

IN-Finite: Museum of Foreign Identification

Literary creation from the sense of not-belonging

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iii. Abstract

The sense of belonging is considered a fundamental human need, part of the human condition. As a spectrum of actualization of the sense of belonging, foreignness works as a factor in the configuration of culture and identity. This work seeks to understand key elements of the influence that foreignness has in the creative process due to its interaction with these realms of the self. More specifically, it aims to identify the opportunities that the position of foreignness offers to creators. The author's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-national circumstances are used as base for a practice-based research method that enables theoretical frameworks to be confronted with different artistic endeavours, with the aim of producing a bundle of diverse work, the intersections of which inform the concept of foreignness and some associates, like uprootedness, estrangement and alienation. The result is organized as a curated museum-like experience that links theoretical, critical and creative pieces, recounting individual and collective reflection, the last gotten through a workshop, to enable further development of foreign art.

1. INTRODUCTION

Picture me standing in front of the mo'ai locked up in the British Museum. It is a scene of extreme discomfort. It's lonely. The mo'ai stares at a shiny white wall, I stare at a shiny white label that explains what the mo'ai is. I, myself, walk under labels every day: "diversity", "inclusion", "international student", hashtag wanderlust.

There is a problem to be addressed in the room. The exhibition is carefully planned by the best of the field, but, to me, the mo'ai looks out of place, just as I think I do in my little classroom full of British people. The mo'ai and I are foreigners. The mo'ai doesn't know it, but I do, and the tension won't leave me, even after I leave London and go back to the tiny room of an ugly flat that I casually call home.

I want to understand, and that leads me to create, to explore through my writing what museums are, what countries are, what borders mean and where am I in the greater picture. I choose to create because it allows me the luxury of the analogy, of threading things together beyond any limit and fear of irrationality. It is, truly, my only hope to identify the threads that form a knot inside my chest.

There are good reasons to use a practice-based approach, better explained by the name I originally met the concept with: creation-research. First of all, in the artistic process, part of the raw material needed for creation comes directly from subject who creates, and the extent of this contribution makes subject and object of the creative practice one and the same¹. When creation is thought as, or fused with, research, the researcher is the researched, and this makes creation the most adequate method to generate knowledge about humanity's own way of being².

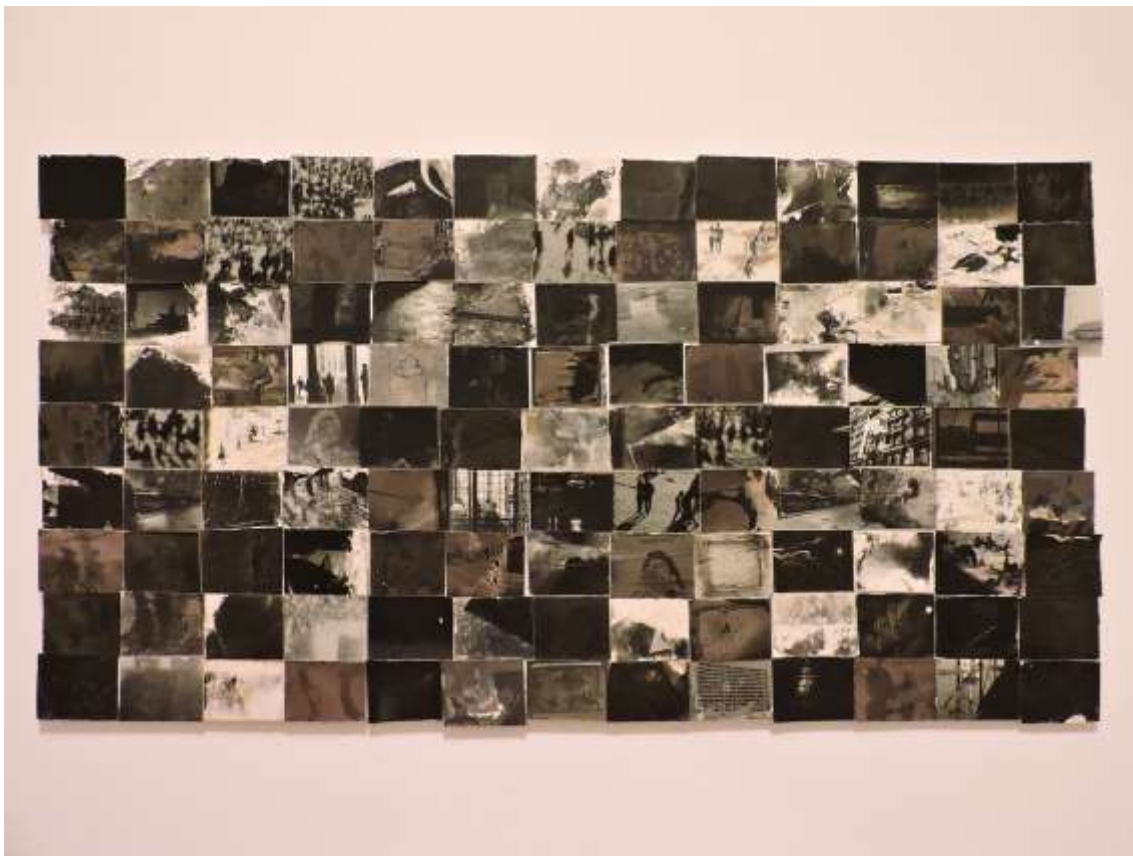
Second, creation-research acknowledges culture, the provider of the raw material that does not come from the subject, through the conscious development of perspective (thus the fundamental role of poetics). "Human beings exist only in interdependence with other human beings"³, and awareness "takes shape against previous experiences, earlier positions, interests formulated for other purposes and other contexts"⁴. While creation in isolation lacks the rigour to be research, making the display of imagination dissolve in the realm of fantasy, creation-research reflects on itself through the paradigm that it is breaking, exposing the broken connections. If "culture consists in the way analogies are drawn between things"⁵, the practice-based research endeavour is that of connecting unlikely realms through imaginative analogy.

I chose to make an analogy between myself and a museum. I made an exhibition room out of the liminal space of foreignness. I did so despite of and thanks to the nausea that I felt at the British Museum, because I perceived that dread to be essential to the solution of my inner tension. The museum, as institution, was the image that made my exercise of imagination possible, the one that allowed me to organize my fragments in a way both intelligible and clearly, awkwardly artificial.

The analogies used are just the same: strange, elastic, hopefully intriguing. Concepts are interlocked following my creative experience and the reflection I made on it: museum becomes body, body becomes text, text is space, and this is identity, and identity appears as a performative art. There are just so many iterations sense and meaning can handle before becoming precarious, but just like the British Museum, this finite space that hopes to contain the infinite.

2. THE MUSEUM

TATE Modern, London, the ever-sunny London that nobody experiences but me. I was tired after six hours of bus travel and voting for the third time that year in the Colombian consulate. Wishing to find the end of the section, so I could finally have an excuse to go upstairs and drink a coffee, I got into a nook where *City Portrait*, by Fernell Franco, was exposed in a wall.



a. City Portrait / Retrato de Ciudad. Fernell Franco, 1987.

Battered fragments of Santiago de Cali, left to the elements as the photographs are not chemically fixed to the paper. One of the two pieces made by a Colombian in the entire museum, which are two more than I expected. A wave of pride washed over me: someone from my country had his works exhibited in the renowned TATE Modern. A little

portion of my homeland succeeding in the First World, next to Tokyo and New York. I told myself that I had fallen in that fallacy before, and so I left my empty joy in front of Franco's collage and walked away.

Going upstairs, I recalled some other windows onto Colombia I have encountered during my time of wandering. There was an empty bag of Juan Valdéz coffee thrown in the street in Aberdeen. A Colombian flag promised ajíaco and empanadas in front of a restaurant in Antwerp, Belgium. Another, Bon Bon Bum bubblegum pops and Hit lulo juice in the middle of Bath's Christmas market. A Bulgarian man told me once about his Colombian colleague, who, unlike me, found cocaine jokes funny. In a recent birthday party, every time I introduced myself, people would ask me my nationality and proceed to excuse someone called Ma Lú —who I have never met and know nothing about—, for her absence, because she was the only other Colombian in the group and "she was supposed to come". "It would have been great if you two met", they said every time, and I smiled awkwardly.

All those tiny fragments gather like the photographs in Franco's *City Portrait*, blending together, degrading at the mercy of my foreign experience. They react to the pieces of faraway lands, struggling to fit all together, interlocking in a looped conversation, a three-dimensional messy tangle: "Sierra Leone is like Colombia", "Colombia is like Greece", "China is like Colombia", "Colombia is like Ukraine".

The resultant tapestry composes a ground for me to stand in, an introductory letter, a name and face in the passport. But is that image a map of myself, or the face of Colombia? Aren't they the same? Three years ago, some people in Cuba gave up on remembering my name so they christened me "Colombia" instead, and I have been thinking about it ever since. What does that mean?

I decided to look into the answers by creating my own, magnified *City Portrait*. To do it, I subscribed to the concept of autoethnography as formulated by Tessa Muncey. In her book *Creating Autoethnographies*, she explains that the practice of autoethnography “emerges out of the iterative process of doing research, while engaging in the process of living a life”⁶, considering both processes one and the same. As researcher and researched, the autoethnographer doesn’t reflect on their experience as a narrative that may resonate with others through empathy or identification, but as a case study whose relevance relies on the unique perspective it offers on a subject lived by many, but that is overlooked, underrepresented or misinterpreted by the mainstream.

Ethnography is the study of peoples and cultures. My autoethnography, then, has to do with a group I belong to, and with which I can position myself as a reference point: foreigners. The pertinence of an autoethnography for foreignness comes to light when considering the sheer size and diversity of the people it comprises, and how buried it is under the hot topics of refugee crisis, migrant waves, world order, colonialism, problematic expat pride, tourist packages and the evergreen genre of memoir, specifically, in the branch of travel literature.

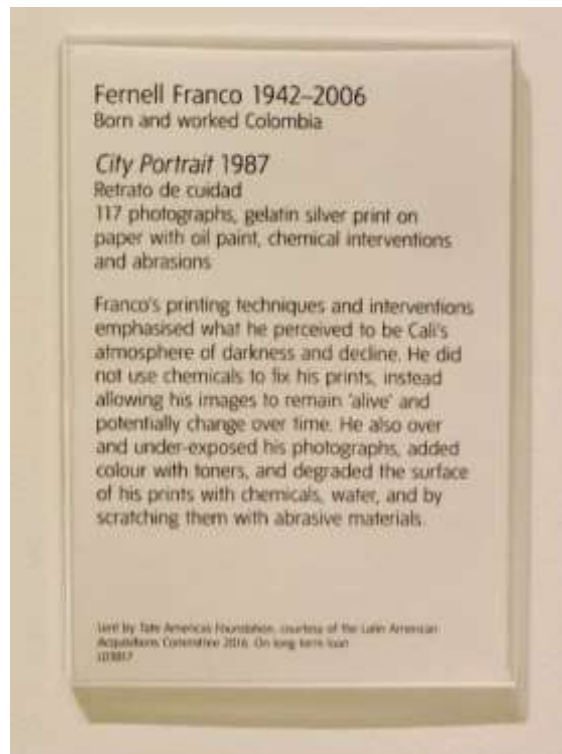
The interest in memoir is born not from the collection of curious facts and anecdotes, but from the mental and emotional journey of the narrator, who tries to find the meaning or consequences of the things they narrate⁷. This seems appropriate for the task at hand. However, different from the autoethnography, the memoir seeks to form a conventional narrative where the reader can follow a progression and arrive to some sort of ending, of literary fabrication. This, added to the presumption of factual accuracy that memoirs entail, would seclude the exploration to the events of a life, which, for a phenomenon as ethereal

as the relationship between foreignness and creation, results insufficient.

In the other hand, a structure alike *City Portrait*'s prompts me the way I need: none of the 117 photographs that compose the piece match their neighbours as pieces of a puzzle. Rather, they communicate across the board and reveal connections every time the eye moves from darkness to light or from empty to full spaces. Many faces of the city of Santiago de Cali appear in it without completely revealing themselves, the silhouettes coexist, change and wither with the pass of time, composing an allegory to history —fragmented, non-linear, blurry—, instead of telling a story, as a comic book would do.

I am not “trying to evoke a response to [...] personal experience, but to contribute to the discourse on [the topic of research]”⁸. I agree with the idea that “the form must actively enhance the subject matter”⁹, thus I rely on experimental approach to engage with fragmentation and intersectionality, which I consider essential characteristics of foreignness. Honouring the constant encounter with the hidden and the unexpected, I gather here traces, dialogues, incidents and artefacts that relate to each other by work of the reader's eye, laying the dots to be connected and outline ephemeral borders, suggesting transitory shapes of the foreign experience.

I took another cue from *City Portrait*, but this one was not Franco's doing, but TATE's. While the other Colombian artwork, “Bound” (also by Franco) reminisced Latin America in a way I recognized, I would not have grasped the magnitude of *City Portrait* without the help of the curator's note.



b. One of the curators' notes on Fernell Franco's room at TATE Modern.

The word "Colombia" in this piece of text was what made me stop and swell with fallacious pride instead of rushing for a coffee and a good view over the Thames. I took what resonated with me from the context given in the note and interpreted the artwork accordingly. Also, intrigued by the clarification "Born and worked Colombia", I started to make note of the same tag in other pieces: "Born France, works France, Algeria, Germany". "Born and works USA". I couldn't say whether TATE adds this for the pure sake of context, or there is an unspoken intention to appear more diverse and multicultural. In any case, drawing a parallel with Muncey's idea of autoethnography as research while living, that TATE recognizes in the notes the tacit influence of the *living* in the creation serves as testament of the imprint of nationality in creatives' lives and their audience.

As this is a piece of academic practice-based research, and as I am about to display my individual experience “to increase the public’s enjoyment and understanding”¹⁰ of foreignness (I am paraphrasing the mission statement of TATE here), I found my role as researcher similar to that of a curator who organizes and contextualizes a collection.

Now, if there is an institution responsible for the perpetuation of exoticism, it is the museum. That is why I reject the naive pride of finding a Colombian artwork pinned to the wall, another butterfly in the collection of peevish peddlers. Museums uproot pieces from their context by framing them, and then recontextualize them according to their agenda —just as storytellers do—, but, as established keepers of knowledge, their narrative becomes hegemonic discourse, leaving thousands of voices unheard, those which alternative methods of research like autoethnography seek to bring back to the light.

In order to use the setup of a museum to curate this piece, I had to infect the institution of the museum with mortality and free it from the ill intent of preserving knowledge not only for history, but also from history, fixing the convenient omissions and changes that historiography is so fond of by making them subjective, not definitive.

The theoretical framework I developed to achieve this is summarized in the first section of this work, *Metamorphic Anthropophagy*. The core idea is that understanding can be achieved by means of personification. Through the intense subjectification of an object, it is possible to morph into it and abduct its perspective, comprising its being and accessing its knowledge. This state of multiple agency and multi-layered awareness is precarious and takes the morphed body to the verge of collapse, giving it the allegoric qualities of fragmentation and agony. When ‘I’ use the frame of autoethnography to position myself at the

centre of the research, making curator and curated one and the same, 'I' become the 'body of artwork', and while 'I' get exposed and broken, 'I' remain in context and preserve my agency.

Anthropophagy is also useful to contextualize and validate the external sources of this piece, which is necessary considering that I have borrowed from many people and relied on real life dialogues quite a lot. This happened because foreignness is necessarily multidimensional, it involves more than one entity or territory. I am a foreigner somewhere, I am foreign to someone, and so I must reach and devour that outside me to give shape to myself. This 'outside' comes sometimes from memory, sometimes from reflection, and also from the material produced during a workshop I conducted in the University of Salford with voluntary participants. The different levels of reliability and awareness that resulted from these sources correspond to the intrinsic intersectionality of the subject and to the stage of development of the research, which also played in the definition of the methodology.

The first text I wrote in this exploration, called *The Wandering Foreigner*, explicitly avoided the task of conceptualizing foreignness beyond an instrumental definition and refrained from studying it under an interdisciplinary lens. Although my personal case was mentioned to exemplify some of the points I make, it was still a traditional piece where I desperately tried to separate my experience from the theory I develop, fearing my subjectivity will weaken the credibility of my arguments. Through the year, I realized my subjectivity is essential to my practice and the research that results from it: just as I wouldn't have stopped for long in front of *City Portrait* were it not from the same country I am, I wouldn't be able to create this piece if I was not living in Manchester as a Colombian, studying creative writing in the United

Kingdom as an international student. It was because I had to go to London to vote for Colombian elections that I visited the TATE Modern in the first place. If I came from a country that allowed voting by post, or if I didn't think my vote was important, the outcome would have been wildly different.

The gain of pairing these nuances of life with the theoretical concepts I have analysed and/or developed, most of which are applied in the creation of this text, is what makes this piece an authentic autoethnography and a relevant contribution to the field. As Muncey puts it, "you cannot separate what you are from what you do"¹¹ and as so, in the process of making a museum, I become a living museum myself.

1.1. About us

By birth, my group of reference is the country of Colombia. Inside it, I am part of the 84,15% of inhabitants who lack a defined ethnic or racial background¹². In relation to the indigenous people, commonly called *natives*, and the people of black ancestry, known as *afro-Colombians*, this condition of being *non-native/mixed* puts me a ground level of non-belonging.

I had a German grandfather, from whom I inherited the right to German citizenship and, most importantly, a German last name. In the context of Colombia, the strangeness of the name, added to some traditions my family adopted from my grandfather, labelled me as "the German". With this first level of foreignness, when I was 21 years old, I moved temporarily to Germany, without a deep knowledge of the language or the customs.

My lack of understanding plus my unfamiliar face added a second level of foreignness in which I was identified as “the Colombian”, despite my name and passport. Later on, at age 25, I moved to Great Britain, a place with which I have no connection with besides the fact I am fluent in its language, and got my third and last level of foreignness, the one of the visitor. This one is similar to the condition of tourist that I acquire when I visit another country for a brief period, just in different degrees inside a spectrum, depending on how far the local culture is of what I already know.

1.2. Our points of reference

The decision to write in a language that is not one’s own, even if justified by the mere wish of socially interacting, has unavoidable consequences in the writer’s cultural identity. The notion of identity is critical here: in rough terms, identity comes from *idem*, “the same”, a root it shares with identification, and it is the action of defining individuality from the characteristics shared with a group. It could also be defined as the way empirical, cultural and social traits mix in a specific shape that serves to establish how someone is unique and part of a group of equals at the same time. To speak about cultural identity, then, is to refer only to the cultural traits present in this conformation of individuality.

Due to this, the subject that embraces a foreign cultural factor like a second language partially detaches himself from the forms proper of his first language, therefore modifying the cultural portion of his individual shape. The cultural load of the second language, expressed through its semiotics, devices, conditions and context, pulls the piece

of writing —and the author behind it— out of the walls of its original culture and into the transcultural space.

Since the modified identity suffers a change in its state of matter and becomes liquid and malleable, somehow unbalanced, it is only natural to describe the transcultural space not as a peaceful point of transition from culture A to B and back, but rather as a precarious ground in constant movement. Within an analogy to territory, the transcultural space would behave like a body of water.

Deleuze and Guattari offer another representation. Theorizing about the nature of the book, they describe the *classical* book —the very typical idea of book, the one linked to *tradition*, that we can assume as the one that entirely belongs to a single culture, hence being able to contain it— to be a still, unnatural root of the tree that represents life⁸. Opposed to this doubtful homogeneity, they demand for creation to happen under a heterogeneous, rhizomatic logic. Rhizomes are a type of root which grows indefinitely and connects with everything, one that can reach levels of abstraction that encompass the nature of social interaction and the state of identity of an author in the transcultural space.

It's worth noting that Deleuze and Guattari use the terms "rhizomatic" and "nomad" interchangeably. Put in their own words, the innate motion of the rhizomatic logic, which translates to the nature of the transcultural space here, is comparable to that of a pendulum, "a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle"¹³. Just like pendulums, once the starting point is left behind, it becomes impossible to reach again, which means that the decision of detaching oneself from the unity of one own's culture is

irreversible and, going back to the analogy of territory, that means the transcultural object will never settle down again.

The development of this model attributes an unnatural stillness to culture that makes little sense, after all, transformation is an essential part of human nature. Besides, contact between cultures exerts change. To define cultural identity as "a sort of collective 'true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common"¹⁴ solves this conundrum, but applies a scale of judgement to the way of living of social groups. Are all the layers but the first one 'untrue'? Is freedom the act of stripping off one own's identity from the lies and impositions that pollute the culture, a process that is commonly described as *going back to the roots*?

Within this frame, a jump to the transcultural space becomes a betrayal, the layering of one of those superficial selves over the one that is 'true' or 'rightful'. However, no matter if an individual wants to completely eradicate the foreign cultural traits imposed to him, the fact is that they are part of his identity and that this change of shape has irrevocably thrown him in the transcultural space. The mixed-race, colonized *mestizo* can't go back to his original language to reject the one of the colonizers, because his original language is the one of the colonizers.

This impossibility to go back gives culture a symbolic dimension against the transcultural space, where the influence of history and the melancholy of the homelessness makes it become allegorical. Benjamin points out that allegory speaks about the dead side of history¹⁵. It is a mechanism capable to approach crisis and express the fragmented, to

rearrange the pieces of a lost legacy —the culture lost after a jump to the transcultural space— into a new, even if transitory, whole.

The allegoric device leads to recognize that “as well as many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather —since history has intervened— ‘what we have become’.”¹⁶. In this sense, cultural identity is a work in progress that concerns more to identity and less to culture and tries to find the current position of the transcultural subject in the stream of history, one that is authentically temporal.

With this definition, the transcultural piece of writing is necessarily deemed as allegorical. A postcolonial writer may use this approach to break free from the duty of symbolic representation. However, the fact that he is *unrooted* at the eyes of the empires, which live under the discourse of hegemony, thus believing in a long, uninterrupted tradition that defines their cultural identities as complete (symbolic), makes the readers from there consider this writer barbaric, adjective that, used by European nations, becomes quite literal.

Reading someone or something as barbaric is to consider it foreign in a very specific, Western way. The barbarians don’t speak the legitimate language (Greek). They don’t belong to the legitimate culture (Roman) either, they are a threat to the borders of the empire. European western nations interpret changes on their cultural realities as intents to decimate the stronghold of civilization. From a colonialist point of view, while culture is defined by the way people live, civilization is the way people should live, the only way of living that makes humans human. The scourge of conquering and crusades operates under the logic it is only human to bring civilization to all people, to give them

the opportunity to leave behind their uncivilized practices and elevate themselves to a virtuous condition which is defined in symbolic terms.

