Magoffin does not mention dressing as a man or wearing bloomers (Homes 15). To assess the impact of traveling on the two authors, the evolution of their dress code informs us about their relation to the others encountered on the trail. As both authors were removed of the constriction of their former surroundings, they started to experiment with their clothing, in a cautious and limited way by Susan Magoffin, and in bolder steps by Lewis Garrard. For Lewis, his high moment in sartorial matters comes when he spends several weeks with the family of the Cheyenne wife of William Bent, one of the trading partners of the firm he is traveling with. For a few weeks, he “goes Indian” with relish and is considered a sensation by the Cheyenne who had never seen a white juvenile as they usually dealt with adult traders and soldiers. They stripped him of his clothes and painted his body in the fashion of their tribe. He describes wearing only a breechclout while the Cheyenne women made him new buckskin clothes. He quips that he looked like a “respectable savage” (Garrard 60-88).

While he considers “going Indian” as a short-lived part of his adventure, his view of the semi-nomadic Cheyenne is positive. He does not wish to see them settled, assimilated, or even converted to Christianity, and – while he describes being attracted to a Cheyenne woman – he has qualms about miscegenation with women of dark skin color (Meyer 267). He is class-conscious, in a way that is typical of the 19th century, and makes the customary difference between a woman of a lower social class and a lady of

a higher social class. The distinction does not seem to be based on money only but on culture. When meeting Mexican women in Taos – he calls them *señoritas* – he muses about being attracted to them (Garrard 171). He also mentions glowingly the wife of Kit Carson, “a refined lady” who is Mexican (181). Garrard’s “ladies” are thus of European cultural origin, and he does not bestow the term ‘lady’ on Indigenous women, whom he labels “squaws”. The possibility of him marrying a Mexican woman is a sign of his mental integration of the conquered territory.

Susan Magoffin undergoes changes in her way of dressing and mentions them when they deviate from the norm. She writes about suffering from the heat and having to take off several layers of clothing, including her dress, to take her nap in her ‘chemise,’ an undergarment that a proper lady would avoid being seen in public. She adds sheepishly that modesty prevented her from undressing any further (29). By mid-19th century standards, the statement seems bold and adventurous. It is also an indication of the way traveling loosens social norms. Magoffin has limits as to what she is willing to accept and she is not prepared for nudity, whether naked arms, legs, bosoms, “almost naked children” (92-95), or breechclout wearing Indians (14). However, in her narrative of the integration of the conquered country we see her conversing, in Spanish, with a pant-wearing Comanche chief (112), and the fact that his outfit is also composed of a blanket-coat, an article of clothing typical of the frontier, is not commented upon, and can be construed as an acceptance of indigenous otherness. When socially acceptable, *i.e.* when her modesty is not threatened by nudity or short Mexican skirts, Magoffin writes about honoring Mexico by wearing a red dress to a ball in Santa Fe (143), red in honor of the colors of Spain. The event happened in August 1846; the American Army of the West was still stationed in the city; the star-spangled banner had been hoisted over the Plaza, and Magoffin’s red dress becomes the

symbol of a narrative of integration of New Mexico into the United States.

The narrative of integration that began at the time of territorial conquest also started a southwestern regional trend of re-using mostly Spanish names for places by English-speakers of the United States. Almost 80 years later, by the same logic, the New Mexican state flag, the “Zia Sun”, features an indigenous sun symbol and the red and gold colors of Spain (official communication of New Mexico’s Secretary of State). Moreover, the fact that the writings of Garrard and Magoffin are still in print is proof of their participation in the national narrative.

The actions and worldviews of the two authors give us another angle on their beliefs and evolution. Discourse evolution is also relevant when assessing a possible gender bias in the narrative of territorial conquest. Unsurprisingly, gendered views and expectations are present in the two journals in the early stages of the trip. Lewis Garrard stows a supply of ammunitions in his bags (8-14) while Susan Magoffin packs “little articles” in her “plunder-basket” (1-3). The man prepares for an iconic armed conquest of the West – or dreams of playing the part – while the woman aims for domesticity on the trail. The most memorable events of the first days of both travelers describe an innocuous set of activities. Lewis shoots at birds, and Susan picks flowers. Adaptation to the reality of their ‘adventure’ is easier for the man who finds the Mexican cowboys “really astonishing” (Garrard 14-15) while the young woman has a hard time adjusting to the swearing of the teamsters (Magoffin 2-3). For both, under the pressure of circumstances, the gender stereotypes become less apparent. Lewis Garrard brags about using his scalping knife as tableware – although he has never actually used it for scalping – but he also informs the reader that he has washed his shirt himself, “succeeding tolerably, only” (14).

Deep into Mexican territory, Susan Magoffin has to fill in for her husband and becomes a traderess; she haggles in her newly-learned Spanish, counts the money and – when danger is close – cleans the guns (232-233). A dynamic of change in the discourse of the seasoned travelers shows how their traditional social stereotypes fade. In his journal, Garrard describes his stay with the Cheyenne and their camp life as an awesome adventure (181, 249). Susan Magoffin is less exuberant but conveys her appreciation of the lifestyle of Indian women when she loses her unborn child in a carriage accident. While she rests at Bent's Fort, she longingly watches an Indian mother bathing her newborn in the river and writes negative comments about the ill effects of "civilized life" on child-birth (67-68). While the gendered roles of both authors are in part dictated by society, we also see deviations from the code of their social group when overwhelming situations arise. It will thus be interesting to see what they have to say about political and social matters.

Political statements and view of the conquered peoples

While both travel texts were not meant to be political statements, they can be read as such mainly because they relate to a key event in 1846, the "Year of Decision" for historian Bernard De Voto, an important milestone in the territorial accretion of the United States. The trivial details of the trip and the few lines devoted to the War itself suggest that for the travelers the invaded country seems to rightfully belong to the United States even before conquest is completed. At least, this was how they felt in the early stages of the trip before they were forced to realize that their presence in invaded Mexico is not an innocent pastime, and they implicitly come to realize – at key points of their narratives – that they are capable of a

critical vision of territorial conquest and Manifest Destiny. However, the full scope of their involvement does not become apparent until far into the narratives. We learn, almost offhandedly, that Susan Magoffin's brother-in-law is in charge of a secret diplomatic mission (for which he will later be jailed in Mexico) as part of the military advance team into Mexico (Magoffin 105, 169; De Voto 256-257). As for Garrard, he mentions the importance of Governor Charles Bent – one of the associates of the Bent & St Vrain company – only when news is received of his murder in Taos by Mexicans and Pueblos rebelling against the American occupation (131).

While in the first stages of their trips territorial conquest was implicitly described as a regular transnational traveling activity – with its focus on daily routine and entertaining details – it soon becomes apparent that both authors play an active role in the Manifest Destiny to conquer the continent. Bent & St Vrain, as well as the Magoffins, were both trading outfits with a strong interest in territorial conquest, mainly to avoid the high tariffs imposed by Mexico on imported goods (Meyer 263-264). Both travelers enter occupied Mexico after leaving Bent's Fort, which becomes a beacon of "civilized life" for Garrard, a place where one eats with proper silverware and sleeps in safety (41). When leaving the fort, Magoffin is consciously aware that she enters dangerous territory and her diary starts a new day count, daily indicating the miles separating her from Bent's Fort (71-72).

Both travelers become aware of the linguistic frontier as they cross into Mexico. While they knew that some of their fellow travelers were not English speakers, but Spanish or Canadian French speakers, the realization becomes acute when reaching Bent's Fort. Susan Magoffin started to learn Spanish from day one of her trip and even gives a Spanish title to her travel journal, an unusual choice as the journal itself is written in English, with Spanish words or phrases when appropriate. The linguistic choice can be construed as a wish

to master the language for trade – she will be using Spanish with customers – but also for managing a household and social activities – as will be the case when she travels into Mexico. When she reaches the first Mexican settlement, Mora, she has to order food in Spanish and proudly writes down in her diary the words she uses (90-91). Lewis Garrard is less task oriented when he reports how entertaining it is to master the colorful expressions used by French Canadian and Anglo-Saxon mountain men. The young man clearly enjoys writing down swear words and profanities that would be out of place in his social circle (83), he is also fascinated by the colloquial language of his travel companions (105) and does not write disparagingly about the language of the other. For Magoffin, only the swearing seems inappropriate (48) but she does not comment negatively upon the fact that the encountered others are Spanish speakers.

However, both travelers lapse – from time to time – into comments about the superiority of their own culture, but their remarks grow weaker and further apart in the course of their writings. For Magoffin, Mexican women crossing streams barefooted, with their skirts hiked up, are compared to “ducks” in the first settlement (95) and Mexican workmen are described as “void of refinement, judgement &c. [*sic.*] as the dumb animals” but she nevertheless accepts their compliments when they call her pretty (98). From then on, Magoffin learns to know the Mexicans and even finds friends in Santa Fe (109-110) and in El Paso (210). As for the Indians along the trail, Magoffin fears the roaming Pawnee and Apache – described as stereotypes of dangerous Indians (149) – but not the settled Pueblo, “the principal cultivators of the soil – supplying the Mexican inhabitants with fruits, vegetables” (151). As for Garrard, his negative remarks upon people he meets are limited to Indians “debased by liquor” (10), mountain men who objectify their women, buying and trading them (128) and, more rarely, Mexicans whose “moral education” he criticizes (196).

On the trail, as both travelers meet the inhabitants of the country in the process of being conquered by the United States, bonds form and discussions start to take place. After eight months on the trail, upon reaching the vicinity of El Paso, Susan Magoffin writes about discussing politics – an unusual step for her – with an upper-class Mexican man, Don Ygnacio, in whom she sees a Mexican George Washington. For the first time, she writes about the conflict between the United States and Mexico. The context is a seemingly friendly encounter with a Mexican family, despite the fact that it takes place in El Paso, where several prominent families have had one of their members taken hostage by the conquering army to ensure the safety of the merchants. Through reported speech, she gives us the Mexican vision of the American invasion, with a strong criticism of President Polk's politics who has, according to Ygnacio, corrupted George Washington's ideals through the invasion of "the territory of an other [*sic.*] nation" (Magoffin 211). For the first time, the young woman writes down her doubts about the acceptability of conquering Mexico. The fact that a sheltered young woman, from a privileged background, turns to radical criticism makes it a valuable testimonial of reconciliation from the war zone.

Lewis Garrard, who arrives in Taos in time for the trial of the murderers of Charles Bent and several American traders, is the only eyewitness of the proceedings to leave a written account. The group he has been part of since leaving St Louis was biased in favor of the American occupation as one of their own, Charles Bent, had been chosen to be the new governor of the territory of New Mexico. While Garrard was idly waiting in Taos for the trial to proceed, he attended several sessions, visited the burned-out church of the Pueblo, and commented upon the events leading to the trial of the Mexican and Pueblo rebels. He is shocked by the fact that Americans conquer a foreign country and then try the rebels for treason. He boldly compares Mexicans to American

Patriots fighting for their freedom against the English during the Revolutionary War. Both Magoffin and Garrard similarly choose to compare the independence of Mexico to the founding event of the United States. Garrard negatively comments upon the unfairness of the Taos trial, as the judge is an interested party due to the fact that his son was murdered in the uprising. Garrard is also requisitioned to participate in the security of the hanging of the convicted rebels (197-198), an event he views with disgust. Presenting the Mexican rebellion as a positive event is an important element of the narrative of integration of the conquered territories.

Alongside the rare political commentaries, Magoffin discusses more neutral elements of the material culture when she describes with appreciation Mexican homes and gardens. The first house she lives in as a married woman is her home in Santa Fe. She notes with appreciation architectural details that are fashionable today (Wilson 101) but certainly not in 1846 mainstream America: the whitewashed adobe walls of the *sala*, the rammed earth floors, the plank ceiling, the cushioned benches along the walls, and the shutters to darken the bedroom for the midday siesta (Magoffin 103-104). Various elements of the material culture of the conquered region are seen in a positive light by both authors. In both texts, the reader does not encounter a strong wish to Americanize New Mexico. For instance, the local food culture is favorably commented upon. Lewis Garrard, who seems to be constantly hungry, may not be the best food critic but he does not miss an occasion to describe what he eats, from the buffalo hunted on the trail to the *biscochos* given to him in Taos, cookies he loved so much that he took a bag of them on a horseback ride, and fondly remembers eating the last crumb. Whether Mexican or Cheyenne food, or the fare of the mountain men, Lewis Garrard shows an appreciation of the food culture of the invaded peoples.

For Magoffin, the first weeks on the trail are a continuation of the domesticity she has left behind as she picks berries to make

pies (37), or notes how buffalo meat and marrow compares to food served in the best restaurants of the East coast (43). Her curiosity about Mexican food becomes interesting when it is related to the war time activities of the conquering army of the United States. When her merchant caravan reaches El Paso, she is now deep in in foreign territory – and in the war zone – and there is no going back as news from the Taos rebellion have reached them, the situation clearly becomes dangerous enough for colonel Doniphan to take measures to protect American civilians. The family lodging the Magoffins has one of their members hostage of the army of the United States, which Magoffin considers on one hand a “proper (sic) step”, while on the other hand she admits the host family “can of course have no very friendly feeling towards” the Americans (201-203). This is the peculiar context for Magoffin’s glowing description of Mexican food, starting with the hot chocolate served twice daily, and her wish to start a recipe book (Magoffin 208-209). Her efforts to ingratiate herself with her host family is not the only explanation for her war-time recipe book, the reader senses a genuine appreciation of otherness in Magoffin’s writings who feels the need to bring back food memories from her foray into unknown territory. The fact that Mexico was in the process of being invaded shows that otherness in food culture was seen as an element of material culture worth keeping.

Conclusion

The two voices of Susan Magoffin and Lewis Garrard diverge from the confident colonial voice found in the classic political discourse of Manifest Destiny. While they are active participants in the expansion, they express doubts about the rightfulness of the conquest. They also show an appreciation for elements of the culture of the

invaded people. While it is easier for a young man to participate in Cheyenne festivities, for a young woman her appreciation of Pueblo culture is limited to the knowledge she gained in the household sphere when she buys their produce on the market and remarks on their effective role in the local economy. Both travelers experience extensive contact with Spanish speaking Mexicans and they relish learning foreign languages. They both appreciate elements of the material culture of the Mexicans, whether food or architecture. Their view of the conquered country does not include Americanizing the culture of the people and prefigures activism that will appear decades later.

One has to wait for the 1920s to witness action in favor the distinctive style of architecture in vogue in Santa Fe, a style part neo-Pueblo, part Hispanic, that is still enforced today (Wilson 101). In the 1960s, Chicano activist Reies Lòpez Tijerina criticized the loss of power of Hispanics under American rule (Tijerina 39-44). It is interesting to notice that elements of the anti-imperialist discourse can be found in the texts by Magoffin and Garrard. As for the culture of the invaded peoples, both authors present endearing cultural traits among those who were in the process of being invaded by the United States.

Appreciation of Hispanic culture in the United States will come about with the 1972 publication of the seminal text of Chicano culture, *Bless me Ultima*, by Rudolfo Anaya. The semi-fictitious novel, based upon reminiscences of the author's youth in Llano, New Mexico, was seen as a radical departure from American literature as the English text is interspersed with Spanish words and phrases. Magoffin and Garrard's narratives of integration can be seen as a precursor, and it is all the more relevant as they were devised during the heydays of Manifest Destiny, and show only minor gender deviations. Both authors have contributed to the construction of an American discourse of integration transcending the ethnocentric Anglo-Saxon vision.

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DISCURSOS DE RESISTÊNCIA
/ DISCOURSES OF RESISTANCE
/ DISCURSOS DE RESISTENCIA

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**NATIVE METAL MUSIC, IDENTITY, AND
AUTHENTICITY: THE DINÉ REZMETAL SCENE**

**METAL NATIVO, IDENTIDAD Y AUTENTICIDAD:
LA ESCENA DE REZMETAL DINÉ**

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ABSTRACT: This chapter discusses indigenous metal music, especially music from the Navajo reservation, by examining aural and visual texts, including films shot on the reservation, that endeavor to explain the presence and importance of RezMetal. In doing so, I challenge stereotypes of both Native Americans and metal music thorough focusing on their intersection in examples of Hollywood cinema, classic metal songs and the indigenous metal scene.

KEYWORDS: Native Americans; music; Navajo; authenticity; identity.

RESUMEN: Este capítulo aborda la música metal indígena, particularmente la música Navajo, a través del estudio de textos sonoros y visuales procedentes de películas filmadas en la reserva que tratan de explicar la presencia e importancia del RezMetal. Para ello, cuestiono los estereotipos Nativo Americanos y los de la música metal, así como su intersección con ejemplos encontrados en el cine de Hollywood, en

canciones clásicas de la música metal y en el universo metal indígena.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Nativos-americanos; música; Navajo; autenticidad; identidad.

Introduction

This chapter discusses indigenous metal music, emphasizing especially music from the Navajo reservation, by examining aural and visual texts, including films shot on the reservation, that endeavor to explain the presence and importance of RezMetal. In doing so, I challenge stereotypes of both Native Americans and metal music thorough focusing on their intersection in examples of Hollywood cinema, classic metal songs and the indigenous metal scene. In the United States a policy of assimilation of Native peoples to settler society, which meant abandoning indigenous culture and values – or at least making them invisible – in order to establish a standard national identity, was later supplemented by a policy that acknowledged a Native presence that could function as a non-threatening cultural object preserved from the past. Resistance to assimilation, then, risks a kind of fossilization or anesthetization of Native experience, and since metal has consistently worked to avoid just this kind of reification as part of a global popular music, it is perhaps not surprising that indigenous metal scenes have developed throughout the Americas and worldwide.

The putatively oppositional status of metal is reflected in indigenous iterations as cultural resistance to settler colonialist discourses such as Christianity and perceptions of the land. Thus, in a tradition established by Robert Walser, I understand both metal and the depiction of Native Americans (and metalheads) in film, as cultural rhetoric (x) and, following Arjun Appadurai, as part of a series of

more or less local interventions that participate in a global flow of mediascapes and ideoscapes. I hope that this chapter helps to further elucidate the following polarities identified by Idelber Avelar in his “Otherwise National” essay on Brazilian metal band, Sepultura in which he avers that such a study “can help us further unsettle a few oppositions that still plague cultural studies. These oppositions include the celebration of globalization versus the eulogy of the local, the championing of authenticity versus its debunking, and the defense of “resistance” in popular culture versus the affirmation of its ultimate futility” (139).

Indigeneity in Today’s Hollywood: *Hell or High Water* and *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*

In a short article in *High Country News*, Jason Aesnap discusses two Hollywood films released in 2017, shot or set on U.S. Indian reservations, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog* directed by Steven Lewis Simpson and Taylor Sheridan’s *Wind River*. The first adapts the biography of a white man, Kent Nerburn, who is forced to experience the inequities of contemporary Indian existence on the Lakota reservation and to represent white settler colonialist responsibility for it. In *Wind River*, it is once again the white characters who are the villains, which leaves the Indians to play the intensely depressed, deprived – or indeed dead – characters: the film incorporates flashbacks. Thus, in the words of Aesnap, “we return to the point that, at least in Hollywood, the Indians die” (25). He hereby implicitly links the sympathetic Hollywood films of 2017 to images of the noble, but outdated Indian, perhaps most succinctly depicted in John Mix Stanley’s painting *The Last of Their Race* from 1857. The demise of the Indians is here seen as inevitable: the indigenous family group rests on the rocks at the edge of the country, with no place further

to go as the sun sets behind them. Still more famously, James Earle Fraser's bronze, *The End of the Trail*, depicts a sentimentalized version of the Indian stereotype – exhausted, about to fall from or with his horse – originally made for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 and reproduced in miniature as countless bookends, ashtrays and paper weights. Similarly, for Aesnap, “[t]o this day, the Indians die, and not just physically, but culturally” (25). He questions why white filmmakers are so disposed to “making us see how America has screwed Native people”, and asks “Is it too terrible to live in one’s homeland? [...] Is it so bad to be indigenous in the 21st century [...] When do the Indians win?” (25)

These dilemmas will be addressed in this chapter via the cultural positioning and rhetoric of Native metal scenes. Prior to that investigation, however, I want to test Aesnap’s argument and lay the ground work for my own by considering another Taylor Sheridan film, this time one he wrote but did not direct, *Hell or High Water* (David Mackenzie, 2016). Gil Birmingham, playing half-Mexican, half-Comanche, Alberto Parker, side-kick to Jeff Bridges’ genially racist Sheriff Marcus Hamilton, turns in a much-admired performance – as the stoic Indian who dies in the end. Heading out from Lubbock to locate the bank-robbers, Sheriff Hamilton comments that if he dies he will at least have “a half-breed by my side to avenge me. If you can stay sober long enough, knowing how you Indians like the bottle”. The irony is rife: it is Marcus who drinks too much – we see him taking a six-pack to bed at a remote hotel – and it is he who ends up avenging his partner’s death. Like much racist humor, Marcus’s one-liners depend upon judging his partner against popular stereotypes. Thus, annoyed by Alberto watching a tele-evangelist in his motel room, Marcus suggests that his partner should be “burning sage and dancing around the fire”. Next morning, Alberto tells Marcus that he is “starting to feel sorry for [him]” – since his boss will soon be forced into retirement. Marcus’s come-back, “Indians aren’t supposed to feel sorry for Cowboys. It’s

the other way around”, provokes an enigmatic look from his partner, but confirms that Marcus’s perverse means of establishing a relationship with Alberto depend upon the same assumption that Aesnap discusses, that the Native community is one to be pitied. This is a view enforced by another scene in the film when Ben Foster’s bad-boy bank robber, Tanner, encounters a man at the Comanche 66 casino, who affirms that he is Comanche, to which Tanner responds “Lords of the Plains”. “Lords of Nothing now” shoots back the Indian.¹ As Chris Patrello remarks in a wide-ranging discussion of gendered Native stereotypes on t-shirts and in paintings, statuary and the metal song “Indians” by Anthrax,² “[w]hile the historical and material specificity associated with each individual object reflects shifting systems of production, use, circulation, and value, all rely on narratives of cultural decline, victimhood, and normative forms of male power”. (n.p.)

Hell or High Water thus raises several issues in regard to Native Americans; perhaps unexpectedly, it also illustrates stereotypes about metal music. Whilst Marcus and Alberto listen to Waylon’ Jennings on the radio as they head for trouble, their antagonists, the bank robbers are not associated with specific music. When they are stopped at a gas station, however, a run-down vehicle drives up containing two white guys who threaten and pull a gun on the unconcerned Tanner. Before they can do much his brother returns, beating one before letting the cowering driver go. The scene is accompanied by music coming from the second car – “Hate Me” by Metalcore band, Atila. This association of fast, loud, ‘aggressive’ music with violent anti-social male behavior accords with common stereotypes of metalheads.

¹ Aesnap refers to the contrived nature of this scene in his article: “No Comanche (and I am one) would ever utter such a defeatist thing. Comanche are way too proud” (24).

² See below for a brief discussion of this song.

In *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (2017), set on the Pine Ridge reservation, and directed by Chloé Zhao, an Asian-American born in Beijing, metal is one element of a complex soundtrack although, contrary to what the title might lead one to expect, the film is not especially filled with music and non-diegetic music is used infrequently. Johnny Winters sells liquor on the Pine Ridge Lakota reservation but aims to leave for Los Angeles with his girlfriend, Aurelia, who will go to school to be a lawyer. However, he is constrained by several things including the loving presence of his young sister Jashaun. She in turn, realizing her brothers' intent to leave, largely abandons him, taking up instead with Travis, an ex-con tattoo-artist and creator of inventive clothing which combines a broadly punk aesthetic with traditional designs. [See figure 1.]



Figure 1: Travis Lone Hill as Travis in an image from *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (Chloe, Zhao, Significant Productions, 2015)

Travis, who has made a blanket for his one-year-old son whilst in prison, now starts to create a dress for Jashaun, who is helping him with the sales of his clothing – displayed on the the hood of his car – by keeping the books. Like Johnny, Travis is presented

as implicitly good-hearted but undermined by alcohol. We see him drinking and rapping with friends, forgetful of the presence of Jashaun who he eventually introduces as his sister, before ruefully reflecting that drinking always ends in trouble. His assertion is backed up later in the film when Jashaun comes by his place to find him gone, apparently back in jail following an alcohol-fueled fight. Thus, the film manifests both the hard life of the reservation – effectively symbolized by a mangy buffalo head attached to a wooden post, suggestive of a lost cultural centering – and various forms of protest against such conditions. For Johnny, these are primarily dis- or mis-placed anger at his circumstances, and breaking taboos by selling alcohol and planning to leave, supplemented by boxing. Alcoholism is presented as destructive of the fabric of indigenous life and culture; Travis’s costume designs, on the other hand, adapt rather than contravening traditional cultural practices, for example by incorporating the number Seven which, he explains to Jashaun, is “our culture’s most sacred and revered number”.

Music in *Songs* includes country, hip-hop and traditional Lakota chants, all of which occur mostly as diegetic sound. Metal is used mainly when Jashaun goes to a bar where a metal band plays. The episodic nature of the narrative in *Songs* does not make clear precisely how or why Jashaun goes there, though the sequence closely follows the one in which Travis forgets her. In that sense, it may be said to function as a correlative and release for Jashaun’s raw emotions, thus complicating Rosemary Overell’s assertion that “[i]n such a masculine discourse, it is rare for metal songs to articulate emotions, which are, in Western culture, feminized” (201). The association of metal with alcohol as both transgressive and threatening is however maintained, and the film presents both rap and metal as primarily negative, destructive forms of protest. They do not accompany any of the many scenes in the film that depict the natural beauty of the reservation or of Native knowledge of and relationship to that

landscape. In terms of Avelar's oppositions, the music is a local variant of transnational trends, questionably authentic, and largely futile as a means of resistance. Still, the appearance is excellent publicity for Oglala Metal band, *Razor Chain*, who perform "The Whole World Screams".³

The Whole World Screams

The beginnings of heavy metal – or metal music as it is now more commonly called to provide a catch-all term for a wide variety of subgenres – are hardly controversial. Although fans and researchers may differ as to the roots of the music, there is general agreement that Black Sabbath and Judas Priest originated the genre in and around industrial Birmingham in 1970 with the former's first album, *Black Sabbath*, usually considered the first heavy metal album. Analyzing its eponymous opening track which begins: "What is this that stands before me / Figure in black that points at me", Nicola Masciandaro draws attention not so much to the dark imagery but to the interrogative mode: "The first word of the first line of the first song of the first album of Heavy Metal attacks the world with a question" (37). Metal music and the scenes which surround it may be seen as constituting a variety of rhetorics and practices of transgression, questioning, and rebellion in response to the circumstances of modernity, neo-liberalism, globalization, alienation, post-Fordism, and deindustrialization.

The transgressive element of metal, there from the start in "Black Sabbath", has been regularly recreated by more extreme forms of

³ Razor Chain's 'biog' section on ReverbNation.com explains "Hey there Metal Fans, this is Razor Chain and we're here to do one thing and one thing only: tear shit up!" See <https://www.reverbnation.com/razorchain/song/14646226-the-whole-world-screams>. Accessed 12 Aug. 2019.

the music. For example, vocals are now commonly growled so that lyrics cannot be discerned – the important thing is the interaction of the instrument of the voice with the distorted guitar and blast-beat drumming. Whilst Black Sabbath’s vocalist, Ozzy Osbourne, has been recuperated into mainstream culture as a television dad, the sound and look of black metal musicians, in corpse paint and wearing metal spikes, maintains the antagonistic attitude towards bourgeois society that has been central to the genre. It is hardly surprising, then, that metal has been periodically attacked by elements of that society. Moral panics over, for example, Satanist lyrics that provoke their listeners to suicide rely on several interlinked but faulty assumptions: that a discourse about suicide must perforce support such actions;⁴ that the Satanic references constitute unironic reflections of beliefs rather than elements of transgressive performance; that listeners absorb messages uncritically – the so-called hypodermic theory which accords fans no power to resist, reinterpret or refine the meanings of cultural objects. One charge brought against Judas Priest in Nevada in 1990 over a suicide pact established and acted upon by two young fans in response to subliminal messages that could be heard when songs were played backwards, “depended on the premise that such hidden messages can be decoded without conscious awareness and on the idea that they affect listeners more powerfully than overt communication” (Walser, 145). Disputing such panics in which metal music and metalheads play the role of the deviant “folk devil”,⁵ Walser and other academic metalheads such as Jeremy Wallach, Harris Berger and Paul D. Greene, co-editors of

⁴ For example, Osbourne, sued for encouraging the suicide of 19-year-old John McCullom, argued that his song, “Suicide Solution” was an anti-suicide message inspired by the death of a friend. See Walser, 145-148 for further discussion of this and similar cases.

