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Elective Affinities

Rethinking Entanglements between Latin America
and East-Central Europe

Edited by

Agnieszka H. Hudzik, Joanna M. Moszczyńska,
Jorge Estrada and Patricia A. Gwozdz

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Introduction

I From Geopolitical Negotiations to Elective Affinities in Literature

Once upon a time, the distant regions of Latin America and East-Central Europe – each attracted by the forces of neighboring empires and wrapped up in various geographical considerations – developed an alliance beyond transatlantic and political borders in spite of their relative isolation from each other. This transregional exchange might sound like a fairytale if we analyze cultural exchanges with a sole focus on the Western European discourses with which both regions are so deeply engaged. However, there are other, more subtle dots to connect if we are to discover more finely spun entanglements. For instance, looking back at the mass migration processes that took place in the 19th century,¹ we can identify early cultural exchanges that fostered new dynamics between far-apart countries, comingled deep-seated national identities, and renewed the past, paving the way for future family constellations and generations.² From discussions of private family matters to the development of political strategies, this wide range of social exchanges laid the groundwork for a network which was strengthened by transregional intellectuals, writers, artists, and journalists, and for reflections on a shared history as well as a transcultural movement connecting Eastern and Southern narratives.

Since then, a great deal of work has been done to make the history of these entanglements visible.³ Shortly after World War II, a transregional affinity between Central European and Latin American literatures was already being pointed out by Milan Kundera, who saw “a bridge – silvery, light, quivering, shimmering – formed like a rainbow over the centuries between my little Central Europe and the im-

1 See Blanca Sánchez-Alonso: The Age of Mass Migration in Latin America. In: *The Economic History Review* 72, 1 (2019), p. 3–31.

2 See Mihaela Robila: *Eastern Europe Immigrant Families*. New York: Taylor & Francis 2013.

3 For a critical discussion of the term, see Wolf Lepenies (ed.): *Entangled Histories and Negotiated Universals: Centers and Peripheries in a Changing World*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 2003, as well as Shalini Randeria: Geteilte Geschichte und verwobene Moderne. In: Norbert Jellka/Hanna Leitgeb/Jörn Rüsen (eds.): *Zukunftsentwürfe: Ideen für eine Kultur der Veränderung*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 1999, p. 87–96.

mense Latin America.”⁴ His understanding of Central Europe is based on the juxtaposition with Russia – a perspective which should also be viewed with critical caution – in the context of the debates on the reconstruction of the center of Europe in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵ Kundera draws his readers’ attention to the new novelistic style of the 20th century from Central Europe, brought forward by writers like Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch and Witold Gombrowicz. They were later joined by Latin American writers such as Juan Rulfo, Alejo Carpentier, Ernesto Sábato and Carlos Fuentes. These directions of aesthetic innovation from both hemispheres were connected by the “historical memory of the Baroque, which makes a writer hypersensitive to the seductions of the fantastical, magical, oneiric imagination.”⁶ Kundera, however, was not interested in any theory of influence or a history of the novel in a linear sense. According to him, literature arises from a network of complicated connections which cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional order of influence or a mere play of intertextuality.⁷

When reading Kundera’s essay on the tragedy of Central Europe, first published in November 1983 in the magazine *Le Débat*, and Gabriel García Márquez’s 1982 Nobel Prize speech in parallel, the similarities in the way they argue and assess the political situation are unmistakable. García Márquez also speaks of oppression, plundering and intellectual abandonment, meaning incomprehension on the part of Western Europe – of the “loneliness of Latin America,” which he made the

4 Milan Kundera: *The Curtain: Essays*. Transl. by Linda Asher. Faber & Faber 2020 (ebook).

5 Kundera is not alone in this endeavor; consider the writings of other Central European authors of the time, such as György Konrád, Václav Havel or Czesław Miłosz. External powers then divided Central Europe with the Iron Curtain, destroying the historically developed polycentric unity. As a result, Central Europe gradually disappeared from the map of the West and, according to Kundera’s bitter accusation, was forgotten, especially by Western European intellectuals. For more on Kundera’s concept of Central Europe, see Leonidas Donskis (ed.): *Yet Another Europe after 1984: Rethinking Milan Kundera and the Idea of Central Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi 2012.

6 Milan Kundera: *Encounter: Essays*. Transl. by Linda Asher. Faber & Faber 2020 (ebook).

7 Kundera’s artistic intuition to connect the two geopolitical and geopoetic spaces can be classified historically and is based on his personal contacts, see Jasper Vervaeke: *Un puente plateado. Kundera, Fuentes, García Márquez y Cortázar en 1968. Romaneske (Vlaamse Oud-Romanisten Kring; Vereniging van Leuvense Romanisten)* 1 (2018), p. 79–86. The thesis of literary connections between East-Central Europe and Latin America runs consistently through Kundera’s essays and also appears in the statements of his friend Carlos Fuentes. Although it is linked to political power relations during the Cold War, it is not only cultivated by the aforementioned writers. It can be understood not only as a political, but above all as an aesthetic manifesto that hints at a complex range of themes and opens up further perspectives on transcultural literary interdependencies. More about that in Agnieszka Hudzik: *Mitteeuropäische und lateinamerikanische Literaturen: Brücken und Verflechtungen*. In: *Philologie im Netz* 92 (2021), p. 70–73.

main theme of *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1967).⁸ For both writers, literature, especially the novel, becomes a refuge for the experiences of the individual beyond imposed political or national attributions, for their perception of themselves and the world; it becomes an “intensifying moment of contradictions,”⁹ a new home for the lonely, the forgotten, the misunderstood.

To revive the disrupted transatlantic dialogue between the regions thematized by Milan Kundera and Gabriel García Márquez, the volume *Elective Affinities. Rethinking Entanglements between Latin America and East-Central Europe* elaborates on the intellectual, cultural and literary links between the areas, ranging from the migrations of the 19th century and travel literature of the 20th century to contemporary global imaginaries. These links are always embedded in geopolitical discourses and factor into negotiations around key concepts such as “post-imperial,” “marginal,” or “peripheral,” all of which can receive a particularly critical examination in literature.¹⁰ This volume aims at mapping the intertextual and transcultural connections between East-Central Europe and Latin

8 Milan Kundera: *The Tragedy of Central Europe* (1984). In: Yoei Albrecht/Mathieu Segers (eds.): *Re:Thinking Europe: Thinking Europe: Thoughts on Europe: Past, Present and Future*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2016, p. 191–214. Gabriel García Márquez: *The Solitude of Latin America*. Nobel Lecture, December 8, 1982. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1982/marquez/lecture/> [December 5, 2023]. García Márquez was familiar with the Eastern Bloc, see his travel reportages *De viaje por los países socialistas. 90 días en la ‘Cortina de Hierro’*. Cali: Ediciones Macondo 1978.

9 See Julio Prieto: *La escritura errante: ilegibilidad y políticas del estilo en Latinoamérica*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert 2016, p. 13–47.

10 Gesine Drews-Sylla: Slavistik. In: Dirk Götsche et al. (ed.): *Handbuch: Postkolonialismus und Literatur*. Stuttgart: Metzler 2017, p. 75–78. Gisela Febel/Paulo de Medeiros: Romanistik. In: Dirk Götsche et al. (ed.): *Handbuch: Postkolonialismus und Literatur*, p. 67–68. For a detailed analysis of Eastern European Literatures in this context, see also Anita Starosta: *Form and Instability: Eastern Europe, Literature, Postimperial Difference*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP 2015. While postcolonial theories in the context of Latin American Studies are very common (see Robin W. Fiddian: *Postcolonial Perspectives on the Cultures of Latin America and Lusophone Africa*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2000. Mabel Moraña et al. (eds.): *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham, London: Duke University Press 2008), in East European Studies they are still discussed very critically, see the chapter “A Controversial Paradigm: Postcolonialism in East-Central Europe” in Cristina Sandru: *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of Post-1945 East-Central European Culture*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012, p. 14–169, as well as in the studies of Klavdia Smola/Dirk Uffelmann (eds.): *Postcolonial Slavic Literatures after Communism*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang 2016, and Alfred Sproede/Mirja Lecke: *Der Weg der postcolonial studies nach und in Osteuropa: Polen, Litauen, Russland*. In: Dietlind Hüchtker/Alfrun Kliems (eds.): *Überbringen – Überformen – Überblenden. Theorietransfer im 20. Jahrhundert*. Köln: Böhlau 2011, p. 27–67. See also Dirk Uffelmann’s chapter *Postcolonial Studies: Processes of Appropriation and Axiological Controversies* in the latest monumental volume

America, as well as identifying aesthetic and literary-historical lines of contact and movement between these two parts of the world. These elective affinities are a form of negotiation for recognition and of the way in which literary traditions position themselves within the universalized view of world literature.¹¹

II Interdisciplinary Approach: From Political Studies to Comparative Literature

The links between East-Central Europe and Latin America are less researched in terms of literature than in the fields of political science and international relations in German, or in art history, sociology,¹² philosophy and the history of ideas – mainly in English.¹³ In the literary field, studies pertaining to these regions are dominated by cases of German, Austrian or East-Central European writers in exile in Latin America,¹⁴ or, conversely, Latin American writers in Europe – and primarily in Western European countries.¹⁵ Other possible links such as the

Central and Eastern European Literary Theory and the West. Ed. by Michał Mrugalski/Schamma Schahadat/Irina Wutsdorff. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2023, p. 807–820.

¹¹ For a critical discussion of the term “world literature” see Ottmar Ette: *Literatures of the World. Beyond World Literature*. Leiden: Brill 2021, as well as his work on global literary history and TransArea Studies, Ottmar Ette: *TransArea. A Literary History of Globalization*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2016. It should also be mentioned that the term “Weltliteratur” used by Goethe was already invented as a concept *avant la lettre* in early modern times. See the discussion in Patricia A. Gwozdz, Markus Lenz: *Literaturen der Welt. Zugänge, Modelle, Analysen eines Konzepts im Übergang*. Heidelberg: Winter 2018. See also for a critique of mapping world literature as a kind of imperial cultural technique of European actors in early modern times Theo D’haen: *World Literature in an Age of Geopolitics*. Leiden, Boston: Brill 2021, p. 1–11.

¹² Immanuel Wallerstein: *The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis*. In: *The Essential Wallerstein*. New York: The New Press 2000, p. 71–105.

¹³ Especially the works of Eugeniusz Górski should be mentioned here as an early, outstanding comparative study about the entangled history of concepts in philosophy in Latin America and Eastern Europe: Eugeniusz Górski: *Dependencia y originalidad de la filosofía en Latinoamérica y en la Europa del Este*. México: Univ. Nac. Autónoma de México 1994. Eugeniusz Górski (ed.): *Latin America and East Central Europe: studies in the history of ideas/America Latina y Europa Centro-Oriental*. Warszawa: CESLA 2001.

¹⁴ Wolfgang Kießling: *Exil in Lateinamerika*. Leipzig: Reclam 1984, and Eva Behring/Alfrun Kliems/Hans-Christian Trepte (eds.): *Grundbegriffe und Autoren ostmitteleuropäischer Exilliteraturen 1945–1989: ein Beitrag zur Systematisierung und Typologisierung*. Stuttgart: Steiner 2004, p. 126–131.

¹⁵ See Karl Kohut: *Die spanische und lateinamerikanische Literatur im französischen Exil*. München: Minerva-Publ 1984, and Susanne Klengel: *Die Rückeroberung der Kultur. Lateinamerikani-*

more broadly understood literary-aesthetic exchange are largely approached in theories of influence or reception history. Heavily reliant on the criterion of statehood, these contributions tend to reproduce political classifications¹⁶ and seldom offer a synopsis or overview of the complex connections between the two regions.¹⁷ We would like to broaden this view. Many treatises focusing on both East-Central Europe and Latin America separately often adopt postcolonial perspectives and test their applicability to the two post-imperial spaces in different ways, but rarely search for overlaps and commonalities between them. With this publication, we wish to take a first step towards addressing these gaps and steer away from the assumption that Western Europe and its categorizations always determine cultural exchange. To challenge this Eurocentric view, we propose reflecting on the networks that arise as a result of centrifugal mobilities and the construction of artistic and theoretical affinities. We aim to rethink the premises of literary studies by pointing out the entanglements between East-Central Europe and Latin America without the categories of periphery and center. Instead, we seek to unearth poly- or ex-centric dialogues, networks, and interweavings, and to approach literary studies with preconditions in mind that are diversely assembled, and not simply preordained.

This implies delving into the foundations of comparative studies. Thanks to the unique transareal comparative perspective, this publication illuminates underrepresented research perspectives. Many renovations remain to be undertaken throughout this discipline, which must adapt its approach to current phenomena such as globalization, migration, mobility, and digitalization. Comparative literature can no longer limit itself to thinking in terms of major regional philologies and its role as a mediator between them. The transareal comparison of literatures – including lesser-known languages and literatures of the Global South – and the focus on transcultural, non-Eurocentric interdependencies both correspond to the challenges of today's mediatized world and are necessary in order for the discipline to do justice to planetary tendencies. In this way, the discipline can prove its social relevance and promote a transareal approach, which expands the literary canon in Western Europe

sche Intellektuelle und das Europa der Nachkriegsjahre (1945–1952). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2011.

¹⁶ For example, Mónika Szente-Varga (ed.): *Latin America and Hungary cultural ties/América Latina y Hungría contactos culturales*. Budapest: Dialóg Campus 2020.

¹⁷ In some contributions, the regions are brought together but considered separately, see Janett Reinstädler/Oleksandr Pronkevich (eds.): *(Audio-)Visual Arts and Trauma – from the East to the West*. Saarbrücken: universaar 2018.

to include other languages, regions, and their interrelationships so as to develop a new sensitivity for geopolitical diversity.¹⁸

On the one hand, our perspective is linked to a change of perspective in Eastern European research, “the move from transnational to transregional connections”¹⁹ and the investigation of the relationships between the postcolonial and the postsocialist.²⁰ On the other hand, we would like to reconstruct interconnections and intellectual networks that the research has thus far examined largely in a general and undifferentiated manner from the perspective of global history, e.g. with regard to the Soviet Union, but without taking into account the complex situation in the Eastern Bloc.²¹ Therefore, we speak of East-Central Europe to put Kundera’s view up for discussion and to try to reconfigure a geo-poetical region with a complex history that resonates to this day. Kundera describes this history as follows: “As a result, three fundamental situations developed in Europe after the war: that of Western Europe, that of Eastern Europe, and, most complicated, that of the part of Europe situated geographically in the center – culturally in the West and politically in the East.”²² Through this differentiation, we would like to sharpen the image of (colonial) dependencies within the European continent. This perspective is well known in the history of intellectual networks,²³ art his-

18 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press 2003.

19 Katja Castryck-Naumann: Introduction: Moving from Transnational to Transregional Connections? East-Central Europe in Global Contexts. *Transregional Connections in the History of East-Central Europe*. Hg. Katja Castryck-Naumann. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2021. Katja Castryck-Naumann/Torsten Loschke/Steffi Marung/Matthias Middell (eds.): *In Search of Other Worlds. Essays towards a Cross-Regional History of Area Studies*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag 2019. Chris Saunders/Helder Adegas Fonseca/Lena Dallywater (eds.): *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2023. Natalia Telepneva: *Cold War Liberation: The Soviet Union and the Collapse of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, 1961–1975*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press 2022.

20 Sharad Chari/Katherine Verdery: Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War. In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, 1 (2009), p. 6–34.

21 Tobias Rupprecht: *Soviet Internationalism After Stalin: Interaction and Exchange Between the USSR and Latin America During the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2015. Mirko Petersen: *Geopolitische Imaginarien. Diskursive Konstruktionen der Sowjetunion im peronistischen Argentinien (1943–1955)*. Bielefeld: Transcript 2018.

22 Milan Kundera: *The Tragedy of Central Europe* (1984), p. 192.

23 The works by Michal Zourek are exemplary in this context. Michal Zourek: *Čechoslovaquia y el Cono Sur, 1945–1989: Relaciones políticas, económicas y culturales durante la Guerra Fría*. Universidad Carolina de Praga: Editorial Karolinum 2014. Michal Zourek: *Československo očima latinskoamerických intelektuálů 1947–1959*. Praha: Runa 2018. See also an interview with Zourek for the online magazin *Global Voices* with archival photographs of Latin American and Central Euro-

tory,²⁴ and in the social sciences²⁵ – but not in the study of literary and cultural connections.²⁶ The case of Latin America, on the other hand, presents a complexity that has been recognized by its 19th- and 20th-century intellectuals, whose projects of inventing and reinventing the region are still the subject of debates among Latin American scholars both nationally and internationally. Often referred to as the laboratory of Modernity, José Martí's *Nuestra América* is a geo-poetical region whose history is complex with entangled violence and transculturation, explorative economies and conviviality, all of which continue to resonate to this day.²⁷

With these general goals in mind, a comparative compilation of literatures from the 20th century provides an extensive field of research and a wide range of topics, including the direct cultural contact resulting from exile, migration and travel, as well as aesthetic-poetological commonalities. However, a burdensome obstacle to exploring the hybrid textual relationships and transcultural interdependencies between East-Central Europe and Latin America lies in the linguistic heterogeneity of the two regions. In turning to human geography, we can bypass the impossibility of defining space by looking to human practice. The geographer and social theorist David Harvey suggests that rather than searching in vain for a definition of space, it is more productive to explore how different human practices produce and harness different concepts of space.²⁸ This perspective can be

pean writers; Filip Noubel: During the Cold War, Latin American intellectuals found solace in communist Prague, <https://globalvoices.org/2020/11/21/the-story-of-how-latin-american-intellectuals-found-solace-in-communist-prague/> [December 5, 2023].

24 See the issue of the magazine *ARTMargins* with the title *Artists' Networks in Eastern Europe and Latin America* edited by Klara Kemp-Welch/Cristina Freire (2012, Vol. 1, No. 2–3).

25 Estela Schindel/Gabriel Gatti (eds.): *Social Disappearance: Explorations Between Latin America and Eastern Europe*. Berlin: Dossiers, Forum Transregionale Studien 2020. Accessible online: https://perspectivia.net/receive/pnet_mods_00003944 [December 5, 2023].

26 In this context, the project “Escritores latinoamericanos en los países socialistas europeos” (ELASOC), led by Emilio J. Gallardo Saborido, is worth mentioning. For more information see the website of the Spanish Agencia Estatal de Investigación <https://www.aei.gob.es/ayudas-concedidas/ayudas-destacadas/proyecto-idi-2020-generacion-conocimiento-escritores> [December 5, 2023], and Emilio J. Gallardo-Saborido/Ilinca Ilian: Cruzando el puente plateado: las relaciones culturales entre América Latina y el Bloque del Este. In: *Revista de Letras* 57, 2 (2017), p. 11–14.

27 See Ottmar Ette: *José Martí. Teil II: Denker der Globalisierung*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2023.

28 “[S]pace is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. In other words, there are no philosophical answers to philosophical questions that arise over the nature of space – the answers lie in human practice. The question ‘what is space?’ is therefore replaced by the question ‘how is it that different human practices create and make use of different conceptualizations of space?’”

applied to the study of literary interdependencies between East-Central Europe and Latin America: Instead of defining these (cultural) spaces, it would be more appropriate to ask how and why literature participated in their conceptualization and how one should approach as well as conceptualize their entanglements.

One way of approaching their entanglements would be a two-step process. Firstly, to disentangle both regions from the imperial and Eurocentric binaries of East-West and North-South,²⁹ and secondly, to entangle them both in a kind of South-East epistemic “network of affinities,” to use Mbembe’s words³⁰ analogically, where each one of us can imagine and choose what they want those affinities to be and what story they want to tell. Being aware of the utopian task of this “disentanglement” and the fluid borders of the spaces studied in this book, we recognize the need for a new academic narrative that strives to decolonize the way we think about Latin America and East-Central Europe. Decolonization has been with us for quite a while, and although in some contexts it persists as a mere buzzword, we believe that the literature and the literary history of those two different geo-cultural areas provide an incredibly abundant assemblage of ideas, imaginaries, beings, and chronotopes that communicate with each other and among each other, and this communication is precisely what needs to be made visible.

In this sense, to decolonize what and how we study, know, and talk about these two regions is to recognize the troublesome category of being neither fully North nor fully South, but always somewhere in between, as well as to take on the epistemological challenge which the affinities between two such in-betweeners pose to comparative and transareal literary research. If we treat the idea of the (semi-)peripheral position of both the Latin American and East-Central European literary fields as historically given, we can strive for decolonization or, in other words, for a “decolonial border thinking” that is “[. . .] grounded in the experiences of the colonies and subaltern empires. Consequently, it provides the epistemology that was denied by imperial expansion. [. . .] It also moves

David Harvey: Space as a Keyword. In: Noel Castree/Derek Gregory (eds.): *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell 2006, p. 275.

29 Caroline Levander/Walter Mignolo: The Global South and World Dis/Order. In: *The Global South* 5, 1 (2011), p. 9. Martin Müller: In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South. In: *Geopolitics* 25, 3 (2020), p. 734–755. Tomasz Zarycki: Comments on Martin Müller’s “In Search of the Global East: Thinking Between North and South.” In: *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 38, 4 (2021), p. 191–201.

30 Achille Mbembe: African Modes of Self-Writing. Transl. by Steven Rendall. In: *Public Culture* 14, 1 (2002), p. 258.

away from the postcolonial toward the decolonial, shifting to the geo- and body politics of knowledge.”³¹

As we know, minor or peripheral literatures have been and always will be thriving in spite of imperialism, and their designation as peripheral changes over time (Would we call Polish literature, which has given us five Nobel Prizes in Literature, peripheral? Is Hispanic literary production, which created the Latin American Boom of novels, a minor field?). Nevertheless, a colonial or subaltern conscience remains profoundly present in “peripheral” literary expression. Therefore, the decolonial move of this book is to recognize this dynamic and remap the global literary order by pointing to assemblages, affinities, and entanglements that may be less obvious and more tangential, thus bringing them to the table where the politics of knowledge production takes place, but on different terms: the terms of colonial/post-colonial difference.

Border thinking emerges from anti-imperial epistemic responses to the colonial difference, that is, the difference that hegemonic discourse attributes to “other” people. This subaltern position can be an advantage, as it implies a “double-consciousness”³² free of the hegemonic voices who strive for sameness so intensely that they often erase their own difference – such as the USSR and the United States during the Cold War, when they struggled for military, political, and cultural domination³³ in Central-East Europe (or in this particular case, the Eastern Bloc) and Latin America respectively. In examining the Cold War constellations as an example, it can be productive, at least within comparative literary studies, to think of both regions in an overlapping way that relates postcolonialism (as a condition) to postsocialism.³⁴ We may ask, is the “post” in postimperial the same as the post in postcolonial?³⁵ or rather “Is the Post in Post-Soviet the Post in Postcolonial?”³⁶ Addressing the affinities between “posts” is, of course, only one possibility for thinking about both regions together.

This collection of papers is primarily concerned with assessing the difference between diverse posts. However, instead of relying on Soviet or North American hegemony, we propose focusing on the differential nucleus, which makes the dif-

31 Madina Tlostanova/Walter Mignolo: *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press 2012, p. 60.

32 See W.E.B. DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007.

33 See Madina Tlostanova/Walter Mignolo: *Learning to Unlearn*, p. 68.

34 See Anita Starosta: *Form and Instability: Eastern Europe, Literature, Postimperial Difference*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press 2015.

35 It is a question inspired by Kwame Anthony Appiah: Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial? In: *Critical Inquiry* 17, 2 (1991), p. 336–357.

36 David Chioni Moore: Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Post-colonial Critique. In: *PMLA* 116, 1 (2001), p. 111–128.

ferentiation of posts possible, as a means for approaching the cultural production of regions connected by their analogous positions in a power constellation. We are thus speaking of a potential turned into a power to subsume and command, but also a potential for change, for contesting forceful discourses, disarticulating them, and appropriating their fragments. Thinking in terms of an indeterminate core allows us, on the one hand, to discover diverse ways of arranging fragmented elements and seeing in any artifact a product of relational forces. On the other hand, this methodological approach avoids the dialectical fall-trap that forces us to adhere to mediation and its totalizing force as the only means of using either creation or recreation to fill a fundamental void which, ultimately, cannot be closed. So instead of wielding emptiness, we focus the potential for differentiation and consider any cultural artifact as both reassembling and already assembled, as an expression of the preconditions for possibility and the creation of such conditions. An apparent circularity underlies this approach, which is the price to pay for a thought that does not promise closure and that seeks to respond to a geography becoming multifarious.

After the project of globalization, which conflated social and economic liberalism into a cosmopolitan sense of well-being, we cannot but look suspiciously at any universal claim or at the shattered fragments of the globalist utopia, fragments that might well be the “posts” described above. Similar doubts are raised by Messling, who advances the term “minor universality” to highlight the different consciousnesses articulated beyond globalization’s centers and its dominant discourses.³⁷ Rethinking space in this manner has become topical, because, as Dipesh Chakrabarty explains, the earth that for Hobbes had to be cultivated, for Arendt became a map known to us down to the smallest detail as if it were the palm of our own hand, for Schmitt was land to appropriate and ground a *nomos*, and for Heidegger a place of dwelling³⁸. These worlds all share a reflective movement towards the global, towards ideal forms that may be contested but remain firm as a transcendental goal.³⁹ To steer away from this school of thought, Chakrabarty posits the planet as a malleable and sculptural category whose history cannot be fully told, a place that must be made “friendly” or habitable in the sense of tapping into its continuous processes.⁴⁰ The focus now lies on transformations and how to channel their becoming. As a consequence, space has become

37 Markus Messling: *Universality after Universalism: On Francophone Literatures of the Present*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter 2023, p. 21.

38 Dipesh Chakrabarty: The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category. In: *Critical Inquiry* 46, 1 (2019), p. 6.

39 Ibid., p. 25.

40 Ibid., p. 20.

unbounded, the earth is not shaped by a mediation between human and nature but by a “fabulist imagination” impinging on the realm of technologies and artifacts in order to foster habitability and to shape the earth.⁴¹ From the planet, we can thus only grasp a possible combination of their multitudes of interrelated processes to channel otherwise.

Against this backdrop, we can ask how cultural artifacts recreate their own space beyond ideal forms, that is, beyond a hegemonic, Eurocentric view, and follow alternative roads. For instance, a book on travel literature could be seen as constantly negotiating its own position and thus establishing a cultural pathway that can later be traveled again to cultivate an affinity between distant regions, and to reaffirm and enhance that path. As arbitrary as they might seem, such affinities are motivated by the effervescent force of planetarity, of a thought moving beyond the circumference of its own tradition and challenging the unitary globe with tangential assemblages.

To identify such amalgamating crossings, which feature emergent properties at odds with global oneworldedness,⁴² we must hark back to Spivak’s coinage of the term “planetarity” in 2003. Her conjectures about the cross-pollination of area studies and comparative literature have become gospel and yet, they are more than a method. At the core of her approach lies a will to renewal, a will to learn how to “dis-figure the undecidable figure into a responsible literality, again and again,”⁴³ always exercising philological skills and cultivating a “care for language and idioms.”⁴⁴ Philological undertakings can disentangle or entangle a cultural artifact in broader intertextualities; through repetition, they bypass a dialectical negation and thus bring to the surface an “underived alterity,”⁴⁵ that is, an alterity that does not arise from colonial difference, nor from the “annihilating” tendencies of a subject that must negate the other to experience itself as “limitless subjectivity.”⁴⁶ Repetitive variations and forced re-readings represent the humanist challenge to idealist foundations, because they render the globe uncanny and bring about a “reconstellation.”⁴⁷ Such an attempt to de-automatize worldviews and reflect on undecidable alterities is central in the comparative approach to the

41 Achille Mbembe: *The Earthly Community: Reflections on the Last Utopia*. Rotterdam: V2 2022, p. 13.

42 See Emily Apter: On Oneworldedness: Or Paranoia as World System. In: *American Literary History* 18, 2 (2006), p. 365–389.

43 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press 2023, p. 72.

44 Ibid., p. 5.

45 Ibid., p. 73.

46 Achille Mbembe: *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2001, p. 118.

47 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Death of a Discipline*, p. 74, 91.

entanglements between Latin America and East-Central Europe. Our theoretical endeavor, however, would never aspire to rewrite a canon, nor can it cherry-pick works and authors for a *pléiade*. Universalism must be left behind in an atomized world where interrelations are liquid and affected by literatures that cannot be encompassed in a study, let alone systematized. This encourages collective endeavors and synergies between experts, but, more importantly, demands reflections on the latest discussions of world literature from a philological perspective focused on potential for change and re-assemblings.

“Literatures of the world”⁴⁸ and “world literature”⁴⁹ have a common ground – which is literature – but imply different understandings of the world’s regions and its networks beyond borders.⁵⁰ Any academic criticism of a nationally, linguistically, temporally or spatially restricted literary history, which has spoken of a singular world literature since Goethe, must be aware of the concomitant tendency to claim conventionality as an unavoidable echo in the genesis of the European literary field circa 1800. This genealogy is reflected in epistemological consequences that can no longer do justice to the current research on global literature. Although Erich Auerbach still used the singular in his article “Philology of World Literature,” referring to Goethe and praising his sense for the “image of the historical-perspectival sense,” he was no longer able to invoke such a monological, conceptual construction without thinking about alternative perspectives, so that he finally introduced the concept of the “literatures of the world” into the discussion.⁵¹ Although David Damrosch takes a critical look at Goethe’s conceptualization and cites Auerbach’s *Mimesis* as the most prominent example of a possible reading of world literature as “global literature,”⁵² he is forced to admit, based on the immense influx of recent research, that the global perspective on what philologists call literature is constantly shifting and reconstituting itself on the horizon of reception – and is thus linguistically and culturally mediated. “In this sense, literature can best be defined pragmatically as whatever texts a given

48 See Ottmar Ette: *Literatures of the World: Beyond World Literature*. Leiden: Brill 2021.

49 See David Damrosch: *What is World Literature?* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 2003.

50 See Patricia A. Gwozdz/Markus Lenz: Einleitung. In: Patricia A. Gwozdz/Markus Lenz: *Literaturen der Welt. Zugänge, Modelle, Analysen eines Konzepts im Übergang*. Heidelberg: Winter 2018, p. 9–19.

51 Erich Auerbach: Philologie der Weltliteratur. In: Erich Auerbach: *Philologie der Weltliteratur. Sechs Versuche über Stil und Wirklichkeitswahrnehmung*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1992, p. 84.

52 Damrosch: *Reading World Literature*, p. 25. In a very strict sense of the word, Damrosch defines “global literature” as literature that is read exclusively at airports, because as soon as the reader returns to his own cultural context, literature is inscribed in the local structure of reception and is therefore no longer global.

community of readers takes as literature,” Damrosch writes.⁵³ He does not, therefore, see world literature as an “immense body of material that must somehow, impossibly, be mastered,” but as a “mode of reading that can be experienced intensively with a few works just as effectively as it can be explored extensively.”⁵⁴ What Damrosch calls for in relation to the study of world literature is a collaboration on both sides of, as well as beyond, national contexts – a collaboration that connects the specialized knowledge of individual contributors, for example, with the publication of anthologies in which “specialists” (in “the source culture”) and “generalists” (“in its new cultural and theoretical context”) come together.⁵⁵

Pascale Casanova, on the other hand, a former student of Pierre Bourdieu, oriented her reflections towards a field theory transferred to the international level in order to examine diachronic and synchronic processes of the “international literary space.”⁵⁶ Similarly to Gisèle Sapiro’s questions, sociological premises dominate in Casanova’s *World Republic of Letters* when it comes to analyzing the social conditions of the circulation of literary works (political, economic, cultural).⁵⁷ However, we should also ask here to what extent the historically dense concept of the *république* calibrates a universalism that, while contextualized critically in terms of sociology and power, is nevertheless demanded pragmatically through the semantic centering of France – according to European, or rather Parisian, standards.

In his essay *The Four Genealogies of World Literature*, Jérôme David brings together the individual positions of Damrosch, Casanova and Moretti in a comparative style to underline four conceptual-historical distinctions: the philological genealogy from Goethe to Auerbach, which also introduces the second critical genealogy, in turn represented by scholars such as Damrosch and Casanova.⁵⁸ However, David emphasizes that at this point, a label is used normatively in order to create exclusive strategies without questioning one’s own choice of criteria. He also discovers a critical usage of the concept of world literature in Marxism, which has long served as a gauge of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat: the use of the term points to an increasing globalization of the bourgeoisie and its economic expansion in the cultural field. The third pedagogical genealogy is

⁵³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 299.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵⁶ Pascale Casanova: *World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge Massachusetts 2004, preface xii.

⁵⁷ Gisèle Sapiro: How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)? A Sociological Approach to World Literature. In: *Journal of World Literature* 1, 1 (2016), p. 81–96, here p. 82.

⁵⁸ See Jérôme David: The Four Genealogies of ‘World Literature’. In: Joachim Küpper (ed.): *Approaches to World Literature*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2013, p. 13–26.

generally concerned with the educational aspect of literature in bourgeois culture, while the methodological genealogy of the term, which has been reformulated since the 1950s, is now being renegotiated.

To rewrite the history of world literature from the perspective of “ultraminor world literatures,”⁵⁹ or the entangled histories of world literatures from the perspective of Eastern European literatures,⁶⁰ while also framing polylogical movements to and from Latin America in global contexts such as *EuropAmericas*,⁶¹ *ArabAmericas*,⁶² and *AfricAmericas*⁶³ is a challenging task. Aimed at creating new research areas within comparative literature, these endeavors use the “poetics of movement” brought forward by Ottmar Ette as a starting point: “the movements among movements indicate the interwoven nature of literature and living mobility as well as the central significance of retained, vectorized patterns of movement to an understanding of both literary and cultural processes.”⁶⁴

Hence, all publications on this topic show that there is no longer one center, but rather many centers. *One* world literature has already become a concept of *many literatures* in *many worlds* situated within polycentric dynamics of world-making through reading, translating, sharing, connecting and critiquing.⁶⁵

59 See Bergur Rønne Moberg/David Damrosch: *Ultraminor World Literature*. Leiden: Brill 2022. From the perspective of Moberg and Damrosch, the term “ultraminor” in comparison to major, minor, and small can only be explained in scales of growth and decline by changing conditions of literary production and circulation over years or centuries. Although demographic size is one of its criteria, the term tries to challenge geographical criteria. Hence, the authors argue, referring to Franco Moretti: “Structure changes when size changes. The ultraminor size constantly generates a certain structure in terms of patterns of living, thinking, mapping, remembering, and speaking, all with consequences for both political and aesthetic developments. Methodologically, the connection between size and structure can turn into a way of reading not only ultraminor literature, but also minor and major literature.” (p. 2)

60 See Annette Werberger: Überlegungen zu einer Literaturgeschichte als Verflechtungsgeschichte. In: Dorothee Kimmich, Schamma Schahadat (eds.): *Kulturen in Bewegung. Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis der Transkulturalität*. Bielefeld: transcript 2012, p. 111–143.

61 See Ottmar Ette/Dieter Ingenschay/Günther Maihold (eds.): *EuropAmericas. Transatlantic Relations*. Frankfurt am Main, Madrid: Vervuert Iberoamericana 2008.

62 See Ottmar Ette/Friederike Pannewick (eds.): *ArabAmericas. Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World*. Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2006.

63 See Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger/Tiago de Oliveira Pinto (eds.): *AfricAmericas. Itineraries, Dialogues, and Sounds*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2008.

64 Ette: *TransArea*, p. 36.

65 The book series *Literatures as World Literatures*, published by Bloomsbury, dedicates each volume to different languages and regions of the world that unfold these dynamics in national and transnational contexts, e.g. in the case of *Polish Literature as World Literature* edited by Piotr Florczyk and K. A. Wisniewski (Bloomsbury 2024), *Bulgarian Literature as World Literature* edited by Mihaela P. Harper and Dimitar Kambourov (Bloomsbury 2022) or *Romanian Literature*

III Connecting the Disconnected: Multiple Pathways through Elective Affinities

Diving into one of these possible worlds, the present volume focuses on literary entanglements and the dynamics of transcultural exchange processes between Latin America and East-Central Europe. At the publication's center of interest are literary-historical connecting lines, theoretical similarities and poetological connections that go beyond national and regional stratifications. In seven different sections and an appendix of geopoetic literatures by Mexican writer Karen Villeda and Polish writer Dorota Masłowska, these papers aim to contribute to the transareal history of literatures and the varying conditions of their reception. They focus on significant actors in the exchange as well as their networks, and in this respect, do foundational work on the mobility of social imaginaries, their migrations and intersections.

The first section, entitled *Theory and History of Entanglements*, starts with a theoretical approach to history writing. For Guillermo Zermeño Padilla, thinking from a Latin American position about history and its future necessarily involves revisiting Europe, because the old counterpoint between Europe and America has lost its significance since the decolonization processes of the post-war era. For this reason, both Europe and America are in the midst of reconfiguring historical knowledge, a process with no clear or specific epicenter. In his paper, Zermeño provides a survey and a critical reassessment of historiography and its crises to argue for a new chronotope for history. He proposes a focus on transversal dynamics that bring together the contemporary with the not-contemporary; their simultaneity at times creating a multifaceted presence.

From the theory of writing history in geopolitical contexts and with a focus on Latin America, Ottmar Ette traces a network of the literatures of the world in a space of conviviality that challenges the monopoly of European concepts of world literature dominated by geographical centers like New York (Damrosch) and Paris (Casanova). Exchanges of literary theory beyond the hegemonic power of European colonialism are discussed from a polylogical view; writers of the Caribbean archipelago as well as the literatures of Brazil, Asia and Eastern Europe are considered. Literatures of the world enmeshed in a process of global acceleration can only be seen in the light of a history of its movement that goes beyond national borders, languages, and identities.

as *World Literature* edited by Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, Andrei Terian (Bloomsbury 2019) and many more.

The second section, *Intellectual Networks and Literary Fields*, starts with José Luis Nogales Baena's paper about the founding of a pro-Soviet network in Mexico. During the first stage of the Latin American (Cultural) Cold War, the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange and its journal, *Cultura Soviética* (1944–1954), functioned as the central node of a vast network of local, national, and transnational relations, a place for the circulation and contact of people, ideas, and projects in favor of socialism in general and the Soviet Union in particular. This network was promoted and sustained by Moscow with obvious propagandistic purposes, but carried out with the enthusiastic collaboration of the pro-Soviet Latin American left.

Ana Davis González delves into the socio-literary panorama of Río de la Plata and discusses texts by intellectual creatives who visited socialist countries between 1932 and 1959. These *writer-intellecutuals* are key historical figures with a dual social role: they participate in public discourse on ideological-political issues through creative works and, at the same time, intervene in the contemporary cultural field by expressing their positions in aesthetic terms, depending on the tensions or struggles that exist in their respective contemporary circles. By examining texts published in the cultural press, Ana Davis shows how ideas are put into circulation and how a transactional Soviet cultural framework was woven into the Río de la Plata. She further illuminates the writer-intellecutual's participation in a negotiation between the ideological trend of communism, two cultural and geographic spaces – Eastern Europe and Río de la Plata – and two very distant political contexts, namely the evolution of the Soviet Union after Lenin until the Thaw era as opposed to the Uriburu dictatorship, *Peronism* and the *Revolución Libertadora* (“Liberating Revolution”) that closed this period in Argentina.

Elisa Kriza's article examines concepts of freedom and authoritarianism in texts by Mexican writers José Revueltas and Octavio Paz, with a focus on Russia and Central Europe as symbolic places during the Cold War. The article demonstrates how these writers created an individual space beyond the polarizations of the Cold War. Their evolving notions of the meaning of individual and collective freedom as well as freedom of speech remain relevant today. Kriza's interpretation of the Mexican writers' concepts of freedom are contrasted with Revueltas' thoughts about the trial of Soviet writers Andrey Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel in 1966 as well as the texts by Revueltas and Paz on the Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the Soviet penal system (gulag). The article concludes with reflections on Paz' anti-imperialism during the Cold War and compares it with current debates surrounding Russia's war against Ukraine in the 21st century.

The following section, *Authors of Dis/connection*, is opened by Pablo Sánchez, who analyzes three texts by Latin American writers Pablo Neruda and Miguel Ángel Asturias, both Nobel Prize winners, who relate their experiences in Euro-

pean socialist countries during the Cold War. These curious texts have seldomly been studied and reveal both the political strategies of socialist governments for obtaining the support of the intelligentsia, as well as the needs and ideals of Latin American writers in times of political instability on the continent. In an analysis of selected texts from Neruda's *Viajes* (1955), Asturias' *Rumania, su nueva imagen* (1964), and the co-authored *Comiendo en Hungría* (1969), Sánchez shows how the authors express optimistic visions of socialism, praise economic developments, and extol the virtues of Hungarian gastronomy in a humorous and entertaining work sponsored by the country's government to improve its international image after the events of 1956. These texts in verse and prose dispense with direct political pronouncements and become an original and unexpected defense of the socialist way of life.

Aleksandra Tobiasz's paper addresses Witold Gombrowicz's changeable contours of self-identification, which are reshaped both at a crossroads of different orders of time (historical, cultural, and diaristic), and in relation to the places of his exile – which stretch from Western Europe all the way to Argentina. Gombrowicz's diaristic practice (public Diary and private Kronos) foregrounds temporal displacement in the history of the twentieth century, oscillating between different understandings of time such as *chronos* and *kairos*, and is influenced by divergent *regimes of historicity* found in particular places. Just before World War II, Gombrowicz was persuaded to migrate to Latin America, which appeared to offer a safe distance from the European burden of history. However, upon his return to Europe in 1963, he found himself immersed in a historical unfolding once more, and in memories of the past. To the writer, exile in Argentina meant an open, spiral-shaped hermeneutic laboratory of self, but the return to Europe enclosed him once again in a circle of the historical absurd.

Javier Toscano discusses Vilém Flusser's philosophical writings through the lens of migration and discusses a nomadology of thinking beyond national borders. Born in Prague in 1920 and migrating to Brazil for more than three decades, Flusser turned the theme of exile into a central part of his work. Toscano's contribution focuses on the ways in which Flusser operationalized his reflections on living without a *homeland* to form the center of a dynamic form of thought. Looking into works of great theoretical value, interviews, and other texts, this article follows the construction of a *Nomadology*, a philosophy of migration that never acquired a definite form in Flusser's work, yet emerges through clearly defined themes and concepts based on his experiences of migration and intercultural exchange.

The fourth section integrates *Images and Imagineries on the Move*, which widen the corpus of textual formations and aesthetic practices being compared from Hungary to Slovenia. Starting with Mónika Szente-Varga's essay on how *En-*

counters with the Rain God by László Passuth bridges distances between Hungary, Mexico, and Spain, we dive into the literary, intellectual, and personal trajectory of the Hungarian author – against the backdrop of a thrilling international constellation during the Cold War. The paper focuses mainly on Passuth's most acclaimed historical novel about the Conquest Period and the life of the conquistador Hernán Cortés. The novel, according to Szenté-Varga, had a great impact on the Hungarian imaginary of Mexico.

Jaša Drnovšek's paper discusses travel writing by Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950). In 1919 she set out alone on a world tour from Celje/Cilli, a town in the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes; her main destination was Japan. But at the Genoa port, from where long-distance steamships sailed, she found that she could only buy a ticket to Mollendo, a port in the deep south of Peru. Karlin then stayed in Peru for more than four months. While research so far has focused primarily on Karlin's life, on language and style in her work, or on her writings referencing Japan, this essay is the first scholarly study to address her representation of Peru. Both Karlin's travel literature and her fiction are considered. Drnovšek shows that Karlin's account of Peru's history was strongly influenced by the *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* (1609, 1617) written by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616).

In *Crossing Borders, Closing Gaps: Translation*, Claudio Soltmann and Monika Dąbrowska discuss the theory of translation as an important transcultural vehicle between authors as agents of network-making. Claudio Soltman studies the phenomenon of indirect translation in Chile as carried out by Manuel Antonio Matta and Guillermo Matta in poems and extracts of larger works by Adam Mickiewicz and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859) published in 1850 in *Revista de Santiago*. These *indirect* translations had previously been translated from Polish into French by writers and translators such as Auguste Lacausade (1815–1897), as well as Polish translators in France such as Krystyn Ostrowski (1811–1882). The translations were created against the vibrant backdrop of the revolutionary movement of 1848 in France. By focusing on the paratextual content (or translator's footnotes) of the translations, it is possible to deduct some of the Chilean translators' ideological leanings. Paratexts become a valuable medium which, in the case of indirect translations, make both translators visible. Soltman's case study presents insights into the agency of translators and the political aspirations they shared with the original authors to counter European imperialism during the first half of the 19th century.

In her contribution titled "Difundir la literatura polaca en México y la mexicana en Polonia. Sergio Pitol como agente transcultural," Monika Dąbrowska addresses entanglements in the fields of translation and cultural mediation using the prominent example of Mexican author and translator Sergio Pitol's life and work. Pitol's enormous and passionate body of work has made him an outstand-

ing promoter of Polish literature in Mexico, Argentina and Spain. As a writer, translator, and editor, he fostered a mutual cultural and literary influence between Central-East Europe and Latin America based on the exchange of literary texts both in translation and the original languages. This intersection was highly productive, argues Dąbrowska, referencing the theoretical framing of the “agent of translation” and demonstrating the indispensable role of Pitó in the cultural relationship between Mexico and Poland.

The last section, *Migration and Entangled Memories*, completes the theoretical approaches with a further connection between Peru and Poland as well as Brazil and Jewish Eastern Europe. Anna Ratke-Majewska’s article, “Poles from the Peruvian Montaña: Recollections of Polish Emigration to Peru in the Early 20th Century,” examines the issue of narratives about Polish emigration to Peru that consist largely of orally transmitted memories and which have been told in social settings since the 1930s. The text focuses on validating the hypothesis that, concerning the subject of the colonization campaign in Peru, two primary directions of oral narratives can be discerned. The first direction depicts Polish emigrants as involuntary victims and martyrs entangled in circumstances beyond their control. The second direction portrays Polish settlers as indolent, avaricious troublemakers. The research presented in this article stems from an analysis of archival materials housed in the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw, Poland. These materials encompass official documents, contracts, letters, reports, press clippings, and brochures. The research process also entailed supplementing these materials with other texts, primarily from the 1930s, such as newspaper articles, excerpts from travel literature, and popular science publications.

The contribution of Robert Schade titled *Bom Fim, New Birobidzhan and centaurs* sheds light on the work of Jewish Brazilian author Moacyr Scliar. Schade focuses on the inter- and transcultural as well as the socio-economic situation of Jewish migrants in Brazil, and on the culinary aspects of this specific hybridity represented in Scliar’s novels. The subject of memory also plays an important role in this literature, as it often alludes to pogroms and the Holocaust.

IV Traveling with Female Voices

The last section is called *Contemporary Female Perspectives* and provides a literary coda for our volume featuring texts of contemporary female travel literature, in which glances are exchanged in both directions. In the micro-essays about Czechia, Hungary, and Poland by the Mexican writer and poet Karen Villeda (born 1985) and in a reportage from Cuba by Dorota Masłowska (born 1983), a Polish

writer and rapper, we find further interrelations and affinities to reassemble. Translated by Tara O'Sullivan, these two texts are being presented in English for the first time. Published in 2017, Karen Villeda's essay collection *Visegrado* was awarded the José Revueltas Literary Essay Fine Arts Award the same year.⁶⁶ Masłowska's reportages from Cuba were published in Polish in the online cultural magazine *Dwutygodnik.com*⁶⁷ and then reprinted as a book with other pieces from her regular column, "How to Take Control of The World without Leaving the House."⁶⁸

Today, we find our lives enmeshed in a globalized and closely linked world whose societies continuously push the circulation not only of goods but also of people, some of whom have the possibility of moving freely from one place or one country to another. But who is enjoying this freedom of movement? With what attitudes, perspectives and expectations do those travelers – often in the role of tourists – arrive in other countries? What impact do the narrations circling back to us through the lens of the traveler have on our perception of a foreign country and its residents?

We should ask ourselves if those narrations transport histories of encounter and how they are conditioned; where the limits of those encounters emerge, operate, and solidify. Villeda presents us with a certain estrangement in reference to the historical past in the form of language difficulties, or the proliferation of the touristic enterprise in the countries of Visegrád visited by her narrator. Her micro-essays circle around the question of how travel moves and changes our perception, the impacts it can have on our ways of writing, and the necessity of new literary forms – like micro-essays – to rethink historical and aesthetical relations between different places and culturally heterogeneous areas.

Masłowska presents us with the experiences of a Polish narrator in Cuba, provocatively pushing the perspective of traveling Westerners to solipsistic extremes. We are confronted with a drastic text playing with the aesthetics of disgust and brutality (as rap lyrics do) that forces violence upon its readers – a violence inherent to a language originating from a Eurocentric perspective and acting out the representation of the other, which is often to be found in fictional and non-fictional (travel) documents. That is where the reader finds herself at the limits of encoun-

⁶⁶ Karen Villeda: *Visegrado*. México: Almadía 2017.

⁶⁷ Dorota Masłowska: Kuba (1). In: *Dwutygodnik.com*, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/arttykul/7506-jak-przejac-kontrolę-nad-swiatem-nie-wychodzic-z-domu-kuba-1.html>; Kuba (2), in: *Dwutygodnik.com*, <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/arttykul/7539-jak-przejac-kontrolę-nad-swiatem-nie-wychodzic-z-domu-kuba-2.html> [December 5, 2023].

⁶⁸ Dorota Masłowska: *Jak przejąć kontrolę nad światem 2*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2020.

ter, or rather, at the negation of encounter. A text that is continuously performing white supremacy while at the same time breaking with it cynically and diving into the grotesque. It exposes stereotypes that run rampant in both regions, Latin America and East-Central Europe. From the short story about Cuba, we can learn about the aesthetic and socio-cultural sensitivity of a post-Soviet generation who experienced the transformation period, a generation that so much wants to be Western that it adopts the colonial gaze, and in this way, serves the Western stereotype of the *primitive* from the East who is racist, uneducated, and projects their own *primitive* reflection. Masłowska's text does not gloss over the inequality often fostered by Western travelers entering other, especially non-European countries. Exaggeration as literary strategy leads to an ironic rupture of prejudice, but at the same time it lays bare the discursive power solidifying conceptualizations and suppressing difference. The other, who is continuously sieved through certain headwords, phrases, and images, remains confined within the structures of prejudice, and reveals a journey to a non-existent place, that is, an imaginary tropical land where Westerners can only find themselves by negating the other.

Both authors, Masłowska and Villeda, confront us with the difficulty of how to report on, to speak and write about our encounters with other countries and other people. About the violence and, consequently, disparities that often spring from a certain use of language, which operates as a representative force in these texts.

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I Theory and History of Entanglements

Guillermo Zermeño

Repensando la historia, el eurocentrismo y el historicismo desde América Latina

1 Introducción

La siguiente aproximación se basa en algunas investigaciones realizadas sobre la historia de la historiografía moderna. Se parte de la hipótesis de que el modelo historiográfico que rige la disciplina de la historia (que conjuga una relación particular entre el tiempo y el espacio), tras siglo y medio de existencia, ha entrado en crisis en las últimas décadas del siglo XX. Y esta situación crítica no compete sólo a la Europa oriental u occidental, sino afecta por igual a la constelación llamada desde el siglo XIX América Latina para distinguirla de la sajona. Esto significaría que estamos siendo testigos (como académicos) de una reconfiguración del mapa mundial que invita a repensar la historia y sus formas de escrituración. Una reconfiguración, asimismo, que afecta sus relaciones con otras disciplinas afines de las humanidades (como el arte, la literatura y la filosofía) y de las ciencias sociales (como la antropología, la sociología o la ciencia política). Es verdad que esta transformación puede verse desde hace tiempo en sus formas narrativas de restituir el pasado y de representarlo,¹ que incluye a su vez el retorno del sujeto-historiador-observador reflexivo que se hace cargo de la historia al momento de narrarla. Ahí aparece un observador situado en los intersticios que marcan la diferencia y la distancia entre el pasado ya sucedido y el presente en constante actualización de cara al futuro, en un constante tránsito entre el pasado y el futuro. Esta ubicación intermediaria de estar entre-espacios, entre-disciplinas, entre-historias, entre-tiempos y culturas abre el compás idóneo para trascender toda clase de etnocentrismos y localismos de raigambre nacionalista al modo del siglo XIX. En ese sentido, estar entre dos puede convertirse en una fórmula *teórica*, es decir no propia del sentido común, que invita a disminuir y transformar las oposiciones tradicionales existentes entre disciplinas, naciones y tiempos, para tratar de entender y situar lo que está teniendo lugar en el entorno de la *crisis* actual marcada por el incesante movimiento, no solo de poblaciones, sino entre mundos, espacios, disciplinas, y culturas.

Situados en este lugar, en este ensayo se parte de la revisión del cronotopo historicista clásico o régimen de historicidad modernista que da marco todavía

¹ Remito a mi ensayo: Explicar, narrar, mostrar. Danto, Habermas, Foucault y la Historia. En: *Historia y Grafía* 24 (2005), p. 151–192.

en buena medida a nuestro presente.² Se trata de volver la mirada hacia nuestro pasado inmediato a fin de poder *provincializar* la influencia de Europa,³ así como de *des-provincializar* a América Latina. Con la conciencia de que a estos esfuerzos les preceden proyectos como los de Susanne Klengel y Manuel Suárez Cortina.⁴

Una primera exploración de esta problemática se encuentra en mi ensayo «El *cronotopo* moderno de la historia y su crisis actual».⁵ En esta nueva incursión, por tanto, habrá algunas referencias a dicho ensayo, a cambio de intentar centrar la reflexión en el tópico de la crisis de las filosofías de la historia que enfática o subrepticamente pueden seguir marcando nuestras narrativas históricas y sus formas de politización. En ese contexto pienso que al asumir la crisis del modelo historicista heredado se pueden abrir espacios de diálogo a partes iguales entre diversas regiones y culturas, como son las que puede haber entre América Latina y Europa del Este en vistas a la reflexión y clarificación del momento histórico crítico en el que estamos y sus posibilidades.

Y es que, me parece, en el trasfondo de las siguientes reflexiones está la sombra y fantasma de un cierto eurocentrismo encubierto, que, a pesar de buenas intenciones, podría seguir acechando, en medio de la crisis, en algunos enfoques latinoamericanistas o mexicanistas y este-europeos al no querer asumir las implicaciones del ingreso en una etapa post-historicista y post-imperial alrededor de la historia. Es decir, dado el carácter que han tomado los acontecimiento después de

2 El «régimen de historicidad» es concebido como una categoría heurística que permite observar las diferentes modalidades históricas sobre las que se han articulado diferentes modos de relación entre el pasado, el presente y el futuro. Por ejemplo, se puede afirmar que el tiempo actual está dominado por un presente presentista en el que tiende a prevalecer un pasado ensanchado a costa de un futuro menguante. Lo cual puede explicar ese incremento en la devoción por el pasado y sus rituales, por la «memoria». Véase, François Hartog: El historiador en un tiempo presentista. En: Fernando Devoto (ed.): *Historiadores, Ensayistas, y Gran público 1990–2010*. Buenos Aires: Ed. Biblos 2010, p. 15–28. De manera más puntual se puede revisar del mismo autor: Una inquietante extrañeza. En: *Creer en la historia*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Finis Terrae 2013, p. 121–166. Véase además, Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht: Nuestro amplio presente. Sobre el surgimiento de una nueva construcción del tiempo y sus consecuencias para la disciplina de la historia. En: Guillermo Zermeño Padilla (ed.): *Historia fin de siglo*. México: El Colegio de México 2016, p. 123–146.

3 Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton UP 2000.

4 Manuel Suárez Cortina (ed.), *Europa del sur y América Latina: Perspectivas historiográficas*. Madrid: Bibliotheca Nueva 2014. Susanne Klengel y Alexandra Ortiz Wallner (eds.): *Sur/South. Poetics and Politics of thinking Latina America/India*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2016.

5 En Fabio Wasserman, coord.: *Tiempos críticos: historia, revolución y temporalidad en el mundo iberoamericano (siglos XVIII y XIX)*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros 2020, p. 19–34.

1989 relacionados con Europa, por un lado, y las crisis latinoamericanas después de las dictaduras (blandas y duras) y los militarismos, por otro lado, se abre un espacio propicio para repensar conjuntamente (salvadas la diferencias obvias de lenguas y tradiciones incubadas) el destino de la historia y los dilemas abiertos en cuanto a las formas idóneas de articular y/o re-articular las relaciones entre el pasado y el presente.

La idea de este ensayo, entonces, es, dentro de lo posible, hacer entrar en diálogo a estas dos grandes regiones del subcontinente europeo y americano alrededor de los intercambios y contrastaciones del concepto de *historia*, en su ambigüedad, como relato del pasado y como devenir. Conscientes de la envergadura del problema, este intento se realiza por lo pronto como una suerte de preámbulo metodológico de futuras investigaciones enfocadas a la comparación entre estas dos regiones. Este propósito sería posible si se parte de la premisa de que actualmente existen las condiciones idóneas para esta clase de estudios en la medida en que ambas regiones comparten situaciones afines tanto por su geografía como por su historia. Hay eventos históricos recientes que las pueden hacer ver como contemporáneas una de otra; como copartícipes de un mismo presente presentista. Pero puede haber igualmente en sus pasados eventos que pueden mostrar disonancias temporales que los hacen ver como contemporáneos. En torno a este punto aparece como central el concepto de nación o formas de identificación basados en un cierto tipo de relatos históricos. Lo importante por ahora es subrayar que ambas regiones con-viven en una etapa post-imperial que invita a su reconfiguración social en sus diversos órdenes, políticos, económicos y culturales.

Como ya se sugirió, los eventos relacionados con la caída del muro de Berlín y la desmembración del imperio soviético a comienzos de la década de 1990 pueden encontrar su correspondencia con la crisis de modelos económicos y políticos desarrollistas y progresistas cimentados en el siglo XIX del mundo iberoamericano, de modo que podrían encontrarse equivalencias funcionales entre ambas regiones como copartícipes de un mismo presente dilatado con desafíos y dilemas afines. Así como podría hablarse de la entrada en Europa oriental en un periodo posimperial y su correspondiente fragmentación y necesidad de definir sus fronteras identitarias y territoriales, del mismo modo en América Latina existirían las condiciones para repensar sus identidades después de los ímpetus nacionalistas y revolucionarios decimonónicos que les dieron forma.⁶ La entrada en un nuevo umbral de

6 Véase Anne Appelbaum: *Entre este y oeste. Un viaje por las fronteras de Europa*, trad. Francisco J. Ramos Mena. México: Debate 2023 (*Between East and West. Across the Borderland of Europe*. 1994). Ryszard Kapuściński: *El imperio*, trad. Agata Orzeszek. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama 1994. Para el caso mexicano remito a mi ensayo *Entre futuros-pasados y futuros-presentes: reflexiones en torno a la actualidad* (en prensa).

tiempo, de tránsito entre un pasado que ya jugó sus cartas y un futuro que no termina por plasmarse, deja ver solo que nada está asegurado de antemano. Puede haber variantes restauradoras de supuestos pasados gloriosos chauvinistas y etnocéntricos, pero puede haber también otras posibilidades portadoras de otros futuros.

Una manera de introducirse a este momento posimperial es apelando a lo que sería la crisis de la historia historicista, fundamento de muchas de las variantes del periodo imperial o neocolonial, y resituar la historia en el contexto de las reconfiguraciones en curso enmarcadas por la globalización. De ahí que esta exposición está agrupada alrededor de algunos ejes conceptuales, comenzando con los que nos dan orientación geográfica, hasta aquellos que traen a la superficie algunos de los dilemas conceptuales que se enfrentan desde la historiografía en este nuevo entramado espaciotemporal.

2 ¿Norte y sur, este y oeste?

Iniciamos con una reflexión acerca de lo que puede significar pensar y repensar la historia desde América Latina. Hacerlo desde acá implica situarse necesariamente desde ese otro lado llamado «Europa»; no como una forma de esquivar el problema o de buscar reivindicaciones obsoletas. Más bien se trata de realizar un viaje de ida y vuelta entre dos hemisferios, en los que la ubicación geográfica no determina el resultado final de la operación. Y en eso Ryszard Kapuściński es ejemplar en el modo como ha situado sus correrías enmarcadas por la figura de Heródoto, que lo hace cobrar una nueva actualidad.⁷ Si nos preguntamos de qué Europa hablamos, si del este o del oeste, igualmente podemos hacerlo en relación con América, si del norte o del sur.

En estas variaciones, no obstante, reconocemos que hoy existe una Europa en proceso de reconfiguración, distinta a la surgida durante el siglo antepasado. Algo similar puede decirse con respecto al caso americano atravesado igualmente por serias tensiones y crisis periódicas, encuentros y desencuentros entre quienes habitan el norte y el sur del continente. Aunque no podemos olvidar, para entrar en materia, que solo existe la denominación *América Latina* hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XIX: una noción acuñada en la Francia de Napoleón III para contraponer racial y culturalmente a los pueblos latinos con los germánicos y anglicanos. En ese sentido, se trata de una noción que llega bastante cargada semánticamente al siglo XX.

7 Ryszard Kapuściński, *Viajes con Heródoto*, trad. Agata Orzeszek. Barcelona: Anagrama 2006.

Además, a nivel iberoamericano, su articulación atravesó también por el filtro, también cargado, del concepto de hispanidad tras la crisis del '98. Muchos de los proyectos culturales que emergerán para el nuevo siglo no estarán exentos de una carga decadentista; y que están condicionados por las diferencias que puede haber entre quienes habitan el norte y el sur, una división encuadrada por «lo cultural» que servirá de marco para el surgimiento de América Latina como área de estudio especializada contrapuesta a la América anglosajona, y que sirve de base para plantearse la pregunta acerca de si las dos américas tenían o no una historia compartida.⁸

Sin embargo, debido a su fuerte carga regionalista y etnocéntrica Horst Pietschmann advirtió con razón algunos de los peligros de situar el área de esa manera al alejarse de las tendencias globales, encerrarse en sí misma y «perder de vista los grandes temas y debates de la historia en general. . .».⁹ Si ese es el caso, entonces puede observarse la siguiente paradoja: al tiempo que América Latina se consolidaba como área de estudios en el mundo académico, Europa entraba en un proceso de descolonización y de dudas sobre sí misma, que la condujo a perder su centralidad teórica a favor de otros futuros proyectados desde la Europa oriental y la América del norte.

3 ¿Fin de las historias universales y regionalistas?

El talante autocrítico aparece en Europa con mayor claridad y énfasis a la sombra de los estragos y del reordenamiento del mundo producto de la Segunda gran guerra del siglo XX. En nuestro caso nos interesa destacar lo que puede reflejarse en la crítica a un tipo de historias y narrativas universalistas y etnocéntricas, presentes en obras como la político-antropológica de Claude Lévi-Strauss *Race et Histoire* de 1952 y la político-filosófica de Karl Popper *La miseria del historicismo* de 1957. Las considero básicas para repensar el modo como se han articulado las relaciones e interacciones entre diversas culturas atravesadas por la temporalidad. Pero también sabemos que a la par no han dejado de aparecer obras que despiertan de su letargo discursos añejos y anacrónicos con el interés de hacer resurgir o afianzar viejas utopías sobre las que se ha construido nuestra actualidad, y que en algunos casos no hacen sino reafirmar paradójicamente aquello de

8 Horst Pietschmann: El desarrollo de la historiografía sobre la colonización española en América desde la segunda guerra mundial. En: *Balance de la historiografía sobre Iberoamérica (1945–1988)*. Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra 1989, p. 81–165.

9 Ibid., p. 92.

lo que pretenden distanciarse: el pensamiento occidental como faro y luz de la humanidad entera. En cuyos sueños y promesas aparece sin duda la figura espectral de Hegel en su afán de insertar toda clase de historias en el espíritu universalista de la gran historia historicista diseñada desde Europa.

En una de sus obras dedicada a esclarecer las relaciones entre tiempo y narración Paul Ricoeur sugirió la necesidad de «renunciar a Hegel», con la salvedad de que ese alejamiento debería partir de su reconocimiento.¹⁰ De otra manera el peligro era el de repetirlo negándolo, porque, a diferencia de la crítica de mediados del siglo pasado al acusarlo de estadolatría o de haber sido causante de la emergencia de los estados totalitarios conocidos, la nueva crítica daba un paso más para escapar de sus sombras que siguen rodeando tanto a Europa como a América Latina (un lugar en primera instancia supuestamente no protagónico en la elaboración de esas utopías modernistas).

Al respecto encajan bien lecturas como las de Henri Lefebvre de 1976, *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche (o el reino de las sombras)*, o la obra de Frantz Fanon,¹¹ un clásico de la literatura sociológica y antropológica poscolonial, cuyo análisis se funda en el principio de historicidad que afecta tanto al colonizador como al colonizado, y en el cual el principio de temporalidad no es exclusivo del discurso de la historia filosófica y universalista, sino constitutivo de los trazos que imprimen sus huellas sobre la piel de los cuerpos colonizados, así como de la sociedad de los colonizadores. De manera que pensar y repensar la historia no está condicionada y determinada solo por las coordenadas de índole geográfica. Por eso se trata de pensar América Latina en paralelo a repensar e historizar Europa.

4 Historiografía y globalización

Lo anterior cobra cierta relevancia si inscribimos dicha relación en el contexto actual de la globalización. A cuya fisonomía la distingue no la secuencialidad lineal de los procesos históricos propios del historicismo universalista, sino su dinámica de transversalidad o contemporaneidad de lo no contemporáneo. Es decir, que enfatiza y profundiza el sentimiento de interdependencia y simultaneidad temporal de cada una de las partes y regiones que conforman el sistema in-

¹⁰ Guillermo Zermeño: Between anthropology and history: Manuel Gamio and Mexican anthropological modernity 1916–1935. En: Saurabh Dube y Ishita Banerjee-Dube (eds.): *Unbecoming Modern. Colonialism, Modernity, Colonial Modernities*. Londres: Routledge 2019, p. 59–75.

¹¹ Alejandro de Oto: *Franz Fanon: política y poética del sujeto poscolonial*. México: El Colegio de México 2003.

terplanetario. Esto significaría que estamos en un punto de inflexión que afecta tanto a Europa como a América Latina a partes iguales.

Esta situación emergente multifactorial y multirregional dio lugar al surgimiento del neologismo *globalización* en la sociología de la década de 1980, que no ha dejado de afectar la reconfiguración de nuestras disciplinas. Sin tender a hipostasiarla, sabemos además que está en juego la noción de *red*, una forma metafórica para hablar del estar enredados mutuamente a ritmos cada vez más acelerados.

En este contexto, con Ingrid Simson editamos un libro sobre las relaciones entre historiografía y globalización, enfatizando la perspectiva latinoamericana. Lo hicimos con la preocupación ante la proliferación de obras históricas enmarcadas por la noción de *lo global* (a veces observando el fenómeno solo como un momento más dentro de una misma genealogía historicista), y la necesidad de destacar las diferencias que podría haber entre historia universal, *world history* y la historia global, esta última como un cambio de perspectiva, en correspondencia con la nueva reconfiguración a nivel internacional.¹²

Indicios de esta transformación están a la vista, son parte de nuestra cotidianeidad informativa, en la que lo nuevo tiende a ocultarse rápidamente en el caudal del pasado, condicionando las visiones de futuro al velocímetro impuesto por el presentismo o «actualismo».¹³ Uno de sus efectos más visibles tiene que ver con la pulverización de las previsiones que marcaron y dieron pauta a las historias universales historicistas. Con lo cual se han creado las condiciones para escribir otro tipo de historias espacio-temporales. Algunos ejemplos notables de este viraje se encuentran en obras como las de Karl Schlögel y Jeremy Brotton.¹⁴

En esta clase de «historias espaciadas» se muestra que la «historia global» más que extensión de las historias universales, significa un cambio de ángulo visual en la manera de ordenar las experiencias del pasado a la luz del presente. La experiencia de habitar en un mundo global trastoca la secuencia lineal narrativa tradicional construida a partir de un telos futurista (siempre pospuesto), para concentrarse en la

12 Ingrid Simson/Guillermo Zermeño (eds.): *La historiografía en tiempos globales*. Berlín: tranvía · Walter Frey 2020.

13 Mateus Henrique Pereira y Valdei Lopes de Araujo: Actualismo y presente amplio: breve análisis de las temporalidades contemporáneas. En: Aurelia Valero y Guillermo Zermeño (coords.): «La historia en un tiempo «presentista»» en: *Desacatos*. Revista de Antropología Social, México, CIESAS, 55, septiembre/diciembre (2017), p. 12–27.

14 De Karl Schlögel: *En el espacio leemos el tiempo: Sobre la historia de la civilización y Geopolítica*, trad. José Luis Arántgui. Madrid: Siruela 2007; y *El siglo soviético: Arqueología de un mundo perdido*, trad. Paula Aguiriano Aispurua. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg 2021; Jeremy Brotton: *El bazar del Renacimiento: Sobre la influencia de Oriente en la cultura occidental*, trad. Carme Castells. Barcelona: Paidós 2003; y Jeremy Brotton: *A history of the world in twelve maps*. London: Penguin Books 2013.

descripción de sucesos que ocurren en simultaneidad en diferentes espacios.¹⁵ Ahí se delinean diferentes clases de experiencias en su singularidad, tomando como referente la marca de un tiempo cada vez más homogéneo.

¿Qué clase de operación se realiza cuando se intenta entrecruzar tiempo y espacio? En principio sabemos que los restos del pasado pueden agruparse cronológicamente, de lo más antiguo a lo más reciente, un hecho después de otro, y así sucesivamente hasta completar una línea completa del tiempo. Pero puede darse un paso más si esos hechos se relacionan entre sí y se ordenan en términos de causalidad. Esto es posible si quien los ordena cuenta de antemano con un principio preexistente que los integre en un todo explicativo que provoque el entrecruzamiento de hechos en sí mismos singulares, diversos e irreversibles. Para dicho efecto se requiere que exista un observador omnisciente capaz de conocer el principio y el término de cada una de las acciones de antemano. Tal sería el caso y privilegio del historiador ordinario. Esta clase de narraciones explicativas contiene un grado de mayor complejidad y alcance que las puras relaciones de carácter cronológico y ha sido dominante durante el auge de las historias nacionales enmarcadas por el régimen moderno de historicidad.

Pero puede darse, no obstante, otra forma no diacrónica de organizar los hechos históricos: aquella que pone mayor énfasis en las relaciones de sincronía y simultaneidad de los hechos ocurridos. Es decir, que incluye a su perspectiva la dimensión de la transversalidad, que excluye la perspectiva meramente lineal para eventos que ocurren en forma paralela, sin entrecruzarse, y que se ha visto en parte potenciada con el desarrollo de la tecnología cinematográfica.¹⁶ Desde la óptica del espectador o lector éste puede ver cómo se desarrollan dos acciones o más en diferentes espacios al mismo tiempo. En este caso, los hechos no se agrupan linealmente, uno detrás de otro, sino poliédricamente. Aquí cobra un mayor peso el lugar donde se desarrollan las acciones, y el tiempo tiende a reducirse al mínimo. En ese sentido, este ordenamiento de los hechos no sigue la cronología natural del tiempo; domina más bien la lógica de sujetos y objetos visualizados en simultaneidad. Sin embargo, esta perspectiva no es posible si *la secuencia cronológica temporal* no se *interrumpe* y queda subsumida en una óptica no secuencial. Esta forma interrumpe, por así decirlo, el tiempo al hacer un corte dentro del mismo tiempo. Sólo así puede mirarse algo como parte de otra cosa y abrirse a la posibilidad de la

15 Henning Trüper/Dipesh Chakrabarty/Sanja Subrahmanyam (eds.). *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World: Europe's Legacy in the modern World*. London: Bloomsbury 2015.

16 Un buen ejemplo es el experimento de Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht: *Living at the edge of time*. Cambridge: Harvard UP 1997. Existe una versión en español: *En 1926. Viviendo al borde del tiempo*, trad. Aldo Mazzucchi. México: Universidad Iberoamericana 2004.

historia comparativa: comparar sucesos diferentes y observarlos integralmente como parte de una misma secuencia, sin menoscabo de su especificidad.

5 El historicismo historiográfico: una revisión

El cronotopo historicista presupone una práctica cultural específica: el acto de escribir, que presupone a su vez, el acto de leer. Contiene un doble poder: el de representar el pasado (dimensión simbólica) y el de movilizar, anímica y políticamente, a sus receptores (dimensión político-pragmática). Su emergencia supuso la transformación de un *arte* de historiar (*ars historica*), de cuño renacentista,¹⁷ en una ciencia explicativa del pasado con capacidad de predecir o anticipar el futuro.¹⁸ Dada su naturaleza, esta escritura ha funcionado a la vez como memoria, recuerdo y ejemplo, distinguiéndose de las meras inscripciones. Y su estructuración sigue las reglas del arte de la retórica.¹⁹ No se nace historiador, se aprende el arte de la historia.

Con este precedente, Reinhart Koselleck advirtió que en la historiografía europea del siglo XVIII las dimensiones diacrónica y sincrónica en las formas de narrar tendían a conjuntarse.²⁰ Esto significaba que las formas acostumbradas de narrar las historias ajustadas al *ars historica* se estaban transformando. Una historiografía fuertemente moralizante estaba siendo sustituida por un nuevo concepto de Historia que reunía a la vez en un todo un tiempo fluido (la historia como proceso) y un tiempo condensado (la historia como un saber del pasado). En este contexto, el tiempo religioso, providencialista y escatológico, iba dejando de ser la única pauta de ordenamiento de los sucesos del pasado. El tiempo serial cronológico iba quedando asimilado al transcurrir del pasado, incorporando a su vez la dimensión de un futuro abierto de carácter impredecible.

Esta manera de operar de la historia y la historiografía puede verse también para el mundo iberoamericano.²¹ Se ha mostrado que, años más o años menos, se

17 Anthony Grafton. *What was History? The art of history in early modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2007.

18 Guillermo Zermeño Padilla: De la historia como un *arte* a la historia como una *ciencia*. En: *Historias conceptuales*. México: El Colegio de México 2017, p. 67–124.

19 Matthew Kempshall: *Rhetoric and the writing of history: 400–1500*. Manchester: Manchester UP 2011.

20 Véase en particular, Reinhart Koselleck: *historia/Historia*, traducción e introducción Antonio Gómez Ramos. Madrid: Trotta 2004.

21 Javier Fernández Sebastián: Hacia una historia Atlántica de los conceptos políticos. En: Javier Fernández Sebastián (dir): *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano: La era de las*

fue dando un proceso comparable al europeo. Durante el lapso de 1750 y 1850 pudo advertirse cómo la forma tradicional de ordenar los hechos (que presupone ya la distinción entre fábula e historia basada en la crítica textual), influenciada por el arte de la retórica (técnica por la cual las narraciones cumplen funciones soteriológicas, jurídicas y edificantes),²² iba cediendo paso a otra forma de articular dichas relaciones. Dicho sintéticamente, esa nueva forma se estaba articulando alrededor de la nueva noción de *historia contemporánea*, ausente durante el periodo anterior.²³ Para salvar ciertos equívocos, hemos de insistir en que esta transformación sólo era legible en el ámbito donde circulan las informaciones letradas. Para Iberoamérica, se puede identificar la incorporación de este cronotopo historicista hacia el decenio de 1826–1836, que sienta las bases para elaborar narrativas generales de las nuevas entidades políticas, que incluían a la vez la dimensión del pasado como la del futuro.²⁴ En estas escrituras se ve ya la voluntad de trazar una historia «filosófica» de la nación, de lo sucedido y de lo que puede o debería de suceder;²⁵ de carácter teleológico a partir de un concepto naturalista y, hasta cierto punto, providencialista, de la historia. Tanto el individuo como el género humano aparecen como dueños y esclavos a la vez de un destino prefijado, no inspirado salvíficamente, sino alentado por un futuro promisorio de felicidad y progreso constante, mediante el ejercicio de las «revoluciones».²⁶

revoluciones, 1750–1850, [Iberconceptos-I]. Madrid: Fundación Carolina/Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales/ Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales 2009, p. 25–45.

22 Alfonso Mendiola: *Retórica, comunicación y realidad. La construcción retórica de las batallas en las crónicas de la conquista*. México: Universidad Iberoamericana 2003.

23 El bosquejo de esta historia puede seguirse en Éliane Martin-Haag: *Les lumières françaises et l'histoire*. En: Gilles Marmasse (dir.): *L'Histoire*. Paris: Vrin 2010, p. 53–74.

24 Sobre la evolución del concepto «historia» en Iberoamérica, véase Javier Fernández Sebastián (dir.): *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano. La era de las revoluciones, 1750–1850*, [Iberconceptos-I]. Madrid: Fundación Carolina/Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales/ Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales 2009, p. 549–692.

25 El término que relaciona historia con filosofía aparece por primera vez en la reseña de Voltaire de 1764 del libro de David Hume *Complete history of England* y apunta al esclarecimiento del desarrollo de la humanidad en su conjunto. Es posible que su aparición coincida precisamente con el concepto de Historia (con mayúscula) entendida como singular colectivo. Todavía Herta Nagl-Docekal en *Der Sinn des Historischen. Geschichtsphilosophische Debatten* (Fischer Verlag 1996), se pregunta si hoy es posible o no la filosofía de la historia. Por el contrario, el pensador alemán Odo Marquard dejaba ver en diversos ensayos las dificultades actuales para mantener dicha denominación. *Dificultades con la filosofía de la historia. Ensayos*, tr. Enrique Ocaña. Valencia: Pre-Textos 2007.

26 José María Luis Mora (1836): *México y sus revoluciones* (3 vols.), ed. y prol. Agustín Yañez. México: Editorial Porrúa 1977.

Se puede advertir que esta nueva noción de historia está cerca de la economía política diseñada por Humboldt.²⁷ Ahí no aparece la fórmula piadosa de la historia como maestra de los tiempos porque en su diagnóstico final prevalece la noción de crisis o estado transitorio: el pasado es irreversible, pero tampoco se tiene la certeza de lo que pasará. Es la fórmula más próxima a un debilitamiento del concepto clásico de historia.

No me detengo en el análisis de la nueva retórica utilizada para poner por escrito esta clase de narraciones.²⁸ Me remito al trabajo analítico realizado por Hayden White en *Metahistoria* en el que da cuenta de la historiografía europea del siglo XIX.²⁹ Sólo menciono el llamado público durante este periodo para que los nuevos historiadores de la nación –independientemente de su condición social– acudan «infatigablemente a las bibliotecas y los archivos» y consulten «los documentos de todas clases», los ordenen «con paciencia» y den nuevo «espíritu a aquellos huesos áridos y esparcidos» y puedan «reanimar cualquier época de los siglos pasados, de suerte que la muestre como fotografiada. . .».³⁰ De suerte que para finales del siglo antepasado era un lugar común hablar de la ciencia de la historia entendida como una de las palancas del progreso.

Lo anterior es solo un pequeño esbozo de la emergencia en México y en nuestros países iberoamericanos del cronotopo historicista, cuyas narrativas están guiadas por el principio de la diacronía y la sincronización espacial (que conjuga estructura y acontecimiento) y que puede sintetizarse alrededor de la fórmula acuñada por Benedetto Croce: al final toda historia es *historia contemporánea*.

27 Mora, *México y sus revoluciones*, t. I, p. 470–471; Alejandro de Humboldt [1805]. *Ensayo político sobre el reino de la Nueva España*, 2ª. Edición corregida y aumentada, traducción de Vicente González Arnau. París: Casa de Jules Renouard 1827.

28 Apoyada en las virtudes anunciadas del periodo clásico, de imparcialidad y objetividad, amor a la verdad y claridad en la expresión.

29 Hayden White: *Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP 1973. Existe la versión en Español: *Metahistoria: La imaginación histórica en la Europa del siglo XIX*, trad. Stella Mastrangelo. México: FCE 1992.

30 Guillermo Zermeño: Ciencia de la historia y nación en México, 1821–1910. En: Sandra Carreras y Katja Carrillo Zeiter (eds.). *Las ciencias en la formación de las naciones americanas*. Berlín: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert 2014, p. 57–90.

6 El historicismo y su crisis

Sería ilusorio querer disponer de una descripción o sintomatología completa de la crisis del cronotopo historicista.³¹ Sólo tenemos indicios y tenemos que dejar fuera además los avatares de la ciencia de la historia durante la fase de la conversión de la historia en una profesión.³² Sin embargo puede solo mencionarse que, debido a la división social del trabajo académico, el *espacio* tendió a quedar en manos de los geógrafos y agrimensores, y el *tiempo*, en manos de filósofos en primera instancia. Sin desconocer los intentos del estructuralismo braudeliano para reunirlos de nuevo alrededor de una ciencia de la historia entendida como una ciencia de la sociedad, cuya crítica y crisis a partir de la década de 1960 son en sí mismos indicadores de la crítica y crisis del cronotopo historicista.³³ Dicha «crítica» se encuentran también en los primeros trabajos de Michel Foucault.³⁴

De los años sesenta del siglo pasado hasta nuestro presente sabemos que han ocurrido muchas cosas en la el campo intelectual. Hay historias de toda clase en todos los ámbitos disciplinarios. Desde los «cataclismos» (Dan Diner),³⁵ hasta las revisiones y la crítica política, sociológica, histórica y filosófica de los historicismos del siglo XIX. La escuela de Frankfurt, Karl Popper, Raymond Aron, Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Octavio Paz. . . por mencionar algunos nombres. Y no obstante, a pesar de la crítica ideológica del historicismo, para una parte de la intelectualidad de la guerra fría, las expectativas de un futuro perfectible, desarrollista y hasta revolucionario, siguieron vigentes; es decir, con capacidad para alimentar y llevar adelante acciones e iniciativas de todo tipo, incluyendo una relación particular con la historiografía. El ejercicio de la «crítica» estaba todavía alimentado por la conciencia de la posibilidad de cambiar y de estar cambiando el mundo en el día a día. Se trata, obviamente, de la Historia (mayúscula) convertida durante el siglo XIX en un gran tribunal de justicia; se trata de las acciones humanas pertenecientes a un

31 Esfuerzos de esta índole se encuentran en H. U. Gumbrecht: *Lento presente. Sintomatología del nuevo tiempo histórico*, prol. José Luis Villacañas. Madrid: Escolar y Mayo 2010. La versión alemana: *Unsere breite Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2010.

32 Otto Gerhard Oexle: *L'historisme en débat: De Nietzsche à Kantorowicz*. París: Aubier 2001. Una semblanza de este proceso se puede seguir en Arnaud Dewalque: *Le tournant épistémologique. De la philosophie de l'histoire de Ranke à Heidegger*. En: *L'histoire*. París: Vrin 2010, p. 155–175.

33 François Dosse: *L'histoire en miettes: Des Annales à la «nouvelle histoire»*. París: La Découverte 1987, 2005.

34 Judith Revel ilustra la trayectoria de Foucault en: *Historicisation, périodisation, actualité. Michel Foucault et l'histoire*. En: *L'histoire*. París: Vrin 2010, p. 187–207.

35 Dan Diner: *Das Jahrhundert verstehen, 1917–1989: Eine universalhistorische Deutung*. Colonia: Pantheon 2015.

tipo de experiencia temporal particular tamizada por un nuevo sentido de la historia. Tuvieron que darse otros acontecimientos, en cierto modo inesperados, como la caída del muro de Berlín a fines de 1989, la Glasnot y la Perestroyka en la antigua Unión Soviética, para que esa Historia comenzara a perder su peso tradicional.

La crisis se evidencia precisamente cuando esas expectativas de futuro o utopías modernistas comenzaban a debilitarse o «nublarse».³⁶ Conforme el siglo XX llegaba a su término y la geografía del globo terrestre se reconfiguraba, incluyendo la europea, las relaciones de tiempo tradicionales han acabado por invertirse: a un futuro cada vez más estrecho y limitado o amenazador le corresponde ahora un ensanchamiento del pasado. Incluso, si hay nuevos pasados y futuros, estos ya no corresponden con las expectativas de quienes habitaron los siglos XIX y parte del XX. Sus expresiones son visibles en los modernismos arquitectónicos y artísticos de principios del siglo XX, y en la dinámica de la moda, paradigma de la modernidad. En general, los presentes en clave futurista han acabado por adoptar las modalidades de lo atemporal o de la moda retro. Siguen alimentándose de las tradiciones incubadas en el pasado. Si bien es importante enfatizar lo siguiente: se trata fundamentalmente de tradiciones fabricadas durante el siglo de oro del cronotopo historicista. De ningún modo se relacionan con supuestas prácticas ancestrales, a no ser que se trate de lugares aún no tocados por la Historia y la civilización moderna occidental. En ese sentido, buena parte de la crítica postcolonial o crítica a un supuesto *eurocentrismo*, no deja de ser una bella ilusión que se desploma en el mismo momento en que busca situarse dentro de las mismas coordenadas de las utopías fabricadas por el occidente cristiano o poscristiano.

Por otro lado, esta crisis conlleva un segundo efecto en cuanto a las relaciones entre el espacio y el tiempo. Si en el modelo historicista la *historia contemporánea* era el espacio idóneo para la simultaneización o sincronización de eventos no simultáneos o asincrónicos, sin evitar una secuencialidad narrativa lineal y progresiva; en una situación como la actual, dominada por el *presentismo*, tiende a observarse una especie de retorno de la espacialidad a la historiografía en detrimento del tiempo historicista. Este retorno representa la condición de posibilidad para el trazo de otras estructuras narrativas dominadas por la transversalidad y la fragmentación.

En la medida en que la sucesión de los hechos tiende a acelerarse, a ritmo de ráfagas ininterrumpidas, en lapsos cada vez más acortados, en esa medida, el tiempo histórico acostumbrado tiende a desaparecer. Esta dinámica fue metafórica hecha tiempo por Marshall Berman bajo la fórmula de que en la modernidad *todo lo sólido* tiende a desvanecerse *en el aire*; o que el sociólogo recién fallecido,

36 Octavio Paz: *Tiempo nublado*. México: Seix Barral 1985.

Zygmunt Bauman, bautizó como de *modernidad líquida*. En ninguna parte se hace más visible esta dinámica de aceleración que en Silicon Valley, lugar de producción de nuevas tecnologías de comunicación que afectan se quiera o no a la población global. Dentro de la dinámica de la sociedad de consumo contemporánea, se trata de producir futuros que casi en el mismo momento que se realizan, se vuelven pasados.

Así, mientras Koselleck identificó todavía a la modernidad construida bajo la lógica temporal de *futuros pasados*, a esta nueva lógica de las relaciones espacio temporales se le podría denominar como hecha de *pasados futuros*. Lo cual, teniendo en cuenta la aceleración del tiempo, contiene un aspecto paradójico señalado por Gumbrecht: el de la sensación de estar inmersos en un tiempo de extrema lentitud o de pasados que nunca terminan de pasar.