This explains why European readers are reluctant to submerge themselves into third world literature. As Fredric Jameson explains, they perceive this literature to be demanding for other reader, one that cannot identify with the established civilization and needs allegoric devices. As the same author admits, "these reactions to third-world texts are at one and the same time perfectly natural, perfectly comprehensible, and terribly parochial"¹⁷. That Europeans brand foreign texts as primitive because the very primitive impulse of self-defence demands them to do so is ironic and, seeing how irony and allegory are so closely related, it is possible for the transcultural writer to use this irony to position himself.

According to Paul De Man, irony works as a mechanism of self-multiplication that allows the writer to observe himself from the realm of language¹⁸. This ability, which works in a very similar way to allegory, is necessary to interact with empires at a truly social level, one of equal exchange of cultural traits, instead of falling in the scale of value of civilization imposing, one that nullifies cultural identity.

The colonization process gave the European gaze an inhuman quality. About this, Césaire said that "the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal."¹⁹. After so many years of putting their civilizing quest over any social interaction with the other, the European gaze lost the basic human function of empathy. This translates into the inability to identify with non-European characters and situations, and to refuse to let foreign elements touch European

culture until and unless they stop being barbaric and play by the European rules. This is where exotification comes into place.

The exotic is another consideration of the foreign, one of value. Designating something as exotic is to give worth to its foreignness, to justify the interest it creates on the fact that it doesn't belong to the culture. It can be explored, but not so much that it gets assimilated into the culture, for it would lose its worth. Therefore, it is given an eternally representative function, one that demands stillness. The rhizomatic growing of the transcultural space is stopped and the postcolonial writer, forced to present the collection of fragments that conform his cultural identity in the symbolic terms of European civilization, finds what he has as inferior.

The demand for representation "makes us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other',"¹⁶ and gives us a vain urge to correct the 'wrongs' in order to fit in, moment in which the colonization process triumphs and cultural identity is lost, because it is not actively being built anymore. Toni Morrison explained that discrimination "keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being"²⁰ to a spectator—the European—who works as gatekeeper and determines the value of what is explained to him.

Irony, when considered as a way to define the position of the subject on what he calls nature, allows the transcultural writer to see the lie on the scale of value of civilization, to notice the fragmentary, allegoric nature of the cultural identity of empires, even when they refuse to acknowledge it. Being able to perceive how essentially inhuman is the imperial disposition of listening to the other in order to assess how human (civilized) he is, allows to establish contact with them in

allegoric terms, ones that don't sacrifice the appreciation of one's own identity.

It is time now to reintroduce considerations of language and introduce myself to the question. The only British cultural trait I consciously adopted before moving to the United Kingdom was language. Even more, the reason I moved there in the first place was because of the language. While I speak Spanish and German as consequence of other cultural factors that determined me, I learned English for a purely social reason: in our present day, English is the most widespread second language, which makes it a common tongue for cultures that, without it, would be unable to establish contact, especially non-violent contact. The horizon of possibilities given by the existence of this *lingua franca* expands the dimensions and connotations of foreignness. It creates scenarios where cultures that belong to different colonization systems interact in a way that is not mediated by their respective colonizers, and culture contact under these circumstances can only be considered liberating. Or so I thought.

When I decided to take English into my literary process, which is the same that putting it in the very centre of the literary practice —because, let's remember, language is the fundamental matter of literature— I couldn't ignore its cultural load. English is a cultural factor of British identity and to use it implies the aperture to British traits in the process of cultural identity building. It was required that I understood how British culture polluted my practice, how it modified my trajectory in the transcultural space, how it established a new dimension of foreignness within me. This went through the consideration of the United States as the most influential generator of cultural features for the English language, as well as the transformations each of the former colonies of the British empires has

executed on the language, factors that touched me as inhabitant of the continent of America. However, as the language factor of my cultural background didn't include English, I find reasonable to approach Great Britain as main point of reference.

The experience of foreignness upon arrival to Great Britain changes drastically between spoken and written language. Spoken language, present, dependant on a body of foreign-looking features who speaks with an accent, is ingrained in a wholeness that can be immediately identified as foreign, while written language, subtracted from immediacy, can escape the designation of foreignness. The fact that English is the *lingua franca* may be the reason why British culture tolerates heavy alterations on the use of English before labelling it as foreign. Not even a foreign-looking name in a signature is going to trigger the European gaze, after all, centuries of colonialism have established the figure of the absorbed migrant in the British imaginary.

The cultural traits of the content in the text, however, do suffer from exotification, and the British reader will realize a text is foreign when enough unfamiliar cultural factors are noticed. Automatically, the piece will be imposed with the duty of representation mentioned before. To continue, the reader will try to assign a category to the writer, to determine the group in the name of which he is talking. This category is, of course, one of the cultural traits: territory, race, lineage, citizenship. Confronted with the fact that the writer will not always provide the name of the category by himself, the British, as well as other imperial cultures, come with their own. My case, treated this way, brought the label "latino", a term set up to encompass the extremely volatile transcultural space in which the former colonies of the Spanish and Portuguese empires established themselves. It is a way of othering useful for the imperialist discourse of the United States to stay

hegemonic, that has spread accordingly to their needs. What makes someone "latino" is defined in very blurred terms, which makes the label able to cover extremely mixed cultural backgrounds like mine. Neither my condition of non-native, nor my German last name or European customs, not even my fluency in English can take me out of the definition of latino. My layers of foreignness become conditions that make me belong to this metaculture, a post-culture adequate, according to the semantic needs of the empire, to the postcolonial world.

This homogenization of heterogeneity, that finds its highest expression in globalization, equals society with culture, which can only end in the last being deemed outdated or irrelevant. The erasure of transcultural spaces makes all people live in the same territory and have the same citizenship, that of the world, no matter if their ways of living are radically different. It is an abstract idea that hardly stands on when confronted with reality, but that of course, looks like the triumph of civilization. To accept the categories of the empire is to play in the game of its scale of value and to admit that differences are meant to be graded in a hierarchy of what is right and what is wrong. In other words, it is to change foreign for barbaric.

However, avoiding the label of latino by camouflaging my transcultural identity behind my European last name and my fluency in English is not the way to go. Forsaking any intent of communicating in English is also inadequate; even Césaire admits that, "exchange is oxygen"²¹. Isolation doesn't work for transcultural subjects.

The position from which I create has to be, then, the one of the wanderer, the nomad who refuses to settle down. The wanderer resides in change, his social interaction is based on a transcultural identity that

is always moving, that unfolds constantly to avoid the stillness of representation, that remains foreign. Foreignness, understood not as a context but as the core of identity, makes the artistic creation unreachable to the bad habits of empires.

1.3. Our building

An eclectic publication called 'Museum of Foreign Literature, Science and Art' was an American favourite during the first half of the 19th century²². They selected reviews, articles, poetry and serialized fiction from British magazines, which led to authors like Dickens being featured regularly. To modern standards, a Museum of Foreign Artefacts that reduced would be disappointing.

How would a museum of foreignness look, then? Like the British Museum of London, that seems to have objects of every culture except the British? Like the Surgeon's Hall in Edinburgh, a collection of human body parts, the weirder, the better? Maybe it would be more like the World of Illusions, located in the same city, an assortment of shiny mirrors. Or it could resemble Madame Tussauds, back in London.

Museums are collections of things that are deemed significant to certain subject, which, in this context, can be understood as topic, but also as individual —let's not forget that a lot of modern museums, including some of the mentioned above, existed first as private collections²³ or were greatly expanded by them²⁴. The curator, or team of curators, assort the selected meaningful pieces to form a narrative that then is displayed for the public to experience. In this regard, a Museum of Foreignness would be filled with artefacts relevant for and to the foreign perspective, assembled to guide perception towards the

state of being of foreignness. This reading of the museum as collage allows to understand it not as an institution, but as a holistic type of artwork.

Museums do not have to be designed under an artistic viewpoint, though. In general terms, the purpose of a museum is double: as storehouse, it preserves the objects of knowledge; as narrative, it divulgates said knowledge²⁵. Going back to the problem of the museum speculated about, what is there to teach about foreignness, then? To whom? Who is a stranger to the concept of foreignness, what is the profile of the visitor that interests this institution? In all rigour, it is necessary to define foreignness first to be able to answer these questions. However, the entire museum is constructed to form a definition —not the definition— based and supported by the subjective experience of the curator. Only after living this experience, it is possible to determine whether one has known this kind of foreignness out of the wall of the pages.

Due to this, the exercise proposed here is not that of factual learning, like in a science museum, as much as it is of personal identification, and of the consideration of foreignness as a factor that plays in the definition of a subjective position, which then determines the creation and/or consumption of new cultural artefacts to a greater or lesser degree. The artwork facet of the museum, described above, allows for this dynamic to happen.

Why a museum and not a more conventional piece of art, though? Mainly because of the spatial nature of museum, here embodied, which is essential for the concept of foreignness. Space defines borders and liminal areas in between; it inspires familiarity or estrangement, it has

its own syntaxis, able to “affect perception and potentially, cultural meaning.”²⁶

Besides, the eclectic nature of the museum is suitable in the sense that it allows multiple perspectives and experiences to coexist, open for the visitor to connect in a multidimensional, multifaceted understanding of the relationship between foreignness and creation.

1.4. Get there

The exhibition starts with Metamorphic Anthropophagy, a piece that contextualizes the curator’s approach to the design of the collection.

Then, the main four rooms are organized so the visitor can dive into the foreign self through four levels:

- Feet/Motion: the movement
- Mouth/Voice: the language
- Face/Presentation: the features
- Guts/Position: the self-perception

After, you can take a break in our temporary exhibition room before heading to the workshop level, where the results of the interactive programme of the museums are showcased along with the process behind the scenes.

Finally, there is a consultation room that includes the library and some references.

We hope you enjoy your stay.

2. METAMORPHIC ANTHROPOPHAGY

Born Brazil, works Latin America.

This work has been located in the great hall of the museum as starting point and core structure of the whole exhibition. Based in Oswald de Andrade's *Anthropophagic Manifesto*, it seeks to canalise its potential towards the decolonization of Hispanic American artistic practices. First, it contextualizes the circumstances of the manifesto and the heritage of Hispanic American mixed-race people, to identify the reasons why the anthropophagic metaphor has not been widely applied outside Brazil. Then, it reinterprets the concept of anthropophagy under the lens of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's Multinaturalist Amerindian Perspectivism to adapt it to the Hispanic American needs, and proposes a new dimension to the metaphor with the hope of giving creators a new tool to achieve creative and social autonomy in the postcolonial landscape.

This paper proposes a current theoretical framework to revisit Oswald de Andrade's *Anthropophagic Manifesto*, in order to enhance the potential of its proposed anthropophagy as a creative attitude to decolonize the artistic practice in the Latin American countries beyond Brazil. It starts with a necessary introduction of the 'mestizo' identity and the role of colonial racial segregation in its development. Then, it overviews the European general discourse on cannibalism in contrast with Andrade's affirmations, to achieve contextual clarity before diving into the theory of Multinaturalist Amerindian Perspectivism, proposed

by Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, which sheds light over the cultural background that made possible the conception of anthropophagy as a creative attitude in the first place. Linking the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* with the observations of Viveiros about shamanic practices and their relationship with anthropophagy, I propose an additional dimension to Andrade's metaphor, with the aim to expand its reach and connect it to the reality of mestizos, thus giving them another tool to position themselves in the postcolonial cultural landscape.

'Mestizo' is a specifically Hispanic-American label. It was created by the Spanish Empire to refer to people who were descendants of peninsular Spaniards and Amerindians. It was the third position in the colonial caste system, after the peninsular Spaniards and the 'criollos' —also called continental Spaniards—, which meant that it had less privileges than them, but more than native American, blacks and their possible mixtures. There is a Portuguese cognate of the word, 'mestiço', but it differs from 'mestizo' on the fact that Portugal did not try to impose an ethnic/racial system of social stratification and did not extend the labels to the individuals' descendants, making possible for mixed race people of the same origin to have different privileges.

The Spanish Empire struggled to institute and maintain the social caste system in place due to several factors, the main ones being the extensive mixing in the colonies and the everchanging nature of the concept of whiteness itself²⁷. Children born from illegitimate unions and sexual violence created layer after layer each generation, forcing the authorities to craft new names for the most prevalent racial combinations. Even so, the insistence on a social hierarchy based on race made segregation part of the colonial culture and made whiteness a pre-requisite for social mobility: by the beginning of the 18th century,

when certificates of purity could be requested in a hearing, racially ambiguous people started tampering with their family trees, beginning a trend of denying and/or erasing indigenous and black heritage.

With the exit of the peninsular Spaniards after the process of independence, the line between 'criollos' and mestizos became blurry enough for the latter to find themselves in the position of power, one that would only remain if the caste system survived. Besides explicit actions like refusing to abolish slavery despite having promised so during the independence campaigns²⁸, mestizos also insisted on keeping European values, traditions and knowledge regarded as superior, taking as reference countries besides Spain. Doing that, they positioned themselves at the top of the social ladder and assumed a European identity. The rush of visibly mixed-race people, who made (and still make) up for most of the population, to position themselves in the 'mestizo' category and benefit from its recently acquired power worsened the denial of other ethnic ancestry, ultimately burying whatever chance Amerindian culture had to recover, and also ostracizing black culture. The extent of this social manoeuvre made 'mestizo' the official term in Spanish to describe the general process of mixing ancestries, equivalent to 'mixed-race' or 'half-blood', without it losing its undertone of racial segregation. 'Mestizo' is effectively a code word for the wish to be 'white enough', a veiled confession of whiteness aspiration that keeps European culture as the gravitational centre of Hispanic American societies.

Indigenous and black/mulatto identities survived as minorities. Positioned as the oppressive majority, mestizos ought to decolonize their thought if they want to reconnect with their non-white heritage and/or set free from their dependence on European input, while knowing that, in the same way it is not possible to erase the heredity

of a living organism, white heritage cannot be removed from Hispanic American history and mestizo identity. It is in such a grave position between a rock and a hard place where the potential of the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* could fully unfold.

At this point, it is important to bear in mind that the manifesto, in line with similar publications of the time, is not a purely critical text, but rather “a collection of surrealist phrases that work against rational argumentation... largely aimed to free thought from the imprisonment of grammar, philosophical speculation, and logic, and to produce *affects* and *percepts* rather than *concepts*”²⁹. It doesn’t define anthropophagy, but instead showcases it in a provocative way to lure readers into exploring its poetic dimensions. Instead of a manual of instructions, the artist who wants to use the anthropophagic approach encounters material that can only be understood if it is appropriated and re-signified; truly, it is a text to be ingested and digested. Due to this, the treatment of the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* in this paper cannot be anything but interpretative, which, as it will become evident further on, remains coherent with the theoretical framework proposed.

The manifesto’s openness made impossible for Brazilian modernists to consolidate anthropophagy as more than “a heterogeneous, often contradictory aesthetic venture”. Its importance resides on the power of the metaphor, the ripples of which canonized the text as the base of a “cultural theory on consumption and counter colonial discourse”³⁰ imprinted all across 20th century’s Brazilian art and cultural manifestations, from the architectural modernism that made Brasilia possible, to tropicalism, cine novo, peripheral literature and more³¹. Such versatility and impact raise the question of why the influence of anthropophagy sharply decreases outside Brazil. Why, despite both Brazil and Hispanic America undergoing a similar process of

modernisation and its derived anxiety, did anthropophagy captivate the minds of the first while barely attracting attention from the latter? What resonated against Brazilian cultural background but couldn't stir up a reaction in the rest of Latin America?

It is tempting to blame the historic chasm opened by Portuguese control over the area during colonial times, that made Brazil's circumstances different from the ones of its Spanish neighbours. However, the Spanish and the Portuguese empires shared their views on cannibalism, which they used as pretext for conquer and colonization, just as all the other European nations had done at least since the times of the First Crusade³². This suggests the understanding of the concept was pretty much the same across all colonies and the countries that raised from them.

Although Europe has seen its share of cannibalistic practices, featuring in ancient Greek myths, old Slavic tales, medieval reports, medical formulas of the 17th century and pharmaceutical catalogues in the times of the First World War, they have never been socially reinforced or established as an acceptable practice, but rather deemed as a product of desperation, depravation, madness, superstition or as a pure manifestation of evil. Cannibalism has been experienced as "a trauma that slivers through the shock, torment and anguish expressed by the narratives recording the drama of the unspeakable"³³ since the Middle Ages.

Judaeo-Christian tradition was determinant in the shaping of Europeans' understanding of cannibalism as it is. Sadly, the full scope of its role and the consequences it had in America thanks to evangelism are past the reach of this paper. Suffice to say that Catholicism deemed cannibalism the act of essential violence as it condemns the victim's

soul to the torment of uprootedness: the body consumed disappears, and with it, the person's history and connection with the living world, making the promised resurrection unattainable. Already in medieval times, "Christian theorists decisively rejected any possibility that Christians might commit cannibalism"³⁴ and promptly concluded that "cannibalism decisively constructs a living creature as something other than Christian, European or human"³⁵. In concomitance with the military campaigns for the expansion of European territories, this accusation made cannibalism an "instrumentally useful technology of definition by which the malignant otherness of cultural enemies and outcasts can be established and periodically renewed"³⁶. When Europeans found the New World, indigenous communities were immediately accused of cannibalism with such intensity that the name of one of the tribes, the Caribs, served as base for the word "cannibalism" itself³⁷.

A first reason for the apathy of Hispanic America towards anthropophagy appears: it is the *ultimate barbarism*, the defining trait of the non-European. To embrace a creative attitude inspired by anthropophagy is equivalent to radically reject white identity, abjure the whole European system of values and to mark oneself as the Other. It is a blind jump to the bottom of the concealed caste system.

In the other hand, it was exactly that status of anthropophagy as mark of the Other what prompted Andrade to choose it as centre of his manifesto. Dreaming of modernity while facing the reality of a rural, mostly illiterate country, he embarked in the quest to find something that could "amalgamate the regional and social differences of what constituted being Brazilian, as well as the historic transformations"³⁸ and stay "regional and pure" despite the accelerated times. Anthropophagy appeared as a completely local concept, forever

untainted because it collided against every European value; essentially reactionary. It was also connected with the history of that notion of Brazil that the modernists claimed to be rediscovering, a free indigenous land that fascinated them.

The manifesto opens with the aphorism "only anthropophagy unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically."³⁹ It "establishes a 'we' in behalf of which things are said"⁴⁰ that directs the reading towards the search of a collective identity (Brazil) and makes anthropophagy the very fundament of society. After a couple of lines, it asks directly in English: "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question."³⁹

The mention of the Tupi, colloquial name for the tribes of the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family, brings to the table another crucial factor that differentiates Brazil from its neighbours. The Tupi were the biggest indigenous community of Brazilian territory, and their domain didn't extend too far from the borders that the Portuguese established for their colony. Their predominance can be estimated by the fact mixtures of their language and Portuguese, called *lingua geral*, were used extensively in the colony until the beginning of the 20th century and even replaced other indigenous languages⁴¹. At the same time, they were also one of the few groups which had anthropophagic practices, first recounted in quite the exaggerated fashion by European explorers⁴², then documented by diverse academics with testimony of Tupi descendants. While tribes in Hispanic America were either not cannibal or too small to affect the foundations of culture, therefore distancing mestizos from anthropophagy, Tupi people was in the capacity to leave a trace in Brazilian society, one that has been followed by mestiços of all extractions, including Andrade.

Lévi-Strauss suggests that “the problem of cannibalism... would not be a search for the ‘why?’ of the custom, but, on the contrary, for the ‘how?’ of the emergence of this lower limit of predation by which, perhaps, we are brought back to social life.”⁴³ It is in the answer to the how, in the understanding of the practice beyond the prejudice of the why, where the possibility of appropriation emerges. In exploring the (local) reality and the (familiar) cosmovision that prompted the apparition of indigenous anthropophagy, at least for the countries in contact with the Amazon, it is possible to reassign meaning to it in a useful way.

The manifesto declares that anthropophagy is “the only rule of the world” and then proceeds to call for the “absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform him into totem.”³⁹ It suggests a process more complex than the absorption of the strength of the enemy—in a way analogue to the elevation of the Christian soul through the ritual ingestion of the body of Christ—, that most recounts of Amerindian cannibalism during colonial times describe, because, established as the ruling principle of all Brazilian spheres of life, which means, as the mandatory action towards the Other, anthropophagy seems to comprise a complex metaphysical dimension.

Up to this point, I have opted to use the term ‘anthropophagy’ for Andrade’s metaphor and general Brazilian practices, while using ‘cannibalism’ for the European notion. Besides the fact that Andrade chose the word ‘*antropofago*’ despite ‘*canibal*’ being part of the Portuguese language too, I did so for the sake of accuracy. Cannibalism refers to eating one’s own species: a man who eats another man, a lion that eats the offspring of another lion. Anthropophagy refers to the consumption of humans, and it is a given that the action is performed by a human. To determine if there is cannibalism, the first step is to

define if predator and prey belong to the same species. In the case of anthropophagy, the first step is to define what is to be human, a matter in which Amerindian and Western worldviews disagree completely.

While in European thought 'human' is seen a substantive, a state that is reached, performed or created by the subject, Amerindian thought understands it as a relation, as a subjective position that works akin to a pronoun⁴⁴. The labelling of Amerindian cosmovision as perspectivist comes from the observation that "virtually all peoples of the New World share a conception of the world as composed of a multiplicity of points of view"⁴⁵ in which the universe is inhabited by "diverse types of actants or subjective agents [...] equipped with the same general ensemble of perceptive, appetitive, and cognitive dispositions: with the same kind of soul"⁴⁶. Actants can be men, animals, spirits and geographical entities. The fact that they all have the same kind of soul implies that they all perceive the same basic nature in themselves, which makes them relate in the same way to other subjective agents. If being 'human' is a matter of subjective position, and all actants are positioned in the same way in relation to others, it means they all perceive themselves as human, which makes them human.

At first glance, this sounds either as relativism or as an ideal social development, where the human condition dignifies all living creatures and prompts the existence of a fundamentally fair society. Andrade dreamed of such utopias, proclaiming the advent of the 'Pindorama matriarchy' and affirming that "before the Portuguese discovered Brazil, Brazil discovered happiness"³⁹. However, two discrepancies appear.

The first is that Amerindian humanity does not have a connotation of dignity or superiority akin to the Western understanding of the concept,

being rather a common denominator, "the reflexive mode of the collective"⁴⁷. Humanity, as a kind of relation, lies as potential within each kind of subjective agent. "For if all existents are not necessarily *de facto* persons, the fundamental point is that there is *de jure* nothing to prevent any species or mode of being from having that status"⁴⁸. Humanity is recognized in all beings because they reveal themselves as human when/if they actualize the human potential contained in their subjectivity.