⁵ Stanley Cohen’s 1972 analysis of Mods and Rockers, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, introduced this use of these terms.

Metal Rules the Globe, emphasize how the musical genre encourages individual expression and provides a sense of community and an outlet, otherwise lacking, for emotions and frustrations for a vast range of often disenfranchised communities around the world. To repurpose Razor Chain's cry, the whole world screams. *Metal Rules the Globe* does not, however, include a section on Native American metal and neglects indigenous or aboriginal metal in general. I suggest that the music is in many ways especially congruent with such communities.

While metal has become a global subculture, a wide variety of local influences interact with and alter this international phenomenon. Taking his terminology from Arjun Appadurai's work on globalizing cultures, Paul Greene argues convincingly that metal music scenes produce "counter-nodes of identity [...] that are, in many ways, both transnational and marginalized" (9). Because of its transgressive stance and consequent marginalization, the diffusion of metal to far-flung locations around the planet has, Adam Mayer and Jeffrey Timberlake argue, "occurred among decentralized actors (bands and enthusiasts) and with little profit motive" (32). Still, metal music, while commonly rejecting mass culture and substituting its own internal set of values and perspectives on modern (or postmodern) living, at the same time uses and expresses itself through mass media and may be, willingly or not, commodified, "[t]aking advantage of human behavior and participation in the market for the distribution of its product" (Scott 235). While classic metal bands such as Iron Maiden and thrash metal bands like Metallica sell vast quantities of music and sell out huge auditoria, most metal bands play locally and put out occasional "demos". Extreme metal music especially, excluded by mutual desire from mainstream distribution and performance circuits, frequently maintains a DIY-aesthetic which is referenced proudly by many bands.

Indeed, reference to such an aesthetic has become central to much of the discussion of the nature of music scenes. The concept

of the scene was developed by sociologist Andy Bennett, drawing on suggestions from Will Straw, as a more flexible, consumer-oriented terminology than the idea of a subculture, originally applied as a structural means of analysis by the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies.⁶ To Straw's balancing of the local and translocal in the development of a music scene, Bennett and his collaborators added the importance of the virtual, and "scene" has since developed to include far more than the central figures of bands and fans sharing musical tastes that distinguish them from others. It now provides a ubiquitous, ever-evolving, theoretical framework for academic discussion of the construction of identity within local, transnational and/or virtual infrastructures. Summarizing the ways in which the term has come to be used in 2015, Bennett and Christopher Driver explain that "local music scenes invariably embrace a broad range of activities, including music-making, production, promotion – as well as the necessary infrastructure of physical resources, such as venues, clubs, rehearsal space, recording studios, and record/music shops, needed to sustain such activities" (102). This approach has been widely applied to metal music, perhaps most consistently and effectively by Keith Kahn-Harris, and I will return to it later in this chapter, in the context of a culturally specific form of DIY scene construction on and around the Navajo reservation.

Run to the Hills, Indians

Before I turn to the contemporary Diné metal scene, it is worthwhile examining the way that Native Americans have been portrayed in classic metal, and how the genre has been adapted by indigenous metalheads. Two tracks in particular, from two of the

⁶ See Straw (1991), Bennett (2000; 2002), Bennett and Peterson (2004).

biggest-selling and most influential metal bands, reference Native life explicitly and extensively. Considering the oppositional ideology of metal, it is hardly surprising that some song lyrics sympathize with groups marginalized, even eradicated, by the state. Anthrax's "Indians" (*Among the Living*, 1987) contains a call-and-response section with the following words:

Forced Out – brave and mighty
Stolen Land – They can't fight it
Hold On – To pride and tradition
Even though they know how much their lives are really missing.

The song emphasizes a displacement and dispossession that leaves the Indians powerless despite acknowledging their cultural strength. The official video opens with various Native artifacts – carpets, teepees, regalia – indiscriminately shown on a screen behind the band on stage. Later, singer Joey Belladonna comes on stage in an elaborate and colorful headdress brimming with feathers.⁷ Chris Patrello, critiquing the patriarchal bias inherent in non-Native portrayals of Indian culture, argues that "Indians" reflects "paternalistic forms of male power and control. Indigenous peoples, whose traditions and lifeways are intimately connected to nature, are powerless to stop the totalizing force of modernity". In this song, the Indians, to return to Aesop's words, once again lose – "not just physically, but culturally" (25).

This is also true of Iron Maiden's "Run to the Hills" (*Number of the Beast*, 1982), but this is a song which, especially if considered

⁷ Belladonna claims Native ancestry. Much later, in an example of commercial exploitation of the song's fame, Anthrax released a bourbon called "Indians", a move which shows, unsurprisingly, how metal megabands are incorporated into the consumerist ethic, but also suggests a lack of cultural knowledge or sensitivity to the relationship between Indians and alcohol.

along with its official video, offers a more complex and potentially instructive set of signifiers regarding colonization in the Americas. It is more clearly set in the era of settler-colonial genocide and land grabs, referencing the American Plains and the Cree, so that tribes are seen as somewhat less homogenous, suggesting an awareness, quite absent from “Indians”, of distinct Native American ancestries, cultures, and concerns. The following lyrics capture the song’s sentiments:

White man came across the sea
He brought us pain and misery
He killed our tribes, killed our creed
He took our game for his own need
We fought him hard, we fought him well
Out on the plains we gave him hell
But many came, too much for Cree.

Here “Run to the Hills” acknowledges an effective Native opposition to settler abuse that is quashed by superiority of numbers. In the second half of the song, the lyrics switch so that they appear to be voicing the settlers. The change in perspective does not however mitigate the clear moral division between the sides; rather, lines like “selling them whiskey and taking their gold” rehearse the settlers’ indiscriminate greed – building on the earlier irony of “his own need”. The images of the official video add another layer of meaning, cutting between shots of the band on stage and excerpts from a black-and-white slapstick film depicting settlers coming west and encountering Indian opposition. Sometimes erroneously identified as a Keaton or Chaplin movie, the clips are in fact from *Uncovered Wagon* (J.A. Howe, 1923), a spoof of Paramount’s recent hit *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze, 1923). The central comic device in the film is that the colonizers are traveling west into Indian county by car not wagon, whilst the Natives are mounted on bicycles. (Thus,

despite the updating of technologies, the Indians are left with the less powerful, though more maneuverable, means of transportation – and can still be read as resisting modernity). The comic scenes from the film, parodying both sides, clash with the verbal critique of the ideology of manifest destiny. The first shots of the Indians show them applying not war-paint but rouge, emphasizing an awareness of performativity. Later a potential scalping is spoiled when the target turns out to be wearing a hair piece, whilst a settler, shot with an arrow in the butt, hops around as if simply kicked. Nevertheless, the settlers produce a machine-gun to fight back, suggesting, once again, that it is the technology of modern industrial production rather than numbers or perseverance that is decisive.

The official videos for both “Indians” and “Run to the Hills” on YouTube are heavily commented upon, including by many (self-identified) Native Americans, strongly supporting the songs. Amongst the comments to “Run to the Hills”, are “The Musician in me is saying this is an amazing song. The Native American in me is saying this is a SUPER amazing song”. Several comments reflect on the oddity of a British band writing about Native Americans, whilst one elliptically hints at the wider applicability of the settler-colonial critique: “America, Africa, Asia and Australia colonial history”. Creating video accompaniments to popular songs and posting them on YouTube is another way in which fans reflect on content; one such piece, created for “Run to the Hills” in 2014, is noteworthy for its professional-quality editing of recent Hollywood productions including *The Lone Ranger* and *Apocalypto*.⁸ Interpretations of “Run to the Hills” are indeed legion. The song has remained immensely popular, functioning as the encore on Iron Maiden’s 2019 tour; the

⁸ In this video, as in the interpolated film from the original official version, the settlers eventually bring out a machine-gun to defeat their antagonists. Only on this occasion, in footage from *The Lone Ranger*, we are clearly shown the damage it can do. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Du2f-DP4oGc>. Accessed 12 Aug. 2019.

words also serve as the title of the band's authorized biography. As Titus Hjelm, Keith Kahn-Harris and Mark LeVine note in the introduction to their *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures*, "[T]he controversiality of metal is dependent on the social and cultural context and the interpretations that that context allows and enables" (9). Played to huge, mostly white male, audiences on heritage tours of stadia venues, "Run to the Hills" is inevitably sanitized, absorbed as it is into cultures of nostalgia and profit that fit ill with critiques of settler-colonial exploitation. Although YouTube facilitates this rereading of the song, its power to allow it to play in unexpected and uncontrollable contexts may also return some of its contestatory power.

Native Metal / RezMetal

The kind of, albeit not fully coherent, politically-charged content I have been discussing in "Run to the Hills" is not typical of metal music in general or indeed of Iron Maiden. As Niall Scott emphasizes, metal and politics "make strange bedfellows" and its practitioners, unlike many punk bands, are typically disdainful of political engagement (228). Alienated by neo-liberal austerity politics, many fans, rather than resisting the system, simply reject it, to widely varying degrees – by becoming metalheads. However, while some bands disdain the expression of political and social involvement as either pointless or counter-productive, their music may still make a rhetorical intervention in society. For many metalheads, the social practice of the metal scene results in a lifestyle that recognizes their values. Thus, many Native bands incorporate traditional cultural practices that have been ignored, prescribed or obliterated as part of a settler policy and practice characterized by overlapping strategies of genocide, forced treaties, treaty

breaking, land theft, tribal termination and structural racism and today sustained by Native impoverishment, disenfranchisement and continued exploitation. This is true of both struggling reservation acts and widely-known Native musicians, notably Chuck Billy of Testament. The attention to a past which must be seen as part of the contemporary scene is apparently a concrete way of challenging the dominant society's rejection of Native values as primitive and of little relevance to the present.

Ihsan of Norwegian black metal band, Emperor, discussing the celebration of "primitive" cultures, comments that "[...] in the States everything gets mixed together. They have no old culture at all" (Hedge Olsen 139). His words reflect the success of the dominant consumerist culture, including cultural forms such as Hollywood cinema, in marginalizing alternative cultural knowledge. Metal, however, turns out to be one way in which various tribes across the United States do reiterate that knowledge. Nechowen, for example, who have recorded extensively in Chickasaw, are a folk metal band steeped in Native culture as evidenced in both their lyrics and instrumentation. Los Angeles-based Resistant Culture, sometimes referred to as practicing tribal grindcore on the border between the extreme punk and metal genres, use traditional flutes, drums and gourd rattles, as well as chants, in their music and are perhaps the most widely known of the explicitly political Native bands. Their "Beneath the Concrete" assails corporate building and design practices which are seen as crumbling under the threats of pollution and economic uncertainty, envisaging an urgently-needed ecological recovery,⁹ while "Mending the Hoop", as the title suggests, references the need to repair the broken circle of life. Northern Haze, an Inuit metal band from Igloolik began playing in 1985 and were first to record in the Inuktitut language. Newer members grew up

⁹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdFMTAl0Q9k>. Accessed 12 Aug. 2019.

listening to the band and one of them is founder-member James Ungalaq's son. Distinguishing such bands from those in the south of Canada, Luke Ottenhof explains: "[b]ands in the southern music machine are working themselves to the bone for playlist spots and record deals; bands in the north are working themselves to the bone for their communities – their friends, their families, themselves. If not explicitly anti-capitalist in its approach, it's at least community-minded and solidarity-building". This distinction points to a more general one that identifies the DIY approach of many Native bands who are lesser known and perhaps musically-accomplished than Nechowen, Resistant Culture or Northern Haze. The lack of musical infrastructure such as recording and performance venues in much Indian territory pushes bands towards such an aesthetic and towards a genre, metal, that is able to accommodate it.

This is true for the sprawling Navajo reservation which covers about 71,000 square kilometers in Northern Arizona, New Mexico and southern Utah. Here I approach that metal scene largely through discussion of certain visual representations of it. Analysis of specific elements of a scene contribute to our understanding of it and lay the ground work for further detailed studies; certainly, I make no claims to comprehensiveness. As indicated earlier, scholarship has increasingly emphasized the complexity of such scenes. In his pioneering work, Walser, adapting Christopher Small's term "musicking", advocates for "the idea of music as a verb in order to challenge our common practice of analyzing and understanding music in terms of objects, which [...] effaces the social activity that produces musical texts and experiences" (xxiii). Thus, Walser directs attention to the full panoply of activities, within both production and consumption, that characterizes the cultural experiences occurring in a specific location, now generally referred to as the "scene". For current purposes, I draw on the functions and generalizations, some combination of which make up a local music scene, described by Jeremy Wallach

and Alexandra Levine (118).¹⁰ The functions they ascribe to scenes are to act as conduits for “global circulation of metal sounds”, to provide gathering places for the collective consumption of metal artifacts and expertise, to provide sites for performance, and to promote local artists to the larger network of scenes (119). Thus, a community of metalheads is created first by listening to bands playing cover material, later their own compositions; while places to play – perhaps on a flat-bed truck or simply in a family’s hogun – are established. Vital scenic institutions are gradually established, in this instance both on the reservation – the support of Navajo officials including current President, Jonathan Nez, a self-proclaimed metalhead – and adjacent to it, as in the case of concert venue and music shop Juggernaut, in nearby Gallup which now also hosts a small recording studio. [See figure 2.]



Figure 2: Juggernaut Music, Gallup, New Mexico (Photo by the author)

¹⁰ For a review of the various ways in which “scene”, – and “subculture” – has been used in metal studies, and for a detailed application of the term to a variety of situations, see Kahn-Harris 19.

Gallup is home too to radio station, classic rock 93X (KXXI), which has promulgated a harder rock sound on the reservation and environs, and occasionally plays local metal bands. Some of the publications and videos of *Native Entertainment Magazine* have also functioned as scenic institutions.

Wallach and Levine's subsequent generalizations overlap with and explicate their four crucial functions. Amongst their claims is that metal scenes are defined and sustained by amateurs: "in order for scenes to survive, there must be a critical mass of musicians willing to remain for long periods in a liminal state, never really crossing over into the realm of the professional musician" (123). The slippage here from "long periods" to "never" rhetorically enacts both the non-profit, communal aspect of a local metal scene such as that on the Navajo reservation and the vague promise of a wider relevance. Echoing claims of the American dream, Karl Sanders of Death Metal band, Nile, attests; "I think in the spirit of metal there is a work ethic. The "metal gods" reward those who are willing to work hard" (Purcell 75). For Sanders such work means creating new and original metal sounds. His ideal is for an *authentic* metal that is appropriate for its individual scene. Thus, the DIY ethic becomes central to success, even though such success will make it harder to maintain. In addition, as Kahn-Harris notes, "[i]ncreasingly [...] pride in even the most marginal and unpromising location has started to become the norm" (119). In this way the growth of a metal scene has produced a RezMetal identity that celebrates the culture of the Diné whilst recognizing the challenges consequent upon settler-colonialist subjugation of that culture: including the imposition of Christianity, enforcement of the reservation system, and later policies such as termination. Only through incorporating this history, I suggest, can the Diné bands be seen as authentic music-makers worthy of reward from the "metal gods".

The short film, “Metal from the Dirt”, aiming to explicate such circumstances, begins by emphasizing both the lack of jobs on the reservation and the strong cultural roots of the society. Metal music is presented as a response not only to anger over economic grievances, but to a cultural trauma has been passed down through generations. One key interviewee, Myron Lee argues that “[i]f we didn’t have this metal sub-culture, there’d be a lot more dead people around here [...] in this barren wasteland”. But then he hesitates: yes, it is “beautiful but depressing” – in other words, the dirt is generative, not simply barren. (The accompanying image cuts, somewhat unsubtly, between sublime landscapes and broken windows in run-down buildings.) “Our brand of metal is different from anything else, claims Jerold Cecil, I Don’t Konform’s manager, speaking for a supposedly authentic music, peculiar to the developing scene of Navajo metal. Rory James of Mutilated Tyrant describes how his band combines non-Native music with local themes. This is most strikingly illustrated by the connection the film draws between black metal bands and Navajo beliefs. Ashtaroth’s Brent Jensen talks about “embracing the dark side to culture [...] things not supposed to be talked about”. We see the application of corpse paint, as Mutilated Tyrant’s Laurel Tsotsie makes the connection to Navajo witchcraft and the importance of ashes and blood to ceremonial occasions.¹¹

Covering some of the same ground, *RezMetal* is a feature-length documentary on the Diné metal scene currently in production. The film’s writer and director, like *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*’s Zhao, comes originally from elsewhere. Ashkan Soltani is an Iranian-American. In discussion with me, Soltani highlighted this background: “I grew up during the Islamic revolution and in the midst of a devastating war with Iraq. I spoke little English at the time, but I didn’t need to understand the lyrics of metal bands such

¹¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3AnyzzkDzA>.

as Pantera that helped me escape the oppression that drove friends to depression, drug addiction, and ultimately suicide. I found solace in heavy metal, which is often blamed for self-destructive behaviors and suicide". Soltani's words reprise Lee's in "Metal from the Dirt", and the idea provides an underlying thread running through *RezMetal*. Assertions of metal's value as a source of Native pride, identity, and self-fulfillment, and thus as an antidote to suicidal thoughts, suggest an alternative medical metaphor to that hypodermic theory which holds that metal injects the idea of suicide into receptive minds; rather, the injection of a view of the world which acknowledges its problems, biases, and historical wrongs often functions as a vaccination against hopelessness.

A September 2015 report from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) claims that suicide among Native youth in the United States is at crisis-level; among people aged 18 to 24 nationwide, the suicide rate is 12.8 deaths per 100,000 whilst within the Native population that age, the rate nearly doubles to 22.5 deaths per 100,000 ("Suicide rates").¹² Research into potential causes and fixes for the problem remains inconclusive; however the importance of indigenous knowledge and culture and enhancing trust between Native and non-Native communities have been increasingly emphasized. Heather Stringer, in an article entitled "The Healing Power of Heritage", surveys such approaches in four separate initiatives. In one of these, on the Apache White Mountain reservation, she notes how researchers have adapted a triangular (thinking-feeling-

¹² In *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*, Johnny's friend, Sam *aka* Scrapy Coco has committed suicide and his life is celebrated in a brief drinking scene featuring Johnny and his friends, but Zhao avoids emphasizing such details, hoping not to produce a reflexively miserabilist narrative such as those criticized by Aesnap, despite the fact that, as she recalls, "Pine Ridge is kind of the ground zero of all the struggles the reservations face. Around that time teen suicide was declared an epidemic" (Zhao). As I am writing, *The Denver Post* reports on a series of suicides on the Ute Mountain Ute reservation in Montezuma county in south-western Colorado, which borders the Navajo reservation across the New Mexico and Utah lines. See Tabachnik.

-doing) model to one using four quadrants (thoughts, feelings, behaviors, spirituality) in the shape of a circle, thus reflecting the tribe's cyclical world view (48). It is hard to dispute the importance of such work, yet relationships between cultures and behaviors are, of course, complex. Field work among youth at a school site adjacent to a reservation in northern Michigan, for example, led Meagan Harman to conclude, counterintuitively, that "[i]ndividuals who identified and participated in their Native culture were not found to have lower rates of depression and suicidality" (152).¹³

Knowledge and use of traditional practices are undoubtedly invaluable for many Native artists, but others will resist the expectation to make distinctively or purely Native arts. Art does not stand still and evidently work that was scintillating and ground-breaking two hundred years ago cannot effectively be made today. Thus, artistic practices, however traditional, change – and a key part of the artist's activity is making those changes and making them relevant. Traditional art is constantly reinvented or it effectively stops being art at all; in popular parlance it loses authenticity. In fact, representations of metal music such as Soltani's in *RezMetal*, not only advocate for the life-preserving qualities of a metal scene that provides a source of inspiration, self-expression and happiness, but also attempt to reposition metal bands as a part of the fabric of life on the reservation, playing, paradoxically, an authentic Indian music: "I hope *RezMetal* will bring authenticity to contemporary Native American narratives. [...] Many of the young Native musicians and fans featured in the film are deeply connected to their traditional

¹³ Harman questions still more fundamental truisms about suicide, noting that: "Native American youth were found to have higher rates of depression but also to have higher self-esteem" (152). Part of the confusion here may still be the result of category fallacy – the assumption that categories can be consistent from one language or culture to another, one of many problems that bedevil western investigation of indigenous populations. For the origins of this discussion see Kleinman.

culture, but they are also connected to the music and cultures of modern society”.

RezMetal's main narrative line concerns Kyle Felter, singer and guitarist with Diné thrash metal band I Don't Konform (IDK) who we witness at the start of the film playing at a house concert in Window Rock. Felter, following the suicide of his cousin, a fellow metalhead and bandmate, sends a demo tape to Fleming Rasmussen, Grammy Award-winning producer of Metallica, in Copenhagen. This leads to Rasmussen's visit to Window Rock, and a first recording in a hogun only a mile or so from Navajo tribal headquarters. To his surprise, Rasmussen realizes that he is a household name on the Navajo nation. The film then tracks IDK's trip to his Sweet Silence Studio in Copenhagen to record and many months later we witness Kyle and the band's Drummer, Randy, pick up the first batch of their debut albums in Gallup. We see Chuck Billy and Testament visit the reservation and Kyle and the always supportive, then-vice-President Nez attending Metallica's concert in Phoenix. At the end of the film, however, Kyle is living in Phoenix, working to support his family. Wider success, let alone making a living through music, seems no closer.

Interviewed for the *Navajo Times*, Rasmussen reports that he heard an authentic anger in the sound Felter originally shared with him, and then – as if explaining that authenticity – describes his journey to the United States: “I spoke to a couple of American people on the plane, and they weren't too proud when they heard I was going here”, he says. “Their thought was that they gave the Native Americans a really bad deal. [...] That's what I want to come out once the album is done – that anger about the way they have been treated”. (Pineo 4). Indeed, Rasmussen seems to have conceived of his project as one in which commerce and advocacy should be combined: “We can do a total underground album, which will sell two copies, which is to Mom and Dad. [...]

But it would be nice to do something that maybe gets a broader appeal, and maybe tell America what's going on on the reservations" (Pineo 5). *RezMetal* pursues a similar objective, featuring not just IDK but the Diné metal scene more broadly. Fitted into the IDK story are recordings of other metal bands such as Testify for whom tribal councilman Edmund Yazzie plays drums – while his son sings and plays guitar, thus echoing one of Wallach and Levine's defining generalizations: that the subculture does not cast out its elders, that knowledge is passed down from generation to generation (126). Also interspersed, are interviews not only with fans and musicians but with officials such as Yazzie and Nez who makes clear that he sees metal, quite specifically, as something that offers "hope and a sense of belonging to those who may be contemplating suicide". Thus, metal music, the film contends, has become an important tool for both tribal solidarity and individual fulfilment, as much a means of creative decolonization as, say, a return to traditional weaving.

Testify and IDK are not amongst the more extreme metal bands on the Navajo reservation – and Fetzer and Yazzie are congenial and approachable. Their music and appearance are hardly threatening. Diné black metal bands like Morbithory, largely absent from *RezMetal*, will seem more so to many observers. In a video interview distributed through YouTube as part of a series of such explorations of contemporary Native identity produced by *Native Entertainment Magazine*, band members, Lord Eligos, Lord Amaris, and Lord Vehexen, from the small reservation community of Many Farms, Arizona, appear in corpse paint and discuss Native exploitation and anger and their consequence for Indian identity and values. Benjamin Hodge Olson notes that "notions of place, history, identity and traditional culture [...] are endemic to black metal of all persuasions" (136). Evidently these abstract commonalities in black metal provide a node of reinterpretation whereby global practices

are embodied in local manifestations. One might argue that because of its origins there the pagan Norse context of Norway provides a template for alternative versions of black metal, but, more importantly, each national, regional, or local variant of the form must fill the requisite slots with its own uniquely interrelated circumstances that, in the case of Diné bands, include colonialism and the neo-colonialism reflected in negotiating life in a nation within a nation – specifically, Many Farms, *Arizona*. Indeed, Morbithory begins the interview by explaining its location in relation to various geographic features, notably the Chuska mountains.

Whilst place, environment, history, and traditional culture are all very different for Morbithory than for, say, Emperor, a resentment of Christianity's displacement of traditional beliefs is a commonality. Drummer, Lord Eligos explains: "Norwegian has their own shit. [...] We have our own traditional values. [...] but we also play along with them because Christianity took their tradition and destroyed it. [...] and they also took our tradition, destroyed it. [...] rather than just bitching about emotions and shit, we actually sing about the real struggle and that's Mother Earth trying to help us out". Lord Vehexen proudly describes the band's DIY aesthetic, expressed in the home-made wrist-band of spikes that he sports, a "personal creation" fashioned from "construction" nails. The band explain how they incorporate Navajo ideas and words into their music and how the corpse paint is expressive of war-paint, a gesture of resistance. "Fuck yous to all the people who took our land. We are on the war path". The acknowledgment of traditional "respect for the darker side of life" is extended to the band's commitment, "to spread the message of Satan himself". This link to a Satanism averred by many of the Norwegian bands is somewhat inconsistently invoked by Morbithory. Later, it is expressed not as congruent with a traditional belief-system but as a consequence of disenfranchisement. The objective is "to represent poverty – the life of being Navajo, considered

as rejects”. To which Vehexen adds: “And to praise Satan”.¹⁴ Thus Satanism here represents an anti-Christian resistance to exploitation and exclusion, an invocation of tradition, part of an attempt to be individual, to be authentic.

Concluding Thoughts and New Perspectives

As an alternative approach to defining Native identity and authenticity in a local response to the transnational world of media flows, I want to briefly consider television show *Making Regalia*, broadcast by First Nation Experience (FNX), a free channel out of San Bernardino Community College District in southern California which transmits a wide variety of programs targeting Native audiences, frequently highlighting both traditional and hybrid cultural forms. *Making Regalia* is a program about how to use different hackles, Indian nun chucks, and horsehair to make headdresses and dance sticks for use in pow-wows and on other traditional occasions. Juaquin Lonelodge explains why he uses particular kinds of twine and specific knots, and his problem with Elmer’s’ glue. He also interviews older regalia makers, whilst explaining how the continuance of traditional practices will, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, allow participants to travel outside their own reservations to perform. Originating from Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Television, *Making Regalia* was at first only regionally distributed but, following its success on the vimeo platform, was picked up by FNX. The idea is to preserve a knowledge and skillset that Lonelodge felt was disappearing. With its instructional format designed to promote traditional clothing

¹⁴ The on-line comments to the interview reflect this uncertainty, one respondent writing of the Satanic references: “It is satire. They can’t be serious”. The interview and accompanying comments are available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjedCnyMA4U>. Accessed 12 Aug. 2019.

practices using DIY techniques, *Making Regalia* bears comparison with Travis's mushfaked shirts and dresses in *Songs My Brothers Taught Me*, the DIY venues for metal performance on the reservation and the black metal paraphernalia of Morbithory.

Evidently, the notion of making your own allows for a localized response, whether in the spirit of accommodation or resistance, to commercial consumer culture. It proposes an authenticity that is absent from mass-produced ready-made cultural objects. Although authenticity is pervasively held up as positive, the notion of a purely authentic culture is evidently untenable. Authenticity is a constructed concept that changes over time yet purports to describe an unchanging essential identity, thus sustaining stereotypes: if some idea or practice fails to fit the stereotype it must simply be inauthentic. But human identities have many different aspects and metal scenes on spaces such as the Navajo reservation can challenge such static ideas of what is culturally appropriate, so that authenticity in the sense of allegiance to tribal values is filtered through Norwegian black metal as well as modern glues. As Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright point out in a discussion of visual culture, but of equal applicability to musical forms, "[t]o make claims about authentic cultural expression unencumbered by influences from colonial forces is to ignore the reality of mixing, appropriation, and cultural exchange. [...] Viewers may appropriate what they see to make new meanings, meanings that may be not just different but even oppositional to the ideologies intended or received in these texts' original contexts" (406). Thus, is metal imitated, reimagined and reused on the reservation by musicians and other participants in the scene.