Una de sus expresiones, aunque sea en su modalidad virtual, es el de la transversalidad o capacidad de entrecruzamiento de dos líneas en el tiempo observables cuando se cuenta con una perspectiva espacial; es decir, la idea de conectarse desde el espacio propio con otros espacios distantes, produciéndose un efecto de presentificación o de un tipo de *contacto* emocional particular. Sin embargo, esta forma de contacto comunicativo contiene la ambigüedad propia de las comunicaciones virtuales propias de los medios de comunicación de masas. Estas conexiones que, no por ser virtuales no son menos reales, no hacen sino profundizar la brecha entre las experiencias vitales y corporales de los individuos y sus experiencias virtuales o posibles; es decir, que no dependen de la ley de la gravedad impuesta por los lugares espaciales habitados. Esta situación – que escinde al individuo y la sociedad – ya había sido apreciada y reflexionada al momento de aparecer el cronotopo historicista desde la perspectiva del romanticismo.

Asimismo, los efectos de la transformación de la experiencia moderna del tiempo son visibles en la historiografía, en particular en cuanto al ordenamiento y exposición de lo que pasa en el tiempo mediante el arte de la narración, y además son visibles especialmente en el campo de la literatura, en donde sus linderos tradicionales han perdido vigencia. Una muestra reciente de ello, por ejemplo, la tenemos con la entrega del premio nobel de literatura a un cantautor. El primer sorprendido fue el mismo premiado, Bob Dylan. Un arte dirigido a la lectura fue otorgado esta vez a los amantes de la radio y de los discos, al arte del sonido. Todo un equívoco productor de nuevos sentidos, para perplejidad de puristas y fundamentalistas. En el campo de la creación literaria algunos de estos cambios fueron visibles durante el periodo de la crítica al clacismo modernista, si bien todavía se movían bajo los clichés de las utopías modernistas o vanguardias. Actualmente algunos de los últimos defensores del canon clásico literario, como Harold Bloom o Mario Vargas Llosa, califican a la nueva generación de escritores e historiadores como *posmodernistas*. Una noción que circula en ambos campos con una carga más bien peyorativa, y que en

nuestro caso habría que tomarla sólo como un síntoma de la reconfiguración de las relaciones entre dos formas distintas de narrar o de dar cuenta de la experiencia humana, la historiográfica y la literaria, derivadas del nuevo entramado de las relaciones de temporalidad.

Uno de sus efectos en la historiografía, lo constituye en especial la crisis de las narrativas lineales, universalistas y teleológicas, dominantes durante el periodo modernista, temprano o tardío. Surge también como reacción a su incapacidad de rescatar la experiencia *realmente sucedida* (tal como aspiraba la historia convertida en una ciencia del hombre), lo cual es un asunto, desde luego problemático, y que ha sido reflexionado crítica y ampliamente, entre otros, por H.G. Gadamer y Paul Ricoeur, y que tal vez no tenga una salida satisfactoria, pero que en las exploraciones recientes tiende a estar orientado por la reivindicación y el elogio del fragmento y lo aleatorio, como clave del nuevo modo de contar y escribir historias.

La nueva tendencia se podría justificar a partir del siguiente postulado tomado de la teoría de los sistemas sociales. Los individuos – hombres y mujeres – entendidos como unidades concretas, empíricas, viven y actúan al mismo tiempo, en simultaneidad; pero también lo hacen supeditados a horizontes temporales diferenciados, en la medida en que sus pasados y sus futuros no son coincidentes. Simultaneidad espacial y no simultaneidad temporal son las dos medidas por las que transcurre la historia. Si esto es así, entonces la identificación del orden social y su funcionamiento – objetivo de la ciencia histórica – debería ser comprendido y explicado no sólo en términos de una secuencia narrativa lineal (que simultaneiza lo no simultáneo), sino también en términos de una representación que admita la dimensión de lo simultáneo.³⁷ Como sabemos, el primer nivel sigue dominando hasta ahora en la representación histórica. Pero, la crisis del cronotopo historicista, ha abierto la posibilidad para el desarrollo de narrativas acordes con el segundo elemento de la ecuación historiográfica.

Considerando que la historiografía convencional ha privilegiado un tipo de narración lineal que se centra en el entramado de eventos no simultáneos en términos de relaciones causales, y que también se debería incluir la dimensión de la simultaneidad de todo evento transcurrido en un presente, entonces una buena representación del pasado debería abarcar la doble dimensión de lo simultáneo y lo no simultáneo a la vez. La crisis de la narración vista a la luz de la crisis del cronotopo historicista y su crítica significa así poner a la hermenéutica también en crisis, en la medida en que ésta ha servido de fundamento a las explicaciones

37 Niklas Luhmann: *Sistemas sociales. Lineamientos para una teoría general*, trad. Silvia Pappe y Brunhilde Erker bajo la coordinación de Javier Torres Nafarrate. México: Universidad Iberoamericana/Alianza 1984.

que proponen los historiadores por medio de narraciones basadas sobre todo en la no simultaneidad.

7 Para concluir

En relación con el concepto de Historia, Iberoamérica dependió en sus inicios de un sector del occidente europeo, así que se trata de la transformación de una práctica historiadora que, en principio, no es de cuño americano, y menos autóctona. Se trata en esencia de una invención histórica moderna surgida entre los siglos XVIII y XIX. Se trata de un concepto que migró a Iberoamérica y se asentó durante el periodo de la constitución de las naciones estados modernas.³⁸ En una segunda instancia, y gracias a la crisis del cronotopo historicista, se han creado las condiciones para observar su emergencia y apropiación en suelo americano como un concepto global, que puede ir de un lugar a otro, en completa simultaneidad. En ese sentido, la crisis del cronotopo historicista ha creado las bases para hacer comparables modos simultáneos a la vez que diferentes de inscribir el tiempo en la historia, en un juego de coincidencias y divergencias constantes. La emergencia de un nuevo cronotopo *presentista* es sólo el comienzo de nuevos cuestionamientos y desafíos para la historia en la que estamos inmersos y practicamos. Significa la entrada en una nueva complejidad que conviene ser examinada e iluminada.

En este lapso parecería, sin embargo, que existe un cierto consenso en torno a que Latinoamérica dejó de tener el peso *académico* a nivel global; y que ese hueco ha sido ocupado por un cierto tipo de utopías o ideologías modernistas y universalistas marcadas por el pasado; que llevan incluso a la consideración de que América es y sigue siendo el lugar de la redención de los pecados de Europa. Podemos pensar en la utopía franciscana del siglo XVI o dominica en la que aparecen figuras como Fray Bartolomé de las Casas o Vasco de Quiroga, con el fin de marcar la supuesta excepcionalidad u originalidad histórica de esa parte del hemisferio.

En ese sentido, en medio de la crisis se continúa en muchos aspectos con un tipo de recepción historiográfica relacionada con el proceso de colonización y civilización de la conquista del XVI cuando se asimilan y traducen las otras culturas en términos del mismo nicho civilizatorio de Occidente. Lo no familiar en lo propio o europeo. De forma similar a como hicieron los griegos en relación con los

38 Olivier Christin (dir.). *Dictionnaire des concepts nomades en sciences humaines*. París: Métailié 2010.

escitas de las riberas del mar negro cuando integraron discursivamente a los bárbaros en la Helade o *polis* ateniense.³⁹

Estas reacciones parecen suceder en un momento en el que por razones sistémicas o globales está teniendo lugar una crisis o reconfiguración de nuestros saberes, cuando se tiene que preguntar nuevamente y de manera más radical acerca de sus presupuestos y justificación, de sus límites y alcances, tanto sociológicos como cognitivos. Estas cuestiones afectarían por igual a las dos partes, en la medida en que invitan a reconfigurar el binomio tradicional centro-periferia. De tal modo que, a diferencia del lapso anterior en el que los centros de poder académico eran perfectamente identificables, actualmente es difícil seguir sosteniéndolo. Incluso, cuando podemos añadir que dicha relación centro-periferia, de colonizador-colonizado, tiende a reproducirse a nivel interno o local. Esta pérdida de centralidad y emergencia de un mundo policéntrico daría lugar, en efecto, al establecimiento de relaciones inter-académicas, inter-nacionales e intra-nacionales más fluidas y menos jerarquizadas.

En el pasado los principales centros académicos se significaban por ser los proveedores de las grandes teorías y claves interpretativas de los procesos sociales e históricos. Las nuevas condiciones, empero, de manera silenciosa, pero sobre todo a la luz de la crisis global, han trastocado las líneas de suministro, transmisión y ensamblaje del conocimiento incubadas durante la guerra fría, reflejadas en el peso dado todavía a las historias nacionales de corte universalista.

Expresión de este viraje se dio cuando las nuevas generaciones dejaron de formarse en el círculo tradicional de los mexicanistas, latinoamericanistas o hispanistas. Lo cual no implica su desaparición, pero sí la apertura a otra clase de relaciones académicas bajo el impacto de académicos y especialistas que no se significan por su pertenencia a un lugar particular (francés, alemán, colombiano, brasileño), sino por el tipo de cuestiones abiertas, de orden histórico y epistemológico.

Ser mexicanista o latinoamericanista, o perteneciente a una especialidad regional, dejó de ser la única la puerta de entrada para establecer vínculos académicos con especialistas de otras disciplinas o regiones; convocados más bien ahora por problemas relacionados con la *historia sin más*; como lugar o plataforma principal de encuentro, de flujos informativos y de crítica investigativa. Lo anterior no tuvo su origen en un cálculo prediseñado, sino fue el resultado de acontecimientos inesperados o no previstos del todo que vinieron a marcar un presente en marcha e incierto, vislumbrado como amenaza y como posibilidad.

En un intento final de atar la urdimbre de este texto diría que la cuestión de la teoría de la historia en un contexto posthistoricista presupone, al menos, dos

39 Neal Ascherson: *Black sea: The birthplace of civilization and barbarism*. Londres: Vintage 1995.

distinciones fundamentales. Primero, la que hay entre historia como acontecer e historiografía como una forma particular de dar cuenta de lo ocurrido; y segundo, la que existe entre historia y memoria. Ya que en medio se atraviesa la diferencia que hay entre el tiempo real, el de cada instante, el del ahora, y el tiempo historiográfico o narrativo, propio de los cronistas, analistas o historiadores.

A su vez, la teoría de la historia como una forma de reflexión de segundo grado a partir de la misma práctica historiadora, viene a sustituir a aquella práctica subsumida en la fórmula ambigua de *filosofía de la historia*; una forma, mediante la cual la historia delegaba a disciplinas afines los esfuerzos de justificación y fundamentación de su praxis como actividad científica o filosófica.

Esto significa que la historia se hace cargo de su propia praxis (un conjunto de operaciones y lenguajes) y se plantea el problema fundamental del tipo de representaciones sobre el pasado que realiza, ancladas siempre en un presente móvil, fugitivo, a la vez que situado. Así, desde la reflexión crítica, se deslinda de las filosofías historicistas teleológicas. Este gesto simple abre la compuerta para compartir un mismo piso, una misma agenda de problemas, con iniciativas provenientes de otras tradiciones, de otras lenguas. Por eso, al contraponer Europa y Latinoamérica habría que destacar su porosidad debido al abundante flujo migratorio de ideas y los modos peculiares de apropiación.

Pensadores como H. G. Gadamer pueden venir en nuestra ayuda con su propuesta de fundar una nueva hermenéutica ajustada a los desafíos que tenemos como humanidad; para traspasar el umbral de las viejas dicotomías de estar dentro y fuera, incluidas las dimensiones continentales, e incluso los contrastes entre los del norte y los del sur, los del este y los del oeste. La necesidad de tender puentes entre regiones era antes impensable, explicable solo si detenemos nuestro ojo ante el fenómeno de la globalización, sin reducirlo a una explicación meramente economicista. Ya que en juego está su impacto en la organización de nuestras disciplinas, pero sobre todo en la forma como se establecen las relaciones entre diferentes regiones y culturas, marcadas por el tema de la alteridad radical. Reconocer este punto de partida implica el fin de la historia universal al modo hegeliano, y la apertura a otros modos de relación allende la cuadrícula de los países centrales y periféricos, de los avanzados y los atrasados; de los elegidos y los *condenados de la tierra*.

Teórica e historiográficamente el eurocentrismo dejó de ser el problema principal desde hace tiempo. El problema actual más bien tiene que ver con todas las clases de etnocentrismos, indigenismos, autoctonismos, victimismos e ideologismos, que solo, como cortinas de humo, tienden a posponer los verdaderos problemas de la humanidad: el de la comprensión de la historia y sus contingencias.

Ottmar Ette

The Centrality of Latin America and TransArea Studies: Europe, Asia, and the East of the Old World

There are good reasons to posit the thesis that all the literatures of the world converge in Latin America. There is no other continent – not Europe, not Africa, not Asia or Oceania – where literary traditions from the most diverse cultural areas collide, concentrate, confront, and mutually stimulate each other in such an intensive way as in Latin America. Latin America is like a burning lens under which the cultures of the world certainly do not live together without conflict – especially when we think of the islands of the Caribbean, a relatively small space. In this sense, Latin America is a space of conviviality.¹

Undoubtedly connected to the long history of European colonialism, the region's literary and cultural relations were particularly intensified by the most diverse literatures of Europe. But over the course of the past decades, the relations of the literatures of Latin America, with its diverse indigenous cultures and its innumerable literary filiations from Asia, Africa, or Oceania, have increasingly become the focus of literary analyses. The *expresión americana*, to use a term coined by the Cuban poet José Lezama Lima,² who is open to all literatures, has multiplied and diversified, especially since the second half of the 20th century.

In the course of more than five centuries, the main research areas of scholarly (literary) interest were oriented towards the various colonial languages and, above all, towards the globalized idioms of Western Europe. For in the various phases of accelerated globalization³ – which were closely connected to the colonial spread of Spanish and Portuguese, but also of Latin in the first phase and with the globalization of French and English later on – the literatures of Western Europe were illuminated the glow of particularly active and intensive literary relations, so that the references to other literatures of Europe and especially Eastern Europe remained in the shadows of this interest. The initiative of this edition

1 See on this concept Ottmar Ette: *ZusammenLebensWissen. List, Last und Lust literarischer Konvivenz im globalen Maßstab (ÜberLebenswissen III)*. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos 2010; also Ottmar Ette: *Konvivenz. Literatur und Leben nach dem Paradies*. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos 2012.

2 See the volume of essays by José Lezama Lima: *La expresión americana*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial 1969.

3 See the model of the four different phases of accelerated globalization in Ottmar Ette: *TransArea. A Literary History of Globalization*. Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2012.

to examine the manifold relations between the literatures of Latin America and those of Eastern Europe to shed light on those supposed *shadow areas* mentioned above is therefore a very welcome pursuit.

To give adequate weight to the relations between Latin America and Eastern Europe, it is of course necessary to integrate them into a panorama of the literatures of the world that is as comprehensive as possible. The following reflections are dedicated to this task. A specific look at the history of Eastern European and Latin American relations can be found at the end of this opening contribution. Before continuing, however, we must understand that the literatures of the world today have long ceased to be oriented around the ideas, assessments, and conceptualizations that Goethe gave the neologism “world literature” almost two hundred years ago. For a literary system oriented around a single center can no longer be recognized in the multiform and multilogical literatures of the world: It has long failed to do justice to the highly complex literary relations that have since emerged. We therefore urgently need a different understanding of the literatures of the world based on concepts of movement that place all references under the sign of an all-encompassing mobility.

Let us first note: the literatures of the world are polylogical. The very concept of literatures of the world aims at the fact that forms of production, reception and distribution of literature on a planetary scale do not draw from a single *source*, are not reducible to a single tradition – such as the occidental – but refer back to the most diverse range of cultural areas, time periods, and linguistic regions. Against this background, the concept of the literatures of the world – in contrast to Goethe’s concept of world literature – does not aim at an understanding that is dialogical at best, mediating between Occident and Orient, between West and non-West, but at a polylogical comprehension and experience of a knowledge that can never be reduced to a single logic.

From today’s perspective, world literature, with which Goethe so vehemently and persistently opposed the concept of National Literature, can be described as an epoch that has long passed its historical peak and is now characterized by new horizons (of writing, reading, and theory) both in terms of its *historical becoming* (historisch Gewordensein) and in its *becoming history* (Historisch-Gewordensein), which can no longer be aligned to a single point of view, to a single meridian of a single literature that spans the world. *TransArea Studies*, which operate between different cultural areas, are no longer based on spatial history, but on the *history of movement*. They are committed to the poetics of movement. In this context, Transarea Studies, which are as much oriented towards cultural studies as they are towards Literary Studies, are not only concerned with representing global reality as accurately as possible, but at the same time (and perhaps far more so) with capturing and presenting *lived*, but also *livable* realities on a global scale as

polylogically and polyphonically as possible. Both within and outside of the dimensions of comparison, transfer, and interconnection,⁴ a transareal constellation of knowledge and science is concerned with a poetics of movement capable of grasping fundamentally complex⁵ processes in their diverse and contradictory life contexts in an equally transdisciplinary and multi-perspectival manner.⁶ Consequently, it is about a reorientation of methods of analysis in literary studies, which must be aligned with the poetics of movement.

When a transareal perspective is applied, relationships do not give rise to an *other* that can be clearly separated from one's own self, because they are not committed to any logic of alterization or gesture of discrimination between supposed centers and supposed peripheries. They are particularly interested in South-South relations, which are often of a transtropical nature, but at the same time they try to reflect on the ties back to *the* North, which can be grasped in the history of movement. Thus, we can sketch a multi-perspective history of globalization, which also includes North-North relations. In doing so, it is also important for *TransArea* Studies to include relations of Latin American literatures to cultural areas which were not prominently involved in the phases of accelerated globalization.

For a number of years now, there has been a multitude of studies that examine not only Arab-American, but to no lesser extent American-African, American-European, or American-Asian relations, whose mobile webs transareally configure both the hemispheric space of the Americas and individual nations or nation-states.⁷ In the future, it will be essential to make such *TransArea* Studies fruitful for a new, transareally interconnected panorama of the literatures of Latin America as well as

4 See Michael Werner/Bénédicte Zimmermann: Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. The Approach of the "Histoire croisée" and the Challenge of the Transnational. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (Göttingen) 28 (2002), p. 607–636.

5 On the concept of the fundamental-complex system, see Friedrich Cramer: *Chaos und Ordnung*. Die komplexe Struktur des Lebendigen. Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig: Insel Verlag 1996, p. 223.

6 See Ottmar Ette in his article *Zukünfte der Romanistik im Lichte der TransArea Studien* (The Future of Romance Studies in the Light of TransArea Studies) on the significance of such an epistemological reorientation, not only in terms of subject history, but also on the specific relationality of the cultures and literatures of Romania. In: Dieter Lamping (ed.): *Geisteswissenschaft heute. Die Sicht der Fächer*. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag 2015, p. 93–116.

7 See among others Marianne Braig/Ottmar Ette/Dieter Ingenschay/Günther Maihold (eds.): *Grenzen der Macht – Macht der Grenzen. Lateinamerika im globalen Kontext*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert 2005; Peter Birle/ Marianne Braig/ Ottmar Ette/Dieter Ingenschay (eds.): *Hemisphärische Konstruktionen der Amerikas*. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert 2006; Ottmar Ette/Friederike Pannewick (eds.): *ArabAmericas. Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab*

the literatures of the world, to simultaneously elaborate the centrality of Latin American literatures.

Especially in such a strongly vectorized area of transcultural overlap as Latin America, Transarea Philology can perform pioneering work that will contribute to critically questioning and, where necessary, disposing of the national literary, in part racist legacies of the national philologies founded in the 19th century.⁸ TransArea Studies draws on the knowledge stored in the literatures of the world, among other sources. This knowledge can very well serve as a corrective to disciplinarily limited patterns of perception and raise awareness of issues to be worked out transdisciplinarily. If literature is, as Roland Barthes observed, “*toujours en avance sur tout*,”⁹ i.e. always ahead of everything – including the sciences – is it not therefore a treasure trove of experiences and insights that have yet to be discovered and illuminated scientifically?

The following considerations aim to focus on the transareal interconnections of the literatures of the colonial world of America as well as the emerging Latin America and to think about Latin America between Africa, Europe, Asia, and Oce-

World. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2006; Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger/ Tiago de Oliveira Pinto (eds.): *AfricAmericas. Itineraries, Dialogues, and Sounds*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2008; Ottmar Ette (ed.): *Caribbean(s) on the Move – Archipiélagos literarios del Caribe. A TransArea Symposium*. Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford: Peter Lang Verlag 2008; Ottmar Ette/ Dieter Ingenschay/Günther Maihold (eds.): *EuropAmerikas. Transatlantic Relations*. Frankfurt am Main, Madrid: Vervuert Iberoamericana 2008; Ottmar Ette/ Horst Nitschack (eds.): *Trans*Chile. Cultura – Historia – Itinerarios – Literatura – Educación. Un acercamiento transareal*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2010; Ottmar Ette/Gesine Müller (eds.): *Caleidoscopios coloniales. Transferencias culturales en el Caribe del siglo XIX. Kaléidoscopes coloniaux. Transferts culturels dans les Caraïbes au XIX^e siècle*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2010; Ottmar Ette/Werner Mackenbach/ Gesine Müller/ Alexandra Ortiz Wallner (eds.): *Trans(it)Areas. Convivencias en Centroamérica y el Caribe. Un simposio transareal*. Berlin: edition tranvía Verlag Walter Frey 2011; Ottmar Ette/Gesine Müller (eds.): *Worldwide. Archipels de la mondialisation. Archipiélagos de la globalización. A TransArea Symposium*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2012; Ottmar Ette/ Werner Mackenbach/ Horst Nitschack (eds.): *TransPacífico. Conexiones y convivencias en AsiaAméricas. Un simposio transareal*. Berlin: Walter Frey/tranvía 2013; and Ottmar Ette/ Gesine Müller (eds.): *Paisajes vitales. Conflictos, catástrofes y convivencias en Centroamérica y el Caribe. Un simposio transareal*. Berlin: Walter Frey/tranvía 2014; Ottmar Ette/Gesine Müller (eds.): *Paisajes sumergidos Paisajes invisibles. Formas y normas de convivencia en las literaturas y culturas del Caribe. Un simposio transareal*. Berlin: Walter Frey/tranvía 2015.

⁸ See Markus Messling/Ottmar Ette (eds.): *Wort – Macht – Stamm. Rassismus und Determinismus in der Philologie (18./19. Jahrhundert)*. München: Wilhelm Fink 2013.

⁹ Roland Barthes: *Comment vivre ensemble. Simulations romanesques de quelques espaces quotidiens*. Notes de cours et de séminaires au Collège de France, 1976–1977. Texte établi, annoté et présenté par Claude Coste. Paris: Seuil IMEC 2002, p. 167.

ania, but also with a view to Eastern Europe, in order for a new understanding of transareal relations to develop through foundational scholarly research. These case studies attempt to show dimensions of the relations addressed above.

I

Most visitors to the *Mezquita Catedral* of Córdoba pass by the *Capilla de las Animas del Purgatorio* carelessly. Part of a mighty Christian cathedral built within one of the most magnificent mosques of the Islamic world in a show of force and self-assured violence full of victorious pride, the chapel was acquired by a certain Don Gómez Suárez de Figueroa in 1613.¹⁰ When the Spanish nobleman, who was born in the Andes of South America, died in 1616, he was buried in this chapel according to his wishes. An inscription still points us to this man and the name under which he enjoys great fame to this day:

El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, varón insigne, digno de perpetua memoria. Ilustre en sangre. Perito en letras. Valiente en armas. Hijo de Garcilaso de la Vega. De las Casas de los duques de Feria e Infantado y de Elisabeth Palla, hermana de Huayna Capac, último emperador de las Indias. Comentó La Florida. Tradujo a León Hebreo y compuso los Comentarios Reales. Vivió en Córdoba con mucha religión. Murió ejemplar. Dotó esta capilla. Enterróse en ella. Vinculó sus bienes al sufragio de las Animas del Purgatorio. [Son Patronos perpetuos los señores Deán y Cabildo de esta Santa Iglesia. Falleció a 22 de abril de 1616. Rueguen a Dios por su ánima.]¹¹

The nobleman who is buried here and who had the ornate lattice at the entrance to his chapel decorated with the insignia of his Inca ancestors is thus none other than the author of those great literary works discussed here. His additional inter- and transcultural translation work¹² is most famously preserved in his translation of the *Dialoghi* of the poet and physician Leone Ebreo or Leo Hebraeus alias Je-

10 Here I draw (in an abbreviated form) on the subchapter “Interior Views from Outside” of my book *Viellologische Philologie. Die Literaturen der Welt und das Beispiel einer transarealen peruanischen Literatur*. Berlin: Walter Frey/ tranvía 2013.

11 Cited in Remedios Mataix: Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: apunte biográfico. In: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/bib_autor/incagarcilaso/pcuartonivel.jsp?conten=autor>.

12 See Mercedes López-Baralt: *El Inca Garcilaso: traductor de culturas*. Madrid, Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2011; Susana Jakfalvi-Leiva: *Traducción, escritura y violencia colonizadora: un estudio de la obra del Inca Garcilaso*. Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs 1984; Margarita Zamora: *Languages, authority, and indigenous history in the Comentarios reales de los Incas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988.

huda ben Isaak Abravanel. Thus, in a crowded space at the tomb of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, we find the presence of Inca, Islamic, Christian, and Jewish traces, references to Peru and Florida, Italy and Spain, to the last Inca ruler and to souls in purgatory, to the representatives of the Catholic Church and of secular power, to the insignia of the sword and the pen. A truly indefatigable pen, which always – for the last time in the text carved here in stone – sought to measure out the complex vectors of a life that, like no other, was lived thinking and interrelating the old and new worlds in all the different strands of their traditions.

The biographies proudly listed in this inscription at the entrance to the *Capilla de las Animas* resolutely opposes any attempt to reduce the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega to a single cultural origin by including a genealogical reference to the author's Spanish father, the conquistador Sebastián Garcilaso de la Vega, and to his Inca mother, the *ñusta* or princess Isabel Chimpú Ocllo, niece of the Inca Túpac Yupanqui and granddaughter of the Inca Huayna Cápac. In the context of thought proposed here, it should be less about the designation of the man born in 1539 in Cuzco as “primer mestizo de personalidad y ascendencia universales que parió América”,¹³ which has long since become canonical, than about the fact that even in his final resting place, the vectors of his life are stretched out within a field of forces between religions, empires, cultures and languages¹⁴ in a constantly renewed movement.¹⁵

Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca, who spent the first two decades of his life in his native city of Cuzco and, after the death of his father in 1560, a total of fifty-six years in Montilla in Andalusia and in Córdoba, presented this field of forces in the *Proemio al lector* with which he prefaced his famous and extremely influential¹⁶ *Comentarios reales*. Here, his pride in his dual descent is as evident as his astute assessment of the balance of power and forces in which criticism of Span-

13 Luis Alberto Sánchez: La literatura en el Virreynato. In (ed.): *Historia del Perú*. Vol. VI: *Perú colonial*. Lima: Editorial Mejía Baca 1980, p. 353.

14 See Sabine Fritz: Reclamar el derecho a hablar. El poder de la traducción en las crónicas de Guamán Poma de Ayala y del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. In: Feierstein, Liliana Ruth/ Gerling, Vera Elisabeth (eds.): *Traducción y poder. Sobre marginados, infieles, hermeneutas y exiliados*. Frankfurt am Main, Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2008, p. 101–120.

15 See Bernard Lavalle: El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. In: Luis Iñigo Madrigal (ed.): *Historia de la Literatura Hispanoamericana*. Vol. I: *Epoca colonial*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra 1982, p. 135–143; and Sylvia L Hilton: Introducción. In: Garcilaso de la Vega: *La Florida del Inca*. Madrid: Historia 16 1996, p. 7–52.

16 See Alejandro González Acosta: Dos visiones de la integración americana: “Comentarios reales” del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega y “Crónica mexicana” de Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc. In: *América Latina. Historia y destino. Homenaje a Leopoldo Zea*. Vol. III. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México 1993, p. 49–62; or Amalia Iniesta Cámara: Inca Garcilaso de la Vega y

ish historians could not be overstated. His argumentation is therefore one of caution and perseverance at the same time:

Aunque ha habido españoles curiosos que han escrito las repúblicas del Nuevo Mundo, como la de México y la del Perú, y la de otros reinos de aquella gentilidad, no ha sido con la relación entera que de ellos se pudiera dar, que lo he notado particularmente en las cosas que del Perú he visto escritas, de las cuales, como natural de la ciudad del Cozco, que fue otra Roma en aquel imperio, tengo más larga y clara noticia que la que hasta ahora los escritores han dado. Verdad es que tocan muchas cosas de las muy grandes que aquella república tuvo: pero escribenlas tan cortamente, que aun las muy notorias para mí (de la manera que las dicen) las entiendo mal. Por lo cual, forzado del amor natural de patria, me ofrecí al trabajo de escribir estos *Comentarios*, donde clara y distintamente se verán las cosas que en aquella república había antes de los españoles, así en los ritos de su vana religión, como en el gobierno que en paz y en guerra sus reyes tuvieron, y todo lo demás que de aquellos indios se puede decir, desde lo más ínfimo del ejercicio de los vasallos, hasta lo más alto de la corona real. Escribimos solamente del imperio de los Incas, sin entrar en otras monarquías, porque no tengo la noticia de ellas que de ésta. En el discurso de la historia protestamos la verdad de ella, y que no diremos cosa grande, que no sea autorizándola con los mismos historiadores españoles que la tocaron en parte o en todo: que mi intención no es contradecirles, sino servirles de comento y glosa, y de intérprete en muchos vocablos indios que como extranjeros en aquella lengua interpretaron fuera de la propiedad de ella, según que largamente se verá en el discurso de la Historia, la cual ofrezco a la piedad del que la leyere, no con pretensión de otro interés más que de servir a la república cristiana, para que se den gracias a Nuestro Señor Jesucristo y a la Virgen María su Madre, por cuyos méritos e intercesión se dignó la Eterna Majestad de sacar del abismo de la idolatría tantas y tan grandes naciones, y reducirlas al gremio de su Iglesia católica romana, Madre y Señora nuestra. Espero que se recibirá con la misma intención que yo le ofrezco, porque es la correspondencia que mi voluntad merece, aunque la obra no la merezca. Otros dos libros se quedan escribiendo de los sucesos que entre los españoles en aquella mi tierra pasaron, hasta el año de 1560 que yo salí de ella: deseamos verlos ya acabados, para hacer de ellos la misma ofrenda que de éstos. Nuestro Señor, etc.¹⁷

The *Proemio* has been quoted here in its entirety because in these lines, a mobile, constantly changing position of the ego and its relationship to the objects depicted is unfolded in the most condensed form. This is a complexity that could not be adequately rendered by any history of transfer or *histoire croisée*. These lines again point to the central thesis of the present work. For the numerous biographies of this *first-person* figure interspersed throughout the text make it possible

José Carlos Mariátegui: dos fundadores de la peruanidad. In: *Revista del Centro de Letras Hispanoamericanas* (Mar del Plata) V, 6–8 (1996), p. 149–160; Edgar Montiel, El Inca Garcilaso y la independencia de las Américas. In: *Cuadernos Americanos* (México) 131 (2010), p. 113–132.

17 Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca: *Comentarios reales de los Incas*. 2 vols. Prólogo, edición y cronología Aurelio Miró Quesada. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho 1985, here vol. 1, p. 5.

to trace not only a life path leading from America to Europe, but far more the oscillations that cause and enable a multi-perspective presentation of the objects.

In doing so, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega succeeds, by constantly maintaining the connection between writing and life, in re-presenting the history he has drafted from the perspective of an experienced and lived history in such a way that the first-person character's own knowledge of life enters an intimate relationship with abstract forms of knowledge and representation that are thus *subtracted* from a direct, empirical knowledge of the objects. Consequently, it is about much more than the transareal life course of an outstanding author crossing the most diverse cultural areas, the most diverse cultures, and languages. The *Comentarios reales*, of course, cannot be detached or abstracted from the trans-cultural life knowledge of this staged self.

At the same time, however, this knowledge of life is also a knowledge of survival, since the staged author knows himself to be in a power structure in Spain that has opened its gates to him as an offspring of noble Spanish origin, but which at the same time threatens him with a unilateral worldview and an inquisitorial orthodoxy, the monolingualism of which is very much blended into the discursivity of the book's preface. The basis of this knowledge of survival is the unrestricted inscription of the ego in a salvific-historical context, insofar as the sole beatifying religion of the Roman Catholic Church is said to have saved so many great nations and their citizens, and thus also the ego itself, from the abyss of superstition and idolatry.¹⁸

The unrestricted commitment to this Christian history of salvation, which was also reflected in the purchase of the *Capilla de las Animas* in the mosque of Córdoba that was converted into a Christian cathedral, at the same time also enables a multiplicity of movements, which between Spain and *aquella mi tierra*, between *los españoles* and the indigenous population of Peru, does not manifest itself in a fixed intermediate position, but is expressed in constant figures of movement. It is no coincidence that the name of the *Capilla de las Animas* already refers to souls in purgatory and thus to Purgatory itself, that Christian space of movement situated *between* the fixed points of heaven and hell. The oscillation between the world of Spain, in which the narrator's self has been moving for many decades and in which the explicitly addressed readership of the text is also situated, and the *New World*, which Peru appears as a part of, makes it possible to speak of an *amor natural de patria*, a love of the fatherland, in which the object

¹⁸ See David A. Brading: The Incas and the Renaissance: The Royal Commentaries of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. In: *Journal of Latin American Studies* (Cambridge) XVIII, 1 (1986), p. 1–23; Sabine MacCormack: *Religion in the Andes: vision and imagination in early colonial Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991, p. 332–382.

of this love is grasped from different perspectives at the same time: After all, in terms of the history of movement, this concept can be applied just as much to the viceroyalty of Peru as to the prehispanic empire of the Incas, but at the same time also to Spain, the land of Garcilaso de la Vega's father which created a transatlantic empire through the conquest of the Inca Tawantinsuyo.

This multi-logical and transareal understanding of one's own history as well as one's own stories is also evident in the designation of one's own birthplace, "la ciudad del Cozco, que fue otra Roma en aquel imperio," which puts prehispanic Cuzco on par with the "eternal city" of Rome.¹⁹ The procedure of a literal blending of the two cities not only refers to their respective religious significance, but also establishes the relationship between the Incan empire and Roman antiquity, consequently equalizing old world and new world antiquity. The claim to historical dignity associated with this gesture creates a movement of constant oscillation across comparison and transfer in which one's own origins appear in their otherness under the double light of ancient and contemporary Rome, without becoming the Other. Cuzco, as an urban space, does not become a space of one's own *or* of the other, but a *space of movement* of one's own as other and at the same time of the other as one's own, whereby the lexeme *otra* can never be stopped in its movement. It stands neither for a fixed identity nor for a fixed alterity.

II

Our second case study takes us out of the colonial period and into that exciting era which can be understood as transitional period towards an independent Latin America. With his novel *El Periquillo Sarniento*,²⁰ first published in 1816 in a censored and therefore still incomplete format, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi presented a narrative text known for being the first novel written in Latin America by a Latin American. While this founding text of the Hispano-American novel has always been called "la novela de la independencia mexicana"²¹ in Hispano-America, as its creation coincided with the formation of the Mexican nation,

¹⁹ See Sabine MacCormack: The Inca and Rome. In: José Anadón (ed.): *Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: An American Humanist. A Tribute to José Durand*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame 1998, p. 8–31; and: *On the wings of time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007.

²⁰ José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi: *El Periquillo Sarniento*. Prólogo de Jefferson Rea Spell. México: Editorial Porrúa²⁰ 1992.

²¹ For example, Noël Salomon: La crítica del sistema colonial de la Nueva España en "El Periquillo Sarniento". In: *Cuadernos Americanos* (México) XXI, 138 (1965), p. 179. See also Luis Iñigo

we should focus our attention primarily on the fact that this literary-historical text is the first novel written by a Latin American in Latin America. This text, which in literary-historical terms is written in the tradition of the Spanish picaresque novel, is a literary form re-semanticized within new cultural, social, and political contexts, and its transatlantic foundation between Europe and America has been in the spotlight from the beginning. This by no means implies that this great novel was limited solely to European-American relationship webs.

Nevertheless, the *novela picaresca* format is a highly creative choice, especially regarding the relations between Spain and New Spain, and between Europe and America. Indeed, *El Periquillo Sarniento* opens up in a special way to the question of the transareality of the American literatures of the world that is addressed here. For it was in full awareness of the Berlin debate on the New World that had flared up decades earlier²² and in which none other than the great representatives of the Neo-Spanish Enlightenment such as Francisco Javier Clavijero or Fray Servando Teresa de Mier y Guerra had vehemently intervened and sided against Cornelius de Pauw, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal and other European philosophers that José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's picaresque unfolded a transareal model of movement to realize the movement-historical concision of his own Enlightenment writing.

From this perspective, it would undoubtedly be revealing to relate the proliferation of paratextual elements (such as various prefaces, dedications, reader's notes, titling, interpolated texts, etc.) in Lizardi's novel to that in Clavijero's *Historia antigua de México* and to highlight the importance of the New Spanish Enlightenment to this novel. While the paratextual elaboration in *El Periquillo Sarniento* may be much more artful, one can observe in both texts the author's at times almost obsessively recurring attempt to situate himself within certain European discursive traditions and at the same time to intervene transatlantically in the American-European dispute. Lizardi was writing at a time of radical asymme-

Madrigal: José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi. In: Luis Iñigo Madrigal (ed.): *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*. Vol. 2: *Del neoclasicismo al modernismo*. Madrid: Cátedra 1987, p. 143, where the "primera novela propiamente hispanoamericana" is mentioned.

²² See Ottmar Ette: Von Rousseau und Diderot zu Pernety und de Pauw: Die Berliner Debatte um die Neue Welt. In: Hans-Otto Dill (ed.): *Jean-Jacques Rousseau zwischen Aufklärung und Moderne*. Akten der Rousseau-Konferenz der Leibniz-Sozietät der Wissenschaften zu Berlin am 13. Dezember 2012 anlässlich seines 300. Geburtstag am 28. Juni 2012 im Rathaus Berlin-Mitte. Berlin: Leibniz-Sozietät der Wissenschaften (= *Sitzungsberichte der Leibniz-Sozietät der Wissenschaften* 117) 2013, p. 111–130.

try²³ in literary relations between the old and new worlds, and he was acutely aware of this fact of highly unequal relations in transatlantic exchange. And yet – or perhaps because of it – he succeeded in arguably becoming the first writer in American literary history to make a living from his writing.

At this point, however, I would like to direct our attention to another question connected to the first emergence of a utopian concept in the literatures of Latin America that sheds light on transpacific relations, which should be pointed out with regards to the colonial period already. For the staging of utopian forms of writing occurs after the protagonist, Periquillo Sarniento, has spent a long time in the Philippines and chooses to return with the Spanish galleon from Manila to Acapulco. During this crossing, which is historically never without danger, there is a shipwreck in which Periquillo, as the sole survivor, is washed up by divine decree (*divina providencia*) on the beach of an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.²⁴ The morning after the shipwreck, the sun rises beautifully, and he hears human voices. Helpful people provide him with food; and an interpreter is soon found who assures him that he has been very lucky not to have been displaced to the nearby (and real) Ladrone Islands, where he would surely have been enslaved immediately. Periquillo quickly learns the local language;²⁵ but when he is asked about his profession, i.e. how he supports himself, the *Pícaro* falsely states that he is a nobleman and therefore does not have to work. This is the beginning of the socio-critical examination of feudalistic neo-Spanish society from the perspective of this island in the middle of the Pacific.

Periquillo's interlocutor, a "Chinese and Asian,"²⁶ quickly makes it clear to him that no-good nobles are not tolerated on the island, as they would only harm the community. Everything on the island, on the other hand, is oriented around the law of usefulness to society. The Chinese islander takes on the role of a common-sense scholar who easily sees through Periquillo's lies.²⁷ On the island, everything is subordinated to the common good, everyone wears the signs of his profession and his status, so that one can always recognize with whom one is speaking: everything on this island is rationally constituted, and all parts of society are transparent for the state.

23 See Ottmar Ette: Asymmetrie der Beziehungen. Zehn Thesen zum Dialog der Literaturen Lateinamerikas und Europas. In: Birgit Scharlau (ed.): *Lateinamerika denken. Kulturtheoretische Grenzgänge zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag 1994, p. 297–326.

24 José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi: *El Periquillo Sarniento*, p. 358.

25 Ibid., p. 360.

26 Ibid., p. 361.

27 Ibid., p. 368.

The punishments on the island are draconian,²⁸ but this harshness is justified in detail. Theft, for example, is punished by cutting off the thief's hand.²⁹ The island unfolds a counter-image to New Spanish society, and the Chinese man appears as the representative of a much more just community, which is, of course, implicitly oriented towards Western values. These are projected – as in Thomas More – onto the foreign, in this case *Chinese* society, which is captured on the island as in a world fractal.³⁰ Transpacific relations take the place of transatlantic relations.

Finally, the Chinese man accompanies Periquillo Sarniento on his way home to New Spain and continues his relentless criticism of the society there. But let us leave him at this point and note that a clearly structured, hierarchical, and transparent *Chinese* society, oriented around the common good at all levels and representing ideas of the European as well as the colonial Spanish Enlightenment, advances to become a distant utopian mirror of the society of New Spain, which is deeply marred by injustice. The Chinese man's island, on the other hand, appears as just, transparent in its social order, merciless in its punishments, but at the same time oriented toward the collective good of its inhabitants.

Regardless of whether we understand the late 18th century in Europe as the golden age of utopias or as the crisis period of literary utopias, it is striking that the Mexican writer oriented himself only towards a spatial, but not a temporal projection and its literary filiation, and in doing so, inserted all those elements that range from shipwreck and island situation to static city and social order to strictly regulated forms of work and rigorous forms of punishment, maintaining a strong conformity with the genre. He thus placed his own utopian design in a close intertextual and architextual relationship to the canonical model of Thomas More.

This in no way implies that Fernández de Lizardi's text is a literary "imitation" of the genre's founding utopian text or plagiarizes it. On the one hand, Periquillo's stay on the island of Sancheofú – a clear and direct allusion to Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Sancho's Island – is, according to current knowledge, the first literary utopia within Latin American literary history and therefore per se an epoch-making innovation that cannot be emphasized strongly enough as a literary achievement on the part of the author. On the other hand, the projection of utopia from Hispano-America to the West, i.e. to the *Far East*, also represents a fundamental innovation, indeed a break with the European tradition, insofar as America no longer provided European authors with a blank canvas for

²⁸ Ibid., p. 375.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 378 f.

³⁰ See Ottmar Ette: *WeltFraktale. Wege durch die Literaturen der Welt*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag 2017.

their own projections.³¹ Asia and the Pacific region also moved into the focus of the prospective Latin Americans, even if they could not yet be referred to as such, since this designation only emerged as part of Panlatinism, which developed under French hegemony from the mid-nineteenth century onward.

Fernández de Lizardi's decision in favor of the specifically utopian and thus against the still young uchronic tradition, which had a high revolutionary potency both in literary history and regarding the historicization of political-social counter-designs, must not be misinterpreted from today's perspective as ideologically regressive just because it was presumably oriented around a static image of history. It certainly cannot be denied that a static vision of history, as can often be observed within the literary-philosophical tradition that followed the *Utopia* of 1516, is also present in the *Utopia* chapter of *Periquillo Sarniento*. However, we must not interpret this aesthetically convincing solution as a sign of any kind of backward-looking ideological orientation on the part of the New Spanish-Mexican author; rather, we must understand the cognitive potentials that a utopia, paradoxically related to a transareal space of movement, held within Fernández de Lizardi's social project. China was now held up as a utopian counter-image on the horizon of the emerging Latin American literature of the early 19th century.

III

Our third case study comes from the end of this turbulent 19th century in Latin America and is in a sense extraterritorial. At this point I could have chosen the Cuban national hero José Martí, whose complex multi-relatedness within Latin American and global historical references I have addressed in detail elsewhere.³² But the sample text briefly analyzed below illuminates the same historical situation of the declining Spanish colonial empire from a different perspective.

Let us therefore return once again to the Philippines, where *Periquillo Sarniento* had taken us. At the end of the 19th century, the Spanish colonial empire still existed in this archipelago, but it was caught up in the worldwide developments we can understand as the third phase of accelerated globalization. At the same time, we turn to a writer of whom it can be said without exaggeration that

³¹ See Horacio Cerutti Guldberg: *Utopía y América latina*. In: Horacio Cerutti Guldberg: *Presagio y tópica del descubrimiento*. México: CCYDEL 1991, p. 21–33. It is surprising that in this work, which was presented in Mexico, the Fernández de Lizardi's utopian vision is not mentioned.

³² See Ottmar Ette: *José Martí. Part II: Denker der Globalisierung*. Berlin, Boston: Verlag Walter de Gruyter (Series *mimesis*, Vol. 100) 2023.

in his writing, Spanish reached its zenith as a literary language in the Philippines and at the same time became extinct. So let us consider a well-traveled author named José Rizal and a novel that is one of the outstanding creations of a national literature which subsequently abandoned the Spanish language in the 20th century and adopted English instead – along with Tagalog, of course.

With the collapse of Spain's continental colonial empire in the Americas, many of the centuries-old threads in the global weave of the former Iberian world power were severed, particularly regarding relations between the Philippines and Mexico. For centuries, the Spanish galleon that connected Manila with the New Spanish port of Acapulco provided an extremely important link in the cultural exchange between the Americas and the Asian world: the Philippines were, so to speak, an Asian outpost of Spain's American colonies. Far beyond the spread of Namban art from Japan and the global dissemination of Asian screens, which took on an artistic quality of their own in the Spanish Americas,³³ this transpacific connection through the Philippines we briefly learned about in *Periquillo Sarniento* was of inestimable importance to global trade relations in the Spanish Empire. All of these trade and cultural relations came to an end with the decline of Spain and the rise of the United States as a neocolonial hegemonic power.

The life and work of José Protacio Mercado Rizal y Alonso Realonda, who was born on June 19, 1861 in Calamba on Luzón in the Spanish Philippines and executed by Spanish soldiers on December 30, 1896 as a pioneer of the revolution, may serve as evidence of the impressive literary and cultural wealth of these transpacific relations. The Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea,³⁴ for example, was right to associate him with José Martí, born in Havana in 1853, whose eventful life and wide-ranging work was certainly no less restless and multifaceted than that of the author of *Filipinas dentro de cien años*. Both became great national heroes of their respective archipelagos. José Martí was killed in 1895 in the war he started against Spanish troops, who also executed José Rizal, one of the leaders of the Philippine insurgency. These murders and these wars, of course, did not prevent the downfall of the Spanish colonial power. José Rizal spent time in Spain, France and the USA, but also in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, in Hong Kong, Japan, England and Belgium, before he unsuccessfully applied to be allowed to accompany the Spanish troops transferred to Cuba as a doctor in 1895. This re-

33 See Ottmar Ette: Magic Screens. Biombos, Namban Art, the Art of Globalization and Education between China, Japan, India, Spanish America and Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries. In: *European Review* (Cambridge) XXIV, 2 (May 2016), p. 285–296.

34 See Leopoldo Zea: Prólogo. In: José Rizal: *Noli me tangere*. Estudio y Cronología Margara Rusotto. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho 1976, p. ix–xxx.

quest was denied. Like Martí, Rizal fought against the Spanish colonial power and embodied the transareal dimension of an anti-colonial struggle that was at the same time a struggle against the emerging imperialism of the rapidly expanding United States, the power that – thanks to its superior *New Steel Navy* fleet – would annex both island worlds as spoils of war in different ways a few years after the deaths of the two authors.

Under the Spanish colonial authorities, Rizal's genealogy was viewed under racist auspices, and therefore problematic. Born into a wealthy family as the seventh of eleven children, Rizal was officially considered a Chinese mestizo, since he was a fifth-generation descendant of a Chinese merchant who had immigrated from Fujian Province and his mother was a Spanish-Filipino mestizo. His criticism of the Spanish colonial power, his launch of a Masonic lodge, his political proposals aimed at radical reforms, and above all his book publications critical of colonialism brought him into open conflict with the Spanish colonial power.

Certainly, José Rizal's most famous work to date is his novel *Noli me tangere*, published in Spanish in Berlin in 1887. It is remarkable that Martí's only novel, *Amistad funesta*, also first appeared as a book in Berlin (albeit posthumously in 1911, in the tenth volume of the *Obras Completas*). But this coincidence draws attention less to similarities between the two authors than to how problematic Spanish-language publishing structures were in the remaining colonies at the time.

It is no coincidence that José Rizal, who also knew how to read and express himself in German, French, English and Latin, had learned a highly imperfect Spanish in his childhood in addition to his mother tongue, Tagalog, which forced him to constantly hone his expressive abilities against a multilingual background, unlike an author who had learned Spanish as his mother tongue. Blending different languages into one another, the translingual work makes the Filipino author a writer without a fixed abode whose entire oeuvre can only be adequately grasped from a transareal perspective. Against this background, it is important to emphasize that neither Martí nor Rizal, despite their restless struggles for their homeland, limited themselves to a preoccupation with *their* Caribbean or Philippine archipelago. The space for experimentation and movement present in their thinking and their travels was unmistakably transareal and transarchipelagic, in that on their paths and in their thinking – to use the *excipit* of Martí's *Nuestra América* – “las islas dolorosas del mar,”³⁵ that is, the pain-filled islands of the sea, are always interwoven with a global dimension.

35 José Martí, *Nuestra América*. In: José Martí: *Obras Completas*. Vol. 6. La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales 1975, p. 23.

It is no coincidence that the first of the novel's sixty-three chapters, which was published in Spanish in the capital of what was then the German Empire and quickly became famous in the Philippines but was soon banned by the Spanish colonial administration after official and academic reviews, begins with the depiction of a large dinner. The importance of such feasts in the Asian region is legendary. This one is spiced with a great deal of *couleur locale* and is meant to demonstrate to the reading public, who is addressed directly, how such forms of sociability took place in the "Perla del Oriente,"³⁶ in the Pearl of the Orient.

In this undoubtedly costumbristic prelude to *Noli me tangere*, from the very beginning a *soundscape* is very consciously integrated into the only briefly evoked tropical river landscape and its only rudimentarily developed cityscape with the "acordes de la orquesta" and the "significativo *clin-clan* de la vajilla y de los cubiertos,"³⁷ which in turn is supplemented by a landscape of the most diverse scents, a specific *smellscape*. The synesthetic dimension is clearly marked from the beginning. Hospitality is marked by the orchestration of globalized sensory stimuli and table manners, so that local color is translocalized, as it were, against the backdrop of a worldwide circulation of goods and habits: The Philippines can thus be experienced sensuously in literary terms within global connections.

In this novel, which is translingual and contains various sprinklings of different languages, the house plays an important role as a fractal *pattern*.³⁸ The house, with its characteristic *intérieur* of the time, its famous banquets, its owner's ostentatious consumption, and the people who meet here, concentrates the tense world of the colonial Spanish Philippines as if under a burning mirror. The fractal structure of this house, which unites a highly heterogeneous totality as if in a *modèle réduit* (Lévi-Strauss), shines from the beginning as a representation of the entire novel. As if in a fractal *mise en abyme*, Rizal's novel sketches that worldwide colonial and, at least in perspective, postcolonial space of the movement of cultures that expresses itself in the archipelago and even more so in the globally networked island world of the Philippines. Asian, European, and Latin American cultures are introduced into one another and aesthetically condensed within the sight of this house. We also find such a fractal condensation in the concluding case study, which will lead us to relations with Eastern Europe.

³⁶ José Rizal: *Noli me tangere* Prólogo Leopoldo Zea. Edición y cronología Margara Russotto. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho 1976, p. 8.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See on the fractal pattern of the island house Ottmar Ette: Von Inseln, Grenzen und Vektoren, p. 161–167, and the book *WeltFraktale. Wege durch die Literaturen der Welt* mentioned above, on the concept of the *literatures of the world*.

IV

At this point, for reasons of time and space, I unfortunately cannot bring the presence of Africa and the Arab world, which I have researched in other contexts, into this investigation. At this point, however, I would like not only to venture into the 20th and early 21st centuries, but also to point out the fractal dimension of Latin American writing in both the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking worlds of Latin America. In this context, it seems appropriate to me at the end of our short overview to expand our image, looking toward this Lusophone world as well as Eastern Europe, and at the same time to show in a final case study how important aspects of the relationship of Latin American literatures to Eastern Europe can be shaped.

Let's start with a simple fact. The Universidade Federal do Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil, is the seat of the only Polish Studies program in all Latin America, and for good reason. Located on a plateau with the *Mata Atlântica* sloping steeply to the sea, for a long time the city was the destination of a massive migration from different regions and countries of Europe, but from Eastern Europe and Poland in particular. Even today, the large proportion of European and Eastern European populations is recognizable in the cityscape and decoratively staged in the so-called "fairy tale forest" of the city park. It is therefore not surprising that Brazilian writer Dalton Trevisan, one of the most distinguished narrators in the Portuguese language who was born in Curitiba on June 14, 1925, and awarded the prestigious *Prémio Camões* in 2012, devoted himself to the topic of Polish immigration to his native city and presented the novel *A Polaquinha* in 1985. In Trevisan's narrative world, which is often set in Curitiba as a model, as if in the form of a *modèle réduit*, the image of a young woman emerges in everyday or colloquial language based on the art of dialogue. She tries to find her way in life as an attractive blond migrant in a patriarchal world dominated by men, which is anything but easy for her.

The author of *A Polaquinha* shows us the reasons for the character's struggles in his dialogical novel. As the son of prosperous Italian immigrants, Trevisan knew the patriarchal world of Curitiba and that of the immigrants very well, and understood how to situate his "*little Polish girl*," doubly marginalized in her working world as a migrant and a woman,³⁹ in the realistically rendered Paraná – a state dominated by male sexual fantasies – in such a way that her entire subal-

39 Wilma de Lara Bueno: *Curitiba, uma cidade bem-amanhecida. Vivência e trabalho das mulheres polonesas no final do século XIX e nas primeiras décadas do século XX*. Dissertação de Mestrado, Setor de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes. Curitiba: Universidade Federal do Paraná 1996.

tern position as a blond sexual object becomes visible in a sometimes frighteningly crude manner. Together with all kinds of transgressions and broken taboos in his portrayals, such intense literary close-ups earned⁴⁰ the author, who became known as an explorer of gender relations and is probably the city's most famous son, the nickname “vampire of Curitiba”.⁴¹

Trained as a lawyer at the Universidade Federal of Curitiba, the author practiced his learned profession alongside his writing for seven years. Through his cleverly staged colloquial expressions, he becomes the discreet advocate of a woman who has been degraded to a feminine object of lust and made socially invisible, who tries to go her own way against all odds and through her biographical traversal of Curitiba society sheds a significant light on the conditions of life and love in the provincial Brazilian town. For the literary portrayal of love relationships always sheds a general light on the prevailing social conditions.⁴²

Although the world of *Polaquinha* is set in Curitiba, it stands as a model for the social relations and perversions of a bourgeois world eroded by *machismo* that bears the watermark of a relationship between Latin America and Eastern Europe in the form of the brutal economic and sexual exploitation of the migrant woman. Consequently, we can speak of a scale of generalization in this novel's diegesis and its protagonist that goes far beyond Curitiba and Brazil, meaning that one must speak of a clear core of subaltern asymmetry with regard to the “little Polish woman”.

The misogynistic process of sexual objectification of the character of the blond Polish woman is clear from the first pages of the novel. Thus, after only a few lines at the beginning of this narrative text, the following statement is made:

Eu no pijama de pelúcia. Ele, calça de lã e japona marrom. Começou a me abraçar e beijar. Afastou o lençol, já debaixo das cobertas – corpo a corpo. Ficou excitado. Uma bolina – então se dizia bolina – tão gostosa. Tirou para fora, era a primeira vez. Não cheguei a ver. Me fez pegar: grande, todo se mexia. Com medo, mas queria – como é que podia caber? Não, agora me lembro, o pijama azul de seda com bolinha. No meio das pernas, aquele volume palpitando. Pediu que me virasse. Baixou a calça do pijama, entre as coxas – tão quente, me queimou a pele, até hoje a cicatriz. Eu queria, mas ele só encostava.⁴³

40 See Rosângela Nascimento Vernizi: *Erotismo e transgressão: a representação feminina em A Polaquinha de Dalton Trevisan*. Curitiba: Universidade Federal do Paraná 2006 <<https://acervodigital.ufpr.br>>

41 See Leo Gilson Ribeiro: O vampiro de almas. In: Trevisan Dalton: *A guerra conjugal*. 10°. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record 1995.

42 See Ottmar Ette: *LiebeLesen. Potsdamer Vorlesungen zu einem großen Gefühl und dessen Aneignung*. Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter (Series Aula, 2) 2020.

43 Dalton Trevisan: *A Polaquinha*. Rio de Janeiro: Record 1985, p. 6.

The body of the young woman becomes the site of the most diverse dreams and nightmares for different male sexual partners. For the pretty Polish woman herself, her body becomes a place where the experiences of attractive *body-having* and painful *body-being* are entangled in the face of the dominance of the male, phallogocentric principle, which is already expressed with repulsive clarity in the above-mentioned opening passage. Dalton Trevisan explores the absurdities of a life of dependence as deeply as he does the abysses of a female power of seduction, whose magical attraction is only the flipside of an absolutely subaltern positionality and dependence. The eroticism of some scenes alone provides a view of the perversity of a life lived in the deepest dependency, which can undoubtedly be extended and transferred to the relations between Brazil and Poland, between Latin America and Eastern Europe in the reading of this novel as a *world fractal*.

For in the writing of the Brazilian author, which is in this respect comparable to the otherwise completely different narrative literature of João Guimarães Rosa,⁴⁴ Curitiba is certainly a *world fractal* that forms the city-island in Brazil – which can also be understood as an island⁴⁵ – into the model of an entire world and its reciprocal relations. *En miniature*, this constellation configures the relations as they exist between the East of Europe and the East of Latin America. This fractal dimension and the universalization associated with it open up the interpretation proposed here, which conceives Trevisan's story of *Polaquinha* as a parable of the dependent situation of the woman and the migrant in a male-dominated society. The Brazilian author has endowed this parable of the suffering as well as the transgression of this role with a semantics that casts a special light on the relations between the *little Pole's* country of origin and the patriarchal society of Latin America. The diminutive *Polaquinha* is also negatively semanticized against this background.

But we could go one step further and ask about the transferability of Trevisan's insights to the level of literary relations between Eastern Europe and Latin America. For it seems important to me to relate the story of this young woman who works in the hospital to the position that Eastern European literatures occupy in relation to the literatures and cultures of Latin America. There is no doubt that there were and are literary relations here, but these relations have largely flown under the radar of research, except in a few illustrious cases. In other words, as a staging of the protagonist's subaltern positionality, *A Polaqui-*

44 See Ottmar Ette: Sagenhafte WeltFraktale. João Guimarães Rosa, "Sagarana" und die Literaturen der Welt. In: Ette, Ottmar/Soethe, Paulo Astor (eds.): *Guimarães Rosa und Meyer-Clason. Literatur, Demokratie, ZusammenLebenswissen*. Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2020, p. 25–52.

45 See Heike Muranyi: *Brasilien als insularer Raum. Literarische Bewegungsfiguren im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Walter Frey/tranvía 2013.

nha sheds a significant light on the asymmetrical relationality through which Poland and Eastern Europe are linked to Latin America on a literary level as well.

It is highly gratifying that this volume responds to the lack of resonance these networks of relations have found in literary and cultural studies research and thus to this highly asymmetrical situation and aims to break new ground in this field. The problem of a fundamental asymmetry, as implied in Dalton Trevisan's title diminutive, will be impossible to ignore. For it goes without saying that the current literatures of the world still carry within them that asymmetry of relations which historically brought about the emergence of a system of world literature: The literatures of the world are not a *creatio ex nihilo*, nor a theoretical, well-balanced construction created at the drawing board. Rather, they have a prehistory marked by sharp asymmetries of power, which at times still seem to be expressed in the relations between Latin America and Eastern Europe. The 21st century will most certainly see a shift take place in this relationship.

II Intellectual Networks and Literary Field

José Luis Nogales Baena

On the First Stage of the Cultural Cold War in Latin America: The Creation of a Pro-Soviet Network in Mexico

1 Planning the Cold War

The year 1944 was a decisive one during World War II. It began with the news that the Red Army had succeeded in breaking the siege of Leningrad. Five months later, American, British, and Canadian troops landed on the beaches of Normandy. The defeat of the Axis powers was finally in sight, but so too was the beginning of another global conflict: the Cold War. On June 13, while intense battles were being fought in Europe and Nazi Germany was retreating on all fronts, thousands of kilometers away, in Mexico City, the Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso [Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange] was officially inaugurated.¹ The stated purpose of this civil association was “to tell the truth about the USSR,” to combat anti-Soviet propaganda, and to promote Mexican culture within the Soviet Union.² The Undersecretary of Mexican Education, one of the political authorities who presided over the inauguration of the Institute, celebrated in his speech the importance of this “kind of institution, whose purpose is to strengthen the bonds of friendship among the peoples of the world, by mutually acknowledging each nation’s efforts in advancing human culture.”³ He also stated that “the contribution of the Soviet Union to the imminent defeat of the representative forces of slavery, tyranny, and barbarism has been so great in its effectiveness and heroism that it has inspired the unanimous admiration of all the free men of the earth” (see Figure 1).⁴

The end of the World War II was still months away, but the Soviet Union was already taking advantage of the positive image it had garnered through its fight against Nazism. In Latin America and other parts of the world, the Soviet Union created a series of cultural entities intended to make use of the good relations it

1 See Actividades del Instituto. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 35.

2 Editorial. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 3–4. Through this essay, I translate all quotes in Spanish, French, or Russian into English.

3 Intercambio y comprensión. Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Gral. Tomás Sánchez Hernández, Subsecretario de Educación Pública, en la ceremonia inaugural del Instituto. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 5.

4 Ibid.

INTERCAMBIO y COMPRENSION

Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Gral. Tomás Sánchez Hernández, Subsecretario de Educación Pública, en la ceremonia inaugural del Instituto.



El señor Secretario de Educación Pública, que se encuentra ausente de esta capital, recorriendo las escuelas del Estado de Jalisco, me ha hecho el honor de designarme para que inaugure, en su nombre, los trabajos de este Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso, y exprese a ustedes la importancia tan grande que concede la dependencia a su cargo, a este género de instituciones, cuyo objeto es estrechar los lazos de amistad entre los pueblos del mundo, a través del conocimiento recíproco del esfuerzo que cada uno de ellos viene realizando en favor del progreso de la cultura humana. Por otra parte, el hecho de que los organismos similares formados hasta el presente, establezcan tales vínculos entre nuestro país y los países que han contribuido con el mayor sacrificio en la lucha por la causa de la libertad, de

la democracia y de la civilización, es ya una señal evidente del propósito que abrigan las Naciones Unidas, para que el mundo de la paz se organice bajo el signo de los ideales más altos del hombre.

La contribución de la Unión Soviética a la derrota inminente de las fuerzas representativas de la esclavitud, de la tiranía y de la barbarie, ha sido tan grande por su eficacia y su heroísmo, que ha provocado la admiración unánime de todos los hombres libres de la tierra. Esta admiración se ha traducido en un afán por conocer cuáles son los factores que han determinado la magnífica resistencia y las estupendas victorias del Ejército Ruso, sobre la organización militar que se vanagloriaba de su invencibilidad, y bajo cuyos golpes se habían ya derrumbado los ejércitos que tradicionalmente ofrecían el espectáculo de su experiencia, saber y heroísmo, en el continente europeo.

Es un afán de conocimiento que no se circunscribe a la estrategia militar, sino que se extiende a la comprensión de las virtudes de un pueblo, de cuyo seno ha podido



En la inauguración del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso. De izquierda a derecha: Profesor Luis Chávez Orozco, Presidente del I.I.C.M.R.; el Consejero de la Embajada de la U.R.S.S., Valentin Yakubovsky; General Tomás Sánchez Hernández, Subsecretario de Educación Pública; Arquitecto Carlos Obregón Santacilla, primer Srlo. de Artes del Instituto.

NOVIEMBRE DE 1944

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Figure 1: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 5. Paper size is 23 x 32cm (9¹/₁₆ x 12¹⁹/₃₂ inches).

shared with these countries at that time. In Bogotá, the Instituto Cultural Colombo-Soviético was created in 1944 (and still exists, currently as the Instituto Cultural León Tolstói). Among its founders were historian Germán Arciniegas, former President Alfonso López Michelsen, and poets León de Greiff, Luis Vidales, and Jorge Zalamea.⁵ In Havana, the Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Cubano-Soviético was founded in 1945. Its journal, *Cuba y la U.R.S.S.* [Cuba and the USSR], produced more than sixty issues between 1945 and 1952. The Cuban anthropologist and cultural historian Fernando Ortiz was its first president. Other presidents succeeded him, but the institution's activities were interrupted by the 1952 coup d'état of Fulgencio Batista.⁶ In Buenos Aires, high-ranking diplomat Enrique Corominas encouraged the founding of the Instituto Cultural Argentino-Ruso in 1946. He was joined, as in the previous cases, by authorities from the scientific and intellectual world from his country in this endeavor. They faced challenges, including problems with the police when Perón outlawed and persecuted the Communist Party between 1949 and 1953, but in 1953, they enthusiastically resumed their public activities to become the Instituto de Relaciones Culturales Argentina-URSS.⁷

Despite their local particularities, all these institutions shared common characteristics. They organized a broad agenda of events and produced their own publications: cultural journals, information bulletins, books, and pamphlets. Each one was aimed at promoting a positive, attractive image of the Soviet Union. Publishing and distribution activity, however, was undoubtedly more significant in Mexico. The Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange created the monthly journal *Cultura Soviética* [Soviet Culture] in November 1944, advertised since its 10th issue as “the best cultural information about the USSR in Latin America.”⁸ The Institute was encouraged and sponsored by the Soviet ambassador to Mexico, Konstantin Alexandrovich Umansky, who had extensive experience as a propagandist and diplomat.⁹ The leftist intellectual Víctor Manuel Villaseñor was also

5 Juan Camilo Rueda: El corazón de Rusia en Colombia. In: *Plaza Capital* (November 27, 2019), n. p. <https://plazacapital.co/esquinas/4084-el-corazon-de-rusia-en-colombia> [September 27, 2023]. Claudio Ochoa Moreno: Rusia, 85 años. In: *Revista Enfoque* (June 25, 2020), n.p. <https://www.revistaenfoque.com.co/opinion/rusia-85-anos>. [September 27, 2023].

6 Katia Figueredo Cabrera: El Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Cubano-Soviético y su revista: Una apuesta por la fe. In: *Espacio Laico* 3–4 (2017), p. 63–64. <https://espaciolaical.net/articulos/?article=4935> [September 27, 2023].

7 Adriana Petra: *Intelectuales y cultura comunista: Itinerarios, problemas y debates en la Argentina de posguerra*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económico 2017, p. 88–90.

8 In: *Cultura Soviética* 2, 10 (1945), p. 45.

9 Umansky arrived in Mexico in June 1943. Once he started his job in Mexico, he quickly became suspected of promoting an alleged Sovietization of the country and was embroiled in accusations and controversy. He died one year and a half later, on January 25, 1945, in an accident on the

responsible for the launch of the project, and remained Secretary of the Institute for six years. He initiated and directed the first six issues of *Cultura Soviética*, until the writer Luis Córdova took charge of it. Historian Luis Chávez Orozco, former Undersecretary of Public Education, was elected President of the Institute. Like the writer José Mancisidor – the next President of the Institute, appointed in 1954 – or the famous labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano – whose speeches and photos *Cultura Soviética* would publish numerous times – they all belonged to the first generation of Mexican Marxist intellectuals, a generation forged during the Mexican Revolution and influenced by the ideas of the Comintern (the Communist International or Third International). They neither questioned Stalinism nor doubted that the future of humanity would be unfailingly communist.¹⁰ They were never affiliated with the Mexican Communist Party, but were fellow-travelers.¹¹ The Institute's headquarters on Edison Street became their center of activity for many years.¹²

The Cold War was as much a series of military, political, and geostrategic conflicts as a clash between two opposing cultures and ideologies. It was a confrontation between two incompatible ways of defining modernity and organizing the world: between the socialist and capitalist systems. These two visions would compete to convince the world of the supremacy of their position. Hence, the cultural battle. Between 1945 and 1989–91, cultural productions became the most powerful

Mexican Air Force plane that was supposed to take him to his new destination in Costa Rica, an incident that raised numerous conspiracy theories. See Víctor Manuel Villaseñor: *Memorias de un hombre de izquierda*. México: Editorial Grijalbo 1978, vol. 2, p. 36–38, 41. And Héctor Cárdenas: *Historia de las relaciones entre México y Rusia*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica 1993, p. 202–214.

10 Carlos Illades: *El marxismo en México: Una historia intelectual*. México: Taurus 2018, p. 41–59. On Víctor Manuel Villaseñor and his longstanding support of Stalinism, which can be considered a representative example of his generation, see José Luis Nogales Baena: *Recuerdos del futuro de Víctor Manuel Villaseñor, un hombre de izquierda*. In: *Anclajes* 27, 3 (2023), p. 101–115. DOI: 10.19137/anclajes-2023-2737.

11 A 'fellow-traveler' could be defined, summarizing, as any person who is not a Communist member but expresses sympathy, even commitment, to the program or part of the public program of the Communist Party and who is willing to cooperate to a greater or lesser degree with the Soviet regime. See David Caute: *The Fellow-Travellers: Intellectual Friends of Communism*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1988, p. 1–14. And Michael David-Fox: *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy & Western Visitors to The Soviet Union, 1921–1941*. New York: Oxford University Press 2014, p. 207–209.

12 On the origins of the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange, see José Luis Nogales Baena: *Soviet Culture and Cultural Exchange in Mexico during the Cold War*. PhD dissertation, Boston University, 2023, p. 47–66. Also, Ángel Chávez Mancilla: *La creación del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso como instrumento soviético del "frente ideológico"*. In: *Letras Históricas* 24 (2021), p. 97–117.

tools for the promotion of ideological objectives and strategies.¹³ The financing of institutions, non-governmental organizations, educational exchange programs, or visits of influential figures from abroad, to cite just a few examples, became an essential part of the cultural diplomacy of the two great powers.

That was the case of the pro-soviet institutions forged at the end of World War II. These cultural institutes and their publications became public centers, defenders, receivers, and disseminators of the culture, politics, ideology, science, history, arts, and literature of the Soviet Union in Latin America. In the case of Mexico, a whole vision of the world and of modernity, of the past and of what the future of humanity should be, marked by the Stalinist era, was projected through *Cultura Soviética* (1944–1954). This mission was promoted and sustained by Moscow with obvious propagandistic purposes but carried out with the enthusiastic collaboration of the pro-Soviet Latin American left. These intellectuals, Marxists, and fellow travelers perceived the distant Soviet Union shown to them as the realization of socialism, a materialized utopia that, with its own national characteristics, they wished to export to their country and promote in the rest of the continent. Even though they belonged to different national political projects within the Mexican left-wing, and were occasionally at odds with each other, they formed a common body in favor of the USSR and uniformly assumed the idealistic, pacifist, pro-Soviet, and pro-Stalinist discourse promoted by the Soviet government at the beginning of the Cold War. They subscribed to its international policy point by point. They continued a well-established Mexican tradition of leftist groups supporting the USSR, both through political events and acts, and through a network of print media. Their transatlantic elective affinities brought them together in their local and international entanglements.

What do the editorial practices of these institutions tell us about the connections between pro-Soviet intellectuals and Stalin's Russia? How do national intellectual, artistic, and political debates about culture relate to international ideological struggles? In other words, how did the first stage of the Cold War influence and shape these debates in Latin America? What role did cultural journals play in the transnational movement of ideas? Did they intervene in the political-ideological processes? To what extent?

This article focuses on the particular case of Mexico and on one possible facet of study: the *value* and *uses* given to printed publications to create a network of local, national, and transnational relations of people, ideas, and projects in favor

¹³ Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried: The Model of Cultural Diplomacy: Power, Distance, and the Promise of Civil Society. In: Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds.): *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*. New York: Berghahn Books 2010, p. 15.

of socialism in general and the USSR in particular.¹⁴ The Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange and its journal functioned as one of the central nodes of that vast network. This paper offers a panoramic view of the development of this network during the first stage of the Latin American (Cultural) Cold War: the one that took place before the invasion of Guatemala and the Cuban Revolution.¹⁵

I first offer an overview of *Cultura Soviética*, as well as of the asymmetrical relation the Institute established with the Soviet Union. Then, I explain the role played by print media in the Soviet Union, as well as the network of journals and printed materials established throughout that time. As an example of a common feature of *Cultura Soviética* with other Soviet journals, I comment on illustrations and their functions. As a distinguishing feature of the journal, I highlight the cast of Mexican managers and contributors. Finally, I expand on the value attributed to printed materials by the pro-Soviet front in Mexico. In the concluding remarks, I put all the pieces together to enumerate a series of functions of the printed materials, underline the pioneering importance of the materials studied in the context of the Cold War and the need to deepen their analysis in future works.

2 *Cultura Soviética* and the so-called Cultural Exchange

Geographical, historical, social, and political characteristics make Mexico a place of paramount importance to understanding the development of the Cold War in Latin America. Situated south of the United States border, Mexico maintained a strong, independent national revolutionary rhetoric while also preserving good relations with its powerful neighbor, in part, thanks to a hard anti-communist line. For decades, the ruling party upheld an authoritarian government that, in return, achieved political stability in a region of instability. The Mexican Commu-

¹⁴ These ideas about the uses of print and the formation of different types of networks were inspired by the critical work of the Seminario Interinstitucional Usos de lo Impreso en América Latina. See for example: Seminario Interinstitucional Usos de los Impresos en América Latina: Entrevista con Roger Chartier: Límites, prácticas y tensiones en una historiografía en construcción. In: *Meridional: Revista Chilena de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 13 (2019–2020), p. 197–217. DOI: 10.5354/0719-4862.54423. On journals and its relationship with intellectual history, and on journals as networks, see Aimer Granados García (ed.): *Las revistas en la historia intelectual de América Latina: Redes, política, sociedad y cultura*. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Cuajamalpa and Juan Pablos Editor 2012. In particular see the introduction by Aimer Granados García, p. 9–20.

¹⁵ See the Cold War periodization argued by Vanni Pettinà for Latin America: *Historia mínima de la Guerra Fría en América Latina*. México: El Colegio de México 2018, p. 19–61.

nist Party was one of the smallest on the continent and never managed to assume the leadership of Soviet influence within the Mexican working class. Among the Mexican political and intellectual elites, however, there were leftists who defended the Soviet project with admiration and enjoyed privileged relations with the USSR as interlocutors. In addition, the country had been historically enriched by large waves of immigration and, more recently, had sheltered thousands of political exiles from Europe and Latin America. All this formed a complex human geography of contrasting political tendencies and multiple connections with foreign countries.¹⁶ “At the intersection of world and regional history,” Patrick Iber has written, “Mexico City became a key node in the global debate.”¹⁷

Cultura Soviética was born within this polarized context to offer a global vision of the Soviet world to the Spanish-speaking audience of Latin America. But what does it mean that the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange journal was called *Cultura Soviética*? Probably, the adjective *Russian* was fulfilling a double function: on the one hand, to avoid the attribute *Soviet* at the beginning of the Institute, which could have been more problematic; on the other hand, to privilege a specific culture and nation above the rest, as from the mid-thirties onwards, Stalin was promoting the Russification of the Soviet Union, *id est*, Russian chauvinism.¹⁸ It was precisely during World War II that the ideology of the Soviet state underwent one of its most dramatic turns, showing a decided willingness to embrace Russian nationalism: the idea of this contest as a Great Patriotic War was promoted from the very beginning.¹⁹ Other ideas exploited by the Kremlin since 1939 about Russian cultural heritage would be picked up by the journal and can be seen in it everywhere: for example, that Russians were a great brotherly people helping their neighbors to “liberate themselves”; their powerful image of “victorious people,” dating back to the Napoleonic invasion; the “primacy” of Russian culture, whose intellectual, scientific and technical achievements are used to point to its individuality and originality over other nations; or the “greatness of

16 Soledad Loaeza: La fractura mexicana y el golpe de 1954 en Guatemala. In: *Historia Mexicana* 66, 2 (2016), p. 733–754. DOI: 10.24201/hm.v66i2.3346. And, by the same author: Estados Unidos y la contención del comunismo en América Latina y en México. In: *Foro Internacional* 53, 1 [211] (2013), p. 36–52.

17 Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2015, p. 13.

18 Robert Service: *Stalin: A Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 323–331. Orlando Figes: *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*. New York: Picador 2003, p. 480–482.

19 E. A. Rees: Stalin and Russian Nationalism. In: Geoffrey Hosking y Robert Service (eds.): *Russian Nationalism, Past and Present*. Palgrave Macmillan 1998, p. 87–88

the Russian language,” which justified the establishment of Russian as the base language of all Soviet peoples.²⁰

Nevertheless, all this should not make us forget that the title of a journal always acts as a key to its reading: “It not only advances but also fixes positions.”²¹ In other words, the title *Cultura Soviética* affirms in advance, without any doubt, the existence of a specific culture of the Soviet Union, common to all its components. Indeed, the syntagma embraces the broadest possible sense: the journal tried to promote a whole way of life, that of the *new civilization* that emerged from the Revolution of 1917. It promised to keep their reader informed of the progress of the exact sciences, biology, agronomy, literature, and plastic arts in the socialist nation.

Cultura Soviética also promised to provide readers with news about the events held in the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange. This new non-profit civil society presented itself and its journal as a tool for strengthening cultural relations between Mexico and the Soviet Union. It aimed to avoid the “well-known defamatory [Western] propaganda” and to show “the truth about the Soviet Union.”²² Thus, the journal had propagandistic value from the very beginning. Moreover, after the full onset of the Cold War, from mid-1948, *Cultura Soviética* took on the ideas of the Cominform (The Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties), hardened its discourse against the United States and capitalism, turned to defend the (pro-Soviet) pacifist movement and promoted the cult of Stalin as the greatest world leader. Until its disappearance in December 1954, *Cultura Soviética* was the major Mexican medium of Soviet propaganda.²³

The Institute was officially and publicly connected with the USSR through the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, internationally known as VOKS (a transliteration of its Russian acronym: *BOKC*; see Figure 1). VOKS was founded in 1925 as a non-governmental social, cultural, and exchange organization, supposedly independent from the Communist Party, thus reaching out to a broader audience: the non-communist masses and members of the intellectual *petite bourgeoisie*. It became an extensive network that maintained influence

20 Frederick C. Barghoorn: Stalinism and the Russian Cultural Heritage. In: *The Review of Politics* 14, 2 (1952), p. 178–203.

21 Patricia M. Artundo: Reflexiones en torno a un nuevo objeto de estudio: las revistas. In: *IX Congreso Argentino de Hispanistas: El hispanismo ante el bicentenario*. La Plata: UNLP-FAHCE. Centro de Estudios de Teoría y Crítica Literaria 2010, p. 10.

22 Editorial. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 3–4.

23 José Luis Nogales Baena: *Soviet Culture*, p. 47–256. Karl M. Schmitt: *Communism in Mexico: A Study in Political Frustration*. Austin: University of Texas Press 1965, p. 120–159. Ángel Chávez Mancilla: La revista *Cultura Soviética* en el marco de la Guerra Fría cultural en México (1944–1954). In: *Signos Históricos* 24, 48 (2022), p. 428–459.

through journals, projects, and connections with other countries.²⁴ Statements made through different issues of *Cultura Soviética* suggest that VOKS provided the journal with all its Russian materials.²⁵ At the same time, the Institute sent materials from Mexico to Russia every month, fulfilling the cultural exchange announced on many occasions.²⁶

Nonetheless, it is clear that the exchange was categorically asymmetrical. There was no parallel organization to the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange in Russia, nor was there a journal of Mexican culture in the USSR, nor did the events, news, and printed materials dedicated to Mexico have similar dimensions or status to those dedicated to the USSR on the other side of the Atlantic. Moreover, some shipments of Mexican material to Russia were frustrated by ideological concerns. Katarina Lopatkina, who has meticulously studied in Russian archives the reception of graphic works – paintings and engravings – sent by the Institute for its exhibition in Moscow, affirms that most of them were never exhibited. They were instead put in storage and even criticized as formalist works, prototypical of decadent bourgeois art.²⁷ From all this, it is clear that the asymmetry of the exchange was absolute and always in favor of the USSR. Even when a parallel institution of cultural exchange was created in the Soviet Union in 1966, the asymmetry continued.²⁸

24 On VOKS, see Frederick C. Barghoorn: *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1960, p. 158–166. Jean-François Fayet: VOKS: The Third Dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy. In: Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds.): *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010, p. 33–48. Jean-François Fayet: *VOKS: Le Laboratoire helvétique: histoire de la diplomatie culturelle soviétique durant l'entre-deux-guer*. Chêne-Bourg: Georg 2014.

25 See, for example, Editorial: Noviembre de 1944 – Octubre de 1945. In: *Cultura Soviética* 2, 12 (1945), p. 3.

26 For instance, see Editorial. In: *Cultura Soviética* 8, 48 (1948), p. 3.

27 Katarina Lopatkina: From Mexican Artists to the Soviet State: The Story of an Unwanted Gift. In: *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* 17, 3 (2017), p. 379–397. And, by the same author: Hidden Mexican Treasures: Works by Modern Mexican Artists in Soviet Collections. In: *Meno Istorijs Studijos* 9 (2021), p. 221–238.

28 The Society of Friendship and Cultural Links “USSR-Mexico” (Sociedad de Amistad y Vínculos Culturales “URSS-México”) was established on June 30, 1966, in Moscow, inside the House of Friendship with Peoples of Foreign Countries. See Editorial: Ha sido fundada la sociedad “URSS-México.” In: *Informaciones: Boletín Mensual del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso* 4, 41 (1966), n.p. There are, in addition to Barghoorn and Fayet’s books, other case studies that highlight the similarities of the VOKS method in, for example, Canada (Jennifer Anderson: *Propaganda & Persuasion: The Cold War and The Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press 2017) or Western and Central Europe (Michael David-Fox: *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, particularly Chapter 2, p. 61–97).

The network of asymmetrical exchanges created by VOKS and other organizations of the so-called ‘third dimension of Soviet Foreign policy’ gave rise to a network of printed publications. They formed an extensive multilingual bibliography on the Soviet world, aiming to disseminate a favorable and idealized image of its culture, technological advances, feats of engineering, and artistic accomplishments.²⁹

3 Printed Media as Propaganda

As the French intellectual Régis Debray has recalled, “socialism was born with the word ‘printing’ written on its forehead.”³⁰ In the struggle against ignorance, the “battle for education” through the written word has always been fundamental, “at the top of the political agenda of the left.”³¹ Soviet socialism is a representative example. The Bolshevik party was born and linked to a newspaper, *Iskra*. For Lenin, the newspaper was not only collective ‘agitation’ and ‘propaganda’ (*agitprop*) but an instrument of organization.³² That is why, after only one day in power, the Bolsheviks nationalized the press: “The printed press is our most powerful weapon,” Lenin wrote in 1918.³³

In Soviet Russia, the various forms of printed media – journals, books, newspapers – became objects of devotion and a distinctive sign of culture. Editions of books and print runs of newspapers numbered in the thousands, and from the mid-1930s, the idea was promoted that the USSR was the most widely read country in the world, something Lovell has identified as one of the Soviet cultural myths.³⁴ According to him, there are two fundamental ideas underlying this patriotic myth: “First, that in the Soviet Union people read a lot, and would read even

²⁹ The expression ‘third dimension of Soviet foreign policy’ was originally coined by the British historian E. H. [Edward Hallett] Carr to refer to the VOKS as an organization that encompassed ‘everything between ‘official’ diplomacy, embodied in the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (NKID), and the organization of world revolution via the Communist International (Comintern or CI)’ (Jean-François Fayet: VOKS, p. 34). Nevertheless, as Fayet has shown, ‘this third dimension of Soviet foreign policy in fact covered a multitude of Soviet organizations beyond VOKS that were often interwoven, and sometimes even competing, with one another’ (ibid.).

³⁰ Régis Debray: *El socialismo y la imprenta: Un ciclo vital*. In: *New Left Review*, 46 (2007), p. 7.

³¹ Ibid., p. 13.

³² Ibid., p. 16.

³³ Quoted in Jeffrey Brooks: *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2001, p. 3.

³⁴ Stephen Lovell: *Books and Their Readers in Twentieth-Century Russia*. In: Miranda Remnek (ed.): *The Space of the Book: Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2011, p. 232.

more as society progressed further towards Communism; second, that the printed word was capable of uniting people and instilling in them the core values of Soviet society.³⁵ The government thus endorsed reading as a form of mass education. The Soviet system had the right to censor and could make certain books and writers invisible, could silence, promote, or turn them into cult objects depending on whether or not they adapted to the ideology of the State/Party. Still, under this system, thousands of books and journals were printed and distributed at minimal prices or even free of charge among its citizens.

The same policy applied to foreign countries. If printing constitutes the core activity of any cultural diplomacy, as Jean-François Fayet has written, the Soviets did not neglect any of the possible ways in which it can be practiced: they supported publishing houses, helped with translation, sent books and journals as gifts, set up libraries, and organized print fairs and exhibitions.³⁶ Book diplomacy and, more generally, print diplomacy were the first forms of cultural exchange practiced by the Soviets.³⁷

In the USSR, books and journals were printed in dozens of languages, not only in the official languages spoken in its various republics but also in many other countries of the world, as the aim was to distribute controlled information about the country abroad. To mention just a few representative examples: the Foreign Languages Publishing House printed books in English, French, German, Spanish, and other languages; VOKS published and distributed its own monthly information bulletin in English, French, German, and Spanish; different Soviet friendship societies – in Spain, Switzerland, Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Cuba, to name just a few examples – had their own journals, bulletins, or newsletters; and so did societies in other countries that bore similarities to the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange.