The degree of said actualization affects the way a collective is perceived by another, which takes us to the second discrepancy: because it is dependent on perspective, humanity is not actualized by more than one collective at a time. From the perspective of men, men are the subjective agents that perform culture (the humans) while animals and other entities have no agency over the cultural actions taking place, therefore remaining non-human. From the perspective of the jaguar, jaguars are the performative actants of culture (the humans) to which men cannot access. During an encounter, a man sees himself as human and the jaguar as predator, while the jaguar sees itself as human and the man as prey. The potential humanity of the jaguar cannot be actualized without it becoming a subjective agent, which it cannot do from the perspective of the man.

The conundrum is solved by the consideration of the body. Culture, understood as the way of living of humans, is shared by all subjective agents and it is essentially the same, but the nature of the body of each collective determines the specificities of their life and the position they have (predator, kinship, prey) from the perspective of others. Men and jaguars perform the same cultural rituals and obey the same cultural rules, they just do it in accordance to the determinations of their bodies: the first will drink beer with their food while the latter will

opt for blood, but both are choosing the perceived appropriate beverage and, as action of cultural performance, the beverage is the same⁴⁵.

This system proposed by Viveiros is the opposite of the one held by Western thought, which considers that all bodies have the same nature, which makes possible for them all to be measured and understood under the same objective natural principles; while the realm of the soul is exclusive to human beings, diverse and profoundly determined by subjectivity. The implications of this complete flip of the relation nature/culture also make the epistemological approach of the two systems radically different. The Western world seeks the objective truth to unveil the mechanisms of reality, whereas the Amazonian world looks for the subjective view to understand culture with a new perspective. The first aims to remove itself completely from the object, so this can reveal how it is affected by the laws of nature without any kind of bias or contamination; the second aims to project itself completely into the other subject, to occupy its perspective and understand how the laws of culture apply to it.

Adapted to the Amerindian interpretation, cannibalism remains the same, but anthropophagy changes: through the recognition of the human potential within every being capable of subjective agency, every act of consumption becomes an act of anthropophagy in potential, that would be actualized if the humanity of subject devoured is performed in/from the perspective of the predator. It has been already observed that such thing is impeded by the determination of the body, but there is one role in Amerindian society capable of trespassing this barrier: the shaman.

To the rest of the community, to suddenly have full access to the perspective of another collective is considered a sign of grave illness, trickery or danger. Instead of the expansion of perspective, it is viewed as the *abduction of agency* from which the victim and his kin “will cease being human for each other”⁴⁹. Shamans are the ones who carry out such abductions. They take the subjectivation of the other to the point of personification, changing their body to adopt the other’s form and access their perspective. They “enjoy a kind of double citizenship in regard of their species (as well as to their status as living or dead)”⁵⁰ and are able to transit between them to translate knowledge and experience.

Shamanic endeavours are performed only under highly controlled circumstances. Shamans are feared as much as they are respected, and the shamanic trance is put on the same level as agony. It is, after all, an act of body displacement that goes against its nature: “the spirit refuses to conceive spirit without body. Anthropomorphism”³⁹. The mythical metamorphosis of shamans is “an intensive superposition of heterogenous states rather than an extensive transposition of homogenous states”⁵¹, where all the affects that render the body singular are forced out of the substantial materiality of the organism.

This painful superposition of contradictory affects that keeps the individual in the verge of collapse, but able to access more than one perspective, is present by default in the mestizo body. Beyond “the specific physiology or characteristic anatomy”⁵² resulting from mixed ancestry, the body as a bundle becomes “an ensemble of ways of modes of being that constitutes a *habitus*, ethos or ethogram”⁵² one that can reorganize itself to *morph* into the subjective agent it seeks to understand.

Just as the shaman is not dead nor alive, not here nor there; the mestizo is confined to a liminal space of ambiguous, transitory identity. However, the shaman can say what perspective is original to him and which one he abducts, a directional clarity the mestizo cannot grasp, for he has never belonged to any of the three main collectives of the Americas. Because the mestizo cannot perform culture from the state of trance of the multiple perspective, he must personify —this is, to fully project the self into— one of the perspectives, adopting its affects until he can abduct the subjective position (the way of being human) of said perspective.

Considering mestizo identity as shamanic makes it post-human, uprooted and predatory. Anthropophagy, the consumption of the human through the abduction the subjective position it entails, becomes the logical way to perform culture and alleviates the mestizo from the burden of subculture. European input is unavoidable, but it is addressed from above, in a way whiteness aspiration cannot grant. It is not about imitation or appropriation anymore, but personification through embodiment.

Metamorphic anthropophagy allows the shamanic mestizo body to navigate humanity, harmonize the body affects left by the colonization, understand the sorrow of colonial violence as condition instead of obstacle, and reconcile with the fragmented nature of identity. Going back to the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* with this additional conceptual layer expands the poetic reach of its aphorisms and, also, gives new criteria to criticize it. After all, Andrade, caught up by his local yet cosmopolitan utopia, enunciates his collective as 'we', but preserves the alterity of the indigenous as "savage nature [...] pre-logic mind [...] a cultural fetish derived from romantic ethnographic images"⁵³.

Anthropophagy as appropriation doesn't question the structural inequality caused by the colonial racial segregation system, perpetuated by the survival of the mestizo concept itself. Consumption of the alterity as inferiority becomes oppression when power is indexed "according to the metaphysical arrogance of a subject that feeds structurally upon the bodies of devalorized others"⁵⁴, just another expression of cannibalism.

Metamorphic anthropophagy, based in embodiment and personification, gives the opportunity of *becoming minority*. The consumption happens in a harmonic performance of culture that fully actualizes the humanity of the other, and after it is complete, and the mestizo has retracted to the liminal space, the human potential is still recognized, for every subjective agent is human and can reveal itself as human.

In the times when the decolonization of thought is nothing less than the first priority of postcolonial societies, it is worth to revisit and reinterpret the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* to utilise the evocative power that made it become the *avant la lettre* of Brazilian culture consumption in the first place. The adaptation of the anthropophagic attitude to the mestizo context may make possible a truly autonomous performance of culture, one that works against segregation and represents the mixed, metamorphic nature of Hispanic America.

3. MOVEMENT / FEET

This display brings together some reflections about motion and the significance of the points of departure and destination. It explores the reasoning behind wandering, displacement and travelling, focusing more on the vertical line of the walking path than on the horizontal line of the border.

With not a lot of money, with little luggage, wishing I could keep jumping from train to train. Thanks to Viviana for the indications, the patience to repeat the indications and for making me feel like home. Now, Google Maps shall protect me. Cuntfaces, I love you, but really, at least for now, I have no wish to go back to the backwards mentality and the upstart nonsense of Colombia. Homeland is the people we love, and I take you all everywhere I go. I hope you have a nice evening. Here, it is tomorrow already.⁵⁵

3.1. Oscillation. *Born in land, works in the air.*

"The object of every transformation is necessarily another transformation, and not the original substance."⁵¹

I swing

From one place...

...to the other

A man becomes an acrobat only
mid-air

A part of me is here

Another is there

I added the vectors to find my location

And I found myself

over the ocean.

Oscillation: the regular variation of a measure in relation to a central value⁵⁶. The movement determines the point of equilibrium. If the object stops there, the motion is over.

Vibration is oscillation. I need to vibrate. In all dimensions of being, I go back and forth and sideways. I feel constrained by the solid state, it is freezing, it shapes me in an awkward form. I cannot reach a point of equilibrium, I flow, contaminated. If I try to distil myself, I am gone.

Life depends on oscillation. Lungs and heart work in cycles, brain and mind organize in loops. After learning, one tries to go back. But the very nature of the pendulum prevents it: once the starting point is left behind, it becomes impossible to reach again.

I want to take you there

To be taken away

To uncover the covered

To see the unseen

The eyes of the foreigner

The unveiling of worlds

We swing, we collide and change routes. It is no accident that writing workshops are described as places to bounce ideas back and forth. Every interaction is a modification, a shift in direction, but the strength of the original vector remains the same.

In order to listen, I must match the rhythm. Get into the same vibe. Blend. That can be very hard. I struggle to make conversions to the

British Imperial System. When I hear 'slug', I think of an animal, when I hear 'stone', I think of a rock. Being lost in translation feels like being adrift instead of afloat.

Perseverance bears its fruits. When I tune in, we can share swing time back in the playground of the minds. Then, the game of collisions can start.

String theory suggested that a new universe was created by every contact⁵⁶. The congestion seems overwhelming, but not every encounter produces an event of the same scale. I walk closer or distance myself, to see what happens, how ideas slide down a polished language or jump over the shards of the English I broke. How the foreign imagination reacts to my foreign words.

Sometimes, the need to keep on the role of the Other makes the vision blurry and the head ache. I want to integrate, but it is not my intention to be absorbed. Fitting in is not the same than becoming one.

I carry a crocheted bag. Wayúu women make them to weave their memories and their thoughts. My mother gave me mine as a gift, knitting a snake that slides across, endlessly. If I am going to believe in string theory, I prefer to do it this way, as threads intertwined to create universes out of flowing patterns.

Borges imagined the conditions of the ideal super-writer. His Carlos Argentino had the Aleph, the point on earth from where all places can be seen without confusion, and endless source of inspiration. His Ireneo Funes had a definitive memory, one that could take all the shapes of a candle flame back to his mind. His Joseph Cartaphilus, when made immortal by the river, became, at the same time, Homer and Ulysses⁵⁷.

*So foolish did his ideas seem to me, so pompous and so drawn out
his exposition, that I linked them at once to literature.*

Argentino despaired, Funes went crazy, Cartaphilus dedicated his
immortality to find death.

I don't seek to become a super-writer.

A piece cannot be definitive. This knowledge is what allows us to put
a period and define an ending. An acrobat can't stay forever mid-air.

However, the show must go on. I don't know what I would do if I
could not read and had no readers.

The creative heartbeat has two phases: illusion and disillusion. Theory
is electroshock therapy. A regulatory intervention to pump the author
out of existential arrest, or a base of reference to cling on to when the
rhythm is out of control. A framework may keep the creator on edge,
but that means they will not fall off the edge.

Oscillation. Vibration. Waves. Music. Theory works like harmony. It can
stand by its own, be creative, expressive by itself. The melody
resonates with its support; it becomes richer, deeper... unless they are
out of tune. Being tone-deaf is a literary possibility.

I don't think every text is a pamphlet. However, every text has a thing
to say. I don't want to escort my work to apologize for the
inconveniences it may cause, I prefer to build its strengths and let it
fight on its own. Now that I count with some new instruments, new
notations, new structures, I can express myself better: I have names
to call my nameless ghosts.

I appropriated the name of Sarah Ahmed⁵⁸ for my anxiety and the name Laurent Berlant⁵⁹ for my depression. I hired Deborah Cameron⁶⁰ to judge the self-help quotes the internet throws at me. I sit to write and put them all over the table. I notate them as sharps, bemols and silences.

It feels good to not be alone in the writing desk.

In process

The new

The old

The strange

The familiar

The queer

The standard

The process

Me

3.2. IN-Motion.

A miscellaneous showcase of moving reflections.

3.2.1. "You do you". Born Colombia, works Colombia, USA.

There's no need to tell you where I come from

Simply, life wanted it this way

Early tomorrow, we will be two strangers

Because I never stop, not in my way, not in love⁵¹

The beauty of going abroad is that, in a foreign land, one is nobody, and as so, one can become whatever one wants to be. Invisible I have walked, with my story paused because I would form no attachments, for I did not belong, so nothing could belong to me. I have become used to this non-existence, comfortable being background noise, necessary while irrelevant, organic to the routine of animals.

There's no need for you to know where I'm headed to

Simply, fate wanted it this way

Early tomorrow, we will be two strangers

You will think it was a dream, don't ask me why I left⁶¹

3.2.2. "Tumbleweed". Born Colombia, works Colombia, Germany, UK.

Botanical Garden of Bogotá, September 2 nd , 2018
The physical condition of the tree formerly located in the 9 th Street was deficient, as evinced by dry branches, side shoots, asymmetric crown, branches at risk of fall, basal bifurcation, crooked trunk. In addition, it had insects and chlorosis. ⁶²

If I was not a tumbleweed, the mayor of Bogotá would have found me deficient, thus commanding the botanical garden to behead me. Running away with the wind, I escaped certain death in the hands of the system, but in the process of uprooting myself to take off, I also pulled most of my life out of me.

The strategy of normal tumbleweeds is to keep the stele alive in the centre of a carcass that rolls around, dead and dry, until it finds water. When this happens, moisture degrades the lifeless exterior and serves as fertile soil for the propagules at the core, which grow into a new plant. Tumbleweed is ruderal, indifferent to the surroundings: rocks, sand, piles of garbage; if there is water, it works. There is where I reveal myself as Other, because, indecisive, I keep rolling under the rain, and it has rained for so long, my world flooded.

I am not an uprooted plant anymore, but a log adrift, soaked wet but with a dry, dying core. I am misshapen, asymmetric, collapsed, twisted, I am the home of fish, molluscs and marine parasites. Despite all of this, I thrive: I have a future safe from the mayor of Bogotá, a city that is thousands of kilometres far from the ocean.

3.2.3. "Reach". Born and works UK.

I have been stuck in Nottingham four years now, by accident. I hate Nottingham, it is awful, there is nothing to do! I grew up in Greater London, you see, I am a man of big cities. I need to move constantly; I procrastinate everything up to the last minute because I am busy doing something else.

I cannot wait until graduation. So soon! I have been dreaming of leaving since I started studying. I am now about to get in a position where I can earn money and go wherever I want. I am twenty-two; I am ready: to spend four more years doing a PhD would be unbearable.

Better to go abroad and work. I considered becoming a writer, but environmental sciences will take me further. There is so much to do. I love Spanish, I hear you guys and I say "man, I want to go Los Angeles and learn to speak it already". It would be a dream, but I know it wouldn't last. I told you, I need to move.

I speak French and German, but I went to Stuttgart once and I didn't like it. It is too grey, too close, I need something else. I love Indian curry and I have some mates that come from Mumbai. China looks interesting, too, but...

My favourite singer was American, lived in Los Angeles. He killed himself last week. I saw his Instagram stories right before he did it. He was so alone, man, so sad. It had to be that his ex-girlfriend got engaged like a week after they broke up. I know how it feels; I wanted to be there, you know? We all tried to reach and sent messages, but he wouldn't listen. What can you do, really, when you are a stranger stuck in a place like Nottingham?

I can't wait to leave already.

3.2.4. "The minimum". Born Salvador, works UK.

He's got bright greenish eyes, like Rihanna. There's something on his mischievous smile that reminds me of the diva too, but that is as far as the similarities go. He sits under the sun on the parking lot, apart from the people who smoke, to eat an apple. I join him. In a couple of hours, the match between two minor teams will kick off in that small stadium in the middle of nowhere. Neither of us is looking forward to it.

He tells me he doesn't want to work, but that he can deal with the kiosks because, if he tells the managers he is not confident at the till with some fake stutter, they will put him in charge of something easy, like refilling the napkin dispensers or serving the hot drinks. As far as the money keeps coming without much effort and he can provide to his mother back home, he is content.

The manager doesn't believe his claims and puts him in one of the tills. We were promised a quiet shift, but clients crowd around the kiosk and we sell almost everything out. In the break before half-time, he volunteers for cleaning all the cooking appliances, sweep and mop the floor, and reorganize the window displays. When the shift ends, he does it all again and then gets yelled at by the manager because the supervisor mixed up the till references and marked his to be incomplete. The problem gets sorted just in time for us to catch the bus back home and he doesn't have time to send money to his mother.

He winks at me just like Rihanna does, puts on a cheeky smile and asks for my number before saying he hopes we meet again in another shift.

4. VOICES / MOUTH

This section displays different takes on language(s). One of the most evident and relevant components of foreignness, language works both as wall and door, problem and solution, means to an end and the finality itself.

Special consideration has been given to names. Several works exhibited here explore the challenges posed by the proper name, a word that imposes itself upon every language, untranslatable and reactive to pronunciation, and how it intervenes to answer to the needs of identity.

Language embodied has a history, a development, an organic nature that determines it. The body of language can carry diseases.

My illness is the delirium of *saudade*, that I tried to cure by learning how to wish happy holidays in fifteen different languages. Nowadays, I can't remember most of them, and I keep writing "kala kristhouyena" instead of "kala christouyenna". I still dream of being a polyglot, though, or, at least, of writing the best Colombian Minnesang in English.

4.1.

The Shape Of

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*⁶³ seeks to draw a line. Point by point, he extends his figure in space, outwards with every new proposition, inwards with every new comment on a preposition, making its density and length tend to infinity. However, lines have no curvature, while the mind of Wittgenstein works in a Fibonacci sequence.

Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis is another preposition, another fixed point that could lie somewhere in Wittgenstein's eternal spiral. Its dimension can only be appreciated, though, if it is allocated in another plane, as a centre of gravity, that pulls the spiral and makes it into a cone or an infinite staircase.

This is an exercise of topologic observation over the staircase and other figures of thought, drawn with the projection of lines of language. It studies the properties of the resulting geometric bodies, all of which remain unaltered through continuous transformations. It is inspired by Wittgenstein's own use of logic and starts despite the bitter conclusion of *Tractatus*: that little is done when problems are solved.

Some strategies used for drawing

- Annotated translation:

To put in evidence how a word was found, or how a sentence was made.

- Hybrid language:

To use code-switching, semantic extensions and loan words.

- Neologisms / Compound words:

To make new words through the merging others.

- Hermeneutic (plurilingual) dictionary:

To make a chain of definitions to explain a word.

- Fallacious translation:

To assign meaning to a word through imposed genealogies or phonetic associations.

- Fromlostiano / homosyntactic translation:

To translate word by word without changing the grammatical structure of the sentence.

"In order to draw a limit [...] we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit"⁶³

"The book [Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus] will draw a limit to thought, or rather —not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts." "It will... only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies in the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense"⁶³

"The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language"⁶⁴

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world"⁶⁶

"Here begins my despair as a writer. All language is a set of symbols whose use among its speakers assumes a shared past. How, then, can I translate into words the limitless *Aleph*, which in my floundering mind can scarcely encompass? Mystics, faced with the same problem, fall back on symbols: to signify the godhead, one Persian speaks of a bird that somehow is all birds; Alanus de Insulis, of a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere; Ezekiel, of a four-faced angel who at one and the same time moves east and west, north and south. [...] Perhaps the gods might grant me a similar metaphor, but then this account would become contaminated by literature, by fiction."⁶⁵

Language is absolute.

Yes

No

Is my language the language?
Is my world the world?
Am I trapped in the language or
is language trapped in me?

Can my language become the
language?
Will my world grow the size of
the world?
Am I trapped in my language or
is language trapped in me?

You only can know what you can express.

Can I express myself?

I am the size of the universe

The universe is my size

"The subject does not belong to the world, but it is a limit of the
world"⁶⁷

The name of the universe is my name

The universe is in constant intrinsic expansion.

It does not expand into anything,
it does not require free space outside of it to grow.

The expansion is only apparent
because the distance between objects increase with time.

However, neither objects nor the space between them move.

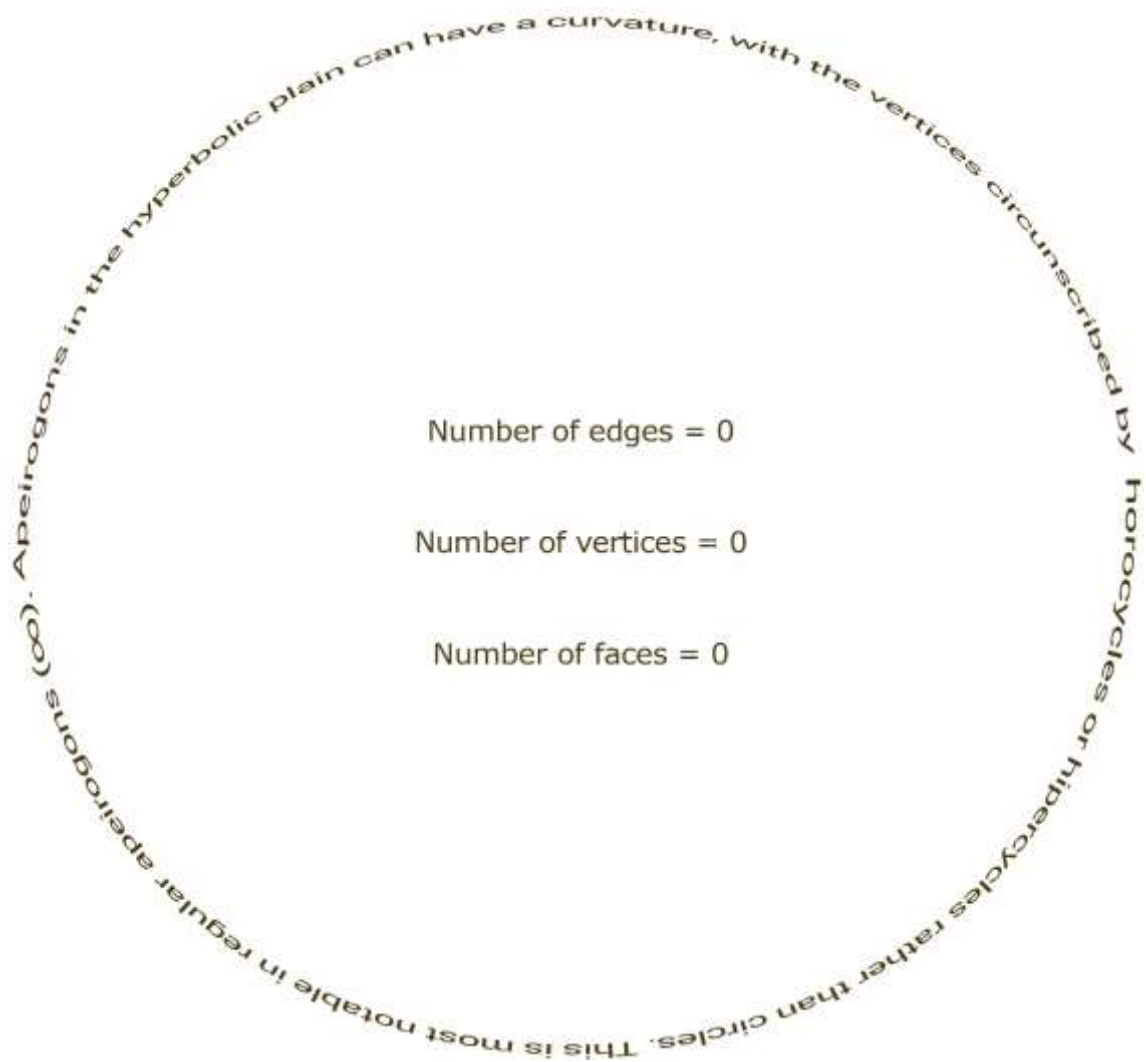
Instead, is the scale used to measure spacetime
the one that changes.