Sturken and Cartwright complete their survey of visual culture by arguing that "we should learn from the tactics and politics of those forced to live at the margins of late modernity's development [specifically through their] [...] assemblage and bricolage strate-

gies” (426). What Niall Scott describes as the metalhead’s “pursuit of authenticity, honesty and integrity” (232) is intimately tied to making the music and the scene distinctively local, adopting a DIY approach using whatever comes to hand. At the margins this is more necessary both for economic and cultural reasons. Not being granted full access to modernity’s privileges encourages the use of DIY techniques that resist consumerist norms, suggest new ways to forge and explain identity, and may allow a cultural resistance to both stereotypes and ecologically unsustainable development. The potential for a more explicit activist political and social focus in constantly evolving indigenous metal scenes is certainly there. Songs such as Morbithory’s “This Dying Fucking Useless Earth” express, in an especially bleak and hopeless manner, a sense of desperation about abuse of the land and Native land rights; that protest is echoed in more positive terms in Resistant Culture’s “Landkeeper”, which begins with the sounds of crows, wind, and traditional flute music. Through the protest they register, such interventions, whilst they acknowledge that the Indians may have lost, also announce a culturally specific defiance. They begin to fight back – and often they imply that the environmental degradation consequent on colonialism, neoliberalism, and rampant consumerism damns us all. Indeed, Native metal regularly confronts the injustices of colonial land-grabs and is thus part of a wave of Native challenges to non-indigenous land use. In the United States this movement has been most clearly manifested in the protests over the construction of the pipeline at Standing Rock. As I write, Native sit-ins in opposition to the construction of a further telescope at Mauna Kea on the big island of Hawai’i continue. In Australia, the Uluru Statement from the Heart of May 2017 explains: “[t]he ancestral tie between the land or ‘mother nature,’ and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is

the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished [...]”. While authenticity is a fabulous creature, land and water rights are eminently connected to the real, physical world. The supposedly inauthentic culture of indigenous metal illustrates the hybridity of all identities, but offers opportunities for new kinds of engagements with modernity and the continuing consequences of colonialism and neoliberalism.¹⁵

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¹⁵ How authentically I can write about Native metal music is a question that must be asked. I am a white Englishman ensconced at a university in the United States. I study film and cultures from around the world because I find the comparative ideal worthwhile, but I tread, metaphorically, on many different soils from which I do not hail. I write from a position of privilege, advancing my own work while attempting to be cognizant of the relative position of the knowledge and value system in which I operate. If it goes without saying, it still needs to be said that I do not and cannot speak on behalf of any Native communities; rather I speak about them, attempting to show respect and understanding, but always from a specific, distanced perspective.

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**FOLK MUSIC AS PROTEST AND THE
PROGRESSIVE VOICE OF WOODY GUTHRIE**

**LA MÚSICA FOLK COMO PROTESTA
Y LA VOZ PROGRESIVA DE WOODY GUTHRIE**

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ABSTRACT: Folk music as protest developed in various ways and through many different lenses. But the influences of Marxism and the Communist Party (CP) were constant. Through the International Workers of the World (IWW) and promotion of protest lyrics by the communist press, folk music became the voice of the working class and the disadvantaged. Although presented through various performance models such as Revolutionary Choruses, it was the singer/songwriter that became most influential. It was through the CP's American Music League, that the first singer/songwriter embodiment would emerge: Woody Guthrie. He was a tireless advocate for the poor expressed through his simple approach as a radio personality, author, musician, and recording artist. He not only standardized the singer/songwriter as a voice of consciousness, but he also became folk music's first celebrity. In doing so, he enabled folk music to crossover from Communist-led insti-

tutions, into the American mainstream. He would inspire future songwriters such as Bob Dylan to compose their own protest songs. And it was through Dylan, that protest music would turn into rock and later become a mainstream market-driven success.

KEYWORDS: music; folk; protest; art; activism.

RESUMEN: La música folclórica como protesta se desarrolló de diversas formas y a través de diferentes lentes. Pero las influencias del marxismo y del Partido Comunista (PC) fueron constantes. A través de la *International Workers of the World* (IWW) y la promoción de letras de protesta por parte de la prensa comunista, la música folclórica se convirtió en la voz de la clase trabajadora y los desfavorecidos. Aunque se presentó a través de varios modelos de interpretación, como *Revolutionary Choruses*, fue el cantante / compositor el que se volvió más influyente. Fue a través de la *American Music League* del PC, que surgió la primera encarnación del cantante y compositor: Woody Guthrie. Fue un incansable defensor de los pobres expresado a través de su enfoque simple como personalidad de la radio, autor, músico y artista de grabación. No solo estandarizó al cantante/compositor como una voz de conciencia, sino que también se convirtió en la primera celebridad de la música folk. Al hacerlo, permitió que la música folclórica pasara de las instituciones dirigidas por los comunistas a la corriente dominante estadounidense. Inspiraría a futuros compositores como Bob Dylan a componer sus propias canciones de protesta. Y fue a través de Dylan, que la música de protesta se convertiría en rock y luego se convertiría en un éxito impulsado por el mercado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: música; folk; protesta; arte; activismo.

Throughout its history, the term “folk music” has consistently been redefined and filtered through a number of different lenses. For some, the term “folk” was used to describe a “process” rather than style. According to Dave Van Ronk – ringleader of New York’s second folk revival – folk music was in his words, “The musical expression of preliterate or illiterate communities and passed directly from singer to singer” (27). To Michael C. Scoggins, “folk music” by definition was “the traditional music of a nation or ethnic group”. He went on to say that “unlike classical music, folk music has historically been anonymous” and that “folk musicians, unlike classical musicians, were traditionally amateurs” (33). Others, such as English folk song collector Cecil James Sharp wrote that folk songs were “songs created by the common people” (3-4). But it was Northern Irish poet Ciaran Carson who drew a distinction between folk and traditional music. He posits that unlike traditional music, folk music can be played on modern instrumentation and in more contemporary styles. He also points out the difference between instrumental music (being music for dance) and folk song tradition performed by solo singing, the latter being of storytelling ballads and folk songs.

With regard to folk as an American tradition, authors such as Elizabeth F. Barkley trace its origins to British folksongs in remote areas of the Appalachian Mountains during the colonial era. For Scoggins, change of instrumentation and lyrics of new experiences had transformed these songs from British into American. One common practice was to set original lyrics to preexisting British folk tunes accompanied by fiddle, banjo or guitar (the latter two, more common in America).

There was also an additional attribute: simplicity. Regardless of origins, folk has always conveyed a basic, anyone-can-do-it approach that was relatively easy to execute. It was this particular property that would help perpetuate American folk music’s development well into the 20th century. And along with it, mass dissemination such as

the rise in literacy, the phonograph record, radio, and eventually, television. Another important factor, was protest.

By the late 1800s, traditional American music in the form of hymns and marches were already serving a different function: propaganda songs. According to authors, Richard A. and JoAnn Reuss, propaganda songs were defined as “[s]ongs of persuasion on behalf of political and social causes” (20). In fact, propaganda songs have been part of the American landscape since the early colonists and would continue to express lyrics of grievance such as anti-slavery, temperance, and suffrage.¹

The synthesis between propaganda and folk music began with the American labor movement of the early 20th century. The idea behind this merger originated with the Marxist movement. Indeed, from the very beginning, the Marxist Movement understood the power and significance of propaganda songs from Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), to the Paris Commune of 1871, to workers choral groups and labor unions in the early 20th century.

They also understood that songs expressing a cause can foster a spirit of brotherhood, militancy, and solidarity – something that speechmaking alone could not replicate. Thus, by initiating a new American tradition, protest music would resonate throughout the century and become one of folk music’s defining characteristics. Not only with regard to subject matter but eventually by mid the 20th century, a distinct aesthetic style will emerge.

The process began with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or “Wobblies”).² As a Marxist-influenced labor organization, the

¹ One example was a singing group, The Hutchinson Family from New Milford, NH. They toured the US from 1841 to 1876 (35 years) performing protest songs that tackled issues such as the abolition of slavery and the Temperance movement.

² The IWW was founded in Chicago in 1905. Through their Marxist ideology, they set out to organize laborers who, in the eyes of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), were undesirable outcasts: unskilled immigrants, migrant farm workers, and people of color.

IWW systematically popularized and distributed a message of class struggle via the *Little Red Songbook*. They saw themselves as one big union with poetry and song inseparable from their rebellious activities. For them, an emphasis on emancipation, education, and organization was synonymous with creative self-expression.

Before the *Little Red Songbook*, the earliest 20th century collection of labor songs was *Socialist Songs with Music*, compiled in 1901 by Charles H. Kerr – he borrowed significantly from an earlier collection, *Chants of Labor* (1888) by William Morris. As opposed to these collections, the *Little Red Songbook* consisted of new and original material by IWW songwriters. Their content included songs, ballads, and poems. Among their various writers were Ralph Chaplin, T-Bone Slim, William D. Haywood, and most notably, Joe Hill.³

He was a picket line/union organizer involved in revolutionary campaigns within the US, Mexico, and Canada – he was always “on the road”. He saw the class struggle, as a wave toward worldwide labor solidarity. In his own lifetime (and thereafter), Joe Hill was remembered for his songs, poetry, and cartoon drawings. His lyrics first appeared in the *Little Red Songbook* in 1909 and remained so throughout future editions.

With songs like “The Preacher and the Slave” and “Pie in the Sky”, he understood the power of song through simple lyrics expressing defiance and solidarity. And because his words were set to popular tunes, audience participation was relatively easy. By 1910, his “hits” were sung at picket lines, union meetings, and street gatherings. His songs of social consciousness, served as a function to emotionally unite the working class toward a common cause – all from a Marxist-oriented approach. But once the Communist Party (CP) in America was established, things started to change with a lesser emphasis on music.

³ Joe Hill (b. Joel Emmanuel Häggglund and also known as Joseph Hillström – Gävle, Sweden, October 7, 1979; d. November 19, 1915, Salt Lake City, Utah).

It began with the birth of the communist movement in America. During their “Founding Convention” in Chicago from August 31st to September 5, 1919, a radical faction of the Socialist Party in America (SPA) – known as the Left-Wing Section (LWS) – split from the SPA. There were two factions within the LWS: The Communist Party of America (CPA) – who grew out of the former Language Federation of the SPA and the Communist Labor Party (CLP) consisting of prominent people from the LWS who attempted unsuccessfully at taking over the SPA during their convention.

On November 8, 1919, the first Red Scare began with police raids on 71 offices and the headquarters of the CPA within the New York City area. Coordinated arrests were made by the New York Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities – approximately 700 police officers of the NYPD were involved. A cache of communist/socialist literature was seized and a significant number of suspected CPA members were arrested. From then on, the CPA conventions would have to be held in secret.

By 1923, their existence – both the CPA and CLP – was threatened due to internal, factional infighting and the mounting pressure of arrests and harassments on a now national scale. As a result, the CPA and the CLP consolidated. Since their survival interests were now paramount, it became their sole, preoccupied focus. This left no room for any considerations regarding programs of art and music. If needed, they would on occasions appropriate worker’s songs that have already existed such as the IWW or proletarian repertoire from Russia or Germany.

Then in 1928, a new phase had begun known as the Third Period. It transformed the international communist movement into a more radicalized, ideological direction where strict doctrinal adherence became central. It was spearheaded in a speech by Nicolai Bukarin in July of 1928 at the World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. He suggested that a breakdown of world capitalism was

imminent and that intensification of the class struggle was needed to overthrow the Bourgeois and install a new proletarian order.⁴ From now on, art will serve as a weapon of agitated propaganda (a.k.a. agitprop). In America, this meant that the northern communist press would be among agitprop's several key outlets.⁵

Left-wing publications such as *The Daily Worker*⁶ distributed poems/lyrics written by southern coalminers and textile workers specifically for their northern readers. They did so to publicize union labor struggles while simultaneously promoting their own radical agenda. This was due to urban-based union organizers who traveled to the American South mobilizing strikes at textile mills and coal mines. They connected with rural cultures and adapted local traditions into their cause especially with regard to indigenous folk tunes/lyrics. Once they came in contact, they realized how influential these songs were in recruiting, agitating, and promoting union solidarity.

Among the first of folksong lyrics published by the communist press, came from the textile workers of Gastonia, North Carolina. It was home to 570 mills with 66-hour workweeks, sporadic pay-cuts, and deplorable working conditions. The communist-sponsored National Textile Workers Union (NTWU) – with the help of radical organizers – staged a strike that was covered closely by communist newspapers such as the *New Masses*.⁷ The first example of pub-

⁴ According to Comintern (Communist International) theory, the First Period following World War I, marked an insurgency and eventual defeat of the working class. The Second Period, marked a firm consolidation of Capitalism from 1920-27.

⁵ A noted example, was the *New Masses*. An American Marxist magazine with close ties to Communist Party USA published from 1926 to 1948.

⁶ Published by Communist Party USA, *The Daily Worker* was based in New York City. It was first published in 1924 and at its peak, reached a circulation of 35,000.

⁷ *New Masses* was an American Marxist magazine with close ties to Communist Party USA. It was published from 1926 to 1948.

lished folk lyric [from the strike] was presented in the *New Masses* in August of 1929.

It was written by an eleven-year old boy named Odell Corey whose folk song was a caricature entitled: “May I Sleep in Your Barn Tonight, Mister?” He was dubbed as an early “poet laureate” of the labor strike. He made reference to Manville Jenckes, owner of the biggest textile mill in Gastonia who “done us dirty, and he set us out on the ground”. He also referenced NTWU strike leader, Fred Beal: “May I sleep in your tent tonight, Beal? For its cold lying on the ground” (Reuss 84). He also wrote an additional song – a parody of a popular folk song, “Casey Jones” – which was published in *The Nation*.

Of more cultural significance, was the work of Ella May Wiggins. By the time she was twenty-nine, she had given birth to nine children – four of whom would die of whooping cough and poor nourishment⁸ – while caring for her crippled husband. As a textile spool spinner, she endured 12-hour shifts, six days a week for the meager pay of nine dollars per week. She rose to prominence working for the NTWU by addressing public gatherings, organizing union activities, and writing protest songs. She wrote her songs on the back of leaflets or pamphlets and sang them in open gatherings.

Her best-known works were “Chief Aderholt”, “Come and Join the I.L.D.”, and “Mill Mother’s Lament” all of which were published in the communist press. Following her death by a vigilante mob on September 14, 1929, she was hailed as a martyr of the labor movement and at her funeral – as she was laid to rest – graveside mourners sang her song, “Mill Mother’s Lament”. As the years passed, her songs were remembered as landmark contributions to the

⁸ She requested to be transferred to day shift (instead of her current night shift) in order to look after her sick children but her request was denied. Because she had no choice but to quit, she had no money for food and medicine which led to the deaths of her sick children.

Gastonia laborers' cause. "Mill Mother's Lament" would be published in *American Folksongs of Protest* (1953), a collection compiled by John Greenway and the communist press would write almost forty articles about Wiggins following her death. But coverage of the union activity and the publishing of militant songs would continue on to 1931 where the next major strikes occurred this time, in the coal mining regions of Harlan County, Kentucky.

Similar to Gastonia, northern-based organizers were mobilizing the coalminers of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky. In Harlan County Kentucky, they stumbled upon hard-bitten indigenous poetry and publicized it via the left-wing press using it for their own means as agitprop. They also provided a narrative for some of most violent clashes in the history of the US labor movement. It began in the Spring of 1931 at a time when wage cuts and job losses had pushed miners to the boiling point.

Following a failed strike attempt by the United Mine Workers (UMW),⁹ radical organizers sponsored a new union called the National Miners Union (NMU). Although few miners had understood Marxist doctrine of the Third Period, they realized that organizers were coming to their aid in a desperate situation. It was within this environment, that the NMU staged a new strike which eventually, along with the union itself, was smashed by vigilantes in service of the coal companies.

It began in the early summer of 1931 when Vigilante gangs launched a campaign of terror against the strikers/laborers with propaganda and violence aimed at eradicating what they called, "foreign involvement". Many laborers were murdered, others were severely injured, and still others were made homeless. All labor activ-

⁹ Communist organizers filled in the leadership vacuum left empty by a failed walkout by the American Federation of Labor's (AFL) United Mine Workers (UMW). They [UMW] were accused of selling out their local members.

ity ceased when the workers went on strike and by early 1932 – as a backlash against them [initiated by mine owners] – NMU leaders were either incarcerated, murdered, or forced to flee or into hiding.

What became known as “Bloody Harlan” was covered extensively by the northern radical press. Part of that coverage centered on the Dreiser Committee – a group of northern writers led by novelist Theodore Dreiser who publicized the striking workers’ deplorable treatment and conditions. Of the 50 people who had testified, the most notable was Aunt Molly Jackson (1880-1961): midwife, ballad singer, and militant unionist.¹⁰ After becoming a member, she wrote protest songs such as “I Am a Union Woman”, “Kentucky Miners Wife”, and “Poor Miners Farewell”. She had been jailed for previous union activities.

During the Dreiser Hearings on November 7, 1931 at the Glendon Baptist Church in Arjay, Kentucky, she dramatized the pitiful conditions by performing her own song, “Ragged Hungry Blues” to an enthusiastic reception. More importantly, was the coverage received in the communist press such as *The Daily Worker*. It mentioned her song at least seven times and printed the lyrics. She and her stepbrother Jim Garland – an NMU organizer – went on to inspire more militant statements that the left-wing would co-opt and publish for their own purposes. They would also – through their activism – increasingly expose urban radicals into the world of traditional American folklore.

Another key outlet [of Third period influence], were urban artists associated with the CP. Their goal was to define the question of what constituted “proletarian art” and consider as to how the new communist polemic be interpreted. One example, were Revolutionary

¹⁰ After becoming a midwife in 1908, Aunt Molly Jackson would deliver 884 babies. During the Dreiser hearings, she addressed inquiries of infant mortality and malnutrition that she had witnessed throughout her [midwife] career.

Choruses. Throughout the 1920s [before the Third Period] they were among the earliest music institutions supported by the Communist Party consolidation of 1923 (in spite of the party's overall indifference with regard to music). Because a majority of the American communist movement's membership were from Eastern Europe, most of the revolutionary choruses were formed within their respective communities. The origins of this tradition dated back to their European days where labor organizations devoted to music were an inherent part of left-wing working-class cultures.

Immigrants arriving the US brought this tradition with them starting around 1900. Practically every language culture in the CP movement had formed their own chorus and orchestra – among the most noted, was the Jewish Freiheit Gesang Ferein (Freedom Singers Society). Choruses were mostly made up of first generation American migrants who were either factory workers or sweatshop laborers. In the evenings, they would gather to rehearse and because the music was difficult to successfully execute, they required extensive [rehearsal] time. Their repertoire included workers' songs and choral music from their European homes.

They each had their own music directors/conductors who were poorly paid (Jacob Schaefer of the Freiheit Gesang Ferein was one of them). Their concerts were mostly periodic and they performed for their local language community and related workers' organizations. Although they were appreciated only within their own language groups, they did hold an exalted place as the center of cultural life in the early communist movement. As a result, they were influential to the process of developing musical activity as the Communist Party grew and unfolded.

But they were virtually ignored outside of their respective language groups. As a result, they did not connect to the average American laborer not only because of foreign languages but also due of the music's technical difficulty. Another example was the

Composers Collective. Established in 1932, consisting of left-wing composers and critics who performed and wrote high-art, activist works and revived old revolutionary compositions. They set their own rules for the foundation of proletarian music. Among their ranks, were Henry Cowell, Wallingford Riegger, George Antheil, Mark Blitzstein, Elie Siegmeister, Ruth Crawford, and ethnomusicologist, Charles Seeger. In addition to being schooled on Marxism, they incorporated elements of Third Period ideology in their attempts to transform music into weapons of the workers' revolution.

But the Composers Collective had a problem similar to Revolutionary Choruses: they could not connect with an uneducated, average working-class group – their art-form was too high-browed, elitist, and complex. It was not until 1933, that the first English-language revolutionary chorus was founded. By that time, another change within the international communist movement had already begun. It became known as The Popular Front.

It marked a shift away from Moscow's centralized control. With fear of a rising Germany, they decreed that CP organizations join with local left-wing groups – regardless of ideology – to unite against fascism. This gave communists worldwide permission to adopt their own mannerisms free of Moscow's influence. In the US, it meant that the CP "Americanize" itself. As a result, the role of art would change. Rather than agitprop of the elite or the communist press, it would now serve the common folk. In this respect, the concept of "art-as-a-weapon" had given way to a new emphasis on "folklore".

The transition began with the American Music League (AML) consisting of bands, orchestras, and choruses. By 1937, their groups had evolved to meet new standards inspired by the Popular Front. For choruses, English was now the norm and despite their emphasis on labor, revolutionary, and folk songs, some – but not all – still maintained a Euro-based, high art approach. Nonetheless, their concerts drew increasingly large numbers.

By the late 1930s, sing-alongs with the audience became standard. This helped to simplify and popularize folk music while providing entertainment far removed from the picket lines. It was also during this time that the AML introduced urban-based folk singers of whom the elite had little respect due to their simple, common-folk approach. They would however, leave a lasting legacy long after the choruses had come and gone. They would be known, as “Lomax Singers”.

Alan Lomax¹¹ promoted folk singers who were unique yet, influenced by his view of life and plight of the disadvantaged.¹² Unlike revolutionary choruses or Composer Collectives, Lomax singers connected straightaway through simple, direct songwriting and an easy-going, anyone-can-do-it performance style. Although some folk groups had emerged, it was the Lomax singer with guitar who would shape the art of folk music for decades to come.

The source of his left-wing influence was knowledge and scholarship of unknown indigenous American artists. He cataloged their traditions through working with his father, John A. Lomax. According to Gene Bluestein, John Lomax met with a group of academic folklorists in 1913 and emphasized that the significance of American folksong was not in transplanted British folk ballads, but rather in songs of “miners, lumbermen, Great Lakes sailors, railroad men, cowboys, and Negroes” (Brackett 142) – a turning point in the academic study of folk songs

Alan Lomax began by helping his father explore prisons of the south and discovering artists like Huddie Ledbetter (a.k.a. Lead Belly), Dock Reed, and Vera Hall. As he furthered his field experience, he

¹¹ Alan Lomax (b. January 31, 1915, Austin, Texas; d. July 19, 2002, Safety Harbor, Florida).

¹² Lomax’s left-wing conversion was concurrent with the start of the Popular Front. More than any other figure, he was the main force behind folk music’s revival in urban America.

met with and collected songs of many indigenous cultures¹³ – an insight that enabled him to empathize with their hardships expressed through songs of grievance and first-hand experience.

He thereafter met folksingers from both rural and urban roots like Burl Ives, Josh White, and Pete Seeger. Lomax promoted them by booking performances, guiding their careers, finding record labels, and recording them in the studio. His enthusiastic support of Woody Guthrie – one of his favorite singers – was no exception. As a result, Guthrie would be one of the most noted legacies to emerge from the Popular Front era.¹⁴

He was described as a man of the earth who wrote songs based on first-hand experience loosely influenced by Marxism while romanticizing the hobo free-spirit who rode in box cars and hitchhiked cross country. As an embodiment of the common-folk, he wrote about their hardships and later – with the Almanac Singers – synthesized both folk and workers music together making them synonymous. With The Weavers in 1949, he was part of the first folk recording to be popularized nationally through the Hit Parade.¹⁵ But the process from obscurity to crossover notoriety began in the summer of 1938.

Traveling back to Los Angeles, the plight that he had witnessed of the Dustbowl disaster¹⁶ had deeply affected him. Describing it to

¹³ By 1940, Lomax worked as assistant in charge of the Archive of American Folksong for the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

¹⁴ Woodrow Wilson Guthrie (b. July 14, 1912, Okemah, Oklahoma; d. October 3, 1967, New York City).

¹⁵ The first folk song to become a national hit was *Goodnight Irene* (written in 1908 by Huddie Ledbetter) recorded by The Weavers in 1949 on the Decca label – it sold 2,000,000 copies. Also, as a member of The Weavers, Guthrie wrote a song that became the second folk song to become a national hit in 1950 called *So Long*, *It's Been Good to Know Yuh* selling over a million copies, reaching #4 on the *Hit Parade* – it was a rewrite of his song, *Dusty Old Dust*.

¹⁶ The Dustbowl Disaster was a drought caused by violent dust storms that severely damaged the environment and agriculture of the American southwest. It came in phases: 1934, 1936, and 1939/40.

his wife as “about people being hungry and not having a place to live” (Cray 132), it provided a new sense of purpose. His role was to help the dust bowl victims of his native Southwest from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Kansas. In his own words, “for every farmer who was dusted out or tracted out, another ten were chased out by bankers” (Cray 134). For him, it was a call to activism.

Following his Los Angeles arrival, he visited radio station KFVD where he once hosted the *Woody and Lefty Lou Show*.¹⁷ He began listening to Ed Robbin’s left-wing commentary broadcast. Robbin was deeply critical of fascist movements in both the US and in Europe; poverty in a nation of affluence; Jim Crow laws of the South; and nationwide segregation especially in Los Angeles. By this time, he was also bureau chief of a Communist Party newspaper, the *People’s Daily World*.

With actor Will Geer, he introduced Guthrie into left-wing ideology by explaining through a Marxist lens the inequalities of a rigged system. Although he would study Marxism, be an avid reader of *The Daily Worker*, and influenced by communism itself, Guthrie was not a doctrinaire. He took what he wanted; what best fit his worldview; and disposed of the rest – he never became an official party member. His role was to be the voice of the poor and the disadvantaged.

His first outlet was a column he wrote for the *People’s Daily World* called “Woody Sez”. The idea was to write, “just little comments on things the way I see them” (Cray 152). He debuted on Friday, May 12, 1939. From then until January of 1940, he wrote 174 commentaries – each consisting of four to five paragraphs – about

¹⁷ The *Woody and Lefty Lou Show*, with Maxine Crissman as “Lefty Lou from Old Mizzou” ran on a Los Angeles-based station, KFVD (and briefly on XELO from Tia Juana, Baja, California) from September 14, 1937 to June 18, 1938.

the events of the day as well as his own life.¹⁸ The column itself, was influenced by his fellow Oklahoman, Will Rogers (who had also written a column) and the hillbilly, Okie dialect from books that he had read as a boy.

He sent his columns to *The Daily Worker* which were approved for publication. According to its feature editor Sender Garlin, his columns promoted the party's humanity – their interest in people – even though it was not of CP doctrine. At the time, Guthrie's writings were highly pointed lampooning Wall Street (as opposed to bankers) and expressing opposition to the US involvement in the European war. "Woody Sez" became a popular daily feature gaining him notoriety in the east coast, left-wing circles. But it was Alan Lomax, who would launch him into national status.

It began at CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System). His colleague Earl Robinson, was impressed with Guthrie's natural abilities. In his view, Woody was the consummate performer who had personality, grit, and charisma. Lomax was even more impressed. For him, Guthrie was a resurrection of Will Rogers.¹⁹ Influenced by his fellow Oklahoman, he [Guthrie] emulated Rogers' style of one-liners, quick jokes, social commentary, and empathy for the working class – he was Will Rogers with a guitar. He would also become the embodiment and voice of the disadvantaged with protest songs like "Vigilante Man", "Dusty Old Dust", "I Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore", and "Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues".

After first inviting him to the Library of Congress – Lomax's employer where he managed the folksong archive – he invited

¹⁸ He also drew cartoons – 82 of them – each drawn within a two-inch space. They were basically stick figures with faces displaying Guthrie's unique, lively personality.

¹⁹ Will Rogers (b. William Penn Adair Rogers November 4, 1879, Oologah, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory – now Oklahoma; d. August 15, 1935, Point Barrow, Alaska Territory): he was a comedic actor, columnist, trick-rope artist, Ziegfeld Follies star, humorist, explorer, and radio personality.

Woody to record his own songs. By 1940, Lomax was approached by RCA to record his own folksong album. Because he was preoccupied with his radio shows, managing the archive, and promoting folk artists, he was simply too busy and instead, suggested that they consider Woody Guthrie.

This unknown entity – an authentic witness to the Dust Bowl Disaster – was one who “wrote and spoke the folk idiom of the Southwest with natural perfection” (Craig 179-180). At the time, RCA had taken an interest in the success of both the novel and 1940 film of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. On the heels of that success, they decided to go with Guthrie. He would record on the old Victor label (the original name before it merged with RCA).

They requested twelve songs on the dust bowl. With RCA’s interest in Steinbeck’s novel, Guthrie was asked to write a song about Tom Joad (the book’s main character). He spent the entire night writing it on a typewriter. He would thereafter, consider it to be his best effort as he wrote in *The Daily Worker*, “the best thing I’ve done so far” (Cray 180). “Tom Joad” consisted of 17 verses set to the tune of a Carter Family ballad, “John Hardy”. In essence, he condensed an entire novel into six minutes that would take up two sides of a 78-rpm vinyl disk.