Some journals printed in the USSR in Spanish – although also in other languages – that circulated in Mexico are *Tiempos Nuevos* (1943?–1990), *La Mujer Soviética* (1945–1988?), *Literatura Soviética* (1946–1990), *Unión Soviética* (1950–1988), and *Cultura y Vida* (1957–1990). Additionally, the Soviet Embassy in Mexico published the *Boletín de Información de la Embajada de la URSS* (1944 onwards). Other journals were printed abroad but supported by the Soviet Union, and they most likely would not have existed without its support: the Soviet Union sent translated materials to be published elsewhere. In Mexico, some examples of these publications include the periodicals of the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cul-

35 Stephen Lovell: *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, p. 21.

36 Jean-François Fayet: *VOKS*, p. 380–381.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 382.

tural Exchange: *Cultura Soviética* (1944–1954), *Intercambio Cultural* (1955–1958), *Ciencia y Técnica* (1955–1956), *Boletín de Informaciones del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso* (1962–1963), and *Informaciones: Órgano Mensual del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso* (1963–1970); as well as the journal *Paz: Revista Mensual* (1951–1954?), that was created as part of the Peace Movement – *Paz*'s director was General Heriberto Jara, President of the Mexican Pro-Peace Committee.³⁸

These journals shared certain characteristics, but differed in their objectives, design, and final content. Each was also aimed at a different audience. Russian Hispanist Vera Kuteishchikova, who worked for VOKS for thirteen years, was in charge of receiving the material sent to Russia by the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange every month. The Institute sent reports about events held, as well as posters, new books, and the journal *Cultura Soviética*. Kuteishchikova states that *Cultura Soviética* differed from other publications because of its effective graphic design but was monotonous in its content because all the materials it published were sourced from the Soviet Information Bureau: “On the pages of the journal, the image of our country was presented in typical propaganda-style.”³⁹ That is, *Cultura Soviética*, most of whose articles were of Russian origin – approximately eighty percent – was similar for the most part to the typical Russian propaganda journals that had existed for many years and continued to exist. The *VOKS Bulletin* (1930–1956) – published in French, German, English, and other languages – was perhaps the most widely known and distributed of those journals. Comparing their content and formatting, there is no doubt that *Cultura Soviética* is a close relative. They both shared the same ambition to report on the various facets of the new Soviet world and to embrace Soviet culture in its entirety.⁴⁰

³⁸ The peace movement was triggered after the creation of the Cominform on October 5, 1947, an entity that became, in practice, the guide for all the communist parties and of the International Movement for Peace. On the peace movement in Mexico, see Horacio Crespo: *El comunismo mexicano y la lucha por la paz en los inicios de la Guerra Fría*. In: *Historia Mexicana* 66, 2 (2016), p. 653–723. Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom*. And Jorge Octavio Fernández Montes: *Voces y llamamientos de la cultura por la paz: Génesis del pacifismo prosoviético de México en los albores de la Guerra Fría*. In: *Política y Cultura* 41 (2014), p. 7–29. On the Soviet international journals distributed in Latin America, see also Tobias Rupprecht: *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, p. 34–37.

³⁹ Vera Kuteishchikova: *Moskva – Mekhiko – Moskva. Doroga dlinoiu v zhizn'*. Moscow: Akademicheskii Proekt 2000, p. 144.

⁴⁰ “In October 1956 the *VOKS Bulletin* was replaced by *Culture and Life*, a magazine published monthly in English, Russian, French, Spanish and German” (Frederick C. Barghoorn: *The Soviet*

4 The Functions of Illustrations

A constant feature of *Cultura Soviética* that was also a trademark of Soviet style was the inclusion of numerous images aimed at illustrating the often dense and boring articles on science and other subjects. “A germ of Stalinism rests in the frankness of encyclopedism, the stupidity in the bosom of intelligence,” wrote Debray: “The pedantry, the heaviness and rigidity of Soviet discourse, its moralistic melancholy, are inevitable when a school takes on thought and subdues it with an iron fist.”⁴¹ The journal tries to overcome this heaviness of the Soviet discourse with an attractive and heterogeneous design: diverse content in each issue, varied distribution of the text on each page, and inclusion of numerous photographs, tables, maps, engravings, or drawings. Almost every page of *Cultura Soviética* includes an illustration, which gives the journal an attractive visual variety to balance out its often dry content.

Photographs, in particular, played an important role in the journal. They highlight the protagonists’ beauty, the constructions’ grandeur, and the magnificence of the discoveries or achievements made in the USSR. They were not mere images that illustrated a chronicle, a report, or the celebration of an event. They fulfilled several other essential functions, for the journal was aimed at informing, showcasing Soviet achievements, and convincing the reader of the greatness of the Russian people and their compatriots. The photographs were informative; they aimed to explain or clarify something. They also held a documentary nature: they described in detail or captured the essence of various subjects. Above all, they were proof, a means of authentication, a reliable document corroborating what was said or explained in a text. For the same reason, photographs had the mission, in most cases, of being symbolic – of becoming a symbol of something superior to the factual thing they portrayed, conveying a broader abstract concept such as happiness, peace, or wisdom.⁴²

Ultimately, we must think of the importance of these images for all those who did not read the journal or who only partially read it. We must think of the images as content in and of themselves, as the informative base, with functions beyond the text that they accompanied. It is most likely that many *readers* approached the journal only superficially: they picked it up, leafed through it,

Cultural Offensive, p. 165). The Spanish version of this journal, *Cultura y Vida*, also circulated in Mexico, as we know thanks to the Institute’s journal *Intercambio Cultural*. See *Notas: Cultura y Vida*. In: *Intercambio Cultural* 5, 26 (1957), p. 2.

⁴¹ Régis Debray: *El socialismo y la imprenta*, p. 14–15.

⁴² On the functions of photographs just mentioned, see José A. Martín Aguado: *Lectura estética y técnica de un diario*. Madrid: Editorial Alhambra 1987, p. 49–50.

looked at its photographs, read the headlines and the names of the authors with their titles and positions, and all this already transmitted to them a particular image of the USSR and the world, of the work of the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange. This was enough; many did not go any further, as is still often the case today when leafing through some newspapers, journals, and books. Given the importance of headlines and images in the journal, it is unmistakable that the designers of *Cultura Soviética* – along with those of other Soviet or pro-Soviet publications – understood the importance of these technical aspects and how they allowed their message to be successfully conveyed to their audience.

5 Collaboration of Pro-Soviet Mexican Intelligentsia

At the same time, *Cultura Soviética* should be differentiated from other (pro-)Soviet journals for being a mixed project. It was primarily composed of Soviet materials, but this composition was left in Mexican hands, and the journal included articles written by local collaborators. It was, after all, a Mexican journal for which the Institute's leader had become the public face and assumed responsibility for its contents. Although it represented a minority of the content, the weight of materials of Mexican and Latin American origin was what personalized the project and gave it exclusive value, making it a compelling attraction for those eager to learn more about the cultural exchange between the two nations, the activities of the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange, and those committed to the USSR in Mexico. The publication – the voice of the Institute – was the first printed tool of what became the Mexican-Soviet cultural front of the Cold War and, as such, was a crucial node in the network of people, printed matter, and ideas constituting that front. In this sense, one of the main functions of *Cultura Soviética* was to inform the public of the activities conducted by this group of pro-Soviet Mexican intellectuals.

The Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange always had an ongoing agenda: artistic and documentary exhibitions, publications, and films; conferences on Mexican and Soviet themes; photo libraries, newspaper libraries, and other library services; recorded music auditions and concerts; Russian language courses; theater for children; publication of books; radio broadcasts, bookstores, sending delegations composed of representatives of scientific, artistic and cultural circles.⁴³

⁴³ See, for example, Editorial. In: *Cultura Soviética* 19, 113 (1954), p. 3.

Most of these events were held at the institution's headquarters on Edison Street. Many of the conferences were given by members of the Board of Directors or by regular collaborators with the journal: Víctor Manuel Villaseñor, Luis Chávez Orozco, Luis Córdova, poet Efraín Huerta, engineer and politician Manuel Mesa, famous painter Diego Rivera, José Mancisidor, musician and composer Gastón Baqueiro Foster, and so on. Others included guest personalities from the fields of literature, science, the arts, politics, and even relatively unknown characters who had been in contact with the Soviet Union. Luis Quintanilla (former Mexican Ambassador to the USSR); Mexican writers Fernando Benítez, José Revueltas, and Aurora Reyes; General Heriberto Jara (President of the Mexican Pro-Peace Committee); and the well-known poets Pablo Neruda (Chilean), Nicolás Guillén (Cuban), and Juan Rejano (Spanish), among many others, passed through the Institute's headquarters. As proof and result of the print culture practiced by the Institute, *Cultura Soviética* later published most of these lectures as articles and reported on them with photographs of the audience included (see Figure 2).

6 The Cult of Printed Materials

Print culture and its importance exists throughout the history of the journal *Cultura Soviética*. As in the Soviet world, the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange professed this cult and awarded a high symbolic value to printed materials. Indeed, its printing activity initiated with a series of short monographs.⁴⁴ These titles were later distributed together with *Cultura Soviética* as gifts among subscribers. They were touted as one of the first achievements of the new institution.⁴⁵ As Debray wrote, they were born in the battle for education.⁴⁶

44 Ivan Benedictov: *La agricultura soviética en la paz y en la guerra*. México: Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso 1944. T. Serebrennikov: *La mujer de la U.R.S.S. en la paz y en la guerra*. México: Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso, 1944. Georgy A. Miterev: *La salud pública de la URSS en la paz y en la guerra*. México: Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso, 1944.

45 Actividades del Instituto. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 35.

46 The Institute also published conferences and individual works: a well-known basic handbook of Russian language, for example (Nina Potapova: *Manual elemental de lengua rusa*. México: Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso 1945), or Ángel Batalla Bassols' memoirs about the five years he lived in the USSR (Ángel Bassols Batalla: *Cinco años en la U.R.S.S., un estudiante mexicano en el país del socialismo*. México: Ediciones del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso 1950). For a completed list of the Institute's publications, see José Luis Nogales Baena: *Soviet Culture*, p. 257–260.

metros sobre el nivel del mar, situado en las estribaciones del pico más alto de Europa. Sus extraordinarias riquezas naturales: un magnífico aire de montaña, maravillosos glaciares, bosques de coníferas, manantiales de aguas ricas en ácido carbónico, etc., permiten la organización, en estos lugares, además de centros curativos, de albergues de turismo.

Simultáneamente al desarrollo de los grandes establecimientos, en los lugares donde existen condiciones naturales para ello, nos preocupamos de instalar balnearios, sobre todo en los lugares donde esto es necesario para el servicio de grandes núcleos de población. Por esta razón nuestra ciencia hidrogeológica no sólo se dedica al estudio de las zonas que cuentan con manan-

tiales, sino que, por medio de la exploración —con frecuencia a gran profundidad— procura elevar hasta la superficie aguas curativas que permanecían ignoradas. Por ejemplo, por medio de la perforación, en Moscú, se ha logrado sacar, de una profundidad de 250 metros, agua de excelentes cualidades curativas, que ya se utilizan en el tratamiento de enfermos.

Por medio de una perforación parecida se han descubierto en Essentuki, a 370 metros de profundidad, valiosas aguas, ricas en ácido carbónico.

La balneografía no se detuvo en su desarrollo ni siquiera en los duros días de la guerra. Uno de los principales adelantos de aquel tiempo es la aplicación del barro, con gran éxito, en la curación de heridas.

ACTIVIDADES del INSTITUTO

La conferencia *Lenin en el Arte*, sustentada recientemente en nuestra sala de actos por el destacado pintor mexicano Diego Rivera, constituyó un evento de gran significación que estuvo plenamente concurrido.

Rivera hizo notar con toda justeza el papel de primer plano que Vladimir Ilich desempeñó en las nuevas artes soviéticas. En efecto, nunca la historia presentó el caso de un estadista de tal clarividencia, para enjuiciar y poner las bases del futuro desarrollo artístico de su país. Pese a sus abrumadoras ocupaciones en la política, en la economía y en la construcción del nuevo Estado, Lenin se ocupó eficaz-



mente del mundo del arte y sus opiniones al respecto, como lo hemos expuesto en esta revista, nunca adolecieron de falsos extremismos. El quiso entregar a su pueblo el arte, la ciencia y toda la cultura de la humanidad en suma, del pasado y del presente que, en manos de los soviéticos daría nuevos y preciados frutos como la experiencia lo confirmó.

Sobre estos y otros conceptos el maestro Rivera disertó ampliamente, afirmando que mucho tuvo que ver Lenin y sus doctrinas como inspiradores del movimiento muralista mexicano, que no ha tenido paralelo en el mundo.

Figure 2: *Cultura Soviética* 8, 44, p. 40.

The first issue of *Cultura Soviética* announced, among other news, the “novel and ample pavilion” that the Institute had opened at the 1944 Book Fair in México City. There, “valuable Soviet books on art and science were exhibited.”⁴⁷ The pavilion was built thanks to the Spanish businessman Manuel Suárez y Suárez, known patron of Mexican muralism and other arts. It sold books in Spanish by Russian classics – Tolstoy, Chekhov, Turgenev, Pushkin, Herzen, Gogol, Andreyev, and others – as well as by the new Soviet generation: Ivanov, Gladkov, Seifullina, Petrov, Ehrenburg, Alexey Tolstoy, Ostrovsky, Grossman, Wasilewska, Simonov, Leonov, and others. There were also records of early and modern Russian music and, among other publications, the journals *Literatura Internacional* and the *VOKS Bulletin* in Spanish.⁴⁸

The second issue of *Cultura Soviética* was dedicated to this pavilion and the success of the Institute at the Book Fair (see Figure 3). This issue establishes, in general terms, the importance that printed material had in the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange. Following the Socialist/Soviet tradition of the cult of printed material and the need for its distribution to *teach* the people, it also demonstrates the symbolic, cultural, and moral value that printed materials have for those who possess them, know them and make an effort to distribute them to all levels and classes of society. A chronicle of the pavilion informs us that classic Russian authors sold well, but that the most sought-after were books on the scientific, industrial, and agricultural developments of the USSR, as well as those related to the recently ended war. Moreover, it asserts that during the twenty days the pavilion remained open, “it was visited by more than one hundred thousand people, whose interest in the exhibition of books and photographs is revealing of the growing sympathy of the Mexican people towards the USSR.”⁴⁹

In this same issue, there is also an article dedicated to publications printed in the USSR entitled *Gigantic Publishing Work*. It exposes the astronomical number of copies of works printed in the USSR in the previous years: books of poetry, art, and novels; manuals and textbooks, both in Russian and in the various languages of the Soviet republics; books on various political subjects, not forgetting, of course, the millions of copies printed of Lenin and Stalin’s works.⁵⁰ Finally, the second issue of *Cultura Soviética* closes with a section entitled “At the disposal of our readers: Index of articles translated from Russian, for consultation at the

47 Actividades del Instituto. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 1 (1944), p. 35.

48 Ibid.

49 El pabellón del Instituto en la Feria del Libro. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 2 (1944), p. 22–23.

50 Gigantesca labor editorial. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 2 (1944), p. 32.

CULTURA SOVIETICA

REVISTA DEL INSTITUTO DE INTERCAMBIO CULTURAL MEXICANO-RUSO

AÑO 1

DICIEMBRE DE 1944

NUM. 2 VOL. I



FERIA DEL LIBRO 1944

PABELLON DEL INSTITUTO DE INTERCAMBIO CULTURAL MEXICANO-RUSO

La participación del Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso en la Feria del Libro, del 1º al 21 de noviembre próximo pasado, constituyó una experiencia de resultados fructíferos que superaron nuestras esperanzas, en tanto significan cimientos para una nueva etapa de trabajo de esta institución.

Sin temor a exagerar, puede afirmarse que el pabellón del Instituto fué uno de los más visitados en la Feria. Miles de personas acudieron a su recinto llamativo y acogedor; allí contemplaron el grandioso esfuerzo de los pueblos soviéticos en la paz y en la guerra, su devoción por la cultura y su inquebrantable unidad y extraordinario heroísmo ante la agresión nazi. La arquitectura sobria y sugerente del edificio, la exposición exterior de fotografías gigantescas y la espléndida música rusa, ucraniana, georgiana y de otras repúblicas de la URSS, fueron atracciones de buena ley para un público de todas las clases sociales, que por el gran interés que manifestó, supo recompensar ampliamente nuestros afanes. A la entrada y en las paredes del local, frases de sereno juicio del señor Presidente de la República y de figuras destacadas en los círculos científicos y artísticos de nuestro país, sobre el heroísmo de los pueblos y del ejército de la Unión Soviética, la trascendental importancia de su lucha en la defensa de la cultura, y sus logros en las artes y las ciencias, daban al ambiente un digno tono de respetabilidad.

Queremos rendir público testimonio de agradecimiento a todas aquellas personas que nos auxiliaron material y moralmente, a quienes acreditamos el éxito obtenido, de notoria trascendencia para la vida y desarrollo futuro de este Instituto.

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Figure 3: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 2 (1944), p. 3.

Institute,”⁵¹ an account of the specialized USSR library in the Institute’s headquarters that had recently been built. Successive issues would continue reporting on new acquisitions for this facility. Interested readers were therefore welcome to the Institute in a physical form, allowing them to expand their knowledge of Soviet affairs, and to engage with others who shared their interest in this topic.

The Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange did not participate in the Mexico City Book Fair again – perhaps due to the lack of benefactors, or maybe because the Soviets decided to have their own pavilion – but it continued to give an account of the cult for printed matter and everything related. It did participate, however, in the 7th Agricultural, Industrial and Cultural Fair of Tuxpan (Veracruz) in August 1946. There, it claimed to achieve a similar success to that of two years earlier at the Mexico City Book Fair: “We estimate that seventy-five to eighty thousand people visited the stand.”⁵² The pages referring to this activity proclaim: “In this way, striving to shift the normal activities of the Institute to the Mexican province, we believe that we better fulfill our purposes by bringing Soviet art, science, and culture into contact with the rich cultural heritage of our different regions, the marrow of our nationality.”⁵³ In other words, for the Institute, it was necessary to propagate the “exchange” and “the truth” about the USSR everywhere in Mexico. This explains why chapters of the Institute were later inaugurated in Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Aguascalientes. There was no shortage of conferences, exhibitions, celebrations, and, of course, libraries and bookstores.⁵⁴

The Soviets, however, did participate in the 1946 Book Fair with their own pavilion. Their participation was announced beforehand with great fanfare in *Cultura Soviética* 19: “As is already known, the publishing movement of the USSR is one of the first in the world both in quality and quantity, and the Mexican public will have the opportunity to verify this when they visit the Soviet pavilion.”⁵⁵ The Editorial of issue 21 was devoted to declaring the wonders that could be seen there and to state, once again, what everyone should know, “that in the USSR there is a true national cult for the book and its arts.”⁵⁶ The Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange would cultivate that devotion in Mexico too.

51 A disposición de nuestros lectores. Índice de artículos científicos y artísticos. In: *Cultura Soviética* 1, 2 (1944), p. 42.

52 Nuestro Pabellón en Tuxpam. In: *Cultura Soviética* 5, 25 (1946), p. 48.

53 Ibid.

54 Nuestra Sección en Guadalajara. In: *Cultura Soviética* 14, 79 (1951), p. 21. Actividades del Instituto. Actos en esta capital, en Monterrey y Aguascalientes. In: *Cultura Soviética* 17, 98 (1952), p. 50.

55 Editorial: La Feria del Libro. In: *Cultura Soviética* 4, 19 (1946), p. 3.

56 Editorial: El Pabellón Soviético. In: *Cultura Soviética* 4, 21 (1946), p. 3.

The Institute's library expanded with new titles and translated articles. At the same time, *Cultura Soviética* promoted many other books related to its interests throughout its ten years of life, even if those books had not been published by the Institute. Travelogues to the Soviet Union, in particular, were promoted and given much visibility. Thus, for example, books such as *Al otro lado de la "Cortina de Hierro"* (1946) by Víctor Manuel Villaseñor or *Retorno al futuro* (1948) by Luis Cardoza y Aragón were extensively advertised at the time of their publication.⁵⁷ Books about the Soviet Union were reported in notes, excerpts, and reviews. The journal also included advertisements from publishers related to the interests of the Institute. Thus, publishers expanded the network of print ideas interconnected through *Cultura Soviética*, which functioned as a main node of that network, connecting its readers with that series of books and journals related to the USSR. Books by Soviet authors, history, and Marxist philosophy from Russian, Mexican, and Argentine publishers such as Editorial Popular, Editorial Problemas, and Editorial Lautaro, among others, were reviewed, publicized, or commented on many times.

To give an example, issue 113 of *Cultura Soviética* celebrates the tenth anniversary of the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange and belongs to the last stage of the journal, including advertisements for the Institute's bookstore within the opening pages. Among the new titles, it was possible to acquire books from Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* to the *Report on the Activity of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 19th Congress Party*, by Georgy Malenkov, as well as works by Gorky, Hegel, and Stalin. One could also acquire a Spanish-Russian or a Russian-Spanish dictionary, the journals *Unión Soviética*, *Literatura Soviética*, and *La Mujer Soviética*, as well as other related Soviet journals in Russian, English, French, or even German.⁵⁸

7 Concluding Remarks: The Values and Uses of Printing Materials

As in the Soviet world and following the tradition of socialism commented by Debray – in which books and printed matter were seen as fundamental tools for the education of the masses, the fight against inequalities, and the class struggle – the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange adopted through its activities and

⁵⁷ Villaseñor, Víctor Manuel: *Al otro lado de la "cortina de hierro."* México: Sociedad de Estudios Internacionales 1946. Cardoza y Aragón, Luis: *Retorno al futuro: Moscú 1946.* México: Letras de México 1948.

⁵⁸ Librería Exposiciones Editoriales. In: *Cultura Soviética* 19, 113 (1954), n.p.

reflected through its journal a cult of and profession in printed materials that diversified along several lines. See, as a final example among the dozens possible, the cover illustration of issue 67 of *Cultura Soviética* (Figure 4). In the foreground, a peasant woman and a worker read the newspaper *Pravda*, the official mouthpiece of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The image of the newspaper, which is literally translated as “the truth,” serves as a symbolical seal of excellence: it assures the reader that the content of the *Cultura Soviética* journal is accurate and reliable.⁵⁹ In the background, a large machine continuously prints other copies while two technicians and a female worker check that production is running smoothly. Men and women, young and old, industry and agriculture co-exist harmoniously in the image – the printed medium links them. The image informs us that in the USSR, the press is vital and reaches everyone; that everyone appreciates and supports the press. *Cultura Soviética* fulfills a similar role of informing Mexico about the latest news. Its role, like that of a newspaper in the USSR, was intended to be equally fundamental in Mexico.

At the Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange, books, journals, and pamphlets were heavily valued, and libraries were meeting places and a cause for celebration, not only as a place to read texts but also as a form of action and organization. The existence, publication, visibility, and circulation of printed materials were important even if only for their symbolic value. Printed materials became objects of worship and a working tool. They had a series of essential functions: 1) to demonstrate to the world the interest in knowledge and the promotion of culture that were cultivated in both the USSR and the Institute in Mexico; 2) to propagate, to give news of the ideas and acts carried out in both areas; 3) to promote the knowledge of the USSR and its vision and interpretation of the world to the greatest number of people.

For all this, as we have seen, a variety of materials and forms of communication were created. This extensive offering was aimed to satisfy a broad and diverse public, aligning with *Cultura Soviética*'s purpose of functioning as a central meeting point in print, and an opportunity to diversify its readers. The journal not only disseminated news; its advertising also attracted interested parties to points of sale or loan, which in turn functioned as meeting points, information points, and venues for other occasions (such as the Institute's Library, its bookstore, and other places where events were held). Print immortalized and amplified events and celebrations: a meeting, a speech addressed to a room of fifty people, could be distributed through print to a wider mass of readers beyond

59 The renowned title of *Pravda* newspaper was familiar to many of those who did not know the cyrillic alphabet.



Figure 4: *Cultura Soviética* 12, 67, cover, with an engraving entitled “Día de la Prensa en la URSS” [Press Day in the USSR] by Alberto Beltrán.

Mexico City. Local events could become moments of national transcendence and even, at a regional level, transcendence across the continent or the broader Latin American context, depending on the dissemination of its pages. Hence, one of *Cultura Soviética*'s fundamental tasks was to convert all kinds of events into printed material: not only to report on them but also to memorialize them permanently on its pages.

Therefore, the pages printed in *Cultura Soviética* reveal how the battle for minds and hearts was waged from the beginning in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, a key node in the regional and international networks of the transnational conflict that was the Cold War. *Cultura Soviética* reflected the cross-border network of ideas and people woven between Mexico and the USSR between 1944 and 1954. The Institute of Mexican-Russian Cultural Exchange and its journal were pioneering weapons of the Latin-American cultural Cold War and thus laid the foundation for the Latin-American pro-Soviet cultural front, later opposed by the pro-Western cultural front.⁶⁰ *Cultura Soviética* could be easily disregarded as a typical example of Soviet propaganda. Nevertheless, its pages reveal a set of Mexican political convictions, cultural attitudes, and editorial actions that go beyond propaganda to show the day-to-day reality of true believers. Studying this journal helps us to better understand and question the first stage of the cultural Cold War in Latin America and Mexico.

⁶⁰ On the former, see Frances Stonor Saunders: *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: New Press 2013. Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom*. And Karina Jannello: La guerra fría cultural en sus revistas. Programa para una cartografía. In: *Universum* 36, 1 (2021), p. 131–151. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-23762021000100131>

Ana Davis González

Intelectuales rioplatenses en países socialistas europeos (1932–1959)

1 Introducción

El punto de inflexión generado por la Guerra Fría en el panorama histórico, ideológico y político del siglo XX se tradujo inevitablemente al ámbito cultural, reestructurando las fuerzas y los agentes de los distintos campos. En el literario, la polarización ideológica suscitada por la Guerra significó, para algunos, una toma de posición política de sus textos literarios y no literarios. Otros, en cambio, buscaron en la neutralización creadora un «no-posicionamiento» que, en realidad, no dejaba de traslucir una postura ideológica. Porque, como explica Alan Badiou, el XX fue indudablemente el siglo marcado por la guerra en un sentido amplio, no tanto porque en el pasado la guerra no determinara la vida del hombre, sino porque «entre 1850 y 1920 se pasa del progresismo histórico al *heroísmo* político histórico [. . .]. El proyecto del hombre nuevo impone la idea de que vamos a obligar a la historia, a forzarla»¹ (cursiva nuestra). Ese «heroísmo» asumido por algunos escritores les otorgará la condición de «intelectuales» en tanto agentes que transmiten públicamente reflexiones acerca de la sociedad y cuyas reflexiones tienen necesariamente una consecuencia político-ideológica explícita.

La Guerra Fría reforzaría, de este modo, las relaciones de escritores-intelectuales entre países socialistas y lugares con los cuales no habían tenido ningún contacto hasta el momento, por ejemplo, Latinoamérica, lo cual generó un nuevo espacio geocultural de diálogo entre sí. De ahí que Germán Alburquerque reclame la figura del «intelectual latinoamericano en viaje» como objeto de estudio imprescindible para la crítica latinoamericanista.² En el presente artículo partimos de su sugerencia con el fin de dar a conocer el panorama socio-literario rioplatense en que se divulgaban textos que proyectaban las impresiones del intelectual-creador que visitó países socialistas durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, en un recorrido de ida y vuelta a su lugar de origen. Como señala Alburquerque, los dos ejes claves que se repetirán en todos estos textos será la visión del mundo soviético como utopía y como defensora de la paz,³ una paz que solo se alcanza a través de la guerra y la revolución, términos

1 Alain Badiou: *El siglo*. Buenos Aires: Manantial 2005, p. 31.

2 Germán Alburquerque: *La trinchera letrada: Intelectuales latinoamericanos y Guerra Fría*. Santiago: Ariadna Ediciones 2011, p. 80.

3 Germán Alburquerque: *La trinchera letrada*, p. 105–106.

que se conciben desde una perspectiva optimista porque son las vías que posee el pueblo para alcanzar la libertad. De ahí que Sylvia Saïtta aluda no al viaje a la URSS, sino al «viaje a la revolución» misma, una experiencia que «[. . .] convierte al viajero en espectador de un experimento que se ha cumplido y que por lo tanto convierte a esa sociedad en objeto de un conocimiento racional».⁴ Pero también como un experimento aún en proceso porque aún se espera su advenimiento en el mundo occidental.

Por ello, nos decantamos por ceñirnos al intelectual-creador (o *escritor-intelectual*) definido como aquella figura que tiene un doble cometido: participar en la opinión pública sobre temas ideológico-políticos a través de sus obras de creación y, al mismo tiempo, intervenir en el campo cultural de su tiempo, posicionándose en términos estéticos en función de las tensiones/luchas que existan en ese campo contemporáneo concreto. En este último aspecto incluiremos aquellos textos publicados en la prensa cultural de la época, puesto que el espacio hemerográfico fue uno de los órganos de difusión principales de las ideas y prácticas del campo literario del pasado siglo. De ahí que nuestra intención sea mostrar cómo su impulso a la escritura estaba motivado por informar/divulgar una experiencia de viaje a su país de origen. El escritor-intelectual participa así de una negociación entre una tendencia ideológica concreta, el comunismo, dos espacios periféricos – Europa del Este y el Río de la Plata – y dos contextos políticos muy distantes – la evolución de la Unión Soviética posterior a Lenin hasta la época de Deshielo, frente a la dictadura de Uriburu, el peronismo y la Revolución Libertadora que cierra este período en Argentina –. La curiosidad intelectual de quienes viajan a la URSS, al ser proyectada en revistas culturales, deviene un discurso de propaganda, más o menos directo o explícito; por ello, al revisar estos textos en conjunto y en diacronía, es posible dilucidar cómo se ha urdido un entramado cultural transnacional soviético en el Río de la Plata.

En línea con Claudio Maíz, creemos adecuado desplazar el término de *escritor* por el de *actor-red*, al cual el crítico define como autor colectivo que expone tensiones, ideas, configuraciones discursivas y formaciones ideológicas en sus obras literarias. El actor-red surge, por tanto, a raíz de esos cortes topográficos y cronológicos, a los cuales añadiremos un corte discursivo en sentido amplio; en otras palabras, un mismo hilo conductor, entre forma y contenido, que una esos textos de nuestro objeto de estudio. Así, antes de adentrarnos en las obras que nos ocupan, describiremos brevemente esas «redes de transferencia de bienes

4 Sylvia Saïtta: *Hacia la revolución: viajeros argentinos de izquierda*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica 2007, p. 18–19.

simbólicos»⁵ entre los intelectuales rioplatenses de izquierda con el fin de comprender el lugar de enunciación desde el cual escriben. Porque estos libros de viaje se escriben, claro está, para autolegitimarse dentro del Partido Comunista, en un proceso de *juego de espejos* de la imagen de la URSS; dicho otra manera: para entender el espacio de enunciación de su escritura, es necesario indagar, primero, en la imagen de lo soviético difundida en el campo hemerográfico, concretamente, en las revistas donde los escritores mencionados colaboraron, porque es esa imagen la que condiciona su horizonte de expectativas a la hora de viajar a la URSS. Tal horizonte de expectativas se verá determinado, a su vez, por la responsabilidad política de escritor comunista, cuyo deber es mantener, reforzar y confirmar dicha imagen positiva a la vuelta de su viaje, lo cual impone un tipo de discurso muy concreto.

Por tanto, se hace necesario sintetizar brevemente las redes intelectuales y *revisteriles* del campo literario para conocer a los actores-red a quienes los escritores están respondiendo; hablamos de dos tipos de redes porque la red intelectual es más amplia, mientras que la red *revisteril* es un «punto de condensación» por el cual los intelectuales intercambian ideas, sobre todo en el siglo XX.⁶ El otro punto de condensación serían las redes epistolares, de las cuales nos serviremos también cuando sea relevante al caso que nos ocupa. En este sentido, no concebimos a las revistas político-culturales como una mera proyección de una época, sino como dispositivos generadores de discursos y, en este sentido, la revista crea y modela al campo intelectual, y no al revés. Se busca profundizar así en el proceso en el cual las teorías marxistas y soviéticas, arraigadas en el Río de la Plata aproximadamente desde 1910,⁷ se vuelcan al campo cultural a partir de 1932. Pero estos textos no son obras aisladas sino que forman parte de una práctica discursiva colectiva anclada a una experiencia concreta (viaje a un país socialista) con un mensaje ideológico explícito –aunque, como veremos, casi todos se refugiarán en una supuesta neutralidad política para defender su objetividad–. Dicha práctica confluyó con otra que también se inicia durante los años treinta, sobre todo en prensa, que consistió en la proliferación de textos breves autobiográficos: «No había periódico o semanario que no incorporara una pequeña autobiografía

5 Claudio Maíz: La eficacia de las redes en la transferencia de bienes simbólicos: el ejemplo del modernismo hispanoamericano. En: *Alpha* 33 (2011), p. 23.

6 Horacio Tarcus: *Las revistas culturales latinoamericanas. Giro material, tramas intelectuales y redes revisteriles*. Buenos Aires: Tren en movimiento 2020, p. 80.

7 Horacio Tarcus: *Marx en la Argentina. Sus primeros lectores obreros, intelectuales y científicos*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI 2007, p. 49.

[. . .]. ¿De qué otra forma un escritor podía darse a conocer?»⁸ El corte cronológico elegido ha sido la primera mitad del siglo XX, más concretamente, el período de 1932 a 1959, porque, si bien la historiografía concuerda en que la Guerra Fría se inicia en 1945, para algunos, la polarización ideológico-política de la Guerra comienza en la Revolución Rusa:

Este punto de vista quiere remarcar que el origen de la Guerra Fría radica en una rivalidad histórica que tarde o temprano iba a estallar y que se fundaba en la incompatibilidad de dos sistemas ideológicos de aspiraciones universales y, por tanto, excluyentes.⁹

Se podrá contraargumentar que el estallido del conflicto no se produce hasta 1945, algo indudablemente cierto, no obstante, nuestra elección no se basa en la manifestación explícita de la guerra sino en las formaciones discursivas e ideológicas que dieron cabida a la misma; dicho de otra manera, 1917 genera una serie de debates que se proyectan en redes de intercambio y diálogo entre intelectuales que, en el caso latinoamericano, dan como resultado las prácticas discursivas que analizaremos aquí: escrituras del yo que describen una experiencia de viaje a países soviéticos, dirigidas a su sociedad de origen, con un fin ideológico-político. Así, si Alburquerque afirma que desde 1945 se creó un espacio, inédito hasta la fecha, que obligó a los intelectuales latinoamericanos a posicionarse en un conflicto de carácter internacional,¹⁰ nuestra perspectiva es que ese proceso se iniciaría en 1917, como demuestra el corpus elegido aquí. No obstante, como indica Saítta, los libros de viajes a la URSS comienzan a divulgarse en el Río de la Plata a partir de 1921.¹¹

El final de nuestro estudio se fijó en 1959 siguiendo la periodización de Alburquerque, para quien en 1959 finaliza la etapa de «la Guerra Fría como conflicto bipolar mundial», época en la cual se reacciona ante el miedo de una tercera guerra, algo que se traduce en una suerte de «lucha pacifista que tibiamente toma partido contra la supuesta agresividad norteamericana. Es el tiempo en que los intelectuales pro comunistas identifican la lucha por la paz con la causa soviética».¹² Los textos escogidos, como veremos, responden a esta retórica tibia de «lucha pacífica» que se interrumpirá drásticamente a partir de la Revolución Cubana cuando comienza,

8 Omar Borré: Autobiografías en el Río de la Plata. Arlt, Mallea, Borges, Olivari, Raúl González Tuñón, Marechal, Rojas, Gerchunoff. En: *Hispanérica* 73 (1996), p. 72.

9 Germán Alburquerque: *La trinchera letrada*, p. 14.

10 Germán Alburquerque: *La trinchera letrada*, p. 21.

11 Sylvia Saítta: Moscú en los relatos de viajes (1917–1920). En: Fernando Luis Martínez Nespral, Jorge Ramos (ed.): *La ciudad y los otros miradas e imágenes urbanas en los relatos de viajeros*. Buenos Aires: Nobuko 2009, p. 85.

12 Germán Alburquerque: *La trinchera letrada*, p. 289.

según Alburquerque, el proceso de «latinoamericanización» de la Guerra Fría». ¹³ A partir de aquí, se operan dos fenómenos que diferencian las prácticas discursivas de ambas etapas: en primer lugar, esa retórica moderada se endurece debido a que la tibieza anterior es entendida como un modo de atenuar el compromiso del intelectual; en segundo lugar, comienza un sentimiento de unión pan-latinoamericanista que anteriormente seguía categorías aún de corte más nacionalista. Cabe matizar este último punto ya que el nacionalismo se contrapone necesariamente a la ideología comunista propugnada por dichos intelectuales, por tanto, no nos referimos al nacionalismo en términos de ideología sino, más bien, destacamos que esa red de «latinoamericanismo» era menos acentuada en la primera mitad del siglo XX que en la segunda, reforzada, en lo político, por la Revolución Cubana; y, en lo literario, por el Boom. Es por ello que nuestro corte topográfico será el Río de la Plata, teniendo en cuenta la estrecha vinculación entre escritores e intelectuales de Argentina y Uruguay. Pero, antes de detenernos en el contexto rioplatense, debemos señalar la importancia del libro de viajes de ida y vuelta a la URSS como subgénero internacional que, como apunta Jacques Derrida, nace y finaliza en el siglo XX porque es en esta centuria cuando se generan las condiciones políticas para su desarrollo, de ahí su especificidad:

Se trata de una tradición abundante y breve, intensa y densa, de los «retornos de la URSS». [...] Obras semejantes no existían antes de la Revolución de Octubre. Y no existirán mañana; ya no puede haber tales obras después del fin de las luchas y esperanzas, de las anticipaciones y controversias a las que esta Revolución habrá dado lugar. [...] Así me parece que no hay otro ejemplo [...] de tipo de obras que [...] se vinculen a una secuencia única y finita, irreversible y no repetible de una historia política; y se vinculen a esta secuencia justamente en lo que ata el fondo a la forma, la semántica o la temática a la estructura del relato de viaje-testimonio-autobiográfico. ¹⁴

Derrida se decanta por clasificarlos como «relatos de peregrinaje» similares a los viajes a Jerusalén porque proyectan la imagen de un «espacio mítico», escatológico y mesiánico» a una tierra cargada de futuro esperanzador con el fin de importar la Revolución a sus países de origen –de ahí la necesidad del retorno–: «se va ahí listo para explicar, a la vuelta [...] por qué y cómo «uno no ha vuelto de aquello», tan estupefacto está uno y tan admirable es esto». ¹⁵ Así, Rusia emerge como la capital del espacio periférico de la República Mundial de las Letras, frente a la capital central y hegemónica de París. El perfil del viajero que crea

¹³ Germán Alburquerque: *La trinchera letrada*, p. 289.

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida: Back from Moscow, in the USSR. En: *Daimon Revista Internacional de Filosofía* 5 (1992), p. 49.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 58–59.

estas prácticas es también muy concreto; como subraya H. M. Enzensberger, el viaje «revolucionario o radical», como él los denomina, genera el *sistema de la delegaciya* que incluye a viajeros oficiales que viajan a la URSS según los siguientes aspectos: 1) no realiza el viaje por su cuenta sino acompañado, 2) es recibido y guiado por anfitriones, 3) disfruta de privilegios que los residentes normalmente no gozan, 4) y existe una organización que los asisten constantemente.¹⁶ El contexto español no fue ajeno a dichas prácticas, como advierte Sánchez Zapatero al comparar los libros de viajes con las crónicas al Nuevo Mundo, «. . . en las que los navegantes y los soldados españoles intentaban relatar las características de las nuevas sociedades descubiertas allende los mares».¹⁷ Algunas figuras fueron María Teresa León, Fernando de los Ríos, Rafael Alberti, Josep Pla y Max Aub.

Como ya se ha mencionado, es a partir de 1921 que comienzan a publicarse en la prensa rioplatense textos breves que proyectan dicha experiencia de viaje, tanto de extranjeros como de autores locales; el primero es *Moscú. Diario de un viaje a la Rusia Soviética* de Goldschmidt, traducido por Julio Fingerit (1923), cuya repercusión fue especialmente exitosa.¹⁸ Durante la década del veinte, los viajeros más asiduos eran políticos con curiosidad ideológica o invitados por la URSS, profesionales que participaban en congresos de diversas disciplinas —médicos, arquitectos, abogados, etc.—, periodistas corresponsales de algún periódico y, finalmente, militares o dirigentes comunistas que cumplen con tareas de partido, aunque estos últimos no relatan su experiencia en la escritura porque suelen ser viajes clandestinos. Algunos ejemplos que comprenden dicha década son los siguientes: *El viaje* (Rodolfo Ghioldi, 1921), *Viaje a la Unión Soviética* (José Penelón, *La Internacional*, 31 de mayo de 1924), *Rusia: la verdad de la situación actual del soviét* (León Rudnitzky, 1928), *Impresiones de una visita al país de los soviets* (Martín García, *Crítica*, 3 de febrero de 1928) y *La verdad sobre Rusia* (Vidal Mata 1930). A la lista habría que añadir un texto curioso, tanto en forma como en contenido, de la autoría de Arturo Capdevila, titulado *Apocalipsis de San Lenin* (1929) y dedicado al político socialista Alfredo Palacios (Figura 1). En él, el escritor narra la muerte de Lenin desde una elevación épico-heroica y mediante una suerte de alegoría bíblica. No obstante, la ambigüedad de su discurso no contenta a todos los comunistas, pues desde las páginas de *Claridad* recibe una crítica especialmente negativa y la trascendencia del libro es nula.

16 Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *El interrogatorio de La Habana y otros ensayos*. Barcelona: Anagrama 1958, p. 106–107.

17 Javier Sánchez Zapatero: Utopía y desengaño: análisis comparatista de los libros de viajes a la URSS. En: *Estudios humanísticos. Filología* 30 (2008), p. 273.

18 Sylvia Saíta: Moscú en los relatos de viajes, p. 96–97.

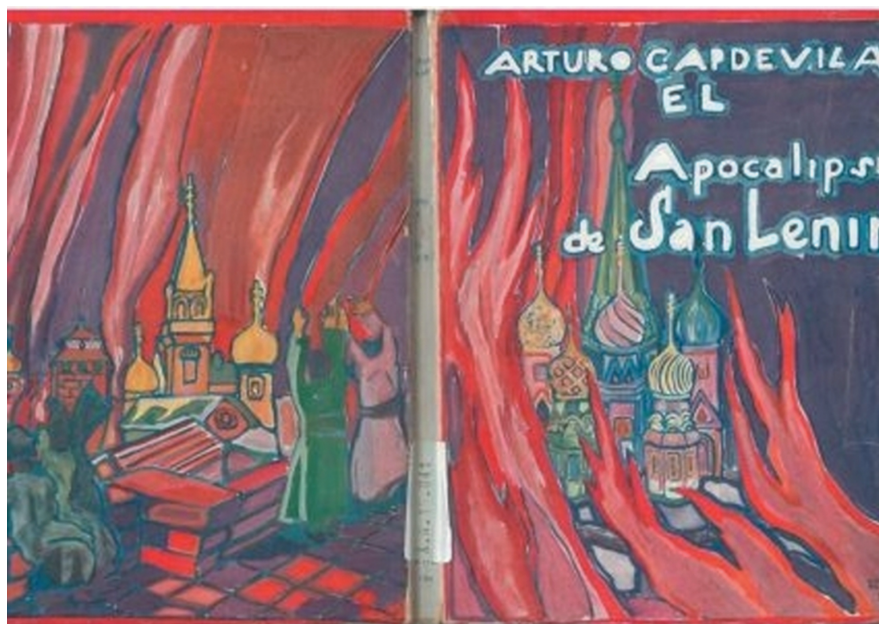


Figura 1: Portada de la primera y única edición de *El apocalipsis de San Lenin* (Capdevila, 1929).

Entre la crítica, podemos destacar los nombres de Petra, Saïtta, y de los historiadores Horacio Tarcus y Michal Zourek quienes supieron acercarse a algunos de los textos mencionados en conjunto; la segunda editó en su volumen *Hacia la revolución: viajeros argentinos de izquierda* (2007) varias obras de las mencionadas, junto con una introducción crítica acerca de lo que significó el viaje a la URSS por parte de estos escritores. Aunque, cabe aclarar que el texto de Kordon, *600 millones y uno*, se edita parcialmente, es decir, solo con el relato de viaje a China, relegando el capítulo sobre Rusia.

Por su parte, Petra publica *Intelectuales y cultura comunista* (2017), un estudio dedicado a un tema más amplio, como su título indica, pero incluye un capítulo – «Vanguardistas, reformistas y antifascistas» – donde hace alusión al panorama hemerográfico de los años veinte, treinta y cuarenta en Argentina y, en consecuencia, a los escritores comunistas, socialistas y anarquistas del campo cultural del país. A ello podemos añadir el breve trabajo de Neme Tauli y Ricardo Martín de 2013, conferencia donde se definen los relatos de viajeros argentinos de izquierda a la URSS como «construcción de un dispositivo cultural, de una ficción en la cual se describe un paraíso terrenal que no es más ni menos que el modelo

en función del cual se quiere transformar la sociedad argentina».¹⁹ Siguiendo la teoría de los imaginarios sociales de Backzo, los autores analizan cómo el horizonte de la utopía, tradicionalmente imposible de alcanzar, desciende a la tierra y se plasma en estos relatos. Por su parte, en *Primeros viajeros al país de los soviets* (2017), Tarcus estableció una antología de textos publicados entre 1920 y 1934, por viajeros –no necesariamente escritores– con el fin de dar muestra de ese discurso de época que tenía como objetivo general ofrecer al público popular, «por pocos centavos, la teoría política de la nueva revolución».²⁰ Finalmente, el libro de Zourek, *Praga y los intelectuales latinoamericanos (1947–1959)* (2019), como su título indica, se centra en la ciudad de Praga como «puente imaginario entre Europa Occidental y Moscú» y recoge una antología de autores latinoamericanos que escriben sobre su experiencia – entre ellos, González Tuñón y Varela –. A los mencionados, cabe añadir un estudio reciente, «Los libros de viaje a la URSS de Castelnuovo, Varela, Kordon y González Tuñón (1932–1959)» que reflexiona sobre las escrituras del yo en cuatro libros de viajes que citaremos aquí.²¹

Partiremos de estos trabajos para examinar el modo en que el comunismo se difunde en el Río de la Plata así como la manera en que dicha imagen evoluciona a través de esta red de intercambios y debates intelectuales. En este sentido, seguimos una perspectiva metodológica transnacional de *histoire croisée*, como propone Tobias Rupprecht en su estudio sobre las relaciones entre la URSS y Latinoamérica a partir de 1953, titulado *Soviet internationalism after Stalin* (2015). El autor describe cómo la apertura operada desde la muerte de Stalin lleva a la URSS a conquistar nuevos lugares del planeta con que anteriormente carecía de contacto y su objetivo se fija en Latinoamérica, un espacio periférico pero donde hallan un espíritu subversivo por sus distintas revoluciones de independencia. Esta operación, que Rupprecht denomina «*internationalism*», sería una fuente de legitimación para crear una idea integral del modelo soviético en la vida moderna que, a partir de 1953, busca despolarizar la Guerra Fría, diluyendo el binomio Occidente frente a Oriente a favor de una situación «multi-polar».²² Aunque nuestro corte cronológico finaliza

19 Neme Tauil y Ricardo Martín: «Te diré que no es un paraíso pero marcha a pasos agigantados. . .». Relatos de viajeros argentinos de izquierda sobre la Unión Soviética [https://www.aacademica.org/000-010/184] 2013, p. 5.

20 Horacio Tarcus (ed.): *Primeros viajeros al país de los soviets. Crónicas porteñas. 1920–1934*. Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Cultura del Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires 2017, p. 10.

21 Ana Davis González: Un viaje de ida y vuelta a la URSS. El yo itinerante trasatlántico en textos de Castelnuovo, Varela, Kordon y González Tuñón. En: *Anclajes*, XXVII/3 (2023), [s.p.].

22 Tobias Rupprecht: *Soviet internationalism after Stalin. Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War*. Cambridge: University Press 2015, p. 9.

cuando empieza este proceso, nos serviremos de la tesis de Rupprecht como base para entender esos últimos años previos a la Revolución Cubana.

2 El campo revisteril e intelectual argentino de izquierdas en diacronía (1932–1959)

Sin duda, el reto más complejo a la hora de abordar las redes de intercambio entre intelectuales de izquierda del período elegido sea sistematizar diacrónicamente las prácticas discursivas que proyectan una imagen de lo soviético o que dan cuenta de los debates y las polémicas locales en relación con el tema. Esta primera tarea parte de la necesidad de clasificar, luego, los relatos de viajes en función de los dispositivos que los motivaron – razones por las cuales se viaja (congresos, invitaciones, turismo, etc.) –, los dispositivos genéricos – libros de viaje, autobiografías, cartas, libros de memorias, etc. –, y la cronología entendida desde dos espacios: qué sucedía en el panorama del Río de la Plata tanto como en el país de destino. En palabras de Saítta:

Una primera Rusia es la que aparece representada en los libros de quienes viajaron antes de finalización de la I guerra mundial, cuyos relatos son más relatos de guerra que relatos de viajes [. . .]. Diferente es la Rusia de Lenin a partir de la publicación de la NEP cuando se militaba en favor de la constitución del Frente Único con socialistas, reformistas, sindicalistas y [. . .] no ostensiblemente comunistas. Otra muy distinta es la Rusia de Stalin, que sostiene la posibilidad del socialismo en un solo país, y la consigna de clase contra clase. Por último, diferente será la Unión Soviética del llamado de los Frentes Populares contra el fascismo.²³

En el siguiente subapartado nos centraremos únicamente en la cronología del contexto porteño porque, si bien nuestro corpus incluye escritores uruguayos como Castelnuovo, su escritura y desarrollo profesional fueron cultivados en Buenos Aires, centro cultural y editorial, y es por ello que la historia de Argentina es el contexto relevante para el tema que nos ocupa.

23 Sylvia Saítta: Moscú en los relatos de viajes, p. 90.

3 1931–1938, la Década Infame y la Guerra Civil española

El primer recorte en que dividimos el período escogido (1931–1959) se iniciaría en 1931, año umbral porque es el inicio de una nueva época – la Década Infame – de tensiones ideológicas debido a la dictadura de Uriburu (1930), una reacción política que se alza contra el liberalismo, impulsada por la emergencia de los nacionalismos y el fascismo. A su vez, el impacto de la Guerra Civil Española se traslada al terreno literario y en el campo comunista se publican dos obras fundamentales que dan cuenta de ello: el poemario de Raúl González Tuñón dedicado a la Revolución de Asturias, *La rosa blindada* (1935), título que inspira la revista homónima posterior (1964–1966), y *España bajo el comando del pueblo* de Córdoba Utirburu (1938). El pensamiento marxista en Argentina se configura, en esos años, en torno al político y ensayista Aníbal Ponce, cuyo socialismo es de corte positivista, muy alejado de otros intelectuales latinoamericanos, por ejemplo, de Mariátegui, cuyo pensamiento anticientificista e irracionalista dista del discurso dialéctico ponciano.²⁴ El influjo de sus ideas son determinantes para intelectuales y escritores rioplatenses de la década del treinta, quienes lo consideran la autoridad más relevante del pensamiento marxista. En su obra *Humanismo burgués y humanismo proletario* (1935) Ponce da un giro óptico a la dicotomía Ariel/Calibán, con el fin de desterrar el mito arielista para filtrarlo por la vía del materialismo, y propone a Calibán como la figura positiva del binomio en tanto encarna el trabajo, la acción y la realidad terrenal. Así lo destaca al relatar su asistencia a *La tempestad* en el teatro de Moscú:

El desdichado «monstruo rojo» que Shakespeare tanto había calumniado en Calibán, ¿no estaba acaso con un alma nueva en aquella inmensa sala en que la hoz y el martillo ocupaban el sitio de la corona y las águilas? [...] Eso pensaba yo al regresar del teatro mientras caminaba por las largas avenidas, sobre la nieve quebradiza: feliz dos veces de poder reunir [...] la Rusia Nueva que ha dado sentido a mi madurez y el viejo Shakespeare que pobló de sueños mi adolescencia.²⁵

Pero Ponce se halla en un espacio marginal de la intelectualidad argentina. El espacio hemerográfico estaba dominado por la revista de Victoria Ocampo, *Sur* – nótese la asimetría entre la hegemonía política nacionalista frente a la dominación liberal en el campo cultural –. De ahí que sea la editorial de Ocampo la que

²⁴ Óscar Terán: *Aníbal Ponce: ¿el marxismo sin nación?* Buenos Aires: Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente 1983, p. 25.

²⁵ Aníbal Ponce: *Humanismo burgués y humanismo proletario*. Madrid: Miño y Dávila, p. 118.

publique *Retoques de mi regreso a la URSS*, traducción al español del desengañado excomunista francés André Gide, en 1937 y que llegó a tener hasta siete ediciones, lo cual demuestra el éxito del libro. Frente al bando liberal, la izquierda se dispersa en diversas revistas culturales: *Brújula* (1930–1932), *Metrópolis* (1931–1932), *Contra* (1933), *Rumbo* (1935), *Clase* (1933), *Dialéctica* (1936), *Contra-fascismo* (1936–1937), *Unidad* (1936–1938), *Orientación* (1936–1949). La posición periférica de las revistas de izquierda se mantiene también en el campo hemerográfico de los años cuarenta y cincuenta, un dato relevante a tener en cuenta al analizar el lugar de enunciación del corpus escogido, una posición siempre anti-hegemónica. Su condición marginal no se reduce al mero discurso sino que se traslada también a la violencia de toda dictadura; así, por ejemplo, el intelectual Héctor Agosti relata cómo en 1934 fue apresado en Caseros por un intento de rebelión y desacato a la República,²⁶ o González Tuñón fue condenado a dos años de prisión por dirigir una revista subversiva (*Contra*, 1935). Por su parte, Castelnuovo recuerda en sus memorias (1974) que, tras publicar algunos artículos suyos acerca del mundo soviético, por poco es apresado en el presidio de Ushuaia y, allí mismo, menciona también que Roberto Arlt se habría negado a viajar a la URSS por miedo a la persecución comunista.²⁷

La década del treinta se abre con la institucionalización del relato de viajes a la URSS, ya sea por el éxito de ventas o por la proliferación de los mismos, tanto en formato libro como breves crónicas periodísticas. Algunos ejemplos son *Yo ví! . . . en Rusia* (Castelnuovo, 1932) *El imperio soviético* (Napal, 1932), *Visita al hombre futuro* (Ponce, 1935), *Tres semanas en Rusia* (Tedeschi, 1936), y *Roma y Moscú. Impresiones de un cirujano argentino* (Zeno, 1937). De ahí la queja de Manuel Gálvez, escritor completamente alejado del comunismo y muy cercano al nacionalismo hegemónico, que lanza en el prólogo a la traducción de *Un fascista en el país de los soviets* del italiano P. M. Bardi, en 1932: «Entre nosotros no ha faltado algún escritor que, después de un viaje de turismo, nos hablara de los museos de Leningrado y del palacio de los zares».²⁸ Así, si Castelnuovo abre la década con *Yo ví! . . .* con una imagen idealizada del país, el verdadero éxito editorial lo alcanza un libro donde la mirada es completamente negativa: *El imperio soviético* del sacerdote Dionisio Napal. Fue publicado en 1932 y en 1933 ya tenía cinco ediciones de 20000 ejemplares cada una. Su popularidad es lo que evita, según recuerda Castelnuovo en sus

26 Héctor P. Agosti: *Los infortunios de la realidad: en torno a la correspondencia con Enrique Amorim*. Buenos Aires: [s.e.] 1995, p. 38.

27 Elías Castelnuovo: *Memorias*, p. 172–173.

28 Manuel Gálvez: Prólogo. En: *Un fascista en el país de los soviets* de P. M. Bardi. Buenos Aires: Tor 1932, p. 5–6.

Memorias, que otro escritor, Horacio Quiroga, lo acompañe en su viaje.²⁹ El dato en realidad es erróneo porque el viaje de Castelnuovo es anterior a la publicación de Napal, de ahí que no fuera posible esa negativa de Quiroga; no obstante, es posible que Castelnuovo no mintiera conscientemente sino que, más bien, confundiera conversaciones que posiblemente sí habría mantenido luego sobre el éxito de la obra, que resonó negativamente entre las páginas de *Claridad*. En esta revista, en un artículo firmado por M. Z.,³⁰ se alude a Napal como «el *speaker* de la radio eucarística», puesto que *El imperio soviético* denuncia los mensajes pro-soviéticos de la prensa de principios de la década del treinta.

4 1939–1945, II Guerra Mundial y el camino hacia el peronismo

El panorama descrito finalizaría alrededor de 1938, fecha significativa por la muerte de Ponce, pero sobre todo porque en las revistas culturales, incluidas las liberales, se acentúan las tensiones ideológico-políticas a partir de 1939 por dos razones de índole internacional: la victoria franquista y el estallido de la II Guerra Mundial. Cierra la etapa, claro está, el significativo año de 1945, por la finalización de la Guerra, el estallido de la Guerra Fría y el inicio del gobierno peronista en Argentina. 1945 es un año clave para el PC argentino en términos editoriales, pues se funda la Distribuidora Rioplatense de Libros Extranjeros (DIRPLE), que difunde revistas comunistas foráneas, como *La Pensée* y la editorial Problemas, perseguida por censura y cuyo cierre forzado se anuncia el 12 de febrero de 1942 en *Orientación*, aunque logra reabrirse meses después. Entre las revistas de izquierda de este período destacan la ya mencionada *Orientación*, *Argumentos* (1938–1939), *La hora* (1ª época, 1940–1943; 2ª época, 1945–1949; Figura 2) y *Nueva Gaceta de la AIAPE* (1941–1943).

De las mencionadas, las más destacables son *Orientación* y *La Hora*, no solo por su mayor duración sino también por dedicarle un espacio central a dos temas que nos ocupan: la imagen que se divulga de la URSS y los debates literarios en relación con la función del escritor en tiempos de complejidad política. Ambos periódicos difunden las noticias políticas y culturales del país; así por ejemplo José Mairal, quien reside en la URSS, envía noticias a *Orientación* casi a diario acerca del teatro en Moscú, o el corresponsal de *La Hora*. Aunque en este período se publi-

²⁹ Elías Castelnuovo: *Memorias*, p. 150.

³⁰ M.Z. [¿May Zubiría?]: Manuel Gálvez y el fascista que fue a la URSS. En: *Nueva revista* 2 (1934), p. 14.



Figura 2: Portada de *La Hora*. Tomado del archivo CeDInCI.

quen pocos libros de viaje, el libro de Augusto Bunge, *El milagro soviético: cómo ha sido posible* (Ed. Problemas, 1942), es una excepción que se celebra con alegría desde *Orientación* (15/11/1942; Figura 3). No extraña la escasa cantidad de libros de esta índole ya que, unos meses antes, el director del periódico, Faustino E. Jorge, denunciaba el allanamiento a su domicilio por parte de la policía para reclamarle la documentación sobre la contabilidad de *Orientación*.³¹ Tal era el clima de persecución y represión de la intelectualidad comunista durante esos años.

Cabe destacar también entre textos periodísticos breves, las cartas póstumas escritas desde Moscú por Ponce en 1935 y dirigidas a su hermana Clara (*Nueva Gaceta. Revista de la AIAPE*, 2/2, 1935), así como la descripción de Moscú y Leningrado por parte de Lila Guerrero, escritora y traductora, e hija de una inmigrante rusa. En *Orientación* Guerrero publica diversas traducciones entre las que destacan poemas de Maiacovski y en «Moscú, ciudad de la victoria» hace un desplazamiento de París como capital cultural dominante por estas ciudades soviéticas:

³¹ Faustino E. Jorge: El allanamiento a *Orientación*. En: *Orientación* (12 de febrero 1942), [s.p.].



Figura 3: Publicidad del libro de Bunge (*Orientación*, 15/11/1942). Tomado del archivo CeDInCI.

Erenburg en «Mi París» [. . .] escribió sobre el París de los trabajadores [. . .]. Pero de Moscú, como de todas las ciudades soviéticas, no se puede escribir así. Porque Moscú es toda nuestra. [. . .] la nueva Moscú surge del laberinto confuso, de la antigua ciudad de mercados delineada y remozada por la revolución [. . .]. Porque Moscú es la ciudad de la victoria. De la victoria del pueblo.³²

Y en un segundo artículo, añade: «Leningrado [. . .] es la ciudad de la tradición revolucionaria rusa».³³ Pero es a partir de la batalla de Stalingrado cuando esta ciudad cobra una centralidad esperable; por ejemplo, *Orientación* le dedica el ejemplar publicado el 15 de octubre de 1942 donde González Tuñón publica *Un resplandor en el horizonte* donde alaba la resistencia del pueblo: «Allí estaba, allí está aún, no de llanto y de ceniza» como la ciudad de Garcilaso, aunque llena de escombros y de muerte, Stalingrado. Allí está la ciudad. Yo miro hacia ella y veo una mujer con un

³² Lila Guerrero: Moscú, ciudad de la victoria. En: *Orientación* (2 de noviembre 1939), [s.p.].

³³ Lila Guerrero: San Petersburgo-Petrogrado-Leningrado. En: *Orientación* (2 de noviembre 1939), [s.p.].

fusil».³⁴ En el mismo número, se brinda también un espacio donde numerosos artistas argentinos pintan la ciudad, entre ellos, Norah Borges (Figura 4).



Figura 4: «Stalingrado» por Norah Borges (*Orientación*). Tomado del archivo CeDInCI.

Pero además de las revistas locales, cabe destacar la divulgación de la cultura soviética en el país mediante prensa dirigida por órganos rusos; durante la década del cuarenta, por ejemplo, *Unión Eslava*, *El Ruso en Argentina*, *La Voz Rusa*, *Tierra Rusa*, y *Calvario ruso*, censuradas bajo el gobierno de Perón pero también durante los años previos al mismo – por ejemplo, cuando se prohíbe la realización del I Congreso Eslavo en Argentina (1942).³⁵ En el marco de dichas tensiones políticas, cabe apuntar que el año de 1943 es un nódulo temporal al estallar la Revolución de junio, cuando las masas populares seguidoras de Perón preludian su inminente gobierno. Por ello, las inquietudes entre los comunistas contrarios al peronismo se dejan traslucir en numerosas páginas de *Orientación*, como en los artículos siguientes: «La suprema necesidad: salvar la patria del nazi-peronismo»,³⁶ «Cerrar el paso a la demagogia peroniana»³⁷ o «Un llamado de las juventudes políticas. Repudian la demagogia peronista».³⁸

³⁴ Raúl González Tuñón: Un resplandor en el horizonte. En: *Orientación* (15 de octubre 1942), [s.p.].

³⁵ Ana Inés Serrano Benítez: El elemento foráneo y la imagen del extranjero comunista durante el primer peronismo. El caso de la *Unión Eslava Argentina*. En: *XII Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamento de Historia* (2009). En línea: <http://www.aacademica.org/000-008/929> [07/06/2022], [s.p.].

³⁶ Emilio Troise: La suprema necesidad: salvar la patria del nazi-peronismo. En: *Orientación* (14 de noviembre 1945).

³⁷ José Branderburgo: Cerrar el paso a la demagogia peroniana. En: *Orientación* (31 de octubre 1945).

³⁸ [Sin firma]. Un llamado de las juventudes políticas. Repudian la demagogia peronista. En: *Orientación* (18 de octubre 1945).

5 1946–1955, peronismo y Guerra Fría

El tercer recorte cronológico abarca el período de 1946–1955, es decir, entre el inicio de la Guerra Fría y del gobierno de Perón, hasta el comienzo de la Revolución Libertadora que derroca al peronismo y la época del Deshielo ya mencionada. Según Zourek, entre 1947 y 1956 fue «la época en que la Unión Soviética alcanzó el prestigio en su máximo esplendor ya que contribuyó significativamente a la derrota del fascismo ganando así la simpatía de los intelectuales de izquierda hacia este país».³⁹ Cabe señalar que la polarización indiscutible de la Guerra Fría no se extrapola en Argentina como tal debido al esfuerzo exitoso del peronismo por situarse en una tercera posición, enfrentándose al bando liberal y al comunista en la misma medida, y erigiéndose como la representación de la clase obrera. Dicha etapa se abre con una «prolífica actividad editorial comunista que [había decaído] estrepitosamente» durante el peronismo: «el PCA contaba con ocho sellos editoriales (oficiales o independientes dirigidos por comunistas) y varias librerías distribuidas en distintos puntos de la ciudad de Buenos Aires».⁴⁰ En el campo hemerográfico de izquierda se percibe un claro descenso en la fundación de revistas culturales, entre las cuales destacan *Latitud* (1945), *Expresión* (1946–1947), *Cuadernos de cultura* (1950) y *Propósitos* (1951–1976), mientras que *Orientación* y *La hora* permanecen vigentes. Sí es significativa la publicación de libros de viajes fundamentales, como *De Montevideo a Moscú: crónicas de viaje en misión diplomática* (Emilio Frugoni, 1945), *Rusia por dentro* (Lauro Cruz Goyenola, 1946), *La esfinge roja. Memorial de un aprendiz de diplomático en la Unión Soviética* (Emilio Frugoni, 1948), *Un periodista argentino en la Unión Soviética* (Alfredo Varela, 1950), *Cinco uruguayos a la URSS* (VV.AA. 1952), *Mi viaje a la URSS* (Jesualdo Sosa, 1952), *Notas de viaje a la URSS* (Emilio Troise, 1953), *Crónica de un viaje a la URSS y a Checoslovaquia* (Alfredo Gravina, 1955), y *Todos los hombres del mundo son hermanos* (Raúl González Tuñón, 1954). Cabe aclarar que, durante los cuarenta, únicamente se publican autores uruguayos, Frugoni y Cruz Goyenola, y en editoriales de Montevideo. Pero, a diferencia de la visión optimista de Frugoni, el libro de Cruz Goyenola es el único, de los mencionados, que proyecta una imagen negativa de la URSS y por ello recibe una reseña negativa desde las páginas de *Orientación* – En *Rusia por dentro* (Jorge Thenon, *Orientación*, 12/06/1946) –. En el caso de Troise, el político explica en la advertencia preliminar cómo se censuró la publicación de su relato al volver de su viaje, lo cual le costaría incluso la cárcel. Recién tres años después logra editar su obra incom-

³⁹ Michal Zourek: *Praga y los intelectuales latinoamericanos (1947–1959)*. Rosario: Prohistoria 2019, p. 19.

⁴⁰ Adriana Petra: Intelectuales y política en el comunismo argentino: estructuras de participación y demandas partidarias (1945–1950). En: *Anuario IEHS* 27 (2012), p. 30.

pleta, porque habría perdido parte de la misma en Uruguay: «Fragmentarias como son, entrego estas notas [. . .] al juicio de nuestro pueblo, que necesita ser cada vez más informado acerca del país soviético, frente a la calumnia y a los horrores que sobre él propaga el imperialismo guerrista».⁴¹

Y no es de extrañar esto último en un clima de tensiones política, pues tanto el pensador Agosti como el escritor Enrique Amorim aluden, en su epistolario, a la violencia y la censura peronista ejercida contra el comunismo; el primero señala que fue expulsado de *Crítica* por ser «enemigo del régimen» en 1950, año en que Amorim era detenido por la denominada Sección Especial para la Represión del Comunismo, misma Sección que, en 1954, detiene a Agosti.⁴² En lo que concierne a la prensa soviética, la ya mencionada revista *Unión Eslava* denuncia la represión peronista con estas palabras: «Jamás en ningún país del mundo [. . .] los eslavos fueron perseguidos y se les privó de la libertad, como aquí en la Argentina en la época en que el Sr. Perón estuvo gobernando el país».⁴³ Como suscribe Serrano Benítez, tres años más tarde se prohíbe la realización del III Congreso Eslavo y se solicita la expulsión de 106 extranjeros, acusados de comunismo, amparándose en la Ley de Residencia: «A partir del año 1948 ser subversivo o sujeto «indeseable» estaba estrechamente relacionado con participar en informes de la prensa extranjera».⁴⁴

Otro ejemplo de censura lo hallamos en las tituladas «Cartas polonesas», Amorim envía al diario uruguayo *Justicia* tras su paso por el *Congreso Mundial de Intelectuales por la paz* en Wroclaw (1948) aunque, en una carta a Agosti (28/12/1948), se queja de que las mismas aparecen censuradas en *El hogar* de Buenos Aires.⁴⁵ Muchos escritores rioplatenses asisten al mismo congreso en la ciudad polaca: Amorim, Francisco Espínola, Enrique Wernicke, Varela, entre otros; este último cuenta su experiencia en dos artículos de *Orientación: La fraternidad de los intelectuales* (17/11/1948) y *Latinoamérica en Europa* (15/12/1948). El primero versa, sobre todo, sobre la unidad pan-latinoamericanista del congreso: «El temperamento expansivo de los sudamericanos nos creó muchos afectos». Y, asimismo, desmiente que el congreso fuera un evento comunista pues consistió, según Varela, de una «gama de matices ideológicos que representaban los congregados. [. . .] El Congreso tuvo, es cierto, una directiva única y un único norte: la paz».⁴⁶ El segundo artículo, que escribe ya en París, describe la enorme actividad

41 Emilio Troise: *Notas de viaje a la URSS*. Buenos Aires: Sendero 1953, p. 3.

42 Héctor P. Agosti: *Los infortunios de la realidad*, p. 105.

43 Anónimo, sin título, *Unión Eslava* V/34 (1 de febrero 1946), p. 1.

44 Ana Inés Serrano Benítez: El elemento foráneo y la imagen del extranjero comunista durante el primer peronismo, [s.p.].

45 Héctor P. Agosti: *Los infortunios de la realidad*, p. 63.

46 Alfredo Varela: La fraternidad de los intelectuales. En: *Orientación* (17 de noviembre 1948), [s.p.].

editorial y de traducción que, en Europa del Este, se estaba desarrollando para divulgar a escritores latinoamericanos.

Lo que está claro es que el género del libro de viajes a la URSS estaba ya institucionalizado como una moda; así lo demuestra el intento frustrado de Agosti por escribir sus experiencias de viaje a la URSS en 1953.⁴⁷ Algunas de dichas obras se publicaban como crónicas o cartas en prensa, incluidos aquellos textos que difaman lo soviético, como el del popular poeta, Atahualpa Yupanqui, en su artículo *El cadáver de la infamia complotada pende de la cuerda* (*Orientación*, XIV/519, 1949). En una entrevista con Leo Sala (1970), el poeta aclara que viajó a Hungría, Bulgaria, Rumania y Checoslovaquia entre 1948 y 1950, pero no quiso entrar en Rusia porque su individualismo contrastaba con su cosmovisión ideológica y, por ello, abandona el PC a su regreso. Pero, antes de su desengaño, Yupanqui publicaba con frecuencia en *La hora*, por ejemplo, algunos esbozos de su libro *Tierra que anda* (1948) aparecieron en ese periódico, posteriormente prologado por Varela, quien halagaba la militancia comunista del poeta.⁴⁸

Otro acontecimiento a destacar en esta etapa fue el Congreso Mundial de los Pueblos en Viena (1952) al cual asistieron intelectuales rioplatenses como María Rosa Oliver, Juan Carlos Castagnino Adolfo Midlin, Fina Warschaver Ernesto Giudici y Leónidas Barletta. Este último, quien había fundado *Propósitos* un año antes, hizo de su revista el órgano de difusión principal de las actividades desarrolladas en el Congreso. De los mencionados, resulta fundamental la figura de Oliver por la escasa presencia de testimonios femeninos⁴⁹ en la época y por recibir el Premio Lenin de la Paz en 1957.

6 1956–1959, la Revolución Libertadora y la Época del Deshielo

El último lapso, más breve, abarca únicamente desde 1956 a 1959, es decir, entre la Revolución Libertadora y la época del Deshielo, hasta la Revolución Cubana. Debido a la política internacionalista de la URSS en este período, como ya se ha comentado, el juego de espejos entre la URSS y Latinoamérica se completa mediante revistas como *Literatura extranjera*, donde se divulgan traducciones de escritores latinoame-

⁴⁷ Héctor P. Agosti: *Los infortunios de la realidad*, p. 81.

⁴⁸ Alfredo Varela: Prólogo. En: *Tierra que anda* de Atahualpa Yupanqui. Buenos Aires: Anteo 1948, p. 5–8.

⁴⁹ Sus manuscritos inéditos se hallan en el archivo de la Universidad de Princeton pero fueron examinados y estudiados por Moraes Medina (óp. Cit.).

ricanos. Así, por ejemplo, en una carta sin fecha del redactor jefe A. Tchakovsky le solicita a Agosti un artículo para su revista, cuyo objetivo último es «faire connaitre à nos lecteurs l'opinion publique de l'Argentine, l'état actuel et les perspectives du développement des rapports culturels entre l'Amérique Latine et l'URSS en général, entre l'Argentine et l'Union Soviétique, en particulier».⁵⁰

En Argentina, la Revolución Libertadora agudiza la censura y la violencia, como indica Agosti cuando relata el arresto del escritor Raúl Larra el 8 de marzo de 1955, o al contar la invasión a su propio apartamento y su detención en 1957 a raíz de la publicación de su ensayo *Para una política de la cultura* (1956). Vale la pena leer el relato de Agosti y pensarlo como un testimonio paralelo y complementario a *Operación masacre* de Walsh, pero desde la perspectiva comunista:

Empecemos por la madrugada del 12 de abril [de 1957], cuando cuatro individuos de la Coordinación Federal, pistola en mano, invadieron mi departamento, arrasaron con todos los papeles que estaban sobre el escritorio, incluido este diario, cargaron con muchos libros y me llevaron luego [. . .] hasta la Penitenciaría Nacional. Allí me encontré con [. . .] Emilio Troise, con Leónidas Barletta. [. . .] Recuerdo que Raúl Larra arribó en la mañana; al anochecer: Rodolfo Ghioldi, Jorge Thénon, Osvaldo Pugliese.⁵¹

Otra anécdota significativa fue la destitución de Ernesto Sábato como director de *Mundo argentino* y su expulsión de la SADE en 1956, escritor ya alejado del comunismo pero que de todas maneras muchos comunistas defienden sin objeción. Por esta atmósfera de represión, no sorprende la escasa o casi nula fundación de revistas comunistas así como de la publicación de libros de viajes. La única excepción del médico Ernesto Malbec y su libro *Cómo se vive en Rusia* (1959), cuya mirada negativa del mundo soviético no podía ser de otra manera, viniendo de un liberal y durante un período en que en la propia URSS se denuncia el proceder de Stalin. A Malbec se unen otros escritores liberales que, en artículos breves, dan cuenta de la pobreza en Rusia, denuncian la censura o simplemente se posicionan a favor de la cultura rusa no comunista. El primer caso es el de Manuel Mujica Lainez en su artículo *Detrás de la cortina de hierro* (*La Nación*, 1958); el segundo, lo expone la escritora uruguaya Susana Soca, en *Encuentro y desencuentro* (*La Licorne*, 1957), al relatar cómo hubo de guardar un manuscrito de Pasternak para salvarlo de la censura de la URSS. Por su parte, desde la revista liberal *Sur*, Ocampo defiende a una serie de artistas rusos no soviéticos para concluir que, entre las dos Rusias, ella apoya la liberal (*Saludo a los dos Sergios* en *Sur*, 222). En un espacio intermedio se mantienen escritores como Varela, Jorge Amado o la

⁵⁰ Carta hallada en el archivo CeDInCI (FA-32; correspondencia VIII, 07/1956–12/1958).

⁵¹ Héctor P. Agosti: *Los infortunios de la realidad*, p. 141.

propia Oliver, quienes se desengañan del estalinismo pero no del comunismo. En el lado extremo se halla la figura de Bernardo Kordon quien relata sus viajes a la URSS y a China, pasando por Siberia, y quien se muestra obnubilado por las maravillas que encuentra allí.

7 Reflexiones finales

La revisión de libros y textos en prensa que proyectaron el impacto de los viajes a la URSS da cuenta del panorama sociocultural en que se difundió una imagen de lo soviético entre la *intelligentsia* rioplatense. Examinado en diacronía, la evolución de este panorama pone al descubierto que, durante los años treinta y cuarenta, la red de intercambio de ideas y debates sobre la URSS solo podía producirse preponderantemente en prensa debido a la posición periférica y subversiva de los intelectuales comunistas. A pesar de que esa situación de censura se mantiene, sí podemos ver que, en los cincuenta, hay un significativo aumento de libros íntegros, en detrimento de las revistas, tanto en defensa como en contra la URSS – incluso el de Troise, que logró eludir la censura –. Se podría aventurar, como una de las causas posibles de esta aparente apertura, la necesidad, por parte del peronismo, de contrarrestar la imagen negativa que la oposición de izquierda había generado constantemente del régimen, al denunciar reiteradamente su censura sistemática. Cabe recordar que, en su segunda presidencia, Perón dirigió sus energías a conquistar la intelectualidad de izquierda, al tiempo que se desligaba de la Iglesia y de los sectores más conservadores con que se había aliado en sus inicios. Ello, unido a que el comunismo en los cincuenta no se percibía como un peligro inminente ni real, como sí ocurría en los treinta, permitiría la circulación de este tipo de libro. Dicha situación se combinó con el afán internacionalista por parte de la URSS de crear relaciones culturales transnacionales que abrió las puertas a numerosos viajeros latinoamericanos. Por tanto, la institucionalización del subgénero, el libro de viajes a la URSS, se produce en Buenos Aires debido a intereses políticos muy diferentes por parte de dos espacios alejados geográfica e ideológicamente. De ahí que los años «dorados» del subgénero en Buenos Aires sean de 1950 a 1955, precisamente durante el período en que se inicia el desengaño hacia el stalinismo, y que podría explicar por qué figuras como Oliver no quisieron publicar sus impresiones sobre Moscú. Se prepara así el terreno para que, a partir de 1959, se produzca un viraje de Moscú hacia La Habana, y los debates sobre el comunismo se desplacen del binomio URSS/Stalin para instalarse en el contexto latinoamericano, y adquirir así un perfil continental, no nacional, cuya capital fuera Cuba.

Elisa Kriza

De ogros y sacrificios humanos: Europa del Este, la libertad y la crítica de autores mexicanos al autoritarismo

1 Introducción

Este artículo estudia nociones de libertad y autoritarismo en textos de los escritores mexicanos José Revueltas y Octavio Paz con un enfoque en Rusia y Europa Central como lugares simbólicos durante la Guerra Fría. Por la ubicación geográfica de México, los debates sobre imperialismo, libertad y democracia en la literatura de este país tradicionalmente se orientan a los Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, como este volumen argumenta, los lazos y afinidades culturales más allá de los grandes centros hegemónicos presentan interesantes oportunidades para explorar ideas con envergadura global como las que estudia este ensayo. La presente pesquisa demostrará cómo Paz y Revueltas crearon un espacio individual más allá de las polarizaciones de la Guerra Fría en el cual construyeron sus visiones personales del significado de la libertad física y colectiva, así como la libertad de expresión. Como afirma José Antonio Aguilar Rivera, «uno de los legados más perdurables de Revueltas [fue] su firme defensa de la libertad de expresión».¹ Igualmente, Octavio Paz, a pesar de todas sus transformaciones ideológicas, contribuyó indudablemente a la pluralidad intelectual y la libertad de expresión en México.² Maarten van Delden escribe: «en los años setenta, la defensa de los valores de la libertad y la democracia se había convertido en uno de los principales temas de sus escritos políticos.»³ Los pensamientos de estos autores son relevantes hoy porque estas libertades se garantizan únicamente en estados genuinamente democráticos y en el siglo XXI observamos lo frágiles que son las democracias, aún en países con una larga tradición de elecciones libres.

1 José Antonio Aguilar Rivera: José Revueltas: el presente de una ilusión. In: *Perfiles Latinoamericanos* 46 (2015), p. 28.

2 José María Espinasa: *Historia mínima de la literatura mexicana del siglo XX*. México: Editorial El Colegio de México 2015, p. 279–284.

3 Maarten van Delden: Frente a frente: Octavio Paz y Alejandro Solzhenitsyn. In: *Zona Paz*. 2019. https://zonaoctaviopaz.com/detalle_conversacion/125/frente-a-frente-octavio-paz-y-aleksandr-solzhenitsyn/ [Julio 27, 2023].

La Unión Soviética tuvo un valor simbólico para los y las intelectuales mexicanas durante la Guerra Fría.⁴ La revolución de octubre fue un símbolo de libertad y de internacionalismo hasta que las acciones opresivas e imperialistas del gobierno soviético estropearon esta imagen.⁵ Europa Central, en particular los países del Pacto de Varsovia como Polonia, Checoslovaquia, Hungría, etc., fueron objeto de solidaridad intelectual en contra de la ocupación soviética especialmente en reacción a las invasiones en 1956 y 1968 de Budapest y Praga respectivamente. Pero estos países también fueron símbolos de un socialismo con rostro humano. Este enfoque geográfico fue cambiando paulatinamente cuando en América Latina se establecieron nuevas formas de socialismo en Cuba, Chile, y Nicaragua y el enfoque de la nueva generación de la izquierda mexicana se fue transfiriendo al sur del continente americano.⁶ A pesar de este largo proceso de distanciamiento, aún hoy Rusia ocasionalmente sirve de telón de fondo para expresar posiciones políticas y éticas.

¿Para qué excavar viejos textos de autores canónicos del siglo XX el día de hoy? El paso del tiempo ha borrado la complejidad de autores como Paz o Revueltas, como lo escribe Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle, quien explica que Paz ha pasado por un proceso de despolitización que permite que sea acaparado por representantes de todo tipo de posiciones ideológicas.⁷ La riqueza estética de Revueltas, añade, ha sido ignorada a favor de una recepción politizada pero superficial que enfatiza su fe comunista. Un ejemplo de esta percepción frívola es cuando el crítico literario Christopher Domínguez califica a Revueltas al final de su vida como a «un bolchevique» que «aspiró a la dictadura del proletariado, duradera y perversa».⁸ Como demostraré más adelante, Revueltas fue capaz de asumir la responsabilidad de condenar a los abusos autoritarios soviéticos incluso antes que muchos de sus camaradas, y no cabe duda que no tenía intención de reproducir estos abusos. El presente artículo expone aportaciones intelectuales de Revueltas y Paz que resultan útiles en una época en la que términos como la libertad pare-

4 Viktor JEIFETS: *Beskonechnyi labirint: Kuda vedet rekonfiguratsiia meksikanskij levyy sil*. In: *Latin-American Historical Almanac* 22, 1 (2019), p. 256–288.

5 Egbert Jahn: *The Impact of the October Revolution on International and Inter-Ethnonational Relations*. In: Egbert Jahn: *War and Compromise Between Nations and States. Political Issues Under Debate*. Vol. 4, Trad. Anna Güttel-Bellert. Cham: Springer 2020.

6 Viktor JEIFETS: *Beskonechnyi*, p. 263.

7 Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle: *Estética y política en las conmemoraciones de Paz y Revueltas*. In: *iMex. México Interdisciplinario. Interdisciplinary Mexico* 5, 10 (2016), p. 75–78.

8 Christopher Domínguez Michael: *Tiros en el concierto. Literatura mexicana del siglo V*. México: Ediciones Era 1997, p. 485.

cen tornarse maleables en las visiones intelectuales de México y el extranjero, en particular con relación a la reemergente relevancia geopolítica de Rusia.⁹

A pesar de las divergencias ideológicas entre estos escritores, ambos demuestran una preocupación compleja y profunda con las ideas y la historia de la URSS. En la primera parte del análisis de sus textos el enfoque se centra en la libertad de expresión como derecho humano, en la segunda en la libertad física y el reproche a los abusos del sistema carcelario y finalmente en la libertad de la autodeterminación de los pueblos.

2 La libertad de expresión: El juicio de Daniel y Sinyavsky como paradigma

Entre las injusticias más obvias del régimen soviético se encuentran los juicios conocidos como los procesos de Moscú que se llevaron a cabo durante la era de José Stalin (1928–1953), pero también lo fueron otros abusos judiciales que continuaron hasta el colapso de la Unión Soviética. Después de los principales procesos de Moscú que se llevaron a cabo a mediados de los años treinta, el juicio más significativo para la historia soviética, que fue a su vez el momento que marcó el nacimiento del movimiento disidente que definió las últimas décadas del estado soviético, fue el proceso contra los escritores Andrey Sinyavsky y Yuli Daniel. Este juicio se llevó a cabo en 1966, una época en la que tanto la ciudadanía soviética como la del mundo entero adoptaba un compromiso más holístico con los derechos humanos. Esto también se observa en el pensar de Revueltas y en su reacción a estos diferentes procesos: su evolución intelectual demuestra como su compromiso con la libertad cuajaba y tomaba forma.

En 1935, Revueltas visitó a Moscú por varios meses y pocos años después publicó sus recuerdos de este viaje en el cual experimentó euforia al ver las ideas de Marx y Lenin encarnecidas:

Esto es la idea hecha vida. ¡Hay que darse cuenta de la emoción profunda y enaltecedora que tal cosa significa! ¡La idea! Lo que sólo era un librito, discursos, manifiestos, cárceles. ¡Hoy vida, jóvenes, un país!

⁹ La reciente novela de David Toscana, *El peso de vivir en la tierra* (2022), es un homenaje a la literatura rusa que incluye referencias a la falta de libertad en la historia rusa, sin embargo, su trato del tema es somero y carece de la complejidad requerida para una discusión en el presente artículo.

Por eso observamos todo, todo lo vemos trascendental, aludiendo a la transformación definitiva. Quizá nos equivoquemos en algunas cosas, pues en todas partes hay errores. Pero no es una equivocación sustancial; esta equivocación no afecta la inmensa luz que sale de un corazón soviético, de cualquier corazón soviético joven que se tome.¹⁰

El entusiasmo de la juventud soviética que goza el privilegio de vivir en Moscú contagia al joven Revueltas, quien asume que lo que observa es representativo del resto del país. Lo inspira la hermandad no solo entre ciudadanos y ciudadanas del extranjero y la URSS, sino también le conmueve escuchar las teorías del lingüista soviético Nikolai Marr, quien propone la igualdad de los idiomas en este país multilingüe. Queda claro que el «inmenso dolor» de la opresión imperialista del pasado y la esperanza de la futura libertad lo alientan. Por otro lado, Revueltas está consciente de problemas graves creados por el mismo sistema. Por el momento no quiere asumir la trascendencia que tienen estos «errores», como los llama. Aunque las terribles represiones judiciales de Stalin aún estaban por llegar a su cenit, uno de los tres procesos principales en contra de los antiguos revolucionarios rusos había sido iniciado con el arresto de Grigori Zinoviev y Lev Kameney en diciembre de 1934 y Revueltas debió haberlo sabido. Zinoviev y Kameney fueron compañeros revolucionarios de Stalin, luego arrestados y calumniados, para después ser condenados a muerte. Cabe añadir otro evento del cual Revueltas debió haber estado consciente: la primera farsa judicial llevada a cabo en el preludio de la época de Stalin había concluido en 1928. En el proceso conocido como el Escándalo Shajty, 53 ingenieros fueron falsamente acusados de sabotear una mina de carbón, y el proceso cerró con once condenas de muerte. Este caso fue conocido mundialmente. Revueltas no llegó en ese momento a entender el significado siniestro de todos estos procesos, pero no fue el único. Como lo menciona el historiador David Caute, tanto observadores occidentales como soviéticos no lograron reconocer la falsedad e injusticia de estos eventos en su momento.¹¹ Pero para el año 1966, como muchos intelectuales comunistas y anticomunistas, Revueltas hizo frente al abuso criminal de los juzgados soviéticos.

Lo singular en el caso de Daniel y Sinyavsky era que estos respetados intelectuales, Sinyavsky era crítico literario y Daniel era traductor, fueron acusados de difamar a la Unión Soviética con la intención de socavar al estado, una de las acusaciones más serias del código penal de su tiempo, y que lo hicieron en textos literarios.¹² La abogada soviética Dina Kaminskaya explica por qué este caso era

¹⁰ José Revueltas: II. Corazones del mundo [3 de julio de 1938]. In: *Nexos* 36, 437 (2014), p. 46.

¹¹ David Caute: *Politics and the Novel during the Cold War*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction 2010, p. 57ff.