To a fixed observer, the nearby objects remain the same, but the
background recedes slowly into the distance.

The fixed observer looks all around,
and its sight reaches as far as it can.

The further points it sees are all at the same distance
from its given location.

When they are connected, the resulting shape is a sphere.⁶⁸



I am in constant intrinsic expansion.

I do not expand into anything,
I do not require free space outside of me to grow.

The expansion is only apparent
because the depth I assign to words increase with time.

However, neither the objects I know nor the words I know move.

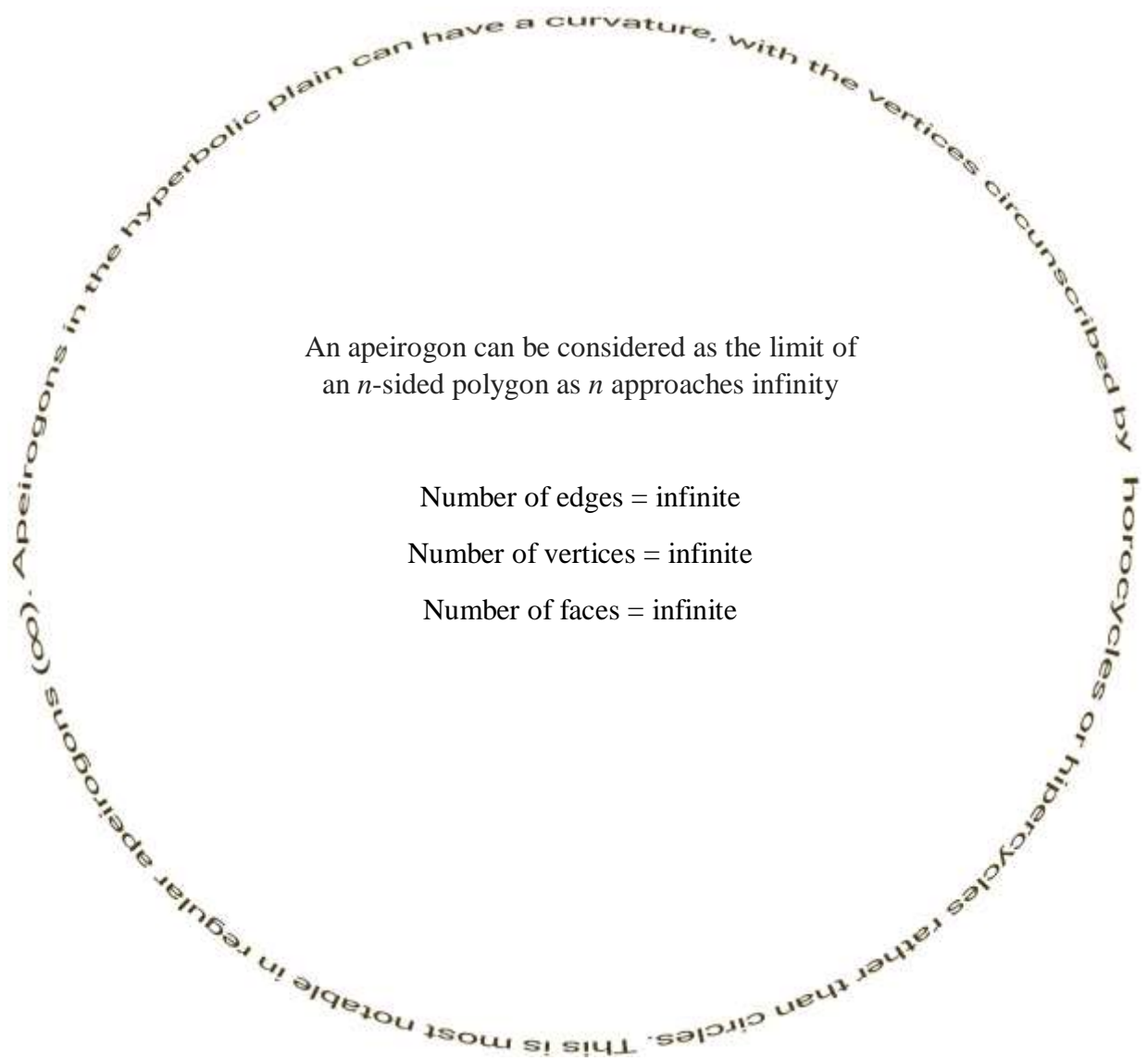
Instead, is the complexity of my symbolic assignation
the one that changes.

My expression remains the same, but the conceptual background
recedes slowly into the depths.

There are no ideal eyes drawing constellations

My expression stumbles,
my understanding bumps against the limits of my language,
each hit, a new edge

I don't draw a sphere, but an apeirogon.



An apeirogon can be considered as the limit of an n -sided polygon as n approaches infinity

Number of edges = infinite

Number of vertices = infinite

Number of faces = infinite

“Distrust of grammar is the first requisite of philosophizing”⁶⁹

The value of the language is

0

It is neither negative nor
positive

When added or subtracted 0, an
object n remains n

An object n multiplied by 0
becomes 0

An object n divided by 0 tends to
 ∞ .

0 is a number

It quantifies a count or an
amount of null size

55

The value of my language is

∞

It becomes negative or positive
in accordance with the direction
of approach

When added or subtracted an
object n , ∞ remains ∞

An object n multiplied by ∞
becomes ∞

An object n divided by ∞ tends
to 0

∞ is not a number

It represents a potential infinity

"To present in language anything which "contradicts logic" is as impossible as in geometry to present by its co-ordinates a figure which contradicts the laws of space; or to give the co-ordinates of a point which does not exist."⁷⁰

The room is not its walls,
but without walls,
there is no room.

I name myself to
know that I exist
The world exists in
me
as Schrödinger's cat

"Definitions are rules for the translation of one language into another. Every correct symbolism must be translatable into every other according to such rules. It is this which all have in common."⁷¹

It is not about having enough words, but about having enough space.

If you need space, you run heads up to the limit and push.

My language is the
expression of thought
Every translation of
my perception
With language, I
assign sense to
nonsense

What can be said
at all can be said
clearly; and
whereof one
cannot speak
thereof one must
be silent."⁷²

Language is
expression of thought
For translation of
perception to make
sense
It must be assigned
the correct symbolism

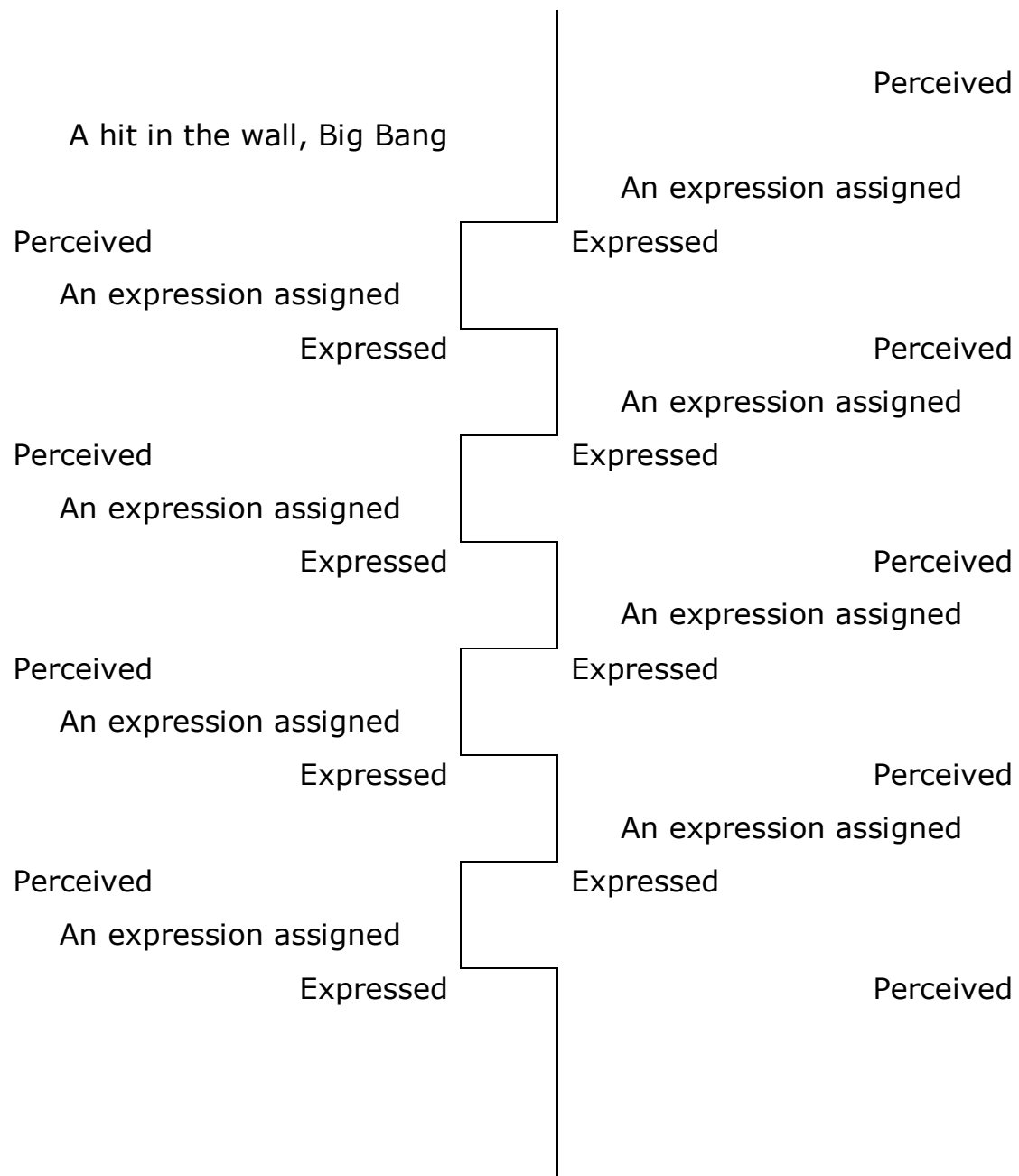
Language as rule. Language as allocation. Language as metaphor.
Language as system. Language as limitation. Language as truth.

Grab a brick

Rules as allocations as metaphors as systems as limitations as truth

Hit the wall





"Imagine that a child was quite especially clever, so clever that he could learn at once to be taught the doubtfulness of the existence of all things. So learns from the beginning 'this is probably a [wall]'. And now, how does he learn the question: is it also really a [wall]?"⁷³

(<chair> replaced by [wall])

A wall comes to mind		A wall painted green		A wall with wasp nests		A wall that is flaying		A wall of my childhood	
wall	The great wall I saw once		The great wall East Side Gallery		The great wall with many faces		The great wall in many languages		The
Thirty walls in thirty desks		Thirty walls made of wood		Thirty walls made of numbers		Thirty walls improvised		Thirty walls to prevent crime	
Wall	The German wall of emotions		The German wall language barrier		The German wall illegal immigrants		The German wall a key to Europe		The
Horrible wall of indifference		Horrible wall always cold		Horrible wall with no echo		Horrible wall mediocre shelter		Horrible wall scratched	
Wall	Border wall constant menace		Border wall national pride		Border wall richness and territory		Border wall pointed finger		Border
Invisible wall to all the senses		Invisible wall no responsibility		Invisible wall voices silenced		Invisible wall forever unpunished		Invisible wall of expectations	
wall wall	The wall as ceiling		The wall as floor		The wall as limit		The wall as divider		The as

If the symbolism is correct, its expression is sharply defined, and it
creates fractal waves to infinity.

Infinity

In-Finity

Only regular apeirogons have a curvature like the universe has a
curvature.

If I want to be understood, I must aspire to be a sphere.

But if I have no edges.

My value

Is

0

"A work of art forces us – as one might say – to see it in the right perspective but, in the absence of art, the object is just a fragment of nature like any other"

(CV 4, Perloff, p. 11)

1. You only know what you can express.

1.1. Only what can be expressed, can be known.

1.1.2. Language is the only vehicle of thought

1.2. Expression is the only form of acknowledgment.

2. Art is a perspective.

2.1. Art is a condition of perception.

2.2. Art can only be perceived as art, therefore it can only be expressed as art and acknowledged as art.

2.2.1. Every expression of art is conditioned knowledge.

2.3. Art is not material.

2.3.1. Art is liminal.

2.3.2. Language and art have the same nature.

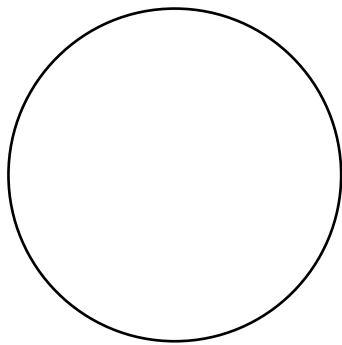
2.3.3. Every acknowledgment of the world is a poetic expression

2.4. The existence of art requires a subjectivity.

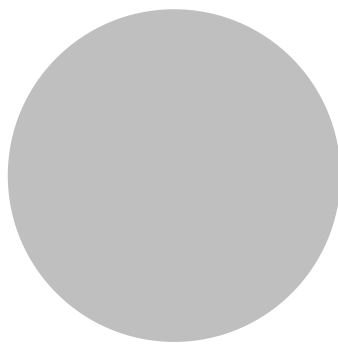
2.4.1. Art is subjective

Given that subjectivity changes the value of the world from zero to infinite,

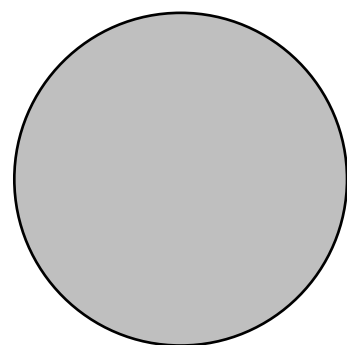
"I leave to the various futures (not to all)
my garden of forking paths"⁷⁵



A sphere is a two-dimensional closed surface, embedded in a three-dimensional Euclidean space.⁶⁸



An open ball is a three-dimensional shape that includes all the points inside a sphere but not the sphere.⁶⁸



A closed ball is a three-dimensional shape that includes the sphere and everything inside it.⁶⁸

Language is the sphere

I am the sphere

My position in the sphere is art

Everything outside the sphere is just nonsense.

Everything inside exists within me
like Schrödinger's cat

4.2. The Política of el Spanglish

Three authors, tres puntos de vista on the growing linguistic fenómeno of Spanglish across la literatura de Latin América.

The question of to what extent the use of dialect/non-standard forms of English in literature is necessarily making a political point contains two hiccups: first, it encompasses a wide variety of forms of language (dialect, slang, cant) that have diverse connotations and relationships with the standard, thus performing differently when dialoguing with it. Second, "the meaning of 'political' is neither univocal nor empirical"⁷⁶, which calls for a definition of what is political, and how language can act politically, before any analysis can be performed.

To tackle the first predicament in this quest, I choose Spanglish as a subject of study. "A deeply-rooted cultural construct highly charged with emotion while eluding a widely accepted definition"⁷⁷, this ambiguous mixture of English and Spanish proper of the Americas has been defined as a language in its own right, a dialect of one of its source languages, as cant, slang, contamination and also as a prolonged halt in the process of learning English or Spanish as a second language. While there is no consensus over its characteristics, one thing is clear: Spanglish is a product of Hispanic immigration to the United States, which grants it a defined political context.

The arrival of new Spanish native speakers to the country has been uninterrupted since the decade of 1950⁷⁸. The density of Hispanic population has raised up to 50% in certain states of the South, while

the total number of people reaches 55,2 million out of the total 323 million inhabitants⁷⁸. The size of the established communities, and the fact that their Spanish is constantly refreshed by new arrivals, makes unnecessary for Hispanic immigrants to completely transition to English, as other minorities do, not even after several generations⁶³. Even if an individual is fluent in both English and Spanish, the language of use within the community is still a mixture of both —Spanglish, where words get remixed, re-purposed or switched accordingly to new layers of meaning produced by daily life interaction. As a working definition, then, I will use the one suggested by Ilan Stavans: the (dis)encounter of Anglo and Hispanic cultures in language⁷⁹.

To address the second demand implied in the initial question, I follow Eugene Miller's use of an etymological approach to determine what is the essential *political* thing to which a claim of being political relates to. He explains that "the term is derived from the Greek word *polis*, which designates a human community of a particular type"⁸⁰ and, under ideas proposed by Aristotle, that "things are 'political' by virtue of their relation or reference, in one way or another, to the *polis*, for example, as sustaining or ennobling it."⁸⁰ Following these ideas, for language to make a political point, it must act in relation to the *politeia*, "the form that gives this community its distinctive character"⁸¹.

Now, a *polis* contains several groups of people, in Greek, *politēs*. One of these *politēs*, the one more privileged or empowered, dictates the norm that the other *politēs* should observe in order to belong: a standard (normal, as in accordance to the norm). This normativity applies to all manifestations of culture, and what doesn't fit is deemed non-standard and then confronted, attacked in behalf of the common interest and survival of the *polis*.

Deborah Cameron postulates the concept of *verbal hygiene*⁸² under this general logic. She explains that normativity is an inalienable part of using language, because it is paradigmatically social, and as so, it requires dialogue to be actualized. This dialogue implies two voices, one that is standard/ideal/academic, and other that is non-standard/pragmatic/colloquial. They keep language evolving in the dynamics of "rules arise from, and themselves give rise to arguments"⁸³. However, this interaction by itself, which takes place in every single dialogue, is not political because "languages cannot have interests" but "it is we, the human inheritors and agents of language, who have interests"⁸⁴. Only if the agent of language, which is to say, the author, puts language at the service of a *politēs* to generate a shift in the *politeia*, it can be affirmed language made a political point.

Because language is not the only device of political enunciation, it is convenient to determine which social items are the most prone to linguistic intervention. Cameron enunciates three dimensions where verbal hygiene takes place, which are a good place to start. They are authority, identity and agency⁸². I will look at the role of Spanglish in the definition of these concepts at a linguistic level on three exemplary cases: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*⁸⁵, by Dominican-American author Junot Díaz, *Yo-Yo Boing!*⁸⁶ by Puerto Rican poet Giannina Braschi, and the translation of the first chapter of *Don Quixote*⁸⁷ to Spanglish by Mexican-American academic Ilan Stavans.

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao is, among these, the only text that can be fully understood by a monolingual English speaker. This happens because the code-switching to Spanish (namely, the free transition from English to Spanish) is limited to individual words or short sentences that can be elucidated by context. Grammar often deviates from standard English to accommodate to the Spanish rhythm

and there are loan words and calques (literal translations), but they all are executed within the expected capacities of an English monolingual speaker.

The novel revolves around a family of Dominican origin who lives in Paterson, New Jersey. It opens with a quote from a Marvel comic followed by a poem by Antillean author Derek Walcott. To dissipate any doubt about the clash of Anglo and Hispanic cultures being the central theme of the novel, it proceeds to explain the political context of the Dominican Republic through analogies with Anglo cultural products: Rafael Trujillo, dictator of the country since 1930 to 1961, is described using references to *The Lord of the Rings* (United Kingdom), *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Star Wars* (United States), respectively. The main character is called Oscar de León (probably a wink to the Venezuelan singer of the same name) but nicknamed Oscar Wao (Oscar Wilde, with the last name re-spelled to express how it sounds to Dominican ears).

Spanglish in this novel operates under the logic that “words are interchangeable yet irreplaceable”⁸⁸. ‘Negro’ is used in the affectionate way ‘nigger’ cannot, ‘mother’ and ‘daughter’ are used to designate the factual blood relationship between two characters, while ‘madre’ and ‘hija’ appear when the nature of such a relationship is characterized as typically/stereotypically Dominican.

Re-spelling takes into account the interpretation of the concept that the borrowing culture gives to the word: the city ‘New York’ becomes ‘Nueva Yol’, capital of the American Dream. ‘Macondo’, the illusory town Gabriel García Márquez described in his novels to represent the essence of the Caribbean culture, is respelled ‘McOndo’ in reference to the company McDonalds, becoming a marketing asset.

There are also words in Spanish without in-text explanation. In the example “we jumped on each other and the table fell and the sancocho spilled all over the floor”⁸⁹, no information is given about the meaning of ‘sancocho’ past the fact it can be spilled, thus being liquid, and that it is probably edible, because it was in the table. These facts are enough for understanding the action, but a reader who belongs to or who is familiar with Dominican culture will know the importance of sancocho for Dominican cuisine and tradition and will get an additional layer of meaning, where the waste of the soup signifies the rupture of the family that threw it away.

This is not the only case in which being bilingual but not a Spanglish user proves to be insufficient to grasp the whole meaning of the text. Díaz comments on the difference between standard and Dominican Spanish on several occasions, sometimes directly, sometimes contrasting two concepts that supposedly mean the same. For the first case, this quote about the education of Beli (Oscar’s mother) is a clear example: “La Inca had to correct her on grammar and against using slang, she now had the best diction and locution in Lower Bani (She’s starting to talk like Cervantes, La Inca bragged to the neighbours. I told you the school would be worth the trouble)”⁹⁰. Later, when Beli rebels against La Inca, drops out of her posh school and starts working as a waitress, she goes back to Dominican slang. The second case can be appreciated in this description: “Beli might have been a puta major in the cosmology of her neighbours but a cuero she was not”⁹¹. ‘Puta’ (‘whore’) is a word found in every form of Spanish, while ‘cuero’ (literally, ‘leather’) is a Dominican slang for a specific kind of whore.

In all these cases, Spanglish performs as a tool of identity construction. To say that it serves as ‘mark’ of an already established social identity, that of the immigrant, would be reductionist. After all, even if Oscar

and his mother share the condition of immigrant, their Spanglish has different qualities and is executed in different situations, thus being unable to 'mark' them both in the same way. Taking language as "one of the things that *constitutes* my identity as a particular kind of subject"⁹² allows to better appreciate how each character's use of the language affects the compound of identity traits. Oscar is implied to be completely fluent in English, competent in Spanish and an active Spanglish user, but his love for sci-fi and fantasy media, added to his insecurities, affects his language in such a way the Americans find him 'geeky' and obnoxious, while the Dominican immigrants consider him not *Dominicano* enough. His other identity traits perform just as dubiously in regards of the standards: in the universe of the book, Oscar doesn't look American because he's a *moreno*, he is not a proper male in the Dominican sense either because he doesn't know how to approach women. The results of all those traits, Oscar's identity, is left struggling in the crossroad of Anglo and Hispanic cultures.