Recorded at Victor Studios in Camden, New Jersey, the album known as *Dustbowl Ballads* was Guthrie’s first commercial recording.²⁰ Along with the double-sided “Tom Joad”, the other two disks had six songs each. Of noted interest, were his liner notes. This 2000-word essay was a scathing critique of bankers, landlords, vigilantes, the police, and the war in Europe. He commemorated his fellow Southwesterners – victims of the dust bowl disaster who

²⁰ Recorded on April 26 and May 3, 1940.

took to the road as refugees looking for in Woody's words, "Honest work for honest pay" (Cray 181).

The album was released in July of 1940. Although Aunt Molly Jackson and Ella May Wiggins wrote militant, labor-union lyrics,²¹ Guthrie expressed working-class plights on a more universal level. He brought his songs to the studio that were distributed through RCA thus initiating folklore's transcendence beyond the left-wing press. Although sales were low, *Dustbowl Ballads* would be an inspiration to folk/protest music for years to come. Later, he would further his message through network radio. Lomax once again, was the catalyst.

He hosted a show called "American School of the Air" where he wrote Guthrie into a script focusing on poor farmers songs. His debut was Tuesday morning, April 12, 1940 on the CBS radio network. Within the 30-minute program, he read dramatized scripts, played "Freight Train Blues" on his harmonica, and sang "Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues" – thus beginning a new career in radio. Within a few months, his popularity grew and he would later become an in-demand radio personality.²²

He later appeared on *We the People* (sponsored by Sanka Coffee) on WNYC in New York and another show with longtime friends Huddie Ledbetter, Aunt Molly Jackson, and Jim Garland called, *Adventures in Music*. In his first appearance, he sang "Tom Joad" which led to popular listener response. His message was stimulating

²¹ Aunt Molly Jackson was a militant unionist who wrote protest songs for the United Mine Workers (UMW). Her song "Ragged Hungry Blues", received considerable attention in the communist press. Ella May Wiggins wrote songs for the National Textile Workers Union (NTWU). Her song *Mill Mother's Lament*, was printed in John Greenway's *American Folksongs of Protest* (1953).

²² Other radio shows included *Back Where I Came From* (another Lomax broadcast) and *Pipe Smoking Time* sponsored by the Model Tobacco Company the latter being his final radio show. It aired from November 25, 1940 to January 3, 1941.

to both folk music enthusiasts and left-wingers alike thus becoming the epitome of what would later be known, as the singer-songwriter.

But upon his return to Los Angeles in early 1941, his radio career began to stall. Although he was back with KFVD, his new show was unable to find a sponsor and it went off the air after several weeks. Once again, finding himself unemployed, he moved his family to Columbia, CA in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in Tuolumne County – an old gold mining town that has been mostly abandoned. His family lived in the back rooms of a gift shop with no electricity. In order to make a meager income to support his wife and three children, Guthrie cut firewood and hauled it into town in his Pontiac, he painted window signs, and sang in local saloons. At this time, the pressures of living a vagabond life with little income to show had taken its toll.

But spirits were lifted when he received a letter from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) from Portland, Oregon – a division of the Federal Government’s Department of the Interior. They were in the process of building the Grand Coulee Dam – a massive public works project on the Columbia River in Oregon. It would provide electricity and irrigation for the surrounding states. The BPA had been making a documentary film on the project and needed someone to record ballads and compose the soundtrack. It was a salaried position that paid \$3200 a year (or \$266 per month).

Stephen Kahn, the BPA’s director of information, decided that entertainment in the form of a folk singer would add more interest and character to the documentary. He asked Alan Lomax at the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress for a recommendation and he immediately suggested Woody Guthrie. The film’s director, Gunther Von Fritsch intended for Guthrie and his family to appear in the film. He was seeking a narrator “with a distinctive voice and style delivery” and, “[...] a common touch” (Cray 208). Guthrie gained inspiration by touring the Columbia

River area and the gigantic Grand Coulee Dam in order to get a feel for the project.

He also saw many road-wary migrants – “his people” as he called them – looking for a new life in farming due to the dam’s new irrigation potential. Nonetheless, he was enthusiastic and understood the concept behind the BPA. He saw beyond this public works project, as something that would improve the lives of those living in the surrounding four states and also, how a democracy could function with the government actually investing in resources that would touch the lives of millions of people.

He worked in the BPA office in Portland and in three weeks wrote twenty-six songs. His songwriting had not been productive as of late but this project had revived his creative voice. Of the twenty-six songs, Kahn chose ten and eventually, only three would be included in the soundtrack for the film, *The Columbia* (which would not be finished until 1949). The most famous of the 26 songs, was “Grand Coulee Dam” – original lyrics set to a traditional folk tune, “The Wabash Cannonball” was ironically not included in the film. In his own unique manner, he tied the grandeur of the “King Columbia River and the big Grand Coulee Dam” with a homage to his people, “[...] for the farmer and the factory and all of you and me”. Plus, “[...] Now in Washington and Oregon, you hear the factories hum [...]”.²³

But for all the promise that this job held for Woody, it only lasted a month. Stephen Khan became worried that Guthrie’s left-wing political views as well as his association with communist party members, would damage the project’s reputation and strain relations with the Civil Service Commission (sponsor of Guthrie’s BPA position). After receiving his \$266, Guthrie was let go in the name of institutionalized censorship.

²³ The three songs included in the film were “Roll On, Columbia”, “Roll On”, “The Biggest Thing That Man Has Ever Done”, and “Pastures of Plenty”.

But around the time he lost his job on June 11, 1941, he was contacted by Pete Seeger inviting him to join his [Seeger's] new folk group – it would be known as The Almanac Singers. After leaving behind his family – as he has done on previous occasions – he hitchhiked cross country and about two weeks later, arrived at a tenement building on West 12th Street in New York City. They decided after his arrival that instead of performing anti-war peace songs, they would now do songs in support of war effort due to Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941. This occurred around the same time they were planning a nationwide tour to perform at picket lines and union halls.

The Almanac Singers were a loose knit bunch that in addition to Seeger and Guthrie, included Millard Lampell, Peter Hawes, and Lee Hays – all of whom had seen the worst of the Great Depression's fallout of endless soup lines and broken, desperate people. Their mission was to speak on behalf of the oppressed against the oppressors. Their songs were pro-union, anti-capitalist, blunt, direct, and polemic – it was agitprop set to music. They would travel cross country and perform to those who were disadvantaged and Woody would stand out as their embodiment.

In addition to his songwriting talents, Guthrie – more than any of the group members – symbolized the workingman/poet model that others would aspire to. He had already proven his capacity as a successful entertainer in the commercialized music world. But nonetheless, he remained committed to the workingman's cause – even in the face of leaving well-paid gigs when faced with compromising his integrity – both artistic and political. He was also well-versed in the repertoire of ballad and folk songs and remained committed to the meaningful adaptation of those songs.

More importantly, Guthrie had “been there”. He had spent his life among workers, dustbowl migrants, hobos, and rural peoples throughout America – and in the view of the Almanacs, he more than

any other – connected to their culture and vernacular. As a result, Guthrie was regarded as a model to be emulated. In the wake of their decision to support the war effort, Guthrie wrote “Sinking of the Reuben James”. He collaborated with Almanac members in other anti-fascist songs like “Round and Round Hitler’s Grave”, “Side by Side”, “Deliver the Goods”, and “The Martins and the Coys” (calling for complete commitment of the US for all phases of the war effort).

Eventually, the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 paved the road for the anti-fascist goals of the communist party and other left-wing organizations, to meld with the pro-war attitudes of the general American public. This enabled The Almanacs to crossover to a more mainstream audience. But in 1942, anti-communist forces began a blacklisting campaign against The Almanacs that led to Decca Records rejecting them for a recording contract. This in turn, would lead to their eventual demise. Guthrie for his part, was working on his autobiography, [during this time] and was already less involved with the group.

He was busy working on a manuscript when he was approached by William Doerflinger, acquisitions editor for the publisher E. P. Dutton.²⁴ His wife, Joy Doerflinger became Guthrie’s agent and unofficial tutor/editor which helped him considerably to transform a stack of jumbled, unorganized written manuscripts into a coherent narrative that resulted in an autobiography that greatly embellished – and in some cases, fictionalized – his accomplishments. The book became known as *Bound for Glory*, completed in September of 1942 (it also included a number of Guthrie’s drawings throughout the book).²⁵

²⁴ Alan Lomax was the one who told Doerflinger about Guthrie working on his autobiography.

²⁵ It was published in 1943.

After that, he returned to folk songs by teaming up with Huddie Ledbetter and Sonny Terry and named themselves, The Headline Singers and continued to write and perform songs that supported the war effort. It was at this time, that Guthrie had pasted a hand-written sign on his guitar that said “This Machine Kills Fascists”. He was also reading Marx and Engels at a local communist bookstore, but was more of a patriotic socialist than a card-carrying [communist] party member. He did however, share the movement’s view that “the highest social priority must go to the needs of the least fortunate” (Cray 283).

In 1949, following his involvement in an organization known as People’s Songs,²⁶ Pete Seeger made an offer for him to join another new group he was forming known as The Weavers. They had initial misgivings about going commercial, but following a successful gig at New York’s Village Vanguard, Decca Records immediately saw their hit-making potential and signed them. The Weavers carefully worked out their arrangements with backing of the Gordon Jenkins Orchestra and a chorus of backup singers in the studio.

They were the first to popularize folk music on the mainstream charts known, as the *Hit Parade*. Their first national hit was “Goodnight Irene” (1949) – an adaptation of a song originally written by Huddie Ledbetter in 1908. The original words – suggesting sexual overtones and morphine suicide – had to be cleaned up [rewritten] for radio airplay. For the Weavers, their recording of “Goodnight

²⁶ *People’s Songs*: an organization founded Pete Seeger and Lee Hays founded on December 31, 1945 – their first post-Almanac project. Their goal, was to “create, promote, and distribute songs of labor and the American people”. They also distributed a newsletter that listed songs, hootenannies, and various articles highlighting left-wing entertainers. One of their [People’s Songs] most noted songs was first published in 1947 called “We Will Overcome” (which incidentally, became the anthem for Civil Rights Movement under the name: “We Shall Overcome”). Due to the lack of tactical and financial aid from the Communist Party (who didn’t hold much respect for folk music), *People’s Songs* went bankrupt. This happened around the same time the CP had also met its demise: their rapid decline as a viable political force.

Irene” sold 2,000,000 copies and became the first folk song to find popular commercial success thereby introducing the concept of folk music to national mainstream audience.

Their popularity became solidified with the follow-up hit: “So Long”, “It’s Been Good to Know Yuh” written by Woody Guthrie. He rewrote a song that appeared in his *Dust Bowl Ballads* album of 1941, called “Dusty Old Dust” (featuring a line in the chorus section, “So Long, It’s Been Good to Know Yuh”). He transformed this protest song into something more lighthearted. That too, was a big seller – about 1,000,000 copies and it reached to #4 on the *Hit Parade* in 1950.

With his involvement in popularizing the genre, Guthrie became a bridge to folk music’s crossover from the communist movement to eventual mainstream recognition through radio and recordings – he was not only seen and read, but also heard. This transition – that he helped initiate – would eventually lead to the popularized folk revival of the 1960s. But along the way, in the eyes of his supporters, he was a living symbol and through his common-folk persona, greatly simplified what was, an elite Marxist philosophy and humanized it.

His legend was later solidified at a benefit concert of his songs arranged by manager Harold Leventhal. It was his idea of presenting a concert to make money for Woody’s family and to publicize his now debilitating illness.²⁷ It was a final commemorative gesture from the Old Left to the man who had championed their cause. It took place on March 17, 1956 to a sold-out 1200 seat Pythian Hall in New York City.

²⁷ He was suffering from Huntington’s Chorea, a progressive brain disorder caused by a defective gene. Symptoms include uncontrolled movement (of arms and legs), changes in behavior (such as depression and uncharacteristic anger/aggression), inability to think clearly, and loss of memory.

Three years later, a folk singer in Minneapolis would be introduced to his recordings. After listening to “Pretty Boy Floyd”, “Hard Travelin’”, and “Grand Coulee Dam” [among others], young Robert Zimmerman was transfixed. For him, it was like a bolt of lightning, an epiphany. He decided to sing nothing but Woody Guthrie songs and copied his melodic delivery and Okie twang (he also read *Bound for Glory*). It was through this emulation, that the man who would reinvent himself as Bob Dylan achieved originality.

On his debut album,²⁸ there were two original songs: in “Talkin’ New York”, he penned original words set to Woody Guthrie’s tune, “Talkin’ Columbia”. The other, “Song to Woody” – an homage to his greatest inspiration – was set to another Guthrie melody: “1913 Massacre”. Although the album sold poorly, Dylan would be highly influential to the rise and popularity of the 1960s folk revival and would transcend Guthrie’s influences in ways that he [Guthrie] could have never envisioned.

Starting with his second album *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* (1963), he began writing protest songs of “social, economic, and political injustice” (Covach and Flory 191). But Dylan transcended simple, direct lyrics by writing poetics – words of deep, hidden meanings with symbolism²⁹ in a folk-oriented context. It began with “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” and continued with “Don’t Think Twice It’s Alright”, and “Blowin’ In the Wind”.

Later that year, the popular folk group, Peter, Paul, and Mary released their own recording of “Blowin’ In the Wind” that reached to #2 on the Billboard charts and brought Dylan his first commercial success – but as a songwriter only. It was in this manner

²⁸ His debut album, *Bob Dylan* was released on March, 19, 1962 on the Columbia Records label.

²⁹ Dylan was influenced by the French symbolist poet, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891).

that Dylan's commercial success began the process of surpassing Guthrie's (who's only commercial success was with The Weavers).

And as Guthrie's celebrity was that of a Dustbowl troubadour, Dylan's would be raised to a much loftier level: that of Spokesman for a Generation. This status was solidified when he performed at the March on Washington on August 28, 1963 that featured Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. In fact, 1963 was the pinnacle of the 1960's folk revival's popularity. A year later, Dylan would achieve commercial status in his own right as a solo artist.³⁰

But in 1965, he underwent a musical transformation. Counter to folk doctrine, he took an interest in rock-influenced electric instrumentation. In *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965), one side of the album consisted of songs with rock instruments. In doing so, he showed that the seriousness of deep folk lyrics could be combined with rock in an electric guitar band format. This would be known as folk rock³¹ – presenting mainstream rock 'n' roll as protest, and through different lenses beyond folk.

And once mass media and the recording industry caught on to folk rock's commercial potential, protest music (in all of its forms) would top the charts. It culminated with many imitations of Dylan's approach leading to the first folk rock protest song to reach #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in August of 1965 called "Eve of Destruction" – written by P. F. Sloan, recorded by Barry McGuire, and released on the Dunhill label (US) and RCA (Canada). Henceforth, protest music would now be woven into the tapestry of popular music,

³⁰ Two 1964 albums: *The Times They Are A-Changin'* and *Another Side of Bob Dylan* saw mainstream chart success in both the US and UK. *The Times They are A-Changin'* (#20 US/#4 UK) and *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (#43 US/#8 UK).

³¹ The first folk rock hit was an electrified version of a folk song written by Bob Dylan called *Mr. Tambourine Man* released by The Byrds in April of 1965. It reached #1 on both the Billboard Hot 100 in the US and the UK Singles Charts.

cross all stylistic lines, and remain a staple throughout mainstream, market-driven culture.

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**NEGOCIACIÓN DE SABERES CIENTÍFICOS
Y MATEMÁTICOS DESDE LA ASTRONOMÍA
Y LA COSMOGONÍA INDÍGENA: ANÁLISIS DEL
DOCUMENTAL *EL ASTRÓNOMO Y EL INDÍGENA***

NEGOTIATION OF SCIENTIFIC AND MATHEMATICAL
KNOWLEDGE FROM ASTRONOMY AND INDIGENOUS
COSMOGONY: ANALYSIS OF THE DOCUMENTARY
EL ASTRÓNOMO Y EL INDÍGENA

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RESUMEN: En este aporte se toma como punto de partida el documental *El astrónomo y el indígena* del año 2002, como detonador para analizar el diálogo de saberes científicos y saberes comunitarios, en el contexto de la construcción y operación del telescopio *ALMA* en el desierto de Atacama, Chile. Se consideran como marco analítico, las posturas pedagógicas que ubican al quehacer científico y matemático, como actividades humanas realizadas desde un contexto cultural específico, así como lo expuesto por autores como Corona (2007), o Santos (2010; 2013), respecto al intercambio y diálogo de saberes desde la interculturalidad. Para sustentar las categorías de análisis, se consideran los usos educativos del cine documental planteados por Wood (2017), así como los análisis realizados por Pérez-Daniel (2010) sobre materiales educativos interculturales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: diálogo de saberes; cine educativo; materiales interculturales; conocimiento comunitario; conocimiento científico.

ABSTRACT: This contribution takes the documentary film *The Astronomer and the Indigenous* (Dirs. Sylvie Blum and Carmen Castillo, 2002) as a starting point to analyze the dialogue between scientific knowledge and community knowledge, in the context of the construction and operation of the telescope *ALMA* in the Atacama desert, in Chile. The analytical framework is based on both the pedagogical positions that locate the scientific and mathematical work in human activities carried out within specific cultural contexts and the arguments exposed by Corona (2007) or Santos (2010; 2013) on the exchange and dialogue of knowledge allowed by an intercultural perspective. Further support for this study is provided by the educational uses of documentary film proposed by Wood (2017) and the analysis of intercultural materials carried out by Pérez-Daniel (2010).

KEYWORDS: Knowledge dialogue; educational cinema; intercultural materials; community knowledge; scientific knowledge.

Introducción

Procesos que vinculan conocimientos científicos y matemáticos con el entorno socio-cultural, han sido sistematizados y desarrollados en las últimas décadas desde perspectivas como la enculturación matemática, etnomatemáticas o el pensamiento científico multicultural. Si bien tales líneas tienen en común el rechazo de una perspectiva de las ciencias naturales y las matemáticas¹ como

¹ Si bien es un hecho que el quehacer matemático es parte fundamental de la actividad científica, para algunos autores como Richard Courant y Herbert Robbins (1979), la evolución histórica de las matemáticas se da en función de la resolución

objetivas, libres de valores y aisladas de los intereses humanos; los debates en torno a una relación horizontal universal-local son una tarea pendiente, predominando aún visiones universalistas del conocimiento a partir de entornos locales o bien, la folclorización del conocimiento, en particular de los pueblos indígenas. Este trabajo aporta a tal discusión analizando el proceso de negociación entre saberes astronómicos y la cosmogonía indígena, asumiendo que las ciencias y las matemáticas siempre han sido, y serán, actividades humanas generadas desde culturas específicas cuyo objetivo es la comprensión del entorno y la resolución de problemas, así como el potencial didáctico de un documental como *El astrónomo y el indígena*, desde la perspectiva del cine educativo. El documental está desarrollado en el marco de la construcción del telescopio *ALMA* en el desierto de Atacama, Chile, donde dan testimonios tanto los astrónomos como autoridades de los pueblos indígenas de la zona sobre las implicaciones del proyecto.

Cine documental como recurso educativo

Desde los inicios del cine, tanto el ficticio como el no ficticio, es innegable el poder educativo, y por ende, el uso pedagógico que se le ha dado a sus producciones visuales y audio visuales. Estos usos, se han dado en un amplio espectro de matices, pasando por escalas de lo deliberativo a lo no intencional, o del adoctrinamiento ideológico a lo interpretativo. Wood, en el año 2017, nos habla de lo complejo que puede ser definir el término de cine educativo, sin embargo,

de problemas prácticos como el conteo o la medición, para después complejizarse en procesos de generalización, abstracción y simbolización. Desde este sentido y para fines de este aporte, me refiero a las matemáticas como un lenguaje utilizado por la ciencia para la comprensión del entorno.

plantea que puede resultar muy útil realizar una sistematización de los diversos usos educativos que se le han asignado al cine.

En este sentido, dejando de lado el cine de ficción, aún el inspirado en hechos reales, el cine de no ficción o cine documental ha tenido, tradicionalmente, una percepción de objetividad mayor al del cine que deriva de un Universo imaginario creado por uno o varios autores. Es precisamente esta apreciación de objetividad la que propongo considerar con reserva. Siguiendo con Wood, el cine documental se puede concebir como una pieza o recurso didáctico que tiene como fin presentar determinada realidad, lo cual, como producto, lo vuelve excluyente de lo ficticio.

Sin embargo, es precisamente el adjetivo “determinada” lo que vuelve ambiguo el sentido de realidad al que se refiere Wood. Nichols (31-54) afirma que los documentales tienen una carga de ficción como cualquier otro producto, siendo una característica común con las producciones ficticias, que en casi cualquier obra de cine documental se desarrolla un conflicto creciente en dramatismo que acaba planteando o proponiendo cierta resolución. Entonces, se establecen también mecanismos de subjetividad.

Si bien el cine documental nos acerca de forma más directa e identificable con cierto grupo o grupos y los sucesos que los rodean, los realizadores, establecen también un universo imaginario, elaboran un recorte de esta cotidianidad para mostrarla en función de los objetivos que desean comunicar a la audiencia, pero se da derivado del vínculo con la realidad de modo indicativo y no metafórico, como sí sucede en el cine de ficción. Lo anterior se establece a partir del diálogo y la argumentación, la cual siempre se da desde una postura ideológica definida, sea explícita o implícita.

Aunado a lo anterior, cabe mencionar el tipo de contrato o acuerdo que se instaura entre los observadores y el documental. La audiencia, en este caso, busca recibir algo distinto a la ficción. No busca un diálogo o un análisis en función de la alegoría o la

metáfora sino en función de la asertividad de quien le presenta la obra. Como en cualquier otro caso de proceso educativo, lo expuesto puede ser incorporado, reinterpretado o bien, rechazado en función del esquema cognitivo de quien recibe la información.

De acuerdo a la intencionalidad respecto a la información mostrada o al conocimiento de la realidad, Nichols (65-106) clasifica los tipos de documentales de la siguiente manera:

- *Expositivo*: centrado en ideas, conceptos o perspectivas abstractas. Alude en gran medida a la capacidad de interpretación del observador.
- *Poético*: centrado en la información desde la dimensión afectiva, esperando mostrar una nueva forma de ver o interpretar lo cotidiano o lo que de alguna manera ya es familiar.
- *Observacional*: centrado en un aprendizaje a partir de observar y escuchar, haciendo inferencias respecto a las conductas mostradas.
- *Participativo*: centrado en las interacciones personales; lo que la gente hace y dice cuando es confrontada por entrevistas o bajo otra técnica de encuentro.
- *Reflexivo*: centrado en el contexto y enmarcado por las restricciones institucionales y personales donde es común el auto-cuestionamiento, lo que hacemos o dejamos de hacer.
- *Expresivo*: centrado en lo empírico y lo que se aprende del encuentro directo y no de segunda mano como pudiera ser de libros o expertos.

En este sentido, es relevante, a partir de lo aquí expuesto, prestar principal atención a los productos de cine documental que al menos en intención, pretenden abarcar varias de las aristas mencionadas. Por una parte, los documentales centrados en contenidos relacionados a las ciencias básicas o matemáticas, normalmente se pueden ubicar

en el tipo expositivo, dirigidos a un público conocedor o al menos entusiasta en la temática, apostando siempre por la capacidad de abstracción y retención de conocimiento del espectador.

Sin embargo, cuando dichas temáticas son puestas en juego desde una perspectiva social bajo un esquema de diálogo o intercambio de conocimientos, es indispensable reconocer el tipo de imaginarios y posturas que los documentales ofrecen, así como su pedagogía (implícita o explícita), pues derivado de esto se pueden configurar, reestructurar o bien, denunciar como son expuestas ciertas realidades.

Lo anterior es el caso del documental “El astrónomo y el indígena”, producido por Nihilo y Sobelman en 2002, desarrollado en el marco de la construcción del telescopio *ALMA* en el desierto de Atacama, Chile, donde dan testimonios tanto los astrónomos como autoridades de los pueblos indígenas de la zona sobre las implicaciones del proyecto, exponiendo las miradas de la astronomía moderna y de la cosmogonía indígena andina sobre el Universo. Para tener una perspectiva más clara de la relevancia de analizar este tipo de propuestas, en el siguiente apartado se muestra cómo se han abordado desde distintos autores, el diálogo o la negociación de conocimientos escolares universales y conocimientos comunitarios o de grupos específicos.

Diálogo de saberes en ciencias y matemáticas

Si bien, las líneas de investigación que vinculan las áreas de ciencia básica y las matemáticas que consideran los contextos socio-culturales específicos, donde se llevan a cabo los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje, se han consolidado y diversificado en las últimas dos décadas con perspectivas como la enculturación matemática de Bishop (1999), matemáticas e interculturalidad de

Goñi (2006), matemática inclusiva de Giménez (2007) o educación matemática y ciudadanía de Callejo (2010), las cuales tienen en común el rechazo de unas matemáticas y ciencias objetivas, libres de valores y aisladas de intereses humanos, en el imaginario de muchos profesionales y público en general, las matemáticas y las ciencias siguen teniendo un carácter universal en el sentido amplio, es decir, no como un horizonte de conocimientos a los que todos podemos y tenemos derecho a acceder, sino bajo un marco universalista de códigos y también de formas únicas de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

Díaz (287-300), sistematiza este debate a partir de las discusiones entre Charles Taylor y Thomas Kuhn. Para Taylor, mientras las ciencias humanas estudian los significados, la acción humana y su intencionalidad, las ciencias naturales, llamadas también ciencias básicas, se encargan del estudio de datos puros, independientes del contexto histórico y socio-cultural. No pueden, desde este punto de partida, ser ciencias hermenéuticas. Los objetos de las ciencias naturales son entonces, asignificativos, entidades del mundo independientes de la interpretación humana.

Por el contrario, para Kuhn, los datos derivados del quehacer científico, como cualquier otra cosa derivada de la acción humana, no pueden estar desvinculados de las creencias, se conforman a partir de sistemas de prácticas desarrolladas en cierto tiempo, contexto y cultura. Desde este punto de partida, las ciencias básicas están determinadas en un tiempo específico y condiciones culturales también específicas, por lo que, para Kuhn, tienen una base hermenéutica. Lo que un ser humano observa e interpreta, dependerá no sólo de la experiencia sensorial, sino también de la experiencia conceptual y simbólica previa.

Siguiendo con las reflexiones realizadas por Díaz respecto al debate entre Taylor y Kuhn, me parece más que pertinente, siendo el conocimiento sobre astronomía un elemento importante en este análisis, la ejemplificación que sobre la observación del cielo realiza

Kuhn. Para él, resulta complicado comparar las observaciones y sus interpretaciones digamos, de alguien que viva en el continente americano respecto a alguien que lo hace desde el continente asiático. Sin embargo, afirma que lo que observamos en el cielo el día de hoy, difiere del cielo que observaban en la antigua Grecia. ¿Diferentes en qué sentido? ¿No es el mismo cielo?

Por una parte, es muy notorio en los referentes culturales. ¿Por qué en un lugar determinado como la antigua Grecia, alguna constelación estelar era vista como una gran osa mientras en otras partes como Egipto, podían visualizar constelaciones con forma de elefante? Esto dista mucho de ser una simple creencia. Es imposible interpretar o codificar sin los referentes culturales, de contexto y la experiencia sensorial previa, aun cuando lo que estamos observando sean entidades del mundo independientes a la existencia humana como declaraba Taylor.

Por otra parte, y en el sentido estricto de abstracción, otra diferencia radica en lo taxonómico. El Sol y la Luna, por ejemplo, compartían la misma categoría que planetas como Júpiter o Marte, mientras que la Vía Láctea y el arco iris se incluían en otro subconjunto. Las diferencias de clasificación son muchas. La taxonomía de los cielos, los patrones y las diferencias celestiales han ido cambiando y reorganizándose. Esto, al día de hoy, se sigue presentando, por ejemplo, con el debate actual sobre el ubicar a Plutón como planeta o no.