¹² Elisa Kriza: «This does not interest the court!»: the 1966 Soviet Satire Trial and its persistent legacy. In: *HUMOR* 35, 3 (2022b), p. 416.

único en la época soviética: «The outburst of public indignation at the arrests was [. . .] because they had been indicted on criminal charges for the content of works of fiction and because the state was judging authors for remarks made by their imaginary characters.»¹³ Hasta entonces el estado soviético había encarcelado a escritores y escritoras acusándoles de crímenes apócrifos, no por el contenido de sus obras como lo hizo antes el zar. Desde el punto de vista de la protección de los derechos humanos, la condena de Daniel y Sinyavsky a trabajos forzados en un campo de prisión por cinco y siete años respectivamente fue escandalosa por cuatro razones: 1) El juicio determinó que Daniel y Sinyavsky eran responsables por las opiniones expresadas por los protagonistas de sus obras ficticias a quienes acusaban de ser inmorales o traidores de la patria. 2) El juez descartó la posibilidad de que la literatura pueda representar puntos de vista diversos, es decir, también aquellos que no coinciden con los del Partido Comunista de la URSS. 3) Los condenaron por haber publicado sus obras en el extranjero sin el permiso explícito de las autoridades soviéticas, decisión paternalista y autoritaria. 4) La condena fue considerada demasiado dura para personas que no amenazaban ni al estado ni a la ciudadanía.

El 26 de febrero de 1966 Revueltas escribió un breve pero elocuente ensayo sobre el caso de estos dos escritores satíricos.¹⁴ En su ensayo que lleva el título *Un «toque de queda» soviético contra la libre expresión del pensamiento* opta por la acertada metáfora del toque de queda para denunciar la hipocresía de las autoridades soviéticas. Con convicción apunta al hecho de que el juicio jamás comprobó exactamente cuáles eran los contenidos difamatorios de las obras de Daniel y Sinyavsky.¹⁵ Esto es una crítica fundamental del proceso: cabe recordar que tanto el procurador como el juez basaron la acusación de difamación del estado en la representación literaria del pueblo ruso como una bola de alcohólicos, algo que de ninguna manera ponía en peligro al estado soviético y mucho menos era difamatorio.¹⁶ Revueltas apunta que se trata de un juicio no por contenidos sino por el modo de publicar – el uso del seudónimo y la publicación en el extranjero – pues esas dos cosas eran las únicas que había podido corroborar el juicio. Revueltas extrae el significado de este abuso utilizando la metáfora del toque de queda:

13 Dina Kaminskaya: *Final Judgement*. New York: Simon & Schuster 1982, p.167.

14 José Revueltas: Un «toque de queda» soviético contra la libre expresión del pensamiento. In: Andrea Revueltas/Philippe Cheron. *Cuestionamientos e intenciones. Ensayos*. Mexico: Ediciones Era 1978, p. 200–206.

15 Elisa Kriza: «*This does not interest the court!*», p. 436–438.

16 Yuri Feofanov: Izoblichenie. *Izvestiia*. 12 febrero 1966. Elisa Kriza: «*This does not interest the court!*», p. 425.

[S]i en cualquier país las autoridades de una ciudad lanzan la orden de queda, salir a la calle después del toque sería considerado un delito, cualesquiera puedan ser las circunstancias individuales del infractor, así haya salido para visitar a su madre agonizante o tan solo por simple ignorancia de la orden. Si un determinado modo, procedimiento o forma de expresar el pensamiento son consideradas como delito, el carácter, la naturaleza, las tendencias y el contenido de dicho pensamiento ya no tienen ningún otro significado que el de una pura cuestión académica.¹⁷

Revueltas explica que la decisión de las autoridades soviéticas abre las puertas a una arbitrariedad infinita, y ejemplifica hipotéticamente que, si se les prohibiera a los escritores soviéticos escribir con caracteres chinos, hasta la crítica dogmática a Mao Tse Tung sería prohibida – algo que de otra forma era bienvenido.

El segundo mecanismo de opresión que reprocha es el abuso de la membresía obligatoria a la Unión de Escritores para censurar a aquellos que buscan mayor libertad editorial. Como esta membresía era imprescindible para publicar obras en la URSS, la exclusión tenía consecuencias palpables. Revueltas escribe que al condenar a Daniel y Sinyavsky a la expulsión de la Unión significa transformarlos en «miseros fantasmas de sí mismos».¹⁸ De facto se les roba el derecho legal de escribir, y como el ser escritor no es una elección sino una vocación irrevocable para aquellos con una «conciencia artística verdadera» el estado los está condenado a romper la ley, pues un escritor escribe y no puede evitarlo. La condena, por tanto, no es para ellos como individuos, sino para la literatura, que es la que está siendo transformada en una actividad clandestina. Esta observación astuta resulta profética, así de temprano como él la pronuncia, pues este juicio fue efectivamente el inicio de la ola de publicaciones clandestinas (*samizdat*) que perduró hasta la *perestroika* en los años ochenta.

Revueltas concluye apuntando al hecho de que Daniel y Sinyavsky han sido ofrecidos como sacrificios humanos «a un dios tenebroso, que no se atreve a decir su nombre».¹⁹ Esta metáfora es significativa por dos razones. En primer lugar, es evidencia de una evolución ideológica personal y colectiva, y, en segundo lugar, es un rechazo absoluto a la forma más común de banalización de la injusticia de los procesos soviéticos.

En su novela *Los errores* (1964) Revueltas ilustra la manera en que muchas personas comunistas justificaron las brutales condenas de muerte a los acusados de los procesos de Moscú de los años treinta apuntando a un «sacrificio» que los mismos acusados ofrecían supuestamente voluntariamente por un futuro redentor.²⁰

¹⁷ José Revueltas: *Un «toque de queda»*, p. 202.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

²⁰ José Revueltas: *Los errores*, p. 198, 223.

En esta novela son personajes ficticios los que justifican esta brutalidad, pero estos pensamientos aterradoros reflejan una tendencia entre comunistas y, curiosamente, también entre anticomunistas de interpretar a los procesados de los juicios estalinistas como mártires que aceptan un destino mesiánico.²¹ Ahora, en este ensayo escrito dos años más tarde, queda indudablemente claro que Revueltas rechaza esta mentalidad ruin que su novela caricaturiza al condenar el sacrificio de Sinyavsky y Daniel como una agresión imperdonable.

Mientras que sus colegas soviéticos pidieron a su gobierno liberar a Sinyavsky y a Daniel por el bien de la patria y del movimiento comunista mundial en una carta abierta al 23º Congreso del Partido Comunista de la Unión Soviética,²² Revueltas aboga por su liberación por el valor mismo de esta libertad y condena a la URSS por esta cruel injusticia. Eran muy pocas las personas comunistas en la URSS y en el extranjero que se atrevieron a defender el derecho a publicar en el extranjero,²³ pero Revueltas fue uno de ellos y en este ensayo lo hizo de una manera altamente persuasiva.

Revueltas vio crecer su desilusión por los partidos comunistas a través de los años, aunque siguió fiel a sus valores izquierdistas hasta el final de su vida.²⁴ Como miles de comunistas cuyos anhelos fueron destrozados por las acciones mismas de la URSS, se fue desprendiendo paulatinamente de toda ilusión con respecto al comunismo soviético. Como he demostrado, la censura soviética y los abusos judiciales fueron unos de los factores que lo llevaron a reconsiderar su relación con el comunismo soviético, y como demostraré en el siguiente segmento, el abuso del sistema carcelario fue otro factor clave en esta evolución ideológica.

3 Revueltas, Paz y Solzhenitsyn: Cárceles verdaderas y verdades subjetivas

En los años setenta uno de los mayores retos intelectuales y éticos en el mundo occidental fue la posición política hacia el disidente soviético Alexander Solzhenitsyn y sus textos sobre el mundo carcelario de su país. El gulag, como se le denomina

21 Elisa Kriza: From Utopia to Dystopia: Bukharin and the Soviet Constitution of 1936. In: Jonas Ross Kjærgård, Karen-Margrethe Simonsen (eds.): *Discursive Framings of Human Rights. Negotiating Agency and Victimhood*, Routledge: London 2016, p. 79–93.

22 62 escritores y escritoras firmaron esta carta. Pis'mo 62 pisatelei. In: Ekaterina Velikanova (ed.). *Tsena metafori ili prestuplenie i nakazanie Sinyavskogo i Danielya*. Moscú: Kniga [1966] 1989, p. 499.

23 Dina Kaminskaya: *Last Judgement*, p. 164–166.

24 Álvaro Ruiz Abreu: *José Revueltas. Los muros de la utopía*. Mexico: Cal y arena 2014, p. 435.

coloquialmente al conjunto de prisiones y campos de trabajo de la Unión Soviética, no era un secreto, pero el número de personas reclusas en él durante la época de Stalin no era conocido ampliamente y tampoco lo eran las condiciones en las que se vivía ahí. En 1962, Solzhenitsyn publicó una novela corta sobre la vida en uno de esos campos. *Un día en la vida de Iván Denísovich* fue una sensación en la URSS y en el extranjero por su cuestionamiento ético de los abusos del sistema penitenciario.²⁵ Solzhenitsyn, quien estuvo encarcelado injustamente de 1945 a 1953, ahora fue admitido en la Unión de Escritores Soviéticos hasta su expulsión por razones políticas en 1969. En 1970 recibió el Premio Nobel de Literatura y tras publicar ilegalmente su obra *Archipiélago Gulag* en el extranjero fue expulsado de su país en 1974. Vivió en el exilio con su familia hasta su regreso a Moscú en 1994. *Archipiélago Gulag* es una obra de tres tomos en la que Solzhenitsyn entreteje sus observaciones personales de los campos de prisión con sus reflexiones históricas. Inicialmente, el público lector consideró a este libro una obra de verdad histórica, a pesar de sus contradicciones y obvias declaraciones puramente ideológicas, como la afirmación de Solzhenitsyn de que los campos de prisión no existían bajo los zares, entre otras.²⁶

En 1974, Revueltas decide leer y confiar en las palabras de Solzhenitsyn, como lo hizo anteriormente con las autoridades soviéticas. En 1938, Revueltas afirma que «la URSS es el único lugar del mundo donde tengo fe absoluta en las noticias, afirmaciones y actitudes oficiales»,²⁷ y añade que no espera que otros compartan su opinión. Años más tarde, al estudiar *Archipiélago Gulag* de Solzhenitsyn, de nuevo alude a la subjetividad de la verdad:

[. . .] la verdad es siempre revolucionaria, no importa de dónde ni cómo surja. Solzhenitsyn tenía que decir su verdad y esa verdad, de una u otra forma, dentro de este o cualquier otro sistema político nos alimenta a todos [. . .] La obligación primera del escritor es decir la verdad[.]²⁸

Mientras que en los años treinta Revueltas acepta todo pronunciamiento estatal soviético como certero, ahora señala que el disidente antisoviético más prominente dice la verdad, ¿cómo sucedió esta evolución?

25 Elisa Kriza: One Day in the Life of the Prison Nation: José Revueltas' and Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Penal Microcosms. In: *CompLit. Journal of European Literature, Arts and Society* 2, 4 (2022a), p. 119.

26 Alexander Solzhenitsyn: *Arkhipelag gulag*. Vol. 1, Moscú: Sovetskii pisatel 1989, p. 399. Esta afirmación falsa estaba vinculada con su aún más descabellada afirmación antisemítica que el gulag fue inventado por un recluso supuestamente judío. Elisa Kriza: *Solzhenitsyn*, p. 204.

27 José Revueltas: IV Corazones de la GPU [20 de julio de 1938]. In: *Nexos* 36, 437 (2014), p. 50.

28 Citado en: José Antonio Aguilar Rivera: *José Revueltas*, p. 10.

Ya en los años treinta, durante su primera visita a la URSS, Revueltas se interesaba por el sistema carcelario, pues consideraba que «el mejor termómetro para conocer el desarrollo de no importa cuál país es conocer el sistema penitenciario con que cuenta».²⁹ Visita a la colonia penitenciaria de Bolshevo, que servía de «cárcel modelo» para visitantes prominentes soviéticos y extranjeros en la cual los y las reclusas viven sin murallas, trabajan por un salario justo y disfrutan de actividades lúdicas.³⁰ Revueltas queda tan apantallado que concluye que esto es superior al trato que reciben las personas en el sistema penitenciario mexicano. Atribuye este sistema aparentemente humano a Felix Dzerzhinskii, el fundador de la Cheka, el servicio de inteligencia y de seguridad interior soviético, a quien califica como una «nobilísima figura», y agrega: «Este era un hombre. Él fue quien puso y logró fundar, todavía en las épocas de mayor miseria en la URSS, esta ciudad de Bolshevo, donde una serie de abnegados combatientes lucha por reconstruir a los hombres.»³¹ Su admiración por Dzerzhinskii parece basarse en su experiencia visitando a Bolshevo, la cárcel modelo, pero es más que eso. Describe su reacción al leer en un periódico que un agente del servicio de seguridad interior soviético fue asesinado y lamenta este crimen apuntando que «nuestros carceleros y los carceleros del mundo capitalista nunca han sido simples hombres, sino simples bestias. Y este es un hombre humano.»³² Con esas palabras revela no solo su ingenuidad sino también el largo trayecto que tenía por delante para llegar a comprender la magnitud de los abusos del sistema penitenciario soviético. Curiosamente, Octavio Paz reprocha justamente al «impulso generoso aunque ignorante» que llevó a muchas personas en Latinoamérica, incluso a él mismo – y como vemos también a Revueltas – a ignorar que el fundador de la Cheka fue quien «desató el terror en contra de los mencheviques y los socialistas revolucionarios, sus compañeros de armas» desde la aurora del estado soviético.³³

En los años setenta, tras leer a Solzhenitsyn, Revueltas alude de nuevo al servicio de seguridad interior soviético que antes tanto admiraba, pero con un tono muy distinto. Lo que permanece es la noción de que el estado de un sistema carcelario sirve de parámetro para evaluar los logros de un país. Una de sus mayores

²⁹ José Revueltas: *IV Corazones de la GPU*, p. 50.

³⁰ Smith, M. Hamblin. Bolshevo: A Russian Labour Colony for Criminals. In: *Journal of Mental Science* 80, 328 (1934), p. 164. El historiador Steven Barnes escribe que efectivamente hubo una temporada en los años veinte en la que este tipo de trato ejemplar fue practicado en la URSS. Steven A. Barnes: *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2011, p. 84.

³¹ José Revueltas: *IV Corazones de la GPU*, p. 51.

³² José Revueltas: *IV Corazones de la GPU*, p. 51.

³³ Octavio Paz: *El ogro filantrópico*. Barcelona: Seix Barral 1979, p. 260.

críticas al estado mexicano era el abuso del sistema carcelario y el hecho de que las personas más pobres del país no gozan de verdadera libertad ni dentro ni fuera de las murallas carcelarias por la estigmatización y la falta de oportunidades que sufren.³⁴ Revueltas ve a México como un universo-cárcel.³⁵ Ahora, al leer *Archipiélago Gulag*, primero en francés y luego en español, se sorprende al ver que lo que Solzhenitsyn describe es mucho más grave pues tiene mucho mayor alcance. Revueltas escribe:

El socialismo soviético es una gigantesca NKVD,³⁶ no en el sentido figurado. La NKVD es una empresa económico-política, que se sustenta en la imperiosa necesidad de extraer la plusvalía absoluta a la fuerza de trabajo tomada en su conjunto, con fines de consumir la acumulación primitiva de capital. La primera fase de la plusvalía absoluta fue el stajanovismo, sin descuidar los campos del archipiélago. Después ha sido solamente el Gulag. Es un libro que me ayuda mucho para mi formación del concepto del Estado soviético —no tan único si reflexionamos sobre el modo de producción asiático.³⁷

La declaración de Solzhenitsyn que el trabajo forzado de los campos de prisión era esencial para el desarrollo económico soviético indignó al público lector de su tiempo, incluyendo a Revueltas. Posteriormente la historiografía ha podido desenmarañar el significado del sistema de campos de trabajo y establecido que este cruel sistema no fue el motor de la economía sino un freno y que su uso fluctuaba no por razones económicas sino políticas.³⁸ Como explica el historiador Steven Barnes, el sistema penal tenía una puerta giratoria acoplada tanto a las intenciones políticas del gobierno como al comportamiento de la persona reclusa. La cantidad de personas en el gulag variaba, con una tendencia hacia la reducción del número de reclusos. Ante la falta de otras fuentes, Revueltas asume que Solzhenitsyn tiene razón y, por su parte, añade que además de los trabajos forzados también el movimiento stajanovista fue una forma de explotación. El movimiento stajanovista, que lleva el nombre del minero Alexei Stajanov, invitaba a la ciudadanía a competir entre sí y rebasar las cuotas diarias del trabajo, que de por sí eran altas. El vínculo sugerido por Revueltas entre los trabajos forzados penales con la competencia laboral voluntaria llama la atención porque Barnes nota que

34 Elisa Kriza: *One Day*, p. 130.

35 Vicente Francisco Torres. *Visión global de la obra literaria de José Revueltas*, México: UNAM 1985, p. 105–107.

36 El Comisariado del Pueblo para Asuntos Internos de la URSS (NKVD) era un órgano de seguridad soviético implicado en arrestos y en administrar los campos de prisión.

37 José Revueltas: Carta a Andrea, 28 julio 1974. In: *Las evocaciones requeridas*. 2, México: Ediciones Era 1987, p. 258.

38 R.W. Davies: Forced Labour Under Stalin: The Archive Revelations. In: *New Left Review* 1, 214 (1995), p. 62–80. Steven A. Barnes: *Death and Redemption*, p. 14–24.

tanto el sistema de trabajos forzados penales como el movimiento stajanovista eran dos métodos por los cuales el gobierno soviético buscaba inculcar a la ciudadanía orgullo por la contribución personal a la labor socialista.³⁹ Para Revueltas es imposible aceptar que un estado sacrifique a su población de esta manera, explotándola ya sea voluntaria o involuntariamente. Lo importante de su recepción del disidente ruso es su rechazo a la esclavitud carcelaria o no carcelaria para el supuesto beneficio económico de la nación. Con esto, Revueltas se mantiene fiel a sus ideas iniciales de que 1) el sistema carcelario debe ser humano y no debe ser abusivo, y 2) que la libertad es un derecho humano que no se puede sacrificar por nada. De esta manera, la URSS pasa de ser un modelo utópico a ser una distopía sin que el observador – Revueltas – sea el que cambie de ideología. Lo que cambia es la información a la que tiene acceso y su evaluación de ésta.

Maarten van Delden escribe sobre Paz y Solzhenitsyn que: «No cabe duda de que el encuentro con Solzhenitsyn fue fundamental para la comprensión que desarrolló el poeta mexicano sobre la naturaleza histórica de la Unión Soviética».⁴⁰ Paz no era comunista y no sorprende que condene a los abusos carcelarios en la URSS, pero su lectura de Solzhenitsyn es meticulosa y matizada y logra mantener en alto el valor de la libertad ante la lealtad ideológica hacia el anticomunismo. La crítica de Paz a Solzhenitsyn es tan importante como la crítica de Revueltas (como comunista) a la URSS porque Paz era anticomunista y compartía un bando ideológico con el disidente ruso.

La preocupación de Paz por la libertad de expresión estaba vinculada con otras libertades, en especial la libertad física como derecho humano y la libertad de los pueblos oprimidos. En 1970, Paz había condenado la falta de libertad de expresión en la URSS, así como en México: «Toda dictadura, sea de un hombre o de un partido, desemboca en las dos formas predilectas de la esquizofrenia: el monólogo y el mausoleo. México y Moscú están llenos de gente con mordaza y de monumentos a la Revolución.»⁴¹ La oposición al encarcelamiento como forma de represión era un tema que tocaba en sus textos que hacen referencia a la URSS, en particular a partir de la popularización mundial de la obra de Solzhenitsyn.⁴² Cuando lee a Solzhenitsyn en 1974 y observa su negación de la existencia de los campos de prisión zaristas, Paz no solo apunta a la existencia de estos sino también a las famosas críticas literarias de estos abusos penitenciarios, por ejemplo,

³⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁰ Maarten van Delden: *Frente a frente*.

⁴¹ Octavio Paz: *Posdata*, p. 30–31.

⁴² Catarina von Wedemeyer: Escribir la deshora soviética. Octavio Paz entre forma poética y comentario político. In: *Revista Iberoamericana* 89, 284 (2023), p. 695–696.

en la obra de Anton Chéjov.⁴³ Paz vincula la libertad de expresión con la libertad física: así como es crucial no abusar de las cárceles, es esencial tener el derecho a criticar estos abusos. Reprocha la injusticia soviética en el gulag y también la censura que condenó a Solzhenitsyn al exilio.

4 Rusia y la libertad de autodeterminación

4.1 Paz y la libertad de los pueblos

Lo sorprendente de los comentarios de Paz sobre Solzhenitsyn es su habilidad de apuntar a uno de los problemas más graves de la ideología del pensador ruso sin caer en la trampa que le aguardaba a sus críticos occidentales. Desde una perspectiva internacional, criticar a Solzhenitsyn por cualquier razón resultaba en acusaciones que hasta Paz mismo repite: que son personas supersticiosas que creen todo lo que dice el partido comunista.⁴⁴ En países más polarizados como Alemania o Estados Unidos críticos de Solzhenitsyn podían perder su empleo o sufrir de falsas acusaciones de ser agentes del KGB simplemente por expresar su opinión públicamente.⁴⁵ Pero Paz, en su posición de pensador liberal mexicano, está libre de sospecha y utiliza su libertad para subrayar que por más relevante que sea la aportación de Solzhenitsyn a llamar la atención a los abusos penitenciarios de su país, no cabe duda de que no es ni democrático ni humanista.⁴⁶

La empatía de Paz por pueblos subyugados es lo que finalmente lo lleva a impugnar a Solzhenitsyn a quien acusa de «arrogancia» e «indiferencia *imperial*».⁴⁷ Por una parte, Paz reconoce que Solzhenitsyn «aceptaría que Rusia fuese gobernada por un autócrata, si ese autócrata fuese asimismo un cristiano auténtico».⁴⁸ Paz reprocha no solo la noción de la autocracia como alternativa sino también que el cristianismo pueda ser el fundamento de un estado que respete al prójimo: dada la historia de la iglesia y los imperios cristianos eso es imposible. Además de criticar a su visión del futuro, Paz también recrimina la falta de empatía de Solzhenitsyn por los pueblos oprimidos como Vietnam y otros pueblos sometidos al colonialismo e imperialismo.⁴⁹ Al criticar al proceso de paz en Vietnam y abogar por una continuación del conflicto

⁴³ Octavio Paz: *El ogro*, p. 256.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9, 262.

⁴⁵ Elisa Kriza: *Solzhenitsyn*, p. 158, 217–218.

⁴⁶ Octavio Paz: *El ogro*, p. 262–263.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 267–268.

bélico, Solzhenitsyn omite que más que ser un conflicto bipolar entre el comunismo y el capitalismo, era una lucha de liberación nacional vietnamita; Paz concluye: «Esto último fue lo que le dio legitimidad. Ignorarlo no sólo es ignorar la complejidad de toda la realidad histórica sino su dimensión humana y moral.»⁵⁰

Esta crítica es esencial para discernir los problemas que conlleva la ideología de Solzhenitsyn y también para entender a Paz y a su compromiso con la libertad y la oposición al imperialismo. La solidaridad de Paz hacia los pueblos de Polonia, Checoslovaquia, y Hungría y sus protestas contra la influencia soviética era firme.⁵¹ Califica a la invasión de Checoslovaquia en 1968 como uno de los grandes momentos de crisis del comunismo internacional, a la par con los procesos de Moscú de los años treinta.⁵² Con empatía denomina a Europa Central como «una muralla viva de pueblos dominados».⁵³ En suma, Paz rechaza tanto al abuso carcelario soviético como la falta de libertad de expresión en ese país pero también al imperialismo nacionalista y expansionista ruso-soviético. De esta manera su imagen de la URSS nos permite entender su noción transnacional de la libertad humana.

En este contexto cabe mencionar que Alexander Solzhenitsyn ha sido uno de los principales ideólogos de la expansión territorial que llevó a la invasión de Ucrania en el siglo XXI, como lo vaticinó el politólogo Herman Pirchner antes de la actual guerra: «We could even see Moscow embrace a policy driven by the vision of Nobel laureate (and Russian nationalist) Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and others, of a Greater Slavic State (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and North Kazakhstan).»⁵⁴ Evidentemente, Solzhenitsyn aún no articulaba su visión expansionista cuando Paz leyó su obra en 1974, pero con su perspicacia intelectual Paz reconoció una actitud imperialista por parte del autor ruso que se tornó virulenta a partir de los años noventa hasta su fallecimiento en el año 2008 y que fue adoptada por el presidente Vladímir Putin.

4.2 Rusia y la libertad en el siglo XXI

El actual conflicto geopolítico agravado por la invasión rusa de Ucrania en febrero del 2022 así como el preocupante deterioro del respeto a los derechos humanos en Rusia bajo el gobierno de Putin han vuelto a colocar a Rusia al centro de debates

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

⁵¹ Octavio Paz: *Posdata*, p. 60–62; *Pequeña crónica de grandes días*, p. 28–29, 33, 129.

⁵² Octavio Paz: *El ogro*, p. 165.

⁵³ Octavio Paz: *Pequeña crónica*, p. 33.

⁵⁴ Herman Pirchner: *Post Putin: Succession, Stability, and Russia's Future*. Lanham, MD & London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2019, p. 41. Ver también: Elisa Kriza: *Solzhenitsyn*, p. 177, 200–203.

sobre el significado del imperialismo, el autoritarismo y la libertad. En este caso, los frentes ideológicos son más ambiguos. Pues hasta en conflictos bélicos que tienen evidentes agresores desde el punto de vista del derecho internacional como lo es la actual guerra contra Ucrania, hay quienes proyectan sus quiméricas visiones de Rusia como libertadora.

Mientras que en Europa la mayoría de las personas que apoyan a Rusia en este conflicto tienden a ser de derecha, en México el diario de izquierda *La Jornada* ilustra la compleja relación entre Rusia y nuestro país. Como sus antecesores estudiados en este artículo, el periodista mexicano antiimperialista Carlos Fazio hace alusiones a la libertad y a los sacrificios humanos en sus textos sobre la guerra para *La Jornada*, pero de manera muy distinta. Vale la pena dar un vistazo a su argumentación.

En una opinión en mayo escribe Fazio que «la liberación de la estratégica ciudad de «Artiómovsk/Bakhmut» por las fuerzas armadas de Rusia –muy costosa para el régimen de Volodymir Zelensky, quien sacrificó allí miles de hombres y toneladas de equipo militar» es una mala noticia para el gobierno de EEUU.⁵⁵ Fazio describe a Rusia como una fuerza que libera a la ciudad de Bakhmut en Ucrania, sin explicar de qué se está liberando esta ciudad destrozada por las mismas fuerzas rusas. Se refiere a Bakhmut como «Artiómovsk/Bakhmut», en referencia primero al nombre impuesto por la URSS a esa ciudad y después al nombre autóctono que fue restaurado por la Ucrania independiente. Esto resulta tan absurdo como escribir Nueva España/México en referencia a nuestro país. También llama la atención su uso del término «sacrificar» para criticar al líder ucranio por defender a su país. Curiosamente, Fazio olvida mencionar que los mismos rusos que lucharon en Bakhmut se quejaron durante meses de ser usados como carne de cañón por parte de su gobierno por esta ciudad estratégicamente insignificante. De hecho, poco más tarde, a finales de junio, las tropas rusas que ocuparon Bakhmut después salieron a ocupar a la ciudad rusa de Rostov en un motín dirigido por Yevgueni Prigozhin, el líder ruso del grupo mercenario Wagner. Semanas más tarde, en julio, ignorando a todos estos eventos tan complejos, Fazio escribe que son los Estados Unidos y la Unión Europea los que iniciaron la guerra contra Rusia en Ucrania y reclama que «el presidente Joe Biden parece empeñado en seguir luchando en ese país de Europa del este «hasta el último ucranio»».⁵⁶ De nuevo alude al sacrificio ilegítimo, en este caso acusando a Biden de utilizar al pueblo ucranio para sus siniestros fines. Ignorando que previamente criticó al gobierno de Ucrania por haber decidido continuar defendiéndose contra la agresión rusa que Fazio jamás admite, el autor se

55 Carlos Fazio: EU, Rusia y la guerra en Ucrania. In: *La Jornada* (5 mayo 2023).

56 Carlos Fazio: EU/OTAN: ¿cambio de peón? In: *La Jornada* (10 julio 2023).

olvida de que lo elemental de esta guerra es el anhelo del pueblo ucranio de liberarse de una ocupación imperialista. Así, Fazio comete el mismo error que Solzhenitsyn con relación a Vietnam en los setenta: no reconoce quién perjudica a la libertad de este pueblo.

En sus artículos, Fazio ignora las masacres de Bucha, Irpin y tantas otras ciudades, los miles de menores de edad raptados por las fuerzas rusas y hasta las contradicciones mismas de la propaganda rusa que causaron la rebelión de Prigozhin.⁵⁷ Declara que Rusia está liberando a Ucrania sin definir de qué. Vale contrastar este tipo de argumentos incoherentes y vacíos en la actualidad con las discusiones de Paz y Revueltas en torno a Rusia que resaltan por su profundidad y por su compromiso ético.

5 Conclusión

El internacionalismo soviético, así como su base ideológica vinculada con la emancipación ciudadana, crearon un marco de referencia con el cual se podía criticar al estado mismo que fue creado como resultado de esta ideología. En la Guerra Fría, los partidos comunistas y sus opositores fomentaban visiones maniqueas. Paz y Revueltas perforaron la cortina de hierro y vencieron al dogmatismo ideológico. Las visiones que ofrecían ambos pensadores mexicanos sobre diferentes formas de libertad en tiempos de fuerte polarización ideológica reflejan ideas complejas y matizadas. En estos textos los ogros son los estados autoritarios o imperialistas que sacrifican a seres humanos por cualquiera que sea su ideología. En 1974, Paz expone la importancia de mantener los ojos abiertos hacia la injusticia, donde sea que suceda:

El rechazo del cesarismo y la dictadura comunista no implica en manera alguna justificar al imperialismo norteamericano, el racismo o la bomba atómica, ni cerrar los ojos ante la injusticia del sistema capitalista. No podemos justificar lo que pasa en Occidente y América Latina diciendo que es peor lo que pasa en Rusia o Checoslovaquia: los horrores de allá no justifican los horrores de aquí.⁵⁸

Paz revela de manera inequívoca su compromiso con la libertad en Europa del Este, Latinoamérica y Occidente. A pesar de su fe comunista, Revueltas demostró que su compromiso político era con la libertad humana y no con un partido. Esa es la gran herencia de estos dos pensadores comprometidos.

⁵⁷ International Criminal Court: *Situation in Ukraine*. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine> [July 28, 2023].

⁵⁸ Octavio Paz: *El ogro*, p. 259.

III Authors of Dis/connection

Pablo Sánchez

La Alianza de los Nobel: Notas sobre los viajes de Pablo Neruda y Miguel Ángel Asturias a los países socialistas europeos

Hoy, en el mundo globalizado de hegemonía capitalista, nos puede producir perplejidad, decepción o incluso indignación leer a Pablo Neruda afirmando que un niño de Moscú en los tiempos soviéticos es «el niño mejor vestido del mundo»,¹ o que otro premio Nobel, Miguel Ángel Asturias, destaque que los campesinos rumanos de 1962 «tienen la cara de los hombres dichosos», y que la juventud de ese país experimenta la euforia de «sentirse jóvenes en un país de gentes felices, todos trabajadores, sin clases superiores ni inferiores, iguales, entre risas y flores, entre aplausos y bailes».² Sin duda, es comprensible la tentación de acusarles de aceptar la extorsión moral que implicaba lo que ya en 1972 Hans Magnus Enzensberger bautizó como el «turismo revolucionario», un sistema corruptor que desarmaba la crítica de la izquierda occidental y producía ofuscación teórica en los visitantes extranjeros de los países socialistas europeos.³ Pero quizá, para equilibrar las cosas, habría que recordar que, en su vejez, el adalid más conspicuo y célebre del anticomunismo latinoamericano desde hace más de 40 años, Mario Vargas Llosa, reconoce asombrosamente, en el último capítulo de *Tiempos recios*, que los errores de la política estadounidense en América Latina – como la intervención en Guatemala sobre la que gira precisamente su novela – explican el embrujo revolucionario, antiestadounidense y anticapitalista que el comunismo y en particular Cuba provocaron en la juventud y en la inteligencia del continente.⁴ Recordemos, también, que la seducción que los países socialistas europeos producen en escritores como Neruda o Asturias tiene lugar después de sus respectivos

1 Pablo Neruda: Homenaje a la URSS. En: *Obras completas. Vol. V*, ed. Hernán Loyola. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg 2000, p. 113.

2 Miguel Ángel Asturias: *Rumania. Su nueva imagen*. Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana 1966, p. 83–84.

3 Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *El interrogatorio de La Habana y otros ensayos*, Barcelona: Anagrama 1972, p. 97–139.

4 Mario Vargas Llosa: *Tiempos recios*. Madrid: Alfaguara 2019, p. 350–351.

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exilios políticos, es decir, que hay unas circunstancias previas que contribuyen a explicar ese entusiasmo por la diferencia de trato entre unos regímenes y otros. En ambos casos, la idealización del refugio socialista, por muy ingenua e interesada que fuera, guarda directa relación con una persecución previa antidemocrática y dictatorial y así propongo abordar y desentrañar la producción textual derivada de esas experiencias.

Lo cierto es que el llamado socialismo real presionó, cautivó y tentó con muchos métodos, recursos y símbolos a diversos intelectuales de todo el mundo, aunque no le sirviera para evitar su derrota final. Y además influyó – a través sobre todo de la incidencia de la Revolución cubana – en procesos literarios tan significativos para América Latina como el llamado *boom* de la narrativa latinoamericana. Por ese motivo, más allá de cualquier posible sanción moral (y del fácil vituperio anticomunista), es posible que tengamos que replantear todavía un poco más la literatura latinoamericana del siglo XX – en especial el periodo 1945 – 1989 – a partir de la compleja competencia entre sistemas dinámicos e interactuantes nacionales pero sobre todo transnacionales; cada uno con su repertorio de modelos, sus instituciones y su reparto de capitales simbólicos y/o económicos, así como con meridianos geopolíticamente diferentes aunque aliados en ocasiones: Buenos Aires y la Ciudad de México, entre otras capitales, con sus círculos literarios, sus revistas y sus editoriales; pero también París como capital de la república mundial de las letras en los términos célebres de Pascale Casanova y sede inicial, por ejemplo, de la revista *Mundo Nuevo*; La Habana como capital del nuevo latinoamericanismo militante a partir de 1959; Barcelona como capital del *boom* y de las nuevas redes transatlánticas (que hoy siguen siendo determinantes en términos editoriales); Estados Unidos, con sus universidades pero también con sus políticas en el contexto de la Guerra Fría; y, por supuesto, Moscú, como centro de un sistema socialista que quizá fue más influyente culturalmente de lo que hoy podemos pensar (al menos entre 1945 y 1959) aunque al final fracasara como fracasó el socialismo real en su competencia sistémica.

Pensemos que la entrada de América Latina en la competencia literaria mundial usualmente asignada al *boom* de los sesenta quizá olvida la importancia central de Pablo Neruda (y, en menor medida, de sus amigos Miguel Otero Silva, Jorge Amado, Nicolás Guillén o Miguel Ángel Asturias) en los países socialistas europeos desde los años cincuenta. Todos estos escritores allí tuvieron un cierto éxito literario, dejaron testimonios de su experiencia en esos territorios y colaboraron en mayor o menor grado con sus instituciones culturales, lo que implica una significativa internacionalización de la literatura latinoamericana que aún no ha sido estudiada en toda su dimensión. Entre esos escritores, nos interesa especialmente el caso de Neruda y Asturias, cuya experiencia a lo largo de los años en los países socialistas produjo unos resultados literarios más diversos y hetero-

géneos de lo que pudiera pensarse en primera instancia. Tenemos en concreto tres libros que son tres llamativos testimonios, muy poco estudiados hasta la fecha por la crítica: uno de Neruda, *Viajes*, otro de Asturias, *Rumania, su nueva imagen*, y un tercero – el más tardío y también el más original – publicado conjuntamente por los dos y que, de modo muy curioso, funciona como una revisión fresca y amena de los dos anteriores: *Comiendo en Hungría*. Los tres textos responden a diferentes circunstancias y nos permiten conocer un amplio espectro de motivaciones para la relación entre la literatura latinoamericana y Europa del Este, desde el rígido dogmatismo político hasta la ociosidad hedonista del viajero, pasando por el básico intercambio cultural entre territorios muy alejados histórica y geográficamente. Hay que tener en cuenta que se trata de una relación muy novedosa con respecto a la poderosa tradición del letrado latinoamericano desde finales del siglo XIX, centrada prioritariamente en la Europa Occidental continental con sus espacios habituales: París, por supuesto, pero también – por razones idiomáticas así como editoriales – España (y, en menor medida, quizás Italia, donde, por ejemplo, fallecieron Florencio Sánchez y José Enrique Rodó). El descubrimiento de la *otra* Europa podría entenderse, en ese sentido, como la apertura de la literatura latinoamericana a nuevas comunidades de lectores y a inesperados beneficios simbólicos (y económicos, en algunos casos).

En el caso de Neruda, su entusiasmo político es bastante conocido y es determinante en su exploración de esa otra Europa. Tiene su fase más épica en el ciclo que empieza con *España en el corazón* y alcanza su culminación con la fusión de tiempo mítico y tiempo histórico visible en *Canto general* y *Las uvas y el viento*, modulaciones poéticas del particular materialismo nerudiano. En esos años, el estalinismo es un elemento polémico pero incuestionable en el ideario del poeta. El segundo de esos libros, como es sabido, deriva directamente de su experiencia con el socialismo real europeo y constituye su más clara exaltación del providencialismo mesiánico socialista. Recordemos que Neruda y Delia del Carril volaron a Moscú el 6 de junio de 1949, con motivo de las celebraciones del 150 aniversario del nacimiento de Pushkin. Así explica el poeta la revelación que supuso su primer contacto con la URSS en *Confieso que he vivido*, más de veinte años después:

Amé a primera vista la tierra soviética y comprendí que de ella salía no sólo una lección moral para todos los rincones de la existencia humana, una equiparación de las posibilidades y un avance creciente en el hacer y el repartir, sino que también interpreté que desde aquel continente estepario, con tanta pureza natural, iba a producirse un gran vuelo.⁵

5 Pablo Neruda: *Confieso que he vivido*. En: *Obras completas*. Vol. V, ed. Hernán Loyola. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg 2000, p. 613.

En otra de las significativas omisiones de sus memorias, Neruda evita mencionar que el mismo Stalin los recibió y le regaló a Delia del Carril un abrigo de astracán.⁶ También evita mencionar que la fiebre viajera de esos años, que le lleva a visitar, además de la URSS, Hungría, la República Democrática Alemana, Checoslovaquia, Rumanía y China, no solo tiene motivaciones políticas, puesto que estas actividades le permiten desarrollar de manera efectiva su vida amorosa todavía clandestina con Matilde Urrutia. En cualquier caso, ahí empezó una vinculación especial con la Unión Soviética y sobre todo con la ciudad de Moscú, que Neruda visitará en numerosas ocasiones (viviendo con lujos recordados por su amigo Volodia Teitelboim)⁷ y a la que incluso dedicará uno de sus libros póstumos, *Elegía*.

A diferencia de otros escritores latinoamericanos y europeos, Neruda no dedicó una obra específica en prosa a su contacto directo con lo original de la realidad soviética, aunque en *Confieso que he vivido*, como hemos visto, encontramos información sobre esos años viajeros de Neruda, que complementan la expresión lírica de la misma experiencia en *Las uvas y el viento*. Sin embargo, hay otro texto autobiográfico mucho menos conocido en el que se recoge, entre otros viajes, la primera experiencia de Neruda en el socialismo europeo y que además tiene un especial interés porque es más cercano a la visita y, sobre todo, es previo a la crisis política de 1956, con la revelación pública de los crímenes del estalinismo en el XX Congreso del PCUS, que afectó decisivamente a Neruda desde el punto de vista político pero también poético, y abrió una nueva etapa de su trayectoria, como han estudiado, entre otros, Greg Dawes⁸ y Hernán Loyola.⁹

Nos referimos al texto leído originalmente en Guatemala en 1950 y publicado en 1955 en el volumen titulado *Viajes* como cuarta y penúltima sección del libro. Puede ser útil contrastar este texto, marcado por el pensamiento escatológico y apocalíptico de la euforia estalinista, con la imagen menos radical de *Confieso que he vivido*, en la que todavía se conserva la fe en el socialismo pero se reconoce la existencia del *problema Stalin*.

En ese primer texto suscitado por el contacto inmediato (aunque mediatisado, naturalmente, por la *nomenklatura*) con la sociedad socialista ya idealizada por el poeta chileno desde que Stalin apoyara a la Segunda República española, Neruda empieza recordando su vivencia del citado homenaje a Pushkin. Sin embargo, la grandeza de la literatura rusa clásica no es ahí un fenómeno aislado, sino que tiene una profunda armonía histórica con la grandeza del Ejército Rojo

6 Mark Eisner: *Neruda. El llamado del poeta*. Nueva York: Harpercollins 2018, p. 358.

7 Volodia Teitelboim: *Neruda*. Madrid: Michay 1984, p. 304.

8 Greg Dawes: *Multiforme y comprometido. Neruda después de 1956*. Santiago de Chile: RIL 2014.

9 Hernán Loyola: *Neruda moderno/Neruda posmoderno*. En: *América sin nombre* 1 (1999), p. 21–32.

que derrotó al nazismo con un alto coste humano. El viaje por «los sitios sagrados de la historia de Pushkin» es también un recorrido por el heroísmo del pueblo soviético ante el nazismo y la constatación de que la Unión Soviética representa el horizonte de la Humanidad. La Historia ha entrado en la fase providencial marxista: «ya se han ido los cocheros que abrazaban a sus caballos y han partido, hacia el camino sin retorno, las prostitutas delirantes y los nobles obscenos.»¹⁰ En el discurso nerudiano resuenan ecos del *Canto de amor a Stalingrado* (1943), porque el poeta por fin conoce en persona la ciudad heroica («ciudad resurgida, levantándose minuto a minuto, como símbolo colosal de la esperanza»),¹¹ pero también vemos alguna coincidencia con la trascendencia materialista de Machu Picchu que encontraremos ese mismo año en *Canto general*: así, en Leningrado «hasta las piedras son inmortales» porque «han recibido la sangre de sus invencibles defensores».¹² El cronista de América que apela a la solidaridad popular en su gran poema de 1950 también aparece en el texto de *Viajes*:

Venid conmigo, poetas, a los bordes de las ciudades que renacen: venid conmigo a las orillas de la paz y del Volga, o a vuestros propios ríos y a vuestra propia paz. Si no tenéis que cantar las reconstrucciones de esta época, cantad las construcciones que nos esperan. Que se oiga en vuestro canto un rumor de ríos y un rumor de martillos.¹³

Podemos comprobar que el entusiasmo es ilimitado en 1950 y se prolonga todavía hasta la publicación del texto en 1955 (ya fallecido Stalin). No se percibe ninguna sombra totalitaria que perturbe la conciencia utópica; la actitud de Neruda es, de nuevo, agresivamente militante, como en tantos otros textos de ese periodo convulso y tan agitado desde el punto de vista político para el poeta, periodo que es el más cercano al siniestro «culto a la personalidad» que marcó la época soviética. Así, para Neruda los problemas de la libertad artística en la URSS (los informes y decisiones de Andréi Zhdanov en 1947–48) solo son «una calumnia más de la reacción internacional, calumnia a la que se aferran los agonizantes intelectuales de la burguesía para agregar su parte de lodo en la charca reaccionaria».¹⁴ Si Shostakovich («el más amado de los músicos en la Unión Soviética») cambia sus creaciones, es simplemente porque «ha tomado como nuevo impulso lo que le aconsejara su pueblo y su partido».¹⁵ No hay ni la más mínima alusión a los casos de Bábel o Meyerhold (tan cer-

10 Pablo Neruda: *Viajes* 4. En: *Obras completas*, vol. IV, ed. Hernán Loyola. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg 2000, p. 787.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 789.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 788.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 789.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 790.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 790.

canos a Iliá Ehrenburg, el mejor amigo soviético de Neruda), represaliados trágicamente por el terror estalinista a finales de los treinta. Por el contrario, el mismo homenaje a Pushkin demuestra el nivel cultural y el libre compromiso con el arte en la sociedad soviética. Sobre Pasternak, Neruda recuerda que incluso sus detractores soviéticos respetan y admiran su talento poético. En cuanto al mismo Stalin, no hay apenas alusiones, pero que no haya culto explícito a la personalidad no impide que se trate de uno de los textos más dogmáticos del poeta chileno, muy revelador de esa fe ciega en el socialismo soviético que sufrirá una conmoción en 1956.

El relato del viaje se completa con otros países europeos (como en *Las uvas y el viento*) y tiene más momentos de homenaje literario expresados con la misma vehemencia política. Nos interesa en especial el primer contacto con Hungría: en Budapest, Neruda asiste al centenario de la muerte del escritor Sandor Petöfi, al que admiraba (y al que volverá a homenajear en *Comiendo en Hungría*). En ese país, cultura y economía también van estructuralmente de la mano en la nueva realidad socialista, porque el homenaje al poeta coincide con la reconstrucción socialista del país: «la reforma agraria multiplica la producción de Hungría, los tractores y la maquinaria agrícola pasan tronando por las praderas, y en este momento de primavera y de pan, el joven poeta muerto hace cien años, vuelve a acompañar, con caballo y con su lira, el destino a su pueblo.»¹⁶ Nada hace presagiar los acontecimientos de 1956 en el país húngaro, al que Neruda regresará con otra actitud y otro discurso muy diferente –menos político– años después, como veremos más adelante.

Hay algunos apuntes igualmente interesantes sobre otros países europeos. Por ejemplo, la buena salud del arte en el bloque socialista parece confirmada a ojos de Neruda con la visita al castillo de Dobříš, en Checoslovaquia: «allí los escritores todos tienen derecho a descansar, como también tienen derecho a pedir que el Estado costee todos sus gastos en las regiones o fábricas o industrias o minas sobre las que quieran escribir sus obras.»¹⁷ Como señala Zourek, el castillo de Dobříš cumplió una función como centro cultural para el comunismo internacional comparable a lo que en los años sesenta sería Casa de las Américas en La Habana.¹⁸ Jorge Amado y Nicolás Guillén, entre otros, también fueron invitados a ese centro cultural.

El testimonio en prosa de Neruda en *Viajes* es, por tanto, complementario de la propuesta político-poética de *Las uvas y el viento* y ha quedado como una de las evidencias textuales más claras del periodo estalinista del poeta. Su optimismo

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 792.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 792.

¹⁸ Sobre esa cuestión, véase Michal Zourek: *Praga y los intelectuales latinoamericanos (1947–1959)*. Rosario: Prohistoria ediciones 2019, p. 67–73.

político no volverá a alcanzar la misma intensidad, salvo quizá en el poema sobre la Revolución cubana, *Canción de gesta* (1960), aunque también tendremos mucha poesía política en alguno de los últimos libros publicados en vida por el poeta, marcados por la esperanza de transformación en Chile.

No obstante, hay que recordar que, a pesar de la «muerte simbólica» que según Dawes supuso el año crítico de 1956, Neruda seguirá viajando con regularidad a la Unión Soviética. En 1957, por ejemplo, lo encontramos en el Festival de la Juventud, uno de tantos eventos organizados por el socialismo real para expandir una imagen positiva de su sistema político y económico y para consolidar los contactos con intelectuales del Tercer Mundo. Pasaron por la capital soviética unos 850 participantes latinoamericanos;¹⁹ entre ellos, Neruda, pero también su amigo Miguel Ángel Asturias.

A diferencia de la amistad entre Neruda y Nicolás Guillén, que, como sabemos, se deterioró gravemente en los años sesenta como consecuencia de la polémica entre el poeta chileno y los intelectuales revolucionarios cubanos, la amistad entre Neruda y Asturias perduró durante más de tres décadas. Se conocieron en Guatemala en 1942 y su relación incluyó episodios célebres, como el cambio de pasaporte que permitió a Neruda escapar de la persecución en Buenos Aires a finales de los años cuarenta.²⁰ Sin embargo, el grado de compromiso político con el socialismo no fue igual de intenso en los dos, como recuerda Neruda en su autobiografía: «tengo que decir que Asturias ha sido siempre un liberal, bastante alejado de la política militante.»²¹ De ahí que los testimonios de Asturias sean menos dogmáticos desde el punto de vista político; en su caso, lo determinante, como veremos, no son tanto las ideas de universal aplicación del socialismo como la actitud de los gobiernos socialistas que ofrecen apoyo y beneficios de diverso tipo al escritor en dificultades, como fue el caso del escritor guatemalteco.

Rupprecht comenta que Asturias, como Alejo Carpentier, no tuvo mucho interés por la construcción del socialismo soviético, y, a diferencia del entusiasmado Neruda, apenas escribió sobre esa realidad geográfica, cultural o política.²² Tampoco estuvo invitado, que sepamos, en el castillo de Dobříš. Sin embargo, sus credenciales antidictatoriales y su currículum de exiliado fueron suficientes para que se le intentara sumar al frente de apoyo externo a la política soviética. Por

19 Tobias Rupprecht: *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: interaction and exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015, p. 51–57.

20 Pablo Neruda: *Confieso que he vivido*. En: *Obras completas. Vol. V*, Hernán Loyola (ed.). Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg 2000, p. 603.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 604.

22 Tobias Rupprecht: *Soviet Internationalism*, p. 157.

ello en los años sesenta recibió un trato especial por parte de diversos países de Europa del Este. Recordemos, por ejemplo, que obtuvo el premio Lenin de la Paz en 1966, justo antes de recibir el Nobel de literatura; al igual que Neruda, a la larga podrá presumir de un doblete único en los premios famosos de la época. La captación del novelista guatemalteco puede entenderse así como un triunfo de Moscú y sus satélites, y una derrota de las políticas culturales estadounidenses en América Latina, centradas en esos años, como sabemos, en instituciones como el Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura, que difícilmente podían compensar los daños a la imagen estadounidense provocados por sus políticas intervencionistas en el continente americano, ya codificadas en el imaginario intelectual latinoamericano desde la guerra de Cuba en 1898 y que, en el caso de Asturias, habían tenido unas implicaciones biográficas traumáticas desde el golpe de Estado contra Arbenz en 1954.

La primera experiencia de Asturias en la URSS tuvo lugar en ese verano de 1957; no deja de ser curioso, como recuerda Rupprecht, que los invitados estrella como Asturias y Neruda no fueran precisamente jóvenes, sino cincuentones.²³ Aunque lo cierto es que sí había un joven muy relevante para las letras hispanoamericanas que también visitó el Festival y que, a la larga, obtendría asimismo el premio Nobel: Gabriel García Márquez, que entonces es un joven periodista colombiano que viaja a los países socialistas europeos en compañía de su amigo Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza para conocer de primera mano las llamadas democracias populares.

No podemos detenernos demasiado en el caso de García Márquez, pero vale la pena recordar que la encrucijada que tenemos en 1957 – años antes del *boom* – nos revela un mapa concreto de la literatura latinoamericana quizá difícil de reconocer hoy, con tres futuros premios Nobel curioseando por la hipotética utopía socialista y confrontándola, por tanto, con los conflictivos destinos políticos latinoamericanos. García Márquez, por ejemplo, en sus crónicas de *90 días en la Cortina de Hierro* está bastante lejos del optimismo mesiánico de Neruda que ya hemos visto: no oculta su decepción por el descubrimiento del socialismo real, aunque realiza un diagnóstico bastante objetivo con la heterogeneidad de los países y sus específicas circunstancias, sin llegar, por ejemplo, al nivel de crítica anti-socialista de su amigo Mendoza, que también relató el viaje, aunque muchos años después.²⁴ Alemania Oriental, por ejemplo, le parece a Gabo el pueblo más triste que ha visto jamás, pero también reconoce que el viaje a Moscú es peligroso para un periodista honesto: «se corre el riesgo de formarse juicios superficiales, apre-

²³ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁴ Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza: *Aquellos tiempos con Gabo*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés 2002, p. 35–45.

surados y fragmentarios, que los lectores podrían considerar como conclusiones definitivas.»²⁵ De ahí que Gabo renuncie a los fastos oficiales del Festival de la Juventud, que incluyen, curiosamente, una visita con Pablo Neruda, visita que el colombiano descartó —es decir, no conoció en persona en esa oportunidad al poeta, del que luego fue buen amigo—, puesto que el objetivo era elegir «entre el festival y una idea bastante aproximada de la realidad soviética».²⁶

Mientras Neruda, a pesar del trauma de 1956 y confiando en el revisionismo de Jruschov, mantiene en líneas generales la lealtad al proyecto soviético (véase, por ejemplo, su citado «Homenaje a la URSS», de 1966²⁷) y García Márquez se aleja para centrar sus esperanzas en Cuba, en el caso de Asturias, el exilio lo llevará a un amplio peregrinaje —como sucedió con Neruda a finales de los cuarenta— y es ahí donde entra la política de captación por parte de los países socialistas europeos, que, muy oportunamente, ofrecen sus mejores recursos para aprovechar el prestigio de un escritor como Asturias y fortalecer la imagen internacional del socialismo europeo con un visitante poco sospechoso de fanatismo. Dadas las limitaciones económicas que impedían competir con las instituciones de Estados Unidos (universidades, por ejemplo), los países socialistas jugaron la carta de la hospitalidad y trataron de manera excepcional a los invitados extranjeros.

Así tienen lugar al menos dos operaciones publicitarias que aprovechan el tirón de Asturias años después de esa visita a Moscú. La primera se produce cuando el novelista guatemalteco es invitado por el gobierno rumano a visitar de nuevo el país —que ya había conocido mucho antes, en 1928— para someterse a una cura de salud después de haber sufrido la detención por el gobierno argentino: «al salir de la cárcel estaba yo muy enfermo de los riñones y el gobierno rumano me invitó a ir a Rumanía para consultar al profesor Olanescu, uno de los grandes urólogos mundiales. Así salimos en julio de 1962 para Bucarest, en donde me internaron en el hospital.»²⁸

25 Gabriel García Márquez: Para una checa las medias de nylon son una joya. En: *Obra periodística Vol. 4. De Europa y América (1955–1960)*, Jacques Gilard (ed.), Barcelona: Bruguera 1982, p. 694.

26 Ibid., p. 696.

27 «Tengo allí muchos amigos. Lo que me gusta de ellos y en general de la gente soviética es su sencillez y su franqueza. También la vida me parece allí sencilla. El cambio grande entre el capitalismo y el socialismo se nota en la despreocupación por cierto tipo de cosas que aquí nos angustian. Qué haré cuando viejo? O qué harán de mí? Qué será de mis hijos? Qué pasará si me despiden del trabajo? Éstas son las preguntas del mundo que se llama a sí mismo libre». Pablo Neruda: *Homenaje a la URSS*, p. 112.

28 *Vida, obra y herencia de Miguel Ángel Asturias: 1899–1999: exposición organizada por la UNESCO y la Colección Archivos en el marco de la XXX Conferencia General de la UNESCO: catálogo*. Nanterre: ALLCA XX 1999, p. 383.

Hay que reconocer que la estrategia de generosidad y persuasión del gobierno rumano fue muy eficiente en el caso de Asturias sin necesidad de que el novelista expresara un compromiso socialista claro e inequívoco. El resultado de esa experiencia será el libro propagandístico *Rumania. Su nueva imagen*, publicado en México en 1964. Aunque es un libro poco conocido y quedó lejos del impacto y la difusión que tuvo el Neruda más político, es un ejemplo inmejorable de los esfuerzos del socialismo europeo para ganar aliados en el terreno de la batalla simbólica contra el bloque capitalista.

La imagen que Asturias encuentra en Rumanía es la de un país nuevo en el que la economía planificada está en pleno desarrollo y las desigualdades sociales parecen eliminadas. El balance es del todo positivo incluso en el terreno cultural: Asturias dialoga al parecer espontáneamente con un escritor del cual no menciona su nombre y al que conoce por casualidad en una playa. El escritor niega las acusaciones de censura o la existencia de una literatura oficial: «los escritores ya famosos en tiempos de los gobiernos burgueses se quedaron en Rumania y escriben como antes sus libros de ficción literaria, de poesía, de teatro, de crítica, sin que se les haya llamado a juicio, encarcelado, molestado, humillado en lo más mínimo.»²⁹ Asturias reconoce el papel destacado que la cultura tiene en el socialismo y destaca la traducción de obras de autores extranjeros, entre las cuales están algunas suyas (*El Señor Presidente*, *El Papa Verde* o *Week-End en Guatemala*), junto a otras obras latinoamericanas como *Los cuentos de la selva* de Horacio Quiroga. El boom no ha llegado todavía; recordemos que el viaje de Asturias tiene lugar antes de la publicación de *La ciudad y los perros*, de Mario Vargas Llosa, que suele considerarse el punto de partida del éxito internacional de la narrativa latinoamericana.

Del testimonio de Asturias no puede decirse que sea una simple postal turística, puesto que se trata de un repaso de más de doscientas páginas, mucho más completo y detallado desde el punto de vista geográfico, económico y cultural de que lo que García Márquez o Neruda habían realizado con anterioridad sobre las llamadas democracias populares. Por eso precisamente resulta asombroso que el novelista que había sido capaz de diseccionar los mecanismos del poder dictatorial en su novela más famosa sea tan ingenuo a la hora de entender otra realidad política. Quizá haya que admitir la enorme capacidad de persuasión de la propaganda rumana, y también las necesidades propias del escritor exiliado, deseoso de encontrar apoyo y no persecución. Pero también hay una performatividad específica de la propaganda que tiene que ver con la agenda antiimperialista de América Latina en esos años: todavía está fresco el entusiasmo inicial de la Revo-

29 Miguel Ángel Asturias: *Rumania*, p. 114.

lución Cubana, y Asturias cita en el libro varias veces a Fidel Castro³⁰ con la esperanza de que los países latinoamericanos sigan el camino emprendido por Cuba, que en Rumanía parece llevar años de ensayo y de éxito. Es posible también que la inquietud por el destino de Guatemala le llevara a idealizar el modelo rumano a partir de ciertas similitudes muy concretas que él cree encontrar entre las identidades de ambos países.³¹

Hay que recordar que el vínculo con Rumanía es en esos años otra coincidencia con Neruda, puesto que el chileno también tuvo un éxito considerable en ese país y además publicó en 1967 una traducción de poesía rumana: *44 poetas rumanos*, que incluía un prólogo en el que el poeta chileno igualmente elogia la ingeniería social de la nueva Rumanía: «las fábricas, las escuelas, las canciones hacen vibrar ahora la vieja tierra rumana. La poesía canta en la revolución del trigo, en la trepidación de los telares, en la nueva fecundidad de la vida, en la seguridad del pueblo, en las dimensiones recién descubiertas.»³²

La Guerra Fría en su versión cultural latinoamericana debe tomar en cuenta estas políticas intercontinentales de aproximación estratégica, a pesar de que, evidentemente, quedaron lejos del protagonismo y la centralidad que Cuba tuvo en esa década. Aun así, las políticas dieron lugar a resultados literarios curiosísimos y sorprendentes que pasaron inadvertidos en pleno *boom* y que aún hoy han merecido escasa atención por parte de la crítica. Y ahí es donde entra la segunda operación publicitaria que implicó a Asturias, en la que además se involucró con su amigo Neruda a partir de una coyuntura casual, y que es el tercer texto testimonial que nos interesa en este estudio.

Después de la Unión Soviética y Rumanía, habrá un tercer país con el que funcionó la alianza de los dos Nobel aprovechando la hospitalidad del turismo revolucionario. Se trata de Hungría, que gracias a los dos escritores nos ha depurado otro ejemplo de literatura de viajes, pero mucho más atractivo e imprevisto, aunque tenga también su vertiente polémica: nos referimos a *Comiendo en Hungría*, el libro que en 1969 publicaron conjuntamente los dos amigos viajeros.

Comiendo en Hungría es otro ejemplo de intento socialista en el terreno simbólico de la propaganda y la proyección internacional, pero fue una apuesta más ambiciosa incluso desde el punto de vista editorial, ya que se pretendía que funcionara como lavado de imagen del país húngaro después de los sucesos de 1956. Incluye once textos breves de Asturias y dieciocho de Neruda, más un discurso «al alimón»: «Brindis en la taberna El Puente». Los dos escritores combinan prosa

³⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

³¹ Véase Stephen Henighan: *Lands of Corn: Guatemalan-Romanian Analogies in the Work of Miguel Ángel Asturias*. En: *Romance Studies* 15, 1 (1997), p. 85–96.

³² Pablo Neruda: *Poetas de la Rumania florida*. En: *Obras completas. Vol. V*, p. 133.

y verso para ensalzar con entusiasmo y lirismo las virtudes del país que les había invitado, sobre todo las gastronómicas:³³ Asturias, por ejemplo, elogia el gulash, la paprika y las sopas típicas, y Neruda hace lo propio con las legumbres, los pescados y los vinos. Rememoran sus experiencias en tabernas y restaurantes célebres y convierten su texto en una guía turística llena de recomendaciones. No hay apenas contenido político explícito, puesto que se trata de un libro breve, informal, humorístico y relajado, lleno de felicidad no reprimida, como afirma Neruda en el prólogo: «cuanto comimos con gloria, se lo decimos en este pequeño libro al mundo. Es una tarea de amor y de alegría. Queremos compartirla.»³⁴ Probablemente por ello haya sido considerado menor en la trayectoria de ambos autores: podría decirse que enlaza con el vitalismo de Neruda en las *Odas elementales*, pero es insólito en la obra de Asturias. Y, desde luego, guarda muy pocas similitudes formales o simbólicas con el capítulo europeo de *Viajes* o con *Rumania, su nueva imagen*.

El libro fue publicado por la editorial estatal húngara Corvina en coedición con una de las editoriales españolas antifranquistas, Lumen, y se aumentó el atractivo del producto con una serie de ilustraciones de artistas húngaros. El proyecto, en realidad, había nacido cuando Neruda y Asturias coincidieron en agosto de 1965 en Hungría, invitados por el gobierno, con sus respectivas parejas (el dato no es secundario, como se verá), antes de acudir a la reunión del Pen Club en Yugoslavia. Recordemos que poco antes Neruda ha publicado *Memorial de Isla Negra*, que, como indica Dawes, es una tentativa de cerrar la crisis política y personal abierta en 1956.³⁵ Desde esa perspectiva, es más fácil entender la reconciliación – incluso de sentido optimista y lúdico – con el socialismo real que representa este libro.

El prologoísta del libro, el escritor Iván Boldizsár, menciona que la idea surgió en la primera noche del viaje, cenando en el restaurante Alabardós:

[. . .] fue entonces cuando los dos escritores latinoamericanos pensaron por primera vez en escribir algo sobre la vida húngara. Neruda pensó en una poesía y Asturias en un pequeño ágape. Cuando al día siguiente, en una taberna de marineros situada a orillas del Danubio, en un ambiente más sencillo, tuvieron ocasión de paladear cosas tan sabrosas y en tanta

³³ También es cierto que pagaron los excesos, aunque eso no se incluyó en el libro, como tantos otros datos relevantes. Según el testimonio del hijo menor de Asturias, los dos escritores terminaron internados: Neruda por lo que había bebido y Asturias por lo que había comido. Seguramente no fue muy grave, pero quizá pone en entredicho el entusiasmo con el que Asturias ataca a los dietistas y la supuesta vida sana en uno de sus textos, el titulado *El alegato del buen comer*. Véase *Entrevistas a Miguel Ángel Asturias y familia. 1954–2016*, recopilación de Ariel Batres Villagrán, Guatemala 2017, p. 406.

³⁴ Miguel Ángel Asturias y Pablo Neruda: *Comiendo en Hungría*. Barcelona: Lumen 1969, p. 15.

³⁵ Greg Dawes: *Multiforme y comprometido*, p. 119.

abundancia como la noche anterior, fue Asturias que se sintió inclinado hacia los versos mientras que Neruda se vio atraído por la prosa, esta vez más extensa.³⁶

Sin embargo, los vericuetos de la Guerra Fría ofrecen muchas sorpresas a la hora de comprender los códigos de comportamiento de los escritores invitados a los países socialistas. Ya hemos visto en páginas anteriores algunas motivaciones de escritores como Neruda y Asturias para dar a conocer sus diagnósticos – más o menos generosos – del socialismo real; pero en el caso de *Comiendo en Hungría*, un libro con más interés por la función poética del texto e insospechadamente ligero para tratarse de un país con una historia reciente como la de Hungría, la motivación prioritaria podría ser, en última instancia, más venal que política. Como señala Csikós:

Hoy en día ya sabemos que en el fondo hubo causas financieras por haber aceptado publicar un libro propagandístico sobre el país. Sucedió que las mujeres de Asturias y Neruda querían comprar nuevos vestidos en una de las *boutiques* más elegantes de Budapest y necesitaban dinero. Así surgió la idea de escribir un libro sobre la riqueza de la gastronomía húngara y cobrar los derechos de autor de antemano.³⁷

Hungría, como recuerda Zelei,³⁸ había tenido muy poca presencia en las letras hispanoamericanas del siglo XX (seguramente parecida a la de Rumanía, y en cualquier caso mucho menor que la Unión Soviética), aunque podemos recordar que el elogio a la paprika y el vino de tokay que hacen Neruda y Asturias ya están presentes en la crónica que Rubén Darío hizo de su viaje a Budapest y que finalmente incluyó en su volumen *Tierras solares*, de 1905. Entonces, Budapest formaba parte de Austria-Hungría; pero cuando Asturias y Neruda visitan el país para hacer su turismo gastronómico, este vive en el socialismo de János Kádár, surgido después de la represión de 1956. Neruda, como vimos, conocía Budapest, pero estuvo antes de la invasión soviética, mientras que para Asturias era la primera experiencia. Curiosamente, García Márquez conocerá esa nueva Hungría antes que los dos, puesto que visitó también el país en su gira europea en 1957.

Sin embargo, Asturias y Neruda evitan cualquier alusión a los conflictos del pasado y se limitan a describir una Hungría de abundancia y felicidad, de ricas tradiciones culturales y gastronómicas. Se les puede acusar de falta de coraje político

36 Boldizsár, Ivan: Aperitivo. En: Miguel Ángel Asturias y Pablo Neruda: *Comiendo en Hungría*, p. 10.

37 Zsuzsanna Csikós: Hungría, doble es tu rostro como una medalla». Visitas, amigos y escritos húngaros de Pablo Neruda. En: *Ars et Humanitas* 15, 2 (2021), p. 75.

38 Dávid Zelei: La Hungría exótica: representaciones de Budapest en la literatura latinoamericana. En: Monika Szente-Varga (ed.): *Latin America and Hungary, Cultural Ties*. Budapest: Dialog Campus 2020, p. 76–77.

y de ingenua idealización, pero también es cierto, que, a diferencia de lo que vimos en los otros textos de ambos autores, tampoco hay apenas elogios a la ingeniería social del régimen: el libro no aspira a ser un testimonio objetivo de la situación del país ni un vulgar panfleto programático, sino que se plantea precisamente como una propuesta lúdica y hedonista muy diferente de cualquier otro ejemplo de literatura propagandística de la Guerra Fría; una propuesta más literaria, en realidad, y con una mayor exigencia retórica, por la intención poética. En ese sentido, es una obra con un importante elemento antidogmático, muy lejana al estalinismo que vimos en *Viajes*, pero menos sorprendente quizá si pensamos en el Neruda posmoderno e irónico que despunta desde *Estravagario*. En lo que respecta a Asturias, contrasta significativamente con la solemnidad y el aparente rigor documental de su obra sobre Rumanía, pero es coherente con su ideario político, menos militante que Neruda.

En definitiva, *Comiendo en Hungría* es un intento excepcional de aportar creatividad (e incluso humor) a la propaganda política de la época anteponiendo la literatura a la ideología y formulando una utopía muy diferente, menos trascendental y más mundana, arraigada en la tradición y en el vitalismo: la utopía de una sociedad en la que la paz tantas veces defendida como lema socialista en la Guerra Fría se percibiera no sólo intelectualmente sino también sensorialmente. El contraste con los testimonios anteriores de Neruda y Asturias es significativo; pero lo que también nos confirma el texto es que los puentes interculturales entre realidades tan objetivamente lejanas requieren de análisis desprejuiciados, que atiendan ante todo al esfuerzo de los escritores para dotar de nuevas posibilidades al exotismo literario. Es verdad que ese texto gastroliterario fue, sin duda, un experimento de poco alcance teniendo en cuenta la fecunda literatura latinoamericana de esos años – en pleno *boom* –, pero puede ser recordado como uno de los ejemplos más curiosos tanto de la Guerra Fría en su versión latinoamericana como de la relación intercultural, demasiado esporádica, entre Europa del Este y América Latina. Los fastos comerciales del *boom* y la fuerte expansión occidental que supuso para América Latina acabaron situando esa relación (que ya de por sí tenía importantes problemas de comunicación, por motivos estrictamente lingüísticos) en un plano secundario, claramente menor en términos cuantitativos (sobre todo económicos); sin embargo, no cabe duda de que *Comiendo en Hungría* nos confirma que las relaciones de los escritores latinoamericanos con los países socialistas fueron más diversas y complejas de lo que sugieren algunas visiones superficiales y maniqueas de los procesos políticos y culturales.

Aleksandra Tobiasz

Between the East-Central European Burden of History and the Argentinian “Lightness of Being”: Witold Gombrowicz’s Representations of Time in Diaristic Practice

1 Introduction

Faced with the turbulent history of the twentieth century and the fluid context of East-Central Europe, Witold Gombrowicz in pursuit of some existential coherence distanced himself from Poland which “due to its geographical location and its history, was sentenced to perpetual tearing apart.”¹ He embarked on an exilic odyssey accompanied by diaristic writing. Born on the threshold of centuries, Gombrowicz was a member of the generation which continuously witnessing historical discontinuities was described by the Slovene writer Ivo Brnčić as “the generation behind the closed doors,”² thus devoid of both roots in the past and long-term visions for the future. Immersed in modern History written with a capital letter, which Reinhart Koselleck defined in terms of acceleration, progress and a widening gap between the past (“sphere of experience”) and the future (“horizon of expectation”),³ Gombrowicz, like many other East-Central European intellectuals, experienced estrangement in rapidly changing spatiotemporal contexts. On his way back from Argentina to Europe he felt “eaten away by time and space.”⁴ With the aim of coun-

1 Witold Gombrowicz: *Testament. Rozmowy z Dominique de Roux*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2004, p. 73 (ebook). Gombrowicz writes about the “extremely sad East-Central Europe” where “one night follows the other” and where “thugs of Hitler” are replaced by those of Stalin. His friend Czesław Miłosz similarly notes: “The part of Europe to which I belong has not, in our time, met with good fortune.” Czesław Miłosz: *The Captive Mind*. Transl. by Jane Zielonko. New York: Vintage 1990, p. vii. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Polish, Spanish, and Slovene are in my own translation.

2 Ivo Brnčić: *Generacija pred zaprtimi vrati*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba 1954, p. 13.

3 Reinhart Koselleck: *The practice of conceptual history: timing history, spacing concepts*. Transl. by Todd Samuel Presner et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2002, p. 110–114.

4 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*. Transl. by Lillian Vallee. New Haven, London: Yale Books, Yale University Press 2012, vol. 3, p. 659.

tering the sensation of defamiliarization, he followed the exilic path of life and engaged in diaristic practice. His *oeuvre* is underpinned by both nihilistic escape from Form⁵ and “a work on forming oneself and understanding the world.”⁶ Reconfiguration of time on the pages of diaries and traveling were the two complementary ways in which the writer attempted to redefine himself in the face of the challenges posed to the individual by the twentieth century such as collectivity and the allure of ideology. The latter was described by his friend Czesław Miłosz in terms of the “Hegelian bite” leading to the “captive mind.”⁷

Gombrowicz’s diaries written in exile foreground his temporal displacement in the history of the twentieth century, thus his oscillation between different understandings of time. This contribution will examine the writer’s changeable contours of self-identification which were emerging at the crossroads of different orders of time: historical, cultural, and diaristic. His life was stretched between Europe and Latin America, therefore between two different ways of time perception, between excessiveness of historical happening and a certain “lightness of being” immune to history. Referring to Milan Kundera’s remarks on “the most mysterious” lightness/weight opposition,⁸ Gombrowicz’s experience of Argentinian emigration could be interpreted in terms of lightness equivalent to the episodic way of being in the present ephemeral moment opened by the escape from Europe and its weight of eternal return of historical discontinuities (two global wars) – this exhausting dialectics of history.⁹ The infinite recurrence of great History strips its witness of individuality, reverberates with feeling of absurdity and

5 I capitalize the word to refer to Gombrowicz’s key concept denoting all forms of being and thinking imposed by society and culture which oppose the strong individual will to be in alignment with the self. Jerzy Jarzębski: Pojęcie “formy” u Gombrowicza. In: *Pamiętnik Literacki* 62, 4 (1971), p. 69–96. For a multidimensional analysis of Gombrowicz’s concept of Form see also: Jerzy Jarzębski: Pojęcie “formy” u Gombrowicza. In: Jan Błoński (ed.): *Gombrowicz i krytycy*. Kraków, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1984, p. 313–346. Józef Olejniczak: *Witold Gombrowicz. Ja!* Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2021, p. 65–66.

6 Jerzy Jarzębski: *Natura i teatr. 16 tekstów o Gombrowiczu*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2007, p. 106.

7 He referred to the postwar official “New Faith” or “Diamat” (dialectical materialism) in the Soviet bloc based on the dialectical philosophy of history. The concept from the title of the book written in 1953 *captive mind* was used by Miłosz to describe the dangerous allure of “the Method, the Diamat – that is, dialectical materialism as interpreted by Lenin and Stalin” and which “possesses a strong magnetic influence on the men of the present day.” Czesław Miłosz: *The Captive Mind*, p. x–xi.

8 Milan Kundera: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Transl. by Michael Henry Heim. New York: HarperCollins 1984, p. 6.

9 Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień. Opowieść o Gombrowiczu*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2005, p. 105.

imposes a burdensome responsibility for certain political stances (bard of emigration, anti-communist, or nationalist) always avoided by Gombrowicz.

Several questions emerge in the context of research on individual relationships with changeable coordinates of time and space. How was Gombrowicz redefining himself as (East-Central) European and Pole in the mirror of cultural otherness of Latin America? How did different cultural orders of time of particular exilic places influence the writer's self-understanding? What role did reconfigurations of temporality inherent in the diaristic practice play in the process? Was Gombrowicz a transatlantic author negotiating in his *oeuvre* elective affinities between the two regions? This edited volume seems a perfect venue to rethink Gombrowicz's life-writing from the perspective of possible entanglements between East-Central Europe and Latin America. Both areas share many features, such as secondary culture, peripheral location, and the ambivalent *locus* of in-betweenness (forming part of the Western tradition but at the same time being outside) which attribute them with a potential to reshape their relationship with the Western world of central cultures and renegotiate the hierarchies inherent in this asymmetric relation. In view of Gombrowicz, the inhabitants of marginal countries shall regard their secondary, immature cultures not in terms of deficiency but a virtue which favouring individuality and creativity can undermine the dominion of Form and cultural tradition.¹⁰ Instead of replicating

10 As Silvana Mandolessi emphasizes in her comparative research on Witold Gombrowicz and Jorge Luis Borges and their ways of conceptualizing relations to their "minor" cultures" of origin and Europe, both writers "reflect on the meaning of belonging to a secondary culture (Poland and Argentina respectively)." Silvana Mandolessi: *Cultural Hierarchies, Secondary Nations: The Tension between Europe and "Minor" Cultures in Witold Gombrowicz and Jorge Luis Borges*. In: Nele Bemong/Mirjam Truwan/Pieter Vermeulen (eds.): *Re-Thinking Europe Literature and (Trans)National Identity*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi 2008, p. 151–153, 156, 159, 161. Similarly to Gombrowicz who stressed the secondary cultures' creativity, Borges accentuated the creative power of marginal cultures' "eccentric position." Silvana Mandolessi: "Travelling Is Being and Seeing": National Identity and Visual Strategies in Witold Gombrowicz and Jose Ortega y Gasset. In: *Russian Literature* 4, vol. 62 (2007), p. 462. Marzena Grzegorzcyk: *Kształt życia i bezkształt tradycji. Argentynska spuścizna Witolda Gombrowicza*. In: Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek (ed.): *Grymasy Gombrowicza. W kręgu problemów modernizmu, społeczno-kulturowej roli płci i tożsamości narodowej*. Transl. by Janusz Margański. Kraków: Universitas 2001, p. 168, 170, 181. However, as Javier de Taboada remarks, instead of finding some common ground between Gombrowicz and Borges, dictated by the wish to integrate the first one into the canon of Argentinian literature, it would be more appropriate to align Gombrowicz with the "eccentric pole" of Argentinian literary sphere represented by Roberto Arlt. Javier de Taboada: *Europeos en Latinoamérica: cine y literatura transnacionales. La visión de Herzog, Buñuel, Aub y Gombrowicz*. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert 2017, p. 216. See also the comparison of *oeuvres* of Gombrowicz and his Cuban friend Virgilio Piñera from the point of view of "commonalities between the intellectual scenes of their home countries and Argentina during the mid-twentieth century" with the application of the concept of "minor nation". Milda Žilinskaitė: *Witold Gombrowicz and Virgilio Piñera, the Argentine Experience*. San Diego: University of California 2014, p. 8–10, 62–67,

the forms produced by the central cultures, the inhabitants of peripheries (Poland, Argentina but also many other countries)¹¹ should ask themselves about their relationship with these forms.¹² As “an atypical exile”¹³ or “a border intellectual”¹⁴ Gombrowicz was marked with a certain in-betweenness¹⁵ which shaped “a hybrid sense of his cultural and historical status.”¹⁶ The ambivalent position of being European but at the edge of the Old Continent, between the West and the East as well as between the North and the South defined the writer’s self.

This paper’s methodological framework is based on an anthropological approach to personal writings, in particular to diary, which has been applied and thoroughly studied by Philippe Lejeune in his insightful research on diaristic practice intrinsically linked with the processes of self-identification. In this regard,

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9n14r0b5> [January 31, 2024]. Artur Sandauer underlined in Gombrowicz’s writings the role of parody of one’s own tradition as a way of finding an alternative attitude towards the West which goes beyond imitation as well as “Scylla of nationalism and Charybdis of snobism.” Artur Sandauer: Witold Gombrowicz - człowiek i pisarz. In: Jan Błoński (ed.): *Gombrowicz i krytycy*, p. 109–110. For the analysis of Gombrowicz’s perception of analogies between Polish and Argentinian cultures and literature founded on both countries’ inherent immaturity and nourished by the same tension between reactionist patriotism and uncritical imitation of Europe see Juan José Saer: *Spojrzenie z zewnątrz*. Transl. by Klementyna Suchanow/Krystian Radny. In: Ewa Kobyłecka-Piwońska (ed.): *Witold Gombrowicz. Pisarz argentyński*. Antologia. Łódź, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Universitas 2018. For the analysis of Gombrowicz’s *oeuvre* in terms of opposition between formlessness and form see: Marzena Grzegorzczuk: *Kształt życia i bezkształt tradycji*. Argentyńska spuścizna Witolda Gombrowicza, p. 159–182.

11 For instance Romania or Canada. Witold Gombrowicz: *Testament*, p. 29.

12 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 115, 167. Jerzy Jarzębski: Gombrowicz, the Émigré. In: John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (eds.): *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe*. A Compendium. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 2009, p. 333.

13 Javier de Taboada: *Europeos en Latinoamérica*, p. 197. The “atypical exile” retains an ambivalent, dialectic and agonistic relationship with both the country of origin and the host society of exilic stay.

14 Abdul R. JanMohamed: *Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home*. Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual. In: Michael Sprinkler (ed.): *Edward Said. A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell 1992, p. 96–97, 102–103.

15 While reflecting on his family background Gombrowicz defined it as stretched “between Lithuania and Congress Poland, between countryside and industry, between the so called better-off and the middle class. These are just the first of the ‘in-between’ that will continue to proliferate around me to such an extent that they will almost become my home, my proper homeland.” Witold Gombrowicz: *Testament*, p. 6, 13. Another significant dimension of Gombrowicz’s in-betweenness manifests in his transatlantic life trajectory.

16 Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek: *Wprowadzenie*. In: Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek (ed.): *Grymasy Gombrowicza*, p. 19. Płonowska-Ziarek interpreted Gombrowicz’s transatlantic journey as “an all-embracing metaphor of cultural ‘in-betweenness’ which became ‘a land of permanent stay’ [. . .]” (p. 20).

I will also refer to the temporal condition of autobiographical writing delineated by philosopher Georges Gusdorf whose focus on the impact of accelerated pace of historical happening on autobiographical attitude reminds of Koselleck's theory of time. Moreover, this study draws on Gerd Baumann's concept of "grammar of identity/alterity," which triggers a reciprocal "process of selfing/othering."¹⁷

Furthermore, Gombrowicz's temporal displacement will be analyzed in reference to the hermeneutic weak ontology as was already suggested by literary scholar Andrzej Zawadzki, who interpreted Gombrowicz's *oeuvre* applying Gianni Vattimo's theory of weak thought. From this perspective, Gombrowicz as diarist was marked with some fragility (some "awful weakness toward life"¹⁸) understood not only as a sign of his aging body but related to the experience of both art and time ("Oh, how the present moment was sucking me dry, how it was weakening me!").¹⁹ Therefore, weakness refers to a deeper ontological level of being which, as imbued with temporality and fleetingness, is not stable but always wavering and incomplete. To some extent, this ontologically inherent incompleteness was caused by the uprooting that characterized Gombrowicz's life in exile between Argentina and Europe.²⁰

Not only weak thought but also psychoanalysis proves inspiring in shaping the methodological background of this research. Literary critic Michał Paweł Markowski interpreted Gombrowicz's *oeuvre* through the prism of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis and Gilles Deleuze's theories. With reference to Gombrowicz's most well-known novel, *Ferdynand*, Markowski problematized the theme of escape still awaiting "a separate study under the title *Escaping Gombrowicz*, which, of course, would be the study of unbearable loneliness, which – like boredom – is a dominion of the Same."²¹ Does "the dominion of the Same" mean the sensation of absurdity provoked by history which in East-Central Europe in the twentieth century, to put it metaphorically, was repeating itself along a circumference of a wheel hermetically closed by totalizing philosophies of history embodied in totalitarian systems? Could a way out of this encirclement – a form of escape – represent a hermeneutic fissure in a form of inner time mediated in a diary and

17 Gerd Baumann: Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach. In: Gerd Baumann/Andre Gingrich (eds.): *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books 2004, p. 18–49.

18 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 311.

19 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 597. The roots of art, in Gombrowicz's view, would lie not in health but sickness.

20 Andrzej Zawadzki: Gombrowicz a myśl słaba. In: Jerzy Jarzębski (ed.): *Witold Gombrowicz nasz współczesny*. Kraków: Universitas 2010, p. 132–133.

21 Michał Paweł Markowski: *Czarny nurt. Gombrowicz, świat, literatura*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2004, p. 119.

inscribed in this manner in the cosmic time of sense?²² Gombrowicz's diaristic practice as a hermeneutic, escapist response to the absurdity of history can be compared – to cite the author's statement from the *Diary* – to “something of a crack in this pitiless homogeneity, something like a door slightly ajar, like some sort of softening. . . and I could sneak out this way. . .”²³ The crack appeared to the writer with the opportunity of journey to Argentina and was widened by the diaristic practice. The paper will address first Gombrowicz's self-understandings in relation to changing spatial contexts defined by particular attitudes towards history. The second part will give an insight into the writer's diaristic reconfigurations of time interpreted as a search for a sense in “the pitiless homogeneity” of history written with a capital letter and echoing with absurdity.

2 Topography Experienced: Between the East-Central European Burden of History and the Argentinian “Lightness of Being”

“Geography. Where am I? [. . .] I was in South America, but where was north, west, south? Where am I positioned in relation to China or Alaska? Where is the polar cap?”²⁴ Gombrowicz as an emigrant and person “out of place”²⁵ was more

²² I am interested here in the third time reconfigured by means of a diary which Paul Ricoeur characterized as “the proper historical time – that mediates between the time lived and the cosmic time.” Paul Ricoeur: *Czas i opowieść*, vol. 3: *Czas opowiadany*. Transl. by Urszula Zbrzeźniak. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2008, p. 143. Diaristic writing combines historical account and fictional narrative which in Ricoeur's view are tools of poetics of a story and respond to different aporias of the phenomenology of time. The third time reconfigured in a diary and thus meaningful for the author, mediates between the time of consciousness and time of the universe which both silent are awaiting some meaning constructed by the individual.

²³ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 646.

²⁴ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 244.

²⁵ Interested in the Argentinian reception of Gombrowicz's *oeuvre*, Pablo Gasparini interprets the writer's life in terms of being “out of place” which was shaped not merely by his exilic uprootedness but also by his “intellectual eccentricity,” Heraclitean personality, “continuous desertion as a safeguard against the detention in any definition or territory of shelter.” See Pablo Gasparini: *El exilio procaz: Gombrowicz por la Argentina*. Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo Editora 2006, p. 24, 29, 34–35, 41. Silvana Mandolessi also stressed Gombrowicz's displacement by reflecting on his ambiguous position of being both in exile (from the point of view of Polish tradition) and a traveler (from the Argentinian perspective). These two attributions were complementary. Silvana Mandolessi: *Heterotopia y literatura nacional en Diario argentino de Witold Gombrowicz*, <https://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v18/mandolessi.html> [January 19, 2024].

interested in the question “where am I?” rather than “who am I?,” thus shifting his attention from the inward immersion towards his place²⁶ and self in relation to Other.²⁷ The changing spatial coordinates of his life made him deeply absorbed by his location in space and his fluid, ungraspable self-identification shaped in “confrontation with externality,”²⁸ another person, culture, landscape. The writer’s works abound in “‘analytic mirrors’, that reflect and refract the structures of host and home cultures.”²⁹ Faced with the abstract vectors classifying the space and inevitable relativism preventing from acquiring a stable ground, an absolute position, Gombrowicz introduced another dichotomy of the concrete and palpable world of direct experience easily dissolved by the dusk in its opposite, thus “the cosmos” and “astronomical space.” He would find himself “in a bottomless abyss, in the womb of the universe,”³⁰ unable to clearly define his place.