A similar process occurs with all the characters. The grand-mother, who lives in Santo Domingo, gets calques in her reported speech that suggest she only speaks Spanish. The mother, a first-generation immigrant and a victim of the dictatorship violence that fled to save her life, is introduced speaking Spanglish from the very beginning, mostly through code-switching: "Muchacho del diablo, this is not a cabaret!"⁹³. Oscar's sister, Lola, serves as an interpreter for her mother and connects her to the American world. She dreams with a life beyond Spanish, because Spanish is the language of the house, therefore of domestic violence.

Oscar's family belongs to a *politē* of Dominican Yorkers, as Lola calls people of their same upbringing. Díaz belongs to that same group and his family portrait is a vocal denunciation to the hostile cultural

landscape that denies the validity of a hybrid identity such as his. The representation of the Dominican Yorker life is done with realistic intentions. It adapts Spanglish to allow both extremes of the cultural conundrum, Dominicans and Americans, to see themselves reflected in Oscar. This possibility of recognition elevates the Dominican Yorker *politē* to the category of normal, of a natural outcome of the constant flux of cultural factors that make up for the United States' cultural identity.

Where Díaz painted the portrait of four generations of Dominican immigrants, Giannina Braschi zoomed on herself. Where he crafted his Spanglish carefully to make it accessible to English monolingual speakers, Braschi let it loose mercilessly. *Yo-Yo Boing!* is a novel about the intimate ways in which making a novel *affects* its author, a statement of poetics of sorts, divided in three main sections: the first, 'close-up', is written in Spanish, arguably standard. The second, 'blow-up', takes up most of the text and is written in Spanglish. The last section, 'black-out', is divided in two chapters, 'perro realengo' ('stray dog' in Puerto Rican Spanish) and 'sardina en lata' ('canned sardine'), and it's written in Spanish with the sole exception of the word 'boss', which completely replaces its Spanish counterpart, 'jefe'.

'Close-up' is a reflection Braschi does over herself, narrated in third person. It describes the way she looks at her face in the mirror, how she perceives the reality of her body, her origin and her being, how she strives for modifying it to make it proper or set it free. It positions Spanish as the language of intimacy and privacy, but most importantly, it establishes that her perspective is definitive, that she's the narrator and the narrated, the owner of the voice.

Cameron states that “speakers do not have total control over their own discourse”⁹⁴. The agency of the subject over language is limited and constricted by the fear of losing communication, and it is in name of communication that users of non-standard forms of language are subdued by *verbal hygiene*. Aware of this, Braschi makes a dialogue out of her second and longest chapter, ‘Blow-up’.

This section is built over a long and exacerbated discussion between she and her partner, a man of Anglo origin who can speak Spanish. Their relationship is chaotic and seemingly dysfunctional, very in line with the definition of Spanglish as the (dis)encounter of Anglo and Hispanic culture. At the beginning, they banter about minor everyday things. Her code-switching takes place every sentence or even inside the same sentence, while his only happens every few pages, when she prompts him to change languages. These dynamics points at her being a Spanglish speaker while he, a bilingual English-Spanish user, switches only when he needs to. He attempts to influence the code-switching pace, he tries to explain (normalize) to which dimensions she ascribes each language and ‘psychoanalyzes’ her from there, and he also accuses her of either understanding less or making herself less understood because of the Spanglish.

Despite her love, she finds her partner insufficient. He never does the things the way she wants and is never bold enough to her liking. She often speaks about an ex-partner she had, nicknamed “Jabalí” (‘boar’, connoted here as euphemism for ‘pig’), who is also coded as Spanglish user. She ditched him for being the kind of toxic *macho* that Díaz also portrays in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. The insistent comparison between these two men and the moments of life during which she met them (Jabalí in Puerto Rico when she was starting her career as a writer, the new man in the United States, when she’s a

published author) serve as allegory of her feelings towards Puerto Rican and American culture, respectively, and illustrate how her agency in the language is received by each of them.

Poetically, Braschi uses her agency to create new meanings by free associations and plays of words. For example, she narrates how she asked an aunt about the meaning of the expression 'son of a bitch' and received this answer (my translation in brackets): "son of a beach -she explained- son las putas americanas [are the American whores] who come to Puerto Rico and have sex on the beach, and sus bastardos [illegitimate children] are called: son of a beach"⁹⁵. Here, there is a reference to the difficulty that most English speakers of Hispanic origin have when distinguishing the pronunciations of 'beach' and 'bitch', but also the validation of the expression 'son of a beach' and its several layers of meaning. 'Son of a beach' is not a term used in any place, but it is a name that Braschi assigns to a concept in her reality: the fact that Puerto Rico, as an unincorporated territory, is under this definition the great son of a beach of the United States. The mispronunciation of 'bitch' is turned into wit, language is effectively used to intervene the broken *politeia* of the American society, unable to recognize Puerto Rico as part of itself.

In addition, *Yo-Yo Boing!* contains extensive explicit commentary about the use of Spanglish and its role in the cultural landscape of the Americas. Statements as "la grandeza de un país la crean los poetas [...] Y por qué no unir la riqueza de Martí y la de Darío y la de Neruda y la de Vallejo [the greatness of a country is created by the poets [...] and why cannot the richness of Martí and Darío and Neruda and Vallejo be united] with the wealth of Whitman and Dickinson?"⁶⁸ explain why Braschi published *Yo-Yo Boing!*, the first full-length Spanglish novel, in the first place. In regards of the risk of missing communication, she

states: "if I respected languages like you do, I wouldn't write at all. El muro de Berlín fue derribado [Berlin's wall was tore down]. Why can't I do the same."⁹⁷. Spanglish, or the perpetual bilingualism, is posed a necessary condition of the Puerto Rican being and as an opportunity to break the distance between cultures, as she considers 'pure' language the way *polis* divorced themselves of their Humanity. To speak directly about the confrontation between standard (pure) and dialect languages enables the political potential in the latter, thus reinforcing the power it already had in other segments of the novel.

Finally, 'black-out' goes back to Spanish, back to intimacy, but this time, Braschi uses first person for 'Perro Realengo' and second person for 'Sardina en Lata'. The only word in English, *boss*, hovers around like a bad influence, like a sinister Other enunciated by the last faint breath of Spanglish.

To understand how Ilan Stavans decided to ditch the realistic approach of Díaz or the intellectual exercises of Braschi, in favour of the densest construct possible, it is necessary to know he did the translation of *Don Quixote's* first chapter as a provocation to a member of the Real Academia de la Lengua Española (RAE), self-proclaimed maximum authority of the Spanish language. According to Stavan's recount of the facts, this erudite declared that Spanglish would not be considered a language until and unless it could produce a masterpiece comparable with *Don Quixote*. Although Stavans identifies *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* as the text that later lived up to that challenge, at the time he replied by suggesting that Don Quixote would acquire a special 'taste' in Spanglish that was worth to try. Soon enough, a cultural supplement promised to publish his translation, if he dared to make one.

The resulting text is only accessible to Spanglish users, because proficient bilingual speakers are likely to be troubled by what Lipski describes as “phono-tactically unlikely combinations in either language (e.g. saddleaba)”⁹⁸. Every sentence contains several code-switches, re-spellings, loan words and other Spanglish devices. It also displays phonetic imitations of non-standard Spanish, like ‘verdá’ instead of ‘verdad’ (‘truth’). Because the translation aimed for sensation instead of accessibility, Stavans committed himself to create a radical sample of prospective Spanglish, a display of the intrinsic potential “ingenuity... show[ing] astuteness, a stunning capacity to adapt, and an imaginative aspect... that refuses to accept anything as foreign”⁹⁹.

In his defiance to the RAE with the intervention of nothing less than *Don Quixote*, the first and ultimate Spanish novel, Stavans asked a question also posed by Cameron: “how is that people can combine a strong concern for the value in language with a near-total lack of scepticism about the criteria normally used to measure it?”¹⁰⁰. The parameters used to condemn Stavan’s translation are arbitrary, and since he treats Spanglish as a language on its own right, the RAE cannot censor the translation as detrimental without labelling the translation to any other language the same way.

The translation is seen by most people as a parody that denigrates Spanglish and the people who use it, but it is the sense of authority hold by the RAE the one mocked by this text. It doesn’t pose as a realistic take on Spanglish or even a likely prospective of its future, because it didn’t have to communicate values but display the values already attached to it by Spanish verbal hygiene. By posing his translation as one among infinite possibilities, Stavans preserves the adaptability of written Spanish, that he considers its most important quality. Nonetheless, I am left wondering whether his point came

across or not: after the translation was published, Stavans was deemed as a disgrace to the Spanish language, accused of racism, or his translation was taken at face value like a form of 'ideal Spanglish', so far that a full translation of *Don Quixote*, based on his method, was published years later. His text might have been too academic, or the message simply got lost in translation. Either way, after the scandal, there was not much of a political shift left behind. These effects, of course, are beyond Stavans' reach as translator or author. Before discrediting him, they show that the *politēs* are not passive consumers of the cultural products thrown at them by the polis structure; after all, to dismiss a message by a cultural agent is also a political decision.

After this analysis, it is reasonable to say the answer to the initial question leans towards a yes. The use of non-standard forms of English, as Spanglish, prompts the dialogue between normal and abnormal, and the struggle over normativity between agents of language, who are necessarily human, who encounter in a necessarily public sphere, are always political. The dimensions in which this political potential can be better actualized are those in which language is assigned the symbolic development of concepts, such as the three outlined by Cameron: authority, identity and agency. Finally, as the case of Stavans reminds us, language alone can't carry the totality of a political point, thus it is necessary to consider it among all the other factors of culture.

4.3. IN-Conversation.

A miscellaneous showcase of telling reflections.

4.3.1. "Second language" Information missing.

A new part of the body

A prosthesis, an extensible limb

An additional eye to look at the world

And additional eye to perceive oneself

A hand that reaches

A finger that points

A fist held in defiance

A pair of legs

That walk, that flex, that compensate,

That hold and resist

A pair of feet that carry me away.

4.3.2. “Is involuntary”. Born in Republic of Ireland, works UK.

When you mentioned that you were going to share your flat with an Irish girl, the Brits looked at you in horror and wished you luck. You added that she came from Cork, and someone started singing a bad rendition of Mozart’s requiem. You smiled, reminding yourself that you understood 20% of what the O’Donovan brothers said during the infamous interview at Rio summer Olympics¹⁰¹. You were afraid, but you believed everything would be alright.

The day arrived and so did she, speaking like a machine gun. Sitting in the kitchen, you focused in keeping your mouth shut, witnessing her ranting about what you vaguely understood was the poor interior design of the flat. “Fkn tabl”, “sht’t no spea fo’nuthng”, “is th’sht the fkn bin?”. Suddenly, she turned to look at you in the eyes.

“That face tells me you’ve got nothing of what I just said,” she declared.

You felt like waking up from a dream.

“I’m speaking too fast, ain’t I?”

“It’s alright, I just arrived. I’m still adapting.”

“You gotta, because I can’t speak slow, y’kno? Seriously, I’s in’t’h’rain sayin fk man, what’f I’nd livin’ith a foreign’r, it’gunnab’a disaaaaasta.”

You nodded and let her talk for half an hour before saying you had to go and do some shopping. Walking towards the mall, you promised yourself it would get better. You told yourself that you were struggling now just because you were new in the city. You were tired and a bit disoriented, that was all. With some peace of mind, you started to hum, and the song you chose was Mozart’s requiem.

4.3.3. “English”. Born Asia, works Europe.

Call me Wendy

Call me Ophelia

I love to buy stuff in Taobao

You can call me Ren

The R is soft, almost like an L

Ren, that’s right, Ren.

Is your Twitter in English?

My name is Atsushi

At-su-shi

The U is softer.

Ats’shi

What is WeChat? What do you mean you don’t have a Facebook?

My name is Qimeng

Simone?

No, Qimeng

I hear “Simone”

It is Qimeng

Can you write it down?

Did you just speak to me in Chinese?

4.3.4. “Angela Smile”. Born from Germans, works Colombia.

Morning hours in the waiting room. A psychologist hurries to interview dozens of applicants. There is a huge goal for next Monday.

“Angela...” says a man with glasses.

He hesitates. He looks at the concurrence with a big, nervous smile.

I raise my hand.

When I enter to the interview room, the psychologist doesn’t look amused. She must be tired of seeing so many hopeful faces.

“Welcome,” she says, without looking at me.

“Thank you,” I reply, rummaging through my bag.

I sit down and give her my CV.

“Tell me, A...”

She blinks fast two or three times. She looks at me and gives me a smile.

“How do you say it?”

“Schuster.”

“Schuuuster? Where is it from? Like, European?”

“German.”

She laughs, delighted. We talk in Spanish. The job is in English. She asks me if I can speak German.

Chairs on the contracting office are full at an hour when they should be empty. The receptionists call us, one by one, to sign the paperwork. I see one receptionist frowning slightly, squeezing her eyes.

I prepare to stand up.

"Angela... Sss... Chhh..."

"Schuster."

The receptionist gives me a small, embarrassed smile.

First day of training, I introduce myself to the teacher and my colleagues.

"Schhhhhusterrrr," the trainer says, showing his teeth while he rolls the R, "German, right?"

"Yes."

"Sieg Heil!"

I sigh. My colleagues laugh, unsure of what is going on.

Training ends with a little graduation ceremony.

"Congratulations, Führer", the trainer says when he gives me my diploma. The director smiles at me like apologizing.

I arrive early to my first day of work so I can introduce myself to my new supervisor.

"Schuster!" he says, his eyes gleaming, "is that Hebrew?"

"My family is Ashkenazi Jew, yes."

"I thought so!"

He smiles, proud of himself. Then, he sends me to the bottom of the office, next to a French guy whose last name is 'Roux'.

"The corner of the foreigners," the supervisors joke afterwards, grinning widely.

4.3.5. “The Name Giver”. Born Colombia, works Colombia, Germany, UK.

When I was a kid, a movie set in China and a book set in Malaysia made me wish I was Mongolian. I dreamed of golden eagles flying over the endless green sea, I dreamed of borrowing the sharp eyes of the falcon and riding at a gallop to fight the Gods of the cold and winter, that, I imagined, lived in castles hidden in Kamchatka, served by spirit bears.

When I learned Kuala Lumpur was not the capital of Mongolia, and that Kamchatka is thousands of miles away from Ulaanbaatar, the actual Mongolian capital, I felt like I had been woken up against my will. At the same time, I felt guilty for fantasizing with the hard lives of real people, so I didn't make a fuss.

Other books and movies made me obsess next with Africa, especially with the vicinity of Zambezi river, with which I fell in love after watching a documentary about Victoria Falls. My father bought a Rhodesian Ridgeback and told me she could fight lions. We called her Nala.

When, later, I learned about Queen Victoria, Cecil Rhodes and Walt Disney, the evil of selective breeding and the danger of trophy hunting, I regretted all my decisions.

Nowadays, I have some reputation as a good name giver. I have done it with pets, fictional characters, and even properties, like the residential complex where my family lives. I guess I have grown perceptive after all the mistakes from my childhood. But I am uneasy, I fear to be found out.

I haven't found a good name for myself.

5. PRESENTATION / FACE

We dedicated this area to the most visually apparent connotations of foreignness, those descriptors that serve as marks of the outsider. It is about documents and artefacts, of course, but mostly about the face itself, the one we are forced to carry everywhere we go: it is about the gestures and body language, the colour of the skin, the size, the height, the sensitivities and the eyes on the other face, that observe us as locals or aliens.

Black sons of Ugandans
born in France
are African when they lose
and European when they win.

Their cousins in America
know no victory,
they have the afro-prefix marked in the skin.

5.1. Common ground

In one dialect of the huitoto linguistic family, the speakers of which inhabit the upper part of the Amazonas river, there are three words to refer to strangers¹⁰²:

1. Makama: someone who wishes to learn from the community.
2. Rakiya: someone who minds their own business.
3. Ruanma: someone who wants to colonize.

In Spanish, they refer to themselves and the other tribes as “indigenous”, and to us as “Colombians”.

5.1.1. Safe ground. Born Bogotá, works Bogotá.

I love Ezequiel, but to be trapped two hours in a car just to see him is super boring. I have asked him a million times why won't he move a bit closer. It's not like his neighbourhood is the best. It is very grey, not a single tree on the sidewalks. He smiles and says he prefers to be close to the exit towards the South, where he comes from. Recently, I learned he must go to the coach station to take a bus to the llano, and even worse, that he must go all the way to the airport to fly home. Both places are like forty minutes north of where he lives! He is making fun of me.

I forgive him. Ezequiel is great. He made my little brother stop snoring and now I can sleep in peace. He also fixed my father's arm and defeated my paediatrician in her own game. She wanted to take my

tonsils out. I think she has a collection of tonsils in her cupboard, the witch. She enchanted my parents to convince them it was the best for me, but then we happened to visit Ezequiel and he noticed. He asked my father what dumb idea he had in mind now and, when he learned I had my fatal appointment next week, he jumped into action. He mixed herbs, he chanted, he gave me the best potion he had. When the surgeon saw me, she called the paediatrician and asked her to stop wasting her time. I laughed so much I think my tonsils got swollen again.

Ezequiel laughs a lot too. He always has a smile in his eyes. It is hard to believe that he cries, but he has told me he does, and that if nobody notices, it is because he cries inside. I think that is bad, tears flow outside for a reason. They are probably toxic if you drop them directly into your blood. He is the doctor, though, he must know what he is doing.

Ezequiel is very wise, you got to listen. He has an explanation for everything. If my feet are always cold, it is because the Amazonas grows during May, when I was born, so my spirit always has the feet underwater. If my dog is sick, it is because he caught a curse that was directed to me. My poor dog, he's blind and one of his legs doesn't work anymore. I begged him to forgive me because I didn't know why someone would hate me so much.

When I asked Ezequiel about it, he told me not to worry and be thankful with my dog instead, because most of the time, the *brujos* are making their *brujerías* just because they can. Or because they want to practice. That is also why they curse people for money, they don't really care. Ezequiel knows how to curse people, but he doesn't do it: he says black magic is too taxing and that his father taught him better. I am glad he

thinks like that, because if he was a sorcerer, not even five hundred dogs could stop him.

He can carry by himself trunks that normally require three people to lift them. Before moving to Bogotá, he used to go fishing at night and caught the fish with his bare hands. He noticed animals hidden so well that a soldier with infrared goggles wouldn't see them in a million years, he could grab wasps with his hands without being stung and bats without being bitten. Once, he stopped a cyclone with a rusty machete.

It was a terrifying night. First came the rain, hammering the tin roof so hard I thought it was a hailstorm. Then the lightnings came with their thunders. I hate thunders, every time one booms close to me, I feel like I am going to die. The wind swept along the hats, the door's rug, my mother's flip flops and a plastic glass I had left on the table. Maybe something else, but I didn't see because my mother told me to get away from the window. I hid under the blankets and then someone banged on the door so hard it almost gave me a heart attack. It was Ezequiel, urging us to leave the bedroom. I thought he was crazy. The bedroom was the only place with four walls in that house!

My parents were scared like me, but they did as he said. They forgot to take my little brother with them, though. While my mother went to rescue him from his pleasant sleep (he could sleep through anything, for real, if it was not for the snoring, you would think he was dead) the wind took the entire roof off. Under the light of the flashlight, I saw it curve and fall on its back, knocking the garden tree down. My father hugged me tightly and I was glad, we thought the wind was going to take us too. Then, Ezequiel decided he had had enough.

He took the machete from the kitchen, I think. He started to chant, as he does, in the language of his dad... I think, and it makes sense, because his dad taught him magic. He had to scream because the cyclone was making a lot of noise on its own. My father yelled at him, he told Ezequiel that he was crazy. I cried because Ezequiel was going too far and because my mother hadn't come back. Then, I saw the reflection of lightnings in the machete's blade, that Ezequiel was holding. He yelled something and stabbed the earth. The cyclone died instantly. My mother arrived in tears and we all hugged, then my little brother came out complaining and ruined the moment.

I asked Ezequiel about his siblings. He told me about his family instead. His wife comes from a branch of the Caquetá river. They speak to each other in Spanish because it is easier, but they have learned each other's languages along the way. Ezequiel can speak four languages now. I am jealous, I can only speak one and a half and I don't think I will marry a French person anyway.

Ezequiel must be lonely in that grey little house, thinking that he used to live in a maloca with all his family. I would change an apartment with balcony for a maloca any day. Well, I would think twice if it is a very good apartment, one that has a charming view and is always warm. But malocas have no blueprints, they are designed by songs. No architect can sit and sing how to make a house and get it done because he knows his song very well. It is nicer to live in a place made by people dancing instead of labourers who yell over rancheras blasting from a loudspeaker so loud that it hurts. I am not sure about having a dirt floor, but I guess it is a matter of habit and, besides, it comes with a perk: you don't need to sweep.

I wanted Ezequiel to teach me the song for making houses and many more, I wanted to know how to speak the language of magic and the one of medicine, but he refused. He may be very wise, but in some things, he is out-dated. It should not be a problem that I have a European grandad, for example. Somewhere among the great-grandads of our great-grandads, my family and Ezequiel must connect. I am a good student, in some years I will speak complete French. I can learn, but he says no.

He insists on silly stuff to keep me happy. For example, he forgets that he has advised me four times to keep my eyes peeled for pink dolphins. Supposedly, I must ask all men to remove their hats and show me their heads, just to be sure they are not dolphins in disguise, covering their blowholes. I tell him every time that there was no point in me worrying about that in the city, after all, the dolphins can't go *that far* from the water. Anyway, when I visit the place where he used to live, because I am sure I am going to do it, I know I will distinguish a man from a dolphin. I mean, I have the advantage of knowing there will be dolphins trying to pass as men. This is something that most people don't know.

Ezequiel is old, but he is so healthy I think we can go together to his place in the future. Maybe not as I would want, as a teacher and a student or at least as close friends. There are so many things I wish he could tell me! I really, really wish he considered me a real friend and stopped keeping secrets. I really don't want him to feel lonely and cry. What if he fills himself with water? He could drown, like one of his sons in the river Ariari.

I met that boy only once. He called himself Uriel and he was very cool. We dared each other to drop candle wax in our fingers without flinching. It was hard, but I managed. At the end, we had nice gloves

made of wax and no candles. He taught me how to fix a fishnet and then he took me to the river to show me how to throw it. He got me a soft drink and managed the neighbour to finally let me pet her monkey.