Desde esta postura, no hay una construcción conceptual neutral o independiente al contexto dentro del cual se construye, sea esta sobre acciones o sobre objetos conceptuales. En este sentido las ciencias básicas (o naturales) y las matemáticas no tienen gran ventaja sobre las ciencias humanas. Para Diaz, por otra parte, los planteamientos de Kuhn dejan ver una tensión existente entre una concepción de ciencia como sistema de conocimientos y como sistema de prácticas. El aprendizaje entonces, se debe a una serie

de acciones en donde los conceptos, teorías y leyes se aprenden, y obtienen sentido. La tensión constante en esta perspectiva mantiene al quehacer científico como un sistema de prácticas o acciones, un sistema empirista que permite acceder a un conjunto de conocimientos. Esto, sin embargo, más allá de posibles críticas, es útil para clarificar los principios constructivistas que han servido de base para el aprendizaje que considera como punto de partida el entorno socio-cultural.

El considerar el contexto como principio para el aprendizaje de las ciencias y las matemáticas no es algo nuevo, pues cualquiera que esté familiarizado con las perspectivas o paradigmas educativos, identificará esto como parte del constructivismo socio-cultural planteado por Vigotsky, a diferencia del planteado por Piaget y centrado más en elementos cognitivos de cada sujeto, como lo mencionan Tryphon y Vonéche. En efecto, muchas propuestas que vinculan el aprendizaje desde el entorno, retoman las bases del constructivismo socio-cultural, sin embargo, esto no es garantía de diálogo entre saberes, como lo planteo a continuación.

Consideraciones en el constructivismo desde el aprendizaje de las ciencias

En otra investigación que realicé en el año 2012, relacionada a libros de texto interculturales, se detectaba que la gran mayoría de materiales educativos para contextos de diversidad cultural, al menos en lo que a ciencias y matemáticas se refiere, echan mano de ciertos fundamentos constructivistas para retomar elementos del contexto, y desde ahí, abordar contenidos de carácter universal. Sin embargo, esta intencionalidad, pocas veces resulta en un diálogo efectivo entre contexto y conocimiento formal, aterrizando en propuestas que pudiesen tener cuatro limitaciones (Cuevas, 218-221):

- *El enfoque constructivista directivo*: referido a las propuestas que inician o plantean retomar conocimientos previos, normalmente relacionados al contexto social inmediato de los estudiantes, pero que terminan no siendo tomados en cuenta o totalmente desechados al presentar los contenidos formales. Se desestima el conocimiento local o de referencia y se legitima el conocimiento hegemónico. Esto, es aún más nocivo que las propuestas centradas en la transmisión de conocimiento, puesto que se vuelve explícita la desestimación de un saber frente a otro.
- *El enfoque constructivista folclórico*: referido a las propuestas que retoman componentes culturales, pero bajo una visión de cultura estática, considerando sobre todo elementos de folclor o elementos ancestrales, más que su riqueza o aporte al razonamiento o abstracción. Generalmente muestran al conocimiento formal o hegemónico en enfrentamiento a otros saberes, por lo que no se establece diálogo sino argumentos de ventajas y desventajas de uno respecto a otro.
- *El enfoque constructivista dicotómico*: referido a propuestas que demarcan de forma tajante una frontera entre conocimientos, de manera que refuerzan la legitimación de unos y la deslegitimación de otros, mediante dicotomías como escolar-cotidiano o científico-precientífico. Si bien las categorizaciones son necesarias para diferenciar ciertos procesos, el problema deriva en establecer de forma permanente unos como antecedentes de otros, o bien, bajo una especie de precariedad conceptual frente a una formalidad, también conceptual.
- *El enfoque constructivista de mínima*: referido a propuestas enfocadas en el sentido de practicidad y dirigidas comúnmente a poblaciones con rezago educativo. Se rechaza el análisis crítico, teórico o metodológico en afán de una apropiación pragmática del conocimiento, dejando fuera todo lo que se

asuma que no es aplicable a la realidad inmediata, generando mayor rezago donde normalmente ya lo hay.

Estas tendencias, a fin de cuentas, reducen o nulifican la oportunidad de diálogo, además de colocar a las ciencias y las matemáticas en una posición hegemónica más que democratizadora del saber, cuando en realidad, ni las ciencias ni las matemáticas discriminan como áreas de conocimiento, sino que son sus usos los que se vuelven excluyentes, algo que se desarrolla en el siguiente apartado.

Inclusión y exclusión en ciencias y matemáticas

Las matemáticas y las ciencias, como he mencionado, no son excluyentes, sin embargo, la sociedad excluye mediante estas áreas, además de la lectoescritura, puesto que quien no accede, limita sus posibilidades y participación, al menos en el contexto de sistemas escolares rígidos, es decir, la gran mayoría. Por tanto, interrumpir o frenar una trayectoria en estos campos, es una forma de exclusión. Añadido a esto, para algunos autores como Giménez (9-12), la distancia que se da entre quienes tienen éxito en matemáticas y quienes no se correlaciona alarmantemente con categorías sociales y de grupo étnico.

Socialmente parece también irrefutable que estas tres áreas, matemáticas, ciencias y lectoescritura sean los pilares de la educación, de ahí, que independientemente de las variaciones o enfoques que pueda tener la evaluación educativa, suelen ser los tres campos de conocimiento que siempre se consideran esenciales en pruebas estandarizadas. Sin embargo, socialmente, es intolerable fracasar en lectoescritura, pero pareciera haber mayor tolerancia a fracasar en matemáticas, sobre todo cuando hablamos de poblaciones en condiciones de desigualdad socio-económica. Se normaliza que

algunos sectores o grupos específicos sean menos hábiles, aunque sea incuestionable la importancia de ese conocimiento.

Ahora bien, ¿realmente no existe el conocimiento matemático en estos sectores? Siguiendo con Giménez (23-30), esta visión y uso discriminador del conocimiento, aunque se debe a múltiples factores, uno muy evidente es el de la evaluación de contenidos. La evaluación en matemáticas por ejemplo, se ha centrado en plasmar en papel la manipulación de números y códigos, y si no existe bajo esta forma, se asume que el conocimiento matemático es nulo. Procesos como la conciencia crítica, la resolución de situaciones problemáticas o la toma de decisiones, rara vez son considerados.

Las matemáticas y las ciencias, desde el lenguaje especializado, se pueden ubicar como convenciones para entender y comunicar acciones que todos, o muchos de nosotros, aplicamos en la vida cotidiana, pero es un hecho que las personas que no saben reconocer esos símbolos o ese lenguaje, son excluidos. Sin embargo, si dejamos de considerar los códigos y los lenguajes especializados, de nueva cuenta, se corre el riesgo de unas ciencias y matemáticas de mínima que sólo se apliquen a la realidad inmediata, puesto que como ya se dijo antes, todos tenemos el derecho de acceder a la matemática y ciencia abstracta.

No se trata entonces, de pretender erradicar las evaluaciones que impliquen formalidad y abstracción, puesto que es indispensable no despreciar la matemática académica. La crítica va más en el sentido inverso, no despreciar, sino de hecho considerar los procesos que se generan fuera de la academia formal como una conexión entre experiencias cotidianas y formalidad. Desde esta idea, se pueden plantear tres objetivos para construir y evaluar conocimiento. Un primero, centrado más en la desmitificación del conocimiento científico y matemático, en donde tradicionalmente se han normalizado las estrategias y las formas únicas de acceder o saber, por planteamientos que vuelvan explícitos los factores históricos

e interpretativos de los que hablaba Kuhn. Un segundo, centrado en un plano estratégico para reconocer y conectar el conocimiento cotidiano como enlace a los conocimientos formales; y un tercero, centrado en los procesos de abstracción y formalización. Esto implica momentos y evaluaciones diversas puesto que los objetivos, aunque complementarios, son diversos también y siguen diferente lógica.

Todos, si es que así lo quieren, deberían y podrían elegir una ruta de formación científica o matemática, poder estudiar una carrera afín a estas áreas a nivel superior, pero se requiere abrir caminos más que truncar trayectorias, así como evitar propuestas que puedan parecer de entrada muy “alternativas”, pero pobres en términos del contenido científico matemático que se construye. Entre las recomendaciones que Giménez (23-32) nos sugiere está el establecer conexiones, incentivar la reflexión significativa, la búsqueda de temas actuales ricos en situaciones que generen reflexiones matemáticas o científicas, actividades abiertas o de indagación, problemas que impliquen comprensión más que ejercicios y el uso diverso de lenguajes.

Ahora bien, ubicando al documental como un material didáctico en potencia, es indispensable también revisar de manera general los materiales educativos, en este caso los que se diseñan para una educación y/o diálogo intercultural, desde estas implicaciones.

Materiales educativos interculturales

Para Corona (12-18), existen ciertos elementos en el concepto de interculturalidad que derivan, como en el caso de la negociación de saberes desde el constructivismo, ciertas contradicciones. Para esta autora, una de las principales problemáticas es que la discusión se centre en las culturas y no en el diálogo sobre las diferencias en el espacio público. Si bien se llama la atención sobre las desigualdades,

no existe un pronunciamiento político sobre esto. En otros casos, se presenta la confrontación similar a la mencionada en el apartado de conocimientos, es decir, una confrontación entre visiones de modernidad y eurocentristas, frente a lo ancestral.

La multiculturalidad desde esta lógica está centrada en el otorgamiento de reconocimiento, la visibilidad o exhibición de las diversas culturas pero aisladas, sin diálogo o intercambios, algo que sirve para mantener el *status quo*. En este mismo sentido, Santos (2010) menciona que la multiculturalidad, incluso puede ir más allá del reconocimiento, llegando a un grado de tolerancia. La interculturalidad implicaría en cambio, no sólo la tolerancia, sino un diálogo e interacción que enriquezca a quien participe (90-99).

Siguiendo con Corona, el centrar la preocupación en la posible extinción de una cultura, la coloca como estática y a sus integrantes como sujetos que si la “pierden”, dejan de ser (14-16). Se teme por la sobrevivencia cultural frente a la cultura hegemónica, sin considerar que no existe una cultura primaria como tal. En ambos casos, la interculturalidad como respeto o como aislamiento, no se supera la colocación de la modernidad como centro, ya sea para reforzarla o para rechazarla. Estas consideraciones planteadas por Corona, coinciden en gran medida con las dificultades de diálogo entre conocimientos desde el constructivismo ya expuestas.

La diferencia, nos dice, es socialmente construida, lo que provoca jerarquía y relaciones asimétricas de poder, al igual que el uso y las formas de acceso a las ciencias y las matemáticas ya mencionado. Nombrar la diferencia, cultural o biológica, naturaliza las relaciones desiguales, de manera similar a los usos discriminatorios de las ciencias y matemáticas en donde en lo ideal todos acceden, pero los procesos y formas de acceso carecen de equidad.

En los materiales para la educación o el diálogo entre culturas, la tendencia en formato es la misma que en cualquier otro material

educativo, siendo los libros de texto los de mayor presencia. Pérez-Daniel (91-106) nos presenta una categorización de los libros para educación intercultural producidos hasta el año 2006 en México, sistematizándolos de la siguiente manera:

- *Los literarios.* Se centran en recopilaciones de narraciones folclóricas como leyendas, fábulas o cuentos tradicionales. El grado de complejidad del proceso de conformación no recae en la planeación de la estructura narrativa, sino en la fidelidad de lo narrado. Las narraciones, sin embargo, no suelen estar acompañadas de una contextualización. Su función es formar o informar, y su uso escolar se relaciona con la capacidad de lectura y escritura.
- *Los cuadernos de trabajo.* Son materiales que presentan series cíclicas, es decir, un contenido determinado que va apareciendo de forma gradual en cantidad y complejidad. Se pasa por distintos niveles de aproximación contemplando las capacidades de los sujetos destinatarios. La característica principal en estos productos es entonces, una progresión sistemática y consciente del contenido. Es importante mencionar aquí, que este tipo de material suele ir acompañado de un texto adicional para el profesor o responsable del aprendizaje.
- *Los textos informativos o de consulta.* Los más antiguos de todos para enseñanza o al menos en el contexto escolar. Son textos especializados en un campo disciplinar cuya forma de exposición permite un uso generalizado. El manejo de imágenes, está supeditado al texto, representando de forma directa a manera de ejemplificación. En los objetivos del usuario recae la utilidad del texto. Aunque la información se presenta como cierta e incuestionable, el usuario tiene total libertad de posicionarse críticamente ante el texto. No hay un discurso como tal sino datos accesibles.

Si bien lo anterior se aplica a materiales escritos, muchas de las características, al menos en intencionalidad, nos sirven como referencia para los productos audiovisuales que también pretenden educar o al menos, informar. Siguiendo con Pérez-Daniel, a partir de los planteamientos de Verón es posible también identificar los personajes que intervienen en los materiales, los cuales se pueden resumir de la siguiente manera:

- *El enunciador autor*. Persona que se enuncia discursivamente como autor del texto, a través de una voz que le habla a los destinatarios. Esta voz puede narrar cosas, presentar temáticas, describir personajes, intervenir en una historia, dialogar con el lector, interrogarlo o darle instrucciones.
- *El enunciador maestro*. Puede aparecer como personaje del discurso si el enunciador autor o el enunciador aprendiz le asigna alguna función, o bien, también puede aparecer como destinatario. Se le reconoce en el material como especialista en la temática.
- *El enunciador tutor*. Aparece sólo como consecuencia del enunciador aprendiz o enunciador autor, es decir, sólo si estos enunciadores le otorgan voz.
- *El destinatario aprendiz*. El principal destinatario enunciativo del material. Suele aparecer, entonces, directamente, interpelado por el enunciador, aunque también aparece indirectamente, es decir, convocado por otro destinatario.
- *El destinatario maestro*. Ciertas partes de un material pueden estar dirigidas al maestro. Por lo general, estas partes convierten al maestro en un mediador entre el enunciador y el aprendiz.

Ahora bien, con los elementos hasta este momento planteados, es posible realizar un análisis que nos brinde una idea clara e integradora de lo que un producto audiovisual, en específico un

documental como “El astrónomo y el indígena”, nos puede otorgar como material educativo que busca establecer un diálogo entre conocimientos locales y conocimientos universales en un contexto contemporáneo. El análisis entonces, teniendo como corpus el contenido de este documental, se centra en un primer momento en una descripción tanto del contexto de producción como del objetivo del material, para posteriormente distinguir su posicionamiento respecto a los conocimientos en función de los testimonios, la postura frente al diálogo de saberes y finalmente las estrategias para establecer dicho diálogo, además de su potencial educativo global.

Contexto y objetivo del documental

“El astrónomo y el indígena”, producido por Nihilo y Soberman y realizado por Sylvie Blum y Carmen Castillo² en el año 2002, se desarrolla geográficamente en la región del desierto de Atacama. El documental, disponible de manera gratuita en algunas plataformas como *Vimeo*³, centra su objetivo en conocer las perspectivas de la astronomía moderna y de la cosmología indígena, en el contexto del proyecto del telescopio *ALMA* (*Atacama Large Millimeter/sub-millimeter Array*) a desarrollarse en el observatorio más grande del planeta, el Paranal, ubicado a 5,700 metros de altitud en el monte Chajmator.

En el contexto del diálogo previo a la construcción, participaron representantes de las 13 comunidades del Área de Desarrollo Indígena de “Atacama la Grande” y las autoridades locales. Según el portal *estrellaloe.cl*, los representantes del grupo científico son

² Quien también funge en varias partes del documental como narradora.

³ Dirección de acceso libre en *Vimeo*: <https://vimeo.com/234271393>. También disponible en: http://www.film-documentaire.fr/4DACTION/w_fiche_film/11767_1#

quienes respondieron las inquietudes de los pobladores, en especial las inquietudes relacionadas al impacto ambiental y cultural que pudiese tener en la zona⁴.

La elección de este documental en específico como corpus de análisis, no se debe a criterios cinematográficos, producción o gravedad del conflicto en cuestión, así que no se alude a su estética o narrativa desde esta lógica, donde posiblemente podemos encontrar otros documentales que de forma más explícita⁵, aborden problemáticas de comunidades específicas en territorios y momentos históricos también específicos. Considero que la resistencia, el diálogo y la necesidad de negociación se da desde muchas aristas que a veces ignoramos por no considerarlas urgentes o graves, pero su impacto es evidente, aunque más sigiloso. Un aula, un material educativo o una charla entre grupos diversos son escenarios cotidianos⁶ de resistencia, diálogo y en su caso, conocimiento en condiciones de horizontalidad. Este documental es elegido entonces, por plasmar de manera explícita, al menos en intención, la diversidad de saberes en función de un proyecto científico, pero con implicaciones territoriales, y busca en determinado punto, un diálogo. No es, ni de cerca, una postura del “deber ser” en términos de diálogo intercultural, sino una invitación al análisis de “lo que es”, lo que tenemos, lo que existe.

⁴ En este sentido, según el mismo portal, los científicos aseguraron que ALMA tendrá un casi nulo impacto ambiental, pues no es un proyecto que vaya a extraer recursos naturales, sino que es una iniciativa que persigue sólo un interés científico. En todo caso, para evitar problemas, confirmaron que el proyecto ya ingresó voluntariamente al Sistema de Estudio de Impacto Ambiental de la Corema. En otro sentido, el mayor argumento en defensa del proyecto fue que no implicaba extracción de recursos, sino que era un proyecto científico y cultural. De alguna manera, en este argumento hay una aceptación implícita de despojo en proyectos previos. Disponible en <https://www.estrellaloe.cl/site/edic/20020826202935/pags/20020826215354.html>.

⁵ Dos ejemplos de dos distintas épocas pueden ser *Terra dos indios* (Viana, 1979) o más recientemente *Sangre y Tierra* (Arango, 2016).

⁶ Otro ejemplo de esto puede ser el documental *Huicholes. Los últimos guardianes del peyote* (Vilchez, 2014).

Desde lo planteado por Santos (2010), la lucha por la justicia cognitiva mundial no puede ser exitosa si se basa exclusivamente en la idea de distribuir de forma más equitativa el conocimiento científico (35-44). Este documental, como he mencionado, tiene al menos la intención de lo que, siguiendo con Santos, puede entenderse como exponer la incompletud y las limitaciones de distintos tipos de conocimiento, a la vez que se posibilita la interacción e interdependencia entre conocimientos científicos y no científicos. La intención entonces, no es promover o demeritar al documental como idóneo o no idóneo en cuanto al diálogo de saberes, sino ofrecer posibilidades de análisis que pueden ser extrapolables a otros documentales o productos con potencial educativo.

Los protagonistas, en quienes se centra el diálogo y dan los testimonios, son tres líderes indígenas, Cecilio González, Carlos Aguilar y Jaime Jeronimo, pertenecientes a la cultura Likan Antai, habitantes del desierto de Atacama, y David Elbaz, astrofísico que labora en el Observatorio Paranal, vinculado al *VLT (Very Large Telescope)*. Durante el documental de casi una hora de duración, también tiene un fuerte protagonismo la voz en *off* de Carmen Castillo, quien funge como narradora y enlace, además de otros astrónomos y habitantes de Atacama, pero con menor protagonismo.

Se presentan dos escenarios principales. El primero, que sirve de apertura también, es el desierto de Atacama, donde se realizan entrevistas y se dan algunos testimonios en tomas abiertas; el segundo es en interiores y exteriores del observatorio el Paranal. También se pueden considerar dos escenarios secundarios. El primero refiere a tomas de las actividades cotidianas de los pobladores de Atacama y el segundo son proyecciones, algunas reales y otras en simulador, de elementos del espacio sideral captados por instrumentos del observatorio.

Estos escenarios van alternándose durante el transcurso del documental. La voz narradora (Castillo), trata de ir enlazando lo que

los líderes indígenas cuentan con lo que los astrofísicos exponen, para finalmente buscar un diálogo entre ambas partes. Es esta voz quien nos da una idea, en los primeros cinco minutos, del objetivo del documental: “Las ciencias modernas del siglo XXI quieren estudiar al Universo para remontar al *Big Bang* [...] Los pueblos indígenas que siguen mirando al cielo como lo miraban los incas, son vecinos en el espacio, pero los separa el tiempo [...] que unos a otros puedan conocerse, es soñar demasiado”.

El objetivo es entonces, mostrar dos miradas, una metafórica y otra literal sobre el Universo, desde la posición de los astrónomos de un proyecto científico tecnológico entre europeos y estadounidenses, y por el otro lado, la perspectiva de lo que un proyecto como este implica para los habitantes de Atacama, quienes llevan siglos asentados en la zona, al tiempo que deja ver entre palabras que eso puede ser utópico. En ese momento, el detonador o el parteaguas, era la construcción de un nuevo telescopio, el *ALMA*⁷, quien, según la narradora, los pueblos indígenas veían con reserva⁸.

Testimonios y escenarios

La primera secuencia, previa incluso a los títulos de apertura, nos sitúa de inmediato en el desierto de Atacama, en donde somos

⁷ Este telescopio inició operaciones formales en 2011 y fue también pieza clave en la primera fotografía de un agujero negro en el año 2019.

⁸ Esa cautela es debido a la escasez de agua que habían provocado las mineras de cobre en la zona, según se plantea. El pedir permiso a la Madre Tierra, como se le llama en muchas culturas, tiene un sentido tangible, hay muchas evidencias de daños previos. El documental, de producción relativamente reciente, se ubica en una época que autores como Gundermann definen como época de reconocimiento a los pueblos indígenas y posterior a la época del integracionismo (2018, 93-109). Sin embargo, aunque esta situación es de suma relevancia para la interacción que pudiese darse respecto a la instalación del observatorio, el análisis se centra exclusivamente en lo que el documental como potencial producto educativo, enmarca respecto a los saberes.

testigos de los testimonios de representantes de la cultura Likan Antari, quienes nos hablan de sus abuelos y de los primeros habitantes. De inmediato nos sitúan en conocimientos ancestrales comparados con la tecnología actual. “Nuestros abuelos siempre se guiaron en este desierto, aunque no tenían tecnología”, comenta uno de los representantes.

Este testimonio parte del comparativo, pues se centra en decir que ellos y sus ancestros, pese a no tener grandes instalaciones, antenas o telescopios, tenían al Universo mismo, pues las estrellas y todo lo que ahí existe era, y es, un indicador para la comunidad. De ahí predecían, de observar, lo que podría venir para el futuro. Menciona también que usaban el agua y sus asentamientos como espejos. Ahí, dice, podían ver como se desplazaba el Universo, interpretaban sus movimientos y cambios.

La segunda secuencia involucra a la voz narradora, Carmen, a quien nunca veremos físicamente. La narración va acompañada por tomas aéreas del desierto, e inicia así: “La importancia que la astronomía otorga a la dimensión óptica con el Universo, es la marca de los tiempos modernos. La relación de la antigüedad con el cosmos se establece de forma distinta”.

Es clara, más aún que en la primera secuencia, la separación de saberes. La narración continúa abordando que mientras la ciencia moderna parece ocuparse de cuestiones muy lejanas a nosotros, los pueblos indígenas siguen viviendo en comunión con la tierra y el cielo. Mientras en el mismo cielo del hemisferio sur se instalan los observatorios más grandes del planeta que quieren estudiar el Universo para remontarnos al *Big Bang*, es decir, el punto de partida, los pueblos indígenas siguen mirando como miraban los incas, afirma en esta primera intervención.

En este sentido llama la atención que es precisamente el cielo el referente para plantear las diferencias, al igual que en el debate entre Taylor y Kuhn. El discurso de separación entre lo ancestral y

lo moderno no solo es claro, sino explícito en su frontera. Mientras que por una parte se asume que la ciencia moderna pretende una deconstrucción hacia el pasado, el origen de todo como parte de la evolución del conocimiento; los pueblos miran igual que los antiguos incas, es decir, una especie de conocimiento cultural que se mantiene estático. La ciencia se describe como algo cambiante, es dinámica, al menos en esta parte introductoria, los pueblos y sus formas de observar, al parecer no.

La tercera secuencia nos lleva al monte Paranal, donde se encuentra el que hasta ese momento es considerado el telescopio más grande del mundo, el *VLT*, haciendo énfasis en que fue diseñado y construido por tecnología europea. Posterior a una serie de tomas en silencio sobre aparatos tecnológicos ubicados en el observatorio, la voz narradora nos empieza a describir, también desde un discurso más técnico, los cuatro telescopios funcionales, así como sus dimensiones y su funcionamiento. Esta inmersión al observatorio da la voz también, por primera vez en el documental a un astrónomo, quien da una breve explicación del funcionamiento de los telescopios a través de la llegada de la luz desde las estrellas y sus trayectos, resaltando el concepto de interferometría⁹.

Se explica el por qué la elección de esta zona para instalar el observatorio y para construir el telescopio *ALMA*. Mientras que la voz narradora habla de que el cielo siempre está azul y las noches son transparentes en este lugar, el astrónomo nos da una explicación más técnica. La corriente de Humboldt, de aire frío, mantiene el vapor del mar a un nivel muy bajo, además de que no existen turbulencias, factores indispensables para mejorar las imágenes visibilizadas.

⁹ Técnicas que combinan la luz de distintos receptores para tener una imagen más nítida.

Este primer adentramiento al observatorio dentro del documental, concluye con la voz narradora relatándonos desde una perspectiva histórica, partiendo de Galileo, Kepler, Newton y sus descubrimientos, pasando por 1963 y la detección de la radiación fósil, para volver certeza el *Big Bang*, hasta los retos actuales de la astronomía, dándonos la posibilidad de saber cómo era el Universo hace 10 mil millones de años, lo que maneja como paradoja, es decir, mientras más avanzamos en el tiempo, más sabemos del pasado.

Esta descripción de las primeras tres secuencias es importante porque llevará la tónica del resto del documental. Tendremos acceso a los testimonios de los representantes indígenas, a partir de este momento en las personas de Cecilio, Carlos y Jaime, el primero de mayor edad que el resto; y de David, que representará la voz de los astrónomos del observatorio. Las narraciones e interacciones se darán en estos tres espacios, el desierto y sus habitantes en la cotidianidad, el observatorio y el trabajo que ahí se realiza donde los telescopios e instrumentos auxiliares son un personaje más, y en menor medida, la posibilidad de ver simulaciones computarizadas, fotos y explicaciones gráficas sobre el Universo y sus elementos.

Habitantes de Atacama y sus planteamientos

Como se mencionó anteriormente, la voz narradora suele servir de preámbulo para escuchar los testimonios, pero a la vez, como se hizo notar en la introducción, es quien desde inicio pone en dos planos distintos los conocimientos de los pobladores respecto a los conocimientos de los astrónomos del observatorio. Siguiendo esta tónica, una vez presentados quienes van a manifestar sus perspectivas, se nos recuerda que se parte de accesos distintos. Nos dice la narración: “El indio por su parte, cuando sus ojos no pueden

ver, crea un mito”, comenta, “mito que muchos consideran prueba de ignorancia”.

Si bien no queda claro quiénes son esos muchos que consideran ignorancia los mitos, el conocimiento de los habitantes de Atacama, de inicio, se pone en desventaja. De alguna manera se asume que al no tener acceso al “poder ver”, su única opción es entonces la invención. Partiendo del supuesto de que se intenta dar una valoración a esta visión alternativa del Universo, sin tecnología, más bien se desvalora al ponerla en una innecesaria desventaja.

Todas las culturas, actuales y ancestrales, han construido explicaciones con tintes mitológicos, y no por eso no fueron o no son capaces de comprender elementos matemáticos o científicos abstractos. Basta recordar ejemplos como las construcciones vinculadas a los astros, los complejos sistemas de numeración o el uso de símbolos derivados del contexto, pero formando parte de códigos y lenguajes matemáticos sofisticados. El mito, entonces, no cumple una función de suplencia al conocimiento científico, sino que responde a otra lógica.

Otro ejemplo sobre esto es el testimonio en el cual Cecilio, el más experimentado de los representantes que dan testimonio, nos narra cómo algunos sucesos vinculados a cometas, o a rayos¹⁰ en la lluvia, se relacionan con futuros sucesos, algunos malos presagios o catarsis. Más allá del sentido mitológico y hasta fantástico que se insinúa pueda tener, es un hecho que la reacción a sucesos de este tipo desde la ciencia, no es muy distinta. Sabemos, por ejemplo, desde el ámbito científico, que fue un objeto venido del cielo el que causó la extinción de especies en el pasado, o que en una tormenta eléctrica hay que tomar ciertas precauciones. En ese sentido,

¹⁰ Carlos menciona que se le conoce como *iyapa* a la combinación de rayo, trueno y relámpago. En realidad, en la cotidianidad es como se concibe, como un fenómeno integral.

las reacciones desde las creencias mitológicas y el conocimiento científico, pueden tener cierto grado de similitud.