Notwithstanding this situation of loss in the geographical space, Gombrowicz’s main axis of wandering and literary production can be conceptualized as extending from the North, identified with rationality, spirituality, metaphysics, darkness and repression, to the South, equivalent to emotionality, materiality, carnality, light and liberation.³¹ What “bothered” the writer in Europe was “the collision of North and South [. . .]. Where the metaphysics of the North tumbles head over heels into the corporeal concreteness of the South.”³² In this respect Gombrowicz’s perspective was alternative to the Cold War West–East division and his reflection contributed to a vertical, meridional paradigm in conceptualization of Europe initiated in the 1930s by other Polish writers during their south-bound journeys. In this sense Gombrowicz’s *oeuvre* could be interpreted as the instance of revaluation of the dominant horizontal way of defining Europe which ‘trapped’ the Slavic nations between ‘more civilized’ West and ‘greater imperial’

26 Julia Kristeva: *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*. Transl. by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press 1982, p. 8, cited after Katarzyna Jerzak: *Potwarz i wygnanie*. Witold Gombrowicz i Emil M. Cioran. In: Ewa Płonowska-Ziarek (ed.): *Grymasy Gombrowicza*, p. 219.

27 As literary scholar Jan Błoński remarks, Gombrowicz “seeks out his neighbour for confirmation” and tries “to find himself in the gaze and consciousness of others.” Jan Błoński: *O Gombrowiczu*. In: Jan Błoński (ed.): *Gombrowicz i krytycy*, p. 203, 218.

28 Katarzyna Jerzak: *Potwarz i wygnanie*, p. 219.

29 Milda Žilinskaitė: *Witold Gombrowicz and Virgilio Piñera, the Argentine Experience*, p. 12. She refers here to Jan Mohamed’s concept.

30 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 245.

31 Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 66–68.

32 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 382.

East forcing on them the inferiority complex. This shift of paradigms which accentuates the uniqueness of historical experiences of the small nations in East-Central Europe enables them to recover from the self-deprecating perception.³³

Gombrowicz's existential map nourishing his "grammar of identity/alterity" consisted of East-Central Europe, the western part of the Old Continent, and Latin America. He recognized in these parts of the world nations living "under the sign of truth" or those ruled by the principle of beauty (Latin America)³⁴ and identified them with cultures of either central, mature (French, German, English) or peripheral, immature character (Eastern Europe and Latin America). These binary classifications are, however, neither clear nor stable. Gombrowicz's map was a dynamic, heterogeneous space where immature cultures immersed in a certain formlessness could influence and undermine central cultures characterized by established, mature forms of expression.³⁵ In this sense, the imagined topography of the author, who himself experienced the "cultural colonialism,"³⁶ was critical of the colonial discourse founded on the categories of center and periphery³⁷ as well as the rigid duality between civilization and barbarism imbued with power structures.

To nuance this map even more, there were many differences within both the mature and immature countries. Even though Argentina and Poland pertained to the same category of periphery, they were divergent. Whereas Poland in "the Least Known Europe"³⁸ seemed to Gombrowicz to be condemned by "the paradox of his-

33 Jagoda Wierzejska: Mit Południa jako kontrapunkt dla opozycji Wschód – Zachód i podstawa mitu Europy Środkowej. In: *Porównania. Czasopismo poświęcone zagadnieniom komparatystyki literackiej*, vol. 11 (2012), p. 71–85. Aleksandra Konarzewska: Witold Gombrowicz, Again: Between Argentina and Germany. In: *Russian Literature* 120–121 (2021), p. 267. Gombrowicz's interest in the South was thus shared by other Polish travelers. Their explorations of Latin America shall be placed in a broader interwar context of the development of Polish commercial and passenger navy, construction of a new harbour in Gdynia and the colonial agenda of the Polish mass organization – the Maritime and Colonial League. Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 91–92.

34 Witold Gombrowicz: *Peregrinaciones argentinas*. Transl. by Bożena Zaboklicka and Francesc Miravittles. Buenos Aires: El cuenco de plata 2016, p. 26.

35 Silvana Mandolessi: Ohyda i podmiotowość: *Dziennik, Testament i Wędrówki po Argentynie*. Transl. by Judyta Woźniak. In: Ewa Kobylecka-Piwońska (ed.): *Witold Gombrowicz*, p. 95. Pablo Gasparini: Amerykańska niedojrzałość i przybysze z zewnątrz: w stronę przemilczanego i nieoprawnego Gombrowicza. Transl. by Magdalena Olejnik. In: Ewa Kobylecka-Piwońska (ed.): *Witold Gombrowicz*, p. 53.

36 Marzena Grzegorzcyk: Kształt życia i bezkształt tradycji. Argentynska spuścizna Witolda Gombrowicza, p. 181.

37 Milda Žilinskaitė: *Witold Gombrowicz and Virgilio Piñera, the Argentine Experience*, p. 65

38 In the lecture given in Teatro del Pueblo in Buenos Aires in 1940 titled *Experiences and Problems of the Least Known Europe* Gombrowicz focused "on the cultural regression" of East-Central Europe as a consequence of totalitarian ideologies and being "between Bolshevism and Hitler-

tory” to the “role of a one-horse town of Europe situated in its center, [. . .] Argentina, although geographically speaking is lost in the most extreme periphery, drowned between the oceans, in reality is a space open to the world, an international country, maritime, intercontinental.” In Argentina, which “is exposed to the most distant winds, [...] one feels to be a citizen of the world and has a premonition of playing a global role. . . .”³⁹ Gombrowicz contraposed Polish culture as “a product of the landowning nobility” with the Argentinian bourgeois culture, the same one as in Western Europe. Consequently, he situated Argentina and not Poland closer to Paris or Rome. This juxtaposition of Polish immersion in nature and Argentinian urban life also shaped different national characters and mentalities.

These somewhat simplified and stereotypical dualities served Gombrowicz – “a Nordic”⁴⁰ to mirror himself in the South, Latin American otherness, this “screen reflecting Polish national psychology.”⁴¹ The binary mechanism of the pursuit of otherness in people and nature through the opposition with the Polish self was unstable and fragile since it was not possible to mitigate entirely the alterity and epistemological aporia in its representation.⁴² Interestingly, otherness is not only located in the foreign outside world but becomes internalized and projected on compatriots. Exilic perspective made Gombrowicz’s homeland an instance of alterity turning each contact with a Pole into an anthropological study (“I devour them with a look, I observe, I investigate how they move, how they talk, what faces they have”⁴³). The perception of Poles in terms of the Other results in their exoticization. As the writer remarked, every time he encountered a compatriot abroad he was forced “to view him in his mystery” just in the same way he would perceive “for instance a Spanish or a Bolivian.” He believed in “an authentic Polish mystery, a

ism.” He viewed this regression as an opportunity for cultural reinvigoration with the help of culture’s immature side. Jerzy Jarzębski: *Gombrowicz*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie 2004, p. 83. Jerzy Jarzębski: Gombrowicz’s Wild Youth: The “Ferdynandean Individual” Fades Away. In: Silvia G. Dapía (ed.): *Gombrowicz in Transnational Context: Translation, Affect, and Politics*. New York, London: Routledge 2019, p. 197–206. Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 121. For more information on the controversies the lecture provoked and responses in the Polish press in Argentina see: Klementyna Czernicka: Odczyt Gombrowicza w Teatro del Pueblo. In: *Teksty Drugie* 3 (2002), p. 252–256, https://rcin.org.pl/ibl/Content/55861/PDF/WA248_70615_P-I-2524_czernicka-odczyt.pdf [January 19, 2024].

39 Witold Gombrowicz: *Peregrinaciones*, p. 11, 70–71.

40 Gombrowicz calls himself “a Nordic” in the *Diary*. Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 382–383.

41 Marian Bielecki: *Kłopoty z Innością*. Kraków: Universitas 2012, p. 40.

42 Ibid., p. 38–45.

43 Witold Gombrowicz: *Peregrinaciones*, p. 113.

certain Polish ‘way’ which attracts and interests the foreigner.”⁴⁴ The exilic “condition of outsider” and immersion in the Argentinian “most diversified human material” of different ethnicities allowed Gombrowicz to “refresh his sensibility”, which enriched him with a new view of Poles (perceived as foreigners) and thus a new perspective on himself. Exile enabled him to verify his previous impressions from the period of life in Poland when he was still “imprisoned” and “quite tormented” by “Polishness”⁴⁵ equivalent to ethnocentrism and oppressing national myths. Argentina also presented a chance to distance oneself from Europe and its cultural heritage founded on “the eighteenth-century philosophical myths including the myth of predetermined rationality and vision of progress as well as modernity.”⁴⁶ Therefore the movement in space beyond the Old Continent was for Gombrowicz parallel to travel in time backwards “down the steps of the process of civilisation in Europe. Being the emigrant from Poland and Europe, he was simultaneously an emigrant from modernity.”⁴⁷

What were Gombrowicz’s perceptions of time in his homeland and later in exile? The mere process of traveling is inseparably related to the act of trespassing divergent “regimes of historicity,” which as “a tool for comparative study [. . .] can elucidate our experience of time”⁴⁸ in different parts of the world. “Regimes of historicity” differ in combination of past, present and future.⁴⁹ Sensitivity to the passage of time becomes stronger with change in space, which then becomes primarily a journey in time. Thus, Gombrowicz’s travels took place not only on a map but also within himself. In the light of the approaching World War II and in fear of the imposed role of witness to a historical avalanche in Europe, he emigrated to Argentina, where he became “one of the many disinherited deprived of even a longing for the past that the pampa was receiving.”⁵⁰ His escape meant “creative forgetting.” Contrariwise his return to Europe in 1963 after almost a quarter century away incited the intensified act of remembering.⁵¹ Before settling in southern France, Gombrowicz spent one year in West Berlin, where he felt overwhelmed by the excessive

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁶ Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 69–70. However, “the eighteenth-century ideologies (the utopian state, the ideal society and ‘the good savage’)” as well as “the myth of South” still resounded in many Europeans’ accounts of journeys to South America. Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁷ Paweł Rodak, “Dziennik Gombrowicza: między mową, pismem i drukiem (wstępne rozpoznanie).” In: *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki* 4 (2004), p. 88 (p. 87–118).

⁴⁸ Francois Hartog: *Regimes of historicity. Presentism and experiences of time*. Transl. by Saskia Brown. New York: Columbia University Press 2015, p. xvii.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. xv–xvi.

⁵⁰ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 171.

⁵¹ Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 209, 211.

history. Suddenly very close to his homeland the writer became inundated by memories of childhood in Poland. However, he never returned to his native country.⁵² The burden of the past was accompanied by the shadow of the inevitable future. In the sensation of approaching death, he felt as if the circle of his life was drawing nearer its enclosure, as if “the cycle was coming to a close.”⁵³

What was the temporal dimension of reconfigurations of the self in the mirror of otherness? The response lies in different cultural orders of time dominant in particular countries as shaped by their collective historical fate and historical experiences. Whereas in some places history can be experienced as a burden, elsewhere a distance towards the historical unfolding would give rise to a certain atmosphere of lightness, which in the Latin American context Gombrowicz characterized as “Spanish, Italian, Latin, and also Indian; the smile, the courtesy, the happiness result here more easily [. . .].”⁵⁴ All the news in the Argentinian press about the financial crisis, general strike, and potential *coup d'état* in the country seemed to the Polish writer as if they were imbued with a certain “exotic air” and thus referring to some other distant continent such as Europe. In contrast, the

52 In this *short period* in Berlin Gombrowicz experienced the anti-German atmosphere dominant in Poland at that time. He was accused by the Polish communist press for accepting the fellowship from the Ford Foundation and became a target of campaign aimed at his discreditation. One of the strongest participants of this campaign was a journalist Barbara Witek-Swinarska who was an agent of security service. In a distorted, misinterpreted and manipulated conversation which in reality was not destined to be published, Gombrowicz was accused of fascism, downplaying of Nazi crimes in Poland and cynicism towards Polish war victims. After more than two decades in Argentina far away from the political affairs in Europe he suddenly found himself in the entirely new geopolitical situation in the vicinity of Berlin Wall. He was unaware of the intricacies of the Cold War politics. His new place of stay between the two ideological blocs, on the western side but still very close to Poland made him more vulnerable to the communist propaganda which in the end deepened his feeling of loneliness and disenchantment. This incident not only worsened his health but also influenced his decision never to return to Poland. Klementyna Suchanow: *Gombrowicz. Ja, geniusz*, vol. 2. Wołowiec: Czarne 2017, p. 296–319. Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk: “Their Astounding Strength in Overcoming Their Past. . .” The Memory of Nazism in the Berlin Diary. In: Silvia G. Dapía (ed.): *Gombrowicz in Transnational Context*, p. 217–218, 220. Kowalczyk noted that Gombrowicz’s superficial knowledge regarding the World War II was shaped not only by the exilic distance but also by Argentinians’ general indifference and the government’s sympathetic attitude towards Nazism manifested in acceptance of many war criminals.

53 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 626. “[. . .]. Berlin was already too close to Poland, Małoszyce, Bódzechów, his childhood, and he perceived this proximity as the closing of a cycle, as a harbinger of death.” Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk: “Their Astounding Strength in Overcoming Their Past. . .”, p. 218. This return meant not only a triumph as a writer but also a confrontation with everything he had tried to escape from before: North, Europe, Poland, family. Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 208.

54 Witold Gombrowicz: *Peregrinaciones*, p. 36.

same information encountered in a European newspaper would be received as shocking and petrifying.⁵⁵ The decision to leave Europe in 1939 allowed Gombrowicz – the “outsider”⁵⁶ to distance himself from the loud and disturbing cacophony of history, “the feverish din of European radio speakers, [. . .] the wartime roar of newspapers.”⁵⁷ Life in Argentina enabled him to perceive European history and political events in East-Central Europe from a safe “chilling distance of years and kilometers.”⁵⁸ He observed the situation in his homeland “as if through a telescope” which enabled a view in “only the most general contours [. . .].”⁵⁹

Gombrowicz’s travel narrative on Latin America problematizes the colonial images of the continent imposed by Europeans.⁶⁰ Was he the first “post-colonialist”?⁶¹ As literary scholar Piotr Seweryn Rosół notes, Gombrowicz’s attempt to go beyond the modern dualities (immaturity-maturity, inferiority-superiority) by foregrounding the in-between sphere was aimed at “the rejection of modern values – such as [. . .] the idea of progress, rational and colonial civilization [. . .]” and “the appreciation of those which modernity rejected as non-modern and consequently stigmatized as abnormal or pathological.”⁶² In this sense his attention was drawn to the marginalized and the peripheral, thus the indigenous people. Nevertheless, his reflection, underpinned by fascination with youth which force lies in its being beyond the scale of values and any connotations with ideology or morality, did not acquire a moralistic tone in defence of this group.⁶³

Gombrowicz’s critical approach to the colonial narrative does not mean the absolute refutation or a radical re-evaluation but a certain reformulation. The writer’s imagined topography is still structured in binary terms of immature and mature cultures. This dualism also nourished the colonial discourse. In line with

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 38–39.

⁵⁶ Witold Gombrowicz: *Testament*, p. 72.

⁵⁷ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 626.

⁵⁸ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 444.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 293, 452.

⁶⁰ Ewa Kobyłecka-Piwońska: *Spojrzenia z zewnątrz. Witold Gombrowicz w literaturze argentyńskiej (1970–2017)*. Łódź Kraków: Universitas 2017, p. 123.

⁶¹ Aleksander Fiut in his article on Gombrowicz’s reflection on the postcolonial discourse in Argentina gives the affirmative response. The paper’s title refers to the writer’s self-perception as a forerunner of the main intellectual trends of the twentieth century which made him call himself the first existentialist or the first structuralist. Aleksander Fiut: Gombrowicz the First Post-Colonialist? In: *Russian Literature* 4, vol. 62 (2007), p. 433.

⁶² Piotr Seweryn Rosół: Becoming Gombrowicz. On the Way of Trans-Subjectivity and Trans-Modernity. In: Silvia G. Dapía (ed.): *Gombrowicz in Transnational Context*, p. 115.

⁶³ Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 195, 201.

the tradition commenced by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, he identified Argentina with a space of immaturity unburdened by history. What, however, distances Gombrowicz from the colonial imagination is deconstruction of the power structures and the granting to subaltern cultures the subversive agency. As literary scholar Silvana Mandolessi remarked, he did not view the American formless potentiality in negative terms of deficiency of spirit passively awaiting final fulfillment by imitating European values. His observations did not entail an imperative imposing on the fragmentary and unfulfilled American reality an obligation to imitate mature Europe. On the contrary, it is American materiality and youth viewed as a value in itself which should inspire and subversively influence the more mature and abstract rest of the world. Latin America under the sign of continuous becoming and imbued with a reinvigorating atmosphere of youth, a source of authenticity, seemed to Gombrowicz a promise which could enable him to approach the inferior side of his self. Remaining beyond verbalization and articulation it could be only experienced, grasped by the senses and Eros.⁶⁴

Gombrowicz's travels in Argentina gave way to impressions different from those shared by other European visitors (José Ortega y Gasset, Hermann von Keyserling, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle or Le Corbusiere)⁶⁵ who claimed that "this country appears as devoid of essence and requiring clarification from outside."⁶⁶ As literary critic Aleksander Fiut remarks, the divergence in perspectives between Gombrowicz and other travelers was conditioned by their origins. Whereas Keyserling did not problematize the colonial violence, "Gombrowicz, inhabitant of Central Europe, continuously devastated by historical cataclysms, never loses sight of genocide in Latin America and extremely cruel treatment of Indians by conquistadors."⁶⁷ While

⁶⁴ Silvana Mandolessi: *Ohyda*, p. 72–99.

⁶⁵ For more information about the debate on the fate of America, different responses to "the obsession with immaturity of America during the first decades of the twentieth century" nourished by divergent interpretations of Hegelian conceptualization of America in the writings of Gombrowicz and other travelers from Europe and North America (for instance Waldo Frank) see: Pablo Gasparini: *El exilio procaz*, p. 44–59. As Gasparini claims, Gombrowicz's originality which distinguishes him from other intellectuals who reflected on Latin America shall not be explained by "his distance from Hegel but his inversion of value" (p. 54). Consequently, whereas Ortega y Gasset or Keyserling tried to redefine "the Hegelian negation of America" and "repair" or nuance the American a-historicity, Gombrowicz cherishes it by regarding the immaturity not as a deficiency or a transitory stage needed to be overcome but as a positive value required to undermine the European maturity (p. 58–59).

⁶⁶ Ewa Kobylecka-Piwońska: *Spojrzenia*, p. 120–121.

⁶⁷ Aleksander Fiut: *Zwiedzanie "Kontynentu z Trzeciego Dnia Stworzenia"*: Gombrowicz i Keyserling. In: Jerzy Jarzębski (ed.): *Witold Gombrowicz*, p. 576. Aleksander Fiut: *Gombrowicz the First Post-Colonialist?*, p. 437. In Santiago del Estero (Argentina), Gombrowicz noted: "Spears,

other European travellers directed their attention towards national psychology and metaphysical depths in an attempt to rationally find a spirit of the place, its cultural identity,⁶⁸ Gombrowicz preferred the more superficial view of a tourist⁶⁹ attentive to the empirical aspect of his exilic condition. Therefore, he decided to remain on the surface and experiential margins, visiting peripheral places and providing an alternative perspective on Latin America. Instead of intellectual debates, inspired by “territorial imagination” (territory shaping national identity) and thus not free from stereotypical representations, about possible essence of Latin America, he was more absorbed by directly experienced phenomena, the concrete materiality of landscape, objects and carnality of inhabitants.⁷⁰ Gombrowicz’s discourse of

swords, spurs, armor, the plumed helmets of the white, bearded conquerors invading the naked defenselessness of those Huries, Lules, Vilelas three or four hundred years ago . . . And a hundred years ago? In his memoirs, General Paz describes how in the 1840s, the governor ordered that two Indians have their throats cut daily. . . These were Indians (“whose eyes I often saw,” writes the general) chosen from the heaps of rotting prisoners in the dungeon and then led out to be slaughtered . . . sadism and masochism still play in that colored air and dance in the streets. Their stench poisons me. Such is the perversity of Santiago!” Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 385. However, Gombrowicz, distant from the engaged writing, would not become an advocate of marginalized people. As Piotr Seweryn Rosół remarked, “he places himself on the side of what is excluded and stigmatized, but does not support the emancipation of groups omitted by history and does not create emancipatory, insurrectional counter-stories focused on a fight for justice and a new identity politics. When he talks about the painful experience of exclusion he is never the political voice of the excluded. The goal is to see value in what modernity has rejected and not in the equivalence of various Others.” Piotr Seweryn Rosół: *Becoming Gombrowicz*, p. 122.

68 Silvana Mandolessi: *Ohyda*, p. 72–99. Silvana Mandolessi: *Heterotopia y literatura nacional*. As Mandolessi argues, contrary to other European intellectuals who referring to historical facts and other types of knowledge tried to define identitarian features of Argentina, Gombrowicz would rather speak about this country in terms of lack of definition.

69 According to Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk, Gombrowicz acquired this perspective also before in the interwar period during his travels to Western Europe, to Italy and Austria. He was observing the ascent and spread of fascism as a tourist interested in the external phenomena on “the surface of life” and not in the in-depth analysis or moral judgement. Gombrowicz’s attitude of tourist can be explained with his scepticism, relativism and belief in separation of art from politics, ideology manifesting in his indifference towards political matters. Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk: “Their Astounding Strength in Overcoming Their Past. . .”, p. 211–214.

70 Silvana Mandolessi: *Ohyda*, p. 72–99. Pablo Gasparini: *Amerykańska niedojrzałość*, p. 25–41. Ewa Kobylecka-Piwońska: *Spojrzenia*, p. 124. Silvana Mandolessi: “Travelling Is Being and Seeing,” p. 458. Mandolessi also emphasized an important aspect about the travellers’ perspective as not devoid of ideological underpinnings which legitimized and preserved power structures (p. 461). As Gombrowicz noted: “Volumes have been written about the psychology of the South American; they are often metaphysical, almost always too ‘deep’— knowledge about a man or a nation is not always a deep-water fish – sometimes spiced with a tasty homegrown mysticism (that there is some undiscovered truth in the ‘silence’ of an Argentinean, for example). All right,

Latin America is founded on “the language of the body”⁷¹ and as such imbued with eroticism which for him played a crucial role in the human life.⁷² “Mortally in love with the body,” it constituted his “touchstone.” Even though a Nordic, Gombrowicz’s metaphysics would be never free from flesh.⁷³ Eroticism identified with values of youth, beauty and inferiority constituted to him “a mother tongue’ and a natural worldview framework [. . .], in particular his anthropology,” centred on a new interpersonal vision of human being.⁷⁴

In the debate on the Argentinian national character and the ways to replace epigonism with creative originality, Gombrowicz as a convinced social constructionist argued that it was not an intellectual in-depth analysis of roots which could promise an insight into the true essence of a nation but action. Whereas abstract theorization may only enforce certain forms of perception and clichés, action understood as a “self-creation”⁷⁵ can reframe the way of thinking and being. It also emphasizes the importance of speaking in one’s own voice liberated from the plural form. Only life not subordinated to a theory and action not following a prescribed program can become original and provide some answers to the questions: Who are we? What is our reality? The starting point, however, must be always the individual man who can respond to creative potentiality of his *milieu* only by overcoming it in himself.⁷⁶ These debates about one’s own way to creativity were present not only in Argentina but also Poland and thus seem to

let it be most profound where it should be, but why should one look for a chasm on the straight-away? Ninety percent of Argentina and South America can be explained by the life these people lead, a life that is, in spite of their complaints, quite easy in comparison with other continents.” Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 416.

71 Aleksander Fiut: Gombrowicz the First Post-Colonialist?, p. 433. Fiut perceived Gombrowicz’s “language of the body as an interpretational tool in defining the nature of the Latin American identity.”

72 Jerzy Jarzębski: *Gombrowicz’s Wild Youth*, p. 205.

73 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 383.

74 Janusz Pawłowski: *Erotyka Gombrowicza*. In: Jan Błoński (ed.): *Gombrowicz i krytycy*, p. 533, 537–538. “For in culture, only eroticism has created a sufficiently rich language that can be used to express artistically that reality which Gombrowicz describes as ‘interpersonal’” (p. 533). As Kowalczyk reminds, Gombrowicz’s new vision of man, always remaining in relation to another man and thus reshaped in the “human church”, was born “on the ruins of Western individualism and Eastern collectivism.” Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk: “Their Astounding Strength in Overcoming Their Past. . .” p. 216–217.

75 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 411.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 478. “What is America, Americans? A concept, generality, abstraction. What is the ‘American reality’? Something that each person can understand as he wishes. [. . .] In my view, one must begin with man, the individual man, and I will say more: the development of America can only be the work of people who have overcome America in themselves.”

return obsessively in the peripheral countries, which, deprived of “direct relation with life,” can be characterized as “secondary” cultures ready to imitate the more mature cultures.⁷⁷ Argentina would be in a better situation here than Poland and more likely to escape epigonism due to its shorter history and literary tradition. Devoid of this burden Argentinians could open themselves to “universal thought and art.”⁷⁸

Notwithstanding the reinvigorating impact of Latin American immaturity, in 1963 Gombrowicz decided to go back to the “mature” part of Europe. Interestingly, as Janusz Margański argues, both continents were not so distant from each other. Thus the writer’s stay in the South was not equivalent to the immersion in an entirely unknown otherness. Contrariwise, in European Buenos Aires and faced with the well organised Polish diaspora of long traditions, he encountered in Argentina “Polish-European ‘the same’: [. . .] myth of Paris as a capital of art, [. . .] a ritual of anachronic Polishness performed in the exotic pampa.”⁷⁹ While living in Buenos Aires, Gombrowicz, remaining “loyal,”⁸⁰ identified himself with the Old Continent (important for the writer’s next debut). What is more, his stay in Argentina made him feel “perhaps more European than the Europeans of Rome and Paris,”⁸¹ However, having returned, in line with the “anti-Parisian reaction,”⁸² he commenced to criticize Europe/Paris from the perspective of Argentina⁸³ as if, in fear of the imposed Form of famous writer, he tried to prolong the Argentinean youth and independence. Far away from Latin America identified with beauty, in France he

77 Ibid., p. 479. Witold Gombrowicz: *Peregrinaciones*, p. 54–56.

78 Witold Gombrowicz: *Peregrinaciones*, p. 76.

79 Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 91, 110. “It occurred to him to recognise Poles in Argentinians, and Polishness in Argentinianness.” Ibid., p. 116. “Gombrowicz transposed the Polish experiences into the Argentinian experiences, and with the help of the Argentinian experiences he interpreted what he lived through in Poland.” Ibid., p. 122. More about the Polish diaspora in Argentina see: Ibid., p. 116–119. According to Miguel Grinberg, Gombrowicz was fascinated with Argentina because he could find in this Latin American country his place of origin, pre-World War II Poland. Miguel Grinberg: Gombrowicz in love. Transl. by Klementyna Suchanow and Krysztian Radny. In: *Literatura na świecie* 4 (2001): p. 83–85.

80 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 659.

81 Witold Gombrowicz: *Testament*, p. 38.

82 Witold Gombrowicz: *Dziennik*, vol. 3, p. 608. The same strategy Gombrowicz had chosen already before the war.

83 Marian Bielecki: *Kłopoty*, p. 18–29. As Bielecki remarks, Gombrowicz’s ambivalent attitude to the Old Continent was marked by oscillation between acceptance and refusal, the need to keep a strong bond with Europe and a fear of its alienating effect. Not disrupted during his stay in Argentina, this bond was reformulated in a critical approach towards Europe underpinned by “a polemics with modernity.”

sought for ugliness in order “to beautify Argentina” and “this seeking of eyesores was something like an act of love on behalf of the Cast Off (Argentina).”⁸⁴ In Paris, embodying “nothing but the ever-receding present,” Gombrowicz tried to shape out of a fog of a fleeting moment a fist necessary to face and irritate the inimical culture representing center and power.⁸⁵ Forced into “a double impasse” in Europe by the inaccessibility of a foreign reality of the Cold War period and the distorting Form imposed by critics, readers he opted for an active stance of assault.⁸⁶

Contrary to the French South which was easily conquered by the writer, Berlin, due to its closeness to Poland, trapped him in the past.⁸⁷ Latinized Gombrowicz felt lost in the North⁸⁸ and instead of keeping an attitude of “an alert observer,” he preferred to speak about his dreams. In Germany, surrounded by the phantoms of the past and covered by “sleep-inducing snow,” “the silence of whiteness, its drowsiness” blurring the contours of reality, he noticed that since his departure from Argentina he was asleep.⁸⁹ “The enfeebled” writer recognized in himself lack of “the strength to overcome the stony foreignness of Europe,” which seemed to him “a pyramid, Sphinx, and an alien planet, [. . .] a *fata morgana*,”⁹⁰ unrecognizable and unrecoverable in time and space. Europe identified

84 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 605–606. Gombrowicz contraposed “the great, real beauty of the human race, the young and naked beauty” with encountered in France “surrogates of beauty such as *belles manières, élégance, distinction, esprit, bon goût*, etc., etc” (p. 607).

85 *Ibid.*, p. 601, 605.

86 Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 215.

87 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 601. Gombrowicz defined his strategy upon his arrival to Europe and France in terms of conquer. Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk: “Their Astounding Strength in Overcoming Their Past. . .” p. 218. “While he managed to defeat Paris [. . .] Berlin put up resistance. Argentinian nature, youth, exuberance, nudity, allowed him to unveil the shameful secret of Parisians who did not know how to cope with the greatness of their city [. . .]. If Paris stood wide open before Gombrowicz, Berlin proved difficult to access. The writer defined his attitude toward France without much difficulty. In Berlin, he was confronted with the memory of the Polish-German past, which he could not set aside, which he could not ignore.”

88 Klementyna Suchanow: *Gombrowicz. Ja, geniusz*, vol. 2, p. 281, 286. As Gombrowicz wrote to his friend Juan Carlos Gómez just after his arrival to Europe he was “overwhelmed by homesickness, lost in the world, distracted [. . .].” He longed for Argentina. The new encounter with Europe was for him “a cause of terrible anguish [. . .].” Gombrowicz’s letters to Juan Carlos Gómez (Berlin, 24 May 1963; Berlin, 15 June 1963). In: *Literatura na świecie* 4 (2001), p. 9–10, 12. According to Margański, Gombrowicz in Berlin, thus lost in the North, surprisingly, recreated the South in the revalorized Sarmatian “old-Polish tradition of nobility” identified with “distance, loosening and liberty.” Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 222–223. Błoński also mentioned Gombrowicz’s rehabilitation of Sarmatian tradition. Jan Błoński: *O Gombrowiczu*, p. 221.

89 Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk: “Their Astounding Strength in Overcoming Their Past. . .” p. 218. Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 639–640.

90 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 659.

with “an infinite emptiness”⁹¹ lacked clear spatiotemporal coordinates; in the same way, his self was deprived of such unvarying points of reference. Existential feebleness shapes outside reality, stripping it of stable foundations, and *vice versa*. An “insufficiently real” world undermines unity and coherence of self, which in consequence becomes marked by a particular feeling of inadequacy of being on the margins of reality.⁹² Faced with foreign Europe, Gombrowicz, whose homeland became Argentina,⁹³ was yearning for the South. Since he left the Latin American shore, as he confessed in one of the letters, he did not have any good day.⁹⁴ Undecided which direction to choose (Argentina, the USA, Canada, or Spain – Barcelona or the Balearic Islands),⁹⁵ “suspended in a complete void,”⁹⁶ and unable to embark on the transatlantic journey again, his last southbound itinerary led him to Vence in Southern France.

3 Gombrowicz’s Diaristic Struggles with Time

Gombrowicz embarked on two different but complementary types of diaristic writing: the public, literary *Diary*,⁹⁷ regarded as a duel with readers in his attempt at self-fashioning as a writer, and the second intimate diary *Kronos*, written by a vulnerable person and published only posthumously. Literary critic Grzegorz Janko-

91 “[. . .] where all places are good – and bad – at the same time.” Witold Gombrowicz’s letter to Juan Carlos Gomez (Berlin, 22 September 1963). In: *Literatura na świecie* 4 (2001), p. 21.

92 Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 659.

93 Witold Gombrowicz’s letters to Juan Carlos Gómez (Berlin, 15 November 1963; Berlin, 29 November 1963; Berlin, 21 December 1963; Royaumont, 12 June 1964; Royaumont, 5 August 1964). In: *Zeszyty Literackie* 49 (1995): p. 95, 97–99, 101–102. Witold Gombrowicz’s letters to Juan Carlos Gómez (Berlin, 9 May 1963; Berlin, 24 May 1963; Berlin, 22 September 1963; Royaumont, 27 July 1964). In: *Literatura na świecie* 4 (2001), p. 7, 9, 20. In the letters written from Berlin and Royaumont to his friend Juan Carlos Gómez, Gombrowicz expressed his disorientation in Europe and willing to come back to Latin America, Argentina which he called his Homeland written with a capital letter. He also planned to have another flat in Uruguay. Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 226–227.

94 Witold Gombrowicz’s letter to Juan Carlos Gómez (Vence, 28 February 1965). In: *Zeszyty Literackie* 49 (1995): p. 105.

95 Anders Bodegård: Jerzy Giedroyc–Witold Gombrowicz. Listy. In: *Zeszyty Literackie* 49 (1995): p. 107. Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 601.

96 Witold Gombrowicz’s letter to Juan Carlos Gómez (Royaumont, 27 July 1964). In: *Literatura na świecie* 4 (2001), p. 27.

97 Alex Kurczaba: *Gombrowicz and Frisch. Aspects of the Literary Diary*. Bonn: Bouvier 1980, p. 6, 9. The literary scholar mentions among features which characterize a literary diary its fictionality (blurred boundary between fiction and nonfiction).

wicz analyzes Gombrowicz's "two ways of writing about life"⁹⁸ with reference to opposite categories describing life that are derived from the culture of ancient Greece and discussed by many intellectuals (Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben): *bios* and *zoe*. While the first term *bios* designates a finite life of a concrete individual represented as a line, personal history and identity, the second category *zoe* refers to a recurrent infinite existence of all species in general, a succession of generations, bare life without properties. Whereas the *Diary* refers to *bios*, life captured in words, sculptured in some form, sense, *Kronos* on the other hand, as an enumeration of facts devoid of narrative, elaborate structure, contains all the rest which escaped form and should be placed closer to *zoe*.⁹⁹

The temporal dimension of Gombrowicz's self-understanding reshaped in diaristic practice can be analyzed at various levels. The first fictitious level is constituted by the text of the *Diary* and regards the narrator's relations to time. The second one can be characterized by the relationship between the author immersed in calendar time and his intimate diaristic writing (*Kronos*). Thirdly, there is a more general interrelation between diaristic practice and the concept of time. I will start with the last and broadest perspective of autobiographical writing as such and its temporal aspect referring to the ideas of Georges Gusdorf. Then I will analyze narrative temporality reconfigured by Gombrowicz in his *Diary* and the one emerging at the junction of the text (*Kronos*) and the reality (historical context).

Gusdorf described the cultural conditions of autobiography with reference to history and anthropology and in connection with the concept of modern Western subjectivity. In his view, an autobiographical attitude expressed in the consciousness of oneself as an individual was a Western concern about the meaningful narrative unity of one's existence. This autobiographical inclination, rooted in a linear concept of time, is thus associated with distressing consciousness of its accelerated pace accompanied by a widening abyss between the present and the past. Therefore, autobiographical genres would emerge together with the perception of historical time as a force uprooting an individual from the mythical frames of being. The lack of earlier given *a priori* patterns of identity (social class, religion) required a search for some new mediations of self-identification such as autobiographical

98 Grzegorz Jankowicz: *Gombrowicz—loading. Esej o formie życia*. Wrocław: Książkowe Klimaty 2014, p. 39.

99 Ibid., p. 69–73, 103–105. However, as literary scholar Michal Oklot notes, *Kronos* is not entirely devoid of confabulation and mythologization, possessing also an element of self-fashioning and creation as a response to annihilating forces of pain and overwhelming dissolution. Michal Oklot: Gombrowicz's *Kronos*: The Pornography of Aging. In: *Slavonica* 19, 2 (2013), p. 120, 125.

forms which would allow one to reconstruct the coherence of one's life and continuity in time.¹⁰⁰

What are the narrative reconfigurations of temporality in Gombrowicz's diaristic writing? Literary scholar Michal Oklot distinguished "Gombrowicz measured by [Ch]ronos (the lining) and 'Gombrowicz' redeemed, flickering in a-temporal breaches, Kairos (the artistic/messianic façade); in short, *Kronos* and the *Diary*."¹⁰¹ Oklot concurrently accentuated the important temporal axis structuring this diaristic practice founded on the oscillation between *chronos* and *kairos*. In the *Diary* there is no trace of continuity in time. The construction of temporality does not abide by the typical, linear and retrospective procedure of capturing the reflections of one's old self in the mirror of the present moment.¹⁰² Instead, as literary scholar Daniel Pratt claims, Gombrowicz's central concept of Form entails a self-construction alternative to the predominant narrative and episodic ways of self-understanding. It would be rather "a present-oriented striving toward self-creation [. . .] emphasizing the present over any unknowable future or inalterable past."¹⁰³ The emphasis on the performative, creative dimension of Gombrowicz's *Diary*, contrary to the traditional retrospective orientation of this genre, directs its temporal construction towards a future "meaningful structure" of the self in the world.¹⁰⁴

Despite all the renewed efforts to capture, as Gombrowicz noted, the "ardently desired" but irretrievable time in order to make contact with himself from the past, the *Diary's* narrator had to admit his failure. "I spend a lot of time reconstructing my past: I diligently establish a chronology and stretch my memory to its limits, looking for myself the way Proust did, but to no avail. The past is bottomless and

100 Georges Gusdorf: Warunki i ograniczenia autobiografii. Transl. by Janusz Barczyński. In: Małgorzata Czermińska (ed.): *Autobiografia*. Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria 2009, p. 20.

101 Michał Oklot: *Gombrowicz's Kronos*, p. 109.

102 Katarzyna Chmielewska: *Strategie podmiotu. Dziennik Witolda Gombrowicza*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo IBL 2010, p. 113–116.

103 Daniel Pratt: Narrative and Form: Gombrowicz and the Narrative Conception of Personal Identity. In: *The Polish Review* 60, 2 (2015), p. 9. Czesław Miłosz also emphasizes Gombrowicz's focus on the present moment and the way a man is continuously reshaped in the interpersonal sphere here and now, which would distinguish the writer from Marxists or Freudians who in the attempt to reconstruct the genealogy of certain phenomena (history of society or history of disease) are more interested in the past. However, Gombrowicz shares their conviction about the subordination of the individual will and freedom to collective categories such as subconsciousness, class or "interhuman church." Czesław Miłosz: Kim jest Gombrowicz. In: Jan Błoński (ed.): *Gombrowicz i krytycy*, p. 195.

104 Jerzy Jarzębski: *Podglądając Gombrowicza*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2000, p. 182.

Proust lies. Nothing, one can do absolutely nothing.”¹⁰⁵ In order to withstand the immersion in these hardly differentiated but sensually experienced overlapping temporalities, the *Diary*'s narrator grasped some dates and numbers which constitute the *kairotic* order of time. They were the landmarks whose repetition could give the impression of predictability and thus contribute to restoring some sense of constancy. In the *Diary* the narrator noted: “Today, the twenty-second, I touched European soil, I have long known that two twos are my number. I also touched Argentine soil for the first time on the twenty-second (of August). Hail, magic! The analogy of numbers, eloquence of dates. . .you miserable creature, if you can't catch yourself in anything else, at least try this.”¹⁰⁶ In another place, the narrator manifested his attention to dates as follows: “My growing sensitivity to the calendar. Dates. Anniversaries. Periods. With what diligence I now surrender myself to this tallying of dates.”¹⁰⁷ The cult of the numbers 22 and 2 allowed Gombrowicz to discern some parallel paths and erect bridges connecting the present moment with the past and the future.

While the *Diary*'s narrator noticed that the systematic recording of his own existence made day by day would not assure a firm ground under his feet, constantly undermined by the flow of time, the author of *Kronos* did not resign his endeavor to bring some order to his immersion in the chaotic reality by inscribing himself within the continuity of facts. In the opinion of Gombrowicz's wife and the first editor of *Kronos*, the writer started his notes at the end of 1952 or the beginning of 1953,¹⁰⁸ thus concurrently with the public *Diary*. From this moment he tried to reconstruct his past life year by year, month by month since the inter-war period in Poland (starting in 1922), not forgetting in the beginning to add the date of his birth (August 1904) and even earlier the probable date of his conception (December 1903). Naturally, the earliest recalled period of life spent in Poland before the World War II, due to the temporal distance, abounds in silence, which prevails over the remembered facts.

Chronology, almost absent in communication with readers of the published *Diary*, became of primary importance for the hidden communication with Gombrowicz's bygone selves in *Kronos*. The strict structure introduced by the calendar may indicate the writer's need to endow his life, “running through fingers,” with some rhythm. First, he imposed the calendar frame for listing of dates. Then he abided by this timeline in his patient attempts to reconstruct his life by gather-

¹⁰⁵ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 1, p. 92.

¹⁰⁶ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 601.

¹⁰⁷ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 306.

¹⁰⁸ Rita Gombrowicz: Na wypadek pożaru. In: Witold Gombrowicz: *Kronos*. Rita Gombrowicz, Jerzy Jarzębski and Klementyna Suchanow (eds). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2013, p. 7, 9.

ing fleeting traces of memory and facts. Literary scholar Jerzy Jarzębski noted that the events remembered from the period between 1939 to 1952 were written in the special column of years and months. Some of the places had to remain blank due to the inability to remember what had happened dozens of years ago. Closer to 1953, the moment when Gombrowicz probably started to write *Kronos*, the journal becomes more detailed and filled with events.¹⁰⁹

Continuity and chronology, undesired in the *Diary*, were placed in the foreground in *Kronos*, allowing the author to some extent to reconstruct his life and then to reread his own fate.¹¹⁰ On the intimate journal's pages, it is possible to find some traces evoking Gombrowicz's recurrent journeys in time. They can be interpreted as constituents of a deeper *kairotic* time emerging at the diaristic crossroads of the objective order of calendar time and the inner experienced time. *Kairos* as a qualitative aspect of temporality marked by the recurrence of memory and dates opens forms of experiencing time other than linear and indicates the individual need for some meaning of being in historical time. *Kairos* also means proper timing and consists of crucial existential moments revealing some individual sense, which undermines for a while the power of *chronos*. In this respect, as the contemporary writer Olga Tokarczuk remarked, *Kairos* as a "god of occasion, passing moment, uncommon possibility" refers to an "extraordinary, decisive moment which changes everything" and thus it depends on the individual readiness to notice a promise of "shift of the trajectory of fate."¹¹¹

The traces of Gombrowicz's imagined travels in time, attributing *Kronos* with some elements of *kairos*, can be found in the comparisons between the past and the present made in the act of rereading the diaristic records, which sometimes also resulted in comments being added in hindsight and changing the original meaning of the previous notes. These journeys in time realized on the pages of *Kronos* were facilitated by Gombrowicz's sensitivity to numbers and anniversaries. It seems that the most important one was the anniversary of his leaving *Banco Polaco*, the bank in Buenos Aires where he was employed for several years. The post of a clerk being just a cog in the bureaucratic machinery was certainly not existentially satisfactory for the writer and his exuberant individuality. After Gombrowicz had left the office (May 10, 1955), each year he celebrated the anniversary of this "liberation" from senseless tasks, mechanically performed and intellectually not rewarding at all. Finally, he could entirely devote himself to literature.¹¹²

109 Jerzy Jarzębski: Afterword. In: Witold Gombrowicz: *Kronos*, p. 422.

110 Ibid., p. 425.

111 Olga Tokarczuk: *Czuły narrator*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2020, p. 24–25.

112 Witold Gombrowicz: *Kronos*, p. 181.

Even though the traces of Gombrowicz's act of rereading his intimate diary are not numerous, it does not mean that he was not using *Kronos* to move within his inner time (between memories and predictions, hopes) more often with the aim of reconstructing and understanding his fate. One of the traces is a note which he made in retrospection in Vence. To the information about leaving the post in the bank recorded in May 1955, the writer after many years added: "**in 10 years Vence** [highlighted in the source, A.T.]." This later note was inserted just between the statement: "Tuesday – today, i.e. the 10th, I left the bank after 7 years 6 months 10 days" [underlined in the source, A.T.] and the question "for good or for bad?"¹¹³ Originally the latter hesitation referred to the author's decision about leaving the bank. However, in the new context created by the added information about Vence, the question might also refer to the writer's later fate after his return to Europe. Was it a good decision to leave Argentina? This dilemma accompanied Gombrowicz for some time after the return to Europe and manifested itself in his plans to go back to Latin America.

4 Concluding Remarks

Gombrowicz's temporal displacement in historical time, expressed in the diaristic oscillation between *chronos* and *kairos*, was shaped by his escape from the great history of the twentieth century and by different cultural orders of time experienced in divergent places of stay: Poland, Argentina, Germany, and France. Furthermore, the process of traveling itself had an impact on the writer's perception of temporality because he experienced his intercontinental journeys as unfolding not only in space but also inwardly within himself. Consequently, during his spatiotemporal travel to Europe, Gombrowicz encountered his bygone self approaching on a phantasmagorical ship from the opposite side immersed in the past of the prewar times. On its board emerged "something like a lost brotherhood, like a killed brother, dead brother, mute brother, a brother lost forever and indifferent . . ." ¹¹⁴ The past seemingly lost and mute was yet not so irrevocably dissolved in oblivion. Evoked by a need for some meaningful symmetry in existence, it suddenly emerged on the surface of the present moment, which, due to its ephemerality and contingency, faded and became a mere apparition in comparison to a vivid trace of the past. This shift in perspectives reverberates from Gombrowicz's

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 181. The statements added by Gombrowicz in hindsight are highlighted and printed in bold in publisher's note *ibid.*, p. 428.

¹¹⁴ Witold Gombrowicz: *Diary*, vol. 3, p. 600.

words: “Finally I thought about myself on that deck—and that for him over there, I am probably the same sort of phenomenon as he is for me.”¹¹⁵

The writer described more explicitly his transcontinental travel in space in terms of time as follows: “What is this journey if not a trip into death? . . . people of a certain age should not move at all, space is too tied up with time, rousing space provokes time, this whole ocean is made more of time than of boundless distances, this is infinite space that calls itself: death. What the heck.”¹¹⁶ The return to Europe in 1963 was experienced by Gombrowicz as a farewell bidden to youth and a presage of death. The writer as the “ahistorical newcomer” in Berlin, in “a place that is more bespattered with history than ever” found himself trapped in historical being again.¹¹⁷ In this sense Gombrowicz’s exilic odyssey could be conceptualized in terms of a shift from the Latin American “lightness of being” and formless immaturity explored by the young writer fighting for fame towards the European burden of history manifesting itself in maturity of Form of increasingly recognized in Europe writer.

When comparing the two phases of Gombrowicz’s life, Latin American and European, one contrast becomes evident, namely the opposition between the experience of reinvigorating youth in Argentina and of deteriorating health in Western Europe.¹¹⁸ While Gombrowicz’s period in Latin America was marked by the ascending line of fame, the one on the Old Continent was unfolding along the descending line of his bodily decomposition. The Argentinian duel for recognition as a writer still in search of his own voice among many potential ways of expression can be contrasted here with the European phase of the struggle with both health problems and the confining definition of himself as a famous writer, the oppressive Form he always wanted to avoid.

Whereas travel to the South (both in European and intercontinental context) meant to him a spirally open, hermeneutic laboratory of self with an abundance of potentialities,¹¹⁹ the return to Europe and North enclosed him again within a circle of his own existence and historical absurd. As Klementyna Suchanow noted, while

115 Ibid., p. 600. “The journey was taken twice: once on the map, and the second time within me.” Ibid., p. 660.

116 Ibid., p. 591.

117 Ibid., p. 627, 633.

118 Michał Okłot in his article also alluded to this distinction by mentioning two parallel but opposite trajectories in *Kronos*: a descending line of ageing which expresses bodily decomposition and another ascending one of “vertical transcendence” which reflects Gombrowicz’s increasing fame as a writer (there are numerous notes in *Kronos* regarding translations and publications of his works). Michael Okłot: Gombrowicz’s *Kronos*, p. 108–111, 119–120, 123–124.

119 Jerzy Jarzębski associated Gombrowicz’s exile in Argentina with “plasticity of the ‘self’ and a sense of creative potency.” Jerzy Jarzębski: *Gombrowicz*, p. 71.

the southbound travel in France (from Paris to Perpignan in Eastern Pyrenees) in the interwar period provoked in Gombrowicz a thought of becoming a writer, his later northbound journey from Latin America to Europe was the return of an acclaimed writer. Thus, the North-South axis was equivalent to a shift from self in becoming to the self already made.¹²⁰ Furthermore, as Janusz Margański suggests, the movement within the vertical coordinates also meant a shift of accents from history and succession of events identified with the North to space and *longue durée* perspective associated with the South. In the southern countries such as France and Argentina Gombrowicz was more interested in “existential duration” and commenced to orientate his life “in spatial categories: topographic and geographic,” reading its sense not from a calendar but from a map.¹²¹ Gombrowicz, who once declared that all his writings must always follow the path of his existence and not be dictated by a historical moment chose the escapist attitude towards historical unfolding in Europe. In this sense his double displacement: spatial in Argentina and the temporal one in the diaristic practice was facilitated by a desertion from geopolitics. Therefore, his life-writing can be viewed as an attempt to distance oneself from the geopolitical Cold War horizontal East-West axis and redefine the self in alignment with the geopoetic North-South vectors.

120 Klementyna Suchanow: *Ja, geniusz*, vol. 2, p. 268.

121 Janusz Margański: *Geografia pragnień*, p. 69.

Javier Toscano

Nomadology: A Philosophy of Migration.

Vilém Flusser between Worlds

1 Introduction

Vilém Flusser (1920–1991) was a thinker of a very particular kind. Trained as a philosopher in Prague – a cosmopolitan Central European city in the interwar period – he then migrated in the late 30s to Brazil as he and his family foresaw the imminent danger of the Nazi threat. In São Paulo, Brazil, he reinvented himself as an intellectual figure of an immense critical capacity. Back in Europe in 1971 after three decades, he was able to develop a philosophical work with a relevant component in a theory of media and social communication that has much in common with the Frankfurt School of Philosophy, yet displays a vitality of its own as it encompasses elements from Phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger), Philosophy of Language (Wittgenstein), and Philosophical Anthropology (Ortega y Gasset).

While this very brief description of his intellectual trajectory would seem to leave out Flusser's Brazilian years as a relevant influence for the development of his thought, one needs only to pay attention to the descriptions Flusser elaborates on diverse texts to sense how his engagement with a foreign culture which he came to embrace as his own became for him a strategy for a vital form of philosophizing. As he writes in *Bodenlos*, one of his most intimate texts: "Philosophy is played in the same way as chess problems are solved, except that philosophy is even more interesting than chess because it reveals even better than chess that it is a game. This is how [I played] philosophy in São Paulo at that time."¹ For Flusser then, thought assumes the shape of life and vice versa, and Brazil embodied his notion of philosophizing as a form of life – yet not as content necessarily, as we will see, but as an intensity.

This intensity is recognizable in Flusser's essays through his characteristic style: relentless, agile and ludic, anti-academic. But it is also condensed into some recurring themes, some of which were never expanded into essay-length texts on their own, nevertheless traverse his work as obsessions that open peculiar trails themselves. This article concentrates on how Flusser delineates a philosophy of migration – which he calls a nomadology² – using his own experience of being

1 Vilém Flusser: *Bodenlos*. Düsseldorf: Bollman 1992, p. 51. All translations in this text are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

2 Flusser developed his own theory independently of the notion of the same name suggested by Deleuze and Guattari in their work *Anti-Oedipus* from 1972. Even if Flusser frequently hides his

between-worlds and uprooted as an object of study, prefiguring in many ways one of the most important topics in political philosophy in the 21st Century: the constitution of a migrant subjectivity. This article will present the main features of this theme and will also aim to show how its traits were the product of a lived experience of a Central European *Weltanschauung* colliding with the radical alterity of the Brazilian reality.

2 Beyond the Nationalist Trap

As he was in Brazil, Flusser was aware that his own condition of exile was running counterclockwise to the mainstream creation of nations that was spawning during the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, new countries and their corresponding national-subjects were being created around the globe, as heralds of freedom, progress and civilization. To be sure, Flusser did not speak against the fights for independence of any people, yet he was wary of what these new nationalistic emotions could unleash. As he wrote:

The French nation, this invention of the French Enlightenment, has led to the emergence of countless other nations. This has produced indescribable atrocities throughout the world, and this fact has been clearly brought to consciousness by various analyses. Nevertheless, the French nation still exists. This is one of the reasons why we should despair of man as a self-conquering being.³

But even if this did not imply condemning the struggles for self-determination of oppressed peoples, he did write critically against one of the movements he was most familiar with, giving his Jewish background: Zionism. As he put it: “Zionism was dubious, because the Praguean *forma mentis* had already overcome this type of nationalism [. . .]. Zionism conceded to Judaism a role contrary to the Praguean one: to be a bridge between peoples.”⁴ Naturally, his emigration to Brazil instead of Palestine was the fiercest of arguments in this regard, for he was an intellectual

sources, an analysis of both uses renders a different conception of the notion. While Deleuze and Guattari attach to it a conceptual framework influenced by psychoanalysis, in the interplay between paranoia and schizophrenia, Flusser expands his idea out of his own experience and through a phenomenological approach. Flusser’s conception ends up being less ideological and more pragmatic and grounded, even if there are clear crossovers between both frameworks. A detailed analytic comparison lies beyond the scope of this article, but a broader comment on this parallel development can be found in Doris Pandžić: Nomadism – the Right to Non-identity. In: *Ky/μmya/Culture* 6,14 (2006), p. 37–45.

3 Vilém Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*. Hamburg: eva 2013, p. 95.

4 Vilém Flusser: *Groundless*. São Paulo: Metaflux 2017, p. 26.

who, following Ortega y Gasset, approached one's life as an organon of thinking.⁵ Therefore, in opposition to Zionism, Flusser strived to make sense out of one of the central themes of cultural Judaism: the experience of exile. And he connected this experience not only with a search of a post-national subject, but also with the peculiar experience of the individual in the information age, overwhelmed by technology and disoriented by competing discourses for power and control. In a quotation packed with meaning, he states:

In exile, everything is unusual. The exile is an ocean of chaotic information. The lack of redundancies there does not allow to receive this flood of information as meaningful messages. The exile, being unusual, is uninhabitable. In order to be able to live there, one must first process the information whirling around into meaningful messages; one must "process" this data. This is a question of survival: if one does not perform the task of data processing, then one is swallowed up by the waves of exile. Processing data is synonymous with creating. The displaced person must be creative if he does not want to decay.⁶

In that sense, exile prefigures a form of existence proper to the information age that the nationalist zeal tends to mask, since an emotional fervor fulfills a sort of identitarian balm. The existential condition of exile – a category that for Flusser performs close to what Heidegger terms *Geworfenheit*⁷ – is brutally obscured, commodified, instrumentalized under a political agenda that attempts to impose a specific interpretation of reality.⁸ Exile, on the other hand, hints to a wound, a hurtful but rather liberating opening: "The world around us has become an uninhabitable desert in which the wind of chance necessarily piles up dunes. We our-

5 Or as Flusser put it, he aimed at turning his "own life into a laboratory for others." Ibid., p. 11.

6 Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p. 103.

7 Martin Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2006, p. 175.

8 Here we find an application of the notion of alienation that Flusser expands to other fields. In his *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, the duality between nationalism and exile is played out in a similar fashion through the binarity of black-and-white vs color photography. Black-and-white images are conceptual in origin, problematic dualities which however do not conceal their critical distance to the reality they represent; on the opposite end, color images are full-fledged ideological, in the sense that they conceal the work of representation they engage in. Flusser writes: "The 'more genuine' the colours of the photograph become, the more untruthful they are, the more they conceal their theoretical origin. [. . .] Looked at uncritically like this, [photographs] accomplish their task perfectly: programming society to act as though under a magic spell. . ." (Vilém Flusser: *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. London: reaction books 2006, p. 44–48). In this play of equivalences, exile has a relation to black-and-white photography in that it always seems upsetting and in need to be overcome. Flusser, however, explores precisely the uncomfortability proper to them.

selves want this contingency, and we stack up dunes to gear up ourselves in the process. We have become nomads.”⁹

Furthermore, Flusser exposes the conceptual ploy that the notion of “homeland” [*Heimat*] – a bulwark of nostalgic intensity – comprises. We are usually told that the homeland is a place of safety and belonging, while our “dwellings” [*Wohnung*] are replaceable. Yet for Flusser, the opposite is indeed the case: the homeland is expendable and interchangeable, but, as the homeless well know, one needs a dwelling to survive. The dwelling becomes then a place of becoming, a site of experience, the foundation for a consciousness that grants a certain access to the world. Otherwise, without a dwelling, without a shelter to protect oneself from the ordinary and the habitual, “everything that arrives is noise, nothing is information, and in an informationless world, in chaos, one can neither feel nor think nor act.”¹⁰ In this sense, the native-nationalists [*Beheimateten*] that defend passionately their homeland make a categorical mistake that evidences their profound misconception, for

[. . .] they perceive their home as cute, just as we all perceive our home as cute. And then they confuse cuteness with beauty. This confusion comes from the fact that the native-nationalists are entangled in their homeland and therefore are not open to the ugliness that approaches, which could be transformed into beauty, for example. *Patriotism is above all a symptom of an aesthetic disease.*¹¹

Every homeland is a mystification of the banal, a familiar broth of emotional attachment masquerading in mystery. In contrast, exile is an invitation to abandon subjectivity-making under the aegis of the nation-state and to explore the human potential of becoming. Consequently, exile abhors ontology (the study of how the world is) and embraces nomadology (the perpetual iteration of change). This implies a refocusing on detachment, on reverting the adoption of social customs and frameworks, on re-engaging with oneself beyond social roles and expectations. As Hannah Arendt writes: “one is never such a master of oneself as when nobody knows you and your life is exclusively and mainly in your hands.”¹² This self-alienation is anchored in a powerful exodus of the subject from a pretended, stable social identity, as he or she embraces instead volatility and flux. Flusser expands further this idea: in exile “we no longer imagine that we contain some solid kernel (some kind of ‘identity’, an ‘I’, a ‘spirit’ or a ‘soul’), but rather that we

⁹ Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p.62.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 29, highlight JT.

¹² Hannah Arendt: *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik*. München: Piper 1981, p. 85.

are immersed in a collective psychic field, from which we emerge like temporary bubbles, acquire some information, process, share, to submerge again.”¹³

Exile as the central structure of nomadology mobilizes dwelling over the homeland, experience over possession, fluidity over fixation, iteration over certainty, the future over the past. But it also privileges dialogue over force and coercion. After all, an “I” is never a particle that can stand on its own; co-creation, correspondence, collaboration are not only desired, but become central tenets of a nomad’s *savoir faire*.¹⁴ In another text, which recalls the core of Martin Buber’s thinking, Flusser argues: “We only really become an ‘I’ if we are there with and for others. ‘I’ is the one to whom someone says ‘you’.”¹⁵ Between an “I” and a “you”, an inhabitable interzone emerges. But this interzone cannot be explored under the nationalist zeal that pushes towards a mythic “we” shaped out of accidents and coincidences turned into essentialist traits. Therefore, instead of asking “who am I?” or “who are we?” in that relation, as questions that strive for a negation of plurality, we can only ask “who am I this time?” or “who are we this time?”, recognizing thus the transient permutations and contingencies that inhabit the encounter, which are activated or called into being every time an “I” faces an “other” as a nomad fellow.¹⁶ As such, the “other” is not so much opposed to as constitutive of the “I”: a witness to her trail-making, to her rising. A unique passage in Julio Cortázar’s novel *Rayuela* (1963) describes this possibility at length, making a parallel over the notion of Brownian movements, random motions observed in particles suspended in a liquid or gas:

[. . .] we compose an absurd figure, we draw with our movements a figure identical to the one that flies draw when they fly in one room, from here to there, abruptly turn around, from there to here, that is what is called brownoid movement, do you understand now? a right angle, a line that goes up, from here to there, from the back to the front, upwards, downwards, spasmodically, slowing down and starting in the same instant in another direction, and all that weaves a drawing, a figure, something non-existent like you and me, like

13 Vilém Flusser: The crisis of linearity. Transl. by Adelheid Mers. In: *Boot Print* 1.1 (2006), p. 21.

14 In a formulation that precedes one of the main theses of Étienne Balibar’s *Citizen Subject* (2016), Flusser writes: “In my now achieved freedom I am the one who spins his bonds with his fellow men, in cooperation with them. [. . .] That is, I think, what it means to be free. Not the breaking of the bond with others, but the braiding of this connection in cooperation with them.” Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p. 20.

15 Vilém Flusser: *Into the universe of technical images*. Minneapolis: UMP 2011, p. 93.

16 In that sense, if we insist on referring to a “homeland”, Flusser would change its terms: “It is not that Brazil is my homeland, but that my ‘homeland’ are for me the people for whom I carry responsibility” (Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p. 26). Likewise, a “nation” could only be seen as a virtual process, not a real state; not a “way of being”, but a “form of searching” (Vilém Flusser: *Brasil, ou a procura de um novo homem: por uma fenomenologia do subdesenvolvimento*. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ 1998, p. 21–22).

the two dots lost in Paris that go from here to there, from there to here, making their drawing, dancing for nobody, not even for themselves, an endless figure without sense.¹⁷

As Flusser in São Paulo, Cortázar describes the uprooted lives of two Argentinians – Lucía (la Maga) and Horacio Oliveira – in Paris, embodying Flusser's nomadology in rather precise terms. For as Flusser argues elsewhere, in a sentence that could be read as a comment to this passage: "The 'absurd' is a term that also means 'groundless' in the same sense as 'without reason', just like the sentence 'two times two is four at seven o'clock in São Paulo' is groundless. This sentence is an example of absurd thinking, and it leads us to the sensation of hovering above the abyss, in which the concepts of 'true' and 'false' do not apply."¹⁸

3 The Category of Groundlessness

Exile is the structural condition of the nomad, but Flusser aims at moving beyond a metaphorical layer, and thus explores, through a reflection of his own life, the existential condition of the migrant as groundlessness. All poetic remnants are left behind, to describe the modality through which a migrant develops sense-making by collapsing cultural frameworks and the certainties of a socio-national life. In *Bodenlos (Groundless)*, Flusser's intellectual biography, he writes: "One who hovers above time, who is groundless, can interpret the apparent clash [between a previous and an adopted culture] as a form of interchangeable perceptions."¹⁹ Groundlessness produces an agitation of the senses and an involuntary form of awareness, as if being removed from a specific order of things would allow one to see the layered construction of the whole world. In short, the groundless subject realizes that the culture we are born in is a determined aspect of the environment into which we are thrust at birth. This is a painful discovery that strikes one as "a malady"; on the other end, "the ones who 'truly' belong to their cultures do so because they never grasped such a discovery."²⁰ Groundlessness implies therefore a process of transcending one's own culture, a constant process of self-alienation, of distancing to one's own self, and a permanent state of inebriation of sorts. It also entails approaching different

¹⁷ Julio Cortázar: *Rayuela*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana 1963, p. 160.

¹⁸ Flusser: *Groundless*, p. 19–20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

cultures as different games one plays. As Flusser puts it: “seen from this situation, every culture emerges as a field for engagement.”²¹

Of course, this is a process, frequently agonizingly painful before it is liberating, and can only be understood as stages in a course of becoming. Because of its hardships, the migrant subjectivity is difficult to hold; the migrant subject is willing to move to the new cultural reality as soon as possible to get away from her distress. As the philosopher observes: “To put it simply, one ‘reality’ gradually replaces the other and the abyss of groundlessness is never revealed.”²² This is why we have seldom explored the type of subject this process engenders. But the state of mind of the migrant, if assumed, displays an ecstatic sense of wonder and curiosity which correspond, according to both Plato (*Theaetetus* 155d) and Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 982b), to the ur-condition of a philosophical mind: *thaumazein*. This wonder is at the base of groundlessness, yet not as a pseudo-foundation in a paradoxical manner, but as an attitude or a state of mind. And this state of mind depends on sustaining indeed a paradoxical form of existence: between being and non-being, between engagement and distance, between certainty and doubt, between desire and frustration. In the philosophical tradition to which Flusser responds, this implies holding unresolved the dialectical synthesis between two recognizable poles, or in other words, performing an *epoché* (Husserl) that means a suspension of judgment that allows a phenomenon to be seen in its fleeting, unstable, and contradictory concreteness. As Flusser concedes:

The “loss of grounding” seemed to be the loss of the models for experience, knowledge, and values [. . .]. Now this also seems to be the loss of the structure that organises these models, hence, the loss of the Western structure in the following manner: the tacit presupposition of the Western tradition is that “Being” (irrespective of what that means) is real, positive, and sheltering. And that “Non-Being,” is the annihilating danger that surrounds “Being” on all sides. Within such a structure, any salvation (be it Jewish, Christian, Marxist, or any other) means to place oneself in the bosom of Being, sheltered from Non-Being (for example: in God, History, or Idea). Non-Being means Hell. Alas, Wittgenstein and Kafka define thought as “Non-Being” and remain Western. If they want to liberate themselves from thought, it means they want to be free from Hell. However, [my] own problem is different. [I] accepted thought as “Being” and wished to be sheltered in Non-Being.²³

Being sheltered in non-being implied for Flusser a contact with a culture of unfathomable dimensions, at some time the distant Eastern tradition, but most certainly the imminence of the Brazilian reality, at once morass and sensual extravagance.

²¹ Ibid., p. 91.

²² Ibid., p. 92.

²³ Ibid., p. 65.

And from there he asserts: “The problem was one’s insertion into the local context. Not in the sense: ‘How can I be inserted into this context?’ But: ‘Where am I, when I see myself inserted into this context?’ [. . .] The problem was how to synthesise the contradiction ‘engagement/distance’.”²⁴ Yet, as we have argued, groundlessness exists precisely because the contradiction remains unsynthesized. If this seems irresolute or rather fragile, it is because it is a counter-epistemology that approaches theories as territories or fields where one plays, and not as explanations or functional models for objective realities. As Flusser explains: “In my view, scientific propositions do not reflect real situations. On the contrary, reality is broken down [in science] into situations through the corruptive (analysing) action of scientific discourse. [. . .] For me, science is *poiesis*, in a diabolic sense: the formal breakdown of reality.”²⁵ Rather than with mere arguments, Flusser engages with seemingly contradictory phenomena, approaching experiences, analyzing gestures, making sense of encounters, testing the resistances to language and observing the overflow of life. For instance, in his book on gestures, Flusser analyzes bodily movements as a communicational notation of sorts, which escapes the (scientific) cause-effect relationship and should be approached instead as a set of monadic units that render meaning. He writes:

[. . .] with concrete phenomena, it is difficult to distinguish between action and reaction, representation and expression. For example, I see tears in someone’s eyes. What criteria could I use to justify saying that this is a representation of a state of mind (a codified symbol) and not its expression (symptom)? In the first case, the observed person is active, “acts out” a state of mind. In the second case, this person suffers, “reacts” to a state of mind.²⁶

In that sense, instead of merely claiming a take on objectivity, science should make sense of its technical-discursive framing, and philosophy – uphold in groundlessness – must make sense of an art of living. And by this he means an art of living “in the real sense of the term”, where “the only working categories are aesthetic: intensity, variety, and emotional or informative charge.” For to him, “to become fused with concreteness” is precisely “to separate the concrete from the aesthetically repulsive ideological scum that covers it; to live in the raw and bare beauty of what is concrete – and which is beautiful precisely for being raw and bare.” In short, this means an “engagement against what is false, and in favour of what is absurdly true.”²⁷ For Flusser, groundlessness is therefore the form of existence of a critically-deconstructed human life, attuned to the extravagances of cultural frame-

²⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 270.

²⁶ Vilém Flusser: *Gestures*. Minneapolis: UMP 2014, p. 5.

²⁷ Flusser: *Groundless*, p. 124–5.

works and ideological structures. Groundlessness implies engaging radically with the affect of the absurd, to subsume it into a climate of religiosity – not under the aegis of a specific religion and its contents, but rather as an existential form of spirituality –, which means taking a leap of faith into the abyss of the non-sensical, existing thus more intensely, if “‘to exist’ is interpreted as ‘to live on the outside’.”²⁸ Only then, holding this critical distance, can one’s life be taken as an integral (art) work of ethico-epistemic achievement, a vital laboratory for oneself and for others.

4 The Migrant as Figure of the Avant-Garde

For most of the 20th century, the figure of the migrant was rendered as a fragile form of existence in a state of flux and in need of protection, definition, and identity. Fortunately, the material precarities of *refugees* and *asylum-seekers* – migrants with legal, political and/or economic constraints – have been justly highlighted in more recent approaches, and their needs and concerns prioritized in the specialized literature, especially within the increasing environment of racist and xenophobic rejection spreading throughout the Western World. However, as a political figure among others – the citizen, the foreigner, the sovereign – the migrant has been delineated and conceptually strapped by a nation-state-based institutional terminology, which stresses its irregular legal status, curtailed rights and non-membership. In that sense, the migrant has been overwhelmingly represented through its negative traits, as a lack, a problem to be solved, a pariah. For as Hannah Arendt argues, the migrant as a stateless being is suspicious, and therefore embodies “the true symbols of *Pariatum*.”²⁹ Flusser is aware of this stigma and offers a deeper explanation on other grounds: “For the native-nationalist, the immigrant is even more alienating, more uncanny than the wanderer out there, because he exposes what is sacred to the native-nationalist as banal. He is hateful, ugly, because he exposes the beauty of the homeland as kitschy cuteness.”³⁰ As it is evident from this remark, Flusser links the migrant’s existential condition, which grants him a particular epistemological vantage point, with a political circumstance. Because the migrant is groundless, she is embarked in a specific quest, engaged in a form of mutual freedom-seeking and concerned with an existential form of de-alienation. This poses a threat to the legal order of the nation-state. It also underlines the utopian impulse of the migrant as a political figure. Arendt has written that, willingly or not, the pariah misrecognizes

²⁸ Ibid., p. 21–22.

²⁹ Hannah Arendt: *Die verborgene Tradition. Essays*. Frankfurt am Main: JV 2000, p. 65.

³⁰ Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p. 21.

“what society constructs as reality”,³¹ which is to say, with Flusser, that the migrant “disrespects” the homeland by insolently refraining from participating in the farcical rituals that lead to the mystification of customs, or as he puts it, to the social “sacralization of the banal.”³² This antagonist relation can be further explored.

The positive role of the migrant in the society in which he or she comes to live has been seldom acknowledged, and when it occurs, it is frequently stated in the superficiality of economic terms (migrants do pay taxes, they do not receive well-fare, etc.) or in the facile theme of the cultural input they provide, which contributes to a melting pot or a multicultural society. While these statements are true, they miss the central pillars of the migrant’s unique contributions to modern political societies. Thomas Nail, for instance, has focused on the movement that migration affords to analyze the nature of kinetic social forces and locates there a neural thread that mobilizes history. For him, “the figure of the migrant exposes an important truth: social expansion [i.e. progress] has always been predicated on the social expulsion of migrants.”³³ In his book-length essay, Nail explores the dynamics of motion in its distinct phases and organizational stances to denounce the stigmatization and even criminalization tactics which different powers have conceived to extract that invaluable force from migrant bodies, their agencies and their practices. In that sense, he is able to establish that “the figure of the migrant has always been the true motive force of social history. Only now are we in a position to recognize this.”³⁴ Of course, what Nail tries to pin down in modern terms is what the tradition of exile from the Jewish experience has been suggesting for centuries. Exile, as we have seen previously, implies in fact a strategical form of movement. And as Calasso writes, trying to explain an epochal transformation: “The Modern is born when the eyes observing the world discern in it ‘this chaos, this monstrous confusion’, but are not unduly alarmed. On the contrary, they are thrilled by the prospect of inventing some strategic movement within that chaos.”³⁵ In that sense, the migrant, as a strategist of motion, could be even seen as the true herald of Modernity.

In a different approach, the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges also re-values the innovations and achievements of foreigners and migrants as contributions to the culture in which they develop their work. In a now classical text from 1953, Borges unfolds his argument in two steps. In the first one, he decries the expansion of nationalism as its narrowing scope reaches the production of litera-

³¹ Hannah Arendt: *Die verborgene Tradition*, p. 56.

³² Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p. 26.

³³ Thomas Nail: *The Figure of the Migrant*. Stanford: SUP 2015, p. 7.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Roberto Calasso: *The Ruin of Kasch*. Cambridge: HUP 1994, p. 40.

ture in particular, and culture in general: “the idea that a literature should be defined by the distinguishing features of the country that produces it is a relatively new idea; also new and arbitrary is the idea that writers should seek out themes from their own countries.”³⁶ In a second step, Borges describes the role of migrants and outsiders as cultural innovators. Drawing on Veblen, an American sociologist, Borges follows the question on the perceived preeminence of Jews in Western culture. Veblen, Borges writes,

[. . .] wonders whether this preeminence allows us to conjecture an innate superiority of the Jews, and answers that it does not; he says that they excel in Western culture because they act within that culture and at the same time do not feel bound to it by a special devotion [. . .]. The same can be said of the Irish in the culture of England. When it comes to the Irish, we need not suppose that the profusion of Irish names in British literature and philosophy is due to a racial preeminence, because many of those illustrious Irishmen (Shaw, Berkeley, Swift) were descendants of Englishmen, were people who had no Celtic blood; however, it was enough for them to feel Irish, different, to innovate in English culture.³⁷

Flusser’s elaboration shares some elements with these approaches,³⁸ but has a distinctive tone of its own, which highlights the existential-cognitive-political nexus through which the migrant develops her vital experience and inhabits the world. As with Borges, this experience is not something innate, but a feature that migrants acquire and cultivate as a form of survival. As Flusser writes: “a phenomenological description of the immigration situation by the immigrant himself should strictly speaking be able to unravel the structure of all human life, and this not in spite of, but because of the specific factors that characterize it.”³⁹ As we have seen, for Flusser these factors include necessarily an embrace of the condition of exile, which implies an existential sort of wound – or “sting” [*picada*] as we will see –, and through the confrontation with the absurd gives way to the existential category of groundlessness: the basic elements of a nomadology. As such, this nomadology implies a de-territorialization of subjecthood, a deconstruction of reified forms of existence, of social forms and subjective roles as holders of a personal identity. Instead of defining and fixing, this philosophical approach rarifies and blurs, and in that sense, from a Cartesian point of view that would seek to advance towards clear and defined objects, it would appear to imply a step backward. But this is pre-

36 Jorge Luis Borges: El escritor argentino y la tradición. In: *Obras Completas*, Buenos Aires: Emecé 1981, p. 270.

37 Ibid., p. 272–3.

38 Flusser engages with a form of Borges’ argument in his *Phenomenology of Underdevelopment*, p. 16.

39 Flusser: *Brasil, ou a procura de um novo homem*, p. 8.

cisely its aim: “The philosophical step backwards is nothing but the attempt to make the unconscious conscious. And such a philosophical task can be accomplished more easily by the immigrant thinker than by the native born. Because the immigrant finds himself in ‘transcendence’ of the problem by his own situation, already and automatically.”⁴⁰

If nomadology is to be understood positively as a step backward, it is because it implies an irresolute suspension in a dialectical process which prevents a new synthesis to take hold before it even emerges, stressing thus the latencies and refusing reification. We have hinted already at the importance of this procedure, but in his text *Phenomenology of Underdevelopment* (1998), Flusser expands this theme with some remarkable notes. Explaining this development will allow us to show how this peculiar form of dialectics has more to do with an existentialist phenomenological project than with the Hegelian or Marxist traditions with which the name is usually associated. Flusser starts his argument with an evident statement, which he slowly clarifies:

Immigration is a dialectical process in which the immigrant receives the impact of the environment, and the environment receives the impact of the immigrant. The result of the process, if successful, is the alteration of both factors. Of course: the stronger the immigrant's personality, the more painful and time consuming the process of change, and the better structured the environment, the more superficial the change made by the immigrant. Equally clear: the more flexible and open the immigrant's personality, and the more malleable the environment, the greater the *feedback* between the two.⁴¹

Flusser explains that a successful process of “integration” depends on the alteration of both the immigrant and the culture in which he or she incorporates. As such, the dialectical process does not immediately imply a sublation (*Aufhebung*) in the Hegelian sense, in a sort of integration into one of the dialectical poles. On the contrary, the success of the process depends on both factors being flexible, elastic, and porose. But we could still argue that agency in the dialectical process comes not from an autonomy from structures, but indeed from a plasticity within them. And yet, further down the text, Flusser describes another direction of the flow: “one can only become Brazilian who first gives meaning to this term. And, in order to be able to give this meaning, one must first discover reality. And, in order to be able to discover reality, one must first change the environment.”⁴² Surprisingly, we now have not only two poles – the immigrant and the environment – but three: the incidence of reality. Yet reality does not refer to the envi-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴¹ Flusser: *Brasil, ou a procura de um novo homem*, p. 13.

⁴² Ibid., p. 15.

ronment, nor to the background of the immigrant, but denotes a situation that appears between both. However, this does not imply a synthesis, at least in traditional terms, because reality is usually assumed as something that is given, not produced. This is the whole point of an ontology. But what is then the role of reality? At this point we need to follow the argument a step further.

To reach reality (and therefore develop a sense of belonging), Flusser asserts that the migrant needs to be able to change her environment. But – and here is the key – “the immigrant cannot rely on his environment in trying to find himself and his way. He must open his own *sting*, within his new life world, to allow his neighbors and himself to get out.”⁴³ This means that the only form through which a migrant can alter her environment is not by tackling it directly, from the outside, but indirectly, from her inside, from her own *sting*. The theme of the *sting* connects very clearly Flusser thinking with the tradition of existentialism in philosophy. As Aho explains: “When the existentialist refers to feelings of ‘nausea’ (Sartre), ‘absurdity’ (Camus), ‘anxiety’ (Kierkegaard), ‘guilt’ (Heidegger), or ‘mystery’ (Marcel) they are describing uncanny affects that have the power to shake us out of our complacency, where the secure and familiar world breaks apart and collapses, and we are forced to confront the question of existence.”⁴⁴ In Flusser, the migrant’s sting provides an access to decode her new environment, and through that, enables an agency over her reality and that of her fellow migrants. Through the theme of the sting, we go beyond a dialectic, and access instead a sort of unfolding of the migrant subjectivity, who can then distinguish the painful duality of her own situation and correlate it to the irreducible condition of human existence to sort out multiple social realities as fields of engagement. As Flusser writes:

If he wants to live in this environment as a free man, he must open his own sting. ‘Free man’ means a man who sees his own situation from the outside, projects a map onto it and acts accordingly, who gives meaning to his environment, lives according to this meaning, and thus transforms it into the world of his life. And, so that this given sense is not mere fantasy, he tries to unveil the reality of the situation in which he lives. Therefore: ready to change himself, in order to change the world. This is how the situation of the immigrant in Brazil presents itself, as an extreme example of the human situation.⁴⁵

Nomadology, therefore, could be described as the phenomenology of a non-intentional affect – groundlessness – which confers meaning in the midst of the absurd. Or alternatively, it can also be defined, in a description that echoes Walter

⁴³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁴ Kevin Aho: Existentialism. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/existentialism/> [March 20, 2024].

⁴⁵ Flusser: *Brasil, ou a procura de um novo homem*, p. 22.

Benjamin, as a dialectics at a standstill, a dialectics where the process of synthesis is permanently retracted, to open up other forms of social equilibria. The migrant can then discover “his unique ability to synthesize proposals by *spontaneous* methods, which are called ‘love’ in other contexts.”⁴⁶ This renders the migrant as a peculiar political figure remarkably sensitive to engage in a politics of care, away from the stubbornly nationalist, liberal citizen, and characterized instead by vulnerability, co-dependence and co-responsibility. The migrant sustains thus the ultimate meaning of human existence in her decision to err endlessly through the arbitrary structures of the social absurd. And this turns her at once a threat to the political status quo – sustained by the structures of the nation-state – and a vanguardist figure, an anti-hero and a herald of the future.

5 Conclusions

Flusser’s nomadology is a theory of migration which, due to its own inherent structure, could not acquire a definitive form. Instead, what we find are statements, arguments and autobiographical remarks scattered in different texts that develop features, themes and other latencies in different contexts and discussions. This was probably the only way to put such a theory forth. As Jaffe argues: “For Flusser, the disorienting experiences of the migrant – the receiver of premature, distorted, and unconvincing information – register feedback about national significance from loss of grounding, different signal to noise ratios, and conflicting principles that yield potential for critical experimentalism.”⁴⁷ Yet we have shown that this experimentalism does not amount to a series of unconnected ideas, but instead forms a critical phenomenology that can be understood as a political existentialism centered upon the figure of the migrant. In that sense, the migrant acquires a political centrality in a project that aims towards a social renewal. As Goodwin remarks: “This idea that immigrants have a responsibility to teach the settled people about the possibility of letting go of their habits and prejudices, and not vice versa as is usually thought, is an important part of Flusser’s positive valuation of immigration.”⁴⁸ In the contemporary information society, the migrant is the one who can actually create something new – i.e. process new

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Aaron Jaffee: *Experience to Experiment, Signs to Signals: Toward Flusser’s New World*. London: Bloomsbury 2018, p. 190.

⁴⁸ Matthew Goodwin: The Brazilian Exile of Vilém Flusser and Stefan Zweig. In: *Flusser Studies* 7 (2008), p. 5.

information – out of her own distinctive experience,⁴⁹ which pivots around the condition of exile and the category of groundlessness. The migrant is thus an impertinent stranger that can help to turn every irrational certainty of a socio-national reality upside down, and open the path towards other forms of freedom, based on a politics of mutual care, respect, co-dependency, and vulnerability.

49 See Flusser: *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, p. 108.

IV Images and Imageries on the Move

Mónika Szente-Varga

Encounters with the Rain God: László Passuth Bridging Distances between Hungary, Mexico, and Spain

A historical novel, with a convincing atmosphere and a skillfully woven plot, must be a living memory, an evocation – faithful and authentic – of a past period, turning into an inalienable particle of our inner world.¹

1 Introduction

From a young age, László Passuth was keen on trying out himself in literature, first as a poet, then as a writer. He published short pieces from the second half of the 1920s, mostly travelogues and texts related to international events. He wrote his first novel, *Eurázia* in the 1930s and competed with it at an international proposal whose first prize was to have the winning piece published in different countries and languages by altogether 18 editorial houses. It was a matter of only one vote, that *Eurázia* got second place in Hungary, thus could not pass to the international level, being that reserved to the best national contender. Nonetheless, this second place ensured Passuth the publication of his novel,² and upon its success an informal offer by the director of the Athenaeum editorial house on the publication of his following work. He planned it to be historical novel, on the fatal encounter of two great civilizations, the European and the Pre-Hispanic one. Upon learning about these plans, the celebrated writer, Zsigmond Móricz measured Passuth with curiosity and said: “Try it, write it, since you are so excited about the topic. Then throw the manuscript into a drawer and forget about it.”³

Passuth heeded some of the advice: he prepared his first historical novel: *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* (*Esőisten siratja Mexikót*), but instead of abandoning and forgetting about the text, he wanted to publish it. The timing (end of the 1930s), the genre (historical novel) and the volume (more than 500 pages) significantly reduced the chances of success, but Sárközi, director of Athenaeum said

1 László Passuth: *La novela histórica*. Madrid: Ateneo 1967, p. 18.

2 István Zsugán: Az Élet és Irodalom látogatóban Passuth Lászlónál. In: *Élet és Irodalom* 13, 13 (29 March 1969), p. 12; Zoltán Gál: Esőisten siratja Mexikót. In: *A Hét* 17, 8 (25 February 1972), p. 10.

3 László Passuth: *Találkoztam Esőistennel*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó 1972, p. 11.

yes, on the condition of a 25% trim, leaving the plot untouched and cutting descriptive, informative parts. Passuth finally erased 10%, and the book was published in 1939. It sold out but did not raise much echo. It was re-printed in 1941 and began to attract more interest, thus a new edition was planned for Christmas 1944 but was thwarted by the siege of Budapest. In the meantime, Passuth started to deliver books soon one after another, publishing altogether seven novels in the 1940s. At the end of the decade, however, he was ousted from the Association of Hungarian Writers and silenced for various years. His career as a writer, about to begin in earnest, was halted by the World War II and then cut by the Communist takeover in Hungary. Yet Passuth would be able to re-start in the second half of the 1950s and soon turn into to be one of the most beloved writers of the country, specialized in historical novels – popular among the reading public, but not with the regime.

The bipolar division of the world seriously impacted Passuth's career and success. The communist leadership did not like him (he belonged to the tolerated category most of the time) and the internationalization of his works was altered: he could have less contact with the Western world and more with countries of the socialist bloc. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that up to a certain extent, he was able to break these boundaries. For example, he was able to reach out to the Hispanic world, in particular to Spain, where he became a bestseller with 12 translated books and numerous editions. Between 1959 and 1979, hardly a year had passed without having a Passuth book (new or re-edited) in Spanish bookshops.

This chapter is going to explore Passuth's Hispanic links: his personal and written presence in Spain and Mexico, as well as the impact he could have on Hungarian imaginary related to that latter country, thus connecting (socialist) Hungary with Mexico. Although various of his works are mentioned, there will be a special focus on the book he wrote on the life of conquistador Hernán Cortés, *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* which, despite his many books, remained his greatest hit throughout his life. It was popular not only in Hungary, but also in places where the story was set (Spain and Mexico), whose past Passuth was reviving in his writing.

The main sources of this investigation include the recollections of Passuth in memoirs, interviews, book prefaces; documents kept at the Passuth Collection of the Petőfi Literary Museum (Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, PIM) in Budapest in the form of letters, lectures, manuscripts, etc.; contemporary Hungarian press (accessible via the Arcanum digital collection) as well as library catalogues. Limitations on research are posed by the scarcity of archival material. This is connected to the fact that the time span of 1939–1979, that is the period between the first edition of *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* and the death of László Passuth, roughly

coincides with the era characterized by the lack diplomatic relations between Hungary and Mexico (1941–1974). Another serious limitation is the little academic attention given to the works and literary trajectory of Passuth, resulting in a surprisingly low number of analyses.⁴

2 Theoretical and Historical Framework

Passuth was born in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1900 and grew up in the dual state. He started to write in interwar Hungary, producing his first novels towards the end of this period, from the second half of the 1930s, and became one of the most read writers of his native country in socialist times. His popularity did not stop at the borders, his works were translated into several languages.

It might seem that the concept of socialist globalization⁵ could fit as a framework to explain the international connectivities of Passuth. This theoretical framework breaks with the notion of isolation in case of the socialist bloc and places emphasis on its international entanglements, in particular with the Global South.⁶ The Soviet Union and the socialist countries started to open up from the end of the 1940s, after war economy was no longer able to meet their needs. This process of intensifying links with the rest of the world sped up with the death of Stalin and the intensification of decolonization. Hungary lagged behind for a couple of years due to its temporary isolation following the violent crushing of the 1956 Revolution. The diversification of international contacts began hence – after the granting of amnesty – from the beginning of the 1960s.⁷ The choice was not a completely free one. On one hand Hungary depended on the Soviet Union, – and had intensive connections with European socialist countries –, on the other hand, it also depended

4 Károly Kokas: Passuth, a történelmi regényíró és emlékiró. In: *SZTE Klebersberg Könyvtár blog* (30 May 2022), <http://blog.ek.szte.hu/2022/05/30/passuth-a-tortenelmi-regenyiro-es-emlekiro/> [March 20, 2024].