The river Ariari is big. It extends so much it is hard to distinguish the other shore. Even so, I don't know how Uriel could drown. He was strong and fast, like Ezequiel, he had learned to read the signs of nature too. I know for a fact that he foresaw the rise of the stream that took my uncle's motorbike away. My uncle makes me ashamed. He didn't listen to Uriel's warnings and chained the motorbike to a tree by the stream. When the motorbike was gone, he decided Uriel had stolen it or maybe that he had cursed him to punish him for not paying attention. How dumb is that?

The motorbike appeared a couple of kilometres down the stream. Of course, it was ruined, as well as Uriel's relationship with us. When I was back, he had gone back to the Douth and I didn't have any news until the river took him. I feel bad, but there is nothing I can do.

Besides Uriel, who was the first one and the only one I met, Ezequiel has other two sons and a daughter. The second joined the army. The daughter already married, and the youngest one is maybe with Ezequiel's wife, who is back to her town to take care of her mother, or maybe he's in the school of Leticia, studying with the nuns. Ezequiel told me he wishes one of his sons goes to university and I don't think the teachers there accept people who were taught by their parents instead of a school. If that was the case, maybe my parents would teach me instead of sending me to school.

I thought of Ezequiel when they taught me origami in the craft class. He has no pets, just a garden in his living room, with plants growing out of the plastic bottles he used to hide them when he brought them

from the Amazonas. I know he likes birds because he imitates them very well, and because he carves figures of toucans and macaws in a red wood that he also brings from the Amazonas. I choose a nice red paper and made some birds for him, and I added a fish made with the biggest cardboard I could find, a discarded poster for science class. He will be happy to know I learned about the pirarucu fish. It is one of the biggest fishes of the world, so big that you can make teaspoons with its scales. I can't wait for Ezequiel to tell me some story about an encounter with a pirarucu. It will be worth the pain of dealing two hours with the traffic jam.

5.1.2. Middle ground. Born Lower Saxony, works Meta.

He began talking of the delight of the children, and of that age when the sudden appearance of the Christmas-tree, decorated with fruit and sweetmeats, and lighted up with wax candles¹⁰³...

...whose fire suddenly died.

Taken out of his book by surprise, Herr Vogt found himself submerged in pitch black darkness. He inhaled and pricked up his ears, ready to identify any sound breaking the silence. Critters sang, screeched and moved under the brushing of the leaves pushed by the wind, so loud that it sounded like rain. There was no silence and there had never been. It was not Christmas time either, nor had he seen a sweetmeat in days. He exhaled, closed the book and left it aside.

“Ezequiel!” he yelled, feeling unable to leave the safety of his mosquito net, “where are the matches?”

The scandal of nature seemed to become louder. Herr Vogt realized how sweaty he was.

“Ezequiel?”

He may have left to do some errands. That man seemed to be very busy at night.

Resigned, Herr Vogt felt around until he found the nightstand. As far as he remembered, there was a small drawer underneath with a flashlight, a pocket knife and a first-aid kit. Maybe, if he turned on the flashlight for only some seconds at a time, he could make his way to the kitchen and back without attracting a cloud of insects that would devour him whole. There had to be more candles and a box of matches in the cupboard.

After some struggle, he found and opened the drawer through the mosquito net. Carefully sliding his hand then, Herr Vogt grabbed the flashlight, an easily recognizable cylinder made of rough rubber, supposedly waterproof. After the rain that he had witnessed that very morning, though, he doubted any device made by human hands could bear so much water without damage.

It was surely a peculiar place. He had come to that country with the intention of getting some business, only to get caught in a net of protocols and futile meetings instead. After seizing a couple of small but decent contracts, he had decided to take a break from his frustrations in that little ‘eco-house’ he had seen on the internet. The countryside had always made him content; he thought that, even if the

shape of the living things changed, the spirit of nature should remain calm and invigorating anywhere in the world.

The 'eco' in the title of the ad was just a way to sell the house's lack of power and access to drinkable water. The forest that was supposedly around it was nothing but an abandoned plantation of African oil palm, and the advertised river and lake close to it were just an artificial pond to farm tilapia and the small stream that filled it, just deep enough to reach Herr Vogt knees. Everything was infested with bugs, a frog or two could be found in the toilet at all times and, despite the site promising a couple of natives, only that man, Ezequiel, was around to do the chores.

Once Herr Vogt found his sandals, the strategy of the flashlight got him to the door without a single insect bite. Maybe he could get used to that life, a routine of finding the way around simulated wilderness. The owners knew their customers, they offered that ruin of a garden to serve a playground for adventurous people with tired hearts. Its charm was to look like a jungle without being deadly, a tamed nature in which no one had to worry about the basic problem of survival. Despite himself, Herr Vogt smiled and grabbed the door's handle.

An unexpected clarity met him outside, the noise of the critters went even louder. Herr Vogt blinked strongly, wondering if his memory was playing a trick on him: albeit the shadows still hid most things, he could perceive colours. There, in the middle of nowhere, without electricity, the yellowish green of the palm trees' leaves and the dirty red of the hammock hung nearby were possible to grasp. Putting the flashlight back in his pocket, Herr Vogt walked straight to the patio and looked upwards.

He had never seen such a shining moon before, not even in the clearest nights of winter. Its light overshadowed every star and made the black space look like an opaque glass. Spinning slowly, he scanned the firmament. The feeling that overcame him was the same the book he was reading talked about. It was the same that had inspired the Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, too. To think that sky had cried an ocean in the morning, pouring a waterfall so thick it seemed a river was running vertically to engulf the world. Herr Vogt laughed out loud and froze when someone else giggled behind him.

"Good night, Don Paul," said Ezequiel, his uneven teeth oddly noticeable under the moonlight.

The man, short and burly as an archaic figurine of stone, was sitting on a breeze block in such a way it seemed he was rather squatting down. He was toying with something that could be a box of cigarettes. The air carried a scent of tobacco.

"I thought you were not here."

Herr Vogt received a slow blink as reply.

"Also, I didn't know you smoked."

"I don't."

Ezequiel raised his hand to let Herr Vogt see what he was holding. It was a small, white plastic bottle with the neck smeared by some gluey dark substance.

"So," Ezequiel said, going back to mix the content of his bottle with a twig, "do you want me to turn around now, so you can keep dancing?"

"I was not dancing."

Ezequiel smiled.

Herr Vogt looked again at the sky, then at the door to his bedroom and the one leading to the kitchen. A soft breeze made him feel less sticky. He sat on a step close to the other man.

"Beautiful night, huh?" he ventured.

"Bad for hunting."

"So, you do hunt at night."

Ezequiel glanced at him.

"You know you can get everything you need in a supermarket, right?"

The man chuckled and licked the twig he had been using. Then, he looked upwards. Herr Vogt did the same. A single cloud approached the moon, big enough to cover it for a little while.

"I hope I can see the Milky Way" Herr Vogt said and then hesitated.

"Do you also call it 'Milky Way' in your language?"

"No, but I enjoy you describe it that way."

Herr Vogt fixed his eyes on a tree with hot pink flowers that was close to the chicken pen, just meters from the house. It was a shame people like Ezequiel had to work for the local landlords.

"Do you celebrate Christmas?"

"Yes."

Herr Vogt let out a heavy sigh.

Ezequiel giggled again, his laugh too childish to belong to a rough, mature body like his. He licked more of his tacky black thing and began humming an indistinct song, which made the sound of the critters fall to the background as a kind of textured silence. Afraid to interrupt him,

Herr Vogt remained still, squeezing his eyes to look for shades of green in the grass.

"Here comes your trail of milk."

Herr Vogt gave Ezequiel a confused look, then, the light disappeared. Startled, he turned to the sky and saw that the cloud had effectively covered the moon, while thousands upon thousands of stars became distinguishable. The galaxy was wide, dense, like a bridge that connected the horizons.

"No way," he muttered.

"If you ever get lost," commented Ezequiel, "you follow that path."

"How?"

"It is like a compass."

"And where's the north?"

"It depends."

Herr Vogt let out a snort. He was not going to get lost anyway.

"What if it is not visible?" he teased.

"Find a mantis and put it in your hand," answered Ezequiel with a tone that made it impossible to know if he was joking, "it will point in the direction of the nearest river."

"How am I supposed to find a mantis in the middle of the night?"

"They like to pass the time under coca leaves."

Herr Vogt stared in disbelief while Ezequiel giggled. With such indigenous features, the man was probably used to tourists taking him

for some sort of shaman. He looked like the kind of person who would get a good laugh and even money out of such circumstance.

"Tell me, Ezequiel, is that your real name?" he asked.

Ezequiel just scowled.

"I mean, the name that appears in your ID."

"It is."

"Did your mother pick it from the Bible? It is the name of a very important prophet."

"I choose it myself."

"Then it is not your real name."

Ezequiel gave him a hostile little smile.

"Let's try again," Herr Vogt proposed, "what was the name your parents gave you?"

Ezequiel said it.

Herr Vogt asked him to repeat it a couple of times.

"How do you write it?" he insisted.

"It can't be written," Ezequiel replied, "that's why I am Ezequiel."

"Hasn't anybody made a writing system for your language?"

"A man like you, that came from the same place. He lived with the missionaries for three years."

"And?"

"He delivered some notebooks to the governor with the language of my mother, then went back to your country."

"Too bad."

The man shrugged. The clarity came back; once again, Herr Vogt felt dazed by the ephemeral colours of things under the moonlight. Ezequiel resumed his humming. Out of nowhere, Herr Vogt felt the urge to dance, but contained himself. Ezequiel had laughed enough at his expenses already.

It was time to think about eating. There was enough bread and cheese in the portable fridge he had rented along with other camping supplies. He could get some slices of the mangoes a neighbour child had harvested that afternoon, too. The kid had climbed around the trees with the ability of a monkey, throwing the fruit at him and cheering every time he caught it, as if that was a great feat.

"Why is it that all your people are such good goalkeepers?" the kid had insisted, "you are too fast for being that big!"

Herr Vogt chuckled.

Ezequiel glanced at him. "What do you want to do tomorrow?" he asked.

"There's nothing to do here, Ezequiel, that's the charm," answered Herr Vogt, longing for a cigarette. He had quit smoking four years ago.

"There are natural pools down the river."

"I'd rather stay to read," replied Herr Vogt and stood up, "do you want some mango?"

"No, no."

The moonlight didn't reach the kitchen. Herr Vogt headed to the cupboard to finally get his candles and matches. The yellow light of the flames, constantly shaken by soft currents of breeze that came from

the glassless windows, projected trembling shadows that made everything look big and unnatural. The fridge looked especially menacing and Herr Vogt hesitated for a while before opening it.

After a while, with a plate of sandwiches and slices of mango in one hand and the candle in the other, Herr Vogt left the kitchen with the intent of sitting next to Ezequiel to eat, but the man was gone. The screams of the insects were a bit desperate, slightly irritating. The night was getting cold.

A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring which I enjoy with my whole heart. I am alone, and feel the charm of existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine¹⁰³.

Herr Vogt blew the candle and sat to eat under the stars.

5.1.3. Battle Ground. Born Amazonas, works Caquetá.

Everything buzzes. Deep, heavy. All the fluids of the world converge in the air and it oozes. Hot, disgusting.

The waters carry the entire civilization, cramped in a raft. Soaked, calm. The Indians don't feel the rain because it doesn't fall.

"Eight sacks, twelve boxes: eight small, five big."

"Eight plus five is thirteen, you idiot."

The brown river flows slowly. It languishes. The Indian with the tiller has broken lips and red stains in his pants.

"Twenty-two Indians and all the adults have mochilas. There is a basket and a throw net full of fish, a cage with two chickens."

"Shut up, Villalba."

The green tone of the camouflage uniform doesn't match the world around. The skin became terracotta in order to blend better.

Things are better when they are done faster. Nothing works like an ambush.

"Stop! Antinarcotics!"

Women hug their children to cover their breasts and the tiller Indian gets the raft close to the makeshift dock. Two against twenty-two, but none of those twenty-two has a single gun.

"Spanish?"

"Yes, sir."

One against one. The Indian is young, robust, dark. He has all his fingers in place and a ready smile. His head is covered in thick black hair, his body is bald.

Even with a shaved head, sweat trickles down the body hair of the soldier.

"Where are you going to?"

"La Pedrera."

"What for?"

"The owner of Araracuara made the river grow."

The jungle swells and lets out a heavy sigh. Sunrays are diffused by the mist, truths are concealed behind the unmoving waterfall of the atmosphere.

"Unpack. Be fast if you don't want our help."

Araza, camu-camu, acai, bacaba, caramuri. Villalba drools over a bunch of mamoncillo and one Indian woman gives it to him without a word. The Sergeant is up the campsite, taking a nap. Lucky Villalba will not need to swim all the way back to Mocoa to save his ass.

The smiling Indian organizes the exposition. Net hammocks, palm tree fibre, old shoes and a pack of replica soccer jerseys. One basket for the iguanas and another for the fish. The ants put their flags in every container, the rice is the only edible in a plastic bag.

"Any encounters?"

"No, sir."

Arroz Florhuila. ONU. UNICEF. Ministerio de Agricultura. Gobernación del Amazonas. Alcaldía de Leticia. Vicariato Apostólico de Leticia. Parroquia Inmaculada Concepción La Chorrera. Project Amazonas. The bags of rice are clean.

"Any signal?"

The Indian bares his teeth. He won't tell.

"Any favours?"

"No, sir."

"Where are they?"

A handy smile. He won't tell.

Slippery fish with a native instinct, hiding in the murky water where predators can't find them. The river curves to avoid the mountain, the people bend to avoid the bullets.

Gold mines. Trade routes. Rubber trees. Savage souls.

Ministerio de Interior y Defensa. Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia. Cartel de Cali. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. Cartel de Medellín. Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Ejército de Liberación Popular.

A fertile soil. An eternal shoal. A fervent procession of souls without name. Gold down the river. Iron and lead crossing the air. Oil. Oil. Oil dropping black down the throat.

There is a sack filled with dry coca leaves and two marmalade jars that contain a white powder.

"Care to explain?"

The jungle swells and sighs again.

The leaves are for making mambe, that thing all Indians eat to cope with life. The white powder, the Indian says, is a hot spice.

"That's some smooth slang."

The Indian's expression, a frown with non-existent eyebrows. Unfriendly face.

"Who taught you that, the guerrillos?"

"No, sir, it is truly a hot spice, we make it ourselves."

The Indians agree. They all have that faint smile hanging from their lips. The sweat trickles and trickles in waves of rage. The command has not sent enough supplies.

"Go look for the Sergeant, tell him we found something."

"We can confiscate this ourselves."

Whispers. Grumbles. This is not the way things are supposed to be.

"Hand everything over."

"Please, sir, it is very difficult to make."

"I bet."

Sacks are ripped, boxes are broken. Three more jars and a sack full of tobacco. The Indians hide their smiles behind their teeth. Villalba is having fun.

"Who is your connection in Brazil?"

"We don't go past La Pedrera."

"How much were you paid?"

"The owner of Araracuara made the river grow."

"I see the river rather low."

The Indians look at the waters. Their small eyes can penetrate the mist, their hairless bodies seem to be about to leave the ground, able to swim in the moist air. Their blood dilutes the yellow fever, their stomachs can feed from the poison of frogs. Twenty-two against two.

They know more. They know better.

"Confiscated."

"Test it with your machines."

The machine is out of chemicals. The generator doesn't work. The command doesn't care, the sergeant can't be bothered. The Indians can't penetrate the sandbags and the concrete walls.

"Or you can try a bit, three grains with the tip of your tongue."

"Do you think I am an idiot?"

The smile is back. The Indian opens the jar. With a lick to his finger, he takes some powder and puts it on his mouth. He blinks hard.

"Yes, three grains. Come on. Help us here."

"Your master will kill you."

Villalba, that lowly newcomer was nothing but trouble.

Their masters are pagan gods, rooted so deep they pass as the roots of the world. They make the river grow when it is dry, they do not care if a spice goes to waste.

"Give me that."

Steam coming out of the pores. The atmosphere can't contain more water. The shoulders bend under the weight of the heat.

"Don't sniff."

"Shut up."

"Do you want some mandioca?"

"You, shut up too."

The Indians are wary. Villalba takes one oar, a makeshift table in the makeshift dock. The merciless jungle holds back its breathing, a smile pursed in the lips. No master will step as a saviour, nobody will be rescued by the breeze.

"Taste it, don't sniff."

"Only three grains, it is very strong."

"Blah, blah, blah."

A white line on the oar. Villalba snorts. His scream gets lost in the burn of his nose.

What a mockery.

"You idiot."

It is time to let go, or the master will come and kill you, if you don't die first.

"Son of a bitch."

The charge of a rifle announces that luck ran out, the sergeant awoke.

"Don't shoot, mi sargento, everything is in order."

The Indians pile in the back of the raft.

"Why is this pig squealing?"

"He snorted hot spice."

Villalba agonizes.

"Is this a fucking joke?"

The smiling Indian is back on land with some leaves and dirty water.

"Fuck off, you animal."

The sergeant approaches with the rifle at hand. He inspects the scene.

Villalba coughs and cries.

"Feed him to the gators and see if they appreciate spicy food."

The watery air is unwelcoming of laugh. The group of Indians line like a school of fish, ready to impress. To defend. In the stillness of water, the murk settles down, treacherous.

"So, what do we have in here?"

The Indians lower their faces.

The rifle cannon inspects each one of them. Naked, hairless.

The uniform is soaked in sweat, but the pants of the tiller Indian only have blood.

"Make that pig shut up."

The Indian kneels next to Villalba. The eyes have gone white.

"Are they clean?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much will they pay?"

Nobody is surprised.

"Do any of you have a name?"

Bora. Miraña. Andoke. Nonuya. Ocaina. Muinane.

Huitoto: Minika, Nipode, Bue.

"I am called Ezequiel."

Words made viscous by a stuffed mouth. The Indian smiles with the lips smeared brown and takes Villalba by the jaw. A wood straw to the nostril, he blows.

The Sergeant spites.

"The chief?"

"My father."

"Where is he?"

"Macharagos."

A blow of the brown thing into the other nostril. Villalba bleeds.

"What did he send us?"

The Indians crowd round the unpacked goods. Rum and cigarettes. Money. Pieces of gold from the tepui of Chiribiquete.

"You can pick what you need from the food, too."

"Including the spice?"

Ezequiel the Indian smiles. He is a bull shark is in his element, he breathes through the gills. He has the tongue prepared to throw venom, a mythical snake.

"We will not have this problem again."

Villalba stops waggling. The ants seek to put a flag over his body, his tears don't find a place in the atmosphere, they don't dry or evaporate.

The shark hesitates.

The rifle doesn't.

"As I told your men, it is very difficult to make, but if it will sort things out, we could leave half a jar."

"I also see you have a bit too many women."

Danger surfaces. The fish in the raft open their mouth and show that they are piranhas.

Now is the sergeant the one who has to smile. He bares his yellow teeth, hidden by a beard out of protocol. An old boar splashing in the mud. Twenty-two lethal creatures against two and Villalba, who is about to drown.

"Go away."

The waters flow. Civilization floats away, down to the edge of the world, its raft a little lighter, its throat a little sore.

The master kills. That afternoon, the water rises from Araracuara and comes down soaring, breaking the makeshift dock.

5.2. IN-Question.

A miscellaneous showcase of observations.

5.2.1. "Mistrust". Born Colombian, works Colombia, Germany, UK.

Identity is a myth sustained by memory.

Culture is a myth sustained by history.

Borges said that oblivion is a deep form of memory¹⁰⁴.

Vives named the country "the land of oblivion"¹⁰⁵.

5.2.2. "The Right to Belong". Born Paris, works everywhere.

"Everyone has the right to a nationality" [...] "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15¹⁰⁶

Freedom as human right makes subjugation an inhuman condition. In the same way, nationality as human right makes the lack thereof inhuman, so fundamental is the need to belong somewhere. Even if the core of a nation is the body of people that comprises it, territory is what ultimately validates it: land holds the meaning and the history; without soil, cultures cannot leave a trace.

However, people move. Constantly, erratically. Different from the humpback whale or the monarch butterfly, human groups do not follow a path, they change places according to their needs, adapting to new environments, learning new ways. Exploration, colonization, travelling, tourism: we move to grow, we associate travelling with freedom.

The universal declaration of human rights enunciates the possibility of changing nationalities as an inherent part of the right to have a nationality. We belong somewhere, but we don't belong to somewhere. We can become nationals of another place, if so we desire.

Can we?

5.2.3. Promised Land. Born Jewish, works in conflict.

Exiled, Ancient Israelites never assimilated anywhere, experiencing their promised land through religion instead. Exiled, my Jewish grandfather never assimilated in his foster country, importing picture calendars from his lost land to hang in the walls.

Today, Israel turns the desert into crops during the day; at night, it sits on the terrace to see the rockets fall. On the other side of the world, I read the news and the traces of Jewish blood become shards of ice in my veins.

Someone said once that I could claim the Israeli nationality. In my ignorance, I wouldn't dare.

I feel ashamed, but I don't know what I feel ashamed for. Maybe it is the fact that I have been called a Nazi before. Maybe it is because I disliked the Israeli entry to Eurovision 2018 and they won. Maybe it is because I don't look forward to Hanukkah, but I expect the end of Ramadan.

In a German classroom, some years ago, I met a man with hair like mine and green eyes like my grandfather's. He had a script in development, the story of a kid that happily overcomes the tragedy of losing a limb in a landmine explosion. He was told his point of view was too grim, that no child could get over such a trauma. I spoke in his defence, I told them that I knew children like that back in my land. He felt encouraged, he said that he was speaking from experience. We were frowned upon, but we didn't care.

At the end of the class, we ran towards each other, eager to know if we were from the same town.

He was Palestinian.

5.2.4. "No offense". Born in the third world, works for the first world.

Rejected

Restrained

Immigrants working in foreign lands

The locals ask if they can talk with someone

"It is an important matter" they say

"I want to talk with like, a person".

Customer service smile

"No offense"

No offense.

5.2.5. "Venezuela". Born Venezuela, cannot work in Venezuela.

Outcasts

Dispossessed

Immigrants stuck in border control

The refugee sees the butterfly cross the border with no passport
and feels bitter jealousy.

5.2.6. “How dare you not to celebrate the 4th of July?”. Born U(SA-K), works U(SA-K)

How is it that you didn't join World War II?

We had our own problems during that time.

But you will join the third, right?

I hope there isn't a third one.

Oh, let's not lie to ourselves.

...

I don't like war.

Are you a pacifist?

Yes, I am.

Ah, well... I don't like war either.

You have never lived through one.

What are you talking about? We were in World War II and you weren't there!

6. POSITION / GUTS.

Here, we explore the intimate dimension of foreignness found within the self. The longing to belong collides with the desire to not be reduced, the relatable and the repulsive in society create a conflict of interests in the individual. It becomes necessary to negotiate the categories of misfit and outcast in order to justify the convenience or not of inhabiting the border.

