

# Representaciones de la resistencia en la literatura y el cine

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Throughout Latin America, and along certain parts of the U.S.-Mexico border, you will see murals and graffiti containing variations of a saying popularly attributed to the Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda: “*Podrán cortar las flores pero no podrán detener la primavera*” (They can cut down all the flowers, but they will never be able to stop the spring). There is little evidence that Neruda actually made this comment, but questions of authorship are beside the point. What matters most is the message. That is, in spite of oppressive forces, searing injustices, and seemingly insurmountable odds, artists and laypeople alike will inevitably reassert power, harnessing a shared humanity to push back against repressive regimes and official state discourse in the search for more equitable and aspirational alternatives.

I’ve been thinking a lot about this Neruda-esque saying over the past year. In my own country (the United States), we find ourselves at what the U.S. historian Jon Meacham describes as “an inflection point,” where political violence becomes increasingly normalized and longstanding democratic and social norms face assault. The tumult of the Trump Era, however, is not an anomaly on the global stage. Countries across the planet are witnessing the rise of far-right movements, many of which echo ideals, often grounded in heteropatriarchy and strongman populism, that malign peripheral groups to consolidate state power and to bolster the cultural and political standing of their supporters.

Lately, however, I’ve also been thinking about a line from the 2000 Julian Schnabel directed film, *Before Night Falls*, based on the autobiography *Antes que anochezca* by Cuban poet and political dissident Reinaldo Arenas: “People that make art are dangerous to any dictatorship. They create beauty, and beauty is the enemy ... Artists are counterrevolutionary.” In unique ways, the articles in this, the fifteenth volume of *Polifonía*, explore this sentiment by investigating how writers and directors grapple with power asymmetries and push back against hegemonic forces with an eye toward more just and humane courses of action.

In her article, Andrea Bernal Lozada (Arizona State University) explores how in the Brazilian-Colombian film *La otra forma*, the body is voluntarily altered to conform to societal molds. In this dystopian setting, characters must modify their bodies to fit geometrical shapes to create a superior body. This article thus considers the act of deformation as a social standard that shapes performative bodies. Grounded in Judith Butler's theory of performativity as well as Mikhaíl Bakhtin's ideas concerning the grotesque, it concludes that the deformed body in this film fulfills a political role in a dystopian and authoritarian world.

In his article, Andrés M. Obando Taborda (Purdue University) analyzes the ambivalent role of *(tecno)vigilancia* in the novel *La virgen cabeza* (2009) by Gabriel Cabezón Cámara, with attention given to its impact on the disadvantaged, the marginalized, and *(sexo)disidentes* in the fictional and impoverished neighborhood El Poso, located in Buenos Aires. Employing Bauman and Lyon's theories on contemporary surveillance, the article argues that the novel establishes a paradox: the systems of *(tecno)vigilancia* that initially promote community cohesion, visibility, and a sense of security are also mechanisms of control, dismantling, and destruction. Accordingly, it argues that the novel criticizes how biopower and neoliberalism create, destroy, and restructure communities, the bodies of *(sexo)disidentes*, and their collective resistance.

In her article, Arabella Adams (Wellesley College) surveys the evolution of homophobia in Cuba in the period after the Cuban Revolution up to the Mariel exodus (1959-1980). She then explores why the film *Fresa y chocolate* (1993), directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea y Juan Carlos Tabío, shouldn't necessarily be seen as a representation of genuine progress. Adams concludes that, given the historical context, the film might best be considered as a form of political propaganda, while the works of other Cuban filmmakers better explore LGBTQ+ resistance to the Cuban government.

In his article, Daniel Cuesta Ágredo (Freie Universität Berlin) analyzes the graphic novel *Los Once* (2014), which addresses the event known as the Siege of the Palace of Justice in November 1985 by the M-19 guerrilla group, and its Retaking, referring to the military operations carried out by the Armed Forces to counter the assault. Through the visual allegory of the animal world, the narrative establishes parallels with historical actors involved in the siege: civilians, the M-19, and the Army. The article examines how this metaphor emphasizes the disproportion of forces and characterizes actors either with humanized features that generate empathy or within a register of bestiality that symbolizes state violence. The article concludes

that the work not only updates a central topos of Colombian collective memory but also complicates its interpretation through narrative and visual strategies that combine fable, allegory, and testimony.