5 James Mark, Paul Betts (eds.): *Socialism Goes Global. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2022; James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, et al. (eds.): *Alternative Globalizations. Eastern Europe and the postcolonial World*. Indiana Press: Bloomington 2020; Béla Tomka: *Szocialista globalizáció Kelet-Közép-Európában. A kutatás új irányai és hiányai*. Szeged: MTA–SZTE–ELTE History of Globalization Research Group 2022, p. 3–21.

6 Kristin Roth-Ey (ed.): *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular: Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War*. London: Bloomsbury 2023.

7 Csaba Békés: *Cold War, Détente and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution*. New York: International Center for Advanced Studies, New York University 2022, p. 1–32, <http://coldwar.hu/publications/detente.pdf> [March 20, 2024]; Emőke Horváth: Foreign Relations between Hungary and Latin America in the Early Years of the Cold War (1947–1959). In: *East Central Europe* 49, 1 (2022), p. 1–22.

on the West, for technology and loans.⁸ Yet the latter contacts necessarily had to be limited for political-ideological reasons. Nonetheless, they were necessary for the survival of the system. Coupled with decolonization, links were formed with Global South in economic, political, cultural, sport and other areas.⁹ Yet these could only partially compensate for limited Western contacts.¹⁰ Nonetheless these entanglements were important as they could bring revenue for the Hungarian government and provide international visibility and prestige. The latter could be used for domestic purposes, to enhance the support of the Kádár system, and for external goals related to popularizing the socialist world. The underlying condition for socialist globalization was the existence of the socialist bloc. With its birth at the end of the 1940s as well as its demise in 1990, the international connections of the implicated countries underwent significant changes. It is true that Passuth's career had been strongly affected by regime changes in Hungary, however, most of his Hispanic links cannot be explained with the framework of socialist globalization.

One, Spain and Mexico did not form part of the official contacts of Hungary for long decades in the Cold War. Diplomatic relations between Hungary and Spain were normalized as late as 1977, only after the death of Franco; and in case of Mexico, even though the Hungarian government reached out various times trying the re-establish links broken during the World War II, the Mexican side was reluctant to make this step, in great part because of the US. Mexican-Hungarian diplomatic relations were normalized in 1974.¹¹ By the time of the re-establishment of Hungarian-Mexican diplomatic relations, Passuth was 74 years old; in case of Hungarian-Spanish diplomatic nexus, 77. He died two years later, in 1979.

8 József Böröcz: Dual Dependency and Property Vacuum: Social Change on the State Socialist Semiperiphery. In: *Theory and Society* 21, 1 (1992), p. 77–104; Zoltán Ginelli: Hungarian Experts in Nkrumah's Ghana. Decolonization and Semiperipheral Postcoloniality in Socialist Hungary. In: *Mezosfera.org* (2018), <http://mezosfera.org/hungarian-experts-in-nkrumahs-ghana/#fn-8114276-84> [March 20, 2024].

9 Péter Apor: Magyarország és a harmadik világ kapcsolatai, 1948–1990. In Sándor Horváth, Gusztáv Kecskés, et al. (eds.): *Magyarország külkapcsolatai (1945–1990)*. Budapest: Történettudományi Intézet 2021, p. 569–590; Zsombor Bódy: *A magyar glóbusz kitágul. Magyar szakértelem a globalizáció folyamataiban az 1960–1980-as évtizedekben*. Szeged: MTA-SZTE-ELTE Globalizáció-történeti Kutatócsoport 2020, p. 1–9.

10 Zsombor Bódy: *Opening up to the “Third World” or Taking a Detour to the “West”? The Hungarian Presence in Algeria from the 1960s to the 1980s*. In: Szeged: MTA-SZTE-ELTE History of Globalization Research Group 2021, p. 3–34; Béla Tomka: Alternatív vagy korlátozott globalizáció? A szocialista rendszerek nemzetközi kapcsolatainak új értelmezéseiről. In: *Múltunk* 1 (2023), p. 220–236.

11 Agustín Sánchez Andrés, Mónika Szenté-Varga: La política mexicana hacia Europa Centro-Oriental durante la Guerra Fría: el caso de Hungría, 1941–1974. In: *En-Claves del Pensamiento* 15, 30 (2021), p. 1–24.

Two, Mexican knowledge on Passuth and his novels stemmed only partially from Hungary in a direct way and was more linked to Spain and the Spanish book market. Spanish-Latin American connections played a significant role in Passuth's overseas success.

Three, Passuth's contacts with the Hispanic world depended a lot on the personal factor. His relations with editors such as Luis Caralt and Jenő Fischgrund, and the friendships he formed with Spanish and Latin American writers and intellectuals. It is also important to take into consideration that some of these contacts had been established before the World War II and lasted even into socialist times. Their resilience is quite unique. Passuth's personality, his elegant and quiet magnetism was a key driver behind this network.

3 Background

3.1 Family Circle

László Passuth was exceptionally knowledgeable on history, art history and culture. He had an openness and curiosity towards novelties and thirst for knowledge, partly connected to his quite extraordinary family background. His mother, Gizella Éber – who raised him – was a high school teacher. Her brothers László Éber an art historian, Antal Éber an economist, Ernő Éber a politician and economic historian and István Éber a factory director. Passuth married Lola Békésy in 1936, the daughter of Sándor Békésy, an economist and diplomat. Her brothers were György Békésy, Nobel-prize biophysist and Miklós Békésy, Kossuth-prize agronomist.¹²

Passuth had an exceptional talent for languages, mastering English, French, Greek, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish,¹³ which enabled him to read diverse sources related to his topics of interest. He was constantly improving his knowledge and collected material for his books with great diligence and humbleness. He was a well-travelled man who visited many countries between the two world wars, and even continued his trips in socialist times, though with certain

12 Péter Kozák: Passuth László. In: *Névpont*, <https://www.nevpont.hu/palyakep/passuth-laszlo-51efe> [December, 14 2023]; János Vincze: A Nobel-díjas Békésy György családfája. In: *Horus* 159, 4 (2018), 156–158; Csaba Komáromi: Utazás egy hagyaték körül – Passuth László irodalmi örökségéről. In: *Irodalomismeret* 24, 4 (2013), p. 109.

13 Passuth worked for the Magyar-Olasz Bank Rt (Italo-Hungarian Bank) until 1948 when it was forced to disappear. Then he found employment in the Hungarian Office for Translation and Attestation where he worked from 1950 until his retirement in 1960.

restrictions. His versatile and impressive knowledge, dedication to work, grace and storytelling, attention to detail and quality all contributed to his popularity among readers of different nationalities.

3.2 Attention Towards the Hispanic World and the Birth of the Rain God

Given Passuth's long trajectory as a writer, stretching over various decades, there was ample opportunity to remember the birth of his first historical novel and in general, that of his interest for pre-Hispanic civilizations. He tended to present this as a whim of fate, linked to a book fair in London in 1926.

Tens of thousands of volumes lined the shelves and halls. Why was it that I was momentarily riveted by two hefty volumes written by Prescott, an American historian of the last century? I did not even know the author's name, but the titles – *The Conquest of Peru* and *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* – fascinated me. Since childhood, I had longed to know more about these mysterious civilisations [. . .]. I had a look into the book on Peru. I was captivated by the clarity of style, the copious table of contents, and the richness of source materials. I bought it.¹⁴

Upon returning to his hotel room, Passuth realized that he needed the volume on Mexico, too. It was the *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* that further fuelled Passuth's interest towards ancient America and that also convinced him of the necessity to be able to read the sources Prescott had used, that is, to learn Spanish. Given his knowledge of Latin and Italian (and other languages), this did not take a long time. He read in Spanish and used Bernal Díaz del Castillo: *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*; Bernardino de Sahagún: *The Conquest of New Spain* and Hernán Cortés: *Cartas de relación* as some of his fundamental sources. In fact, his translation of the letters of Cortés written to emperor Charles V was published in Hungary in 1944.¹⁵ He also enlisted John Lloyd Stephens: *Incidents of travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* and the writings of Eduard Seler and Theodor-Wilhelm Danzel among his principal sources. He also had an important Hungarian contact, art historian Pál Kelemen (1894–1993), who having married an American, settled and worked in the United States, specializ-

¹⁴ László Passuth: *Esőisten siratja Mexikót*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó 1974, p. 593.

¹⁵ Hernando Cortés: *Mexico meghódítása. Hernando Cortés levelei V. Károly császárhoz*. Budapest: Officina 1944. Translation and preface by László Passuth.

ing in (Latin) American Pre-Hispanic and Colonial Art.¹⁶ Besides reading available original sources and secondary literature, Passuth was also keen to see Pre-Hispanic artefacts, and visited the corresponding collections/ objects of museums such as the Ethnological Museum in Vienna and the British Museum in London as well as museums in Germany, Italy and France.¹⁷ Passuth had been collecting material for more than ten years when he set out to write his first historical novel. Having a full-time job as a bank clerk, he completed it in approximately one and a half years. It was a great intellectual adventure; he wrote a novel on the life on Hernán Cortés having read all sources he could lay his hands on and seen corresponding museum collections in Europe, but without having been to Mexico. The book was written all source-based, without direct experience in the Americas.

The Rain God Weeps for Mexico was published in Hungary in 1939, in 1941 and then after a forced silence of various years, in 1957. Editions followed by Szépirodalmi Kiadó (1962, 1965, 1968, 1974, 1978), Kossuth (1992) and Athenaeum (2000, 2005, 2011).

4 Contacts with the Hispanic World: Spain

Luis de Caralt got to know about *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* due to the Hungarian emigrant Oliver Brachfeld (1908–1967)¹⁸ who called his attention to the novel.¹⁹ Caralt and Passuth made a formal agreement on publication of this work still during WW2, in 1943, and the first Spanish edition was launched in 1946. Twenty years later, in 1966, Passuth commented the following to Eugenio Fischgrund, a Hungarian-born editor settled in Mexico:

For 16 years [Caralt] only sent Catalan sweets at Christmas, but no money. Then he began to fulfil his obligations quite properly when the Hungarian Copyright Office started to keep these things in order. What he does and does not account for is a matter of conscience. So

16 His book *Battlefield of the Gods: aspects of Mexican history* (London: Allen and Unwin 1937) was translated and published in Hungary still in the 1930s (*Az Istenek csatateré*. Budapest: Franklin 1939), in fact in the same year as Passuth's *Rain God*. After the war and the regime change, Kelemen's books were no longer allowed to appear in Hungary. His synthesis *Medieval American Art* was published in Hungary as late as 1981.

17 László Passuth: *Találkoztam Esőistennel*, p. 5–11.

18 Brachfeld was author, translator, expert on individual psychology. See Petra Horváth: Brachfeld F. Olivér (1908–1967). In: *Thalassa* 19, 1 (2008), p. 59–83.

19 László Passuth: *Esőisten siratja Mexikót*, p. 598.

far, he has published four of my books²⁰ and has contracts for three more. [. . .] Although Caralt's contracts are only for Spain, he has the right to distribute them in the Spanish-speaking world, but he must inform me [. . .]. I basically like Caralt a lot /have never met him/ because he has a lot of kindness in him.²¹

Caralt arranged the invitation of Passuth to Spain, who arrived in 1966: delivered a lecture on historical novels (published by Ateneo in 1967) and attended the presentation of his fifth book in Spanish, a historical novel that takes us to the times of Claudio Monteverdi: *El músico del Duque de Mantua*. Almost ten years later, Caralt would invite him once more. It was in May 1975, that the 75-year-old Passuth returned to Spain.²² This time to appear at the presentation of another book of his: *Ravena fue la tumba de Roma*, a historical novel on the life of Theodorik the Great (454–526), the king of the Goths. Only six months later Franco would die, providing the opportunity for a regime change in Spain. The country embraced a cautious, peaceful and successful process of democratization.

Editorial Caralt had lion's share in publishing and making Passuth's work known for the Spanish, providing visibility and a connection to the readers. Most of the editions took place before 1975 but continued after the regime change and even after the death of Luis de Caralt in 1994, then as Noguer and Caralt.²³

20 Besides *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico*, Caralt published Passuth's historical novels on the life of Joanna of Naples (*La rosa de oro*, 1959), of don Juan de Austria (*El Señor natural*, 1962) and of Giorgione (*Amor y muerte en las lagunas*, 1963).

21 Letter of László Passuth to Jenő Fischgrund, Budapest, 14 April 1966. Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

22 Ildikó Marton: Miközben itthon nem publikálhatott, Spanyolországban bestseller lett a könyve – Passuth László. In: *Papageno* (23 January 2022), <https://papageno.hu/featured/2022/01/itthon-nem-publikalhatott-spanyolorszagban-bestseller lett-a-konyve-passuth-laszlo/> [March 20, 2024].

23 The works of László Passuth published in Spanish include *Amor y muerte en las lagunas*, (Caralt 1963, 1978, 1984; Mundo Actual 1979); *El Dios de la lluvia llora sobre México* (Caralt 1946, 1959, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1970, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1990; Noguer y Caralt 1998, 2001; Mundo Actual 1979; Orbis 1984, 1985; El Aleph 2003, 2008, 2012, 2015; Omegalfa 2019). Altogether, *El Dios de la lluvia llora sobre México* had more than 30 editions in Spain. Source: Ildikó Marton: Miközben itthon. . . The El Aleph editions use a new translation made directly from Hungarian by Judit Xántus (1952–2003). In the version of Joaquín Verdager (translation made in the 1940s), some parts which depict the Spanish in a negative way were left out. Source: György Kellei: Igazi alkotó munka a műfordítás. In: *Veszprémi Napló* 58, 228 (30 September 2002), p. 7; *El músico del Duque Mantua* (Caralt 1966); *El Señor natural* (Caralt 1962, 1967, 1975, 1987; Noguer y Caralt 2000, 2001; Áltera 2008); *Imperia, cortesana romana* (Caralt 1973); *La rosa de oro* (Caralt, 1959); *Madrigal* (Caralt 1976, 1987); *Más perenne que el bronce. Velázquez y la Corte de Felipe IV* (Caralt 1971, 1973, 1975; Noguer y Caralt 2000); *Mi encuentro con el Dios de la lluvia*, (Caralt 1976); *Nacidos en la púrpura* (Caralt 1969); *Poker de Papas* (Caralt 1981); *Ravena fue la tumba de Roma* (Caralt 1975); It is complicated if not impossible to have a comprehensive list. The most important sources were: The catalogue of the Biblioteca Nacional de España, <http://catalogo.bne.es/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=>

Despite the potential of the Latin American market, Caralt did not take the books of Passuth overseas. This must have had complex reasons, including the little attraction Francoist Spain had for Latin American countries, Caralt's attachment to Falangist ideology, as well as an important presence of Spanish (especially Catalan and Basque) emigrant groups in book publishing in Latin America.

5 Contacts with the Hispanic World: Mexico

Independently from Caralt, *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* was also edited in the Americas: Hyspamérica, Buenos Aires, 1957; Edit. de Arte y Literatura, Havana, 1975 and a pirate edition of unknown date in Mexico.²⁴

Yet it was neither of these editions nor his Spanish editorial house but a personal contact that would actually enable Passuth to cross the ocean. He met Eugenio/ Jenő Fischgrund by coincidence in the Buda Castle. This connection soon evolved into a friendship, strengthened by further visits of the Fischgrund family to Hungary.

There was a phone call from Mexico; a bit unusual. There lives an excellent and wealthy publisher, Jancsi Fischgrund, a native of Eperjes,²⁵ who has been our guest here twice with his mestizo wife [. . .]. He told me that the Mexican state was going to host me for a month, and that I would be taken to Yucatán, and that I shall give a lecture, too. All of this, on the phone. This, understandably, whipped my fantasy, as I still had much desire to see what I had once written about. In the meantime, I had received an invitation from Madrid, for which I had set late autumn as my first date. Now I said the same date in case of the Mexican visit; for I remembered, half asleep, that Cortés had also entered Tenochtitlán in November, and that the weather was fine there.²⁶

Qd9r2gXsvb/BNMADRID/211901634/2/15; Obras húngaras en castellano, <https://web.archive.org/web/20081001214858/http://www.embajada-hungria.org/spanyol/culturaedu/libros2.htm> and WorldCat, <https://worldcat.org/search?q=Laszlo+Passuth&author=Passuth%2C+La%CC%81szlo%CC%81&inLanguage=spa&itemSubType=book-printbook%2Cbook-digital%2Cbook-mic%2Cbook-thesis%2Cbook-mss&itemType=book&limit=10&offset=21> [March 20, 2024].

24 László Passuth: *Esőisten siratja Mexikót*, p. 599.

25 Today Prešov, Slovakia.

26 Letter of László Passuth to Pál Tábori, Budapest, 17 April 1970, Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

The trip – to which Passuth referred to as “the journey of his life”²⁷ – materialized for autumn 1970. He was officially invited by the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture (*Secretaría de Cultura*),²⁸ to a great extent thanks to Eugenio Fischgrund, the couple José Luis Martínez (1918–2007) and Lydia Baracs Sellei (1928–1986)²⁹ as well as to Antonio Acevedo Escobedo (1909–1985).³⁰ Passuth arrived in Mexico City at dawn on 1 November and set out on a sightseeing tour the very same day. Despite his age (he was 70 by that time), he visited countless places inside and outside the capital, and had a long trip to the Yucatán Peninsula. “Like a hunter, when he fills his pockets with cartridges, I stocked up on film reels.”³¹ Of course, he did not only take photos of the trip, but also made notes, which were to form the basis for a new book. At their visit to Uxmal, Passuth and Fischgrund even came up with the title of this new volume. *My Encounter with the Rain God*³² can be considered a travelogue, but not in the usual sense. It also contains numerous historical explanations, commentaries, and occasional quotations from the time of the conquest. At the same time, it lacks any reference to contemporary Mexican politics. Only two years had passed since the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968, but Passuth kept silence, even when visiting and describing the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas*. On one hand, political content could complicate publication at home, on the other hand, although Passuth’s invitation was initiated by Jenő Fischgrund, it was then managed and financed by the Mexican government via the Ministry of Culture. The grateful writer left the Mexican president³³ a dedicated copy of the *Rain God Weeps for Mexico*.³⁴

The Hungarian edition of *My Encounter with the Rain God* was published in 1972 and the 80,000 copies were sold out in three months.³⁵ It was a kind of bridge

27 Letter of László Passuth to Pál Tábori, Budapest, 28 August 1970, Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

28 Passuth László: *Útibeszámoló*. Manuscript, Budapest, 15 January 1971. Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

29 José Luis Martínez was a Mexican diplomat, scholar, historian and editor. At the time of Passuth’s visit, he was director of the National Institute of Fine Arts (a dependency of the Ministry of Culture). His second wife, Lydia Baracs, was Hungarian.

30 Acevedo Escobedo was writer, journalist, scholar, and director of the Department of Literature of the National Institute of Fine Arts.

31 László Passuth: *Találkoztam Esőistennel*, p. 154.

32 Letter of László Passuth to Jenő Fischgrund, Budapest, 18 January 1974, Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

33 Luis Echeverría (1922–2022) was president of Mexico between 1970 and 1976. He had been directly implicated in the Tlatelolco massacre, bearing responsibility as Minister of Interior.

34 Letter of Antonio Acevedo Escobedo to László Passuth, Mexico, 19 April 1973, Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

35 Ibid.

over time and space. Reading it, Hungarians could “see and experience” Mexico and Mexican history from socialist Hungary. Based upon the agreements with Fischgrund, translations were made to English and Spanish. “Unfortunately, I have no good news from Mexico, because my friend and publisher has fallen ill, and I think he is about to shut down his business”³⁶ – wrote Passuth in 1974. Caralt took the work over, keeping the translation of María M. de Kása and publishing the book in 1976, in democratizing Spain. The same year Jenő Fischgrund died.³⁷

6 Impact in Hungary

Whereas regime change did not seem to affect the publication of Passuth’s books in Spain, it did in Hungary, or more precisely, *they* did: the turn to Socialism at the end of the 1940s and also its collapse in 1989/90. Passuth was not allowed to publish in the first half of the 1950s. He was commissioned a historical novel for kids on Ilona Zrínyi, one of the heroines of 17th century Hungarian history. The publication of the novel (*Sasnak karma közőtt*) in 1956 finally meant the end of the years of forced silence. He could publish onwards, and he did so. He published a volume almost every year. In the 1970s his books were sold on average in 85,000 copies.³⁸ The major factors for his popularity have already been outlined in the previous parts of this chapter as they are universal, but one more aspect – a special Hungarian one – is yet to be mentioned. In fact, this is a paradox: the Kádár system which did not like him, unwillingly contributed to his very high issue numbers. This was the result of a complexity of reasons including an opening towards the world which formed part of socialist internationalism, nowadays often viewed and investigated within the process of globalization. Hungarians often got to hear about places outside Hungary, but it was also difficult to know more, due to lack of language knowledge (Russian was obligatory in primary and secondary schools and was the only foreign language to be taught) and limited and censored information from beyond the Iron Curtain. At the same time, travel options were seriously limited, and outside the socialist bloc were very rare. People’s curiosity for remote places (such as Mexico) and/ or remote times found satisfaction in Passuth’s books, which en-

36 Letter of László Passuth to Pál Tábori, Budapest, 9 March 1974, Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

37 Letter of Antonio Acevedo Escobedo to László Passuth, Mexico, 16 August 1976, Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

38 Csaba Komáromi: *Utazás egy hagyatéék körül*, p. 108.

abled them to temporarily surpass mundane problems as well as the constraints of the system. Additionally, it needs to be mentioned, that book market was state regulated in Hungary and divided among editorial houses, each specializing in a particular field. Hence, they did not tend to compete. All of the above contributed to further increasing the issue numbers of Passuth's works in Hungary.

After the death of Passuth in 1979, his books kept appearing: reeditions and even four new volumes. It was after the regime change of 1989/90 that his works started to disappear from the shelves of bookshops. There are several reasons. The book market changed completely, giving rise not only to an increased quantity of works and competition, but also to a diluting of quality. Another factor was that – especially in the 1990s – people tended to look for authors they could not read during the Kádár regime, and not for those they could. The fact that Passuth was so popular in previous decades even cast a certain shadow over him, namely, that his success was not independent of the socialist regime. Another aspect which is sometimes mentioned is that the genre of historical novels has no longer been that popular and that the background information Passuth used, for example to write the *Rain God* is out of date due to the many archaeological excavations and the development of studies on pre-Hispanic times. Were Passuth to write the *Rain God* today, he would surely write it differently. Yet his book is the product of its own time and should be evaluated as such. He collected material for it in the 1920s and 1930s, thus by reading *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* we get an insight into Aztec civilization as well as the level of knowledge available on that civilization about a hundred years ago. Interestingly, the fact that the book does not display our state-of-the-art information on pre-Hispanic times, does not seem to worry the Spanish (much closely linked to the story of the book), as several editions have been published in the 21st century (2003, 2008, 2015, 2019). Finally, a human factor, the factor of envy must be mentioned. “For decades Passuth was the most published and best-circulated Hungarian author. In fact, neither in his lifetime nor since his death has he been forgiven for this by literary insiders.”³⁹ In the last 30 years he has been little published in Hungary, which gave rise to a generational gap. Young Hungarians do not know him, whereas Passuth might still be one of the favourite authors of their parents.

39 Géza Hegedűs: A magyar irodalom arcképcsarnoka: Passuth László. In: *Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár*, <https://mek.oszk.hu/01100/01149/html/> [March 20, 2024].

6.1 The Rain God in Hungarian Imaginary on Mexico

Passuth's writings related to Mexico (in particular his book: *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico*) had a significant impact on Hungarian imaginary for various decades. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the book formed part of general knowledge in Hungary, related to Mexico. Generations have read it, or at least knew about its existence. In order to have a glimpse into this influence, a qualitative analysis of Hungarian press articles was carried out, based on the Arcanum digital collection. The search expression was *Rain God*, and the time period ranged between 1950 and 2023. The 402 results were checked individually, selecting the ones really connected to the novel, which formed the base of the following analysis.

Texts on Mexico were not frequent in Hungarian press in the 1950s and most part of the 1960s. Diplomatic relations got severed between the two countries in December 1941 and had not been normalized. Movement of individuals in both directions was minimal; travel was restricted by Hungarian authorities.

The scarce attention paid by Hungarian media was to be profoundly changed by the 1968 Summer Olympics, hosted by Mexico. News appeared on the building of the installations, the preparations of the Hungarian athletes, their plans, hopes and results. "We participated in 15 disciplines with a delegation of 263 persons [. . .] As for the number of medals, Hungary took third place, behind the United States (106) and the Soviet Union (91). Hungarian athletes won a total of 32 medals, 10 more than at the previous Olympic Games."⁴⁰

The successes and the uncommon setting (first Olympics in Latin America) contributed to increased interest. People were keen to get to know more on the sport events as well as Mexico. Published texts tended to have a recurring feature: references to the *Rain God*. This implies that by the time of the 1968 Summer Olympics, Passuth's first historical novel, *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico*, formed part of Hungarian imaginary. What is more, it became kind of an obligatory reading for those who travelled to the Olympic Games. "Hungarian athletes were not only well prepared for the competitions, but also for their meeting with Mexican culture. It seemed to me that all of them had read at least Passuth's *Rain God*, and many of them had trained themselves almost as experts in the history of Mexico [. . .]."⁴¹ When these sportsmen, coaches and/or reporters wrote accounts on Mexico, it was very likely that they would mention the novel or at least make a reference to its title. The *Rain God*'s presence in the texts could cut distances with the reading public in Hungary and make the author more likely to be accepted as an

⁴⁰ Tibor Ughy (ed.): *25 év Mexikó fényében, 1968–1993*. Budapest: OTSH Sajtószolgálat 1993, p. 2–3.

⁴¹ I. Ö.: Jó volt magyarnak lenni Mexikóban. In: *Délmagyarország* 58, 256 (31 October 1968), p. 6.

authority on Mexico, “country of *The Rain God*.”⁴² It was not uncommon to take a photo together with the ancient Tlaloc sculpture standing outside the National Museum of Anthropology, something László Passuth himself did when he eventually got to Mexico in 1970.⁴³

The Rain God did not only feature in the texts on the 1968 Olympics, but also later, forming part of writings related to Mexico. Hungarian attention increased again in the middle of the 1980s, due to the Football World Cup and mentions to the *Rain God* started to ‘pour.’ However, this experience would be rather sour for the national team suffered a shattering and unexpected defeat from the Soviets (6:0). “The Rain God now cried with us”,⁴⁴ “the Rain God no longer weeps for Mexico but over Hungarian football. Is that the end? Will it have no future?”⁴⁵ The Hungarian national team has not made it to any World Cup since the Mexican fiasco – that is for almost 50 years.

Hungarian attention towards Mexico decreased after 1990, as focus was concentrated on Europe and European integration. At the same time, the re-editions of books of Passuth became less frequent. With the passing of time, first Passuth, then the *Rain God* itself started to get blurred in Hungarian imaginary related to Mexico.

7 Conclusions

Passuth has linked Hungary to the world via his avidly read historical novels, and via the translations of these books which made it possible for non-Hungarian speakers to have access to his works. His strongest connection was the one with Spain, where his contacts reached back to pre-WW2 and continued working despite the Cold War. In 1978 the Spanish writer Jesús Torbado (1943–2018) commented to Passuth: “Your books in Spain, keep being in the shopwindows of bookstores [. . .]. I think you are the most read foreign author among us.”⁴⁶ Spanish editions of *The Rain God Weeps for Mexico* have also been read in the Ameri-

42 Gyula Kunszery: Esőisten országában. In: *Magyar Hírlap* 2, 234 (25 August 1969), p. 9.

43 László Passuth: *Találkoztam Esőistennel*, p. 41.

44 Illés Szabó: Esőisten most velünk sírt. In: *Képes* 7 1, 9 (7 June 1986), p. 57.

45 András Mezei: *Ki beszél itt már Mexikóról?* Budapest: Sport 1986, p. 133.

46 Letter of Jesús Torbado a László Passuth, 9 February 1978. Passuth Collection, PIM, Budapest.

cas and by now Passuth is considered in the Hispanic world as a classic author on times of the conquest.⁴⁷

The coordinates of the Cold War international system as well as political regime changes left their impact on Passuth's trajectory. Nonetheless, he defeated many odds, demonstrating among others that the Iron Curtain was not as impenetrable as originally thought.⁴⁸ Passuth became a widely read writer not only in Hungary (before and during socialist times) but also in Spain (both during and after the Franco regime), and based on his books written on topics related to the Hispanic world, in particular, *The Rain God*, he was even able to reach out to Mexico.

47 Edith Muharay M.: László Passuth, el cronista insólito. In: *La Jornada Semanal* (28 September 2014), www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/09/28/sem-edith.html [March 20, 2024]; Amazon: Libros: El dios de la lluvia llora sobre México, <https://www.amazon.es/lluvia-llora-M%C3%A9xico-Modernos-Clasicos/dp/8415325614> [March 20, 2024].

48 For more on this topic, see György Péteri: Nylon Curtain – Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe. In: *Slavonica* 10, 2 (2004), p. 113–123; Gertrude Enderle-Burcel, Piotr Franaszek, et al. (eds.): *Gaps in the Iron Curtain, Economic Relation between Neutral and Socialist Countries in Cold War Europe*. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press 2009. Patryk Babiracki/Kenyon Zimmer (eds.): *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s–1960s*. USA: University of Texas at Arlington 2014, p. 14–39 and Christian Nae: A Porous Iron Curtain: Artistic Contacts and Exchanges across the Eastern European bloc during the Cold War (1960–1980). In: Ann Albritton/Gwen Farrelly (eds.): *Art History in a Global Context: Methods, Themes, and Approaches*. Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell 2021, p. 13–26.

Jaša Drnovšek

“To Make My Knowledge Be of Use to My Fellow Human Beings”: Alma M. Karlin, Peru, and Cultural Agency

1 Introduction

“Dear reader, you, who follow me patiently, be prepared to find everything different here: the people, the houses, the plants, the animals, the birds – yes, even more: the stars, the air and the time.”¹ These lines are part of an article on Peru, the first of six that round-the-world traveler Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950) wrote mostly in Arequipa² in the spring and summer of 1920 and which appeared between 27 June and 10 October 1920 in the *Cillier Zeitung*, a newspaper that was published twice weekly in her home town of Celje/Cilli.³

1 Alma M. Karlin: Im Reiche der Inka. In: *Cillier Zeitung* 50 (June 27, 1920), p. 1. In this article, all German quotations into English whose translator is not given have been translated by myself.

2 Ibid., p. 3; Alma M. Karlin: Vom Essen und Trinken nah und fern. In: *Cillier Zeitung* 61 (August 5, 1920), p. 2; Alma M. Karlin: Eine entschwundene Kultur. In: *Cillier Zeitung* 63 (August 12, 1920), p. 2; *Cillier Zeitung* 64 (August 15), p. 2; Alma M. Karlin: Die Hauptfeste im Reiche der Kinder der Sonne. In: *Cillier Zeitung* 70 (September 5, 1920), p. 3; Alma M. Karlin: Zauberei und Aberglaube in Peru. In: *Cillier Zeitung* 75 (September 23, 1920), p. 3. The last article, dated 14 August 1920, was written at sea. See Alma M. Karlin: An der Küste von Peru. In: *Cillier Zeitung* 80 (October 10, 1920), p. 3.

3 At that time this industrial town was no longer part of Austria-Hungary but part of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, one of several countries that emerged as successors to the empire. Until the end of the World War I, the majority population in Celje was of German origin. In the first post-war years, however, the numerical proportion and social power shifted in favour of the Slovenes. See Janez Cvirn: Meščanstvo v Celju po razpadu Avstro-Ogrske. In: Marija Počivavšek (ed.): *Iz zgodovine Celja (1918–1941)*. Celje: Muzej novejšje zgodovine Celje 2001, p. 201; Janez Cvirn: Nemci na Slovenskem (1848–1941). In: Dušan Nečak (ed.): “Nemci” na Slovenskem 1941–1955. Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete 2002, p. 99–144, p. 109. Interestingly enough, although Karlin came from a Slovenian family, she was raised speaking German by her mother, a teacher at a German girls’ school. See Jerneja Jezernik: *Alma M. Karlin, državljanka sveta: Življenje in delo Alme Maximiliane Karlin (1889–1950)*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga 2009, p. 7; Jerneja Jezernik: *Alma M. Karlin: Mit Bubikopf und Schreibmaschine um die Welt*. Klagenfurt:

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While research on Karlin has so far focused mainly on her life,⁴ on language and style in her work,⁵ or specifically on her writings with reference to Japan,⁶ the following article is the first to deal with her representations of Peru. Karlin will be treated here as a *cultural agent* – a term derived from the network theory of cultural production developed by the literary scholar Joachim Küpper (see section 4). In particular, I am interested in two questions: first, what ‘knowledge,’ in Karlin’s terms, or what ‘cultural material,’ in Küpper’s terms, did Karlin bring from Peru to Central Europe (see section 5), thus opening up the possibility of entanglements between these two areas? And second, related to this: from where did she draw the cultural material on Inca culture that she afterwards passed on to her readers (see section 6)? To answer these questions, both Karlin’s travel literature and her fiction with reference to Peru will be considered (see section 3). But to start with: What was the background to Karlin’s journey around the world? Why did it also include a visit to Peru?

2 Before Peru: “The Ardent Desire to See Foreign Continents”

The six articles about Peru mentioned in the introduction appeared in a supplement titled *Reiseskizzen* [*Travel Sketches*], consisting of a series of 136 articles that Karlin published in the *Cillier Zeitung* between 1920 and 1928.⁷ That was how long it took her to complete her round-the-world-journey: she embarked on it from Celje

Drava 2020, p. 9–10; 13; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje Alme M. Karlin: Življenje, delo, zapuščina*. Celje: Pokrajinski muzej 2020, p. 77; 80–83; 85–86.

4 See, e.g., Jerneja Jezernik: *Alma M. Karlin*; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*.

5 See, e.g., Vida Jesenšek/Horst Ehrhardt (eds.): *Sprache und Stil im Werk von Alma M. Karlin*. Maribor: Univerzitetna založba Univerze v Mariboru 2019.

6 See, e.g., Klemen Senica: Following in the Footsteps of Isabella Bird? Alma Karlin and Her Representations of Japan. In: Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (ed.): *East Asia in Slovenia: Collecting Practices, Categorization and Representation*. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete 2021, p. 225–257; Maja Veselič: The Allure of the Mystical: East Asian Religious Traditions in the Eyes of Alma M. Karlin. In: *ibid.*, p. 259–299.

7 See Vladimir Šlibar: Članki Alme Karlin v *Cillier Zeitung* 1920–1928. In: Tatjana Badovinac/Teo Bizjak et al. (eds.): *Celjski zbornik*. Celje: Kulturna skupnost Občine Celje 1988, p. 191; 193.

on 24 November 1919 and likely returned on 28 December 1927.⁸ It was not Karlin's first experience of living abroad, however. In 1907, when she was 18, she traveled around Europe with her mother.⁹ In addition, from 1908 she stayed outside her homeland for at least eight consecutive years.¹⁰ Among other places, she lived in several capitals: in London she worked in a translation office and a language school and studied foreign languages; she lived in Paris, and after the start of World War I, she lived in what was then Kristiania, today's Oslo, and in Stockholm.¹¹ Previously, she had passed foreign language exams in English, French, Italian, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish at the Royal Society of Arts in London and exams in French, Spanish, and Russian at the London Chamber of Commerce.¹²

Karlin had been thinking about exploring "the wide world"¹³ as early as her time in Kristiania.¹⁴ Later, she wrote that she "harboured the ardent desire to see foreign continents through the eyes of a writer, a painter, and above all through the eyes of a woman."¹⁵ Soon after returning to Celje she started teaching foreign languages at her home to earn money for her journey.¹⁶ On 24 November 1919, as well prepared as possible, she boarded a Trieste-bound train, taking with her an Erika travel typewriter and her handwritten ten-language dictionary.¹⁷

Once in Italy, Karlin was forced, for financial reasons, to give up her plan to travel to her originally intended destination, Japan, through India. She decided to change course and travel through South America.¹⁸ But in Genoa, it became clear that this journey would not be easy either:

It was a difficult period. All the steamship lines turned out to be useless: I hadn't enough money for some, and in other cases special documents were required. Argentine refused to admit anyone from the Slav countries, because they regarded them all as Bolsheviks; most

8 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*. Transl. by Emile Burns. London: Gollanz 1933, p. 10; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 63.

9 See Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird: Auf dem Weg zur Weltreisenden*. Berlin: Aviva 2021, p. 115–123.

10 See Jerneja Jezernik: *Alma M. Karlin*, p. 25; 37; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 98; 102.

11 See Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird*, p. 126–274.

12 Ibid., p. 207–212; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 101.

13 Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird*, p. 247.

14 Ibid., p. 246–252.

15 Alma M. Karlin: *Der Todesdorn und andere seltsame Erlebnisse aus Peru und Panama*. Berlin: Hofenberg 2021, p. 8.

16 See Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird*, p. 280–283.

17 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 11; Jerneja Jezernik: *Alma M. Karlin*, p. 39.

18 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 13; Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn: Magic, superstitions, and beliefs of urban Indians in Panama and Peru*. Transl. by Bernard Miall. Detroit: Blaine Ethridge-Books 1971, p. 41–42; Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird*, p. 280.

of the English colonies were still closed to visitors. So there was only one single chance – a ship which was going down the west coast of America as far as Chile. I had read so much about the Incas that I wanted to land on the way and admire them at closer range. [. . .] I bought a ticket as far as Mollendo, the last port in Peru.¹⁹

She traveled in third class.²⁰

Even though the ticket to Mollendo was a last resort, Karlin does not seem in the least dispirited. To the contrary, she wrote that her Spanish teacher in London had often talked to her about Latin-American literature.²¹ What is more, at the St. Geneviève Library in Paris she had once unexpectedly found “a grammar of the ancient Quichua tongue, the Court language of the Incas.”²² She had also come into contact with Peruvian culture at the Stockholm University Library:

It was in Stockholm, as I was looking for material for my novel, when the valuable work in the original 16th century [sic!] print: *Comentarios Reales* (History of the Incas) [(1609, 1617)] by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega [(1539–1616)] fell into my hands. I then studied the costumes of the day in modern works because I was writing a play that met its end peacefully in the wastebasket with several of its colleagues. These studies of ancient Inca [. . .] [culture] later moved me to seek out the land of the Children of the Sun.²³

Or, as Karlin wrote elsewhere: “In Sweden I had studied the culture of the Incas in books, how fascinated I was! I felt emotionally connected to these people in an inexplicable way. Now I wanted to see for myself, travel through the empire of the Children of the Sun and search for traces of this vanished people.”²⁴ “What more natural than to break my journey in Peru, the land of the Children of the Sun? Had I not always longed to learn more of their vanished glory and their high civilization?”²⁵ Here, she describes the *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* by Garcilaso as “the best book on the civilization of the Incas.”²⁶

The impression Karlin had of Peru before disembarking at Mollendo on 5 April 1920²⁷ seems quite exalted:

19 Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 23–24; see Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 41–42.

20 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 26.

21 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 41.

22 Ibid.

23 Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird*, p. 267.

24 Alma M. Karlin: *Der Todesdorn* (2021), p. 9.

25 Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 42. On Karlin’s decision to visit Peru see also Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 23–24.

26 Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 41.

27 See Jerneja Jezernik: *Alma M. Karlin*, p. 44; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 19.

To Don Luis [another traveler on the ship] I said cheerfully: “At last I’ll be rid of this evil-smelling old box and I’ll be able to stretch out my legs in bed – which is something I haven’t been able to do for forty-five days.” The young man said quite earnestly: “Perhaps before the week is out you’ll be longing to be able to lie down in these narrow bunks.” But I was dreaming of the time of the Incas, of the wonders of Titicaca and the beauty of the lofty Andes, and I smiled a superior smile. I was ready to be paddled down the Ucayali with an Indian at the bow and another at the stern, with a puma following along the bank and a snake hanging down from the trees. I was not afraid of anything.²⁸

It seems Karlin felt similarly enraptured the first time she saw the Andes in Peru:

Such a feeling as I never experienced before or since crept over me as I saw its brown mountains and its snow-white nitre-fields gliding past me, and as the train carried me up into the region of the lofty Andes, and I was more than ever conscious of it when I stood at the foot of Misti [Figure 1], beyond Arequipa. A premonition awakened within me, or was it a misty recollection? Somehow I knew these mountains, and they knew me; they spoke to me in a terrible and immortal speech. Alas, I understood but a word of it here and there.²⁹

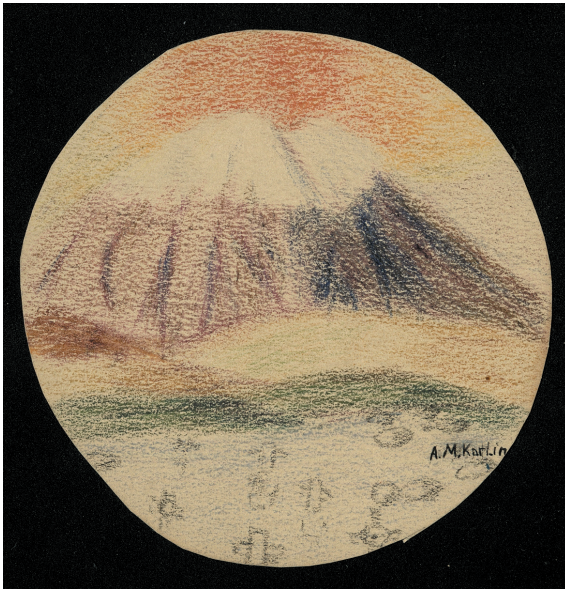


Figure 1: Karlin’s drawing of a cemetery below Misti, drawn in Arequipa and dated April 15, 1920 (Manuscript Collection of the National and University Library, legacy of Alma Karlin, Ms 1872, Slovenia).

²⁸ Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 85–86.

²⁹ Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 42.

3 Karlin's Works with Reference to Peru: "Speechless in the Face of the Achievements of this Woman"

Karlin stayed in Peru for more than four months.³⁰ During this time, she lived in Arequipa,³¹ where she made a living mostly by teaching local children.³² As mentioned above, her six articles about Peru were published by the *Cillier Zeitung* as soon as they made it across the Atlantic. However, Karlin's work about Peru is not limited to these articles. Upon return from her round-the-world journey, between 1930 and 1935, Karlin published with different German publishers five works that are at least in part about Peru and which had definitely not been intended solely for readers in Celje: the work of travel writing *Einsame Weltreise* [*The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*] with the subheading *Die Tragödie einer Frau* [*The Tragedy of a Woman*], which was published by Wilhelm Köhler of Minden in 1930, the first part of a literary trilogy about her journey;³³ the article *Mode und Körperkultur bei den Frauen fremder Völker* [Fashion and Physical Culture among the Women of Foreign Peoples], which Karlin published in 1931 in the publication *Der weibliche Körper und seine Beeinflussung durch Mode und Sport* [*The Female Body and How It Is Influenced by Fashion and Sport*];³⁴ the novel *Der Götze* [*The Idol*], published by Müller und Kiepenheuer of Potsdam in 1932;³⁵ the travel writing *Der Todesdorn und andere seltsame Erlebnisse aus Peru und Panama* [*The Death-Thorn. Magic, Superstitions, and Beliefs of Urban Indians in Panama and Peru*], published by the Berlin-based Prismen-Verlag in 1933;³⁶ and the short story *Tränen des Mondes* [*Tears of the Moon*] with the subheading *Eine Geschichte aus Peru* [*A Story from Peru*], which was published by Paul Kupfer of Breslau, now Wrocław, in 1935.³⁷

The work of travel writing *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* was the biggest success. Initially it was issued in 10,000 copies and due to high demand a so-called 'popular edition' with photos was published in 20,000 copies two years

30 See Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 58.

31 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 92–131.

32 Ibid., p. 97; 104–105; 117; 129; Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 110–114.

33 See Alma M. Karlin: *Einsame Weltreise: Die Tragödie einer Frau*. Minden: Köhler 1930.

34 See Alma M. Karlin: *Mode und Körperkultur bei den Frauen fremder Völker*. In: Rudolf M. Arringer/Else Rasch et al.: *Der weibliche Körper und seine Beeinflussung durch Mode und Sport*. Berlin: Verlag für Kultur und Menschenkunde 1931, p. 105–188.

35 See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze: Roman*. Potsdam: Müller und Kiepenheuer 1932.

36 See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Todesdorn und andere seltsame Erlebnisse aus Peru und Panama*. Berlin: Prismen-Verlag 1933.

37 See Alma M. Karlin: *Tränen des Mondes: Eine Geschichte aus Peru*. Breslau: Kupfer 1935.

later, also at a more affordable price, making it more accessible to the general public.³⁸ But the first edition had already received a very warm welcome in the media. *Der Erdball*, for example, one of Berlin's main ethnological magazines of the time, said the following about the book: "We are speechless in the face of the achievements of this woman. [. . .] The book itself can be warmly recommended, it contains the journey around the world of a heroine who had to earn the money on the spot to be able to continue her journey. Where is the researcher who did something similar?"³⁹

Not surprisingly, similar praise could be found also in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft*, a publication of an organization promoting the retaking of colonies Germany lost after World War I: "In 1919, just after the end of the war, a young woman, Alma M. Karlin, driven by the ambition of a Columbus, embarked on a journey around the world that was quite unique and from which she only returned home in 1928, after eight long years, filled with the most exciting adventures and privations. An unusually exciting and rare book."⁴⁰

According to Karlin's publisher, *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* had been praised not only in Germany but also in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain and Scandinavia.⁴¹ In 1933, the work was published in English⁴² and a year later also in Finnish.⁴³ The work of travel writing *The Death-Thorn* was also published in English in 1934.⁴⁴ It seems

38 See Alma M. Karlin: *Einsame Weltreise: Erlebnisse und Abenteuer einer Frau im Reich der Inkas und im Fernen Osten*. Minden: Köhler 1932, p. 5. A similar publication sequence followed in the second part of her trilogy, while the third part, which appeared in 1933, was published in 20,000 copies. Ibid. In total, the circulation of the trilogy and its first reprints reached 80,000 copies. See Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 66.

39 Anon.: Alma M. Karlin. In: *Der Erdball* 3, 12 (1929), p. 477. For excerpts from 18 selected newspaper reviews mentioned by the publisher in the foreword of the 1932 reprint, see Alma M. Karlin: *Einsame Weltreise* (1932), p. 6–7.

40 Anon.: *Einsame Weltreise*. In: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft* 11 (November 15, 1929), p. [6]. The extensive library of the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, held at the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt a. M., also includes three works by Karlin, among them *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* (see Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main: *Katalog der Bibliothek der deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft in der Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt a. M.: Gliederung nach der ehemaligen Aufstellung*. Frankfurt a. M.: Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg 2004, p. 382; 726, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/14504954.pdf> [July 20, 2023]).

41 See Alma M. Karlin: *Einsame Weltreise* (1932), p. 8.

42 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*.

43 See Alma M. Karlin: *Yksin maailan ääriin: Naisen elämyksiä inkain valtakunnassa ja kaukaisessa idässä*. Transl. by Mika Waltari. Porvoo: Söderström 1934.

44 See Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*.

that Karlin was one of the most popular travel writers between 1930 and 1935, at least among a German-speaking readership.⁴⁵

4 Karlin as a Cultural Agent: Joachim Küpper's Theory of Cultural Production

While excerpts from newspaper reviews cited by the publisher in the 1932 edition of *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* underline the adventurous nature of the work,⁴⁶ Karlin herself says in the foreword it was not the desire for adventure that led her on her journey: "It was not any lust of adventure that drove me on, but the urge of a task that I had set myself and could not be evaded."⁴⁷ In one of the articles about Peru, mentioned earlier, that appeared in the *Cillier Zeitung* she also refers to the effort needed to acquire the knowledge she later conveyed to her readers: "Do any of my readers suspect the high price I paid for my knowledge, the fruits of which they enjoy comfortably in the company of their loved ones with a good apple strudel and a glass of fresh beer?"⁴⁸ And, in another article: "The purpose of my trip is to make my knowledge and my experience be of use to my compatriots and my fellow human beings [. . .]."⁴⁹ Here, Karlin appears as a *cultural agent* – a term that derives from the network theory of cultural production presented by the literary scholar Joachim Küpper in 2018. What are its basic assumptions?⁵⁰

The metaphor of a 'cultural net' is at the forefront of Küpper's extensive discussions. While 'cultural' is to be understood in its broadest, i.e. etymological, sense,⁵¹ the term 'net' or 'network' is defined tersely: "A network is a non-hierarchical struc-

45 See Amalija Maček: "Biti jaz v popolni svobodi": Poskus orisa Alminega pojmovanja književnosti in ljubezni. In: Marijan Pušavec/Matic Majcen (eds.): *Alma M. Karlin*. Maribor: Aristej 2018, p. 16; Barbara Trnovec: *Neskončno potovanje*, p. 145.

46 Alma M. Karlin: *Einsame Weltreise* (1932), p. 6–7.

47 Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 10. See the statement, mentioned earlier, by Karlin that she "harboured the ardent desire to see foreign continents through the eyes of a writer, a painter, and above all through the eyes of a woman." Alma M. Karlin: *Der Todesdorn* (2021), p. 8.

48 Alma M. Karlin: *An der Küste*, p. 3.

49 Alma M. Karlin: *Vom Essen und Trinken*, p. 2.

50 The following outline of Küpper's theory refers specifically to Joachim Küpper: *The cultural net: Early Modern Drama as a Paradigm*. Berlin: De Gruyter 2018, p. 7–8; 10–13; 35–37; 115; 217.

51 "The term ['cultural'] is meant in its etymological sense (from Latin *colere*), that is, as referring to any activities – not only artistic ones – by which humans produce items that do not exist in the natural world." Ibid., p. 8, n. 13.

ture without a center.”⁵² Accordingly, no network in the field of culture arises spontaneously or in an extra-human, evolutionary process, but rather through humans, and therefore each time with conscious intent. Cultural networks, which are in themselves an anthropological constant, are never complete or eternal: they are subject to human will and can be extended, limited, or temporarily suspended. If the original intentions remain unfulfilled, those who established a cultural network may dissolve it again.

As formulated by Küpper, the central goal of all these network structures is “the enabling of processes of transfer of a material that would remain inert without the existence of such structures.”⁵³ The material that is transported in a cultural network is culture, to which Küpper ascribes a complex, dual nature: “Culture exists in two different registers bound to each other: as material forms, and as conscious concepts which inform the respective forms or can be extrapolated from them. [. . .] Cultural networks primarily contribute to transferring the conceptual forms underlying the actual artifacts. The material forms may ‘travel’ as well (paintings, statues, books) [. . .].”⁵⁴

To enable both material and conceptual forms to circulate, according to Küpper, a physical, material substratum is needed. This may be traveling people who, alone or together with their products, serve as a transport device. The cultural transfer carried out by such agents takes place either consciously or unconsciously – artists, for example, fall into the former category.

⁵² Ibid., p. 8.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 10–11. With respect to final artefacts such as paintings, sculptures, and books, Küpper speaks of multiple levels on which *cultural material* floats: “‘Below’ this level, components of texts (motifs, personages, particularly well-conceived formulations [*dicta*]) may be items integrated into the floating process. ‘Above’ this level, cultural material may float as formal concepts, partly rhetorical, partly generic, whose components – that is, specific tropes and topoi, or the range of *procédés* ascribed to the genre of tragedy in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, e.g., peripety or anagnorisis – may likewise float on their own. On an even higher level of abstraction, one may identify the floating of world-modeling concepts linked to certain texts or genres, such as, in the case just mentioned, the ‘tragic vision’ of life as doomed to (unredeemable) failure, which may be expressed by texts whose formal shaping differs from Aristotle’s definition of the genre of tragedy – one may think of certain pieces by Samuel Beckett – but also from the genre as such – one might think of Baudelaire’s famous poem *A une passante* (1855/1857). Finally – and this may be the most abstract level of culturally relevant material floating in the net – it may be enabling structures which float and are thus transferred from one cultural community to another. These are institutions that favor the production of concrete cultural material, but are not linked to any specific variant of such material. They serve as incubators for creative processes. As to culture *sensu lato*, one could point to schools, universities, and academies.” Ibid., p. 36–37.

5 Cultural Material from Peru: The 1920s and the Period of the Inca Empire

For our case, it is interesting that Küpper explicitly mentions, among the cultural networks, the one that began to operate with the so-called ‘discovery’ of Christopher Columbus:

One might think in particular of the network established between Europe and the Americas, starting in 1492. Its original purpose was merely economic; its establishment was motivated by the quest for an *El Dorado* in the literal sense of the term. Especially with regard to South America, it became an infrastructure for the perhaps most important and most radical transculturation in the species’ history, as early as from the first decades of the sixteenth century onward.⁵⁵

As a travel writer [Figure 2] who visited Peru, Karlin belongs to the category of active, conscious cultural agents, and can be seen as part of the cultural network just mentioned. But what cultural material, or, in Karlin’s terms, what knowledge is she talking about as regards Peru?



Figure 2: Karlin with her Erika typewriter and her dog named Blacky (Manuscript Collection of the National and University Library, legacy of Alma Karlin, Ms 1872, Slovenia).

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 8, n. 14.

One of the ways to answer this question is to examine all her works that are in any way related to Peru and try to extract and synthesize information that appears in more than one work,⁵⁶ irrespective of whether it is travel writing or fiction. An example that may seem to support this approach is given by descriptions of a dish from a Peruvian railway station, featured both in the travelogue *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* and the novel *The Idol*:

At La Joya we could have our midday meal – Picante. Old Indian women were sitting on the ground alongside of gigantic earthenware pots, shaking their tresses and helping rice [sic!] with a tin spoon and pounding pepper of various kinds on tin plates.⁵⁷

‘Picante,’ a Spanish word for spicy food, and old local women with braided tresses who sit on the ground alongside earthenware pots, serving rice and pepper of various kinds with a tin spoon on tin plates – this information from *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman* is repeated almost literally in *The Idol*:

“Picante, Picante . . .”

Out on the platform crouched an old Indian woman in a ribbonless, tattered straw hat, begrimed by a full decade of dirt, with a long, unkempt braid spilling out from behind each ear that seemed to crawl like a giant black caterpillar over withered, ill-covered breasts. Around her on the ground stood a row of pewter plates, which she filled with a tin spoon, scooping rice mixed with all sorts of peppers out of a bulbous clay pot.⁵⁸

An overview of the recurring information related to Peru in Karlin’s works shows that it either refers mostly to the present, specifically to the 1920s and the 1930s,⁵⁹ or mostly to the past, specifically to the period of the Inca Empire. The first category includes, above all,⁶⁰ information about corn, chicha, freeze-dried potatoes or ‘chuño,’ about chilli and coca,⁶¹ about lice in food, a guinea pig called ‘cuyo’ as a

⁵⁶ Articles published in the *Cillier Zeitung* are treated as a single unit.

⁵⁷ Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 90–91.

⁵⁸ Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 37–38.

⁵⁹ The novel *The Idol* is set in 1930. See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 105.

⁶⁰ The following summary of information conveyed by Karlin has been drawn from Alma M. Karlin: *Im Reiche*, p. 1–3; Alma M. Karlin: *Vom Essen und Trinken*, p. 1–2; Alma M. Karlin: *Eine entschwundene Kultur* (August 12, 1920), p. 2; Alma M. Karlin: *Eine entschwundene Kultur* (August 15, 1920), p. 2; Alma M. Karlin: *Zauberei und Aberglaube*, p. 1–2; Alma M. Karlin: *An der Küste*, p. 1–3; Alma M. Karlin: *Mode und Körperkultur*, p. 166; 168; 170; Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 18; 37–40; 44; 48; 50; 67; 68; 86–87; 90; 92; 93; 112; 144–145; Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 81–85; 90–131; Alma M. Karlin: *Tränen des Mondes*, p. 14–15; 17; 23–24; Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 32; 34; 39; 40; 60–66; 68; 75; 88; 112–113; 116–117; 122; 124.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Alma M. Karlin: *Vom Essen und Trinken*, p. 2; Alma M. Karlin: *Tränen des Mondes*, p. 23. It should be emphasized that Karlin sees these last four foods as holding economic potential for her compatriots as well as others. On chicha: “Since the corn beer contains very little alcohol,

dish, and about chicha bar or 'chichería.' Also referring mostly to the present is information about the poncho and the mantilla, about the local women with braided hair, about local women with straw hats, about the cohabitation of people and animals in one house, about locals urinating in the street, about local women squatting in the middle of the street, about the locals riding donkeys with one of them sitting backwards so he could chat to the man behind him, and about stray dogs scavenging through piles of garbage during the night. This also includes information about the Peruvian mountains, an earthquake, the Peruvian coast, about Arequipa, Lima, Trujillo, and Cajamarca, about llamas, vicuñas, and gallinazos, and about willows, palms, cacti, and nasturtiums. Also referring mostly to the present is information about sad, melancholic locals, about a local playing a flute, about a local offering a bite of their meal to a stranger out of hospitality, but also information about locals harassing foreign women, about a church with the symbols of the cross, the sun, and the moon, about locals plucking an eyelash to show devotion, about locals pulling dogs' tails so that their squeals would prevent a lunar eclipse, information that

corn thrives well here, the drink is nutritious and also has an excellent effect on liver, kidney and bladder problems, it would be a blessing for our local rural population. Even children can drink chicha without harm. What a cheap and wonderful substitute for example for sour apple cider on a bad year!" Alma M. Karlin: *Vom Essen und Trinken*, p. 1. On dried potato: "Who does not complain bitterly about the fact that potatoes keep so badly? Peruvians know 25 different types of potatoes which often keep for thirty years without spoiling or losing their original taste. [. . .] In order to achieve this benefit, they know two types of processing, of which the first in particular could also be carried out by us. As soon as the night frosts set in, the potatoes are boiled, peeled and exposed to the frost but also to the sun during the day. We would have to use strong artificial heat, such as that produced by ovens in our farmhouses. The frost contracts the potatoes, the heat absorbs their moisture and after about three weeks, often earlier, they are completely dry. [. . .] The second type is less recommended because the taste suffers [. . .]. [. . .] They [the potatoes] keep for many, many years, but for our taste they would only be usable in spicy dips." Ibid. On chilli: "The aji [. . .] contributes [. . .] to increasing body heat without heating the blood like the East Indian pepper – a very pleasant circumstance given our shortage of coal and materials. [. . .] The rocote [sic!] would without a doubt also do well here and would make the simplest, cheapest fare tasty, would make cheap dips possible, make it easier to enjoy horse meat and put the dry potatoes to good use." Alma M. Karlin: *Vom Essen und Trinken*, p. 2. On coca: "Would this [coca] not be an excellent invigorator for the poor soldiers, for tourists who cannot carry a large supply of food with them into the mountains, and an important aid for all people who want or need to work beyond their abilities (mental or physical)?" Ibid. However, Karlin's own experience with coca does not confirm its alleged benefits: "I know that I spent one whole long Sunday [. . .] chewing coca in order to find out whether one really did not feel either hunger or thirst. The coca-leaves tasted bitter, and besides they should not be chewed, but slowly squeezed out by pressing them with the tongue against the gums. I found that I did not want anything, but the next day I was so exhausted that it cost me considerable effort to walk far enough to buy my daily bread in the market." Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 129.

local women, who give birth in the fields, continue working immediately afterwards [Figure 3], information that the birth of twins is unlucky, information about a sect of bloodsuckers or ‘chupadores,’ information about witches, about making a witch’s needle, information about the plant ‘piripiri,’ which grows in Chachapoyas and is used to make a love potion, and information that any cursed drink can be uncursed by making a cross at the bottom of the glass with your ring finger and little finger.



Figure 3: Karlin’s drawing of a “female native with a child” (Manuscript Collection of the National and University Library, legacy of Alma Karlin, Ms 1872, Slovenia).

The information Karlin provides about Peru’s present refers mainly to the everyday street life in Arequipa and either derives from her own observations and experiences (e.g. the description of the locals) or she obtained it through conversations with the locals (e.g. information about their religious and superstitious beliefs). Interestingly, she never addresses the socio-political developments of the time, al-

though Peru underwent a major political change in 1919. After a military *coup d'état*, the country moved from an oligarchic regime known as the 'Aristocratic Republic' (1895–1919) to a reformist, initially democratic-oriented period, the so-called 'Oncenium' (1919–1930). In January 1920, less than three months before Karlin disembarked in Mollendo, a new progressive constitution was promulgated.⁶² But what information does Karlin present about Peru's past?

Mostly referring to the past – meaning the Inca Empire – is, above all,⁶³ information about the founding of Cusco, about the beginnings of the Inca Empire, about the name of this empire, 'Tahuantinsuyu,' about the Inca ruler, as well as information about the holy bird caracara or 'corequenque' and the feathers that were incorporated into the ruler's garb, about Inca gods, about the sacred objects or 'huacas,' about the Virgins of the Sun and about confession among the Incas. This category also includes information about Inca gold and silver, about Inca architecture, about Inca writing or 'quipo,' the information that the Incas did not know individualism, that the Incas did not know fine arts, information about the Inca postal system, information that Cusco residents' location in the city depended on what province they moved from, information about division of crops between them and about the women whom the provinces would send to the ruling Inca, information that the ruling Inca personally officiated at the weddings of newly married couples in Cusco, information about women weaving, information that women who bore a child to the ruling Inca returned to their home village and were given a house and land and were highly revered, information that there were no idlers among the Incas, information about mutual lice removal among children, information that old people who could no longer work took on the role of scarecrows in the fields and information about hunting. Also mostly referring to the past is information about the festival of the Sun or 'inti raymi,' about the health and ritual purification festival or 'citua,' about the 'festival of conferral of weapons,' as Karlin calls the festival 'huarachico,' about the festival of the first hair-cutting or 'rutuchico,' and information about a gold chain the Inca ruler Huayna Capac had made for his son Huascar on this occasion. Finally, this also includes information about the origins of the name Peru.

⁶² See Ombeline Dagicour: Political Invention in the Andes: The Peruvian Case. In: *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 51, 1 (2014), p. 72.

⁶³ The following summary of information conveyed by Karlin has been drawn from Alma M. Karlin: Eine entschwindene Kultur (August 12, 1920), p. 1–2; Alma M. Karlin: Eine entschwindene Kultur (August 15, 1920), p. 1–2; Alma M. Karlin: Die Hauptfeste, p. 1–3; Alma M. Karlin: Mode und Körperkultur, p. 166; Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 14; 16; 44; 60–61; 71–72; 110–112; 117; 126; 292; Alma M. Karlin: *The Odyssey*, p. 117; Alma M. Karlin: *Tränen des Mondes*, p. 21–22; 31; Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 44–46; 48–51; 55–59.

6 Karlin's Source: Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*

The question that arises here is: where did Karlin acquire the cultural material on the history of the Incas? As already mentioned, she first came into contact with Inca culture even before her visit to Peru, in Stockholm and Paris. In addition, she later also read about it at the library in Arequipa, as she writes in *The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman*: “The following days passed without incident. [. . .] I spent from two to five in the public library, reading all kinds of old manuscripts about the Children of the Sun and copying old drawings.”⁶⁴ In her works, Karlin refers to Polo de Ondegardo (approx. 1500–1575) and the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, chroniclers of Peru.⁶⁵ But while the name of the former appears only in the work of travel writing *The Death-Thorn*, spelled wrongly as ‘Ondegano’⁶⁶ and without mention any of his works, Garcilaso is mentioned in the novel *The Idol*,⁶⁷ in *The Death-Thorn*⁶⁸ and in Karlin’s autobiography *Ein Mensch wird [A Human Becomes]*, published posthumously in 2018. In the latter⁶⁹ and in *The Idol*,⁷⁰ Karlin also cites Garcilaso’s work *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* by name. What is more, in *The Idol* this work is presented as of extraordinary importance through the character of Professor Garfeld, an old and famous German archaeologist, who lives and researches in Cusco, and often reads the *Royal Commentaries*:

“Garcilaso de la Vega!”

A short bark, like a military “yes, sir,” then the animal raced up and down the porch, sniffed at tables and chairs, ran through the rooms, got up on its front paws, peered at the bedside table and into the bed, came out again and searched again.

Sieglinde [Professor Garfeld’s niece] rejoiced inwardly.

Then Diana threw three volumes off a chair with her snout, took a thick black-bound book in her teeth and laid it on the professor’s knee.

He patted the dog on the back encouragingly.

“Is this the book?” asked Sieglinde, stepping close to the table to read the title for herself.

It was Garcilaso de la Vega!

⁶⁴ Alma M. Karlin, *The Odyssey*, p. 104.

⁶⁵ For Garcilaso as a transcultural, transatlantic and transandean writer, see Ottmar Ette: Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca oder die Konvivenz der Kulturen. In: Ottmar Ette: *Erfunden/Gefunden: Potsdamer Vorlesungen zur Entstehung der Amerikas*. Berlin: De Gruyter 2022, p. 370–387.

⁶⁶ See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Todesdorn* (2021), p. 20.

⁶⁷ See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 94–95; 108; 186; 261; 309; 321.

⁶⁸ See Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 18; 41; 48.

⁶⁹ See Alma M. Karlin: *Ein Mensch wird*, p. 267.

⁷⁰ See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 94.

“She doesn’t know all the books,” he remarked apologetically, “but she knows this one well. It’s my favorite work!”⁷¹

To what extent did Karlin consult Garcilaso’s *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*? Comparing her information on the Incas to those given by Garcilaso, one can find small discrepancies here and there. For example, she says that Inca women [Figure 4] could not marry before turning 18 and men could not marry before 22,⁷² while Garcilaso says in one place that serfs could marry after the age of 20⁷³ and in another place he sets the age limit at 18 for women and 24 for men.⁷⁴ While Karlin interprets the term ‘coya’ only as ‘princess,’⁷⁵ Garcilaso says that ‘coya’ was primarily used for the ruler’s wife and only secondarily also for her daughters.⁷⁶ And while Karlin reports that Peruvians had superstitiously been pulling dogs’ tails since Inca times so that their squealing would prevent the lunar eclipse,⁷⁷ Garcilaso’s account is similar, though the Incas do not pull the dogs’ tails but beat them.⁷⁸ Sometimes Karlin adds an emphasis that does not exist in Garcilaso’s work. The latter writes about the probationary period of military service among boys, describing a demanding running competition from the hill of Huanacauri to the fortress in Cusco, and reporting that the first ten competitors to reach the finish line were treated with great honour;⁷⁹ Karlin adds that they were served chicha by the Virgins of the Sun.⁸⁰

But much more interesting than discrepancies in information, or Karlin’s provision of information not offered by Garcilaso, is the close similarity of passages in the *Royal Commentaries* and Karlin’s texts about Inca culture. Here are three pairs of examples:

71 Ibid., p. 95.

72 See Alma M. Karlin: *Eine entschwundene Kultur* (August 15, 1920), p. 1.

73 See Garcilaso de la Vega: *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru: Part One*. Transl. by Harold V Livermore. Austin: University of Texas Press 1966, p. 53–54.

74 Ibid., p. 205. A similar discrepancy can be observed in the ages at which blood was drawn from children, to be used on bread, before the ‘citua’ festival. Garcilaso says the children were between five and ten years old, while Karlin says they were between the ages of eight and ten. Ibid., p. 413; Alma M. Karlin: *Die Hauptfeste*, p. 3.

75 See Alma M. Karlin: *Der Götze*, p. 94; Alma M. Karlin: *The Death-Thorn*, p. 58.

76 See Garcilaso de la Vega: *Royal Commentaries*, p. 63.

77 See Alma M. Karlin: *Im Reiche*, p. 1.

78 See Garcilaso de la Vega: *Royal Commentaries*, p. 118.

79 Ibid., p. 367.

80 See Alma M. Karlin: *Die Hauptfeste*, p. 3.



Figure 4: A photograph of Karlin in Inca-style dress, published in the 1932 edition of her work of travel writing *Einsame Weltreise* [The Odyssey of a Lonely Woman].

*They would take a black lamb [i.e. a young llama], this being the color these Indians preferred above all others for their sacrifices, regarding it as having greater divinity. [. . .] For this reason the kings usually dressed in black: when in mourning, they wore the natural grey-brown color of the wool.*⁸¹

When the drinking was over and the golden cups collected, the crowd went to the place of sacrifice and a black llama was brought, because the black colour was considered particularly sacred, while a dull grey meant mourning.⁸²

In the second passage, Karlin, like Garcilaso in the first, emphasizes the black colour of the llama that was to be sacrificed at ‘inti raymi.’ Immediately after-

⁸¹ Garcilaso de la Vega: *Royal Commentaries*, p. 360, highlighted by J. D.

⁸² Alma M. Karlin: *Die Hauptfeste*, p. 2, highlighted by J. D.

wards, she too, like Garcilaso, explains that black was considered more sacred than other colours in Inca culture. In addition, Karlin, like Garcilaso, notes that gray was associated with mourning – a piece of information that does not really relate to ‘inti raymi.’

*They took the sheep or lamb and placed it with its head facing the east. Its feet were not tied, but it was held by three or four Indians. While still alive, its left side was opened, and by inserting the hand they drew forth the heart, lungs, and entrails, which were plucked forth with the hand and not cut: the whole must come out together from the throat downwards. [. . .] They regarded it as a most happy omen if the lungs came out still quivering [. . .].*⁸³

*The victim's head was turned to the east, and four Indians held it. It was a bad sign if the animal managed to get up during the act of sacrifice. With a sharp piece of quartz, because they did not know iron, the left side of the ribs of the living animal was opened and the heart and lungs were ripped out of the body. It was considered a good omen if all the parts came out intact, and especially auspicious if the heart was still pounding or the lungs were still trembling from the air.*⁸⁴

Here Karlin, like Garcilaso, reports that the head of the llama to be sacrificed during ‘inti raymi’ was turned to the east while four Incas held it. Afterwards, she too, like Garcilaso, notes that the left side of the living animal was opened and the heart and lungs were removed. Furthermore, Karlin, like Garcilaso, points out that if the lungs were still throbbing at that time, it was considered a good sign.

*There was a law that a nun who forfeited her virginity should be buried alive and her accomplice hanged. As they thought it was a small punishment merely to kill a man for so grave an offence as venturing to violate a woman dedicated to the Sun, their god and father of their kings, the law provided that the guilty man's wife, children, and servants should be slain too, together with his kinsmen, his neighbours, and his fellow townsmen, and all his flocks, without leaving a babe or suckling, as the saying is. His village was destroyed and strewn with rocks, and the home and birthplace of so wicked a son left forsaken and desolate and the place accursed, to remain untrampled by the foot of man or beast, if possible.*⁸⁵

*[The] terrible punishment was intended for him who sought to divert a Virgin of the Sun from the path of virtue. He himself was to be hanged, and the Virgin of the Sun, if guilty, to be buried alive, but besides him all his relatives, all the inhabitants of his village, even the livestock of his village, had to die; the trees cut down, the fields destroyed, the houses demolished, and the whole area strewn with salt or sand, so that neither man nor beast should ever visit such a shameful place.*⁸⁶

⁸³ Garcilaso de la Vega: *Royal Commentaries*, p. 360–361, highlighted by J. D.

⁸⁴ Alma M. Karlin: *Die Hauptfeste*, p. 2, highlighted by J. D.

⁸⁵ Garcilaso de la Vega: *Royal Commentaries*, p. 199, highlighted by J. D.

⁸⁶ Alma M. Karlin: *Die Hauptfeste*, p. 1, highlighted by J. D.

In describing the punishment for sexual relations with a Virgin of the Sun, Karlin, like Garcilaso, reports that in such cases the Virgin of the Sun was to be buried alive, while the culprit was to be hanged, his relatives, livestock, and fellow villagers killed, and his village demolished. In addition, Karlin, like Garcilaso, notes that the complete destruction of the culprit's home village should prevent not only any human from ever visiting the area, but also any animals – a piece of information that is rhetorically effective, but not essential to understand the punishment.

There is repeated, virtually exclusive mention of Garcilaso among the chroniclers of Inca history; repeated and exclusive mention of his *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* among the historical writings about Peru; a special place for Garcilaso and the *Royal Commentaries* in the novel *The Idol*; excerpts about Inca culture that are, both in terms of their content and style, very similar to those in the *Royal Commentaries* – all this indicates that Karlin was very familiar with at least the first part of the work, which recounts the history of Peru up to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. It can be assumed that she also, at least to a certain degree, used the work as her source even where the cultural material she provides is too dispersed to allow definitive proof of Garcilaso's influence. Indeed, the material on the Incas contained in the *Royal Commentaries* had been accessible in the German-speaking world for at least 130 years⁸⁷ by the time Karlin published her works related to Peru. Yet it seems that, by intertwining this material with the material drawn from her travel experiences, she was able to convey it to a much broader readership than any previous edition of Garcilaso's work.

7 Conclusion

Against the background of Küpper's network theory of cultural production, Alma M. Karlin has been considered in this article as a cultural agent between Peru and Central Europe. It has been shown that she visited Peru rather by chance on her journey around the world in 1920. Already during her stay in Arequipa, she regularly transmitted cultural material about Peru to her home town of Celje. The rest of German-speaking Europe gained access to this material through her works

⁸⁷ The first German translation of Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* was published in 1787/88. See Garcilaso de la Vega: *Geschichte der Ynkas, Könige von Peru: Von der Entstehung dieses Reichs bis zu der Regierung seines letzten Königes Atahualpa*. Transl. by Gottfried Conrad Böttger. Nordhausen: Groß 1787/88.

published between 1930 and 1935, when she became one of the most popular travel writers in the German language.

Following Karlin's motto that the purpose of her round-the-world trip was to convey her knowledge and travel experiences to her compatriots, and, ultimately, to all of humanity, all her works that refer to Peru have been examined. Representative cultural material has been extracted, synthesized, and categorized into information concerning the present, specifically the 1920s, or concerning the past, specifically the period of the Inca Empire.

While the information from the first category – the present – mainly relates to everyday street life in Arequipa, interestingly no information could be found about the socio-political developments in Peru at that time. As far as information about the Inca Empire is concerned, a review of the status of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega in Karlin's writings and a comparison of several passages from her works and Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* suggest that Karlin made extensive use of the latter as a source.

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V Crossing Borders, Closing Gaps: Translation

Claudio Soltmann

Entanglements by Translation: Manuel Antonio and Guillermo Matta Goyenechea Affinities for Polish Poetry during the 1850s

1 Introduction

The northern regions of Chile, known for their large mining resources, attracted a minor, but not less significant, Polish migration since the end of the 18th century. Relevant figures of Polish immigrants who came into Chilean soil developed a meaningful contribution to the educational and literary scene of Chile during the 19th century. Among those figures it is worthy to mention the cases the Polish scientist Ignacy Domeyko (1802–1889), childhood friend of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), founder of various Mining Schools in northern Chile and Chancellor of the Universidad de Chile, and the Chilean writer and journalist José Joaquín Vallejo Borkoski (1811–1858), a descendant of Polish migrants who arrived to the Chilean Copper mining explorations in the northern region of Chile at the end of the 18th century.¹ Vallejo under the pseudonym “Jotabeche” published hundreds of articles in the Chilean press covering the vibrant silver mining fever and the phenomena of instant wealth in the region of Copiapó during the first half of the 19th Century.

Particularly the region of Copiapó was the home soil of the Matta Goyenechea family, they were intertwined with other elite families involved in the recent exploitation of silver mines in northern Chile. These new oligarchic groups characterised by accumulating a large wealth due to the mining activity along with the construction of the significant social power in the region by intermarriage among the families and throughout the practice of cultural patronage of the city of Copiapó. About this topic, Ignacy Domeyko expressed that during the 1840s the wealth produced by the mining activity attracted to Copiapó a “mishmash coming from several parts of the world.”² Meanwhile, the German traveller Paul Treutler

1 Alfredo Lastra Norambuena: Los primeros polacos en Chile. In: *Mapocho* 39 (1996), p. 145. The history of the Polish presence in Chile since the end of the 18th century has only been covered in various texts published by this author.

2 Ignacio Domeyko: *Mis viajes. Memorias de un exiliado*. Tomo I. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria 1978, p. 403. All translations in this text are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

conceived that mining drove a radical process of change providing Copiapó the appearance of a city holding “a high degree of civilisation [. . .] for the gas lighting and its paved main streets.”³ It was in this peculiar atmosphere where three of the sons of the Matta Goyenechea family, Francisco de Paula Matta Goyenechea (1821–1854), Manuel Antonio Matta Goyenechea (1826–1892), and Guillermo Matta Goyenechea (1829–1899), grew up during their childhood, and later emigrated to Santiago to receive their secondary education at the *Colegio de Santiago* under the periodical supervision of the Venezuelan intellectual Andrés Bello (1781–1865).⁴ The three brothers developed a wide-ranging sense of curiosity for literature, but it was particularly during the 1840s when the Chilean capital developed a minor but now permanent growth on the supply of foreign literary books which would also develop the first Chilean literary movement called *Sociedad literaria de 1842*, which had the aim of promoting a “national literature.” This literary group was also labelled traditionally as the *Generación de 1842*. The Matta siblings, particularly Francisco de Paula and Manuel Antonio, played an important role within this literary movement transformed in later years into a larger political movement sustaining liberal and anticlerical ideas.

This article studies the phenomenon of indirect translation as carried out by Manuel Antonio Matta and Guillermo Matta of poems and extracts of larger works by Adam Mickiewicz and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859), working through the relay language of French, published during 1850 in *Revista de Santiago*. These count as *indirect* translations because they had previously been transferred from Polish into French by writers and translators such as Auguste Lacausade (1815–1897), as well as Polish translators in France such as Krystyn Ostrowski (1811–1882). The translations were performed against the vibrant backdrop of the 1848 revolutionary movement in France. By focusing on the paratextual content (translator’s footnotes) of the translations it is possible to present some of the ideological parameters of the Chilean translators. Paratexts become a valuable medium which, in the case of indirect translations, make both translators visible. This case study affirms that translations can offer insight into the agency of translators and the political aspirations they shared with the original authors to counter European imperialism during the first half of the 19th century.

3 Paul Treutler: *Andanzas de un alemán en Chile, 1851–1863*. Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico 1958, p. 77.

4 A more detailed source from the early life of the Matta members, particularly from Francisco de Paula Matta can be found in the set of Memoirs notes written by Manuel Antonio Matta in 1861. See Claudio Soltmann Cáceres: Un documento inédito de Manuel Antonio Matta: Apuntes para servir a la biografía de Francisco de Paula Matta (1861). In: *Cuadernos de Historia* 54 (2021), p. 373–387.

2 The Chilean Translators: Chilean Liberals at the Margins of the “Parisian 1848”

The decade of 1840 marked the beginning of a tense period of intergenerational conflict between a new group of young openly Francophile Chilean liberals, within the *Sociedad literaria de 1842*, with the traditional Catholic order of the country.⁵ Already in 1843, Francisco Bilbao opened himself actively to French authors and literature by attempting to translate into Spanish the book *De l'esclavage moderne* by Félicité Lammenais, as an attempt to provide Chile's youth with a new vision of social and political reform. In his preface of this translation, Bilbao explains that the motive for translating this book was that the Chilean youth “have to take the most active part in overturning and reforming what is old.”⁶ Controversy peaked when the publication of the text *Sociabilidad Chilena* in June 1844 by Francisco Bilbao (1823–1865), triggered charges against him for sedition, blasphemy and immorality against the Chilean State and the Catholic Church.⁷ This decision meant that in October 1844, Bilbao along with his friend Manuel Antonio Matta and his older sibling Francisco de Paula Matta, both aspiring Chilean writers, decided to travel to France after receiving direct orders from their fathers to gain a more complete education in Europe and to thus sidestep this political and judiciary controversy.⁸

After arriving in Paris in 1845, Bilbao and Matta would later witness the first great revolutionary moment of the 19th century in France. They would also attend several open lectures at the *Collège de France*, organised and presented by Edgar Quinet (1803–1875), Jules Michelet (1798–1874) and other European intellectuals, especially courses in Slavic literature organised by the Polish intellectual Adam Mickiewicz. In Paris, The Matta brothers, together with Bilbao, would form part of a network of romantic intellectuals, where they gathered and recognised each other as companions of a “peripheral Romantic intelligentsia” conformed by

5 Most of the studies of the Chilean literary *Generation of 1842* focused on the reception of French ideas. Unfortunately, during the 20th century no particular attention has been given to the reception of authors of other nationalities during this period such as German, Polish, Hungarian, and Romanian. About the Chilean literary avant-garde movement during the 1840s see Ana María Stuenkel: *La seducción de un orden. Las elites y la construcción de Chile en las polémicas culturales y políticas del siglo XIX*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile 2000.

6 Francisco Bilbao: De la esclavitud moderna y observaciones sobre la educación chilena (Edición y noticia de Álvaro García San Martín). In: *La Cañada* 3 (2012), p. 375.

7 James A. Wood: *The Society of Equality: Popular Republicanism and Democracy in Santiago de Chile, 1818–1851*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 2011, p. 164–172.

8 Claudio Soltmann: Un documento inédito, p. 383.

Poles, Russians, Hungarians, Spaniards, Latin Americans, among others.⁹ This network of intellectuals and their political work was crystalized during 1848 and 1849 around the periodical *La Tribune des Peuples* edited in Paris by Mickiewicz, where Bilbao would play a key role on his foundation.¹⁰

Bilbao would cultivate friendship with leading intellectuals of the French republican movement. Meanwhile Manuel Antonio Matta gathered a large amount of reading of writings by key European authors of the liberal and republican movement, which were later portrayed to a Spanish-speaking public as part of Matta's translation oeuvre, when he returned to Chile in 1849. Although Guillermo Matta, the most junior of the Matta brothers did not travel to France because of his young age, his shared enthusiasm with his older brothers Manuel Antonio and Francisco de Paula was evident, especially if we focus on their contributions in the Chilean press. Their arrival back in Santiago materialised on the creation of revolutionary groups, such as the *Sociedad de la Igualdad*, impregnated with a strong political critique towards the Conservative Chilean Government, which later triggered the failed Revolution of 1851, and a production of texts, mainly translations, of several militant literary authors committed to the revolutionary movement.¹¹

3 Indirect Translations. France as a Bridge between Polish Literature and Chilean Readers

In the last few years, as Judith Woodsworth has succinctly noted: “as translators become more visible conduits for interlinkages between countries, the motivation and work of writers devoted to translating each other is of increasing interest.”¹²

9 About the Parisian network during the 1830s and 1840, see Eduardo Devés-Valdes: *Pensamiento Periférico Asia – África – América Latina – Eurasia y algo más. Una tesis interpretativa global*. Santiago de Chile: Ariadna Ediciones/USACH 2017, p. 122–124.

10 Rafael Mondragón: Francisco Bilbao, la tormenta de 1849 y la fundación de *La Tribune des Peuples* del liberalismo al anticolonialismo y el socialismo de las periferias. In: *La Cañada* 5 (2014), p. 18–29.

11 Cristián Gazmuri: *El '48' chileno: Igualitarios, reformistas radicales, masones y bomberos*. Santiago: Editorial Universitaria 1998, p. 42. Gazmuri's work on the Chilean “Quarante-Huitards” remains as a key reference on the period. However, the work does not mention the translations on Polish literature into French language performed by the Chileans during this vibrant revolutionary period.

12 Judith Woodsworth: *Telling the Story of Translation. Writers Who Translate*. London: Bloomsbury 2017, p. 1.

Here we will be attending to the practice of “indirect translation” understood in short as “a translation of a translation.”¹³ This activity has been prevalent throughout a long period of human history and was used widely in various areas of communication and is still today the focus of intense theoretical attention, as Pięta, Ivaska and Gambier’s contribution demonstrates.¹⁴ Translation scholars such as Anthony Pym observe that the practice of indirect translation can be understood as:

The historical process of translation from an intermediary version. For example, Poe was translated into French by Baudelaire, then from French into Spanish by a number of poets. The Spanish versions would then be called ‘indirect translations’, and the first translation, into French, could then logically be called a ‘direct translation’.¹⁵

Moreover, indirect translation can provide a significant contribution to challenging a “conventional binarism in the study of translation or offering insights into the historiography of intercultural relationships and the complex role of intermediary centres in the cross-cultural transfer between peripheries.”¹⁶ The importance of the French language in the development of Chilean literature during the mid-19th century, is well captured statistically. Between 1841 and 1850, of 85 book translations into Chilean Spanish, 85% were conducted from the French, while between 1851 and 1860 of 107 book translations, 65.6% were from the French.¹⁷ The key bibliography on translation in 19th-century Chile has focused solely on the book format, leaving an important amount of sources only available in the periodical press sidelined.¹⁸ Several remarks from Chilean writers and intellectuals of the 19th century also highlight the importance of French, for example, the Chilean bibliographer Jose Toribio Medina, author of the *Biblioteca chilena de traductores, 1820–1924*, wrote that among the expected reasons for the high number of French translations in compared to other European language were “the easiness of its learning” and “being the language on which more works containing teachings

¹³ Yves Gambier: La retraducción, retour et détour. In: *Meta* 39, 3 (1994), p. 413.

¹⁴ Hanna Pięta, Laura Ivaska, Yves Gambier: Introduction: What can research on indirect translation do for Translation Studies? In: *Target* 34, 3 (2022), p. 350–358.

¹⁵ Anthony Pym: Translation research terms: A tentative glossary for moments of perplexity and dispute. In Anthony Pym (ed.): *Translation Research Projects 3*. Tarragona: Intercultural Studies Group, Universitat Rovira i Virgili 2011, p. 82–83.

¹⁶ Alexandra Assis Rosa, Hanna Pięta, Rita Bueno Maia: Theoretical, methodological and terminological issues regarding indirect translation: An overview. In: *Translation Studies* 10, 2 (2017), p. 113

¹⁷ Francisco Javier González-Errázuriz: *Aquellos años franceses 1870–1900. Chile en la huella de París*. Santiago de Chile: Taurus 2003, p. 44.

¹⁸ Bernardo Subercaseaux: *Historia del libro en Chile. Desde la Colonia hasta el Bicentenario*. Santiago de Chile: Lom 2010, p. 81–86.

and spiritual enjoyments have been written into.”¹⁹ Another example about the literary importance of the French language would come from the Chilean writer and educator Domingo Amunátegui Solar who in 1889 wrote:

The main literary works of the other nations are translated into the French language. French became the successor of Latin [. . .] it is the language in which the wise of different nationalities communicate to each other [. . .] it is essential to know French to travel in Europe from Saint Petersburg to Constantinople and even to Madrid.²⁰

This approach was understood in the case of Chilean writers during the 19th century while stating the importance of “metropolitan languages” such as the French language as a *lingua franca* which gave them access to other literatures (especially other peripheral ones, like Central-Eastern European languages). In the case of the Chilean poet Francisco Bilbao, he realised this while conversing with the Italian poet Alessandro Manzoni in 1847, where the latter advised him: “Everything that rattles the world must be translated into French, it is a sign of power.”²¹ Furthermore, one of the translators studied in this chapter, Guillermo Matta, stated as editor of the *Revista de Santiago* in 1855: “French is a language that serves as an interpreter for other languages [. . .] so that we can swiftly understand.”²²

In Translation Studies, paratexts have become a much wider topic of study. From a specific angle, translator’s footnotes have recently also become valuable paratexts which form the focus of specialised research that calls for particular theoretical reflection, and recent approaches adopted which view them as “sites

¹⁹ José Toribio Medina: *Biblioteca chilena de traductores. Segunda edición, aumentada y corregida, con estudio preliminar de Gertrudis Payàs*. Santiago de Chile: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana 2007, p. 76.