The traffic light takes a lot of time, but not enough to remember which way to look.

6.1. Das Geistjäger. *Born in Poland (formerly Germany), worked Colombia.*

I am described as Ausland-Deutsch, and even if I want to translate Ausland as *Out of the Land*, the truth is that it means *Foreign*. Germany is the land of my grandfather, yes, the place from where my last name, my Christmas culinary choices and my convenient passport come, but I am at loss with German culture, I can't find my strand in its "Geistesgeschichte". Most of my writing in German consists in motivation letters to academic institutions that wrote back to me in Spanish, saying "sentimos informarle que no ha sido admitido" most of the times. It's a fragmented, uncomfortable language that I got from standardized textbooks, never-ending classes dictated by a Spaniard in a small Latin American classroom, templates and automated translators.

Wielding Sapir-Whorf's key principle of language as a shaper of thought, here I take the German language as horse to hunt down the German Geist and get a hold of the untranslatable "Deutscheskeit". I stop hiding the resources, the questions and the corrections. I let Spanish and English run along, supporting the effort I make to communicate with Angela Merkel, head of the German State and the hypothetical addressee of my concerns. Most importantly, I allow myself to play with a language that I want to feel as my own, exploring its particular qualities without lowering my head to grammar, correction and the diminishing anxiety of blending in.

Dr. Angela Merkel
Bundeskanzlerin der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Berlin, 2018

Sehr geehrte Dr. Merkel

letzten September, mein Großvater, Heinz Günter
Schuster, ist gestorben.

Englisch – Deutsch	PONS.DE ¹⁰⁷
Pass away	VERB (intr.)
1. pass away – euph (die)	entschlafen

mein Großvater entschlief.

German – English	Google Translate ¹⁰⁸
Mein Großvater entschlief.	My grandfather slept.

Seit letzten September, lebt mein Großvater nicht
mehr. Er hat ein langes, gutes Leben in
Kolumbien, wo er hat von den Nazis...

Englisch – Deutsch	PONS.DE
Refuge	SUBST
1. refuge – secure place	(f) Zuflucht (m) Zufluchtsort

...gefunden.

*"Dos mil
dieciocho"*

*How do you
address a head
of State?*

*How do you
say someone
has died
without coming
out as
insensitive?*

*Am I being
clear?*

*The concept of
safe place is
female, but the
safe place is
male. Colombia
is female in
Spanish. My
grandfather
didn't speak
Spanish when
he arrived.*

Englisch – Deutsch	PONS.DE
However	KONJ.
1. however –	aber
nevertheless	jedoch

Jedoch, sein Tod ist sehr tragisch für mich, weil er zurück nach Deutschland reisen wollte.

German – English	Google Translate
However, his death is very tragic to me, because he wanted to travel back to Germany.	

Jedoch, sein Tod ist sehr tragisch für mich, weil er zurück nach Deutschland fahren wollte.

German – English	Google Translate
However, his death is very tragic to me, because he wanted to go back to Germany.	

Jedoch, sein Tod ist sehr tragisch für mich, weil er nach Deutschland zurückgehen wollte.

German – English	Google Translate
However, his death is very tragic to me, because he wanted to go back to Germany.	

Bitte verstanden: er wurde in Breslau geboren. Heute, Breslau ist Wroclaw und es ist in Polen,

The word I am less familiar with is probably the most formal.

My grandfather was not a tourist.

My grandfather was not a pilot.

My grandfather was a displaced person.

How is Breslau called today?

aber nicht wenn mein Großvater dort wohnte.
Damals, das war Deutschland.

Wissen Sie?

Englisch – Deutsch	PONS.DE
In a way	LOC.
1. in a way	In gewisser Weise

In gewisser Weise, meine ganze Familie ist
immer Ausland-Deutsch gewesen.

Trotzdem...

Nunca le hablé a mi abuelo en alemán, porque
él decidió no pasarle el idioma a sus hijos o
nietos. Aunque lo aprendí a medias, me dio
pena hablarle y que no me entendiera, y ahora
que está en la tumba, solo me queda una cosa
qué decirle:

English	Deutsch	Español
I am sorry.	Entschuldigung.	Excúsame.
I am sorry.	Es tut mir leid.	Lo lamento.
I am sorry.	Verzeih mir.	Perdóname.

*I hadn't
thought of this
like this before.*

*It is not
appropriate to
get too
personal in a
formal letter.
Better leave
Angela out of
it.*

*But I can't take Angela out of this. Angela will not understand where I
am coming from unless I talk the language of my heart.*

May I start by explaining my experience as a German in Colombia?

Español – Alemán	Google Translate
Nadie reparó en el hecho de que yo era alemana hasta sexto grado, cuando un compañero de apellido Castro se interesó en mi segundo apellido, Schuster. No habíamos aprendido nada sobre la Segunda Guerra Mundial hasta el momento, pero Castro había leído un par de libros, o visto un par de películas, lo suficiente para saber que Schuster significaba Alemania y Alemania significaba nazis. Me persiguió por el salón gritando "Sieg Heil" y "Heil Hitler", me acusó de odiar a los judíos y talló una esvástica en mi pupitre.	Niemand bemerkte, dass ich bis zur sechsten Klasse Deutsch war, als sich ein Kollege mit dem Nachnamen Castro für meinen zweiten Nachnamen Schuster interessierte. Wir hatten bisher nichts über den Zweiten Weltkrieg gelernt, aber Castro hatte ein paar Bücher gelesen oder ein paar Filme gesehen, genug, um zu wissen, dass Schuster meinte, Deutschland und Deutschland bedeuteten Nazis. Er jagte mich mit "Sieg Heil" und "Heil Hitler" durch den Raum, beschuldigte mich, die Juden zu hassen und schnitzte ein Hakenkreuz in meinem Schreibtisch.

English - German	Google translate
Nobody noticed the fact that I was German until sixth grade, when a classmate with the surname Castro took interest in my second surname, Schuster. Until that point, we had not learned anything about World War II, but Castro had read a couple of books or he had watched a couple of movies, enough to know that Schuster meant Germany and Germany meant Nazis. He chased me around the classroom screaming "Sieg Heil" and "Heil Hitler", accused me of hating the Jews and carved a swastika in my desk.	Niemand bemerkte, dass ich bis zur sechsten Klasse Deutsch war, als ein Klassenkamerad mit dem Nachnamen Castro Interesse an meinem zweiten Nachnamen, Schuster, hatte. Bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt hatten wir nichts über den Zweiten Weltkrieg gelernt, aber Castro hatte ein paar Bücher gelesen, oder er hatte ein paar Filme gesehen, genug, um zu wissen, dass Schuster bedeutete, dass Deutschland und Deutschland Nazis bedeuteten. Er jagte mich mit "Sieg Heil" und "Heil Hitler" im Klassenzimmer herum, beschuldigte mich, die Juden zu hassen und schnitzte ein Hakenkreuz in meinem Schreibtisch.

Is it...

- | | |
|---|---|
| • als sich ein Kollege | • als ein Klassenkamerad |
| • für meinen zweiten Nachnamen Schuster interessierte | • Interesse an meinem zweiten Nachnamen, Schuster, hatte. |
| • Wir hatten bisher nichts | <i>or</i> • Bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt hatten wir nichts |
| • Schuster meinte, Deutschland | • dass Schuster bedeutete, dass Deutschland |
| • Deutschland bedeuteten Nazis. | • Deutschland Nazis bedeuteten. |
| • durch den Raum | • im Klassenzimmer herum |

Kollege oder Klassenkamerad

Kollege [wie/like] Colleague [like/como] Colega

RAE¹⁰⁹

Colega	Amigo
Amigo	Que tiene relación de amistad
Amistad	Afecto personal, puro y desinteresado, compartido con otra persona, que nace y se fortalece con el trato

Español – Inglés	Myself
Afecto personal, puro y desinteresado, compartido con otra persona, que	Personal affection, pure and disinterested, shared with another

nace
y se fortalece con el trato

person, that is born and strengthened
with interaction.

I won't call friend someone who called me a Nazi.

Castro war nicht mein Kollege.

Klassenkamerad [wie/like] Class Comrade [like/como] Camarada de Clase

RAE

Camarada	Compañía
Compañía	Efecto de acompañar
Acompañar	Dicho de una cosa: existir junto a otra o simultáneamente con ella

Español – Inglés

Myself

Dicho de una cosa: existir junto a otra o simultáneamente con ella	Said of a thing: to exist next to another or at the same time of another.
--	---

We may not be things, but we surely existed next to the other.

Castro war mein Klassenkamerad.

It stills sounds too friendly.

Englisch – Deutsch	PONS.DE
Classmate	<i>SUBST.</i>
1. classmate	M(f) Mitschüler(in)

Deutsch	English	Español
Mit	With	Con
Schüler	Student (of school)	Estudiante (de colegio)
English	Deutsch	Español
Class	Klasse	Clase
Mate	Alter	Viejo

Ein Mitschüler ist/is a Withstudent (of school) is/es un Conestudiante (de colegio)

A Classmate is/ist ein Klassealter ist/es un Claseviejo.

Deutsch	English	Español
Klasse	Class	Clase
Alter	Old	Viejo

A Klassealter ist/is an Old Class, an Outdated.

In the nineties, the word "Germany" brought only "Nazi", "football" and "cars" to the Colombian mind. Then came the DAAD, the Goethe Institut, the money. The day Germany scored 7-1 against Brazil in the World Cup 2014, just after Colombia was eliminated by the Cariocas, Castro uploaded a picture to social media, wearing the German team's jersey with his father. The next year, Castro visited Germany with some friends.

Natürlich hat ein Deutscher „Wetten,
dass..?“ erfunden
Vielen Dank für die schönen Stunden
Wir sind die freundlichsten Kunden auf
dieser Welt
Wir sind bescheiden, wir haben Geld
Die Allerbesten in jedem Sport
Die Steuern hier sind Weltrekord
Bereisen Sie Deutschland und bleiben Sie
hier
Auf diese Art von Besuchern warten wir
Es kann jeder hier wohnen, dem es gefällt
Wir sind das freundlichste Volk auf dieser
Welt...
Deutsch, Deutsch, Deutsch, Deutsch
Nur eine Kleinigkeit ist hier verkehrt
Und zwar¹¹⁰:

*I owe English to the
music, it's just that
German pop doesn't
click with me.*

*How much do you
learn about yourself
in a language class?*

*Do Germans sing in
soccer matches?*

Warum Castro hat mir Nazi genannt, wenn ich bin nicht das, un mein
Großvater Jude war?



c. A letter opened by the Nazis.

Geöffnet. Öffnen. Öffnend. Geöffnet haben.

Sie öffnen. Sie öffneten. Sie werden öffnen. Sie haben geöffnet. Sie hatten geöffnet. Sie werden geöffnet. Sie öffnen. Sie werden öffnen. Sie haben geöffnet. Sie werden geöffnet haben. Sie öffneten. Sie würden öffnen. Sie hätten geöffnet. Sie würden geöffnet haben¹¹¹.



d. Heinz Schuster in front of his former house in Berlin

“Eso hasta fuimos la casa y todo, divino. No nos dejaron entrar, claramente, pero divino.”

Öffnen Sie!

Hier, das ist mein Wohnnachweis:

d. Apotheke am Hermannplatz
Hermannplatz 7-9, 10967, Berlin.



*We used to
have houses,
business, lives
in German
land.*

e. Schuster.
Erkelenzdammm 27, 10999, Berlin.
Deutschland.



*Yes, an
address to our
name.*

f. Schuster.

Remigiustr. 14a, 50937, Köln.

Deutschland.



*And doors
with our
names.*

g. Schusterstr. 79098. Freiburg in Brsgau



*Streets to our
name.*

h. Wölfsohn

Schrötteringsweg 9, 22085, Hamburg.

Deutschland.



*Plaques in our
name.*

Wir haben...

Español – Inglés	Wordreference ¹¹²
Huella	<i>SUBST.</i>
1. huella / señal dejada al pisar	Footprint
2. huella / rastro	Trace
3. (dejar) huella	(Leave a) mark

English - German	PONS.DE
Huella	<i>SUBST.</i>
1. Footprint (huella)	(nt) Fußabdruck
2. Trace (huella)	(f) Spur
3. Mark (huella)	(m) Fleck (nt) Mal (nt) Brandmal (m) Kratzer (f) Schramme

Wir haben ein Fußabdruck, eine Spur, ein Fleck, ein Mal, ein Brandmal, ein Kratzer, ein Schramme in Deutschland hinterlassen.

In Frankfurt am Main. In Heidelberg. In Freiburg in Brisgau. In Mannheim. In Göttingen. In Nordhausen. In Erfurt. In Eisenach. In Weimar. In Leipzig. In München. In Erlangen. In Herzogenaurach. In Bamberg. In Nürnberg. In Würzburg. In Berlin. In Bremen. In Cuxhaven. In Köln. In Leverkusen. In Bonn. In Essen. In Hannover. In Arpke. In Schulchsee. In Hamburg. In Hussun. In Marburg an der Lahn. In Viele Klenstädte, deren Namen ich vergessen habe. Aber es

ist ganz normal, einige Namen zu vergessen, wenn du viele Kilometer rennst.



i. Deutschland (dass ich kenne)

*Most Germans
don't know as
many German
towns as I do.*

*They have told
me:*

*"Du bist viel
gereist!"*

Yes, indeed.

*I know more
Colombian towns
than most of
Colombians do.*

*It doesn't make
me
more of a
Colombian.*

*This is nothing
a tourist can't do.*

- Schmerzen: VERB. hurt
- Geist: SUBST. [Untranslatable]
- Geistschmerzen: SUBST. [Untranslatable] pain.

Ich bin ein Geistjäger. Ich renne. Ich suche.

Ich habe Hunger, und es schmerzt.

Ohne dich kann ich nicht sein,
 Ohne dich,
 Mit dir bin ich auch allein,
 Ohne dich,
 Ohne dich zähl ich die Stunden,
 Ohne dich,
 Mit dir stehen die Sekunden,
 Lohnen nicht¹¹³

*Oh, no, the
 stereotype.
 Oh, no.
 The common place.
 Oh, no.
 Oh, no, the irony.
 Oh, no.
 Oh, no, yet I sing.
 Oh, no, oh, no.*

Let's go further back.

Du
 Du hast
 Du hast mich
 Du hast mich
 Du hast mich gefragt
 Du hast mich gefragt
 Du hast mich gefragt und ich habe nicht
 gesagt¹¹⁴.

*This is the sentence
 in German
 that everybody can
 sing,
 but nobody knows
 what it means.
 Nobody but me.*

Gerade
Gerade aus
Gerade aus, Links
Gerade aus, Links
Gerade aus, Links, Rechts
Gerade aus, Links, Rechts
Gerade aus, Links, Rechts, Halt!

Die
Die Gardine
Die Gardine ist
Die Gardine ist
Die Gardine ist dunkel
Die Gardine ist dunkel
Die Gardine ist dunkel grün.

Du
Du bist
Du bist ein
Du bist ein
Du bist ein bisschien
Du bist ein bisschien
Du bist ein bisschien verrückt
geworden.

*My uncle taught me
my first words in
German, and he also
introduced me
to the concept of
trains.*

*My little brother made
a song out of this
sentence
and it was the only
one
he ever learned.*

It drove me insane.

*It has been long since the last time I touched a German textbook.
The Bild Wort was the best.*

Der? Geist.

Das Fahrrad. Das Automobile. Der Zug. Das? Helikopter. Die?
Flugzeug. Die? Krankenwagen.

Das? Geist.

Der Kopf. Die Rücken. Das? Fuß. Die Hand. Die Auge. Die Nase.

Die? Geist.

Die Mutter. Der Vater. Der Brüder. Die Schwester. Der Großvater. Die
Großmutter. Der Onkel. Die Cousine. Das Baby.

The? Geist.

Das? Kaffee. Die Shokolade. Das? Tee. Der Saft. Die? Wasser. Das?
Milch. Das? Soda.

El? Geist.

Der? Hund. Die Katze. Die? Vögel. Der? Tiger. Das Fisch. Der Löwe.

La? Geist.

Der? Apfel. Die Melone. Das? Orange. Der? Birne. Die Anana. Der
Mango. Die? Wassermelone. Das? Kiwi...

The Raspberry. The Cranberry. The Blueberry, The Coconut. The
Lime. The Lemon...

La Guanábana. La Curuba. El Arazá. El Borojó. El Marañón. El
Mamoncillo. El Zapote. El/La Maracuyá. El Noni. La Granadilla. El
Chontaduro. El Mangostino. El Lulo. La Feijoa. El Fruto del Árbol del
Pan. La Uchuva. El Plátano. El Copoazú. La Papayuela. La Chirimoya.
La Guayaba. El Tomate de árbol. El Carambolo. El Níspero. El Anón. El
Tamarindo. La Pitahaya...

After several decades of not fitting in Colombia, my great-grandfather suffered a thrombosis that made him forget all the Spanish he had learned. Unable to communicate with anyone but his wife and son, he moved to the countryside, where he passed his days eating candies and thinking about the First World War.

El Polyglot Komplex¹¹⁵

El caballero de advanced Alter y prominente bigote himself angehalten en frente de the kräftig puerta de madera, wrinkling die nariz por el noise dass hacían los automóviles that vorbeifahren a toda máquina behind auf él. Tras look die hora in sein fino watch auf pulsera, himself durchlässig mejor the Baskenmütze de leather braun, pasó to die mano left sein bastón and schlug tres times. Er wartete quince seconds exakt, volvió to schalgen y backed off.

—Señor Hoffman —said eine voz conocida, distracting him auf dem lema en latin, geschleifen en el wall über la puerta, that hat empezado a read. Al down die vista himself fand con a leicht risilla in sein interlocutor, as oder más old als él and sehr más hunched als la last Zeit.

—Monsieur Jeangros, je suis content de le revoir!

The old man sonrió und gestured to let le vorbeigehen. A dark corridor conducía zu a simple garden con ein fountain in the mitad, wo a fat cat perseguía ihren tail. Further on, filas auf tables and benches sugerían ein prison lunchroom, even bajo der warm sunshine that atravesaba das plastic tiles. Jeangros ofreció nicht any comment. Outside el Gebäude, a poco auf colourful casetones verbreiten over el Terrain, classrooms llenos mit students que spähten through el Fenstern to ver sie walk by.

"Is it aquí?" fragt Hoffman, when, tras gehen through a amplio sandiger parking lot y ein road between una Reihe of huts y ein little park, ellos betraten to a grande Raum.

"Yes," respondió Jeangros and lo sah with una Augenbraue arched, "¿cuándo werden you superar dein fixation de sprechen in seis Sprachen at mismo Zeit?"

"Je ne puorrais pas le dire, je ne sais pas."

Gelächter hallte gegen el chalkboard und die rustikalen muebles. After ein paar weiteren preguntas, was Jeangros weggegangen. Allein, conectó Hoffman seinen Laptop mit el projector und sah die presentación yet einmal. Es war demasiado long, aber es war muy late, es zu ändern. Ein pequeña teacher mit una michievous, kleinen sonrisa said, dass los almost zweihundert estudiantes soon ankommen würden. Hoffman adjusted seine corbata. The Nervenkitzel de las classes würde nunca wear off.

"Hallo", sagte él, when die Schüler en their Plätze waren. "Me called Thomas Hoffman, yo am Dozent an la University von Yale en the Vereinigten Staaten, y today möchte ich sobre the Rolle von cultural mixing und Interaktion en the Entwicklung der modernos Western wichtigen Sprachen."

Kinder se veían interested, aber no impressed. Irgendwann, apareció Jeangros auf, y chuckled über Hoffman nervous Grinsen. Cuando the Konferenz se ended und los attendees hinausgingen, frases in Französisch y English anschleppten, se met die dos old Männer otra time.

—¿Qué pasa? ¿Extraña a sus ingenuos estudiantes de doctorado? — preguntó Jeangros, malévolo.

„Angewohnheit“, antwortete Hoffman und stieß einen langen Seufzer aus.

"You surely have a complex"

—Mais oui, vous savez que je souffre le complexe du polyglotte.

Liebe Angela.

English – German	Google Translate
This has not been a very rigorous letter.	Das war kein sehr strenger Brief.

English – German	Reverso
This has not been a very rigorous letter.	Das ist nicht ein sehr strenger Brief gewesen.

Diese Brief ist nicht sehr strenger.

English – German	Google Translate
My apologies	Entschuldigen Sie

English – German	Reverso
My apologies	Ich entschuldige mich

Sorry.

How do you address yourself without being cheesy?

Don't you deserve a formal treatment?

6.2. Incoherence. *Born in Colombia, works in Colombia.*

"It is definitely not about [...] preaching the abolition of frontiers that unify-separate sign and world, people and things, "us" from "them", "human" and "non human" [...] it is rather about "un-reduce" them (Latour) and undefine them, making all partition lines bend into an infinitely complex curve"¹¹⁶

In the opening talk of my first master's degree —creative writing with emphasis in short stories and novels—, we were berated by the professors because no one before us had submitted the story of our national war as graduation project. One of them, a prominent author of children literature, requested the microphone to accuse us of being urban kids whose only ambition was to pose as heroes of the nightlife, glorifying our deeds with drugs, alcohol, prostitutes and minor crimes. "The war is just now over", she reminded us, "there are important stories out there and it is our duty to tell them, we are the makers of the post-conflict society".

I was surprised by this call to action, one that seemed fit for a programme in journalism or historiography rather than creative writing. I struggled to understand the source of the professor's frustration, as, even if nobody had written a detailed chronicle of the fifty years of war as thesis, it was impossible that the omnipresent violence had not permeated through most of the projects during the ten years of existence of the programme, and that multiple commentary had not been made about the war. Why weren't the

testimonies, characters, anecdotes, contexts and facts surely featured in the graduates' writing enough? What was the cause we were supposed to be champions for?

They invoked our sense of belonging. They insisted on the debt with the collective, on the fact that we, as the few privileged that could take a higher education programme, were morally obliged to retribute to our culture and guide society towards the best version of itself, now that the peace accord was a reality. They finished by quoting Jorge Luis Borges in his short story called *Ulrica*, where a Norwegian student asks a Colombian professor what is to be Colombian, and he answers: "I don't know, it is an act of faith."¹¹⁷

They failed to mention that, in the story, the student replies "so it is being Norwegian" to the professor. The core of the dialogue is the concept of nationality, not the Colombian identity, for which, actually, Borges had a famous disdain:

"They admire Bolívar and, at the same time, pride themselves on being almost Spaniard. They live happily in the muddle. They are stupid."¹¹⁸

While the misquote and the way it backfires should be baffling, none of us batted an eye, just as we didn't when, next week, the tutors stopped a classmate in the middle of his novel pitch, because he wanted to write about the war and the tutors considered that a project about such fresh events would necessarily be biased, perceived as opportunistic and therefore, futile.