La voz narradora, hacia la mitad del documental, menciona que el tiempo es distinto para los pobladores indios, pues no es el de los millones de años que alcanza a observar el telescopio, sino otro ritmo y un “tiempo inmutable”. Mientras se refiere a este tiempo cotidiano, podemos ver algunas de las actividades diarias de los pobladores, principalmente la agricultura. Aquí, los mismos pobladores son quienes relatan que el pueblo inca contaba por cosechas y conocía los solsticios de verano y de invierno de manera precisa. Para reconocer el equinoccio, tenían columnas erguidas junto a los templos y los sacerdotes miraban las sombras para guiarse.

En el segmento anterior, la narración induce de nuevo a la separación de saberes. El tiempo, elemento central para comprender el Universo, se muestra como estático y ajeno a lo externo, una vez más, no existe lo dinámico, se apela al pasado histórico. Sin embargo, de parte de los testimonios se cae en cuenta de nuevo que como en muchas otras culturas, lo religioso y lo científico-tecnológico no se excluyen necesariamente. Los métodos de conteo y el conocimiento de fenómenos naturales a partir de visualizar sombras por construcciones propias, es algo recurrente, como lo demostró Eratóstenes al utilizar un método similar para calcular el radio de la Tierra hace más de dos mil años.

Los astrónomos en Atacama y sus planteamientos

Cuando se refiere al quehacer astronómico en el observatorio, la voz narradora nos recuerda el punto de partida que actualmente es el objetivo de este campo de conocimiento: el *Big Bang*. No solo nos encontramos ahí como punto de interés, sino literalmente, pues la gran explosión continúa, somos partícipes. Aquí, es importante

recordar que en esta constante expansión, el tiempo también se expande.

Un científico, no se aclara si también astrónomo, aparece brevemente argumentando que existen diez mil años de transmisión cultural en esta comunidad, en donde el Sol y la Luna siempre han sido indicadores para actividades agropecuarias, algo que ya había mencionado uno de los pobladores. Lo que llama la atención a este científico es la proyección de luz sobre el cerro Quimal, el cual, nos explica, tiene una clara forma de mujer.

La luz en determinada época, se proyecta justo en los órganos sexuales de la silueta. Por otra parte, está el cerro Lincalcabur, pero ahí, nos cuenta, sí existe intervención humana. Lejos de considerar algo milagroso lo que ocurre con el Quimal, está de por medio la valoración de la comprensión del fenómeno. Que esto sirva como inspiración para realizar algo similar en un lugar contiguo, es decir, imitar el fenómeno natural, indica un alto grado de interpretación técnica, además de lo que espiritualmente pueda significar.

Como en la primera secuencia, la voz narradora, al mostrar de nuevo el observatorio y sus alrededores, retoma explicaciones más técnicas. *ALMA*, a diferencia de *VLT*, utilizará el espectro infrarrojo y podrá observar lo que el espectro visible no puede. En esos átomos que ahora podrán verse, están los gérmenes de los planetas, de nosotros, somos por tanto hijos de las estrellas. Esto también puede interpretarse desde el sentido metafórico, nosotros como parte de un todo, del Universo, y a la vez un mayor conocimiento de esas regiones no exploradas. En este sentido, la frontera entre lo científico-tecnológico y lo simbólico es difusa.

David, el astrónomo protagonista, nos recuerda que ellos llegaron a Atacama, a fin de cuentas, a mirar el cielo. Sin embargo también está consciente que es sólo su trabajo, pues muchas veces regresan a casa y olvidan. Si fuera posible, comenta, mirar los mismos mundos a la vez, refiriéndose a lo que ven los pobladores, “podremos

ver algo distinto”. Estas palabras, al menos en un primer acercamiento, parecen mucho más abiertas al diálogo que la separación de saberes que ha sido recurrente, aunque no en la totalidad de intervenciones, por la narradora.

El grado de consciencia de saber explicar algo desde un posicionamiento, pero también de que se desconoce desde otro, es un indicio de que se desea descubrir algo más, aunque no quede muy claro lo que esto pueda llegar a ser. “Ver algo distinto” es aceptar que habrá una transformación, muy acorde al aprendizaje desde el constructivismo ya señalado, un reacomodo en el esquema cognitivo. Lo que resta es dialogar directamente, como se muestra en la última parte del documental y es lo que se aborda en el siguiente apartado.

Diálogo, posicionamiento y perspectiva

En la última parte y a manera conclusiva, una vez que se han mostrado de forma separada los testimonios, los representantes indígenas son invitados a conocer el *VLT* en el observatorio. Las tomas, se van presentando desde el trayecto, en el interior del vehículo que los lleva a su destino, hasta llegar al observatorio, en donde guardan silencio pero observan detenidamente los telescopios. Puede tener cierta lógica que el diálogo se realice dentro del observatorio, sin embargo, al menos en lo que muestra la narrativa del documental, los astrónomos no acuden en ningún momento a dialogar en la comunidad, es la comunidad la que se traslada al observatorio, algo que puede reforzar la relación asimétrica en función de “lo científico”, o entre quienes llegan y quienes ya se encontraban ahí.

David rompe el silencio, les explica, a manera de profesor, lo que sucede cuando una estrella muere a partir de una simulación de computadora. El formato de cátedra da espacio para poco diá-

logo pero se emiten algunas preguntas, en este caso de los líderes jóvenes, sobre lo que se puede observar en tiempo real y lo que tiene que ser simulado por programas computacionales.

Inicia el diálogo posterior. Cecilio le comenta a David que entiende el tipo de trabajo que realiza, sin embargo le cuestiona: “¿qué dice usted en la parte religiosa? La creencia de uno, ¿cómo lo ve o cómo lo siente? Mirando el Universo y sentado en la tierra”. David responde que el Universo es necesario para que la vida sea posible, pero eso no implica que la vida sea un proyecto del Universo. Titubeando, comenta que la ciencia no puede demostrar que existe algún dios o que no existe.

A lo anterior, interviene ahora uno de los representantes jóvenes. “Sin ser defensor yo de la idolatría, ¿cómo entiendes tú la muerte y la vida?”, pregunta a David. Viene un largo silencio (20 segundos aproximadamente) con intentos por comenzar a desarrollar una idea por parte de David. “No sé qué pasa cuando un ser humano muere, la ciencia no puede responder esta pregunta. Las estrellas mueren para que haya evolución”. A lo que agrega que debe ser similar la relación entre muerte y vida para los humanos. No preguntan más. Desde el científicismo, la pregunta realizada a David puede carecer de sentido, y a pesar de sus titubeos, se vuelve a notar una combinación en el astrónomo de aceptación en el pensamiento del “otro” que expone los límites del conocimiento propio, y un intento por reconocer que no se tiene una respuesta. Aún así, la incomodidad es evidente.

“Me produjo un escalofrío entrar al lugar. No sólo verlo, está el movimiento. Siento que la cosa (el *VLT*) está viva, hay una energía que va al aparato”, dice Carlos. “Que esta tecnología te hace ver más allá de ese polvo, esa es una forma de ver el Universo. Pero hay otras, los pueblos la ven de otra forma. Es tan válido como usar un instrumento que pueda descubrir algunas cosas”, concluye.

En este intento de diálogo, de conocer la perspectiva del “otro”, resaltan varias cosas tanto a lo que se conoce, como a la postura respecto a lo que se desconoce. Al menos como está estructurado y se puede observar, son los habitantes de Atacama los que van al observatorio y al llegar se encuentran con lo “desconocido” representado por tecnología. El documental no especifica el por qué se da el encuentro de esta manera, pero a fin de cuentas, la forma de presentarlo visualmente y narrativamente así, con un grupo “visitando” al otro, reproduce, tal vez de forma no intencional, algunas imposiciones. Son también atendidos, e instruidos, por David el astrofísico. En el sentido de encuentro, toda la situación tiene características escolares occidentales. En esa lógica, las preguntas hacia David son más que válidas y coherentes respecto a lo que él realiza.

Ahora bien, más allá de la tecnología, el diálogo se complica. Los cuestionamientos que sacan de la zona de confort al astrofísico tienen que ver con su postura sobre lo espiritual, la vida y la muerte. La ciencia, en su evolución, fue fragmentándose en disciplinas y subdisciplinas, con el fin de comprender mejor ciertos elementos de nuestro mundo y de nuestra sociedad, pero ahí, en la cotidianidad, el conocimiento y la sociedad se manifiestan así, sin fragmentación, la pregunta emitida por Cecilio es más que válida en esta lógica.

Al intentar contestar con los mismos parámetros que las dudas tecnológicas, es decir, centrarse en si, la ciencia puede o no puede responder esos asuntos, o si puede o no comprobarse la existencia de deidades, se nota la incomodidad e inseguridad. Es el mismo David que habló antes de la oportunidad de ver lo “distinto”. No se muestra en ningún momento cerrado a este diálogo, pero se nota la dificultad que tiene para establecerlo. Nunca responde lo que a nivel personal piensa o siente, pues habla en nombre de la ciencia.

Carlos es tajante en sus conclusiones, se le nota cómodo y seguro con lo que logra decir. Por una parte, habla de la impresión

que le provoca ver el *VLT*, el cual parece “tener vida”. Esto tiene mucho sentido. La atribución de movimiento a partir de energía es un principio básico de la física, nada se crea, nada se destruye, sólo hay transformación. Carlos no desestima, en ningún momento, ni la labor ni la importancia del conocimiento que se genera en el observatorio, pero a su parecer, como todo conocimiento, sólo funciona para comprender ciertas cosas.

Conclusiones y perspectivas

El ejercicio de análisis sobre este documental, es muy enriquecedor al ubicarlo como material educativo o detonador de diálogo entre conocimientos, posibilitando análisis de otros materiales para su diseño, construcción y por supuesto deconstrucción, resaltando los siguientes hallazgos:

Características educativas:

El documental, de acuerdo a lo planteado por Wood y Nichols, cumple más una función observacional a partir de la acción participativa, que una función expositiva, que suele derivar de información secundaria o dirigida a especialistas. Permite que el espectador realice inferencias respecto a las conductas y posicionamientos de los participantes, quienes son los que reflexionan en primera instancia.

Desde el constructivismo, sí se logran identificar varios de los riesgos respecto a la construcción de conocimiento como la dicotomía de saberes, llamando la atención que es la voz narradora quien remarca esta frontera. También es la narración quien enfatiza algunos elementos que pueden considerarse folclóricos, centrándose en el carácter místico o de cultura estática.

Sin embargo, los abordajes desde conocimientos de mínima y la cuestión directiva donde se desecha un conocimiento en función de

otro, no se presentan, permitiendo en efecto un posicionamiento claro y de respeto entre pobladores y astrónomos, que no por eso no deja de ser complicado y limita el diálogo. Esto se observa en los testimonios únicamente, no en la narración. El enunciador-narrador funciona como tutor, tiene significado si el espectador se lo atribuye.

Posición y estrategias para el diálogo:

Se identifican dos estrategias muy distintas. Como ya se mencionó, la narración gira en torno a la separación de saberes. Esto se refuerza en la forma en que son presentados. Hay un fuerte discurso mitológico y de pasado ancestral cuando se refiere a los habitantes de Atacama, mientras se muestra un lenguaje muy técnico en lo referente al observatorio y los astrónomos que ahí laboran.

Esto, se refuerza en el plano visual con acercamientos a la cotidianidad y a la tecnología respectivamente. Sólo el conocimiento astronómico se ilustra con imágenes computarizadas y simuladores. Cuando se mencionan conocimientos específicos de los pobladores, tanto en sus propios testimonios como por alguien más, no existe este tipo de recurso, limitándose a tomas y paisajes abiertos del desierto.

Son los propios participantes, tanto los pobladores como David, los que inducen el diálogo de saberes, que pese a no resultar en un intercambio fluido, como se observa en la última parte, es evidente la intencionalidad y el grado de conciencia de no saberlo todo, la incompletud referida por Santos (2010). Si se descubre algo nuevo u otra forma de mirar, no queda claro, pero sí queda manifestado que hay diversas formas de entender el Universo.

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**“MYTHOPOETIC ARTICULATIONS” OF SPACE:
REINVENTING THE CITY IN CONTEMPORARY
INDIGENOUS LITERATURES IN BRAZIL
AND CANADA**

**“ARTICULAÇÕES MITOPOÉTICAS” DO ESPAÇO:
REINVENTANDO A CIDADE NAS LITERATURAS INDÍGENAS
CONTEMPORÂNEAS NO BRASIL E NO CANADÁ**

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes two Indigenous texts in Brazil and Canada that transform traditionally colonial urban areas into spaces for Indigenous resurgence: Daniel Munduruku’s *Crônicas de São Paulo* and Leanne Simpson’s *Islands of Decolonial Love*. In these narratives, the characters navigate different sites of São Paulo and Peterborough, respectively, recovering the names and stories associated with those places. Hence, they engage in “mythopoetic articulations” of the space that enable the protagonists to (re)create the physical environment and locate their identity within “re-membered” Indigenous worldviews (Roland Walter 2016). I argue that through memory and imagination, Munduruku and Simpson displace the hegemony of the European imaginary to reclaim

Indigenous epistemologies that transform the *unheimlich* place of colonial subjugation into a decolonial home.

KEYWORDS: Indigenous literature; Brazil; Canada; memory and epistemology; urban space.

RESUMO: Este artigo analisa duas narrativas indígenas no Brasil e no Canadá que transformam áreas urbanas coloniais em espaços para a resistência indígena: *Crônicas de São Paulo*, de Daniel Munduruku, e *Islands of Decolonial Love*, de Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Nessas narrativas, os personagens andam por diferentes lugares de São Paulo e Peterborough, respectivamente, recuperando os nomes e as histórias indígenas associadas a esses lugares. Assim, eles se envolvem em “articulações mitopoéticas” do espaço que permitem aos protagonistas (re)criar o ambiente físico e localizar suas identidades através da recuperação das visões de mundo indígenas (Roland Walter 2016). Este artigo mostra que através da memória e da imaginação, Munduruku e Simpson questionam a hegemonia do imaginário para recuperar epistemologias indígenas que transformam o lugar *unheimlich* da subjugação colonial em um lugar-lar decolonial.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: literatura Indígena; Brasil; Canadá; memória e epistemologia; espaço urbano.

Quando ando por Sampa penso que estou caminhando sobre meus ancestrais. E viver bem aqui é mantê-los vivos na minha memória e na memória desta colossal aldeia de desconhecidos.

Daniel Munduruku, *Crônicas de São Paulo*

Then, I began to start my own talks with a narrative of what our land used to look like as a quick glimpse, albeit a generalized

one, of what was lost – not as a mourning of loss but as a way of living in a Nishnaabeg present that collapses both the past and the future and as a way of positioning myself in relation to my Ancestors and my relations.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*

To talk about Indigenous experiences in Brazil and Canada¹ is to summon up images of a natural life within the bounds of a reserve. In fact, (neo)colonial discourses in these countries still “maintain a stubborn association of ‘authentic’ Indigenous identities with non-urban spaces”, neglecting the role cultural and political Indigenous movements in the cities have played on the production of contemporary Indigeneity (Andersen and Peters 3). To question received notions of authenticity that construe Indigenous peoples as a-cultural and abject beings once they migrate to urban areas, contemporary writers have increasingly reflected on the the challenges and possibilities of expressing urban Indigenous experiences. This article examines two of these writers: Daniel Munduruku, an educator and author of the Munduruku nation in Brazil, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, an activist, writer, musician, and scholar of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg nation in Canada. In both Munduruku’s story collection *Crônicas de São Paulo* and Simpson’s collection of poetry, songs and stories *Islands of Decolonial Love*, the characters navigate different touristic areas of São Paulo and Peterborough, respectively, recovering the Indigenous names and stories associated with those places. Hence, these characters reclaim

¹ Throughout this article, I refer to these countries simply as Brazil and Canada. However, it is important to acknowledge that these are names that, like São Paulo and Peterborough, were imposed by settler colonial administration in the attempt to erase Indigenous presence and inscribe the “New World” into the written records of European civilization. As such, they ignore Indigenous denominations and perceptions of these places.

embodied Indigenous understandings of the geography and engage in what Roland Walter defines as “mythopoetic articulations” of the space – a combination of memory and imagination that helps the protagonists locate their experiences within “re-membered” (memory and assemblage) Munduruku and Anishinaabeg epistemologies (Walter 2016: 36). By (re)inscribing Indigenous presence, histories and knowledges in urban areas of Brazil and Canada, Munduruku and Simpson dismantle the dichotomy between Indigenous homeland and urban locales to transform traditionally colonial urban areas into spaces for Indigenous resurgence.

As a Brazilian doctoral candidate with mixed European ancestry (Italian and Portuguese), I believe it is crucial to start this article by asserting my position as an outsider when addressing Indigenous activism and epistemologies. Located as I am on what, in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines as “this side of the line” (118) and, thus, implicated in the cultural, economic, political and epistemic violence perpetuated by colonialism in my homecountry, I recognize my limited capacity to understand Indigenous experiences and contribute to Indigenous movements in Brazil and Canada. Commenting on the ethical challenges of reading Indigenous texts in the context of Western-centric academia, Heather Dorries and Sue Ruddick state that engaging with Indigenous scholars like Simpson requires “a practice of reading as resurgence” that is embodied, personalized, open and contingent upon the readers’ experiences, responsibilities and needs vis-à-vis their communities (628). For non-Indigenous readers whose ability to comprehend Indigenous experiences is limited, “reading as resurgence” requires us to respect the sovereignty of the texts and acknowledge that certain meanings will be inaccessible to us (Dorries and Ruddick 630). Aware that reading practices of Indigenous texts by non-Indigenous scholars risk (re)enacting colonial relations, my comparison of Munduruku’s and Simpson’s

literary work aims at analyzing the singular role these writers have played in the literary histories of Brazil and Canada and how their artistic practices have called for a critical reinterpretation of master narratives in those countries. In other words, in this article I discuss Munduruku's and Simpson's different forms of creative intervention and negotiation in urban areas of both countries, while being aware of the limitations, gaps and inconsistencies involved in comparative analyses of different knowledges and worldviews.

Expanding on Édouard Glissant's idea that the landscapes in the Americas still preserve the memory of their colonial pasts (150), Roland Walter explores the association between collective experiences and the physical world, stating that "a sense of place is crucial for [sustaining] a community's cultural episteme", that is, the founding knowledges according to which this community interprets the world (2016, 38). According to Walter, identity is both shaped by connections with the landscape and rooted in cultural worldviews in such a way that should the relationship between subject, episteme, language and place be broken, then one's sense of identity and belonging is likewise disrupted. Walter's ideas imply that a reclamation of specific, embodied and localized understandings of geography, therefore, would allow an individual to (re)create the physical environment and, consequently, (re)locate their² identity within a "culturally specific ethos and worldview" (2016, 36). In the context of the forced displacement of Indigenous peoples, appropriation of Indigenous territories and attempted suppression of Indigenous languages and cultures in the Americas, Walter calls for a mythopoetic revision of the space that, combining memory and imagination, turns the *unheimlich* place of marginalization

² It is important to note that throughout this article, I will deliberately use the pronouns "they/them/their" to denote gender neutral grammatical constructions both singular and plural in cases where the preferred pronoun is unknown.

back into a *heimlich* home, “a place-home where the equivalence of world/sense of self (broken and distorted because of colonialism) is restructured based on one’s own ethos and worldview” (“um lugar-lar onde a equação do mundo/imagem do self (rompida e distorcida pelo processo colonizador) é reestruturada com base no próprio ethos e cosmovisão” [2013, 10]).³

Using Walter’s ideas on collective memory, spatial reconnection and epistemic reclamation as starting points for this article, I argue that through their mythopoetic articulations of São Paulo and Peterborough, Munduruku and Simpson displace the epistemic hegemony of the European imaginary to reclaim Indigenous epistemologies that help transform the *unheimlich* place of colonial subjugation into a *heimlich*, decolonial home. If, on the one hand, Munduruku writes for non-Indigenous residents of São Paulo to remind us of Brazil’s Indigenous ongoing history and legacy, Simpson, on the other hand, turns to Indigenous readers to reassure that Indigenous cultures and traditions “provide the ultimate antidote to colonialism” and the “transformative contexts” that are necessary to restore Indigenous political, intellectual, legal and spiritual traditions (2011, 17). Yet, both authors demonstrate that epistemic reclamation is contingent upon issues of land ownership, cultural emancipation, and political sovereignty. In this sense, throughout their texts Munduruku and Simpson deconstruct monolithic notions of territory and the power structures that have helped divide, manage, and exploit Indigenous lands to re-signify geography as a physical, conceptual, and political space. By questioning the settler-colonial imposition of foreign names upon Indigenous geographies, destruction of Indigenous sacred places and burial grounds, and establishment of a reservation system according to which the city becomes non-Indigenous space,

³ To keep the reading flow, throughout this essay the English translation will appear before the original text. It is important to note that all the translations are my own.

Munduruku's and Simpson's performative "re-membering" of São Paulo and Peterborough ultimately re-inscribes Indigenous presence, helps recover Indigenous language and cultural systems, and offers transformative responses to the violence of settler colonialism and white supremacy in Brazil and Canada.

Daniel Munduruku's *Crônicas de São Paulo*: Performative Memory and Spatial Reclamation

When he was fifteen, Daniel Munduruku migrated from his reserve in the northeast of Brazil to São Paulo, one of the country's biggest cities. There, he graduated in Philosophy, with specializations in History and Psychology, and got a PhD in Education from the University of São Paulo. Since the publication of his first book *Histórias de Índio* in 1996, Munduruku has become an important advocate for the cultural and political emancipation of Indigenous nations across the country, particularly through his pedagogical commitment to educate non-Indigenous Brazilians about the country's continuing history of colonialism and Indigenous resistance. In *Crônicas de São Paulo*,⁴ Munduruku combines ancestral memory and his experiences living in an urban environment devastated by pollution, industrial development, and centuries of dispossession to (re)imagine how São Paulo was when Indigenous ancestors were still living there. Walking around the touristic areas of what used to be a big Indigenous reserve, the narrator-storyteller reflects on the meanings of the Indigenous names preserved in the city's

⁴ It is important to note that *crônica* refers to a specific literary genre that, similar to travel journals and exploration narratives, became popular among European explorers and colonizers engaged in recording their imperial views and impressions of Brazil. Throughout this article, however, I will use the English word "story" to refer to Munduruku's *crônicas*.

landscapes, for instance Tatuapé, Anhangabaú, Ibirapuera, Jabaquara, Guarapiranga, Butantã, Pirituba, Tietê, Tucuruvi and Guaianases, and recovers Indigenous stories that are associated with these names. For Miguel Rocha Vivas, Munduruku's *Crônicas de São Paulo* represents, above all, a migration to the "letter," to language, as São Paulo is "translated, reimagined, read anew by the Indigenous chronicler and stroller who reclaims this city from the perspective of an inclusive, collective 'us'" ("traducida, reimaginada, vuelta a leer por el cronista y paseante indígena contemporáneo, quien la reclama suya desde un nosotros inclusivo" [262]). By recovering the dispossessions, memories and values of the people who inhabited and continue to inhabit the streets of this industrial metropole, the narrator of *Crônicas de São Paulo* becomes a (counter)archeologist and diasporic stroller who "migrates" to his ancestors' past to reclaim and record his people's histories. By doing so, he writes a counter-memory for those whose experiences have been excluded from the official texts and journals of the colonial state.

In his mnemonic and imaginative contemplation of Indigenous experiences, Munduruku neither mourns a lost past, nor does he try to recover an idyllic past untouched by Eurocentric civilization and modernity. Rather, he inscribes the past within both the present and the future. In other words, Munduruku negotiates and translates cultural contact and difference in a way that combines both an understanding of his responsibilities with his ancestors' histories, and an awareness of his role as a migrating subject trying to envision a viable future for Indigenous peoples in Brazil. For instance, although São Paulo constantly reminds the narrator of the systemic oppression that colonialism and economic development have brought to Indigenous nations, the city still allows him to contemplate beauty amid chaos, "to listen to the songs of the birds, to hug the trees and to breathe hope" ("ouvir o canto dos pássaros, abraçar as árvores, respirar esperanças" [12]). São Paulo is

also the place where Munduruku finds his vocation as an educator and a place he embraces without having to abandon his Indigenous identity. As the narrator puts it, in São Paulo he transforms “the canoe into train, the bow into word, the woods into *tabual*, the darkness into electric light and the reserve into city. I have not left my reserve for the city; rather, I have turned the city into my reserve” (“o barco em trem, o arco em palavra, a mata em *tabual*, a escuridão em luz elétrica, a aldeia em cidade. Não troquei minha aldeia pela cidade. Eu transformei a cidade em minha aldeia” [43]). Refusing usual representations of the urban in terms of alienation, coerced assimilation and exploitation by a white majority – in Walter’s words, the *unheimlich* place of oppression – the narrator rediscovers São Paulo both spatially and temporally, emphasizing the potential for re-defining Indigenous existence in this city. By doing so, he suggests that to (re)indigenize São Paulo, it is necessary to remap the relationship between past, present and future, and between reserve and urban areas, no longer in terms of dichotomy or linear progression but, rather, in terms of interconnection, negotiation, and contextual learning and re-learning.

Throughout *Crônicas de São Paulo*, thus, the narrator-storyteller conceives cars as modern canoes (21), buildings as gigantic trees (16), the train as a sharp blade cutting through the heart of Mother Earth (16) and the subway of Tatuapé as a metallic armadillo that, different from the wild armadillo that can be hunted and eaten, transports city dwellers in their daily search for food and subsistence (15). By redefining these Eurocentric concepts through his Indigenous perspective, the narrator engages in a process of cross-cultural translation that is crucial to assert the continuity of Indigenous experiences in São Paulo. In “Ibirapuera”, which he translates as “home to many different trees”, the narrator (re)imagines this urban green park, notably a leisure destination for middle-upper class Brazilians and tourists, as a circular reserve that both reminds us of

our responsibilities with the environment and warns us that “we are part of the planet, rather than its owners” (“somos parte integrante do planeta e não seus donos” [23]). While many of the trees in the Ibirapuera were destructed to give way to the city that now grows around them, the narrator still considers this park and, more broadly, the iconic buildings of this big metropole as an attempt, even if unconscious, to accommodate the square into the circle. For the narrator, this process of accommodation creates a balance between past and present that turns São Paulo both into “a habitable place for the spirits of the ancestors, and a resting place for the spirit of the modern man” (“um lugar habitável para o espírito dos antepassados e ideal para o descanso do espírito do homem moderno” [24]). Through his temporal and spatial remapping of São Paulo, therefore, the narrator re-enacts the collaborations and tensions of the contact zone to provide a diplomatic and literary performance in which ontologically heterogenous worldviews coexist without having to reach a literal translation or absolute assimilation. In this sense, rather than achieving a univocality that ultimately silences the Other, as colonial discourses have done, Munduruku’s intercultural translation of São Paulo resembles what Viveiros de Castro defines as “controlled equivocation”, a production of difference that connects two or more discourses “to the precise extent to which they are not saying the same thing” (2004, 20).

While the modern/colonial rationale has imposed arbitrary systems of racial segregation and reified the nature and culture divide, Munduruku’s “mythopoetic articulation” of São Paulo remodels this metropolitan city into an inclusive and global reserve that is home for humans and non-humans, for Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups. As the narrator defines it, São Paulo is “home for all, open for all” (“a casa de todos. Aberta para todos” [56]). In “Jabaquara”, which he translates as “the place of runaway slaves”, the narrator unburies Brazil’s history of slavery and often denied

African heritage to narrate the efforts of the *quilombolas* and other runaway slaves to establish their own settlements in Brazil. Parallel to the slaves' struggles, the storyteller identifies a pattern of resistance, continuance, and survival that to some extent reminds him of his ancestors' own experiences. As the storyteller states, in their longings for home, the slaves brought to the New World the dances and songs that would allow them to reclaim "Mother Africa" (28). For the narrator, this process of reclamation implies that freedom is dependent upon having a land where ancestral spirits are alive, "a land where one can tap the floor to invite the ancestral spirits to dance to creation songs" ("uma terra onde se possa bater os pés para convidar os espíritos ancestrais para dançar a música da criação" [30]). Although Munduruku is aware that Afro-descendants and Indigenous peoples in Brazil have unique experiences of colonialism and systemic oppression, the slaves' recreation of home in Jabaquara awakens in the narrator a desire to sing his nation's own creation songs. At the same time, his visit to Jabaquara, "meeting place of traditions, of *saudade* and of freedom" ("lugar de encontro de tradições, da saudade e da liberdade" [30]), deepens his attachment to São Paulo "land that welcomes, even if in a clumsy way, all those who arrive here" ("terra que dá guarida e acolhe, ainda que de forma trôpega, a todos que aqui chegam" [30]) – a place that, (re)invented and reclaimed through his Indigenous lens, has the potential to become a decolonized home.