²⁰ “En idioma francés se traducen las obras principales de las demás naciones. El francés ha sido el sucesor del latín. Como éste en otro tiempo, es la lengua en que se comunican los sabios de distintas nacionalidades [. . .] Es indispensable saber francés para viajar en Europa desde San Petersburgo hasta Constantinopla i hasta Madrid.” Domingo Amunátegui Solar: *Las librerías francesas*. In: Domingo Amunátegui Solar: *Páginas sueltas*. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Cervantes 1889, p. 174.

²¹ Francisco Bilbao added this quote in his journal in 1847 after meeting Alessandro Manzoni in Milano: “fui presentado a Manzoni [. . .] me dijo que todo lo que agita al mundo debe traducirse al francés, es un signo de poder.” Manuel Bilbao: *Vida de Francisco Bilbao, escrita por Manuel Bilbao*. In: Manuel Bilbao (ed.): *Obras completas de Francisco Bilbao*. Tomo I. Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Buenos Aires 1866, p. LXVIII.

²² El francés es un “idioma [que] sirve de intérprete para los demás idiomas [. . .] para que sea más prontamente entendida por todos.” Guillermo Matta: *Le Chili, considéré sous le rapport de son agriculture et de l’émigration européenne de Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna*. In: *Revista de Santiago* 1 (1855), p. 50.

of translation intervention or adaptation of the text to its new environment.”²³ They can offer themselves as a helpful tool to the foreign reader as sources of information to “facilitate the assimilation of the text.”²⁴ Moreover, as Alexandra Lopes succinctly puts that “footnotes are [. . .] the clearest manifestation of the Janus-like presence of the translator in the text,” the “Janus-like presence” is explained by Lopes as an acknowledgement of “the past/origin of the text, the footnote and other paratextual material also assert the translator’s present Reading/rendering while pointing the other [future?] possibilities of reading the text.”²⁵

4 The Translations of Zygmunt Krasiński’s Poems by Guillermo Matta in *Revista de Santiago* in 1850

While in Santiago de Chile, the Matta siblings actively contributed to the foundation of the *Revista de Santiago* between 1850 and 1851, where they oversaw the editorial board of the publication and submitted several translations and poems about Polish, Italian, German, and French literature to this innovative and provocative Chilean magazine. The translations were published prior to the political insurgency of 1851 against the Chilean Conservative Government, where Guillermo Matta participated as a Liberal belligerent. Two poems by Zygmunt Krasiński, *El sueño de Césara* and *La noche de Navidad*, were translated from French into Spanish and published in October 1850 in *Revista de Santiago* by Guillermo Matta. The Chilean translator added brief paratexts to the poems giving information about the procedure and the background of the author. For example, as an introductory footnote to the first poem, *El sueño de Césara*, Matta wrote: “We have taken this poem, whose author is known by name as an Anonymous Poet of Poland, from the French translation made in the *Revista de Ambos Mundos*. We will publish afterwards another poem by the same author: the night of Christmas.”²⁶

²³ Kathryn Batchelor: *Translation and Paratexts*. London & New York: Routledge 2018, p. 25–26.

²⁴ Roberto A. Valdeón: The 1992 English retranslation of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*. In: *Translation Studies* 7 (2014), p. 7.

²⁵ Alexandra Lopes: Under the Sign of Janus: Reflections on Authorship as Liminality in Translated Literature. In: *Revista Anglo Saxonica* 3 (2012), p. 130.

²⁶ “Este poema cuyo autor es conocido con el nombre del Poeta anónimo de Polonia, lo hemos tomado, de la traducción francesa que ha hecho de él la Revista de Ambos Mundos. Publicaremos después otro poema del mismo autor: La noche de Navidad.” Guillermo Matta: *El sueño de Césara* (traducido para la revista por G.M). In: *Revista de Santiago* 5 (1850), p. 373.

Guillermo Matta's source text for translating two of Krasiński's poems was a French translation of both poems by Auguste Lacauassade published in October 1846 in *Revue des deux mondes*, it was part of a larger article titled *De la poésie polonaise. Le poète anonyme de la Pologne. Le Rêve Césara – La Nuit de Noël*. Lacauassade's article was signed as "A.L" and contained an introduction to Polish poetry and to the history of Polish literature and history since the kingdom of Casmir III the Great (1310–1370) in the 14th century. Matta might have decided not to translate the entire article and just focus on translating the poems by Krasiński. The second poem by Krasiński translated from the French by Matta was *La noche de Navidad*, also published in October 1850 in *Revista de Santiago*, it did not contain any further paratexts, except to inform readers parenthetically that it was a translation from the French.²⁷

In 1849, Guillermo Matta also translated a poem by Adam Mickiewicz titled *A una madre polaca* which was published in *Revista de Santiago* in December 1850. In this translation, Guillermo Matta added a brief footnote informing the Chilean reader that this work was a translation of a previous one: "This composition and the one that follows it have been translated from the French translation made by C. Ostrowski of all the works of Mickiewicz."²⁸ The support of the Chilean translator for the Polish cause was also reflected in his work as a poet, as seen through the publication of his own poem in the Chilean monthly magazine. It was written in 1848 and named *A Polonia* and it was dedicated to his older brother Manuel Antonio Matta. It contained an extract of the satirical work *Pot-de-Vin* by French dramatist Henri Auguste Barbier (1805–1882) denouncing the imperial "evil" of European Empires, such as Russia and Austria, and actively supporting Polish "bravery."²⁹ Additionally, Matta placed an introductory footnote where he provided an explanation to the Chilean reader of the context as well as his own political position from which this poem is composed:

27 Guillermo Matta added to the title of the translation in brackets: "(traducido del francés para la revista)" [translated from the French for the magazine]. Guillermo Matta: *La noche de Navidad*. Por el poeta anónimo de Polonia (traducido del francés para la revista). In: *Revista de Santiago* 6 (1850), p. 11.

28 "Esta composición i la siguiente han sido traducidas, de la traducción francesa que ha hecho C. Ostrowski, de todas las obras de Mickiewicz." Guillermo Matta: *A una madre polaca*. (De Mickiewicz). In: *Revista de Santiago* 6 (1850), p. 138.

29 The extract was as it follows: "L'Italie, à la Pologne: Et toit, pauvre aigle blanche, a l'aile mutilée/ A la plume avilie et longtemps flagellée/ Par les chainons de cuir du knout impérial,/ Pologne valeureuse, à la voûte étoilée/ Tu reprendras aussi la sublime volée,/ Et tu rempliras l'air de ton cri triomphal." Guillermo Matta: *A Polonia*. A mi hermano M. A. Matta (1848). In: *Revista de Santiago* 6 (1850), p. 22.

This composition was written in the year [18]48 when the news of the first Polish insurrection arrived. Back then we believed in the Polish resurrection; but sadly, our hopes were foiled. It was once again beaten and in vain, during its painful struggle asked for help to its brothers. All fell silent! And France which in February was taking its first steps towards its Freedom, had forgotten it and saw it impassively fight and passed away. The Northern Sylph cried once again inside Russian dungeons and in the Iberian mines! Its tainted glory and its freedom were stepped over by the stupid Cossack.³⁰

During the next decade, while an émigré, Guillermo Matta continued to shape his identity through contact with a larger community of displaced and committed writers against Imperialism and political oppression. In his travel notes written between Milano and Venice during 1860, Matta states: “outcast Italians, Polish, Hungarian, French, how much I have sympathised with you during these days of study and meditation; when History shows me the abyss of our misfortunes, I sank myself into the darkness of oppression!”³¹ Guillermo Matta maintained his interest in the Polish cause in the years that followed. During the visit of Polish catholic priest Karol Mikoszewski (1831–1886) in 1867 to Chile, to raise funds for the Polish cause, he was well received by members of the Chilean Radical Party, of which Guillermo Matta was a member, who wrote supportive poems to the cause.³²

5 The Translations of Adam Mickiewicz’s Works by Manuel Antonio Matta in *Revista de Santiago* (1850–1851)

The second Polish author translated and mentioned by the Chilean liberals was Adam Mickiewicz. The works by Mickiewicz were also indirect translations from French, conducted previously by Krystyn Ostrowski, a Polish aristocrat, writer, and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

³¹ Guillermo Matta: Apuntes de mi cartera de viaje: de Milán a Verona (en 1860). Reflexiones que pueden servir de introducción pero interesan únicamente al autor. In: *La Voz de Chile* 38 (26 April 1862), p. 1.

³² Mikoszewski would refer to Guillermo Matta after he visited him at his home in Santiago in 1867 as a “dignified person, a friend of Poland.” Matta received Mikoszewski in his home and clarified his political views and anticlerical sentiments, however Matta considered Polish clergy as an exemption of the rule: “I am a general enemy of the clergy, since it is a class that halts progress, liberty, and the happiness of the peoples. But for the Polish clergy, which is an exemption in the world, I do have a great deal of respect.” About the Mikoszewski-Matta exchange, see Alfredo Lastra Norambuena: Un patriota polaco en Chile. In: *Mapocho* 36 (1994), p. 297.

translator, who translated works by Mickiewicz from Polish into French as an émigré translator in Paris.³³ The sense of isolation or detachment developed in the case of Ostrowski an intense commitment to Polish culture, particularly while living a prolonged exile in Paris after his participation in the failed uprising of 1830.³⁴ A similar trait can be found in the works of both Matta brothers especially in view of their challenging and non-conformist attitudes towards the Chilean Conservative Party and the Governments of Chilean President Manuel Montt during the 1850s. Then, in this case, the common experience of exile and translation could rise to a feeling of companionship between Chileans and Polish translators which could be expressed in the margins of their own textual production, in other words, within the paratexts.

Regarding the Chilean translations of Mickiewicz's works, Manuel Antonio Matta provided paratextual content in his Mickiewicz translations from the French. A first example of this can be found when he translated extracts of the narrative poem *Konrad Wallenrod*, composed originally by Mickiewicz in Saint Petersburg in 1828. The Chilean translator decided to add at the beginning of his translation a footnote marking that information in the text: "Este poema fue publicado por el autor en San Petersburgo" [This poem was published by the author in Saint Petersburg].³⁵ In the translation of the narrative poem *Grażyna* (*Grajina*, *Leyenda de Lituania*) Manuel Antonio Matta added an initial translator's footnote on the title of *Grajina* observing:

Even though this is not the best work by this author, we translate it to show one of the sides of the poet which can say, with one of his characters, "my homeland and I we are more than one. My name is Million. . . because I love and suffer for millions of men". In this one, our readers will find some traces of his genius. The translation which we serve upon is the one made into French by Christian Ostrowski.³⁶

33 Krystyn Ostrowski was also a translator of Shakespeare works from English into Polish. His style as a translator was highly active as to rewrite several aspects of the source text. In his translation of *Hamlet*, Ostrowski presented Polonius as a Polish nobleman captured by Old Hamlet during his war with Poland. When, after his death, Hamlet learned about Polish patriotism and the Poles' readiness to sacrifice their lives for the country's independence. Krystyna Kujawinska-Courtney/Katarzyna Kwapisz-Williams: Central Eastern Europe. In: Peter Marx (ed.) *Hamlet-Handbuch: Stoffe, Aneignung, Deutungen*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler 2014, p. 307.

34 Anna Cetera-Wlodarczyk: "No profit but the name": The Polish reception of Shakespeare's plays. In: Janet Clare/Dominique Goy-Blanquet (eds.): *Migrating Shakespeare: First European Encounters, Routes and Networks*. London: Bloomsbury 2022, p. 154.

35 Manuel Antonio Matta: Conrado Wallenrod. Novela histórica. Por Adán Mickiewicz (Traducido del francés para la Revista). In: *Revista de Santiago* 7 (1850–1851), p. 89.

36 The original: "Aunque no sea esta, ni con mucho, la mejor obra del autor, la traducimos para mostrar uno de los lados del poeta que puede decir, con uno de sus personajes, 'mi patria i yo

In this example, the overt references to the first translator, in this case Ostrowski, are quite unusual during this period when it comes to retranslation. Because often the mediating figures in relay translations are deliberately hidden to give the impression the second translator had direct access to the source text. A similar trait can be found on the second Mickiewicz poem translated by Guillermo Matta. In his translation of *El Castillo de Ballaklava*, Matta once again adds a brief footnote providing visibility to the Chilean reader of the French translator, Ostrowski: “This composition and the one that follows have been translated, from the French translation made by C. Ostrowski from all the works of Mickiewicz.”³⁷

In this case, Manuel Antonio Matta acknowledges the indirect translation by both giving the name of the French translator and adding footnotes providing clarifications made by Ostrowski in terms of geographical sites mentioned in Mickiewicz’s narrative poem. For example, Matta in his seventh footnote for the “Kowno Valley” provided the information given by the French translator: “Valley devoted to Milda, goddess of Love, today, says the translator, it is called Mickiewicz’s Valley.”³⁸ Therefore, in this case of indirect translation, the translator’s previous notes can also become sources of clarification and provide historical and geographical knowledge of the foreign text, especially given the obvious remoteness of Lithuanian and Polish regions for the Chilean reader.

The paratextual production of the Chilean translators then becomes important for reasons of trust and reliability, whereas including the persona of the first translator explicitly highlights a sort of palimpsestic and multivocal nature of the second translation. The procedures conducted by the Matta siblings in the paratexts can be seen as a sign of transparency about the translation process. But they can be characterised as an effort to transfer the lasting echo of the voice of Ostrowski, the first translator, making him a *must-known* name to the Chilean readership interested in Mickiewicz poetry and committed to learn more about the political situation in Poland during the 1850s. Then, Ostrowski, a generally marginal figure of Polish literature, became a militant and literary member of importance within the translations of Polish poetry. The effort conducted by the

somos más que uno. Me llamo Millon. . . Porque amo i sufro por millones de hombres.’ I en la cual encontrarán nuestros lectores, algunos destellos de su jenio. La traducción de que nos servimos es la que hizo al francés Cristián Ostrowski.” Manuel Antonio Matta: *Grajina, leyenda de Lituania*. Por Adán Mickiewicz (traducido para la revista). In: *Revista de Santiago* 6 (1850), p. 337.

37 Guillermo Matta: *El Castillo de Ballaklava* (de Mickiewicz). In: *Revista de Santiago* 6 (1850), p. 140.

38 The original: “Valle consagrado a Milda, diosa del amor, hoy, dice el traductor, se llama el valle de Mickiewicz.” Manuel Antonio Matta: *Grajina, leyenda de Lituania*. Por Adán Mickiewicz (traducido para la *Revista*). In: *Revista de Santiago* 6 (1850), p. 345.

Matta therefore creates an (imagined) community of international mediators and translators, presented as striving for the same political cause. Manuel Antonio Matta in later decades would recall this period at the *Collège de France* during the 1840s in endearing words remarking the importance of translation as the fruits of the labour, and the transference of texts as a movement of “seeds” across different regions of the world:

That of precious and fertile seeds into the heart and brain of an audience from such diverse and distant countries, fallen on contact with the luminous and energetic word, as the electrical spark, went to germinate and to bear fruits at the shores of the Danube or from the Plata, in the beaches of the Black Sea or the Pacific, on the foothills of the Carpathians or the Andes!³⁹

6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has sought to deliver initial insights into how studying indirect translations, as well as focusing on a specific translational paratexts as the footnotes can offer a glimpse of translators’ ideological motives through the visibility to researchers for the study of their figure. The evidence of the research shows an indirect *dialogue* between translators, in which the Chilean translators gathered as much information as possible from the previous work performed by the Polish and French translators from the Polish language, to present the texts to the Chilean reader as best as they could.

In this case, the French and Polish translators mentioned here became indirect mediators and helped to bring the Polish texts closer to Chilean readers, given the linguistic and material limitations of the period. This chapter could not give a full analysis of the translations. But it does provide an initial motivation and the need for future research on these translations while studying both translation processes involved (the first on from Polish to French; and then the second one from French to Spanish). This can become crucial to provide a much complete perspective on the phenomena of indirect translations and about the nature of the early reception of Polish literature in Chile during the 19th century.

³⁹ Manuel Antonio Matta: Rasgos biográficos de Julio Michelet: Lectura hecha en la Academia de Bellas Letras. In: *Revista Chilena* 1 (1875), p. 214.

Monika Dąbrowska

Difundir la literatura polaca en México y la mexicana en Polonia: Sergio Pitól como agente transcultural

Sabía, empujado por un impulso interior,
que debo acercar esa magnífica cultura
a los lectores del ámbito de la lengua española.
Era mi deber.¹

1 Introducción

Las palabras de Sergio Pitól (1933–2018) que abren este texto, procedentes de una entrevista con Wojciech Wasilewski en el periódico polaco *Życie Warszawy* atestiguan otra poderosa vocación del destacado escritor mexicano, igual de esencial que la literaria: la de desempeñarse como mediador cultural entre su país y Polonia, una nación eslava a otro lado del Atlántico. El autor mexicano vivió una considerable parte de su vida en diferentes países de Europa, sobre todo de Europa de Este. Como hijo de la generación del Medio Siglo, estaba abierto a lo que sucede fuera de México, atraído por las regiones culturalmente distintas y convencido de que esa diversidad e intercambio de tradiciones y estéticas puede enriquecer la comprensión de la propia cultura. Esa mente universal, propensa a cruzar fronteras y salir hacia el *Otro* fue al mismo tiempo objeto de incompreensión y críticas por parte de sus contemporáneos que lo tacharon de cosmopolita desentendido de temas nacionales y poco «mexicano» en su escritura. Su obra literaria, autoficcional muchas veces y otras a medio camino entre la ficción y la realidad, culta y repleta de intertextualidad, salpicada de ironía sutil, aparte de experimentar con el lenguaje, con diferentes estilos narrativos y de mezclar géneros – características que le confieren un estilo distintivo – está marcada por la capacidad de explorar culturas y tematizar los viajes, hoteles y personajes en tránsito.

1 En Wojciech Wasilewski: *Pisarz i dyplomata Sergio Pitól, Ambasador polskiej literatury*. In: *Życie Warszawy*, 38 (1987), p.7. [trad. propia]

Si bien existen estudios que exploran su faceta como escritor,² como traductor,³ por mencionar tan solo los más recientes, no son muchos los trabajos que exploran su actividad desde la perspectiva de la comunicación intercultural y el alcance de las diferentes tareas que emprendió para tender puentes entre México y Polonia. Y, sin embargo, esa labor constituye la parte esencial de su legado, imprescindible para la comprensión cabal de su quehacer en el campo literario y diplomático. Pitól fue un apasionado promotor de la literatura europea y, más específicamente la polaca, en México y jugó un papel importante en dar a conocer a autores como Andrzejewski, Brandys, Gombrowicz, o Mrożek entre el público hispanohablante. A su vez, viviendo en Varsovia, no desaprovechó la oportunidad para glosar y presentar la reciente escritura mexicana a los lectores polacos en las páginas de las revistas culturales y literarias.

El presente texto aborda el rol de Pitól como intelectual mexicano en el fortalecimiento de los intercambios literarios mexicano-polacos, primero en la década de los años sesenta y setenta – el lapso de tiempo que abarca las dos estadias varsovianas del autor veracruzano – y posteriormente, aunque con menor intensidad, durante las tres décadas siguientes, prácticamente hasta el final de sus días. El desempeño de Pitól se produce entre un México que atraviesa su transformación y crisis y un país de Europa Centro-Oriental de dominio comunista, en el contexto de Guerra Fría. Ese escenario otorga al joven mexicano la posibilidad de sumergirse en zonas culturales y lingüísticas desconocidas y periféricas, como lo es Polonia y otros países de la Unión Soviética. Es necesario subrayar que la elección de ese destino se opera de forma deliberada y libre, siendo fruto de decisión propia. Ese vínculo marcará toda su trayectoria vital y literaria. No sin motivo en *El tercer personaje* (2013) confesará que Polonia ocupa un lugar crucial es su trayectoria intelectual. Aquí intentaremos mostrar que su afinidad con la cultura polaca es intencionada y electiva.

Para examinar el desempeño de Pitól, sus características, alcance y consecuencias recurrimos al enfoque metodológico ofrecido por los estudios de transferencia

2 José Luis Nogales Baena: *Hijo de todo lo visto y lo soñado: la narrativa breve de Sergio Pitól*. Madrid: Editorial CSIC 2019. Guillermo Carrera García/ Anayetzy Yuriria Marín Espinoza: Memoria e Identidad: una experiencia autobiográfica. In: *RICSH Revista Iberoamericana de las Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas* 11, 22 (2022), p. 152–168. Luisa Yudith Gómez Martínez: Tiempo y sueño: la experiencia pitoliana. In: *Humanitas. Revista de Teoría, Crítica y Estudios Literarios* 2, 3 (2022), p. 197–210.

3 Monika Dąbrowska: Gombrowicz en español a cargo de Sergio Pitól: ¿traducciones irrelevantes o relevante falta de interés? In: Iwona Kasperska: *Ideologías en traducción. Literatura, didáctica, cultura*. Berna: Peter Lang Publishing 2016, p. 69–80. Mario Alberto Carrillo Ramírez: *El traductor en fuga. La práctica traductora y el pensamiento traductor de Sergio Pitól* [Tesis de grado en traducción, El Colegio de México]. Repositorio COLMEX 2019.

cultural o *Cultural Transfer Studies*, disciplina centrada en indagar como se transmiten y asimilan los contenidos culturales: ideas, tendencias artísticas, obras, saberes, modelos culturales, de una tradición a otra, traspasando las fronteras geográficas, lingüísticas o temporales, con su incesante recontextualización y reinterpretación en el contexto de llegada. Los autores que se centran en estudiar la transferencia en el campo literario, desde Miguel Espagne, Pascale Casanova, Itamar Even-Zohar, Sandra Voorst y Karina Smits, hasta Steen Bille Jørgensen y Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, o traductológico como Emily Apter,⁴ elaboran la noción de transferencia cultural y destacan la figura del mediador como transmisor de conocimientos culturales entre dos entornos, a menudo ayudado por una red de colaboradores personales.

El renovado interés de la crítica por la actividad de los mediadores transculturales, perceptible tanto en los estudios transatlánticos como traductológicos, comparatísticos y culturales servirá como base conceptual para revisar el caso particular de Sergio Pitol como intermediario entre la literatura polaca y mexicana. Nos referimos al rol de mediador cultural entendido en el sentido amplio, como cualquier persona, grupo o institución que facilita proceso de transferencia cultural. Otros autores, como Sarah Maitland, adaptan el concepto de «traductor cultural» para referirse a la misma realidad.⁵ La traducción es entendida no en el sentido lingüístico, sino como traslado (*translatio*) de formas culturales a un contexto nuevo. Por otro lado, Petra Broomans acuña el término «transmisor cultural» (*cultural transmitter*).⁶ Cedergren y Schwartz, por su parte, hablan de «intermediario de ideas» (*broker of*

4 Entre los estudios más representativos sobre la transferencia cultural de los autores mencionados, merece la pena destacar: Michel Espagne: Más allá del comparatismo. El método de las transferencias culturales. In: *Revista de Historiografía* 6, IV (2007), p. 4–13; Michel Espagne: La notion de transfert culturel. In: *Revue Sciences/Lettres* 1 (2013); Pascale Casanova: La republique mondiale des lettres. Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1999; Casanova Pascale: Consécration et accumulation de capital littéraire. In: *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales. Traductions: les échanges littéraires internationaux* 144 (2002), p. 7–20; Itamar Even-Zohar: *Polisistemas de culturas*. Tel Aviv: Universidad de Tel Aviv, 2017; Sandra Voorst/Karina Smits (eds.): *Rethinking Cultural Transfer and Transmission: Reflections and New Perspectives*. Havertown: Barkhuis Publishing 2012; Steen Bille Jørgensen/Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink (eds): *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: transnational perspectives, translation processes, Scandinavian and postcolonial challenges*. Leiden; Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021; Emily Apter: *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2006.

5 Una explicación más completa en Sarah Maitland: *What Is Cultural Translation?* London: Bloomsbury 2017.

6 Véase su libro *Battles and Borders: Perspectives on Cultural Transmission and Literature in Minor Language Areas*. GL Eelde: Barkhuis 2015 o el texto The Meta-Literary History of Cultural Transmitters and Forgotten Scholars in the Midst of Transnational Literary History, in: *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: transnational perspectives, translation processes, Scandinavian and post-colonial challenges*. Leiden; Boston: Brill Rodopi 2021, p. 64–87.

ideas).⁷ Aunque con matices distintos, todos estos planteamientos ponen el foco en desentrañar la *agencia* en el proceso de transmisión cultural literaria. Por esa razón, en este trabajo adaptamos el término «agente» para incidir en el papel clave del sujeto que posibilita la circulación y adaptación de elementos culturales en contextos transnacionales. Milton y Bandia describen al «agente de traslación» (*agent of traslation*) al que nos referimos en estos términos:

Often they are individuals who devote great amounts of energy and even their own lives to the cause of a foreign literature, author or literary school, translating, writing articles, teaching and dissemination of knowledge and culture. [. . .] We would like to emphasize their role in terms of cultural innovation and change.⁸

Esta imagen corresponde perfectamente al pluriforme empeño mediador de Pitol que asumió conscientemente y ejerció sirviéndose de una variedad de medios, personales e institucionales. Aparte de practicar la traducción, una forma de comunicación interlingüística y transcultural por excelencia, ejerció como reseñador en revistas culturales, prologuista, antologista, editor, impartió conferencias y seminarios de literatura eslava en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) y en la Universidad Veracruzana (UV).

2 Historia de una fascinación

Para valorar la labor de Pitol como agente intercultural, hay que dejar constar, en primer lugar, una profunda conexión del prosista mexicano con Polonia, fruto de las vivencias personales y lecturas, siempre personales y *heterodoxas*, del joven becario y aspirante a escritor. Traer a la colación algunos datos biográficos e interpretarlos en su contexto socio-histórico encierra, sin duda, muchas de las claves de su posterior trayectoria y proyectos acometidos. Nos interesa adoptar un enfoque crítico que toma en consideración el contexto cultural y político. Por un lado, el de la Guerra Fría y la cortina de hierro que sitúa a Polonia en el lado de países comunistas, en concreto en el momento de «deshielo» comunista y de la llamada *pequeña estabilización* y, por otro lado, el del recién estrenado acercamiento diplomático mexicano-polaco, sellado con una serie de convenios culturales. El escritor de Xalapa pasó casi treinta años en el otro lado del Atlántico,

⁷ En Cedergren Mickaëlle/Cecilia Schwartz: From comparative literature to the study of mediators, *Moderna Språk* 110, 3 (2016), s. i-x.

⁸ Milton John/Paul Bandia (eds.): *Agents of Translation*, Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing 2009, p. 1.

muchos de ellos desempeñando cargos diplomáticos en las sedes en Europa Central: Bulgaria, Unión Soviética, Checoslovaquia y, por supuesto, Polonia. Su prolongada residencia en esa parte de Europa no se puede asignar a mera casualidad, como tampoco lo fueron los destinos diplomáticos que recibió en los años setenta y ochenta, casi todos en los países del bloque del Este europeo. Ciertamente fue considerado por el Servicio Exterior mexicano un conocedor de la realidad socio-política centroeuropea, como lo fue de su ambiente cultural y sus literaturas.

El joven mexicano difícilmente pudo encontrar el momento más apropiado para establecerse en la capital polaca. Esta circunstancia, al parecer colateral, ha sido crucial para asegurar la solidez de su vínculo con Polonia. Fue la persona adecuada en el momento y lugar adecuado, *the right person in the right place at the right time*, y reunía las condiciones idóneas para asumir el papel de mediador entre ambas naciones y sus literaturas. Su llegada a Varsovia en el año 1963, como becario del gobierno polaco, coincide con un punto de inflexión en las relaciones bilaterales polaco-mexicanas, las económicas, científicas, pero también culturales y artísticas. Empieza su primera estadía polaca, de tres años (1963–1966), empezando como corresponsal cultural en colaboración con la Embajada de México. Pitol, residente en Varsovia, aprende polaco, aspecto crucial sobre el que no se ha insistido lo suficiente, como tampoco en su facilidad para los idiomas (traducía también del ruso, inglés, italiano). Lo hace para leer en el original las obras de Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Maria Dąbrowska, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Kazimierz Brandys, Tadeusz Rózewicz, Marek Hłasko, Sławomir Mrożek, Ryszard Kapuściński, Czesław Miłosz y otros. El visitante mexicano se interesa por la tradición de esta región tan distinta y distante, especialmente por su actualidad cultural y literaria, por la narrativa polaca actual, prácticamente desconocida en México. Observa, discute con escritores y cineastas, frecuenta teatros, óperas, cafés literarios y librerías, se mueve en los ambientes artísticos, conoce a Andrzejewski y Kuśniewicz, pide opinión a Gombrowicz sobre sus propios cuentos, forja amistades.

Varsovia constituye para Pitol la puerta de entrada al mundo de las letras eslavas, una nueva y desconocida zona cultural y literaria, donde todo es un descubrimiento. Conviene tener en cuenta que la literatura polaca accesible en México hasta este momento se limitaba a los trabajos histórico-literarios de Edmund Stefan Urbański, libros sobre la II Guerra Mundial, obras de interés ideológico (de autores comunistas) y piezas puntuales de Henryk Sienkiewicz, Władysław Reymont, Klementyna z Tańskich Hoffmanowa, Ferdynand Ossendowski y Dawid Rubinowicz y la biografía Chopin de Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. El hecho de ser un ávido lector, deseoso de las novedades literarias, con pasión por lo diferente le sitúa en situación propensa a descubrir novedades. Aparte, para introducirse en la realidad social y artística polaca cuenta con apoyo y orientación de algunos amigos polacos, como Zofia Szleyen, Danuta Rycerz, Marek Keller, y mexicanos, como

Juan Manuel Torres, Sergio Galindo, Elena Poniatowska, artistas plásticos Leticia Tarragó y Fernando Vilchis.

Por segunda vez se establece en Varsovia entre 1972–1975, esta vez como agregado cultural de la Embajada de su país en Varsovia. Tras un movedizo periodo en Xalapa, Belgrado, Barcelona y Bristol, Pitol ingresa en el Servicio Diplomático Mexicano y retorna a la capital polaca. Pronto asciende a consejero cultural de la embajada. Cabe subrayar que es el primer agregado cultural con que cuenta la embajada de México en Polonia. Si la primera etapa resultó fructífera para su creación, ante todo cuentística, la segunda fue menos fecunda en ese aspecto, sin embargo, no dejó de traducir. Desde principio Pitol no se conformó con conocer a los escritores polacos, sino que decidió hacerlos asequibles a los lectores de habla castellana. Varsovia fue el lugar donde se abrió el camino al oficio de traductor con *Las puertas del paraíso* de Andrzejewski (1967) y siguiendo con Gombrowicz y otros. En 1975 es destinado a París, donde trabaja junto a Carlos Fuentes, el titular de la embajada de México. Aquí termina su estancia polaca, pero no el contacto con el país y su literatura. Las experiencias polacas y las obras y autores polacos entran a formar parte no sólo de su canon de lecturas personales, sino de una vasta red de las referencias en sus obras literarias. De las resonancias polacas están impregnadas, más de fondo incluso, sus textos posteriores, ensayísticos, concebidos mucho después de volver a México. En *Memoria* (2011), una reelaboración tardía de *Autobiografía precoz* (1967), escribe:

Vivo desde entonces enamorado de Polonia. Como todo amor verdadero, el mío está erizado de resentimientos, de incomprensiones, de zozobras, de tiernas reconciliaciones. A menudo le soy infiel y me largo a Londres, a París, a Roma, a Viena, a Budapest, a los Berlines. Vengo y vuelvo siempre.⁹

3 Promotor de la literatura mexicana en Polonia de *pre-boom*

Una mirada a la época varsoviana de Pitol desde la perspectiva de la transferencia cultural descubre su disposición a aproximar a los autores recientes de su país natal y su producción más significativa al público lector a las orillas de Vístula. En los años sesenta y principios de los setenta en Polonia se observa un despuntar de las traducciones de la literatura iberoamericana, también la mexicana, al polaco, un llamado *pre-boom*. En parte, según observa Gaszyńska-Magiera ana-

⁹ Sergio Pitol: *Memoria 1933–1966*. México: Ediciones Era 2011, p. 90–91.

lizando este fenómeno, la lectura de los escritores iberoamericanos venía a suplantar la carencia de conocimientos de los habitantes tras el telón de acero sobre esa parte del mundo.¹⁰ Las intervenciones de Pitól aparecen en el momento, cuando prácticamente no existen especialistas ni manuales de literaturas de América Latina, convirtiéndose en una «voz autorizada» para introducir las novedades literarias mexicanas. Así prepara la entrada y el latente éxito que va a tener en Polonia (y en toda Europa) la prosa gestada por escritores iberoamericanos.

Viviendo en Varsovia, Pitól escribía artículos y prólogos a las obras mexicanas, con el fin de hacer más comprensible la literatura de su país al lector polaco. Así, escribe los prefacios a dos novelas mexicanas que acaban de publicarse en Polonia: *Al filo del agua* y *Pedro Páramo*.¹¹ Considera necesario situar al lector polaco en el contexto histórico-político y literario mexicano, ajeno y desacostumbrado para lector extranjero. Empieza por lo tanto presentando el trasfondo mexicano: las tensiones sociales de porfiriato, movimiento revolucionario de Francisco Madero, el adelanto del país por vía de la Revolución y, finalmente, señala como esos cambios se reflejan en la literatura mexicana. Realiza con ese fin un repaso de la narrativa mexicana, desde Fernández de Lizardi hasta José Revueltas y Agustín Yáñez. Sobre este fondo histórico proporciona las claves interpretativas (ideológicas, más que literarias) de la novela.

Previamente, publicó dos artículos dedicados a la literatura mexicana en la revista *Kontynenty*. Uno titulado *Indianin z Anenecuilco* (*El indio de Anenecuilco*) en 1964 y otro, *Powieść meksykańska* (*Novela mexicana*) en 1965. *Indianin z Anenecuilco* expone la figura de Emiliano Zapata, héroe rural de la revolución de 1910 y defensor de los intereses de los campesinos en el levantamiento contra la dictadura porfiriana y los hacendados. Pitól describe el contexto social de la revolución 1910 de modo, que en la versión polaca (traducción de Beata Babad) suena (sorprendentemente) cercana a las ideas comunistas de lucha de clases y opresión de los campesinos y obreros. El artículo *Powieść meksykańska* trae un resumen de la novela mexicana, desde finales del siglo XIX (Fernández de Lizardi, Manuel Payno, Ángel de Campo), pasando por Mariano Azuela y José Vasconcelos, hasta los escritores recientes como Juan Rulfo, Rosario Castellanos, Carlos Fuentes. Al acabarlo, Pitól nombra a los autores más jóvenes: Sergio Galindo, Sergio Fernán-

¹⁰ Véase Małgorzata Gaszyńska-Magiera: *Recepcja przekładów literatury iberoamerykańskiej w Polsce w latach 1945–2005 z perspektywy komunikacji międzykulturowej*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego 2011, p. 285, 291.

¹¹ Agustín Yáñez: *Burza za progiem*, trad. Kalina Wojciechowska. Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax 1965 y Juan Rulfo: *Pedro Páramo*, trad. Kalina Wojciechowska. Warszawa: Książka i wiedza 1966, respectivamente.

dez, José Emilio Pacheco, Elena Garro, Juan Vicente Melo y Juan García Ponce, que siguen reflejando los trances de México actual.

4 Difusor de la literatura polaca en México

Pitol, igual que amplía los conocimientos de los lectores polacos sobre la tradición literaria mexicana, busca facilitar la recepción de las obras polacas entre el público mexicano y, más ampliamente, hispanohablante. El autor de Xalapa no se limita a incluir a Polonia dentro de su mundo literario, ni a traducir a los autores polacos para que puedan ser leídos en México o España. Se siente llamado a «introducir» su obra en el nuevo contexto cultural, presentar al autor y su texto al lector hispanohablante, con el fin de esclarecer su comprensión. Como escritor, traductor, prologuista y editor, Pitól es muy consciente de que la percepción y circulación de las obras traducidas no depende tan sólo de su intrínseco valor literario, y la calidad de la traducción, sino que en ese proceso entran en juego otros factores: editoriales, promocionales y las redes personales. Y no desaprovecha los medios y contactos que tiene a su alcance para abrir las puertas del sistema literario hispanoamericano, sobre todo mexicano, a los textos polacos que considera dignos de interés. Para referir su polivalente actividad, examinaremos como ha participado en procesos de transferencia cultural como traductor, antologista, prologuista, publicista y crítico literario, además de profesor de literaturas eslavas.

4.1 Traductor

Iniciemos el recorrido por la labor de Pitól a favor de la literatura polaca con las traducciones que realizo al español, puesto que es una acción que media no solo entre dos idiomas, sino entre dos culturas. El texto traducido, más allá del lenguaje, supone una reescritura, una reelaboración discursiva y cultural y, por consiguiente, la traslación juega un papel crucial en la comprensión mutua entre dos naciones diferentes.¹² En su papel de traductor del polaco Pitól se distingue por ser

¹² Sobre el rol de traductor como agente de mediación cultural véase: Wotjak, Gerd: La traducción como comunicación interlingüística transcultural mediada. *Hikma: Revista de Traducción* 5 (2006), p. 221–253 o Diana Roig-Sanz/Reine Meylaerts (eds.): *Literary Translation and Cultural Mediators in «Peripheral» Cultures: Customs Officers or Smugglers?* London: Palgrave Macmillan 2018.

uno de los más prolíficos. Trasladó al español a más de cuarenta textos, entre ellos novelas, cuentos y obras dramáticas de una veintena de autores polacos. Aparte de «actualizar» la producción literaria polaca conocida en México, Argentina y España, con las obras actuales, el escritor mexicano tiene el mérito de ser descubridor y el primer (y único hasta la fecha) traductor al castellano de algunas obras de Andrzejewski, Brandys o Iwaszkiewicz. Y, ante todo, sobresale por ser, durante varias décadas, el traductor «oficial» de Gombrowicz. La crítica de las traducciones efectuadas por él del polaco evidencia tanto las imprecisiones y licencias que se concede, como el arte de la palabra y el cuidado del estilo que en ellas demuestra.¹³

Merece la pena señalar algunos datos de la política editorial en México referente a las traducciones de Pitol. En ese sentido hay que referir una iniciativa, quizá sin precedentes en otras partes del mundo, para reunir y poner a disposición de los lectores, no sólo mexicanos, los títulos trasladados al castellano por Pitol de varios idiomas. La Editorial de la Universidad Veracruzana (UV) concibió entre sus proyectos una nueva colección titulada «Sergio Pitol Traductor». Probablemente, sea la primera serie editorial dedicada a un traductor, donde el nombre de éste avala semejante empresa. La colección se inició en 2007. Hasta la fecha cuenta con catorce libros editados, de los veinticinco previstos. Su iniciador y coordinador es Rodolfo Mendoza Rosendo, coautor con Sergio Pitol de la antología *Elogio del cuento polaco* (2012).

Otro ejemplo interesante de como Pitol abre el camino de los autores polacos a las editoriales mexicanas lo es otra iniciativa editorial de la Universidad Veracruzana, la colección *Biblioteca del Universitario* (BU). De la selección de autores, títulos e incluso prologuistas se encarga el antiguo director de la editorial y profesor de dicha universidad, Sergio Pitol, quién dirige la colección. Es una línea editorial orientada a la promoción de la lectura y de los clásicos universales y dirigida especialmente a la comunidad de estudiantes de esa universidad mexicana (los ejemplares se regalan a los alumnos recién incorporados). Se publicó en ella *El bosque de abedules* y *Madre Juana de los Ángeles* de Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (traducción de Mario Muñoz con Barbara Stawicka y Lorenzo Arduengo Pineda respectivamente, con prólogo de Mario Muñoz, Xalapa 2010). Entre las 51 obras que componen la colección, una especie de biblioteca mínima confeccionada por Pitol, no podía faltar una representación de la literatura polaca.

Al ser una casa editorial eminentemente universitaria, orientada en gran parte a las nuevas generaciones de lectores mexicanos, contribuye a dar continui-

13 Véase Bożena Zaboklicka: Gombrowicz po hiszpańsku w przekładach Sergio Pitola. In: Krzysztof Ćwikliński/Anna Spólna/Dominika Świątkowska (eds.): *Gombrowicz z przodu i z tyłu*. Radom: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Technologiczno-Humanistycznego 2015, p. 45–54.

dad al legado literario de Pitol y su proyecto translatórico de difundir otras literaturas, entre ellas la polaca, en el ámbito hispanoamericano. En la misión de propagar las letras polacas la editorial Veracruzana resultó ser un aliado insustituible. La alianza entre el escritor y la editorial universitaria resultó beneficiosa para ambas partes. La editorial de Xalapa se convirtió en un instrumento sin parangón en la difusión de trabajo de Pitol. Y Pitol en un propagador de la literatura polaca en el mundo iberoamericano. Sin duda, las publicaciones de UV contribuyeron a enriquecer la imagen de la literatura polaca en México.

En las traducciones realizadas por Pitol, se podía distinguir dos grupos de factores que intervienen en su recepción por la cultura de destino. El valor intrínseco, es decir, el valor artístico de los propios textos traducidos, y los factores extrínsecos (sociales, ideológicos, políticos, económicos). Es difícil hablar del factor económico, como clave de decisiones editoriales, por tratarse de autores casi desconocidos. En cuanto al posicionamiento de las mismas dentro del sistema literario mexicano, el primero que jugó el factor decisivo sería el sello del traductor, conocido escritor. El segundo, la vinculación con la Universidad Veracruzana y la marca de su editorial como vehículo de promoción de la literatura polaca en México. Ambos propician la acogida, funcionamiento y difusión dentro del sistema cultural mexicano y latinoamericano, dado que México y Buenos Aires (donde se publica el *Diario* argentino de Gombrowicz) son dos principales centros editoriales de Hispanoamérica. Por otro lado, su recepción en México evidencia la apertura cultural de ese país.

4.2 Antologista y prologuista

La siguiente forma de ejercer de agente cultural que practica Pitol consiste en elaborar antologías y prologar las obras trasladadas al castellano. El autor veracruzano elaboró y prologó tres antologías «polacas»: *Antología del cuento polaco contemporáneo* (1967), *Cuatro dramaturgos polacos* (1968) y *Elogio del cuento polaco* (2012). En cuanto al momento de la publicación en el caso de las tres antologías son prólogos «originales», es decir publicados en la primera edición. También en los tres casos el prólogo proporcionado por Pitol cumple una doble función: proviene del autor de la antología, por lo tanto, explica los objetivos y criterios de selección y, al mismo tiempo, del traductor que conoce de primera mano a los autores que presenta. En las tres antologías el autor ofrece un sucinto repaso de la historia de la literatura polaca, proporcionando las claves históricas y culturales necesarias para la comprensión de los textos que integran la selección. En la última antología, publicada medio siglo después, crece considerablemente la lista de los cuentistas polacos y sus obras. Los prologuistas, trazando el panorama de

vida cultural, evocan a los poetas (Miłosz, Różewicz, Szymborska, Herbert, Zagajewski, Rodowska), ensayistas, dramaturgos (Felix Falk, Rafał Maciąg, Jerzy S. Sito, Kantor), pensadores (Zygmunt Bauman, Leszek Kołakowski, Krzysztof Pomian) y periodistas (Kapuściński) sobresalientes en la escena literaria de la Polonia actual. Una mención reciben incluso los que «dejaron su país y su lengua: Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski y Soma Morgenstern».¹⁴

Las tres síntesis de literatura polaca vienen acompañadas de manifiestos acentos personales. El prologuista de *Antología del cuento polaco contemporáneo*, detallando el comienzo de su relación con el nuevo país, dice: «Recordaba con profunda melancolía los diez días transcurridos en Polonia».¹⁵ No oculta su admiración por la historia y la nación polaca, en la que ve «una sociedad capaz de crear instituciones, de hacer cultura, de experimentar». Le impresionan los trances de su pasado y la fuerza de supervivencia. «La primera deducción que uno sacaría es que no es posible que después de semejantes pruebas aún exista esta nación. No resta sino el asombro ante tal capacidad de persistencia y de resurrección».¹⁶ En *Elogio*. . . afirma: «[Polonia es] un país que ha dado sobradas muestras de fortaleza, perseverancia y resistencia y, sobre todo, que nos ha dado una gran muestra de arte, del arte del cuento».¹⁷ Incluso los criterios de selección de los textos integrantes de la antología no dejan de ser personales y subjetivos. El Prólogo a *Elogio del cuento polaco* no abandona el tono de fascinación. Al contrario, aún después del medio siglo mantiene el estilo cálido, apasionado al reflexionar sobre esta tierra. «Polonia es un territorio misterioso y seductor. Hay cierto canto en su aire al que uno no puede resistirse. Quien entra por la puerta grande que es Gombrowicz o Schulz, por ejemplo, está ya ungido para seguir por un camino que nunca abandonará». El título de este tomo ya es elocuente prueba de ello. Como proclaman los autores «esta antología es un acto de pasión y, además, un elogio, una celebración del cuento polaco».¹⁸

Distinto carácter tiene el prólogo a *Las puertas del paraíso* (1967). Este paratexto es ulterior a la traducción realizada: está fechado en Xalapa, en noviembre de 1995. Forma parte de *El arte de la fuga*, como capítulo titulado *Las puertas del paraíso*. A la vez, aparece como prólogo a la novela de Andrzejewski en la edición de la Universidad Veracruzana en 1996, en la colección Ficción Breve y, posteriormente, en la entrega de la novela por la editorial valenciana Pre-Textos en 2004.

14 Sergio Pitó: Prólogo a *Elogio del cuento polaco* 2012, p. 17.

15 Sergio Pitó: Prólogo a *Antología del cuento polaco contemporáneo*. México: Ediciones Era 1967, p. 9.

16 Ibid., p. 12 y 11 respectivamente.

17 Sergio Pitó: *Elogio del cuento polaco*, p. 18.

18 Ibid., p. 9 y 17 respectivamente.

La edición española varía mínimamente respecto a la mexicana (el autor suprime parte de un párrafo y cambia la redacción de una frase). Lo interesante es que este prólogo funciona separado de la traducción a la que acompaña. Dependiendo de la ubicación que recibe, cambia el registro genérico al que pertenece el texto (ensayo crítico/ prólogo), permaneciendo idéntico el corpus textual. Es propio de Pitol no sólo componer textos nuevos de fragmentos publicados anteriormente, sino usar los textos como paratextos, desvinculándolos del *corpus* en el que se encuentran. Esa práctica diluye las fronteras tanto genéricas, como entre el texto y el espacio paratextual.

La reflexión de Pitol sobre Andrzejewski y su novela tiene características de un ensayo crítico. El prologuista introduce el contexto histórico-político en que el polaco concibe su obra, evocando para ese fin su propia experiencia en Polonia de aquella época. Con detenimiento presenta la figura del escritor polaco, polémico entonces, que despertaba «infinitas, interminables, y violentas discusiones sobre su personalidad, sus opiniones, su vida».¹⁹ Comenta a continuación sus otras obras. Trae, por fin, el recuerdo de sus conversaciones personales con el literato polaco, donde este expresa sus gustos literarios, prioridades estéticas, opiniones sobre sus compatriotas. A diferencia de los prólogos a las antologías, este texto tiene naturaleza más analítica e interpretativa. Pitol examina los procedimientos narrativos, la técnica de monólogo y puntos de vista, sus implicaciones para la lectura, la estructura del relato, la «tensión lingüística», el debate moral. No oculta su estima por «la maestría literaria de Andrzejewski», así como por su personal audacia al abandonar las filas del partido y manifestar su disconformidad con el comunismo.

Los prólogos a todas estas obras revelan la preocupación del autor por iluminar el contexto de la literatura polaca en el que surgen las obras presentadas, facilitar su comprensión y recepción por el lector hispanoamericano, asegurar su éxito en el contexto de llegada. El efecto que persigue es guiar la lectura y su recepción en México (y España). Aparte de la natural función informativa del texto de esta índole, el autor no desaprovecha su función argumentativa. Se encarga no sólo de aproximar al lector hispanohablante a la cultura que originó la obra. Con sus apreciaciones pronunciadas desde la posición de quién conoce el país y, en algunos casos, al autor de la obra, propone su propio punto de vista, orienta la interpretación y valoraciones de las obras traducidas. En su manera de prologar destaca el carácter *personal* del discurso: aportación de recuerdos, anécdotas personales, datos biográficos. Consciente, sin duda, del poder de prólogo para guiar

¹⁹ Jerzy Andrzejewski: *Las puertas del paraíso*. Prólogo de Sergio Pitol. Valencia: Pre-Textos 2004, p. 13.

la recepción, busca contagiar su admiración por la literatura polaca y los autores traducidos, a veces de modo emotivo, recurriendo a recuerdos, sentimientos y emotivos diagnósticos personales. Con todo, sigue una estrategia promocional de la literatura polaca.

Es significativo que, aunque todos los prólogos están a cargo de Pitol – traductor, son escasas las referencias a la versión original, al proceso de traducción o la metodología seguida. Es llamativo que el prologuista – traductor prácticamente no preste atención a los escollos lingüísticos y problemas específicos encontrados a la hora de verter la novela al español. Pitol no ejerce en sus textos la teoría de la traducción, a diferencia de Paz o Borges, por ejemplo. Revela más su faceta de lector que expone su proceso de lectura, la del historiador de literatura o de crítico literario que remite a otros estudios, que la del traductor que comparte su taller, expone las dificultades y las soluciones que adoptó.

4.3 Publicista y crítico literario

Otra herramienta relevante de mediación transcultural son las revistas culturales.²⁰ Con el fin de divulgar las publicaciones polacas en México, traducidas, prologadas o editadas por Pitol, él mismo emprende una acción de insembrar la prensa cultural de textos popularizadores, reseñas y comentarios críticos de dichas obras. Pitol es el primero que proporciona breves notas introductorias al publicar fragmentos de sus primeras traducciones en *La Palabra y el Hombre*. Las llama «colaboraciones desde y sobre Polonia», como las dedicadas a la figura de Kazimierz Brandys y su novela *Cartas a la señora Z*, a Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz y su *Cálamo aromático*, a *Semejante a un bosque* y *Las tinieblas cubren la tierra* de Andrzejewski y a *Diario argentino* y *La rata* de Gombrowicz.²¹ En la misma revista dedica otro texto a analizar el imaginario de Bruno Schulz y para contextualizar su obra menciona a otros dos «asombrosos polacos de los años treinta, Witold Gombrowicz y Stanislaw Witkiewicz». La creación de esas «tres figuras insólitas», según afirma «anticipándose en un cuarto de siglo a la literatura del absurdo francesa, inglesa y norteamericana, nos ofrece un pregusto del trágico sinsentido en que el hombre real iba a verse sumergido

²⁰ Acerca del papel mediador de las revistas literarias y culturales en algunos países latinoamericanos reflexiona Mabel Moraña: *Revistas culturales y mediación letrada en América Latina. Otra travessía* 40, 1 (2003), p. 67–74.

²¹ Textos referentes a Brandys en *La Palabra y el Hombre* 29 (1964), p. 95–99 y 38 (1966), p. 143–147; a Iwaszkiewicz en 31 (1964) p. 469–488; a Andrzejewski en 40 (1966), p. 577–596 y 42 (1967), p. 339–390; a Gombrowicz en 43 (1967), p. 549–562 y 10 (1974), p. 30–37.

pocos años más tarde».²² De forma paralela, convierte al diario *El Día*, la revista *Siempre!*, *Revista de Bellas Artes*, *Excelsior*, *El heraldo de México* y sus suplemento culturales *La Cultura en México*, *El Gallo Ilustrado*, *Diorama*, *El Heraldo Cultural* en la tribuna para dar presencia y voz a los literatos polacos.²³

Las ediciones de Jerzy Andrzejewski, Witold Gombrowicz, Kazimierz Brandys, etc. en la versión española es una ocasión para la aparición en la prensa cultural mexicana de los artículos dedicados a la literatura polaca y los autores traducidos en concreto. Son voces de los comentaristas mexicanos que familiarizan con la escritura polaca, y su contexto europeo. Destacan aquí los artículos de Mario Muñoz desde la década de los setenta: reseñas de *Cartas a la Señora Z.* y de *Cosmos*, traducidos por Pitól, así como trabajos que proporcionan las claves de la obra de Gombrowicz (*Introducción a Witold Gombrowicz*) y de la vida literaria actual en Polonia (*Notas sobre la narrativa polaca contemporánea*).²⁴ Mario Muñoz aporta su conocimiento directo del contexto cultural polaco, provechoso para hablar de la vida literaria del país. Practica la crítica literaria, no la crítica de la traducción propiamente dicha, aunque él mismo tiene en su haber algunas traducciones del polaco al español, de Iwaszkiewicz, Edward Stachura y los reportajes de Kapuściński (*Las botas*, con Gustaw Koliński). Otro autor, también relacionado con la Universidad Veracruzana, que reseña *Las puertas del paraíso* en *La Palabra y el Hombre* es Marco Tulio Aguilera.²⁵

No sin importancia para la inserción de los textos polacos en el contexto socio-cultural mexicano lo es la implicación de las instituciones literarias y culturales. La especial vinculación de Pitól a la Universidad Veracruzana (UV) y la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), sobre todo como profesor de literatura, facilita que estas dos casas de estudios editen sus trabajos. Además, se distinguen por el número de investigadores y publicaciones sobre la obra pitoliana. Otro ejemplo de apoyo de organismos estatales a la labor de Pitól traductor es edición conjunta de CONACULTA y Ministerio de Cultura de la República de Polonia de la última antología del cuento polaco. En todos los casos ha sido la cultura receptora, a través

22 Sergio Pitól: El universo de Bruno Schulz. En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 101 (1997), p. 165.

23 Véase Sergio Pitól: Polonia: el momento cultural. En: *El Gallo Ilustrado*, suplemento dominical del diario *El Día*, México, 31 de marzo 1963, p.1; La literatura polaca contemporánea, en: *El Gallo Ilustrado*, 23 de julio 1967, p.1; Breve panorama de la literatura polaca contemporánea, en: *La Cultura en México, Siempre!* México, 20 de diciembre 1967, p. ii.

24 Véase los artículos de Mario Muñoz: Kazimierz Brandys. «Cartas a la señora Z». En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 40 (1966), p. 748–750; Introducción a Witold Gombrowicz. En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 1 (1972), p. 49–53; Notas sobre la narrativa polaca contemporánea. En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 20 (1976), p. 3–11; Regreso de un largo camino. En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 38–39 (1981), p. 26–28; *Cosmos*. En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 11 (2010), p. 77–78.

25 Marco Tulio Aguilera: «Las puertas del paraíso» de Jerzy Andrzejewski. En: *La Palabra y el Hombre* 99 (1996), p. 214–216.

de su agente de intercambio en la persona de Pitól, la que estimuló el transfer de los bienes culturales. El impacto de la narrativa y el teatro polaco en la cultura meta no puede ser el mismo que el de las traducciones de lenguas de más difusión que el polaco, con más posibilidades de acercarse al centro de la cultura receptora y de influir en la formación de su canon, pero sí, es innegable, y responde a sus expectativas y necesidades.

5 A modo de conclusión

A lo largo de este estudio hemos intentado delinear las acciones emprendidas por Sergio Pitól a favor de mutuo conocimiento y aproximación entre el universo literario polaco y mexicano. Un acercamiento que – no lo podemos perder de vista – redundó de forma inaudita en su propia creación literaria y configuró su estilo narrativo. El recorrido realizado pone de manifiesto la pluralidad de roles que asume como mediador intercultural. La variedad de formas y actividades que acomete exhibe la complejidad del papel de agente transcultural, cuyo trabajo implica la traducción en el sentido literal y figurado, es decir la mediación, adaptación, interpretación, contextualización y promoción de los textos y las formas culturales. Con el ejercicio de estas tareas el escritor hace de puente entre las tradiciones literarias de ambos países. Consciente de la distancia cultural, se apresura en ofrecer unas explicaciones preliminares, proporcionar un marco histórico y las claves de lectura.

En todo ello tiene un papel decisivo el contexto político-histórico-cultural en el que se realiza el transfer. En el caso de Pitól la afinidad con el sistema socialista de la Polonia Popular es un elemento favorable, pero no decisivo. La sintonía percibida por el escritor entre las dos naciones, tan distantes geográfica, lingüística y culturalmente, es propiciada también por razones históricas. Danuta Rycerz señala que sus fundamentos deben buscarse «en la sensibilidad de los dos pueblos, en los valores resultantes de su tormentosa historia, así como en las aspiraciones para mantener su propia identidad nacional».²⁶ México, antiguo imperio azteca venido a menos, pero con el vivo recuerdo de su grandioso pasado, y Polonia, antaño el estado de los nobles más grande de Europa, debilitado por otras tropas y notablemente disminuido en el trascurso de su historia. Los dos estados buscando equilibrio con un poderoso y amenazador vecino. Y en tercer lugar, decisivo sin duda para la identificación de Pitól con el país eslavo, es el factor personal, las intensas vivencias personales y artísticas.

²⁶ Danuta Rycerz: *Relaciones entre Polonia y México. Pasado y presente*. Varsovia: Ediciones CESLA 2012, p. 150.

Aún en el contexto del sistema totalitario, admite la defensa de la libertad, la independencia de «la tribu» o del «rebaño», como lo suele llamar, de las grandes metrópolis que marginan a las naciones llamadas «periféricas». Es muy crítico con la asfixia de las tendencias reinantes, con el nacionalismo estrecho y el desprecio de lo *otro*. En la Polonia de *deshielo* comunista y sus artes encontró ese espíritu de insumisión y libertad. Esos mismos valores los defiende en los autores «excéntricos» y los integra en su propia poética. Por consiguiente, su afinidad con la patria de Gombrowicz, no es accidental sino ponderada y escogida. Considerando la vinculación que existe entre el escritor veracruzano y Polonia, puede concluirse que Polonia adquiere para Pitól un sello personal, que pasa a reflejarse no solo en su obra literaria y su labor como traductor, sino también en su amplia actividad de difundir y promover, en su país y en otros de habla hispana, a los autores que descubrió en Polonia.

Toda su considerable obra traductológica le convierte a Pitól en un destacado promotor de la literatura polaca en México, Argentina y España. José Emilio Pacheco en su artículo *Sergio Pitól y el arte de la traducción* llega a comparar el legado de Pitól traductor a lo que hizo en México Rubén Bonifaz Nuño (1923–2013) con los clásicos grecolatinos. El gran latinista mexicano, entre otros logros, trajo al castellano la obra de los grandes clásicos antiguos y editó la colección *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Mexicana*. Salvando las distancias, puede afirmarse que Pitól hizo algo parecido con la literatura polaca. Su trabajo de traductor está orientado a dar a conocer al público de península ibérica y México las desconocidas voces de las letras polacas. No sólo portó a algunos de los literatos del momento al suelo mexicano, sino transmitió a sus compatriotas su pasión y admiración por los valores artísticos de estas obras.

Para concluir, al legado literario del autor jalapeño es imprescindible añadir la actividad que desempeñó como editor (Ed. Universidad Veracruzana), antologista, autor de ensayos y artículos dedicados a la literatura polaca en la prensa mexicana. Probablemente, sin sospecharlo en aquel momento, se convirtió en la figura clave de un notable acercamiento cultural polaco-mexicano en los últimos cincuenta años. Con su trabajo, extenso y polivalente, pero también con su actitud personal manifestada en las relaciones interpersonales, Sergio Pitól es un ejemplo del papel que puede desempeñar un escritor, un traductor en construir los puentes entre las naciones. Sin duda contribuyó a crear un diálogo literario transatlántico que enriqueció la cultura de ambos países.

Por su labor Sergio Pitól ha sido condecorado por el gobierno de Polonia en dos ocasiones. En 1987 recibió el Diploma de Honor otorgado por la sección polaca de la Asociación Europea de Cultura SEC (Polski Ośrodek Stowarzyszenia Kultury Europejskiej) en reconocimiento de la popularización de la cultura polaca en el extranjero. En noviembre de 1998 le ha sido conferida por el Gobierno de Polonia

la Orden de Mérito de la República de Polonia, en grado de Cruz de Oficial (Krzyż Oficerski Orderu Zasługi Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej), por promocionar la colaboración cultural polaco- mexicana. Ha sido condecorado por el presidente Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Desde el año 2006 la biblioteca de la embajada de México en Varsovia lleva su nombre, como homenaje a un agente transatlántico que conectó a los escritores y lectores de México con Polonia.

VI Migration and Entangled Memories

Anna Ratke-Majewska

Poles from the Peruvian Montaña: Recollections of Polish Emigration to Peru in the Early 20th Century

1 Introduction

The subject of organizing Polish settlement in Peru in the early 1930s, although not extensively discussed, has found its place in the literature of social sciences and humanities. The few available studies, written in the subsequent decades of the 20th and 21st centuries in Poland and abroad, have primarily focused on the chronology of the colonization efforts, the causes, progression, and consequences of this Polish emigration project, as well as the public perception and opinions regarding the conditions in Peru.¹ Therefore, this text is not intended to replicate existing positions. Instead, the presented article aims to explore the various ways in which the Polish exile has been remembered in the social space, particularly in Poland, since the 1930s. The text aims to verify the hypothesis that two main directions of narratives of memory² can be distinguished in relation to the topic of

1 See among others: Michał Jarnecki: Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy. Wokół polskich międzywojennych koncepcji emigracyjnych i kolonialnych. In: *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 44 (2014), p. 102–132, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11649/sn.2014.008>; Marta Kania: Positivists, Naturalists, Travelers, But Not Settlers: Poles in Perú in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries. In: *Polish American Studies* 69, 1 (2012), p. 27–53; Marta Kania: Życ można w Montanji całe lata — o kolonizacji polskiej w Peru. In: Marcin Gabryś (ed.): *Pani Anna w Kanadzie: księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Pani Profesor Annie Reczyńskiej*. Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka 2016, p. 17–37; Jacek Knopek/Anna Ratke-Majewska: *PERU XIX i XX wieku w opisach polskich podróżników, emigrantów i urzędników*. Bydgoszcz: Przedsiębiorstwo Marketingowe “Logo” 2013; Łukasz Krokoszynski: Las promesas alentadoras: La colonización polaca en la amazonía peruana (1925–1935). In: *Amazonía Peruana* 16, 32 (2019), p. 197–235; Mikołaj Paczkowski: “Stworzyć tu naprawdę śliczną a bogatą kolonię polską.” Polskie międzywojenne opisywanie Peru. In: *Białostockie Studia Literaturoznawcze* 19 (2021), p. 107–120, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15290/bsl.2021.19.05>; Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski z państwami andyjskimi: 1918–2018*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo FNCE 2018, p. 203–213.

2 Narratives of memory understood as stories about past events, which are simultaneously an expression of the memory of their authors and a tool for constructing the memory content of their recipients. It is worth adding that narratives of memory should be understood as the result of an interpretation of a past event known to their creator, either through acquired experience or through his or her exposure to accounts and descriptions present in the culture. Therefore, these narratives reflect all the characteristics that memory possesses, including its transience,

colonization efforts in Peru, primarily differing in their portrayal of the Polish settlers. The first direction, while recounting the story of colonization in Peru, depicts the Polish exiles as involuntary victims and martyrs caught up in circumstances beyond their control. On the other hand, the second direction, in its portrayal of the emigration campaign, presents Polish settlers as individuals who were aware of their fate and migrated to Peru predominantly driven by selfish motives, such as greed or the desire to escape. In this latter case, the misery of the exiles is explained mainly as a consequence of indolence and laziness.

It is worth noting that the research presented in this article is primarily based on an analysis of archival materials housed at the Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw, Poland. Specifically, the study focused on selected folders labeled *Files of Janina and Kazimierz Warchałowski (Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich)*, which contained official documents, contracts, letters, reports, press clippings, and brochures. Additionally, these archival materials were supplemented by other texts present in the public space of the 1930s, including newspaper articles, travel literature, and popular science papers. The selection of these sources and the research methodology employed, which included content analysis and analysis of narrative structures, facilitated the exploration of the motives, attitudes, and values held by the creators of narratives of memory. Furthermore, it allowed for the identification of the meanings conveyed by these narratives and the tasks they fulfilled.

2 How did the Polish Emigration to Peru in the 1930s Proceed? Outline of the Issue

One of the challenges faced by the newly established Polish state after World War I was the need to counteract the economic underdevelopment resulting from the prolonged partitions and the damage suffered by various sectors during the war.

fallibility, bias and selectivity. At the same time, they are the outcome of the narrative nature of memory, which allows memory content to be recalled in the form of narratives and thus to be altered and complemented by them as well. It is worth adding that narratives of memory are transmitted both through words and through things, objects and places. The architecture of places of memory is thus a structure in which a narrative is designed to reflect the memory and at the same time to shape it by communicating with and affecting the viewer. The elements of architecture thus give access to the stories about the past that function in a given community, and as a result are able to strengthen its identity. See Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Konflikt pamięci: Polska po przemianach systemowych 1989 roku*. Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego 2022, p. 68–70.

The need for reform and restoration, together with agrarian overpopulation and growing numbers of unemployed people, whose situation was aggravated by global echoes of the Great Economic Crisis, led to massive social discontent and aroused strike movements. There was a growing threat of an increase in radical groups' activity. Economic emigration, in turn, could satisfy the subsistence needs of at least part of Poland's population, leading to a reduction in the number of unemployed workers and landless and smallholder peasants, and resulting in a calming of social tensions. It was for this reason that the government circles of the Republic of Poland tried to support emigration initiatives, including those aimed at overseas areas.³

In the mid-1920s, the Peruvian government developed an interest in the potential colonization of extensive areas in the Montaña region, with the intention of settling European emigrants. Initially, despite ongoing negotiations, this proposal did not receive a positive response from the Polish authorities. In the autumn of 1926, Polish institutions such as the Emigration Office and the State Emigration Council voiced their opposition to the settlement of Poles in the Peruvian Montaña. They highlighted the challenging conditions in the proposed areas for Polish colonization, including the harsh climate, lack of infrastructure, and absence of human settlements. Despite these unfavorable opinions, private individuals persisted in their efforts to obtain colonization concessions. As a result of their endeavors, two permits for settlement were eventually granted by the Peruvian government. The first concession in 1927 was obtained by Kazimierz Warchałowski, former head of the overseas department of the Emigration Office in Warsaw, while the second concession was secured in 1928 by the Polish-American Colonization Syndicate, a joint stock company formed in 1926 by a group of financiers and affluent landowners.⁴

Kazimierz Warchałowski's successful acquisition of a colonization permit from the Peruvian government marked only the initial phase of the settlement campaign. Another crucial requirement was the collection of a sufficient amount of money. To secure the necessary funds, Warchałowski engaged in several months of negotiations with the National Economy Bank of the Republic of Poland. The Bank's representatives, intrigued by the opportunity to establish their own cotton and rubber plantations, participated in a research expedition to evaluate the concession areas in Montaña in 1928. The expedition, which also in-

3 Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski*, p. 199–200.

4 Marta Kania: *Życie można w Montanji*, p. 19–20; Edward Kołodziej: *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939: studia nad polityką emigracyjną II Rzeczypospolitej*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Książka i Wiedza" 1982, p. 126; Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki: *Opis polskich terenów kolonizacyjnych w Peru*. Warszawa: Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny 1930, p. 7–8; Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski*, p. 203–204.

cluded delegates from the Emigration Office, was financially supported by the Polish–American Colonization Syndicate. It is worth noting that the Syndicate obtained a settlement concession from the Peruvian authorities on April 23, 1928, after the expedition had already commenced. During the expedition, the designated areas for colonization were surveyed, and their suitability for agricultural settlement was positively evaluated. However, both the Polish government and the National Economy Bank eventually decided against subsidizing the emigration endeavor. As a result, colonization could only be achieved through private capital investment. In this challenging situation, and unable to raise money from other sources, Warchałowski made the decision to delegate some of his authority to other private individuals who were willing to invest their funds in the colonization of the Montaña lands. Consequently, on April 20, 1929, the Settlement Cooperative ‘Polish Colony’ was established. In an agreement dated June 27, 1929, Warchałowski transferred the right to settle 220,000 hectares out of the 350,000 hectares of land granted to him in concession by the Peruvian government to the Cooperative.⁵

It is worth noting that the positive opinion of the 1928 research expedition, although it did not secure funding from the National Economy Bank, was crucial for obtaining permits to recruit settlers. By a decree of the Polish government dated August 8, 1929, the Settlement Cooperative ‘Polish Colony’ was granted permission to recruit 200 families. Similarly, on April 24, 1930, the Polish–American Colonization Syndicate was permitted to recruit 250 families. However, in both cases, these objectives were not achieved. The Cooperative managed to send several groups, averaging about a dozen people each, to Peru between 1930 and 1931. On the other hand, the Syndicate sent an even smaller number of individuals, primarily those involved in administrative work in the concession lands, along with a group of laborers dedicated to working in the designated areas.⁶

Several factors contributed to the failure of both colonization campaigns. Major financial and organizational problems, the unstable situation in the Peruvian state, and the Great Global Economic Crisis played a significant role in the ultimate failure of the Cooperative ‘Polish Colony’ and the Syndicate. However, of key importance was the fact that both institutions failed to fulfill their commitments, including cases of fraud by collaborators and subcontractors, as well as wishful thinking.

5 Koncesja udzielona przez Wysoki Rząd Peru Panu Kazimierzowi Warchałowskiemu. In: Archiwum Akt Nowych: *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 98, p. 17–19; Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki: *Opis polskich terenów*, s. 9, 21–24; Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski*, p. 206–207.

6 Edward Kołodziej: *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe*, p. 127–129; Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski*, p. 210–211.

The land designated for settlement was poorly prepared, with plots not properly marked out, the forest uncleared, and buildings unprepared. When the first settlers arrived in Montaña in mid-1930 on behalf of the Cooperative, they found the area in such a state. Moreover, the living conditions were much harsher than those described in propaganda brochures, and the situation was further complicated by the improper professional selection of settlers. Due to the rush in organizing the campaign, the Cooperative failed to prioritize sending primarily farmers to the concession territories designated for cultivation. Instead, a large group of representatives from the intelligentsia and factory workers were sent. However, it is worth noting that the low participation of the peasant population in the venture did not indicate a lack of interest in colonizing Peru among this occupational group. The problem usually arose from the several-hundred-dollar sums demanded by the Cooperative and the Syndicate for shipping and preparing the land for a single settler family.

The concessions held by both the Polish-American Colonization Syndicate and the Settlement Cooperative 'Polish Colony' expired in 1933. At that time, the group of Polish settlers located in the Montaña territories was largely left to fend for themselves, although a small subsidy provided by the Polish government was sufficient for some of the emigrants to reach Brazil.⁷ It is important to note that the experiences of the settlers in the Peruvian Montaña garnered significant media attention from the early 1930s. Their stories also found their place in 20th century Polish travel literature, thus contributing to the spread of narratives about the emigrants in Peru within Polish society. These circulated narratives of memory present two contrasting perspectives on the Polish settlers. One narrative portrays them as passive individuals who obediently followed orders and were unable to cope with their difficult circumstances. They are depicted as martyrs caught up in events beyond their control. The other narrative describes the emigrants in Peru as cunning, calculating, and lazy individuals. In both cases, the Polish colonists are portrayed as being responsible for their own fate, whether due to their perceived stupidity, helplessness, compliance, laziness, or greed. However, the issue of overly optimistic propaganda and deception, as well as the crimes they endured, often remains overlooked. It is important to examine this problem by considering two different perspectives within the narratives of memory.

7 Jerzy Mazurek: *Kraj a emigracja: ruch ludowy wobec wychodźstwa chłopskiego do krajów Ameryki Łacińskiej (do 1939 roku)*. Warszawa: Muzeum Historii Polskiego Ruchu Ludowego 2006, p. 112–114; Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski*, p. 213.

3 The Direction of Narratives of Memory: Polish Settlers in Peru Were Helpless Victims and Martyrs

This particular narrative direction gained significant traction in the press, persisting even after the Polish–American Colonization Syndicate and the Settlement Co-operative ‘Polish Colony’ concessions had expired. Its prevalence was primarily driven by the continuous influx of accounts from Polish settlers in Peru. As a result, this narrative trend had already emerged in the social sphere at the beginning of the 1930s and later found representation in travel literature as well. During its initial phase, the narrative garnered support through direct reports from settlers, often published in the form of letters to editors. These accounts emphasized the martyrdom of Poles abroad, shedding light on their immense suffering and unwavering sacrifice in the pursuit of truth. This portrayal served to expose the hardships endured by Polish emigrants and garnered sympathy for their plight.

This was the tone of an article published in the daily *Kurjer Czerwony* on November 18, 1930. It quoted a letter written to the newspaper’s editorial board and explicitly stated, “the fact remains in its tragic nakedness that our emigrants to Peru are exposed to such unimaginable ordeals,”⁸ and emphasized that they have been “left to their own fate without the help of the institutions primarily established to provide it.”⁹ The published letter exposed that the Polish–American Colonization Syndicate had hired 8 laborers to work in the Sepa colony. However, during the journey to the workplace, a representative of the Syndicate verbally informed them to abandon their contracts. As the hired workers did not have any official confirmation that their contracts had indeed been terminated, they were unable to notify the Polish Emigration Office. Despite this uncertainty, they proceeded to reach the colony. Upon arrival, they were informed that their contracts would not be acknowledged and were essentially left to fend for themselves.¹⁰ Regarding the events that transpired next, the authors of the letter wrote the following:

⁸ Martyrologia naszych emigrantów do Peru: by nie umrzeć z głodu kraść muszą żywność. *Kurjer Czerwony* 267 (18.11.1930). In: Archiwum Akt Nowych: *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 128, p. 5.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Surviving freehand in the wilderness, without food and amidst danger! We requested assistance to facilitate our journey to Lima, but it was refused. We traveled 1,200 kilometers by water and through the wilderness, crossing snowy uplands, without knowledge of the language and without a penny. On a raft made of four logs, we sailed in search of a last hope from the Polish Consul in Lima. For sustenance, we relied on what we managed to steal from the indigenous people, and our hope rested on the Consulate, with a bullet as our last resort. Unfortunately, one of the men traveling on our raft took his own life, and four of us sustained such severe wounds during the crossing that without help from the Emigration Office doctor in Cumaria, we would have died. [. . .] Due to the antagonism that has developed against foreigners in revolutionary Peru, earning a living or finding work is out of the question. [. . .] Unless public opinion stands up for us, we are doomed, and dozens more victims of the Polish-American Syndicate will follow behind us.¹¹

A few days later, the issue of the fate of settlers in Peru was brought up in an article by the daily *Piast Wielkopolski*. The article implied that Polish emigration, despite the unfavorable climatic conditions in Peru, was being encouraged as a means to counterbalance radical land reform. Furthermore, the text highlighted the remote location of the designated land for colonization (several thousand kilometers from the coast) and the absence of roads and railways connecting to these territories.¹² The article commented:

In such circumstances, even if the unfortunate Polish colonist survives the deadly climate, if he is not infected by subtropical diseases, if he survives in the face of a plague of dangerous animals — how will he encash the product of his hard work? [. . .] The government has given the Polish-American Syndicate and the Cooperative 'Polish Colony' permission to recruit colonists to Peru. This recruitment is taking place. Encouraging brochures about Peru are being circulated. This must be stopped!¹³

It is important to note that the mentioned article was not the sole response to the publication of the letter, which appeared in *Kurjer Czerwony* on November 18, 1930. The editorial board of *Kurjer* received other letters as well, including those expressing hope for intervention or offering help. This correspondence was published on November 28, 1930, in an article titled: 'The misery of the unfortunate victims dying of hunger in faraway Peru. Who will take care of them and how to help them?'.¹⁴ On December 22, 1930, another article was published in *Kurjer Czerwony* titled: 'The Emigration Office has taken care of the misery of our emigrants in Peru.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Jeszcze o kolonizacji Peru. *Piast Wielkopolski* 276 (27.11.1930). In: Archiwum Akt Nowych: *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 128, p. 7.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Niedola nieszczęsnych ofiar mrących głodem w dalekim Peru. Kto się nimi zajmie i jak im pomóc?. *Kurjer Czerwony* 276 (28.11.1930). In: Archiwum Akt Nowych: *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 128, p. 8.

The unfortunate victims will be repatriated.¹⁵ Information regarding repatriation also appeared in the Varsovian daily, *Express Poranny*, on December 30, 1930, in an article titled: 'Bitter bread in exile under the mother sky of the Peruvian Montaña.'¹⁶ A day later, news of the planned repatriation was reported in the daily *Kurjer Poranny*, also printed in Warsaw, in a text entitled: 'Misery of Polish emigrants in Peru.'¹⁷ Thus, the narrative of the suffering and desperate situation of the unfortunate, starving, and seeking help victims was consistently maintained in numerous press articles.

The situation did not change in subsequent years, including within the context of the Polish Diaspora press. An article titled 'The sad end of emigration to Peru' was published in the Brazilian magazine *Jornal polonez "LUD"* in Curitiba on May 7, 1935. In fact, the article indicated:

The Warsaw prosecutorial authorities are investigating a sensational case involving the organization of emigration from Poland to Peru. [. . .] The Colonization Syndicate promised the emigrants a prosperous future and painted a rosy picture of their new lives. Labor contracts were drafted, guaranteeing the emigrants salaries for their work, as well as their own land, tools, settlement funds, and more. However, upon arrival, the emigrants were faced with a tragic reality. A representative of the Colonization Syndicate awaited them on-site. . . He transported them deep into the country, where they were expected to settle permanently. Unfortunately, they soon discovered that the area was an untouched jungle, hundreds of kilometers away from any city or significant human settlement. Moreover, they were informed that they were required to sign new contracts [. . .] which did not include regular salaries for their work [. . .]. The unfortunate emigrants refused to accept these changed conditions and bravely embarked on their journey back [. . .]. Their trek led them through virgin jungles, teeming with dangerous wild animals, and across the towering Cordillera. Two indigenous guides accompanied the exhausted emigrants, and after several weeks of adventurous travel, they finally reached Lima, the capital of Peru, where they received assistance and care.¹⁸

Did travel literature also support the narrative of Polish emigrants as desperate individuals seeking help? It should be noted that the theme of pity for Poles suffering in Peru and being helpless victims was not extensively explored in travel writing. However, it did make occasional appearances. In 1935, Arkady Fiedler's book, *Ryby śpiewają w Ukajali*¹⁹ (English: *Fish sing in the Ucayali*), was published.

15 Urząd Emigracyjny zajął się niedolą naszych emigrantów w Peru. Nieszczęsne ofiary będą repatriowane. *Kurjer Czerwony* 295 (22.12.1930). In: Archiwum Akt Nowych: *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 128, p. 11.

16 Gorzki chleb na obczyźnie pod macoszem niebem Montanji Peruwjańskiej. *Express Poranny* 360 (30.12.1930). In: Archiwum Akt Nowych: *Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 128, p. 12.

17 Niedola polskich emigrantów w Peru. *Kurjer Poranny* 361 (31.12.1930), p. 7.

18 Smutny koniec emigracji do Peru. *Jornal polonez "LUD"* 33 (7.05.1935), p. 6.

19 Arkady Fiedler: *Ryby śpiewają w Ukajali*. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Rój" 1935.

This work is still considered the most popular Polish book describing an expedition to Peru. Interestingly, despite Fiedler's account of traversing the Ucayali basin, which was the exact region where the establishment of a Polish colony was planned, he only briefly mentioned the Polish settlement attempt in his narrative.²⁰ His concise remark stated that it was in this area "where the unfortunate Polish colonists were supposed to build their future."²¹ The brevity of this statement may have been influenced by both the failure of the Polish emigration project to Peru (which had already become a reality by the time the book was published) and the author's self-portrayal as a traveller-explorer venturing into previously unknown territories.²²

The colony in Cumaria, which was a part of the concession of the Cooperative 'Polish Colony', was also mentioned in another publication. This reference can be found in Adam Dudek's book titled *Poszukiwacze*²³ (English: *Explorers*), which recounts his memories of expeditions and geological explorations in the 1960s and 1970s. In the section dedicated to Peru, the author includes quotes from individuals he encountered during his expedition. Alongside the harrowing descriptions of the emigration conditions, there is a poignant statement that resonates with the narratives of suffering and vulnerability experienced by Polish emigrants:

All I knew about the Ucayali was that fish sing there, I think. In the meantime. . .

— It's not the fish that sing in the Ucayali — my interlocutors are touched to the core — it's the accusing souls of the Poles who died there, but not everyone is given to understand their voice. [. . .] And it is sad to remember — my new friend continues — how in the 1930s people were sent to the promised land, to a country that became a hell for them. [. . .] we were robbed not only of our possessions, but also of our good name. To this day, it is still said that we are thieves, slobes, drunkards. [. . .] We were mocked at every turn, and it has remained so to this day.²⁴

The indicated fragment suggests that the reputational damages caused by Polish emigration to Peru, as shaped by the institutions organizing colonization, persisted throughout the subsequent decades of the 20th century, particularly impacting those Polish individuals who remained in the Peruvian state.

20 Mikołaj Paczkowski: *Stworzyć tu naprawdę śliczną*, p. 116–117.

21 Arkady Fiedler: *Ryby śpiewają*, p. 138.

22 Mikołaj Paczkowski: *Stworzyć tu naprawdę śliczną*, p. 117–118.

23 Antoni Dudek: *Poszukiwacze*. Katowice: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza 1987.

24 As cited in: Jacek Knopek/Anna Ratke-Majewska: *PERU XIX i XX wieku*, p. 186, 188.

4 The Direction of Narratives of Memory: Polish Settlers in Peru are Cunning, Greedy, Calculating, Shiftless and Lazy People

This narrative direction, although also common in press and travel writing, was especially characteristic of circles supporting Polish settlement aspirations. In criticism of emigration, this direction often saw a search for unhealthy sensationalism rather than genuine concern for the fate of citizens. In turn, in descriptions of the settlers' negative experiences, it typically placed blame on the emigrant, who, driven by the low motive of quick profit, decided to leave Poland without being oriented towards hard work and sacrifice.

This position is supported by an article titled "The Truth about Peru", published in the October 18, 1931 issue of *Gazeta Świąteczna* magazine. In the article, the editors shared excerpts from a report by Father Franciszek Sokół, who embarked on a journey to Peru in 1930 alongside a group of Polish emigrants. The introduction of the article stated:

While a group of troublemakers, looking for easy profit and unwilling and unable to work honestly, 'after many unpleasant deeds' (such as shooting at indigenous people, plundering their fields, stealing their boats, etc.) left the shores of Ucayali in disgrace, Father Sokół and a group of other, mostly genuine farmers, immediately set to work, surveying the surrounding land, cutting down the forest, and cultivating all kinds of local plants. As people who came from those areas testified, Father Sokół proved to be a man of indomitable will and truly iron perseverance, at the same time a truly passionate farmer.²⁵

It is worth noting that Father Sokół was described in the text as a "truly passionate farmer," and the group of people who stayed with him — as "mostly genuine farmers." It implies that the mentioned 'willing and able to work honestly' settlers may have been (like Sokół) farmers only 'by passion', as their occupational status was not clearly defined. It should also be noted that in the report presented in the article, Father Sokół did not hide his criticism of the settlement organizers at all. However, this criticism focused on the lack of conducting adequate field research prior to settlement, in particular, the inadequate level of land investigation. On the subject of the organization of the settlement itself, he did not mention.²⁶

In the following month, December 1931, the monthly publication *Wychodźca*, which served as the official organ of the Polish Emigration Society, a social orga-

²⁵ Prawda o Peru. *Gazeta Świąteczna* 2646 (18.10.1931), p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4–5.

nization committed to supporting Polish emigrants, also featured an article on Polish colonization in Peru. It proclaimed:

The national press has recently covered the issues of Polish colonization in Peru rather one-sidedly, with a distinct flavor of unhealthy sensationalism. [. . .] The first batches of Polish settlers arrived in Peru in May 1930. However, the initiated colonization soon came to a standstill because into the virgin wilderness, where only the power of fists and muscles can mean something, were sent groups of settlers, composed of 90% of people who had never before had an axe in their hands. The colonists, discouraged from the pioneering work of colonization, 70 in number, including children, left the area, [. . .] but about 40 souls, including children, remained on the spot in Cumaria, completely acclimatized, already used to working in the local conditions and waiting for a further influx of settlers to continue their pioneering work and lay the foundations of a nationally dense Polish colony over the seas.²⁷

Later in the same article, there was an open letter described as being sent to the editors of the monthly publication “by a group of people who have settled in the concession areas and present in their report the real advantages and disadvantages of these areas.” The letter stated:

We, the undersigned, constitute a group of individuals who have no material or moral obligation to remain in Peru. Therefore, our assessment of Polish colonization in this country is completely unbiased and holds great value for relevant entities in Poland and Polish public opinion. [. . .]

Recent reports from Poland regarding the intended Polish emigration to Peru indicate a lack of knowledge or misinformation about the possibilities of settlement in this country. Given this circumstance, we consider it our duty to highlight this issue to prevent any irreversible harm to our Nation.²⁸

The stay of Poles in Peru was thus presented in the above article as the realization of Poland’s national interest. However, Maria Bochdan-Niedenthal, who, together with her husband (road engineer Kazimierz Niedenthal), was among the pioneers in Montaña, had a different view of the Polish settlement in Peru. She described her two-year stay in South America in a travel book entitled *Ucayali. Raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*²⁹ (English: *Ucayali: Paradise or Hell by the Amazon*). In her book, she offered criticism of both Kazimierz Warchałowski and the Cooperative ‘Polish Colony’, as well as the Polish-American Syndicate. She noted that the purpose of organizing the Polish exodus to Peru was to rid the country of the unemployed and serve the financial interests of specific individuals. In her opinion, this led to a situation where “For the creators of such plans, it was less important

²⁷ Kolonizacja polska w Peru. In: *Wychodźca* 7 (December 1931), p. 2.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Maria Bochdan-Niedenthal: *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*. Warszawa: s.n. 1935.

to create a colonization cell, even if only a trial one, but based on a firm foundation, than to 'diversionary' search for territories in the most reckless manner and to give oneself absolution in advance for the failure of such an action."³⁰ This does not mean, however, that she expressed particular pity for the Polish settlers who arrived in Peru. She believed that "mostly a 'lumpenproletariat' of demoralized intelligentsia and workers"³¹ reached Peru. Her opinion of the Polish exiles was therefore not high. Nevertheless, Bochdan-Niedenthal dedicated more space in her descriptions to the issue of the settler profile. She divided the newcomers to the colony into three groups. The first group consisted of the urban element, mostly intelligentsia, who were seeking adventure, dreaming of quick riches, and unprepared for hard work. The second group comprised life derelicts who believed they could secure a life for themselves amidst the chaos of the emerging colony. The third group consisted of true settlers and pioneers. The author considered the first two groups to be either burdens to the building of the Polish settlement or troublemakers.³²

It is worth noting that Maria Bochdan-Niedenthal's severe judgment of the settlers was shared by Kazimierz Warchałowski, who himself received negative evaluations in her publication. However, for Warchałowski, criticizing the newcomers of the colony served as a means to refute accusations against himself and justify his own mistakes. This need led Warchałowski to unequivocally blame the Polish emigrants for the failure of the settlement campaign in his book *Na wodach Amazonki*³³ (English: *On the Waters of the Amazon*), published in 1938. Regarding the first Polish colonists, he wrote: "Unfortunately, they had flabby muscles and weak hearts. Apart from a few exceptions, it is unknown why they came here. Some rolled up their belongings a week after arrival and left. Others lasted less than two months. Some dispersed along the way. They failed the test of incompetence and ill-will. Most didn't even try to work. Some did not look into the forest."³⁴ At the same time, the author lamented the negative reputation left by the Polish settlers within Peruvian society, which was further exacerbated by the actions of representatives from the Polish intelligentsia. These individuals, upon arriving in the colony areas, instead of aiding the settlement idea, brought about its demise. It was about them that Warchałowski mentioned in harsh terms:

³⁰ Ibid., p. 135.