In her article, Diana Torres Silva (Duke University) analyzes civilian resistance during Colombia's *Estallido Social*, focusing on the symbolic reappropriation of the concept of by the most excluded sectors of society. In a context of longstanding inequality, marginalization, and state repression—conditions that were further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic—protesters, most of them young people already living in situations of precarity, identify with the victims of extrajudicial executions perpetrated by the State. This identification exposes a shared vulnerability vis-à-vis an authoritarian politico-economic regime and generates a *narrativa autopoeítica* in which the “*no todavía muertos*” reclaim themselves as historical subjects and agents of transformation. The article examines how protesters, through literary texts and urban interventions that emerged during the *Estallido*, reconfigure their exclusion into political agency and symbolically redeem those who have been executed—whether in the past, the present, or the future.

In her article, Diandra García (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) analyzes the series *Hernán* (Amazon Prime, 2019) as a critical rereading of the colonial discourse of the Americas. Through a narrative and visual analysis of its episodes, it argues that the series displaces the figure of the conquistador, traditionally represented by Hernán Cortés, in favor of a fragmented construction affected by other voices, especially that of Marina (la Malinche). The fictional story does not seek to simply represent historical facts; rather, it proposes a decolonization of the foundational imaginary by introducing ambiguities, silences, and contradictions. The article argues that the series questions the authority of the conquistador, undermining the heroic chronology, bestowing agency to subordinated characters in the official history (especially in the figure of Marina), and ultimately inviting its audience to reinterpret a colonial legacy that continues to influence society today.

In her article, Edurne Beltrán de Heredia Carmona (Coastal Carolina University) examines *Mi parto robado* (2023) by Nahia Alkorta, situating it as a form of feminist resistance opposite the obstetric violence and authoritarian medicalization of childbirth in Spanish society. Through an interdisciplinary lens that combines feminist theory, trauma study, biopolitics, medical humanities, and justice narratives, this essay argues that the author transforms an experience of violation into political, affective, and collective action where writing becomes an act of symbolic reparation and epistemic disobedience. Accordingly, *Mi parto robado*

reinscribes childbirth as disputed territory and pain as a source of knowledge and agency. It thus contributes to a feminist genealogy that defies hegemonic discourses regarding maternity, medical truth, and institutional justice.

In his article, George Cole (Texas Tech University) analyzes *El puñal* (2014) by Jorge Fernández Díaz through a critical lens centered on Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality and Umberto Eco's study of binary oppositions in the narratives of Ian Fleming. It examines how the novel fuses British spy texts with the *la novela negra dura* and Latin American narcoliterature, thereby producing a critical reconfiguration of the genre. Through its protagonist, Remil, the text denounces systemic corruption, structural violence, and marginalization. In the end, espionage is no longer an act of global heroism, instead becoming a mechanism of control and violence in the service of corrupt elites and transnational criminal structures in contemporary Argentina.

In her article, Patricia Catoira (Montana State University) analyzes John Sayles's film *Men With Guns* (1997). The article argues that Dr. Fuentes, a prosperous physician in the capital of a nameless Latin American country, emerges as a well-intentioned yet naive antihero whose central failing is ignorance of the systemic social injustices surrounding him. By aligning—however passively—with structures of power, he has contributed to the deaths of his students and, by extension, to the suffering of the poor and Indigenous populations. The film ultimately suggests that without confronting and dismantling the entrenched structures of injustice, even the well-meaning—like Fuentes—remain complicit in maintaining the status quo.

In her article, Patricia María Gamboa (University of East Anglia) examines the novel *La mala costumbre* (2023), by Alana S. Portero. Taking place in post-dictatorship Spain, the novel narrates the experience of growing up in a working class Madrid neighborhood during the 1980s and 1990s from the perspective of a young trans girl. Through an intersectional feminist lens, the article analyzes how the interaction between social class and gender identity defines the experiences of the protagonist, producing a space marked by systemic vulnerability but also by the development of forms of resistance. It argues that the novel not only documents the scars of an era, but also inscribes, in its testimonial and aesthetic dimension, a space of everyday resistance in light of the often invisible oppressive forces that threaten to marginalize different groups.

Lastly, in an interview conducted by Lefteris Makedonas with Helena Corbellini, they discuss the legacy of the Uruguayan writer Juan Carlos Onetti, locating his work

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in the larger panoply of Uruguayan literature, especially in regard to his novel, *El Pozo*.

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