In "Tietê", at the margins of one of the most polluted rivers in Brazil, the narrator comments on his ancestors' views of sustainability to highlight the importance of fostering reciprocal and non-hierarchical connections between humans and nature. At first, he explains that for some Indigenous nations, the dynamics of everyday life and forms of governance are organized according to the cyclical patterns of the natural world – a recurrent aspect in Simpson's work. For the Munduruku people living at the edges of

the Tapajós, for example, the river functions as a “grandfather”, a keeper of traditional knowledge that constantly reminds them of the importance of remaining respectful of the environment, and of carrying with them “the certainty of belonging, instead of possession; the certainty that we are one with the planet, instead of its owners; one with the forest, instead of its proprietors [...] one with the people, instead of their masters” (“a certeza do pertencimento e da não-posse, [a certeza de que somos] um com o planeta e não os seus donos. Um com a floresta e não seus proprietários [...] um com as pessoas e não os seus senhores” [47]). Although polluted, the Tietê is still portrayed as a grandfather and generator of life. When moving around the river in his “four-wheel metal canoe” (“canoa metálica de quatro rodas”), the narrator warns that, similar to the river, “we cannot live without nourishing our own ‘riverbanks’ so that other people can also have a prosperous life” (“nós não podemos passar por esta vida sem fecundarmos nossas próprias margens, para que outros também tenham vida em abundância” [49]). Reflecting on the concepts of reciprocity and accountability, the storyteller suggests that existence is relational and dependent upon environmentally conscious action and mutual responsibility between humans themselves, and between humans and the planet.

In “Guaianases, Guarulhos e Guarani”, the last story of *Crônicas de São Paulo*, the narrator (re)traces São Paulo’s colonial history to assert Indigenous peoples’ belonging to this multicultural city. Challenging the dynamics of dispossession, erasure and assimilation that have informed colonial contact, the city stroller here reminds us that a sense of place depends upon the recognition that different knowleges and cultural universes can coexist. Despite receiving another name, adopting different stories and histories, and opening its doors to modernity and development, São Paulo was built upon the “ancestral blood” of the Tamoios, Tupiniquim, Tupinambá, Guarani, Guaianá and Guaru, and this awareness allows

the storyteller to reinstate and honour the memories and histories of those who “could not resist the development of this city” (“não conseguiram resistir ao seu crescimento” [57]). Throughout this story, the narrator-storyteller urges us, non-Indigenous residents, to recognize Indigenous presence as well as the history of patience, resistance, and continuity that marks Indigenous experiences in São Paulo. As he reminds us, São Paulo continues to be home to those who “to this day are still São Paulo’s most remarkable children: the Guaranis” (“ainda hoje são seus filhos mais ilustres: os Guaranis” [57]). As a “home for all, open for all” (a casa de todos. Aberta para todos [56]), São Paulo is built upon conflicting networks and interactions of different agents, realities, identities, histories, and epistemologies – all of which, according to the narrator, should be able to share the same space without having to subsume each other. Resonating with Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of the rhizome as an assemblage of interconnected, sovereign and heterogenous elements, Munduruku moves beyond the idea of São Paulo as a multicultural (and colonial) urban center to transform it into an inherently “rhizomatic” space.

Located in-between “comfort and discomfort zones”, in-between “fields of domination and struggle”, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines an ecology of knowledges, the narrator-storyteller of *Crônicas de São Paulo* develops “hybrid forms of cultural understanding” that account for similarities, differences, incompatibilities and discontinuities (2016, 212). Comparing himself to a serpent that constantly changes its skin to adapt to its environment, the narrator dismantles Western-centric dichotomies and essentialist concepts of identity to conclude that, “serpent by nature” (“serpente por natureza”), he was able to develop “[his] own way to look at São Paulo and take from it what is necessary to keep the balance, to hold the sky, to prevent its self-destruction” (“meu jeito de olhar São Paulo e dela tirar tudo o que for possível para manter o céu

equilibrado, evitando que se autodestrua” [43]). Moving beyond the territorial and imaginative boundaries of colonialism, the storyteller refuses essentialisms and claims of authenticity to insist on the coexistence, oftentimes tense, of knowledges and cultural universes. In this sense, *Crônicas de São Paulo* becomes a performative and relational project of intercultural translation that enables him to assert the political and cultural sovereignty of his nation.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s *Islands of Decolonial Love: Generative Refusal and Epistemic Reclamation*

Similar to Munduruku, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg musician, writer and scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson also questions cognitive and territorial imperialism in Canada to (re)locate Indigenous epistemologies within a reclaimed space. To dismantle the social, political, and epistemic subjugation of Indigenous nations in Canada, Simpson draws upon the concept of affirmative refusal that Nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) and Dene scholar Jarrett Martineau defines as a form of “resistance in (and as) movement” that strategically navigates the “psycho-affective and material terrain” of settler colonialism to envision affirmative expressions of Indigeneity (57). By doing so, Simpson calls for a generative form of refusal that moves through and away from Western-centric systems of thought to envision Indigenous alternatives and nation-based notions of Indigeneity (2017, 198). To challenge state-centered politics of reconciliation and recognition, moreover, Simpson also echoes the claims made by Dene scholar Glen Coulthard. In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Coulthard states that Indigenous resistance entails not only fighting for state recognition, but also promoting continuous “self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices” (24). By maintaining that Indigenous worldviews

provide the transformative tools necessary for the (re)generation of Indigenous life and sovereignty, Simpson implies that it is only through the social, economic, political and epistemic reclamation of Indigenous systems of thought that Canada can become a decolonized state. This (re)generation, of course, can only be accomplished through the reclamation of Indigenous territories, including urban spaces, and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and ownership over these lands.

Originally published in 2013, *Islands of Decolonial Love* actualizes a new place for living contemporary Indigeneity that refuses the settler-colonial rhetoric of healing, reconciliation and recognition to promote “a flourishing of the *Indigenous* inside” (2011, 17, original emphasis). While institutionalized discourses of healing, reconciliation and recognition focus on the importance of accounting for the past and moving on, the stories, songs and poems in Simpson’s debut collection alternate between ancestral past and the contemporary reality of the Anishinaabeg to encourage transformative actions toward a decolonized future. As Simpson puts it elsewhere, the colliding of past, present and future allows for a “spatial construction of time” that moves “out of colonialism” toward the “unfolding of Indigenous place-based resurgences and nationhoods” (2017, 193). By calling for a generative refusal and de-centering of institutionalized ways of living Indigeneity provided by the colonial outside to foster Indigenous self-actualization, Simpson offers a positive reinvestment of Indigeneity that is crucial to advance the resurgent stage. Particularly relevant throughout *Islands of Decolonial Love* is Simpson’s reclamation of Anishinaabeg worldviews and Anishinaabemowin (Anishinaabeg language), as well as her (re)creation of Peterborough as Nogojiwanong, the homeland of the Anishinaabeg.

Responding to Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman’s call for the refusal of colonial spatialities, Simpson claims that re-examining

Indigenous peoples' relationships to place "outside of the spatial constructs of settler colonialism" is crucial to achieve a deeper understanding of Indigenous experiences (2017, 196). Therefore, throughout her work as a writer, scholar and activist, Simpson reminds us that "every piece of North America is Indigenous land" (2017, 197). As such, "every piece of North America", including urban areas, has the potential to become a site of direct action and transformative intervention – from collective movements of alliance and cross-cultural solidarity to projects of language revitalization, urban land reclamation and renaming, and artistic renaissance (2017, 197). Storytelling, of course, is one of the transformative tools that Simpson uses in *Islands of Decolonial Love*. Like São Paulo in Munduruku's *Crônicas de São Paulo*, the landscape in Simpson's texts flourishes with Anishinaabeg "stories of [past and future] resistance", most of which reinforce the dynamism of Anishinaabeg modes of thought and, thus, help dismantle essentialist conceptions of identity and institutionalized discourses that help perpetuate colonial power (2011, 18). This unburying of Anishinaabeg stories becomes crucial to Simpson's reclamation of the space and reaffirmation of Anishinaabeg ownership over these lands.

While in *Crônicas de São Paulo* Munduruku recovers Indigenous stories that are associated with the names preserved in São Paulo's landscapes, in *Islands of Decolonial Love* Simpson challenges the settler-colonial attempt to erase Indigenous languages to call for the reclamation of Anishinaabemowin. Commenting on the Ogimaa Mikana Project,⁵ which works to restore Anishinaabemowin place-names to the streets, avenues, roads, paths, and trails of Gichi Kiiwenging (Toronto), Simpson implies that the restoration of

⁵ As described in its website, the main goal of the Ogimaa Mikana Project is to transform landscapes that often co-opt or make invisible the presence of Indigenous peoples by recovering their original names. More information can be found at <https://ogimaamikana.tumblr.com/>.

Indigenous names and languages is essential to challenge the settler-colonial construction of urban areas as non-Indigenous and, thus, (re)insert Indigenous presence into those spaces (2017, 194). Thus, in some of the poems and stories in *Islands of Decolonial Love*, the reclamation of Anishinaabemowin functions as a political statement against the cultural erasure and ongoing exploitation of Indigenous territories. For instance, in “pipty” the narrator draws upon the assassination of Ojibwa “protester” Dudley George during a confrontation with the Ontario Provincial Police at the Ipperwash Provincial Park to critique Ontario premier Mike Harris’s attempts to build a concrete building on top of *kinomagewapkong*, or “teaching rocks” (2015, 45). Initially intended as an infrastructure project to improve tourism, Harris’ project ends up blocking the creek and, consequently, the spirits of the narrator’s ancestors, who are now unable to communicate. While news channels have claimed that Dudley George “*is the first aboriginal to be killed in a land rights dispute in canada [sic] since the 19th century*” (Simpson 2015: 46, original emphasis), the narrator reminds us that this information is only accurate if we “don’t count suicide, cop killings, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, violent deaths, deaths from poverty, deaths from coping and deaths from being a woman” (46). As the poem suggests, settler-colonial violence is ongoing and cannot be thought separately from the appropriation of Indigenous bodies, lands, and worldviews.

In “nogojiwanong”, a long poem divided into four parts, Simpson recovers the Mississauga Anishinaabeg name for Peterborough to foreground Anishinaabeg ways of conceiving and inhabiting the space. Located “at the foot of the rapids” (2015, 115), Nogojiwanong has been target of various projects of economic development, including the construction of the “highest hydraulic liftlock in the world” that the protagonist in this poem tries to destroy (2015, 122), and of nationalist “picnic” parks built over Indigenous “teaching rocks”

(2015, 123). Like Munduruku's reflection at the margins of the Tietê River, the renaming of Peterborough in this poem enlarges the concept of existence to account for the interconnectedness and wellbeing of the whole community, including non-human beings. For example, incorporating the rhetoric of official documents in the beginning of this poem, the speaker writes a treaty preventing the Canadian government from building lift locks, canals and hydro dams over her nation's land because of the damage these projects would cause in the region's fauna and flora. The treaty, then, is signed on June 21, 1830, at "nogojiwanong, kina gichi anishnaabegogaming", translated as "the place where we all live and work together" (Simpson 2015: 114-5). Significantly, June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada. Instead of reinforcing official dates and celebrations, however, the poem appropriates this national date to turn it into a statement about Indigenous sovereignty and land ownership. It is not by accident, then, that this treaty should be signed by characters of Indigenous creation stories, for instance the "sky-woman", "thunderbird woman" and "Wenona", as well as a few of the animals that live in Nogojiwanong and whose names are written in Anishinaabemowin. While the Canadian state has considered treaties as "legal agreements through which Indians ceded [their] lands for cash" (Simpson 2011: 106), "nogojiwanong" implies that treaties are, in fact, predicated upon establishing healthy and balanced relationships with nature, and recognizing the sovereignty of all parts involved. Against a settler-colonial and patriarchal concept of treaty-making that has institutionalized treaties as a one-way transaction and excluded women from decision-making processes, the poem emphasizes the importance of cultivating balanced and non-hierarchical relations while also reclaiming matrilineal forms of social and political representation.

Different from Munduruku's portrayal of the river as a grandfather, the poem portrays land as an extension of the female body,

that is, the place where women give birth and breastfeed, and the place where the water that runs through the rivers and lakes is the same one that runs through women's wombs and breasts (Simpson 2015: 114). It is not by coincidence, again, that the first signature in the treaty should come from Wenona, the first breast feeder and nurturer of humans on earth (Simpson 2011: 108). Rather than an essentialist view, Simpson's positioning of women's bodies as close to, or even part of nature, is a political statement about Indigenous peoples' connections to the land and claims of sovereignty. According to Simpson, as a generator of life and continuous rebirth, the female body mirrors the cyclicity of the natural world and reinforces the dynamism of Anishinaabeg forms of governance, that is, the ways through which Anishinaabeg political, intellectual, spiritual and social systems are aligned to the patterns of the natural world and, thus, going through constant change, adaptation and renovation (Simpson 2011: 89). While settler-colonial administration in Canada has perceived Indigenous mobility and dynamism in terms of a lack of political and social forms of organization, using this misconception to justify the appropriation of Indigenous territories, Simpson represents mobility and "transmotion" as Indigenous-centered concepts that provide a way "out of settler-colonialism and into Indigeneity" (2017, 197). By understanding the land as an extension of the female body, moreover, Simpson re-signifies the concept of settler-colonial violence to portray it as a shared (and sexualized) exploitation of bodies and environment. Embedded in the poem's renaming of Peterborough, thus, is both a reclamation of matrilineal forms of social and political decision-making, suppressed by the settler-colonial legal system, and a recuperation of Anishinaabeg forms of governance that are non-hierarchical, dynamic and de-centralized.

While "nogojiwanong" addresses the colonial imposition of names upon Indigenous geographies and struggles to free the Anishinaabeg

from the shackles of cognitive colonialism, the last story, “gwekaanimad”, or “shifting wind” (Simpson 2015: 139), challenges vanishing race discourses and common representations of urban Indigenous peoples as abject and a-cultural to provide a positive embodiment of urban Indigeneity. At first, the story contrasts two characters: the aunt who walks down “those white people streets” with her head down, struggling to hide her Otherness in an urban space that she perceives as segregating and alienating; and the narrator, an enthusiastic and strong-willed woman who takes the streets of Nogojiwanong to organize a “big nishnaabeg” parade celebrating Indigenous ongoing resistance (Simpson 2015: 136). As Simpson clarifies, the story draws upon a collective gathering of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg artists, elders and leaders that took place in 2009, an event that brought together traditional and contemporary performers to the streets of Nogojiwanong (2011, 11). For Simpson, this community procession ultimately served as a reminder that although “collectively unseen in the city of Peterborough”, or only seen at official celebrations such as the ones that take place on June 21, the Anishinaabeg have the power to reclaim Nogojiwanong and turn it into “a place of resurgence” (2011, 11).

Moving around the streets of Nogojiwanong, the performers in this story “spread all kinds of seeds all around”, just like “that first time” (Simpson 2011: 137). The spreading of seeds, here, evokes the Seven Fires Prophecy, an “epic narrative in Nishnaabeg thought” that recounts that in a time of peace and harmony, seven prophets came to the Anishinaabeg and warned them about the coming of white colonizers. To protect against the invasion of the settlers, the prophets advised the Anishinaabeg to move “from the east coast of Turtle Island to the western shores of the Great Lakes” (Simpson 2011: 65). The prophets also predicted that during the Seventh Fire, colonial power would loosen, and the Anishinaabeg would be able to “pick up the pieces of their language, culture and thought-ways

and begin to build, in essence, a resurgence” (Simpson 2011: 66). Thus, as Simpson states, during the Fifth and Sixth Fires, periods of intense enforcement of colonial rule, Anishinaabeg ancestors started planting “the seeds of resurgence” (2011, 66). To do so, grandmothers and grandfathers practiced hidden ceremonies, passed down traditional stories, retreated to the bushes to run away from government agents, and struggled to preserve their languages. By recovering the Seven Fires Prophecy, Simpson dismantles institutionalized discourses that reinforce Indigenous trauma and victimization to insist that resistance and resurgence are, in fact, the “original instruction” of the Anishinaabeg (2011, 66).

Significantly, in Simpson’s story this “celebratory community procession” and “quiet act of resurgence” means “collectively [transforming] the streets of Peterborough back into Nogojiwanong, and forward into Nogojiwanong” (2011, 12). Resonating with Munduruku’s approach to temporality, Simpson’s emphasis on a back and forth movement demonstrates that past, present and future are always intertwined, and that any action “now” should take into account one’s responsibilities with both ancestors and those yet unborn. By recreating Peterborough as an alternative space that celebrates Anishinaabeg continuance and agency, Simpson provides “a glimpse into a decolonized contemporary reality [that ultimately serves as] a mirror of what ‘we can become’” (2011, 97-8). Nogojiwanong, in Simpson’s views, actualizes a new place for living contemporary Indigeneity that moves beyond the institutionalized discursive tropes of trauma, healing, reconciliation and recognition. This new place, in turn, opens for a renewed form of embodied politics that embraces Anishinaabeg epistemologies and amplifies Indigeneity from within.

Nehiyaw (Plains Cree) and Dene scholar Jarrett Martineau argues that by questioning colonial discourses and embodying “transversal movements within and against Empire” (13), decolonial Indigenous art exists in “creative contention” with a system that continues to

perpetuate the assimilation and alienation of Indigenous nations (4). In this sense, Indigenous artistic practices become a powerful weapon in the struggle to decolonize. While Simpson proposes a strategic engagement with settler colonialism to dismantle colonial myths such as the natural and vanishing “Indian”, and patriarchal forms of governance, throughout the poems and stories of *Islands of Decolonial Love* she moves beyond institutionalized essentialisms to reclaim imaginative and material forms of being Anishinaabeg. In the context of urban Indigenous decolonial literature, Simpson’s use of Anishinaabemowin to (re)name the space challenges settler colonial “dissections of [Indigenous] territories and [Indigenous] bodies into reserve/city or rural/urban dichotomies” to remind that all of Canada (and, by extension, North America) is Turtle Island (2017, 173). Building upon Martineau’s claim that “the colonial imaginary occupies Indigenous land and consciousness” (9), in her debut collection Simpson demonstrates that restoring Indigenous intellectual and cultural systems is inseparable from fighting for territorial and political sovereignty. In this sense, the poems, songs and stories in *Islands of Decolonial Love* amplify Indigeneity from within, and plant the seeds of a collective action that would allow the “Eight Fire”, the fire of resurgence, to be lit. (Simpson 2011: 18)

In their mythopoetic (re)inventions of São Paulo and Peterborough, Munduruku and Simpson refuse usual representations of the urban in terms of alienation, disconnection to Indigenous knowledge, exploitation by a white majority and coerced assimilation – the *unheimlich* place of oppression – to emphasize, instead, the potential for re-defining Indigeneity and social existence in those cities. Through “mythopoetic articulations” of the space, Munduruku and Simpson reconstruct their characters’ identities within nation-based and situated understandings, and a restored cultural episteme. By re-inscribing Indigenous presence both physically and figuratively, the city stroller in Munduruku’s *Crônicas de São Paulo* and the

woman of vision in Simpson's story question the geographical borders imposed by settler-colonial administration and dismantle the dichotomy between Indigenous homeland and urban locales to remind us that most cities are, in fact, located on unceded Indigenous territories. For the Munduruku and Anishinaabeg nations, works such as *Crônicas de São Paulo* and *Islands of Decolonial Love*, respectively, provide the tools for a positive reinvestment of Indigeneity and sovereignty that deconstructs the disempowering essentialisms created by colonialism in Brazil and Canada. Despite the violent appropriation and exploitation of bodies and landscapes in the Americas, representations of displacement and spatial reclamation like those of Munduruku and Simpson demonstrate that "the freedom realized through flight and refusal is the freedom to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here; a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism" (Martineau and Ritskes 4).

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**(RE)ENVISIONING A DYSTOPIAN WORLD:
GENDER AND INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS
IN *HOUSE OF CARDS*
AND *THE HANDMAID'S TALE***

**(RE)IMAGINANDO UM MUNDO DISTÓPICO:
GÊNERO E RELAÇÕES INTER-AMERICANAS
EM *HOUSE OF CARDS* E *THE HANDMAID'S TALE***

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ABSTRACT: As a time of post-truth politics, economic recession, and identity insecurity, the election year of 2016 has become a crisis and turning point not only for the United States of America, but also for the Americas (both North America and South America) at large. The emergence of gender and racial discrimination, homophobia, xenophobia, protectionism, populism has promoted polarization and conflicts in the present world and has warned people of a dystopian future. During this particular time, cultural products depicting dystopian societies have provided the sites for people to actively criticize and reflect upon current issues and call for social changes. This article aims to examine dystopian representations of gender issues in combination with inter-American contexts in two recent television series – *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-present) – and discuss

how these representations connect with the current issues of women and minority rights as well as the role of the United States in inter-American relations.

KEYWORDS: gender; Inter-American relations; dystopia; U.S.-American television series.

RESUMO: Como um tempo de política de pós-verdade, recessão económica e insegurança de identidade, o ano eleitoral de 2016 tornou-se um momento crítico e um ponto de viragem não só para os Estados Unidos da América, mas também para as Américas (tanto América do Norte como América do Sul) em geral. A emergência de discriminação de género e racial, homofobia, xenofobia, protecionismo, populismo, promoveu polarização e conflitos no nosso mundo atual e alertou-nos para um futuro distópico. Durante este tempo, os produtos culturais que retratam sociedades distópicas têm fornecido às pessoas a oportunidade de criticarem e reflectirem activamente sobre as questões actuais e apelarem a mudanças sociais. Este artigo pretende examinar representações distópicas de questões de género em combinação com contextos inter-americanos em duas séries recentes de televisão – *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) e *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-presente) – e discutir como estas representações se relacionam com as questões actuais sobre os direitos das mulheres e das minorias e o papel dos Estados Unidos nas relações inter-americanas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: género; relações inter-americanas; distopia; séries de televisão dos Estados Unidos.

Introduction

Since the 2016 presidential election, heated debates on emerging problems with respect to women and minority rights, immigration

policies, and foreign relations have revealed the tendency that the United States of America has become a more and more polarized nation. The future of democracy is questioned, and sensations of sexism, misogyny, racism, homophobia, populism, and xenophobia are generated. As a consequence, numerous social movements, such as #MeToo movement, Time's Up movement, Black Lives Matter movement, have taken place in the United States to advocate women and minority rights. During this time, dystopian literature and television series become relatable sources for people to address social and political changes in current American society. As American scholar M. Keith Booker points out, engaging with numerous cultural trends from different levels and various angles, dystopian narratives can serve "as a central expression of the anxieties associated with the modern predicament" (175). Hence, dystopian literature and television series can provide the readers and viewers with the specimens of how "technological and/or political developments have led to dehumanization and oppression" (qtd. in Ostrander 129) as they "render the construction of societies based on oppressive ideologies" (Ostrander 129).

This article aims to examine some detailed representations of gender inequality and the role of the United States in inter-American relations in two recent dystopian television series – *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013-2018) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-present). Engaging with the representations of women's struggles in male-dominated political worlds, this article examines the hierarchy of women, the diversity of gender discrimination and oppression, and the limitations of both series in addressing women and gender issues. In addition, by dealing with the escaping or fugitive experiences of lower ranking women to the border, the analysis of the article moves to the relations between the United States and its neighboring countries and further investigates the sociopolitical hegemony and

geopolitical tension existing between the United States and other countries in the Americas.¹

The Parallel Universe in *House of Cards*

House of Cards (Netflix, 2013-18) is a groundbreaking American political drama which is a remake of the original British mini-series *House of Cards* trilogy² (BBC, 1990-94). The plot of *House of Cards* is centered on how the Machiavellian political couple, Frank and Claire Underwood, struggle and rise to power in a dark and corrupted Washington D.C. Parallel to the real world where we live in, the alternate dystopian world in *House of Cards* is full of deceptions, schemes, corruption, manipulation, and discrimination, all saturated by the bleak color tone, the transgressive stories, and the intense theme music. The most striking dystopian element is the upside-down national flag of the United States of America.³ As “a signal of dire distress”, the upside-down flag constructs the motif of the whole series, manifesting a sense of distress, insecurity, and resistance (U.S. Code Title 4 Chapter 1 – “THE FLAG”). In particular, this symbol functions as “an S.O.S.” signal calling for attention to “the inverted values”, the reversed morals, and “the American dream upended” (Palm and Stickers 42). By featuring this upside-down dystopian world, *House of Cards* resonates with the current problems and the challenges foreseeable in the future: “In truth,

¹ The Americas here refers to the continents of North America and South America.

² The British mini-series version of *House of Cards* trilogy includes *House of Cards* (BBC, 1990), *To Play the King* (BBC, 1992), and *The Final Cut* (BBC, 1994). They are based on Michael Dobbs's trilogy novels of the same name.

³ This dystopian symbol becomes more obvious in the trailer of Season 5, in which the upside-down national flag of the United States flies in front of the background of “bleak, clouded skies, and the voices of children reading the Pledge of Allegiance” (Hawkes n.p.).

House of Cards offers us a half-truth about our own undoing. Our worries may outstrip concrete realities. [...] In the contemplative life, you withdraw from the political world to think deeply before returning to the world of action". (Hackett 2)

In this dystopian Washington D.C., the political world appears as a white male hegemony which has power over women, minorities, and nation(s). The politicians are predominately male, and the power game is mainly played among the upper-ranking elite white men. Only a few female politicians can make their way to the power center, and these top-level female politicians are preponderantly white upper-class women. The gender disparity is straightforwardly reflected in the fact that female characters only take up around 30% of the regular or recurring speaking characters in the series,⁴ while the percentage of female politicians is much lower. The representations of women with diverse backgrounds and struggling experiences in *House of Cards* have mirrored the existing problems of gender and diversity in the United States as well as the emerging challenges of sexism and racism that have swept through the United States from a transnational perspective.

As already noted, only a few number of women – Claire Underwood, Jackie Sharp, Heather Dunbar, Catherine Durant, and Jane Davis – are high-ranking politicians in this male-dominated political world in *House of Cards*. There are numerous cases in the series that female politicians are portrayed as political outsiders and positioned as minor or supporting roles to the male politicians. Ketchen and Yeo call for attention toward the submissive status of the female politicians to the male protagonist Frank Underwood: "Claire is a fellow shepherd, not merely Frank [Underwood]'s 'head sheep' or, as Jackie Sharp refers to herself, his 'pit bull'" (Ketchen

⁴ In recent American television series (2018-19 seasons), around 45% of major speaking characters are women ("TV Statistics").

and Yeo 7). If a female politician, as shown in the promotions of Jackie Sharp and Catherine Durant, appears to be less ambitious and easier to be manipulated, she is more likely to be chosen by the male political leaders represented by Frank Underwood. Meanwhile, just as reflected in the resignation of Heather Dunbar and the fall of Catherine Durant, any form of resistance can bring an end to their political careers. Even Claire Underwood, the most powerful woman who appeared in the series, is not exempt from this situation: “[her] attempts to conceal her ambition and her less popular decisions (like her repeated abortions) in an effort to please the American public says much about the current debates about feminism and the female empowerment in American society” (Wells-Lassagne n.p.). Therefore, in *House of Cards*, the struggles that these female politicians have in finding a balance between being recognized by the male-dominated political system and striving for personal empowerment and accomplishments reflect the exact dilemma that women in politics are still trying to overcome at present days.

At the same time, these female politicians in *House of Cards* are featured with great significance and complicated characterizations which have in many ways envisioned the future of women in politics and women’s lives in general in the United States and beyond. In particular, the show presents Claire Underwood as the leading female character representing the female politicians’ breakthrough in resisting the gender stereotypes and the patriarchal system in the political world. Claire Underwood is not simply pictured as a political wife standing mostly in the background like Elizabeth Urquhart in the British version. She is both a responsible political wife and an outstanding politician – “What makes her a role model is her ability to double as feminine, yet sharp and decisive to get what she wants” (Petridis 79-80). As Claire is a strong, intelligent, and ambitious woman on a par with her husband, Southworth and

Tallman describe the Underwoods' relationship as an "egalitarian partnership" (183). When comparing the Underwoods with the Macbeths, Caroline Crampton underlines that Claire is not playing the role of Lady Macbeth, "pacing the floor while her husband does the deed", since she "has her own storylines" which are of no less significance than her husband's: "she gets in her own tangles with lobbyists, has her own extra-marital affair, and formulates her own strategies for seizing power" (n.p.).