³¹ Ibid., p. 136.

³² Ibid., p. 159–160.

³³ Kazimierz Warchałowski: *Na wodach Amazonki*. Warszawa: Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1938.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 173.

They were the ones who smashed the work that had been initiated with difficulty and tremendous effort, because they were disappointed in their morbid ambitions or dreams [. . .]. They raised a lament, flooded the authorities and editorial offices with complaints, and went out into the world to see that there is no place where work is not required, where conquests come without sacrifice, and where the delight of possession can be achieved without effort. [. . .] Envy, stupidity, and incompetence shook hands. Instead of setting foot firmly in this virgin country, instead of opening wide horizons for Polish thought, of creating a market for industry, of giving the unemployed work, of giving the landless land, we have presented ourselves with the image of a feral and bolshevized bunch of human beings, without any guiding thought, without any moral brakes.³⁵

Thus, not only did these ill-fated settlers act against the national interest. They also inflicted, in the opinion of Warchałowski, serious social and economic damage, on a very broad (state) scale.

It is worth noting, furthermore, that the aforementioned texts, taking the position that individuals who complain exaggerate problems and are to blame themselves (or even lack morality!), failed to pay attention to a crucial cause-and-effect relationship. How did it happen that non-farmers appeared in Peruvian regions despite the provisions present in many documents? According to concessions, permits, agreements, and informational brochures, only families of confirmed farmer status were allowed to go to the Peruvian territories (except for individuals providing organizational, pastoral, or medical services in the colony). If others were sent, the fault lay solely with the recruiting institutions, without justifying it by poor organization, haste, or lack of funds.³⁶

5 Conclusions

The press articles and fragments of travel literature presented above demonstrate the prevalence of two main narrative directions in the memory discourse surrounding Polish settlers in Peru during the 1930s. On one hand, there is a narrative that portrays them as helpless victims and martyrs caught up in circumstances beyond their control. On the other hand, there is a narrative that depicts them as greedy troublemakers, deceitful, incompetent, and lazy individuals. It is worth noting, however, that neither of these narrative directions empowers the Polish colonists. Even when they are given a voice, it is limited to the reader's or recipient's

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Anna Ratke-Majewska: *Stosunki bilateralne Polski*, p. 203–213; Warunki osadnictwa w Peru na terenach “Kolonii Polskiej.” In: *Archiwum Akt Nowych: Akta Janiny i Kazimierza Warchałowskich* 105, p. 3.

interest, often serving to generate sensation or support a particular hypothesis. Furthermore, none of the narratives portrayed the colonists as victims of crimes, manipulation and misinformation, instead limiting their depiction to showing them as victims of a bad fate they were unable to counter. In reality, Polish emigrants to Peru endured significant violations of their well-being, regardless of whether some were able to navigate the situation successfully. This should not diminish the magnitude of the irregularities perpetrated by the colonization institutions, whose culpability should be emphasized within the narratives of memory about the Polish settlers.

It is also worth pointing out that the Polish-Peruvian entanglement of communities and cultures that occurred at the beginning of the 1930s also had other significant and long-term effects. Peru in the Polish social space began to appear on the one hand as a paradise on earth and on the other as a savage wilderness unfriendly to humans. This hinged on the subsequent decades' perception of Peruvian areas, with their society and culture, in Poland. It formed a replicated perception that Peru is a country tempting in its charms but unfriendly, dangerous and wild.

Robert Schade

Bom Fim, New Birobidzhan, and Centaurs: Brazilian Author Moacyr Scliar and Jewish Brazil

1 Introduction: Jewish Migration to Brazil and Life in Porto Alegre

The migration of Portuguese, Italian or even German immigrants to Brazil is widely researched and a commonplace of Brazilian self-understanding. In his book *The Roots of Brazil* (*Raízes do Brasil*, 1936), the historian and sociologist Sérgio Buarque de Holanda writes about the colonization process, mainly referring to the first Portuguese immigrants, whom he describes as adventurers. These adopted indigenous knowledge and customs¹ – including linguistic ones – even though Buarque de Holanda tries, in a certain way, to glorify the colonizing practices.

Less well known among the European migrants are the Ashkenazi families, mainly from the Western parts of Russia called Bessarabia, today part of the Ukraine and Moldovia, who fled the pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century. Those immigrants were sent, with financial support by the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA),² to Argentina and Brazil and settled in colonies in the south of Brazil.

For many immigrants, the Americas including Brazil were considered the Promised Land. After arriving at the port in Rio de Janeiro, they were sent to the less than expected fertile interior in the South of the country, to the colonies of Philipppson, a small town named after the Belgian vice-president of the JCA, Franz Philipppson, who was at the same time director of the Argentine and Rio Grande do Sul Railway Company.³ In Philipppson, the first settlers arrived in 1904.⁴ Later, from 1912, another colony was created: Quatro Irmãos. This also happened due to economic interests – the town was close to a railway line and forests. Every family

1 Sérgio Buarque de Holanda: *Raízes do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras 2014, p. 28.

2 The JCA, founded in 1891, was a philanthropic organization, financed by baron Maurice de Hirsch, with the aim to provide land for Jewish families in the Americas.

3 Marie D. Blocker: *A criação de Numa clara manhã de abril de Marcos Iolovitch, no contexto histórico*. In: *WebMosaica. Revista do Instituto Cultural Judaico Marc Chagall*. 9, (2017), p. 31.

4 This included 66 to 88 persons, depending on the source. See Ida Gutfreind: *A atuação da Jewish Colonization Association no Rio Grande do Sul. A colônia Philipppson*. In: *WebMosaica. Revista do Instituto Cultural Judaico Marc Chagall*. 1, (2009), p. 110.

received 25 to 30 acres of land as well as cattle and had to live in wooden huts.⁵ Both colonies did not last very long though: Immigrants of the first generation usually did not speak Portuguese, were easily infected with diseases, had to struggle with numerous hurdles, or even surrendered to alcohol. Moreover, most of them had no experience in agriculture.⁶ Most of the first settlers then went afterwards, due to the aforementioned problems, to the cities of Santa Maria or Porto Alegre, where they mainly worked as traders, often called *klientelchiks* (peddlers who were selling merchandises in poor areas) or *gravatiniks* (people selling ties) – professions in which some of them have been already active before the migration.⁷ In 1915, only one third of the former number of inhabitants of Quatro Irmãos was still living there.⁸

Despite the many problems that the settlers had to confront, the Jewish immigration can still be considered a success for both the settlers as well as for Brazil, as Jeffrey Lesser points out:

The Eastern European Jewish colonists who settled in Brazil never amounted to more than a few thousand people, yet they played two critical roles. First, the mere existence of the agricultural colonies challenged images of Jews as exclusively and insidiously oriented toward finance and capital in urban areas. Furthermore, residents of the colonies committed themselves to life in Brazil. This challenged notions that Jews were a closed group, uninterested in becoming citizens of countries where they resided.⁹

Due to the relatively open immigration laws, Eastern European Jews after World War I settled primarily in the states of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro, especially in the big cities, where they reached a high level of economic success.¹⁰ While in the beginning many Jews worked mainly as mobile traders, soon they opened their first shops, as, for instance, furniture and textile shops. As Lesser points out, “an ever-increasing match between Eastern European eco-

5 Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança. A presença judaica no Rio Grande do Sul. Pathways of Hope. The Jewish Presence in Rio Grande do Sul*. Porto Alegre: RioCell 1991, p. 70–71.

6 Poultry farming was supposed to be done, and wheat, potatoes, beans, corn and vegetables were supposed to be planted. See Ida Gutfreind: *A atuação da Jewish Colonization Association no Rio Grande do Sul*, p. 111.

7 Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 80.

8 Marie D. Blocker: *A criação de Numa clara manhã de abril de Marcos Iolovitch, no contexto histórico*, p. 33.

9 Jeffrey Lesser: *Welcoming the Undesirables. Brazil and the Jewish Question*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press 1995, p. 16.

10 Ibid., p. 19.

nomic skills and the demands of the Brazilian economy for commercial and industrial activity helped Jews rise to positions of economic security.”¹¹

In Porto Alegre, the Jewish life gained visibility. In 1910, the first Jewish school was founded. In 1915, the first ever Jewish newspaper of Brazil, called *Di Menshait*, was published in Porto Alegre, which, unfortunately, after only 6 issues, had to be discontinued.¹² In 1917 the *Centro Israelita* was established, since 1924 the synagogue is located in Henrique Dias Street, in the *Bom Fim* district. The district soon had a Jewish library, a theatre, societies, shops, a cemetery, and a butcher. If we look at the mixtures within the Jewish community, it is striking that already at that time, Jews from all parts of Europe met in the streets of Porto Alegre. As Moacyr Scliar describes in *The War in Bom Fim*, there was “someone from Poland, another from Lithuania, someone else from Galicia, and over there a group from Bessarabia.”¹³ Polish Jews immigrated mainly in the 1930s to Porto Alegre. In the end of 1930s the German Jews, who normally did not speak Yiddish, arrived. In *The War in Bom Fim*, even a Sephardic Jew, named Ely, turns up one day.¹⁴ But of course, at the time, the state Rio Grande do Sul has already been the location of different immigration waves, especially the ones by Germans and Italians. Now, the big cities were the hotspots of the different movements, where an inter- or transcultural exchange was going on.

In some of his famous and translated novels, of which I will scrutinize *The War in Bom Fim* (1972), *The One-Man Army* (1973), and, with another symbolic layer, in *The Centaur in the Garden* (1980), we can see how this exchange between European settlers, Africans and the indigenous population took place. All the main characters in the aforementioned novels, that were published during the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964–1985), are Jews who, or whose ancestors, migrated to Brazil. As Nelson Vieira states, Scliar questions “the myths of fixed cultural boundaries [and] demonstrates their flexibility, openness, and cultural ambiguity.”¹⁵ Here, I would like to focus on the inter- and transcultural aspects, the socio-economic situation of the migrants, and also on the culinary aspects of this specific Jewish-Brazilian hybridity. Additionally, the historical layer is marked through flashbacks, which

¹¹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹² Lucia Chermont: *Di Menscheit (A Humanidade), a primeira publicação em língua iídiche no Brasil*. In: <http://transfopressbrasil.franca.unesp.br/verbetes/di-menscheit-a-humanidade-a-primeira-publicacao-em-lingua-iddiche-no-brasil> [September 23, 2022].

¹³ Moacyr Scliar: *The War in Bom Fim*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press 2010, p. 115.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 64. This was the latest wave of Jews, who fled from the Nasser regime in the 1950s. See also: Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 100.

¹⁵ Nelson Vieira: *Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature. A Prophetic Discourse of Alterity*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida 1995, p. 152.

show the transgenerational traumatic presence of the pogroms in actual events lived by the protagonists of the novels.

2 Scliar's Novels: War against Nazis, the Birobidzhan Model, and the Condition of Being a Centaur

As Moacyr Scliar (1937–2011), a second-generation immigrant, told in an interview, in his childhood he listened to the stories of adults, which were mainly about the life of migrants.¹⁶ Scliar, who also worked as a medical doctor and health physician, in many of his novels, covers the two generations of Jewish migration to Porto Alegre.¹⁷ He emphasizes the multiple perspectives, a typical position of estrangement, that every immigrant holds:

The immigrant is always a person who somehow does not completely fit into his new country. He sees reality with different eyes, the eyes of someone who has experienced another reality. The immigrant perceives everything anew. His expectations and critical abilities have not already been blunted by habit. He is able to notice in his new land things that those who were born there would never notice. His eyes are wide open for business opportunities, for example. He wants to survive, and, for this reason, he must compromise sometimes. But he is also very aware and extremely critical of social injustices. But the immigrant usually lacks a native command of the new language, and this deficiency limits his interventions in society.¹⁸

Scliar presents in the three novels, most strikingly and coherent in *The One-Man Army*, the different historical stages of Jews in the job market – from being a *gravatinik* on the streets of Porto Alegre (in the 1920s), to textile traders with their own shops (1930s and 40s), to the holders of the booming construction enterprises (1950s and 60s).

¹⁶ Moacyr Scliar/Cristina Ferreira-Pinto Bailey/Regina Zilberman: *Entrevista de Moacyr Scliar a Cristina Ferreira-Pinto Bailey e Regina Zilberman*. In: *Revista Iberoamericana* LXXVI, 230 (2010), p. 225.

¹⁷ As Joanna Moszczynska points out, the narrative context of Scliar's works is mostly situated between the migration phase and the acculturation phase, where the protagonists must live between different life worlds, the one of the past as well as the actual one in Brazil. See Joanna M. Moszczynska: *A memória da Destruição na escrita judaico-brasileira depois de 1985. Por uma literatura pós-Holocausto emergente no Brasil*. Berlin: Peter Lang 2022, p. 83.

¹⁸ Moacyr Scliar/Luciana Camargo Namorato: WLT Interview with Moacyr Scliar. In: *World Literature Today* 80, 3 (2006), p. 42.

The above-mentioned themes of Jewish migration are recurrent in Scliar's novels. Often, we can see repetitions or reconfigurations in the biographical background of his characters, passages he quotes from his own works or even direct quotations from other books, as for instance the autobiographical novel *On a clear April morning*, by Marcos Iolovitch.¹⁹ In many cases, we could even consider these texts variations of the same themes. Although there exist many repetitions, each novel presents a new perspective on interactions among different ethnic groups. In *The War in Bom Fim*, for example, Scliar, in addition to the theme of German immigrant Nazis, also uncovers the African subtext of some Porto Alegre districts (for example, former *Colônia Africana*, which is called *Rio Branco* today and almost free of black population). In other texts, it is also the question of the indigenous populations of Brazil that gains weight, as in *A majestade do Xingu* (*Majesty of the Xingu*, 1997), for example, in which Noel Nutels, a Jewish physician (who really existed and actually migrated to Brazil from the Ukraine), cures indigenous people in Brazil from tuberculosis and vaccinates them against smallpox.

Moacyr Scliar's *Enigmas da culpa*, which is dedicated to the question of guilt from a discourse-analytical, i.e. psychological, religious, legal, medical, and literary perspective, begins with a case history, namely his own and the one of his ancestors:

Which begins in the forties in Porto Alegre, a small, provincial city, whose neighbourhoods had a characteristic profile. Bom Fim, the setting of our case study, was considered a Jewish neighbourhood. It was not entirely Jewish, obviously, but there were a large number of Jewish families living there. Our parents were immigrants, generally from Russia (mainly from the region known as Bessarabia) and Poland, where the Jews had lived, in lyrical misery, in the small villages to which the tsarist government had confined them.²⁰

The life-centre of the Jewish migrants is the Bom Fim neighbourhood in Porto Alegre, where, according to Scliar, the Jews in the 1930s and 40s formed an open society – the street was considered a common centre, much like in the former Jewish *shtetl*. Scliar conceives of it as an idyllic and familiar, and above all public space, characterized by social cohesion and openness. Scliar, as he says, turned to be a writer on the pavements of Bom Fim, where the people were sitting and where the stories were told in public. The doors and windows were always open.²¹ Al-

¹⁹ Marcos Iolovitch: *On a clear April morning. A jewish journey*. Boston: Academic Study Press 2020. Scliar refers indirectly to Iolovitch's novel in *A majestade do Xingu* (Moacyr Scliar: *A majestade do Xingu*. São Paulo 2009, p. 14–15). We can find direct quotations for example in *The War in Bom Fim* (Moacyr Scliar: *The War in Bom Fim* 2010, p. 8), and in *Enigmas da Culpa* (Moacyr Scliar: *Enigmas da culpa*. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva 2007, p. 13).

²⁰ Moacyr Scliar: *Enigmas da culpa*. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva 2007, p. 11. My own translation, R.S.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15. And Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 88.

though the districts were mainly Jewish, the streets functioned as a public space where life realities of different cultures were mixed.

Scliar's first novel even carries the name of the district in his title: *The War in Bom Fim* (*A guerra no Bom Fim*, 1972). In the narrative, Brazil is at war with Germany, the Nazis have advanced as far as the Bom Fim district due to the defeats on the other fronts. The Russian parents of Samuel, who speaks poor Portuguese, and works as a textile trader, had settled in Philipppson, but agricultural life failed. They then went to the Jewish district of the state capital Porto Alegre, which in the novel is considered a country. Joel and Nathan (who is able to fly), sons of Samuel, and his wife Shendl, successfully lead a group of Jews to fight against the Germans, along with Macumba, a boy with African origins. Right from the beginning, the Jews have to confront the antisemitism of the local German immigrants, who also live there. Even the incarnate Golem from Prague, more than three meters of height, later fights among the allies and alongside the brothers in the final battle. Even Nathan appears, flying at the sky, and playing the violin. Later on, Joel kills Hitler, when riding a tram. But some German "fifth column" immigrants, who fought together with the German Nazis, as for instance the soldier Ralf Schmidt, survive. Schmidt's family later eats Samuel's corpse for barbecue. Although they have won the war, the Jewish boys appear as tragic heroes. It seems that one of the inspirations for the novel was an incident that Scliar noticed in the 1930s in Porto Alegre, when „Brazilian Nationalists and Nazis [. . .] paraded throughout the town complete with uniforms and insignia“,²² probably members of Brazilian right-wing integralist-movement.

As we can see, the phantastic and oneiric are central elements of Scliar's narratives.²³ However, we can perceive a strong realistic setting, with many references to historic life of Brazilian Jews and their professions between the 1920s and 1950s, the districts and the streets they were living in, as well as their typical food. The novels are always accompanied by historical dates and refer to global historical events. *The War in Bom Fim* covers the years between 1943 and 1948, *The One-Man Army* between 1916 and 1970, and *The Centaur in the Garden* between 1935 and 1974. Further, it is also a greater Jewish, and maybe Eastern European context, which becomes visible in his novels. In his books, Jewish thinkers like Sigmund Freud (who appears in person in *The One-Man Army*), Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, Isaac Singer, Albert Einstein, Isaac Babel (who was executed by the NKVD, and whom he mentions in various of his texts), or Marc Chagall, play significant roles.

²² Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 96.

²³ Joanna M. Moszczynska: *A memória da Destruição na escrita judaico-brasileira depois de 1985*, p. 80.

At the centre of the novel *The One-Man Army*, (*O exército de um homem só*,²⁴ 1973), is the protagonist and leader of a small communist group, Mayer Guinzburg, or captain Birobidzhan, as he is called mockingly by the local population of the Bom Fim district. Captain Birobidzhan is named after the Siberian city and autonomous state of Birobidzhan, created by the Soviet Union in the 1930s to solve the rising Jewish quest for a nation state. The quixotesque Mayer Ginzburg wants to establish a new colony called New Birobidzhan, together with some animals, the Pig Companion, the Chicken Companion and the Goat Companion, as well as his comrades Leia and José Goldman, who soon retire from the project. The success of the Russian Revolution and books by Walt Whitman, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Rosa Luxemburg continue to drive him. But the eccentric Mayer, who is constantly ridiculed by the others, as well as the communist life of the group remain caricatures. Mayer argues with his father, a practicing Jew, as for communism imported from Russia seems the greatest possible provocation for a traditional Jewish family. But Mayer, who is the talk of the town, pushes the communist centre forward, grows vegetables, and distances himself from his family. In his self-authored journal *The voice of New Birobidjan*, Mayer euphemistically to distortingly describes the political events of Europe, as well as on his farm. Later, the farm is set on fire, which reminds captain Birobidzhan of the pogroms of his ancestors: “He was weeping. He was weeping the way his grandfather had wept after the pogrom in Kishinev.”²⁵ Afterwards, he returns to his wife Leia and his kids and opens a company for construction works in the late 1950s – the third creative field of Jews after being mobile traders and textile traders.²⁶ In 1952, after the anti-Semitic doctors’ conspiracy invented by Stalin and the show trial of Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia, Mayer’s relationship with the Soviet Union is finally reversed: “Mayer Guinzburg now hated Russia, that gigantic and cruel monster. When he thought of the tears he had shed for Stalingrad, of the devotion with which he had heard ‘Alexander Nevsky’, he blushed with shame. To see Russia’s name in the newspaper gave him heartburn. Russia was a liar, cynical, cowardly and treacherous.”²⁷ At the end, after

24 Which also became the name of a song by the famous rock-band *Engenheiros do Hawaii*, from Porto Alegre and thereby entered popular culture.

25 Moacyr Scliar: *The One-man army*. New York: Ballantine Books 1986, p. 69.

26 Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 84.

27 My own translation, R.S. Moacyr Scliar: *O exército de um homem só*. Porto Alegre: L&PM 2019, p. 113–114. Interestingly enough, for unknown reasons this part was actually not translated in the English version. See the original version: “Mayer Guinzburg agora odiava a Rússia, aquela megera gigantesca e cruel. Quando pensava nas lágrimas que derramara por Stalingrado, na devoção com que ouvira ‘Alexandre Nevsky’, chegava a corar de vergonha. Ver o nome da Rússia no jornal chegava a lhe dar azia. A Rússia era mentirosa, cínica, covarde e traiçoeira.” In the German translation, for example, this part has been preserved (Moacyr Scliar: *Die Ein-Mann-Armee*. Frankfurt am

a constant ideological zigzag, he then tries again to build the New Birobidzhan in an old people's home, which of course fails as well. In the novel, the tragic ideological interference between being a Jew and communist in Brazil at the same time is reflected through historical events (also ones that refer to Brazilian history), once as the protagonist's latent nostalgic yearning towards Russia and the admiration for the revolution is later converted to strong disgust.

As one can see, the pogroms always remain a fixed point in memory. In the early 20th century, the hostile atmosphere in Russia²⁸ led to various pogroms, as for example the above-mentioned Kishinev pogrom in 1903, with approximately 120 deaths and 500 injured. In all three novels, the pogroms are mentioned as a trans-generational trauma for the Russian Jews. The past and their Eastern-European origins arouse mixed feelings: "We left Russia in 1916, says Avram Guinzburg, Mayer's brother. We came by ship, and threw up a lot. . . and yet, to the best of my recollection, we were happy. Yes, happy. Father was sick and tired of Russia. And ever since the pogrom in Kishinev, Brazil had been constantly on his mind. True, Russia was the homeland of Scholem Aleichem and of many other great Jews, but to us it was hell."²⁹

In his text *Between the shtetl and the gulag: voices of Russian Judaism*, which is written in the second person singular, Scliar begins with an expression of mourning. The text treats the question of Jewish condition in Russia, or later the Soviet Union, during the centuries, from a rather personal perspective, calling Russia a distant homeland – and thereby putting the traumatic experience of the pogroms in a more ambivalent setting:

And because of the faces, Russia, faces that are familiar to me, that arouse emotions in me: the faces of my grandmother, of my mother, of my uncles. Faces with protruding cheeks, slanting eyes, with that pale smile that is characteristic of people who suffer. I speak to you cause of these faces, Russia, and also cause of childhood memories: my grandmother's copper samovar, where the tea that warmed our souls on the long nights of the gaucho winter came from. And I speak to you because of the stories I heard. And because of Trotsky, of

Main: Suhrkamp 2000). Scliar was the son of a family of communists. He explains his later admiration for the communism of the Soviet Union, as well as for the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 (as an overcoming the Holocaust), with his longing for justice. Later he called himself a Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist, who sings in Brazil the *Internationale* in Hebrew, and accepts the soviet communism as the one and only truth. But his own evaluation of the Soviet Union changes drastically with the Stalinist purges and his doctor's plot in 1952 with various Jewish victims and the later Anti-Jewish campaigns. See Moacyr Scliar: *Enigmas da culpa*, p. 27–32; 165–179.

²⁸ Marie D. Blocker: *A criação de Numa clara manhã de abril de Marcos Iolovitch, no contexto histórico*, p. 29 and Ida Gutfreind: *A atuação da Jewish Colonization Association no Rio Grande do Sul. A colônia Philippson*, p. 108.

²⁹ Moacyr Scliar: *The One-man army*. New York: Ballantine Books 1986, p. 9.

I. Babel, of Chagall, of Sholem Aleichem. Because of the films and the songs that made my young heart beat faster. And it is for love that I speak to you, Russia. For a love which is mixed with disappointment, if not anger. But love, yes. The love one feels for a distant homeland. And that we Jews have many distant homelands.³⁰

Also the family of Guedali Tartakovsky, protagonist of *The centaur in the Garden* (*O centauro no jardim*, 1980), fled from Russia to Brazil after the pogroms. Guedali is a Jew as well as a centaur, half human being, half a horse, who was born in the rural parts of Rio Grande do Sul, in Quatro Irmãos. The Tartakovskys are one of the last families who stayed in the colony, others already went to the big cities. Guedali's family is located between Jewish life (which is marked by the celebrations of *Shabbat*, and *Yom Kippur*, Jewish songs, and the practice of circumcision) and Brazilian culture. When he is born, his mother Rosa complains about his father's decision to have migrated to the other end of the world, leaving their homeland. Despite of the parent's first irritation about his body at his birth, his family accepts and protects him, but keeps him mainly hidden. Later, the family moves to Porto Alegre, to a district called Teresópolis, a bit further from the city centre, because of Guedali's necessity to hide. One day, Guedali flees and gallops south, striving for normality. In a circus he finds a temporary place for himself among human beings. Only after an operation by a Moroccan surgeon do he and his later wife Tita (who is also a centaur, but a *goy*), become human with only their hooves left, that later transform into small human feet. Later, he and Tita lead a normal life in São Paulo, together with a group of Jewish friends, where he finds consolation in Jewish faith. But still, despite the surgery and the return to his Jewish roots, Guedali does not feel complete.

In another interview, Moacyr Scliar underlines the image of the centaur as one of a tension between two identities, where "the centaur is a symbol of the double identity, characteristic of Jews in a country like Brazil. At home, you speak Yiddish, eat gefilte fish, and celebrate Shabbat. But in the streets, you have soccer,

30 My own translation, R.S. Moacyr Scliar: *Entre o shtetl e o gulag: vozes do Judaísmo Russo*. In: <https://www.moacyrscliar.com/textos/entre-o-shtetl-e-o-gulag-vozes-do-judaismo-russo/> [September 29, 2022]. In the original language: "E por causa de faces, Rússia, de faces que me são familiares, que despertam em mim emoções: as faces de minha avó, de minha mãe, de meus tios. Faces de males salientes, de olhos oblíquos, com aquele pálido sorriso característico dos povos que sofrem. Por estas faces te falo, Rússia, e também por lembranças da infância: o samovar de cobre de minha avó, de onde saía o chá que nos aquecia a alma nas longas noites do inverno gaúcho. E te falo por causa das histórias que ouvi. E por causa de Trotski, de I. Babel, de Chagall, de Sholem Aleichem. Por causa dos filmes e das canções que faziam bater mais forte o meu coração de jovem. E por amor que te falo, Rússia. Por um amor ao qual se misturam a decepção, quando não a raiva. Mas amor, sim. O amor que se sente por uma pátria distante. E que nos, judeus, temos muitas pátrias distantes."

samba, and Portuguese. After a while you feel like a centaur.”³¹ Guedali finds himself in an ongoing identity crisis, between his horseness and his Jewishness (which is also mirrored in his mother’s initial complaint about why Guedali didn’t find a Jewish wife), as well as between nature and culture. Even after the surgery, Guedali doesn’t trust his feet. In the game of opposites, none of the parts can be fully suppressed. As a result, the identity struggle can never come to an end. A part of Guedali will always be a horse, a marginalized being, a dislocated Jew: “I feel insecure. I am afraid of standing up. I fear that my legs won’t sustain me; the truth is that I still haven’t learned to trust them. Bipedes don’t have the same firmness as quadrupeds.”³²

3 Hybridization of Food

As the author Marcos Iolovitch describes in his documentary and autobiographical novel *On a clear April morning* (*Numa clara manhã de abril*, 1940), poor Jews from remote areas of Eastern Europe were lured to subtropical latitudes by colorful images and descriptions: Iolovitch mentions his father’s fascination with oranges, which were in short supply in Eastern Europe, but abundant in Brazil, and thus were even fed to pigs. The book starts with the following scenario:

On a clear April morning in the year 19- when the steppes had begun to turn green again upon the joyful entrance of Spring, there appeared scattered about in Zagradowka, a small and cheerful Russian village in the province of Kherson, beautiful brochures with colored illustrations describing the excellent climate, the fertile land, the rich and varied fauna, and the beautiful and exuberant flora, of a vast and far-away country of America, named – BRASIL where the ‘Jewish Colonization Association’, better known as the JCA, owner of a great parcel of land, called ‘Quatro Irmãos’, located in the municipality of Boa Vista do Erechim, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, was offering homesteads on favorable terms to all those who wished to become farmers.³³

31 Judy Bolton-Fasman: *The centaur in the Garden by Moacyr Scliar*. In: *Yiddish Book Center*. August 2003. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140515223027/http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/node/279>

32 Moacyr Scliar: *The centaur in the Garden*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press 2011, p. 5.

33 Marcos Iolovitch: *On a clear April morning. A jewish journey*, p. 1.

Iolovitch shows the different value of single oranges, comparing their preciousness in Eastern Europe with the multitude of them in Brazil. „Oranges in Russia were imported. They came packed in boxes and rolled in tissue paper like the apples from California here in Brazil. And they were very expensive.”³⁴

In the novel, the images of the orange depicted on the brochures served as a condensation of a wishful projection. The narrator describes the picture that was shown to the inhabitants of Zagradowka to look at their possible futures:

Even further back, blued in the distance, were coconuts, palms, and mysterious forests. And, in the foreground, highlighted in vivid and bold colors, was an enormous orchard, composed principally of orange trees; in their shade pigs ate the beautiful oranges that had fallen to the ground. This little picture impressed Papa profoundly.³⁵

In addition to local, natural products, it is worthwhile to look at the cultural practices and economic issues concerning food. In the novels by Scliar, culinary references often frame the narratives and establish links with the past. Due to a strong drive of overprotection caused by the pogroms, periods of famine and by the ubiquity of diseases like tuberculosis, as Scliar explains,³⁶ the Jewish mothers provided their sons with an over-abundance of food: Hot tea, „a nostalgic remembrance of old Russia“,³⁷ from the *samowar* with loads of sugar, *shtrudel*, *kneidlech* with lots of *schmaltz*, *borscht*, *gulasch*, *latkes*³⁸ and *tchulent*³⁹ mark the eastern European origin. Most of those dishes come from Eastern Europe and were brought to Brazil by the Jewish settlers. In *The War in Bom Fim* the *chimarrão* (the Brazilian term for *mate*) can be seen as a reference to the local gaúcho-culture, as well as to indigenous cultures, which is in the novel already decentred by Jewish practices: “Samuel and his neighbors were drinking bitter mate tea. Isaac drank the tea, sucking on honey drops. Samuel laughed, saying that a real Gaúcho drank his tea bitter.”⁴⁰ Also in the accounts of the first Jewish settlers in the south of Brazil, the consumption of the quite bitter *chimarrão* seemed to be a signal of the acceptance of the local culture⁴¹ – which is valid until today. The indigenous influences of Brazilian food culture, for example manioc, sweet potato, *pinhão* or *chimarrão*, mixed with African (as the national dish *feijoada*), Arab, Western European

³⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁶ Moacyr Scliar: *Enigmas da culpa*, p. 18.

³⁷ Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 88.

³⁸ Which are small, fried slices of potatoes.

³⁹ A meat dish.

⁴⁰ Moacyr Scliar: *The War in Bom Fim*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Moacyr Scliar: *Caminhos da esperança*, p. 72.

(mainly Italian) or Eastern European elements is quite typical and symbolize the different migration movements, often combined on one plate. The concept of food as an identity marker in Brazil is quite a complex one. One of the most remarkable scenes happens when Nathan, in *The War in Bom Fim*, exchanges food with Macumba, a character of African descent:

One day he saw Macumba eating lunch and wanted to taste what was in the lunch pail. He liked the beans and rice and even more the cassava mush, which he devoured voraciously. From then on Macumba would give Nathan his lunch pail and would receive from Shendl a plate of good Jewish food. It was not without some sacrifice that he chewed the matzo that was left over from Pesach, but he liked the borscht, the beet soup he said looked like blood, the kneidlach and the gefilte fish. He would take the latkes home to his kids.⁴²

It is obvious, that food serves a symbolic status of identity, mutual recognition, and economic currency, even replacing words – Nathan and Macumba do not even talk to each other during their encounter. But while his mother Shendl refuses the presence of Macumba, the second-generation immigrant Nathan tries to get closer in contact with the other. Macumba even helps Joel fighting in the battles against the Nazis and gives him advice.

As the space in Scliar's novels seems an open one, even the culinary practices are open to negotiation, hybridization, and exchange. Being a Jew in Brazil means being a Brazilian Jew, with all its negotiations and interactions in the different life-spheres, and an emphasis on both parts. Especially in the field of food, many words in his novels are written in Yiddish or Eastern European languages, as, for instance, *samowar*, *shtrudel*, *kneidlech*, *gefilte fish*, *gulasch*, *borscht*, *tchulent* or *latkes*, which also makes Scliar a preserver of the memories of a minority culture in a wider Brazilian context. Food, of course, can also have a potential for rebellion though. The protagonist Mayer in *The One-Man Army*, for example, is described as extremely skinny. His mother tries to make meat appealing to him while he recuses all the Jewish food.⁴³ Later, and as a sort of provocation, he demands pork meat, an animal which is considered impure – a symbolic act of rebellion.

In all three novels we can observe a strong juxtaposition between realistic and fantastic as well as hyperbolic elements, when dealing with the cultural hybridity of the protagonists. Even though Scliar is considered a writer of fantastic literature, we can find strong realistic elements in the descriptions of the life world and the socio-economic situation of the protagonists, as well as culinary aspects. While the Jewish protagonists in *The War in Bom Fim* are, though in a

⁴² Moacyr Scliar: *The War in Bom Fim*, p. 31.

⁴³ Moacyr Scliar: *The One-man army*, p. 11–13.

fantastic setting, mainly described as heroic, the other novels show above all outsiders, marked by a deviant ideology and/or bodily constitution. According to Nelson Vieira, Scliar's fiction "reinterpretes Brazil's social mores and myths using the perspective of the outsider within."⁴⁴ In *The Centaur in the Garden*, though, we can find an overdetermined situation of an identity crisis which, as gets clearer, will never resolve completely. But still, the larmoyant voice in the beginning becomes more confident.

⁴⁴ Nelson Vieira: *Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature. A Prophetic Discourse of Alterity*, p. 182–183.

VII **Contemporary Female Perspectives**

Karen Villeda

Visegrád

Kafka with Double-F

Aladár Székely was born close to the border with Romania. His city – Gyula – is a breeding ground for physicists and chess players. One would think that the plains do not inspire a mind gifted at science or strategic games. The latter is probably due to the so-called Castle (*vár*), which is actually a fortress.

He took pictures of Margit Kaffka. Her portrait is one of the few known photographs of her at the time. She is a woman with a vigorous gaze. Nevertheless, I find her major strength centered in her chin.

In *Colours and Years*, her best-known novel, Kaffka writes the following: “I tell the young ones, terrified of old age, that it isn’t as terrible and decidedly bad as it seems from afar. People do not feel one state of being more intensely than another and don’t miss the things they ceased yearning for. If they enjoy a decent health, they don’t feel the old age in their own bodies: they can move their hands or legs; a nice cup of coffee, a tidy room and a comforting dream may suit them very well. Those pleasures aren’t too expensive; one does not risk anything, nor does one have to suffer much for them.”

Until when will my body comply?

Until I won’t be able to travel anymore.

The Polish Sappho

If we ignore the long and cruel history of female writers whose work has been published under the authorship of Anonymous, Elżbieta Drużbacka can then be considered Poland’s first female writer. Also referred to as the Sarmatian Muse, she is known for her work *Description of the Four Seasons*. This poem about spring is charming: “When the gloomy and tyrannic dominion of winter passes, / from you it is, that the earth draws fresh inspiration. You open warm passages / where ice and frozen remnants thaw. / When your gentle breath pours forth over Earth. / Life triumphs over death in every rebirth.”

Note: Translated from Spanish by Tara O’Sullivan

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One of her works is kept under protection in the National Library of Poland. And why do they keep us, women, protected from her? Where will we find her essays on female emancipation? Why did we lose them? It's a problem of languages, I suppose.

The Same Story, Back Then

This very same fragment of Pomponius Mela, at its end, says: "Everything that can be found on the other side is called Asia." Back then, the sea separated the world in two: Europe and Africa. More than eight hundred years passed, and this world remained the same. *Oceanum* was the name of the North Sea, there was nothing beyond that but Germania. Or, at least, history tells us that this was what the Germanic peoples – almighty as they were – believed when they reunited in the *thing*, a word which meant "government assembly" to them.

Later, *thing* simply came to mean "object" once the world became bigger and Europe aged.

One of the few references I have concerning what might have been a *thing* or a *ping* of Germania is a photograph that was taken in the middle of a forest in Schleswig-Holstein in 2005, one of the sixteen federal states in Germany. The reproduction bears witness to a site of dark-green pastureland, turning bald over the course of the years, and crowned by a circle of rocks. An old wooden bench lies beneath one of those rocks that, as I imagine, could be used as the seat of the learned person who presided over the assembly. This place is a scale model of Stonehenge and it's also the area where religious rites took place. If we dig, we won't find any bones, because the victims that were sacrificed to the gods here were burnt till they were nothing but ashes.

I believe that, in those days, blood was a collective feast. Yet, our world has not changed much.

It was that *thing* that came to mind when I saw one of those piano-shaped benches which, by scanning a code on the smartphone or tablet, provides information on the key places inside the authorized and unfinished biography of Chopin; the same one that records two possible birthdates of the author: February 22nd or March 1st. The tour could go on for almost two hours and is accompanied by a melody.

I remember that they played one of the most famous melodies when I approached this first bench, the *Nocturne Op. 15 no. 3*, written in G minor. I didn't recognise it for a long time. In fact, not until just now, in this memory.

An Improper Woman

Why didn't I write as much about the works written by the women from those three countries? Because of what Virginia Woolf wrote in her, timeless, *A Room of One's Own*: "I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman."

Notes

Travelling is a way of rejuvenating.

Travelling is a way of overcoming.

Travelling is a way of remaining young.

Travelling is a *still*.

Travelling Visegrád.

Travelling.

Snapshots of the Tragedy

All of my travels seem to obey a masochistic impulse.

In Poland, I enter a desolate country. The soft light of December is ruthless, and I can barely sharpen my gaze. As I leave the Główny Station, the first face I see is that of an aged man with almost no wrinkles. His features are expressionless. He seems surreally young to me. In what year was he born? 1929?

I imagine, then, that

he has lived through it all: war,

communism, the European Union.

Some of the faces I encountered in his face reminded me of one of the witnesses in the *Shoah* documentary; of the man who saw how trains transported suffocating Jews. "At first, it was unbearable, but then I got used to the screams", he said and started to work, his gaze fixated on the trenches. The only difference between those faces and the one in the documentary is my memory.

In Poland I put together an interior album of the tragedy composed by 22,261 faces.

Talking without Talking, Hearing through Hearing

I traverse Prague, driven by a single incentive: the chocolate of the Villars brand, refined with the title of a provincial poem like “Absinthe’s tears from Val-de-Travers.” Interestingly, in the Czech Republic, one of the biggest producers of the *Fée Verte*, the packaging of this treat is only translated into English, French, German and Italian.

The import seal shows a sharp-edged language: *Čokoláda s náplní s chutí kéréu Absinth*. I only recognize *Absinth*, and, sometimes, *Čokoláda* from my general knowledge.

In my prejudice of considering a loose letter as just another linking word of the Castilian language, it seems to me that every *s* of the phrase means “and” or “from.” The caron on top of the letters *c*, *z* or *s* is a kind invitation to remain silent because my unskilled hearing mistakes the three sounds for “*shhh*” all the same. I do not find any familiarity with the Czech language. Someone assured me that Czech is a verbally inappetent language because some of its letters wear an admirable Breton hat.

This is not a transparent language because it has the wiles of the wind and burns my face. I try to pay more attention to the daily conversations of the people in Prague. It is an arduous task since the language turns out to be a trap full of symbols.

There are some promising moments when my auditory routine – badly habituated to consonants that are never accentuated – believes to recognize a word. Due to Anglo-Saxon carelessness, I confuse *most* with *más* [i.e. more] til, via a bridge-symbol on the road signs, I learn that it means exactly this: “bridge.” I sharpen my sense of hearing while searching for a word that could relate to the Spanish language. It’s useless. It takes a few futile attempts to realize, with disappointment, that this language rejects me.

Every time that the language of those that live here blankets itself with the veil of their palate, I hear a metallic whistle. I imagine an *útočný nůž* and some chapped hands that brandish their blade against the lusterless clouds.

Return to the Disneyland of the East

I recapitulate. Hordes of tourists make their pilgrimage towards this place without questioning the passion they profess for the city. “Prague has the charm of a showcase that attracts tourists just like honey attracts bees.” Out here, one can

prove that Bohemia (a neglect we inherited from Walt Disney) has become a paralyzing force: ninety percent of the tourists who visit the Czech Republic are only heading for this city. Everyone arrives with a map full of touristic curiosities as if it were some kind of Disneyland of the East.

It's the blindness of the masses
that rhymes with the following phrase:
"It's like a fairytale."

Prague enjoys itself like a tyrannic mannequin, worthy of taking up a part in Jiří Barta's *Club of the Discarded*. I think – whilst in Prague – that I could appear in the credits of this unsettling 1998 animated short film. It would be a routine within the routine: "imitating the already imitated" in Prague, like those tourists blinded by an empty sparkle.

Did they learn some Czech? Almost certainly they didn't. They would memorize the obligatory courtesies of *prosím* ('please') or *děkuji* ('thank you'). Much less the grandiloquent *Rukulíbám, milostpane* ('I kiss your hand, Sir'), which used to be the daily greeting in this country where the profession of the organ grinder was established for maimed soldiers.

Surely, tourists would chant a few single words, pronouncing them miserably:
– *Nejhezčíholčička*.

Or "the most beautiful girl."

Although if they'd pronounce it with the spacing like this:

– *Nejhezčí I lolčička*.

then, Prague would be "the best little girl."

Yes, and the thing is, everybody loves Prague because she is *nejhezčí holičička*, the most beautiful of all the princesses.

And therefore, Prague is not in reality
a collective and perfumed *poliklinika*
with chlorine that causes death.

It can't be real, the Prague of the ancient asylum in the Klemensgasse, nowadays the Klimentská street, where thousands of Jews lived before they were deported to the Majdanek concentration camp, to the ghetto of Łódź or the ghetto of Baranovichi.

It can't be real, the Prague of the cheap and public cafeterias that have been replaced by ethnic restaurants, such as the one called *Kabul Karolina* where they serve Afghan food, its name being the combination of a city in Afghanistan with plenty of underground anti-personnel mines and a typical Slavic name.

It isn't the ugly Prague.

And it is my Prague that nobody loves. It's normal that the newcomers feel that unlimited love for Prague before they bump into the first inhabitant that lives up to the reputation of Czech audacity.

I made my debut with a withered taxi driver who scammed us by offering his best service: the quickest and most expensive tour of my life for a little more than six hundred Czech crowns (kč).

That's how I got dragged into the vulgarity of this city and could come up with the following questions for the tourists and the pilgrims seeking magic:

Did you know that, not so long ago, there was *still* a curfew from eight o'clock in the evening and that the security officers gathered beneath the Powder Tower once they finished their raids?

Are you aware of how Prague used to be a low-budget Vienna during the monarchy of the Hapsburgs?

And that it was a German province during the World War II?

Do you take notice of the Praguian misogyny which affirms that "the prettiest and most intelligent Czech women live in Silesia"?

Are you aware that restaurant diplomacy has singled out English students as *personae non gratae* because of their stag parties?

Beside of its hectoliters of beer, the Czech Republic is also known to be a porn empire.

Examples for the latter can be found aplenty on Google:

"A mature Czechoslovakian whore fucking-Porn.es"

<https://porn.es/videos/65969/una-puta-madura-de-czechoslovaquia.html>

"This old gal needs a good fuck and should have a lot of experience. That's why she accepted a guy from the street who wants his hard dick to be sucked."

"Porn casting of a gorgeous Czech girl-Canalporno.com"

<https://www.canalporno.com/ver/casting-porno-a-una-preciosa-checa/>

This gorgeous brunette shows up in a porn casting to become a porn actress. Although she is a little shy at first, she then lets herself go and ends up showing everything she is capable of in front of the cameras.

There was a time when Prague was an ordinary girl, with one single dress in her closet that others looked down on during balls. Her origins are humble: *práh* means "threshold" and an ancient Slavic root defines the word *praga* as ford. Now she is selling her body. However, *we* will be charged dearly for it.

Mirage

I have a dream on my way to Cracow.

I slowly cross a creek with sleek serpents at my ankles.

I am at a recital by Wiesława Szymborska: "Snakes appeared in my path, / spiders, field rats and young vultures. / Back then, there were no righteous nor

evil ones – just all living creatures / slithering and leaping within a common fright.”

I awake exactly forty-five minutes later.

The same old woman who accompanied me to Oświęcim is now returning with me. We don't know each other, and we're intimates all the same.

This is the third face I'm acquainted with in Poland. Her physical rigidity is a tragic and moving poem. She is miles away from herself.

Human's only purity is its animality. The rest of us is raised by circumstance and context.

These are our faces.

Warszawianka 1831 Roku

Zbigniew Herbert wrote: “Our ancestors didn't have the habit of creating museums like we do. They didn't transform ancient objects into objects held for display in showcases. They used them in new constructions, incorporated the past directly into the present.”

Warsaw is a museum in which everything belonging to the past is worthy of rescue. The city has been toughened by the assails of history but does not cease to sing out passionately: “Rise, Poland, break your shackles. / Today is a day of freedom or death!” In Warsaw, the ancient is not displayed in a museum, it's an element of the present.

All of its history was written between the Wars.

There is something, I am not sure whether it's a tune perceived in the wind or the military formation of the snow, that makes me think it's always winter here, and that the city is always at war. It might be the factions of Varsovians or maybe this all too grayish park where no one wants to take a walk. “Fall in love with Warsaw” is the city's tourism slogan. It's a sad love, though. A love that will blossom someday. Meanwhile, it leaves one with the feeling that the city still lies in ruins.

Warsaw is a *living* museum.

The lustrous asphalt contrasts with a shabby building covered in canvases, showing photographs of Jews at one of the corners that used to mark the border of the ghetto. The sidewalk is covered with slabs, revealing the brick wall that defined the limits of the ghetto.

Behind number 55 of Sienna Street, the journey of a boy on a skateboard is stopped by a persistent fragment of the wall, the only surviving one.

What defines it is the craft and technique, because even the weather can be fought.

I also think about how this boy could be named Mieczysław. He has a melancholic gaze while standing in front of the bricks. “Only the one who is able to use his memories adequately can call himself a holder of true knowledge: only he can be fully human.” I would like to tell him that the pain can be false when you find yourself scolded by a past that isn’t yours. They force you to have what does not belong to you and to respect it as well. I want to tell him not to be afraid. Yet, I also feel fear.

I think about this street and its name, Sienna or Siena, like the title of one of Zbigniew Herbert’s essays where he reveals how the poets of his country, such as the writer Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Eleuter in secret, had been born to honour the Tuscan landscape in song while the Polish countryside spread out before them as inspiration: “The fume of pastoral fire is unwavering / above the flame, pliant, white, one does not know / whether among those flames in colours of prune / angels descended to seduce silver olive trees / or if . . .”

From one side to the other the landscape does not vary much.

Karen Villeda (born 1985 in Tlaxcala) is a Mexican writer, poet, essayist, and digital artist. She has published several collections of poems: *Anna y Hans* (2021), *Constantinopla* (2013), *Dodo* (2013), *Babia* (2011), *Tesouro* (2010), essay collections: *Agua de Lourdes*, *Ser mujer en México* (2019), *Visegrado* (2017), *Tres* (2016), and also children’s books. Her work has been recognized with more than a dozen awards, such as the José Revueltas Literary Essay Fine Arts Award (2017 for *Visegrado*), Gilberto Owen National Literature Award (2019) or Ignacio Manuel Altamirano National Poetry Award (2020 for *Anna and Hans*). On her website POEtronicA (www.poetronica.net), she brings poetry and multimedia into dialogue.

Dorota Masłowska

How to Take Control of the World without Leaving the House: Cuba

Last year, having succumbed to the influence of my older and stronger peers, and following the invocation of The Most Holy Marie Kondo, The One that No One Remembers Anymore, I ended up in church. Back then, her work was Read by Everyone, as well as by me. I bought a copy of her gospel entitled “The Magic of Cleaning”, where Marie asks us to renounce the abundance overcharging our lives, and I also began to carry out the action of Great Tidiness. The simple confrontation with the numerous objects that had gathered over the years was very revealing, because up till now I had considered myself a non-materialistic person; but it turned out that I’ve actually succeeded in gathering a fair load of things.

Tackling the mess of all these supplies seemed to go on forever. I had many objects of enigmatic origin, meaning, and function. Maybe it wasn’t even me who possessed them, some things were just lying around at home, those things had their own things, their things, in turn, had little thingies of their own, and they, then again, would receive pens and ugly festival tote bags for free, Frubies, milky candies and cuddly toys. I’d been fighting them fiercely for days, but a new head was growing out of each one that I’d cut off before. There were object-colonies lying everywhere, sub-colonies, units and subunits, FARMS and sub-farms. “Winter clothes / left by guests / accessories.”

“Ugly prizes/ statuettes / before 2015”, “Souvenirs from people I don’t want to remember”, “Single flippers”, “Animal’s hair/ dog.” Not to mention the five kilograms of coins, seventy-something ashtrays, never opened gifts. Unused, dusty, pointless, in stacks, piles, lines, heaps, sacks, and other crappy bags, did they not only remind me of what’s been bad and is apparently over – still enduring through THEM, persisting in THEIR persistence- but also of what’s been beautiful; however, now it’s rotten and wilted, and only those stupid objects remained: paradoxically resistant to decay, and some of them even seem to last forever.

What could have been done? One could give away a part to those that haven’t been converted by the Mariekondian invocation yet and continue to carelessly cover themselves with whatever they can find. And what’s left will just get thrown away– so, eventually it’ll be handed over to chaos itself, but always ac-

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accompanied by the painful certainty that one doesn't really get rid of all these things; it'll just remain a bold but empty gesture because most of them might even survive the end of the world.

But let's not talk about these things; this is about my life, after all. Those tedious days of cleaning really changed something. I felt light, free, fresh, fresh like a freshman. At least for 2–3 months. However, from one day to the next, the neophyte's bliss faded away unnoticed, the anti-object-alerts gradually lost their intensity; as a result, and following their custom, the things started to sneak in again, to worm their way, while sending each other predatory whistles, and, of course, whenever I looked up – startled – a deathly hush.

The Mariekondian convention happens to be this violent step forward, followed by two, three, four quiet, unconscious steps backwards, as if nothing ever happened. Oh this, because it's so pretty. Oh, that's a shame, it's so cute. And this, I got it for almost nothing at Lidl. A small bidet. A balloon. A spiralizer for vegetables. 10-pack socks. Things, things, things. I remember how they still followed, ran after me as we rushed to the airport in the early morning; how they insisted on jumping into my suitcase, so cram-full that I had to push down and jump on it. . . push down and jump . . . to close it somehow.

Once on board the plane, I instantly put on "Madame Bovary" and now it actually hits me how it was no coincidence that it was she – of all people – who joined me on my way to Cuba, the poet of shopping, the icon of gadgetry, director at the object-and-clothes theatre, where she passionately staged different roles taken up from the novel. "Don't buy this dress, it's too expensive. Buy a smaller one, but two of them. Or wait, wait for the off-season sale, you idiot!" – I screamed out, emotionally scattered in thought, while lifting the fifth-hundredth 10g-pack of Pretzels to my lips, washing them down with tea, each sip out of a new cup, with my new teaspoon, and the packaging gathering between my feet. While the aircraft begins its descent to Havana, the beautiful Emma, played by Isabelle Huppert, is just replacing her entire upholstery, furniture, she has already bought Japanese vases, a proper little hat with a fuzzy tassel, and now she rushes to meet Rodolpho. . .

A dull bump against the asphalt. The lights go on . . . once everyone has ascertained that they're still alive, the passengers begin to crawl out of their seats, and messy lairs, their slumbers, stacks, heaps, piles. Everybody walks out, and it's exactly at this moment that the chaos becomes visible. . . this whole wreck. Muddled blankets and scattered cups, plates and bottles, packaging and plastic sheets, half-eaten sandwiches, headphones, torn newspapers and other (even for us at the time) evident leftovers of creatures that sat out 10 boring hours in a place completely WITHOUT INTERNET . . .

And here we are now, at the airport, with its broken air-con, here we are, with 15-year-old staff members – girls in white knee socks and neat shirts, their

official rigidity melting into heat and boredom – searching through our bags. There's this one piece of luggage already rolling around on the baggage carousel for half an hour and – heads up, cause it's the first time I see such a thing – a car tyre . . . another one appears fifteen minutes later. . . and it spins uselessly, it spins and drags along tape, packaging, chaos. . . all this goes on for a long time, just as is common in countries where time isn't money, but merely time, a relative, extensive, malleable and definitely non-luxury matter that everyone possesses abundantly in this place.

In the meanwhile, we're already in the car, driving through the sultry night. Darkness! Not this yellowish, neon-LED-like Varsovian darkness, but real darkness, black, with silhouettes of palm trees, sheds, old Chevrolets and cargos, Fiat Autos and horse buggies leaning out of the night. Even then, we still think this is some kind of joke or post-flight delusion, just like our accommodation in Boca Ciega, where we're actually just walking in. . .

. . . and I really have to concentrate, praying to the Great Almighty Basebathito, the God of swimming pools and sound systems, God of mouthy women and heavy bass lines; praying, so that he would help me to describe most precisely the state of Casa Carlos . . . and eventually, I have to acknowledge that Casa Carlos is some sort of ongoing pool party, surrounded by hotel rooms with no windows. I should also mention that it's a rather poorly attended event, not quite successful in terms of volume; though with loud dancing music starting between six and seven o'clock in the morning, its sound echoing against the concrete walls for hours, causing ripples in the empty pool, and even making the non-existing window quiver.

. . . But the day we arrived happened to be a Friday, so I remember that there were some bouncing chicas, guys showing their muscles, and I remember how, once we entered the place, everyone suddenly went quiet; whether it was sipping a drink, squeezing someone's boob, having fellatio in or outside corners – those performances had stopped, as if we were two bad-ass teachers arriving with their class register and globe, willing, as always, to ruin the whole party. . .

So, it had been quite weird there from the start, suspicious, naughty. But the poor little room they'd offered us had walls, a bed, the air-con running at 10 degrees, a wall unit slowly falling apart, and therefore, everything we needed to get ready for bed, to close our eyes, to fall asleep. So now I lie in this coolness . . . close my eyes and listen to strange noises. The thumping Despacito, water whirling through the pipes . . . the air conditioning breaking out in weird barks, grunts, slurps . . . phantasmatic cockroaches creeping into my ear, S. taking a bath, slender streaks of ice-cold water snaking over his body . . . ice, ice cubes, clacking teeth . . . I listen, and listen . . . already drifting off . . . just then, from between this hydraulic babble and rainy creeks, Orfeo appears, comes for me . . . now tak-

ing my hand and gently leading me into the icy wastelands of dream and reverie . . . when suddenly – bang! Out of nowhere, someone tugs at the doorknob. A giggling chica enters the room in dancing strides. Jeez girl . . . what's so funny? maybe you'd like to tell us, so we can all laugh about it?

Although she notices me, she makes no attempts to leave, starts to chatter something and sneakily, incredibly sly and almost unnoticed, she is directly heading for . . . and whoever is familiar with my previous writings, knows that drunk girls in want of using my bathroom, are a recurring motif in my life . . . So, maybe it would be worthwhile to finally analyze this phenomenon at therapy; cause what I consider as something “happening” to me, is apparently deeply and subconsciously rooted in the way I was abused by my parents during childhood, and though I insist, shouting: DON'T DON'T DON'T! NOU NOU NOU! Etc., she is just smiling and carries on as if she was at her own place! As if she was at hers!

I sense that there is no way of stopping her now, that I'll have to get up and block the door with my body . . . it's a desperate move I've actually spared for the worst case, because she's wearing a swimming suit that reveals her heavy and all-around tanned breasts, thighs, dripping with water, and a towel that's gradually slipping off her body; and here I am, in my repulsive and broth-stained reindeer jammies, wearing my braces . . . Finally, I somehow manage to get rid of her, but still in all, isn't there something wrong with these girls nowadays that they actually think everyone would like them to piss into their toilet and feel honoured for it?

Anyway, it's already morning . . . morning or not-morning, it's hard to tell when there are no windows; look . . . windows in houses or even hotels might be inconspicuous but they're still a great invention. To catch some daylight or to at least to figure out the time of the day; an easy trick, just a pane, a piece of wood or whatever. Back in Poland, if you live in a room without a window, you can manage somehow, because there is always the opportunity to ask Google what time it is, what it's like outside on the streets, to ask about the special offers, or what they're demonstrating for. But in this place, the internet-free reality: emptiness, nothingness, nothing. Only the sound system's doodle, boasting, enchanting music foreboding sexual intercourse.

So, finally, we left our bunker on a bright-blue and gloomy day [. . .] we walked onto the road that connects Boca Ciega with the nearby Guanabo and continued hesitantly towards the palm trees and elms. Everything was totally new, totally surprising. The trees were very big, ancient, fibrous, and bandaged with lianas. Street corners were lined with heaps of rubbish, where beautiful, dark-blue roosters were feasting.

We passed many remnants of ruined villas. The same walls, the same building patterns; desolate signs had been newly attached to them, announcing in sev-

eral languages that the construction is still “in progress.” An easy way to stop evil tongues, always ready for tittle-tattle about how this is obviously a ruined city! That’s how, in the best of worlds, stupid gossip is cut off without expense. Finally, we’ve arrived in Guanabo.

Meanwhile, this small town slowly drags itself back to life from its great scuffle. The cleaning continues. Some woman sweeps listlessly over a stream flowing alongside the street. A cleaner from the petrol station kicks a can, it lies a little further away. I wouldn’t call the Cubans the Germans of the Caribbean. I wouldn’t even call them the Poles of the Caribbean, and you know what that means. What once lied down, remains to lie around. What once got hung up, still hangs around. What stinks, continues to stink. Destroyed by the hurricane Irma, the city isn’t very keen on cleaning. Smashed concrete, shattered pathways and whole streets still standing in water, all waiting for God’s mercy. Though there are certain values the Cubans do care about. Cars, for example. It’s incredible how the Cubans have taken care of their Fiat 126p cars, this Polakito that is exceptionally popular over here (it might even cost 6,5 thousand euros!!). Torted up and painted in the most beautiful colours; often in silver, sometimes even in gold! In Havana, for the first time in my life, I saw a man washing a car with his bare hands . . .

But let’s return to more pleasant matters now. [. . .] We are hungry. This may not be as interesting as to describe it over paragraphs in a report for a cultural magazine, but from one day to the other, such matters will play an essential role in our lives. Back then, we are still young, naïve, unaware, coming from a country where you can find heaps of peas or other sultan’s treasures on every corner. Here, in front of the bakery, a large queue of people is waiting impatiently with their freshly cleaned plastic bags. Eventually, the bread, or should I rather say the bread roll, appears. Already old when it’s still fresh, expanding like sawdust in your mouth; but in fairness, it comes in different variations: big and small.

[. . .] In the meantime, the Mercado opened, so, with a majestic gesture, we left our backpacks at the depository and walked in confidently [. . .] If there is much of anything down here, then it’s staff: two women watching over the bags, another woman observing the entrance, another one taking care of the checkout, a cashier, a manager, a supervisor in each alley. And this whole machinery enfolds around rice, pasta, ketchup, and jam. And rum. We are considering buying rum. Unfortunately, while paying, you get extremely nervous if every single move of yours is being watched by 7, 8, 9 or even 10 people . . . the bottle breaks. We stand above a growing puddle of rum, like naughty children. No one talks to us, nobody dares to look at us.

The staff members exchange some casual remarks. At the same time, no one’s in a hurry to start cleaning. This puddle is probably still there today, but I believe that now it’s full of corpses, floating around, corpses of people who once

stepped into it, and never managed to get out, or people who fell into it face-forwards with nobody making an effort to help them.

Not seeing any way out of this impasse, we decide to move on but . . . *Hola, hola*, little rascals! Some people run out of the shop shouting, making gestures. We go back. Again, we stand there remorsefully, waiting for insults, tortures. Through the window, we can see the manager approaching us, sent for from another shop, and surrounded by a mob of assistant managers and saleswomen, jumping over the puddles and the bulging cobblestones, buzzing with a large set of keys for the local prison, probably an ice-cold hole without showers, without micellar water or dental floss . . . The council continues. Just a moment later, to our surprise, we are being offered another bottle of rum, and this time, even a bigger one! With body language, our Spanish at level A minus one, we express remorse, joy, relief, and out of this fraternal atmosphere between the Polish and the Cubans, we set off to continue our journey . . .

But early enough, we realize that Guanabo isn't really a place to wander about, especially now that it's getting hot, with all the dogs lying across the pathway like corpses. People move here and there through the mud, holding bags full of bread rolls; big rolls in one, small rolls in another bag. Or the other way around. There is a shopping passage with a manicurist and a watchmaker – this place here is still a reality, where you actually change your watch's batteries instead of just throwing it away. There is also a landline phone solemnly standing on a stool, and a bakery that offers disastrous cakes, as if they had been previously eaten by some mean kids, disgorged, and put together again before the arrival of their parents. PCV-carriages roll down the streets, dragged by sickish horses, eaten up by flies and often charged with large sound systems.

And at this point I must really sacrifice at least one paragraph to the importance of a decent and powerful sound system for the Cubans' lives. Here, the sound system is an essential part of life, even for those who are just approaching the age of reproduction; and for those who've already reached it, up to the point where they're now just recalling how it used to be. Like an LED-shaken altar, families display it on their terrace or front porch, sitting next to it, regardless of their age, level of reproducibility or depression. Quite often, they don't even drink, simply satisfied with the sound system's toxic doodle, showing a cheap gaze, and drifting off with great world-weariness. In the songs, sad men (never women!) sing about sexual relationships they've had, will have, have, could have . . . it's as if the whole life in Guanabo is centered around the act of reproduction [. . .]

The next day is Sunday, with sunshine and strong wind! We swim in the blue and raging sea, yelling, entirely swallowed by the foamy manes, the pearlescent of the wild waves. Once we arrive at shore, we enter the cafeteria Las Palmitas, where we have to spend some time with Tony and his uncle, it's inevitable. Writ-

ing this, it might seem we're familiar, but I actually just grin and bear it, because I know just as little about them as you do. Tony is a shabby Latin lover: he wears reflective sunglasses and a Lakers shirt.

I guess his uncle has seen, and especially drunk, plenty in life; his eyes are bright and washed out of illusion, his skin is rather flabby, not well-rested and pale, he's probably not familiar with L'Oréal. Tony is agonized by my civil status and the nature of my relationship with S. He generally talks a lot, and persistently: to us, to himself and the world, just like that; later, he and his uncle are drinking piss-coloured beer, they start talking about us while we're still right next to them . . . In a word, once we've got everything positive out of this encounter, that could now turn into something negative, we return to our concrete Casa Cesspool. [. .]

But Cuba is not only fiery despacitos and disgusting food, there's also professional commitment. As visitors of the upcoming Theatre Week, we'll hold a workshop in Havana the next day . . . It starts at 10 o'clock, so we still have time to throw a glance at one of those bent, local streets . . . And it was just like stepping into Alice's Wonderland for a moment . . . you enter, and already . . . there's stirring, cooking, boiling over. From each window, smaller window, hatch, even peephole, mad worlds are growing rampantly into our eyes. Fermentation, expansion, tremendous increasement. The gasification of this street is totally mind-blowing! The smell of rubbish, shit and soap. Ruined facades, damaged sirens, careful rubbish constructions, and shopping bags getting cleaned by neighbours. Worlds emerge from other worlds, emerge from other worlds, emerge from other worlds, emerge from other worlds!

We enter a coffee shop with all its selection enclosed in a poor thermos flask. The coffee costs 1 peso, a beautiful mammita is pouring a gulp into our cups . . . In the meantime, we discreetly look around her modest shop . . . an old armchair, a melted and slightly sun-beaten Christmas tree . . . a framed poster of the Spice Girls on the wall, so old and sun-bleached that Geri Halliwell looks totally like Mel B, and Mel C like Mel B . . . One is tempted to say: we have objects, we have computers, the internet, smartphones, functional and non-functional, designer and non-designer, this or that clothing.

But the people down here, they have life.

Now, just to come back to Marie Kondo's "Magic of Cleaning" for a moment. . . but where did I put it? "Farewell to Surpluses. Japanese Minimalism"? No, that's not it. "Hygge, the Danish Art of Whatsoever"? "Zero Waste Life"? Panic-fuelled, I search through my „Books concerning the fact that I have too many things“-shelf. Or maybe I left it on the "Books concerning the fact that I have too many books"-shelf?

When did the reflection on the abundance of objects in our life actually transform itself into just another accumulation of objects? As if we played a part in some sort of implementation of the Midas myth, where everything turns into a product, gadget, or power bank sooner or later, and then, shortly after, turns into rubbish, rubbish, heaps of rubbish that will be segregated with the aid of necessary segregators, segretaries, segregeers and the smart ‘SegreGO!’ app. The publisher of the next “The Magic of Cleaning” edition has already added a “cleaning organizer” and the “Mini-pronto”-atomizer.

Because Marie Kondo desperately talks us into a life that holds a suitable, seasonal costume and expedition ready for us, where every festival is full of flyers and bags of crummy buttons. And, after all, the products take over our eating habits, clothing, mating, sex, birth, disease and dying – as well as our not-eating, not-clothing, the lack of sexual intercourse and our PLANNING of giving-birth – but not only this – they also produce an ensemble of agitated feet, eye’s dryness and other necessities that are much more refined and only slightly unnecessary. And not to forget, the whole sector of products made for buying other products – such as shopping magazines – but not only shopping magazines, cause really, what magazine is not about shopping nowadays?

Nearly every “Women”-, “Achievement”- and “Heel”-magazine is a calculation of things one can buy. Also showing products that serve to take a picture of oneself presenting other freshly-bought products – now, that’s perverse. After all, the level of pleasure, safety and comfort has not increased for a long time – we only multiply objects because they form some sort of three-dimensional, pictorial language that serves us to cry out different tales, and those longings, aspirations, despairs, unfulfillments that are hidden within them. And in all of this, suddenly, there is Cuba. This world without goods.

Total consternation. Cause up till now, even travelling through poor countries, I’ve always been used to certain standards: the locals were somehow living their modest life, but the tourists oases were full of wealthiness and Toblerone – although surrounded by barbed wire and with a curfew – always buzzing 24/7. But in Cuba, it’s not about money or no money; here, food and other products ARE SIMPLY NOT AVAILABLE. [. . .] Gobbling bread rolls, rearranged, and decorated with other rolls, going through all sorts of stages: disbelief, denial, finally a crisis, and then, a slow reconciliation with this destiny, even a certain affirmation. For example, the realization that what I considered to be one and the same roll in the beginning, turned out to be a variety of roll-types, confusingly similar to one another. A sweet and loamy roll. A dry one, with a hint of graham flour. Another one, still moist after having lied around for a week. The same thing with the sandwiches. Identical. In my rejection, I confused the breakfast sandwiches with the lunch and dinner sandwiches, although they were served at different

hours. I confused the rice for beans, confused it for rice with beans with salt . . . it wasn't the same after all.

From one day to the other, I gradually begin to differentiate the nuances of this situation. Facing the impossibility of fulfilling the daily acts of consumption, and separated from the illusions of the internet, we've willy-nilly chosen the only possible option in this place: life. In Havana you just had to step out onto the street, and the hot and incredibly busy molecules already started to bump into our heads.

Coloured flakes were rustling between the leaves of the Ficus tree. Chickens, pig's heads – as a sacrifice to the local divinities – and bunches of bananas were rotting under the tree. The taxi-horns were screaming insistently. Beheaded chickens were hanging in lopsided shacks. At once, some fat cock jumped out from behind the fence and ran off with an important, hasty step, as if going back to fetch a viola he'd forgotten at home. . .

It smelled like combustion. The undershirts got torn by the wind. Horns! The foamy sea was directly flowing into the city behind the boulevard, overwhelming the pedestrians and cars. The Girón skyscraper, a gigantic block of concrete, hung over the neighborhood like a cliff over a picnic; entirely made off sly clearances like prostitute's tights, with the azure madness of the sea shining through them. There were some shabby gyms framed by its gates, where the barbells broke like grass. A shopping centre, a bleak establishment in the characteristic style of a demolished space shuttle. And a grocery shop, its assortment standing out through the large display of Vietnamese marquise-type pastries and a drastic stench of rotten meat.

[. . .] In the evenings, we're peeking into the windows. In the postcolonial villas, the tall apartments were carefully separated in two; in the lower part, a grandpa's head, he's cooking rice with beans, and above his head, a ceiling, and the feet of somebody who's sweeping the floor.

Seen from the perspective of the tumultuous life we're living back home, a life, where we're continuously clogged with some kind of impossibility, some obsession or agitation, cause we've already unlearned how to LIVE; where we only watch, scan, incessantly scroll through something appearing on bold screens . . . now, suddenly POISONED with this dense, stinking, shrieking intermeshing of streets, fingers and parks, we are not able to believe in Warsaw anymore. That it's somewhere out there, like a graveyard, with the neon lights of its arcades glimmering in the dark, with its golden terraces, announcing pointless advertisements, discounts, and collections. [. . .] That we're able to wander around with other zombies for days, searching matters for our – Lord, have mercy – Madame-bovarian worlds and sets in which we then perform ineptly, pretending to be some cool people from H&M commercials. Day after day it strikes us more clearly

that the objects, gadgets, extras, systems, and technologies granted us a lot, but they took away something essential after all.

Life. That's why the Western vampires are coming to this place, to steal corporality, eroticism, and stamina. To sprinkle themselves with this hot, vital blood; to observe, how people walk here, how they dance, how they shout, how they live. To drug themselves with their cheerful, shining bodies at a cheap rate, to trade them for foreign zombie-currency, immediately traded for Macs or smartphones by these bodies. Though it's also clear to the naked eye that offsite, Cuba is producing a skinny nag, dragging a hoary sound system through Guanabo. The awful West squeezes in through all sides. In places where it's possible to catch the faintest Internet signal – in parks and next to big hotels – pioneer-smartphonists are gathering. This looks totally unusual in the local context – where boredom, lethargy and impassés are still apparent in the urban landscape – people, just sitting next to each other uniformly, gazing uniformly, searching for topics of conversation, addressing each other, playing domino . . . Finally, the ones with the smartphone are the ones cut off from reality, mesmerized, crowding about, trying to catch something invisible in the air. Over here, the best of worlds is falling apart, and surely, in a few years, there'll be M&M's, billboards, labour factory-camps and an infinite influx of plastic bags, filling up the country just like they filled up the West in the nineties, turning it into a rainbow-coloured dump.

This process is also visible in our apartment. Made for Western tourists, it overflows with arrangements that flatter our taste and peculiarity. Our own, unused soap. Cups inscribed with 'Cappuccino' and a thing that is completely absurd over here: a box for Ikea cutlery! A huge Samsung fridge. Once you've understood how much space it actually occupies in the heart of its owner, you almost wouldn't dare to use it. We also receive clothes hangers, one of them single serving – the one being used for women's panties. Being a tourist over here is a rather tasteless piece of bread for me. You're obliged to visit the different places where Ernest Hemingway did something, said or drank something, and all this is already a reason to conventionalize Cuba as an extraterritorial country of the European Union; a Mojito costs 4CUC, awful white guys are running around, draped with their cameras, so boring, they make me want to puke. The only thing that saves our day is Oscar, our guide, and luckily not Pascal. Oscar is a humorous Cuban who's been educated in Szczecin and a specialist for the fabrication of ship's engines.

I've asked Oscar whether he was building a ship's engine himself, but he still has to think it over, he told me. We are joking a lot and Oscar is always pulling those typical apprentice-jinks as if he was still in Szczecin, attending classes on the various types of ship's engines, just about to feel the professor's book slap against his head . . .

I still haven't written anything about our cultural, educational, and intellectual activity over here. We don't idle and boldly penetrate the cultural structures of Havana. We tell everyone about the situation in Poland . . . about how we've been damaged during the war; but not only during the war, because we've also suffered before and after the war.

How the cruel invaders tried to depolonize Polish children, but these brave orphans didn't allow it and would've rather died than to subject to cultural annihilation! How the European Union is constantly taking money from us, wasting it for some never-finished, suspicious motorways and unnecessary buildings, ugly as sin, meanwhile our patience comes to its end; if it continues like this, we are obliged to sanction other member states, deal out financial penalties, and ultimately, even throw the Union out of the Union and run it ourselves! That's how it could end. However, this isn't always of interest to everyone as we've noticed in the literary centre of Dulce María where we've been invited to a sort of . . . yeah . . . nobody really knows what exactly.

The centre is located in the decrepit villa of Dulce María, God bless her soul. I don't know her work, but I guess she was writing some sort of crime novels; and must've had a contract with Mercedes, because the lodgings comprise around 400 square meters, with a height of eight meters. Inside, nice trinkets with some already broken-off brilliants, but still showing loads of diamonds, topazes and emeralds. A variety of different things that S. and I don't even have at home. Namely pianos. Or Japanese tapestries, Chinese vases, secret storage rooms, and – not like the ones we have at home, made from the shabbiest wood – marble stairs.

We get invited to the director's study. THE DIRECTOR'S. [. . .] (And now when I think of all the soap characters I met at every corner in Poland, those who didn't even stand, didn't even lie down next to the directors! The polished suit, padded at the elbows . . . showing an old commie's tics, making hand-washing gestures while talking about finances. A TURKISH JUMPER! Grey, grey, triple grey plus a bark cushion's pattern imprinted on his face! Meanwhile, this director. . . not an old crocodile, not Neptune, nothing like a chief. Remarkably big, black, with piercings, tattoos, puffs of grey curls and wearing a fantastic shirt as pink as a Barbie cabriolet. As is customary here, the meeting is assisted by his pretty secretary, who pours drinks, watches his nails and waits for the end of the assembly. She pours him a glass of juice, and, with a fancy gesture, he sweetens it with spoonfuls of sugar. Well, he says, and smudges the spilled juice on his desk, with fingers sticking out of his hand like a bundle of sausages.

Cuban writers are keeping him company. Two older fellows. One of them speaks Polish "TAK" [engl. 'yes']; it gives him so much pleasure that he continues boasting, repeating: tak, tak, tak in different tonalities, rhythms. And he's really

lucky that he's actually encountered such kind-hearted people like us. I don't even want to imagine what could've happened if he'd met some cruel fuckers who would've taken the piss out of him [. . .].

But we smile politely, and once the conversation gets to the topic of Polish culture – quite well known to our interlocutors that were subscribed to the “Polonia” journal in the seventies – almost starting a race, they begin to shout over to each other, exchanging the names of Polish writers: Sienkiewicz! Andrej Ważda! Stefan Milos! No, no, no, Czoslew!! CZOSLEW MILOS! No one knows what's supposed to be the outcome of all this, no one knows, and everyone seems a little intimidated by this lack of knowledge, this incertitude, entirely unlimited, but then again, strongly limited by the potential of this whole situation.

The vernissage of a young photographer from Havana, inspired by Stańczyk the jester, remains just as mysterious to us. BY THIS STAŃCZYK. The melancholiac, sitting around in his red jammies! However, while we're making fun of the absurdities encountered in this enterprise, more and more people begin to gather in front of the Centro Hispanoamericano . . . more and more people . . . the Stańczykistic art is clearly an important, popular movement over here, attracting the public. The first Stańczykologic congress in Havana can be considered an open event. The Stańczykologists have been fetched from San Jose. The eccentric Stańczykology professor arrived from the University of Trinidad. [. . .]

After the successful conference, the Polish group of Stańczykologists takes us out for clubbing. A strict selection rules the club, like the Varsovian Piekarnia in 2001: a retro telephone with a dial disc at the entrance; daredevils get waved through by an employee, then, the security guy approves the earlier pre-admission. The straws sticking out of the mojitos show obvious tooth marks of their previous users, yeah that's true, but they only cost 15 nacionales, so just as much as a dirty, torn plastic bag.

A big signboard hangs in front of the bar, listing all the add-ins that are not available anymore, which really cuts the choice between a pizza with cheese and this same pizza. Pancakes are sizzling on a big and ancient cast-iron oven, watched by a cook who's wearing a blue polo shirt, showing brick-red stains under his arms – remnants of years' sun and sweat – but nevertheless suitable for daily use in Cuba. Just like the shabby porters' liveries represented in the elevators, or the police officers' turnout; they're wearing wellies instead of boots and uniforms that are completely perforated on the shoulders. The Pizzeria is obviously a popular place, although our guides of authentic Havana – Dorota, Hubert and Łukasz – think that it has really downgraded lately. [. . .] The following day [. . .] we drove down to Trinidad.

We take a taxi-bus, together with a gang of young Spanish women, two old Dutch bon vivants and a young, silent Brit showing a desperate gaze, who, as I

realize now, was probably going there to commit some sort of exceptionally well-elaborated suicide, e.g. to let himself get torn apart by some local taxi-drivers, merchants or other people who'd push a lunch-menu into his hands.

I could still see him walking the busy streets – with frantic eyes, a map and a guidebook, he was rapidly, pointlessly walking in circles, not looking at anything. Back in the bus, the road stretches before us, it's hot, the vapourway is boring as hell, we get stuck behind some horse, tractor, smelly Kamaz truck again and again, or behind the bus that's very popular over here; that is, a lorry, with people sitting on a bench above the load bed.

We're surrounded by thickets and jungles, with ridiculous monuments, ruined stadiums, abandoned skyscrapers, once cheerful and today cheerless towns, leaning out of this verdancy from time to time, in a state of long-suspended decay; with single billboards standing around, chewed up by wild animals and alternately citing Che and Fidel. The driver – a young Latino wearing a golden necklace, a simple shirt and worn tracksuit bottoms – stops quite frequently during our drive, taking care of some transactions, interests, orders, changes, leaving numerous boxes in the bushes and picking up others in return.

And somehow, we're finally arriving in Trinidad. By now, we've been in Guanabo and Havana, which, apart from the set-up districts for tourists, has its own independent life, completely dumping itself on everyone. Here – the sheer opposite. Only a part of tourist life is pulsing, swarming about, antlike, while all around it, this destitute church-town is slowly falling apart.

At the local tourist office, the town's residents encircle rich Germans, Italians, English, and Dutch people, trying to squeeze out as much as possible of their purses, while the rest is waiting on the outskirts, in numbness, doze, lethargy. Abandoned on one of those dark and sultry streets, profoundly covered with buildings, we still haven't realized that we've ended up in the Cuban equivalent to the Polish Kazimierz Dolny. The ancient townhouses have openly displayed ground floors, so that it's possible to look inside, where every family presents some sort of exhibition of their lives: the prettiest furniture, flowers, pictures of relatives from Miami, enclosed by golden frames. The real life, I think, though it might be more modest, seems to really be taking place in these theatre-like settings.

Italy? Germany? Holland? – people are shouting after us. Poland – we respond initially, obviously acting thick as mice. Lewandowski! – they respond. So, we change our strategy. Italy – we respond, but that's when they say: Berlusconi! They know how to respond to every headword. Holland? Hollandaise sauce. Germany? Hitler. Saying all this, they immediately approach us, pushing some junk into our hands – it turns out that we've already bought different things off them

during this pattern; now it's just about paying them. We try to escape, but there are other ones jumping out from every corner, alley and angle. [. . .]

Wherever we find ourselves, tucked up wearily, Silvio rushes upon us and begins to show us his tricks: some balls, little boxes here, cards there, tiny cups! Seeing this, an older woman, selling some bracelets made from rowan berries, acts cleverly and joins Silvio in pestering us; waiters are instantly appearing from the underground, pushing their watery vapomohitos into our hands and everyone interacts in this transparent conspiracy and close collaboration; we're already sitting down, and they are waving our arms, walk with our feet, play with our heads as if they were balls, charging us for everything all the time. Over and above, Caribbean flops and trillers are arriving from everywhere, charming at first, but ultimately, even someone who can count to three, could easily sum up all these songs.

Below the bus station, a crowd of people romps about, chattering leisurely – just as the bus arrives, they break away like a flock of crows. A little further up, it's already less touristy on the streets – there's some kind of terrible silence, suspension. Someone is watching television. A horse sleeps. A dog barks. An old mommy stands around and stares. A man is cutting his nails, his wife and daughter are watching him. Security guards on the beach, making sure no locals try to enter it.

I didn't shed any tears after Trinidad. But I returned to Poland with a certain grief. Cause I had the feeling of having experienced a spiritual transformation, a total resocialization. I've never felt as awfully rich as I did after my return from Cuba. The apartment - like an only slightly run-down Carrington residency. We can light up our cigars. Pomp, extravagance. Two ketchups in the fridge. LUXURY. That's where I ran out of noteworthy advantages. Darkness. Internet. People scurry past concrete fortresses. Sublime silence on the metro, everyone shoots bubbles. Shopping. Cars. No music. Alienation, loneliness. It's totally unreal, knowing that, just a moment ago, we were carefree, happy, and alive, alive like never before.

Dorota Maślowska (born 1983 in Wejherowo) is a Polish writer, playwright, rapper, and columnist. She is the author of the novel *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą białą-czerwoną* (2002, UK edition: *White and Red*, Atlantic Books; 2005 US edition: *Snow White and Russian Red*, Grove Press), for which she received the Polish cultural award Polityka's Passport. For her next novel *Paw królowej* (2005, *The Queen's Peacock*), she received 2006 Nike Award, Poland's most important literary prize. Her play *Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po polsku* (2006, *A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Romanians*. Transl. by Lisa Goldman and Paul Sirett, Oberon Books 2008) is performed all over the world. As a rapper artist, she has released two albums *Spółczesność jest niemiła* (2014, *The Society is Not Nice*, aka Mister D.) and most recently *Wolne* [2023, ambiguously: *Free or The Slow Ones* (songs)]. She lives in Warsaw.

Contributors

Monika Dąbrowska, PhD in Hispanic Literature from the University of Warsaw with a thesis dedicated to Sergio Pitol at the International University of La Rioja (UNIR).

Ana Davis González, PhD in Philological Studies (University of Seville, 2020), postdoctoral researcher at the Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos in Sevilla (Latin-American Studies Centre, CSIC).

Jaša Drnovšek, PhD in Comparative Literature (FU Berlin) and researcher at the University of Maribor (Slovenia).

Jorge Estrada, PhD in Comparative Literature (FU Berlin) and a licentiate degree in Hispanic Literatures (UNAM, Mexico), Junior Fellow at MECILA: Maria Sibylla Merian Center Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America in São Paulo (2021), and visiting postdoc researcher (DAAD) at Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (2023).

Ottmar Ette, full professor and Chair of Romance Literatures and Cultures as well as Comparative Literature at the University of Potsdam for almost three decades, Director of the long-term project on Alexander von Humboldt at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Director of the Humboldt Center for Transdisciplinary Studies at Hunan Normal University, Changsha (China).

Patricia A. Gwozdz, PhD (2016) and Habilitation (2022) in Romance and Comparative Literature (University of Potsdam), Chair-in-residence and Lecturer for Romance Literatures and Cultures at the University of Hannover and Potsdam.

Agnieszka H. Hudzik, PhD in Comparative Literature (FU Berlin), Postdoc at the Cluster for European Research, Saarland University.

Elisa Kriza, PhD in Comparative Literature and postdoctoral degree in Cultural History, Comparative Literature and Media Studies (University of Bamberg, Germany).

Joanna M. Moszczyńska, PhD in Latin American Literatures and Cultures (FU Berlin), postdoc researcher at Department for Interdisciplinary and Multiscalar Area Studies (DIMAS) at the University of Regensburg, Junior Fellow at MECILA: Maria Sibylla Merian Center Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (São Paulo 2022).

José Luis Nogales Baena, Distinguished Research Scholar in the Department of Spanish and Hispanic American Literature at the University of Seville (2022–2024), María Zambrano Scholarship (Ministry of Universities, Spain), funded by the European Union (NextGenerationEU).

Tara O'Sullivan, Research Scholar in Comparative Literature and Philosophy at the Freie Universität in Berlin (graduated 2023).

Anna Ratke-Majewska, PhD in Social Sciences in the field of Political Science, Faculty of Social Science, University of Zielona Góra (Poland), Assistant Professor at the Institute of Political Science and Public Administration in its Department of Contemporary History and Political Thought.

Pablo Sánchez, full professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature at Universidad de Sevilla (Spain) since 2018.

Robert Schade, PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Potsdam, lecturer at the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst/German Academic Exchange Service) at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brazil, since 2019.

Claudio Soltmann, doctoral candidate in History and Translation at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/Germersheim.

Mónika Szente-Varga, PhD in History from the University of Szeged (2005) and habilitation (2014), associate professor at the Department of International Security Studies at Ludovika University of Public Service.

Aleksandra Tobiasz, PhD in History (European University Institute, Florence, Italy), researcher at the Institute of Civilisation and Culture in Ljubljana (Slovenia), postdoctoral fellow at the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) in Mainz (Germany).

Javier Toscano, interdisciplinary researcher in the fields of migration studies, political philosophy, and philosophy of technology, post-doc researcher in Media Politics in Paris and Berlin.

Guillermo Zermeño Padilla, full professor and researcher at El Colegio de México's Center for Historical Studies in México City since 1998, member in the highest tier of the national researchers system in Mexico, member of the Research Training Group *Temporalities of Future* (Germany/Mexico).

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