Apart from the majority of white female politicians, the show presents the viewers with the status of colored women in the political profession. Linda Vasquez, chief of staff in the administration of Garrett Walker, is the only Latina politician throughout the six seasons. Her role as a token representative in the Walker administration is made clear through Frank Underwood's comments at the beginning of the first season: "Linda Vasquez. Female, check. Latino, check. She is as tough as a three-dollar steak, check, check, check". (S01E01). By putting Linda Vasquez's status in colloquial words instead of formal descriptions, such belittlement denotes the fact that women of color have to confront multi-faceted discriminations of both racism and sexism. As Vasquez has straightforwardly disobeyed Frank's manipulation, the final exclusion of Vasquez from the power center is an inevitable outcome. The resignation of Linda Vasquez at the beginning of the second season is an indication of the blocked upward mobility of colored women in this dystopian political world.

In *House of Cards*, there is also a diverse spectrum of women struggling and striving in the male-centered power hegemony. Colored women, aged women, lower class women, and immigrant women altogether make up the complex range of lower-ranking women, which functions as exemplification of the theory that "gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (Butler 4). These lower-ranking

women suffer from inequality and injustice, and they are often underrepresented, oppressed, manipulated, and sacrificed in men's political games. When featuring the lower-ranking women's lives, the series presents numerous plots of women leaving, escaping, resisting, or turning away from men and men's power, such as the cases of Zoe Barnes, Rachel Posner, and LeAnn Harvey.⁵

The most highlighted fugitive experience in the series is the prostitute Rachel Posner's attempted escape from Washington D.C. to the border state New Mexico. As the witness of congressman Peter Russo's drunk-driving scandal, Posner gets acquainted with Doug Stamper (Frank Underwood's chief of staff) after accepting Stamper's hush money to keep silent. Later on, Stamper becomes a regular client of Posner and manipulates her to incriminate Russo during the latter's gubernatorial campaign. In this case, the relationship between Stamper and Posner becomes a typical exemplification of how the powerful male politicians take advantage of the lower-ranking women in *House of Cards*. Stamper's behavior of forcing Posner "to commit crimes is a form of manipulation that has dystopian overtones» and manifests "the physical deprivation of liberty» from the weak and powerless lower-ranking women (Sorlin 102). Involved with the political schemes of the Underwoods and the death of Russo, Posner is consequently controlled by Stamper both emotionally and physically. Even though Stamper gradually develops a deep affection for Posner, he becomes highly controlling in their relationship. He brainwashes her and prevents her from having any connection with anybody or having a regular job. In this

⁵ It is also worth mentioning that such experiences are not just limited to the portrayals of lower-ranking women in *House of Cards*. In fact, the behavior and intention of getting rid of men's power and control also appear in the group of higher-ranking female politicians. For instance, Claire Underwood has turned away from Frank Underwood twice when her power and status are intimidated and undermined by her husband in their partnership.

way, Stamper objectifies Posner as his private possession: “because of his own infatuation with her, she literally becomes his prisoner” and “every move and word [of her] are subjected to [his] consent” (Sorlin 101).

Posner’s choice of running away from Stamper is not a random decision. Her early experience of escaping from her abusive father is the evidence of the fact that she longs for independence and freedom. As a result, Posner has made several attempts to breakaway from Stamper’s manipulation and abuse and eventually succeeds at the end of the second season (S02E13). After many tireless days on the run in her last escape, Posner finally settles down temporarily in New Mexico and lives together with some working-class Latino women, some of whom are undocumented immigrants. During her stay in this hiding place, Posner even provides assistance to one of these women with the paperwork to get a protected status in the United States. These women share their new experiences as well as their American dreams, hoping that they can start a better life in this ‘land of freedom.’ Having secretly purchased a false identity with the new name Cassie Lockhart, Posner also feels hopeful for her future: “Once I save up enough, I want to get my own car and have enough for my own place” (S03E13). Nevertheless, Posner’s dream turns out to be a nightmare when Stamper locates her hiding place and eventually captures her. The last scenes of Rachel Posner in the series present a twist which is cruel but not surprising. When the viewers almost believe that Posner has convinced Stamper to let her “live in total invisibility”, the next minute shows him “running over her with his van [...] and burying her in the desert” – she becomes invisible forever (Sorlin 101).

Rachel Posner’s failed escape represents the disparity between the strength of the lower-ranking women and the unshakable power of upper-ranking male politicians. In this dystopian political world in *House of Cards*, men’s political superiority allows them to abuse their

power and manipulate women and minorities. Women like Posner do not have control over their own identity or existence. In Posner's case, her identity and existence is fully under the control of men like Stamper and Underwood – they define her role when she is useful and do not hesitate to destroy her life when the task is finished. Posner's resistance against Stamper and Underwood signifies her determination of regaining control of her own body and life. Consequently, she unwittingly becomes a possible impediment putting these male politicians at risk, and, therefore, is destined to disappear.

Despite the fact that the lower-ranking women, as shown in the glimpse of the female immigrants' drifting lives, are portrayed as weak, poor, and powerless, these women still strive for a better life with hard work and faith. As the oppressed ones, they are "portrayed in positive images", whereas the powerful male oppressors "in negative ones" (Kellner 58). The contradiction between the temporary peaceful lives of the lower-ranking women in the border state and the bleak and dark political world in Washington D.C., again, underlines what toxic outcome might be brought to these women under the show's dystopian theme. These contrasting images portraying the powerful male politicians and the powerless lower-ranking women have some resemblances with the famous cultural symbol *Fearless Girl* installed in front of Wall Street's symbolic *Charging Bull* on the eve of International Women's Day (March 8th) in 2017. Revealing the brutal, muscular strength, *Charging Bull* is perceived as a representation of masculinity and male power; meanwhile, the statue of *Fearless Girl* serves as a women's manifesto to challenge the male-centered political authority and male chauvinism (Merle, n.p.). The sharp contrast between the small but courageous Latino girl and the fierce and aggressive bull portrays the power relations between women from the minority groups and the white male elites from the old boys' club, calling for the public's attention towards colored and immigrant women, minority rights, and intersectionality.

By addressing the disparity of power between powerful men and struggling women, *House of Cards* appears as one of the forerunners of political television series dealing with the topics of women's rights and gender inequality. It is noteworthy to mention that *House of Cards* is "the first major show to carry on without its central character as a result of revelations arising out of the #MeToo movement" (Hunt, n.p.). Influenced by the #MeToo movement, Netflix fired Kevin Spacey (Frank Underwood) in 2017 because of more than 30 sexual harassment and assault allegations against him (Kornhaber, n.p.). The final season of *House of Cards* was consequently suspended and eventually shortened to six episodes, staging Robin Wright (Claire Underwood) as its leading character and presenting a powerful female president to its viewers (Hunt, n.p.). Early in the second season, Claire Underwood confesses in an interview that she was sexually assaulted by Dalton McGinnis who later became a high-profile military general. Not long after, Megan Hennessey, one of the three anonymous women who have called Claire sharing their experiences of being raped by the same man, decides to stand out to say 'me too' in national television programs. Both Underwood and Hennessey's choices of disclosing their experiences as rape victims and speaking up for themselves publically indicate the foresight of the series in presenting women's strength in fighting for their rights and the challenges that women have to face in the aftermath of sexual assault. This setting of plot is also in line with what the #MeToo movement calls for. Initially started by American activist Tarana Burke in 2006 and triggered by the sexual misconduct allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017, the #MeToo movement has awakened and connected individuals "who had experienced sexual harassment or assault to use the words to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the problem" (Hillstrom 1). As "[s]exual violence is an incredibly polarizing subject", sexual assault victims are constantly chal-

lenged by the power disparity in social and political systems and face overwhelming criticism and scrutiny in both private and public spheres (Fileborn and Loney-Howes 1). By saying ‘me too,’ women can construct a support system for each other to face those challenges and regain the right to redefine their worth and body. Nevertheless, despite the endeavors that are made for justice and equality, current sociopolitical reality still reveals signs of a male-dominated power system. In his comment on the #MeToo movement, Donald Trump stood in alliance with Brett Kavanaugh and claimed that this movement is “‘very dangerous’ and unfairly threatened an entire class of powerful men” (Rucker et al. n.p.). Such response can significantly exacerbate the problems of gender inequality and power disparity.

Furthermore, the plots about lower-ranking women’s geographic mobility in *House of Cards* have mirrored the interconnections of cultures as well as the interrelations of nations between the United States and its neighboring countries. When mapping out the international relations between the United States and other countries, *House of Cards* has put little attention on Inter-American relations; instead, it depicts Russia and China, two patriarchal authoritarian hegemonies which are far away on the Asian-European continent, as the biggest international rivals of the United States. Rachel Posner’s fugitive experience to the border state New Mexico can be interpreted as an implication of the influence of the United States on its neighboring countries across the American continent. Posner’s escape to the borderland not only reveals the contrast between the powerful male political leaders and the powerless lower-ranking women and immigrants, or the contrast between the political center Washington D.C. and the border state New Mexico, but also the imbalanced power relations between the United States and the Latin American nations. These poignant contrasts reflect the power hegemony existing in inter-American relations, as Gavin O’Toole argues: “Inter-American relations have been shaped by the reality

of asymmetry in the levels of power exercised by the US and by Latin American countries. A core problem in relations has been the propensity of the US to act unilaterally from its position of strength, often characterized by use of the term hegemony” (331). Similarly, Nicolas Alexander Beckmann also points out that “[t]he dominant feature of inter-American relations has always been the enormous asymmetry of military and economic power between the U.S. and its southern neighbours”, which constructs “the image of the U.S. as an imperial power, and Latin America as its ‘backyard’ or area of influence” (85). As the biggest superpower in this region, the United States has been the leading influencer of the process of democracy and ideology on the one hand, and has also brought “uncertainty” to the stability of this area due to its political, economic, and military interventions on the other hand (O’Toole 331).

During the fictional 2016 presidential campaign in *House of Cards*, Frank Underwood conducts inflammatory incidents to cause social instability and xenophobic sensations and consequently proposes an immigration ban with more restrictions (S04E13). This can be compared with the 2016 US presidential election when Donald Trump made up his inflammatory slogan “Build the Wall” and disparaged Mexican immigrants as “drug dealers, criminals, and rapists” (“Drug Dealers”). Such political stance was enhanced by Trump “[d]uring his first two years in office [...] by repeating his anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric” (Beckmann 84). For instance, Trump’s xenophobic comments on immigrants from Haiti and El Salvador by categorizing these two Central American nations as ‘shithole countries’ have done great “damage to the relations between the U.S. and its southern neighbours” (Beckmann 92). As a result, Trump’s “antagonist approach” in coping with inter-American relations has set up great obstacles for the countries in this region to further develop bilateral or multilateral cooperation with the United States (Beckmann 93). The xenophobic tension promoted by Trump

can also be interpreted as a reflection of the identity crisis of the white male conservatives. Such political stance shares similarities with those elite white male politicians in *House of Cards* who are afraid of losing their privilege, power, and control. After all, with its references to the recent political reality, *House of Cards*, which has been delivering bold predictions and fascinating narratives on gender and diversity in a dystopian context, is becoming more and more realistic and is gradually outpaced by Trump's America.

The Futuristic World in *The Handmaid's Tale*

The debates concerning women's rights during and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election have made the famous Canadian writer Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* a bestseller and "a symbol of protest" to express worries and dissatisfaction towards the United States under Donald Trump's Administration (Weigel n.p.). Alluding to the Puritan roots and slavery in American history, this dystopian fiction harshly criticizes the patriarchal hierarchy and the sensation of misogyny in American society (Nischik 106). Based on the original novel, the television adaptation *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu, 2017-present) "has assumed a pressing relevance" with regard to gender and social inequalities in present days (Enker n.p.). Different from the parallel universe presented in *House of Cards*, the dystopian world in *The Handmaid's Tale* is set in a near-future – the United States has been almost devastated by nuclear pollution, civil war, and regime change, and then "has reverted to a version of religious fundamentalism which operates a class system based on fertility or lack of it, and patriarchal power" (Wisker 6). In this newly founded regime, the Republic of Gilead, women's social status is degraded to "bodily functions" (Wisker 14). By performing its "dehumanizing control over women's power and

individuality”, this new nation has overturned the progresses that have been made since the twentieth century, including the suffrage movement, women’s right movements, and LGBT social movements (Wisker 14).

The Handmaid’s Tale not only reveals a gender problem between subjugated women and male dominance, but also a diversity problem with respect to the hierarchy of women. In Gilead, women are divided into seven different classes according to their functions – Wives, Econowives, Aunts, Marthas, Handmaids, Jezebels, and un-women (Balsamo 83). Wives have the highest status as they are the spouses of high-ranking military leaders (Commanders) and have the privilege to hire Marthas (domestic servants) and a Handmaid (reproductive women); Econowives are those women who are married to lower-class men in the military, so they do not have such privilege as the wives; Aunts are “religious teachers and trainers of handmaids”; Jezebels are military prostitutes; un-women are the rebels “who resist their class assignment“ (Balsamo 83-84).

These classes of women, particularly the first five classes, construct a special hierarchy of women under this male-dominated regime of Gilead. Within this hierarchy, upper-class women have comparatively more power to control or even abuse lower-class women. Nevertheless, the right and power of upper-class women are limited as they ultimately “hold no true power in a patriarchal society” (Greenebaum and Merenstein 176). More importantly, as presented in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, “men hold most positions of power and authority, but women run the patriarchy” (Greenebaum and Merenstein 176). For instance, apart from training and regulating fertile women to become submissive Handmaids, “the Aunts are responsible for sustaining the rituals of the Gileadan society” (Johnson 116). With access to this particular power, the Aunts are offered the right to punish and abuse other lower-class women with violence and hold “a more elevated status than other females

in Gilead, including the wives” (Johnson 118). Therefore, in the hierarchy of women in the Republic of Gilead, the Wives enjoy the resources and services provided by the lower-ranking women, while the Aunts enforce the powerful men’s (namely the Commanders’) control and oppress other lower-ranking women – “The Aunts perpetuate Gilead” (Johnson 115).

The intersection of gender and class oppression within the hierarchy of women does not just exist in the dystopian world of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. At present days, there are numerous real-life examples of “[e]ducated, upper-class women, while still subjugated by men in all areas of their lives, use their economic power to further dominate over other women” (Greenebaum and Merenstein 175). At the same time, men are still dominating “the social, cultural, ideological, and economic spheres” as well as the political world (Greenebaum and Merenstein 175). Hence, to subvert both gender and class oppression, women also have to dismantle the hierarchy, which is implanted by men to serve the patriarchal society, from within.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, since sexism is the major topic of the narrative, the impact and damage of racism can be easily ignored (Merriman 42). As mentioned previously, the story of *The Handmaid’s Tale* is created as a parallel to the history of slavery and then “places particular emphasis on the most persistent forms of female victimization: the sexual exploitation, isolation, and compelled ignorance that accompany severe economic and political powerlessness” (Merriman 43). In this case, the book itself does not put much focus on the discussion of racism⁶ or the intersection of

⁶ In her novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Atwood only uses a few words to illustrate the destiny of black people: “‘Resettlement of the Children of Ham is continuing on schedule,’ says the reassuring pink face, back on the screen. ‘Three thousand have arrived this week in National Homeland One, with another two thousand in transit.’” (93-94).

sexism and racism, as Gilead is presented as “an all-White enclave [in which] Blacks are erased from the novel” (Merriman 44). The fictional narrative of *The Handmaid's Tale* introduces the experience of Offred, who is “a White, college-educated” woman, to feature the “archetypal account of female exploitation”: “Offred would seem an unlikely victim, but at no point in the text does Atwood acknowledge that sexism in America has, generally, been modulated by forms of race and class oppression, nor does she acknowledge the parallels between her own story and the experience of Black slavery” (Merriman 43).

When visualizing women's lives in the Republic of Gilead, the Hulu series of *The Handmaid's Tale* has endeavored to integrate the representations of racism into its narrative of sexism. The protagonist's husband (Luke) and best friend (Moirra) before the founding of Gilead are both of African American descent. Interestingly, in the newly-founded Gilead, the viewers can also observe different races are integrated among the Handmaids, Wives, Aunts, and other groups of men and women (Jones n.p.). Despite the racial diversity of characters, the series, especially the first season, is criticized as it presents “the inclusion of race without the depiction of racism” (Jones n.p.). Since the whole discriminative and oppressive social structure in Gilead which abuses, rapes, subjugates women is largely in resonance with the history of slavery when black women had been forced by white people to experience exactly the same thing in real lives. Hence, simply considering *The Handmaid's Tale* as a post-racial” story is not convincing enough to explain the lasting impact of racial segregation and discrimination till present days (Bastién n.p.). After all, the series still sends out a message to its viewers that, in a male-dominated society, “we all must challenge the sexism and racism that we see *in our everyday lives* otherwise we may find the rights of women and people of color further eroded” (Levchak 154).

In the television adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*, Serena Joy (the Commander's Wife, Mrs Waterford) is a typical example of a higher-ranking woman deprived from the basic rights. Before Gilead was built, Joy was an academic intellectual. She wrote a famous book named *A Woman's Place* in support of domestic feminism and patriarchy and advocated women's rights, claiming that "men should 'never mistake a woman's meekness for weakness'" (S01E06; Locke n.p.). Nevertheless, as her limitation forbids her from foreseeing the possible outcomes of women after the founding of Gilead, Joy is then restricted to the subservient position as a wife in the private sphere. She loses all the power and rights that every woman had in the past – her book is forbidden as women are no longer allowed to read, and her life is restricted to the domestic place as women are forever excluded from the political and public spheres.

Serena Joy's example reveals the danger of promoting, supporting, and tolerating gender injustice and inequality. Women's condition of being unable to have a say about their own future in *The Handmaid's Tale* is in consonance with what is happening in the United States nowadays when women's reproductive rights are debated and decided by conservative male politicians and lawmakers, as Moira Weigel states: "there are men in power who speak the language of overt misogyny, and use religious concerns to justify restrictions on the lives of women" (n.p.). On June 27, 2017, inspired by *The Handmaid's Tale*, women protesters gathered outside the Capitol, dressed as handmaids, to demonstrate their discontent with the anti-abortion healthcare bills and their support for Planned Parenthood (Bondarenko n.p.). Since then, protests of women wearing the red cloak of the handmaids advocating women's reproductive rights arise "from Texas to Ohio" (Bondarenko n.p.). Margaret Atwood interprets the use of Gilead's garb in demonstrations as being "both flexible and powerful" "as a symbol of protest about various issues

having to do with the requisitioning of women's bodies by the state" (Beaumont and Holpuch n.p.).

Meanwhile, in the series, the fugitive experience of the protagonist, June/Offred, delineates how a woman who is socially degraded and deprived from human rights attempts to seek for a trajectory for herself towards freedom. For the fear of the inhumane reforms in Gilead, June makes her way to the former U.S.-Canadian border together with her husband Luke and their daughter. Unfortunately, all of them are captured in the border area. With a new name Offred, June is forced to become a Handmaid, that is, one of the sex slaves of this nation (Updike 466).

June's fugitive experience can be perceived as a reference to the fugitive slaves' escaping experiences across the U.S.-Canadian border depicted in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Specifically, the striking image of June holding her son while they are escaping from the police's search at the borderland connects itself with the image of Eliza crossing the icy Ohio River with her child in her arms in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The similarity shared by the two images highlights the fearlessness of these two women in striving for freedom and equality. This connection then becomes clear in the scene when June/Offred sings the song "Amazing Grace" as Stowe had also used this song in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a symbol of faith and power; ironically, in Gilead, songs like "Amazing Grace" are banned, and June/Offred can only sing it "in her head" (Cottle n.p.). These indirect references to the dark past of the nation function as condemnations of "the patriarchal (or even misogynist) foundations of the United States" as well as the history of slavery and racial discrimination (Nischik 106).

While serving as a Handmaid, June/Offred has never given up the hope to escape. Her fugitive road to freedom has connected the Republic of Gilead/the former United States of America with its neighboring countries. In the south, influenced by the political

changes in Gilead, the Central American countries have also transformed to similar theocratic regimes, and are prone to adopt the system of Handmaids to boost their population. Even though its women still have equal social status as men under the new political system, the Mexican government is on the verge of becoming another Gilead. As Mexico is threatened by the fertility crisis for many years, a delegation led by a female ambassador, Mrs. Castillo, is sent to Gilead in order to “negotiate for the commodity of fertile human beings”, namely the Handmaids (Locke n.p.). When her call for help is refused by Mrs. Castillo, June/Offred finds out that “the dystopia doesn’t end beyond the borders of Gilead” as Mexico will soon become the same (Locke n.p.). This detail in *The Handmaid’s Tale* mirrors the U.S. influence or even intervention on the politics and culture of Central American countries. Despite the change of political regimes in this region, U.S. hegemony is still the key issue defining Inter-American relations in this futuristic world.

In the north, since Canada still remains “a place of relative equality and security” (Wisker 6), it becomes the fugitives’ final destination and is the symbol of freedom and equality. June/Offred’s fugitive and border-crossing experience can be interpreted as a reflection of the cultural differences between the two neighboring nations divided by the forty-ninth parallel, the world’s longest shared border. The relationship between America as “the North American futuristic dystopian state” and Canada as an ideal free-land in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is in line with the contrasting cultural images of the two countries (Wisker 129). Although “sharing a continent, an accent of spoken English, and many [cultural] assumptions” (Updike 465) as well as “a common heritage [of Puritan history]” (Lacroix and LeClaire 38), America and Canada have evolved into two nations with many differences – “the US is often seen as a brasher more powerful neighbour and Canada as more liberal and tolerant, less warlike” (Wisker 6).

The futuristic dystopia in *The Handmaid's Tale*, with its “enlargement of topical issues and phenomena”, is actually highly relevant to the reality since it reflects “more or less perennial human adventures” (Updike 467). The U.S.-Canada relations depicted in *The Handmaid's Tale* also echoes with the history of North America when “Canada exists as a country possibly offering relief from political pressure in the US”: for instance, “in the 19th century the Indians [Native Americans] defeated in battle retreated to Canada, and runaway slaves travelled North on the ‘underground railroad.’ In the 20th century, the American draft-dodgers sought political asylum in Canada during the Vietnam War” (Greven 22). These historical incidents, therefore, can explain the cultural impression that America, this “globally determining neighbour” (Nicholson 33), has left in the Canadian’s eyes as “a violent and somewhat sinister nation” (Updike 465).

Meanwhile, both the fictional and real U.S.-Canada relations have revealed the unequal power relations between the two nations as well as the strong influence of American power. In particular, U.S. imperialism tends to be a significant force influencing the U.S.-Canadian relations as the American cultural and political impacts have overpowered the North American continent. Just as John Updike describes, in the Americans’ eyes, Canada is considered a nation with many qualities which are comparable to or even belong to the American culture: “our friendly northern neighbor stands above, as it were, much of our moral strenuousness, our noisy determination to combine virtue and power, and our occasional vast miscarriages of missionary intention” (465). While interpreting the U.S.-Canada relations in “Blind Faith and Free Trade”, Margaret Atwood also adopts the word “missionary” in “gendered terms” to underline Canada’s weak status in their bilateral relations: “Canada as a separate but dominated country has done about as well under the U.S. as women, worldwide, have done under men; about the

only position they've ever adopted toward us, country to country, has been the missionary position, and we were not on top" (94). Inspired by the cultural and political relations between the United States and Canada, Atwood utilizes the "most cherished national ideals" of the iconic "American spirit" to build up the Republic of Gilead in her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, such as "Puritan intransigence," "uncompromising [...] spirit", and "moral absolutism" (qtd. in Nischik 106). In addition, pointing out "The Frontier" as "the symbol for America" in her book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Atwood comments that the United States is expected to be a new country that "holds out a hope, never fulfilled but always promised, of Utopia, the perfect human society" (40). Ironically, this ideal image of the United States is in sharp contrast to the dystopian Gilead, which exemplifies "the gap between the promise and the actuality" (Atwood, *Survival*, 40).

Therefore, the dystopian world in *The Handmaid's Tale* offers its viewers the opportunity to reconsider the dominant and powerful influence of American culture not only in North America, but also in the Americas at large. Nowadays, the comparison between the United States and Canada is still a recurring cultural phenomenon since it also serves as a means to show resistance against political inequality and injustice. On the 2016 U.S. election night, Canada's immigration website was crashed, and "move to Canada" and "immigrate to Canada" ranked at the top of Google search entries (Kassam n.p.). Showing great resemblances to what Atwood has portrayed in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the border/borderland (the landscape) has become "a medium" to negotiate North American identity, to examine the connections between the two North American countries "in terms of habitation, cultivation, urbanization, or domination" (qtd. in Nischik 106). The intention of crossing the national border has become a symbol indicating North American anxiety and urge in figuring out the future of the United States, North America,

and the Americas – which direction leads to a better destination for them?

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the relations between the United States and its neighboring countries reflect an emphasis on border security and tightened border policy, which block the mobility of travelers as well as immigrants and create political tensions in the border areas. At the same time, the current border and immigration policies proposed by the Trump administration, especially in Trump's call for building a border wall along the U.S.-Mexican border, indicate that the United States is now proactively restricting its connections with its neighbors with a hint of populism and protectionism. Being provocative and discriminative, these policies have not only damaged the relationship between the United States and its neighboring countries, but have also negatively influenced the lives of immigrants and minorities, causing xenophobic tensions across the country. In one of Trump's comments on undocumented immigrants, he "[advocated] for illegal border crossers to be maimed and burned at the border, the kind of treatment usually associated with brutal dictators or military strongmen" (Davis and Shear 4), envisioning an alternative reality similar to what *The Handmaid's Tale* has created.

More recently, just like the #MeToo movement, the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 has quickly swept over both North and South American continents in the wake of the death of George Floyd. It is important to notice that this movement is not limited to a protest only participated by the African Americans; instead, it is supported by a diverse range of people, including white people, women, and other ethnical and social minorities. The 'Wall of Moms' in Portland's protest is a vivid exemplification to show that women and minority rights are closely connected. Moreover, this new wave of protest reflects that systemic racism and police brutality have spread beyond the borders of the United States and have become deeply-rooted sociopolitical problems in many countries

in the Americas. How this movement has united different groups of people and connected the United States with its neighboring countries gives another vision of how people of different genders and diverse backgrounds come together across borders and resist a Gileadan political system in which the authority abuses its power and promotes sexism, misogyny, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression and discrimination.

Conclusion

Beyond the specific details or hints that have appeared in the series, the dystopian worlds in *House of Cards* and *The Handmaid's Tale* have resonated with the current reality of women and minority rights in the United States and regional political hegemony in the Americas. Firstly, both television series have engaged with gender issues concerning women's status and rights. Particularly, as reflected in both series, there are obvious power gaps existing between white women and colored women, and between upper-ranking women and lower-ranking women. The representations of lower-ranking women's struggles and the hierarchy within the group of women help to raise the viewers' awareness to examine the problems of gender inequality from the perspective of diversity and intersectionality. Secondly, both series have featured the lower-ranking women's fugitive experiences in the borderland to escape male oppression. Both Posner and June's escape routes to freedom provide a new perspective to negotiate the hierarchy in inter-American relations. The connections and comparisons between the United States and its neighboring countries in the Americas create the opportunity to re-examine and re-evaluate how "the imagined negative [societies]" in the dystopian television series are created to envision the reality (LeClaire 86). The male-dominated and male-centered political

hegemony in the United States not only forms a social hierarchy which produces and promotes a diverse range of discrimination and oppression, but also constructs a hierarchy of political order in the Americas. As the leading superpower in the region of the Americas, the United States has reinforced the ‘America First’ doctrine and U.S. hegemony, which results in the unequal power relations in this region. Currently, in the time of coronavirus, both gender and political inequalities are accentuated and exacerbated rapidly.

Influenced by the global pandemic, women and minorities are challenged by the deteriorating situation of losing their rights and lives every day; at the same time, Central and South America become the new epicenter of coronavirus where the infections surge day by day. Hence, it has become increasingly urgent to recognize the need to put an end to male-dominance and hegemony and strive for equality not only for people, but also for countries.

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Série Investigação

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