He was encouraged to write about what he knew, about what he could claim as his. We all were, and so, it was stated that the war is not our war, that our people is not really ours. We were criticized for living in a bubble, but later it was clarified that we belonged there, and that we

were expected to fantasize about Bogotá's nightlife to later be called shallow by the big names, giving them an excuse to go back to read James Joyce without betraying the Colombian... whatever it is.

This alienating contradiction is not particular from anywhere. Ulrica makes it clear, it is the same for Colombians and Norwegians, everybody hangs from the ambivalence of belonging, compelled to occupy a position that is forbidden. Everywhere in the world, someone who has a nationality must prove they also have the politic inclination, the economical status, the gender, the background, that they are in the right side of all Great Divisions for their voice to be worthy.

Of course, reality is anamorphic, and no one is ever worthy.

We tried to shrug all that and kept going. When my turn of presenting my text in the workshops arrived, I showed a chapter of my novel, where a teenage boy speaks with a demon that manifests itself as a tree with leaves made of human mouths and eyes. With a surprising conviction, a classmate asked if that had happened to me.

I said no, and he was bewildered. Too confused to take his immersion in my story as a compliment, I insisted I didn't want to project myself into the story, that none of the characters was a self-insert, and that nothing in the novel was based in real life events. For the looks they gave me then, it seemed my art would not be stuff of national pride.

What did I expect? Sitting on the very Latin American tradition of magic realism, I had opted for writing my story in the undoubtedly European genre of gothic horror.

"Write about what you can claim your own." They went to the next text. I found comfort telling myself "gothic" is the root of "German".

6.3. IN-truth.

A miscellaneous showcase of confessions.

6.3.1. "Waiting for a bride". Born India, works UK.

While the bride is upstairs, another woman hoovers the rose petals spread across the carpet and the stage where the ceremony took place. Her colleagues make the tables, fill the fridge with white wine and rosé, connect coloured lights and test the sound for the party.

"Hey, hey, good job right there," says the man in charge of the bar.

"Thanks," replies one of the technicians while he struggles with tangled cables.

"I am not talking to you," the barman spits and approaches the woman with the Hoover, "you are doing amazing, honey."

"Sorry?" shouts the woman, trying to get over the roar of the Hoover.

"You clean very well!"

"Ah... thank you!"

She continues for a little while and then turns the Hoover off to carry it across the venue.

"You would make a great wife, you know?" the barman says with a grin.

She stops and turns to look him in the eyes.

"Look at this pristine white," he says to another man, who is polishing a set of silverware, "don't you think she would make a great wife, Arjun?"

"Oh, yes, yes," Arjun replies and turns to the woman, who holds the Hoover with both hands, impatient to finish her job, "one question."

"Yes?" she replies.

"Do you know how to make naan bread?"

She looks at both men, puzzled.

"Naan bread," Arjun insists and mimics the motion of kneading flatbread, "do you know how to make it?"

"Naan bread is Indian bread," says the barman, "our bread."

"Ah! No," she replies and shrugs, "I just know how to make the bread of my own country."

"Not good enough," declares Arjun and goes back to the cutlery.

The woman and the barman look at each other. She lifts the Hoover and walks away to clean the last section of the stage. It is getting late. The bride will be back soon.

6.3.2. "Her illness starts with a P". Born and works Scotland.

"If they manage to kill me, you have to tell my story."

Cat and I glanced at each other. Wen looked at the stuffed bookshelf next to her.

"I have told that to everybody who's come, but I am serious with you", she added, "that's what you get for being a writer."

When we first arrived, Wen was not home. She let us the keys inside a blue bowl hidden in the corridor and texted saying that she would be back in the afternoon. Because we didn't like the neighbourhood and its creepy gardens, full of broken plastic dolls and makeshift weathercocks, we planned on going back to the City Centre as soon as possible, but we indulged in a cup of tea before hitting the road, and she arrived when we were midway through it.

She barely asked us our names and country of origin before going on a rant about the medical appointment she had just had.

"Fucking doctors!" she yelled, stomping around the house, "none of you are doctors, right? No doctor can come into this house, I will strangle them!"

"We are artists," I answered while Cat hid behind me. Cat's family is only composed by doctors and nurses.

"Good, artists, I can deal with artists. What do you do?"

I told Wen that I was a writer and that Cat worked as an illustrator. I hoped to divert the conversation towards the comic project we were developing, but as the main character of it is a physician, it seemed better to let Wen speak. She had a lot to say, after twenty years of

battling against the NHS for the diagnosis of porphyria, a disease that, she swore, ran with the family.

"You know that the English want to kill us, the Scots? There are less than two million Scots left in Scotland and they are exterminating us. They tried to kick us out first and that's why there are so many bawbags in America and Australia posing with kilts made in China because their great-great-father from the times of Abraham was from here. And besides Scottish, I am a Jew, nobody is more hated than I am! That's why they are doing this to me, they will un-diagnose my porphyria and prescribe me poison until I die."

While she explained how she had concluded that all the Jewish population in Scotland carried a genetical anomaly that causes one type of porphyria, I tried my best to remember what I knew about the condition. Everything I got came from my readings about vampire folklore: some historians think that the symptoms of porphyria made people come up with the legends of vampires and their intolerance to the sun.

"The NHS and the Government know, and they know how to take advantage of it. You know how porphyria has effects on the skin and the brain, right? They treat it as a skin-only problem and misdiagnose as some severe acne or something, so they can give you isotretinoin and drive you insane."

Cat was restless. I struggled not to laugh, not because of Wen's passion, but because Cat, suffering from allergies, had been on isotretinoin for years. Maybe she had some pills in her backpack. If Wen was to find them when she cleaned the guest room!

"I know better," Wen continued, prancing across the room like a lion, "they think I am nuts, but I have done my research. That's why I managed to convince that doctor to give me a test today, and if that test comes as I expect it, and I know it will come as I expect it because I have porphyria, they won't have a way to tell me I am not sick and they will give me the right treatment. I will save my niece and all the bampots in my family that let my mother die."

Finally, Wen said she needed to get some writing done, so we left. Walking down the road, Cat suggested we looked for another place to stay. I said I didn't think Wen was dangerous. She had some kind of mental illness, yes, but as she had good reviews in the accommodation site and she had been kind enough to make us some toasts. We had nothing to worry about.

That night, when we arrived, Wen's voice could be heard from outside the house. She was having a heated discussion over the phone about the evolution of her bloating and farting in the last few days. Cat sneaked to our room, I waved to Wen to let her know we were home and, half an hour later, she was standing in our door, dishevelled and in her pyjamas.

"I am feeling awful, I feel I am going to explode. It is the hormones, you know? We porphyrians are always full of hormones, it is part of the condition. We are dominant, noisy, we repel each other like animals. That is why I fight with my family all the time, we are dysfunctional because this overcharge of hormones doesn't let us be. You see me euphoric now because I'm in a peak, but I will fall back in some days and it is gonna be shit. How was your day?"

Cat muttered that she liked the city. I said that we found Scottish food to be better than British food, and that we had become fans of a big

pub by the bridge, that served excellent haggis. Also, that we were glad we were dealing with the accent rather well. Wen let out a guffaw that was probably heard all the way to the highway.

"That's because nobody is gonna speak to foreigners in doric," she says, "I mean, I don't walk to you two, all petite and with the brown skin, and go 'aye, hou's it gaun?' because you will not get shit, even the fucking Brits don't get shit! They work their asses off to exterminate us, so they can speak their ugly English everywhere, you know?"

I asked her if she knew about the initiatives to teach Scot dialects in Scotland's schools with children's books translated into them.

"That's pure garbage. You can learn fifty languages in school if you want, if you don't need them for life, you are gonna forget. And the kids that speak doric at home gain nothing, because they grow up thinking they can use doric to get a job, to make a life, and they can't. The Brits want these kids to rot somewhere in the highlands, if they cared, they would accept doric in the workplace, in the shops, at the doctor's, like, if it is gonna be a national language, you should be able to go to fucking, I don't know, Bristol, and order a piece in doric."

Cat shivered again. She lived in Bristol. We didn't know what Wen was referring to as 'piece'.

"All the cashiers are Portuguese anyway, we shouldn't bother because you can't even use English anymore," said Wen and left towards the living room, "sorry, I am farting! Ugh, I'm gonna die today".

As days passed, Wen became more agitated. She had a skin reaction and her stomach burnt all the time. She grumbled about the food she couldn't eat, she worried about her writing project, which was a recount of her medical history and how porphyria had marked her life.

"It has to be multimedia. There is just too much to it. I have drawings, my medical records, poetry, essays, audio recordings... I deciphered the coded language doctors use to tell each other I am one of the porphyrians they have to kill, I had to overlap all kind of sources to explain it. It is all here," she said and patted the bookshelf, "the Brits and the NHS are guilty, here's the proof. I didn't make anything up."

She told us the doctors wanted to send her to the psychiatrist because they could give her antipsychotics that would kill her in a matter of days. Also, if they managed to diagnose a mental illness, they could use a legal figure to make her do all kinds of stuff against her will.

"I have been in a madhouse before, when the porphyria was just starting to show up and I still trusted the bassas. I knew inside that I wasn't crazy, I knew my mother was not 'just crazy', but I was lost. I needed answers. I reached to God. I remembered the Talmud says that God will dress the undressed, so I went naked to jump over the fence and escaped. I yelled that if he wanted me to believe in him, he had to dress me, and I ran down the street. They called the police on me, but I hid in a barn and I found clothes made of sack, like, some sacks with the right holes in them. That's how I know God exists, and I went to the police with peace of mind."

In the last day of our visit, Wen could barely walk. She lay on the sofa next to her bookshelf with a hot water bottle on her belly and a notebook by the side. She asked us for our e-mails and gave us hers, written in big letters with a teal Sharpie.

"Feel free to come back, you have been good," she said, "everything should be ok after that test, but if they manage to kill me, you have to tell my story."

6.3.3. “Pieces of discontent from a diary”. Born Colombia, works Germany, UK.

What a horrible flavour. I am dying, my stomach is crawling out of my mouth.

It is raining dogs and cats, and birds and cows and horses.

An entire culture, thousands of years, and they come with the most awful gastronomy.

General disgrace.

It is raining screams and complaints and half-assed excuses and bad news all around the place.

Ugh, ugh! I will never free myself of this smell.

The enemy must be exterminated.

I will drink alcohol and Listerine until I forget or until I die.

The roofs are broken, the floors are broken, the ground is broken by the hail made of fire and water and wind and metal and grass and faces.

It is unfair, disgraceful, that they invest money, technology and resources in making perfect materials into poison and garbage.

It is raining anger.

My mouth hurts.

It is raining pain.

My throat and my oesophagus hurt.

It is suffering season, and everything is soaked, it is wet of misery up to the core of the bones.

It burns.

When will it stop?

Their guts must be made of iron.

How nasty, they do it to protect their home turf.

As if someone coveted their culinary tradition.

Imperialists, they cannot distinguish good from bad.

They are begging to be killed.

I die, I die.

My head hurts, and my brain is numb.

When will things be dry again?

Cursed cake and dirty water coffee.

Old meat...

6.3.4. "Here and there". Born Philippines, works UK.

"Say my name again?"

"Roque."

"The rolled R. You are one of my people. Where are you from, Spain?"

"Colombia. ¿Y tú?"

"I don't speak Spanish. I am Filipino."

"Ah, now I see. Spanish colonies unite."

"Ha, ha, yes! We share some words."

"Like azul"

"Yes, like azul. So, Colombian, where the drug at?"

"Ugh, come on!"

"What? Don't you know Pablo Escobar?"

"I think he was killed before I was born."

"They did good, that motherfucker was rich. They are doing the same in my country right now."

"I have heard of Duterte."

"He has done so good!"

"Do you think so?"

"Oh yes, yes. I grew up in a slum, mate, a horrible place. It flooded when it rained, and the garbage flowed down the streets. It was awful, you could get mugged or beaten up any time."

"Sounds like some areas of Colombia."

"Ha, ha, ha. You know what I am talking about. How the bosses kill people they don't like, or they don't know. Duterte made it different. Last time I went there, it was totally changed. There are trees, and lampposts, the sewers work and there are no muggers anywhere. I could walk with my phone out"

"But doesn't Duterte kill a lot of people just because they oppose him, or he just doesn't know what they are up too?"

"We all know what those guys were up to, a lot of them weren't even Filipino."

"But imagine the British did the same with us."

"Ha, ha, ha. As if they could. They need us, see all the people in this room? Immigrants."

"Look at the States."

"Why do you think I came here instead of the States? Managers here don't care, they know I use their money to pay for my weed and they don't give a shit because I do the job."

"You smoke?"

"Uff, yes, and I honestly should stop. It sucks my money out, you know? I try to get at least three hundred a week because the weed takes eighty."

"Uhm... doesn't Duterte make people shoot drug users on the spot?"

"Ha, ha, ha, yeah. But that's there, not here."

6.3.5. "Downpour". Born at war, works at war.

In the edge of the world

I cry

My tears fall into the sea

I wonder

If it carries my pain back to my land

If the sorrow I feel

Is enough

To pay for the indifference

Of everyone else

7. THE IN-BETWEEN (temporary exhibition)

Foreignness, defined as a dis-location, is essentially a spatial matter. This exhibition, however, goes temporal and represents a fundamentally foreign period, in which the subject is locked in a parallel timeline, one where everything is optional, ephemeral, and decisions can't be taken.

I (am going to) miss you

7.1. "Future". Born Colombia, works somewhere else.

You don't have a future here.

Get out of this banana plantation, of this pigpen, of this puddle of mud.

Go away and stay there, find yourself a husband and make him give you the good life.

All those white guys are crazy for girls like you, after all.

Don't come back.

But teach him to dance. Teach your kids Spanish. Their way of life is too boring, it is bad, teach them ours instead.

I will miss you, but there is no future here.

Like the moon that lights the paths at night

Like the leaves in the wind

Like the sun scares the cold away

Like the earth misses the rain

Like the ocean waits for the river

I wait for you to return

To the land of oblivion.¹¹⁹

I have no future, but future is never present.

7.2. "Present." Born somewhere else, works UK.

We love you. Don't leave us.

I am looking for you, I want you to come back

You have left me here, alone in the range¹¹⁹

PLEASE NEVER LEAVE.

I am looking for you, I want you to come back

You have left me here, alone in the range¹¹⁹

Don't finish your work. If you are never done, you cannot go!

I want to give you a song¹¹⁹

I don't know what I will do without you. All my friends left, if you leave too, I won't have any reason to stay.

And plant in your garden¹¹⁹

What do you mean you are leaving? I just met you, and I like you!
Tell me where you are going next, and I will pay you a visit.

An intimate illusion¹¹⁹

No. I refuse! You just can't make friends and then leave, like, I have only met you for one month now, it is unfair.

I want to see you smile¹¹⁹

I can't wait for you to come home.

[illegible]

We hate people like you
We hate people like you
We hate people like you
We hate you **What** wouldn't I give
To be
What you dare
Wouldn't I give
Not to do
To be
What you dare
Wouldn't I give
Not to do

If your genius and talent here don't bring you fame

*¿Por qué no te vas?*¹²⁰

Quiero verte, veámoslo
Te extraño
Vuelve, vuelve
Vuelve, vuelve
Te extraño
Quiero verte, veámoslo

El país te necesita, te necesitamos
Necesitamos gente como tu
Necesitamos gente como tu
Necesitamos gente como tu

¿Por qué no estás aquí?
¿Por qué no estás aquí?
e ¿Por qué no estás aquí?
¿Por qué no estás aquí?

8. WORKSHOP

Foreignness is not an identity, but one can identify as a foreigner. Using this idea, this level was built through a workshop with voluntary participants at the University of Salford.

The north wing exposes the results of the workshop, named “with the feet elsewhere”, in which participants were invited to create a cartography of their experiences and populate it with people, buildings and customs. Ultimately, they made possible the oxymoron of a land of foreignness. The south wing is designed as a “behind the scenes” area, exhibiting the documentation and planning of the activities.

Administrative documentation can be found at the library.

Up and down with the murky breathing of the city, I let my humanity go.

It flew directly into the light of the electric fly trap.

8.1.1. Day in

Maps are translations of space into language.
Cartography sees foreignness as enemy, ally, goal.

There are chasms between the lines
Deeper than any abyss on the land.

Text is reproduced as it was generated during the session, with no modifications on spelling, although lists were redacted for clarity's sake. Photographs of the physical map are added for better understanding. Drawings are described in square brackets.



155

- **What is Manchester?**

Manchester is a gray city, but calm and warm place.

Lack of spatial perception, Manchester is...

Manchester is fucking dirty.

Manchester is full of bees.

[A pint of beer] + [A football ball] + [Music note] = Manchester.

- **What is not Manchester?**

Manchester is not boring.

Manchester is not only beer and football.

Quiet and/or sunny, Manchester is not...

- **What is the centre of Manchester?**

Piccadilly, the centre of Manchester is...

The center of Manchester is Piccadilly Gardens.

People focus in it's own universe... [cube], this is the center.

- **What is the most authentic place of Manchester?**

A group of homeless people outside a crappy bar blasting old music and opposite a 24 hour fast-food restaurant. The most authentic Manchester is...

The Most authentic place of Manchester is anywhere in Greater Manchester besides Manchester.



k. "Manchester foreign is (not)". Memory on paper.

Inhabitants of Manchester:

- A woman who calls people "love" and loves Morrissey. She's mid-fifties and has two teenage kids, whiter than clouds, to whom she shouts a lot. She's outside an ASDA, going to her car in the parking lot. She bought some cheap clothes.
- A black guy who loves football and plays it regularly. He's got a sandwich and a Monster can in his bag. He goes around wearing only a t-shirt and shorts even in December. He's got an accent; he calls his mother like "mee muuummm".
- An almost naked, "barely legal" girl in impractical high heels, drunk off her tits, walking like a baby deer under the rain at 4am with a band that says she's part of a hen party.
- A white old dude who loves watching cricket and football on stadiums. He just bought a pint and a pie from the kiosk, and he's already drunk.

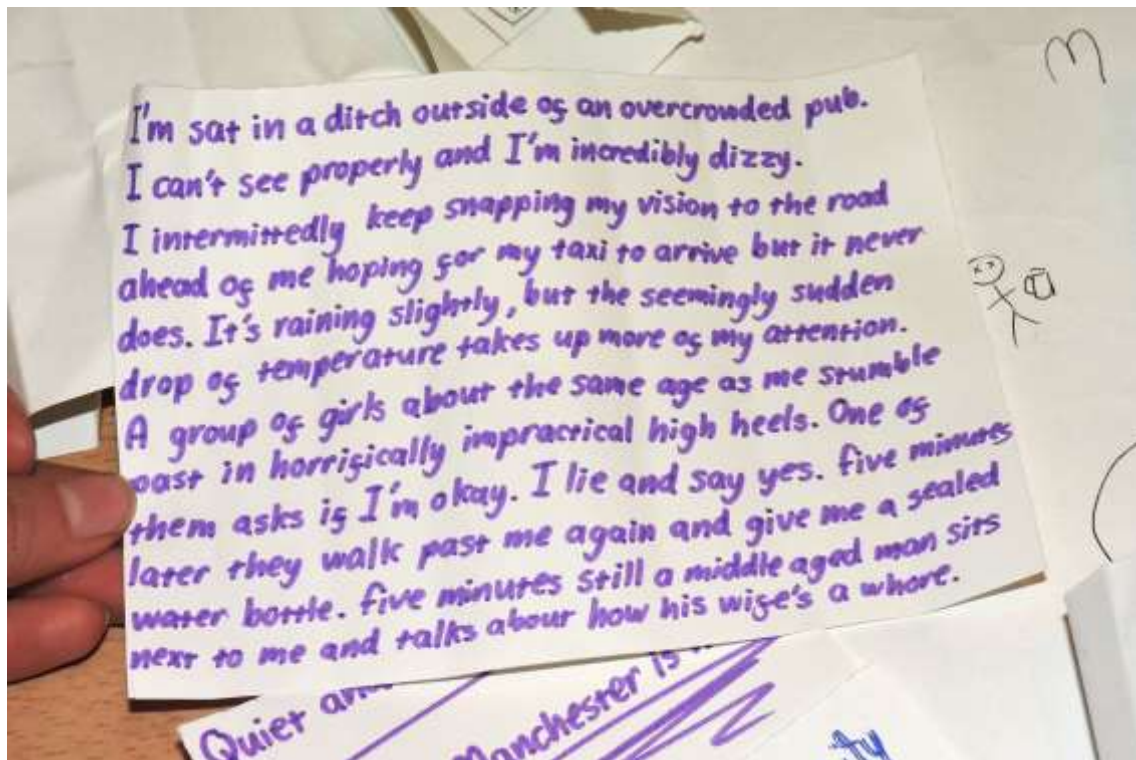


I. Black Mancunian on Old Trafford stadium. The authenticity of a Black Mancunian was subject of debate.

Us, as inhabitants of Manchester:

- I'm sat in a ditch outside of an overcrowded pub. I can't see properly and I am incredibly dizzy. I intermittently keep snapping my vision to the road ahead of me for my taxi to arrive but it never does. It's raining slightly, but the seemingly sudden drop of temperature takes up more of my attention. A group of girls about the same age as me stumble past in horrifically impractical high heels. One of them asks if I'm okay. I lie and say yes. Five minutes later they walk past me again and give me a sealed water bottle. Five minutes still a middle aged man sits next to me and talks about how his wife's a whore.

- [A man with long hair stands in front of a till. The table has a sign that says, "Every Little Helps". The attendant says, "Sorry, love, I don't know what u mean."]
- In the afternoon of a Saturday, you are sitting in front of the fountain at Piccadilly Gardens, eating a lemon and sugar crepe while watching the kids play with the water. You laugh to yourself when you see them stumble, but then you remember the couple sitting next to you and force yourself to stay serious. You have cheap clothes you bought at a charity shop, your hair is a mess and you have no make-up, but you wear fancy jewelry. There is an empty bag at your side, that you will fill with random crap you will find in the Northern Quarter. You look tired, but content, and you sigh every time the sun appears between the clouds.
- I am walking to Asda from the bus station at 11pm. A drugged up homeless person approaches and says: "change please..." I say sorry and walk on. It feels a little unsafe but I know it is normal in Hulme. I go to Asda, do my shopping and walk home.



m. Drunk man pub: text embodied and figurative representation.

Additional observations:

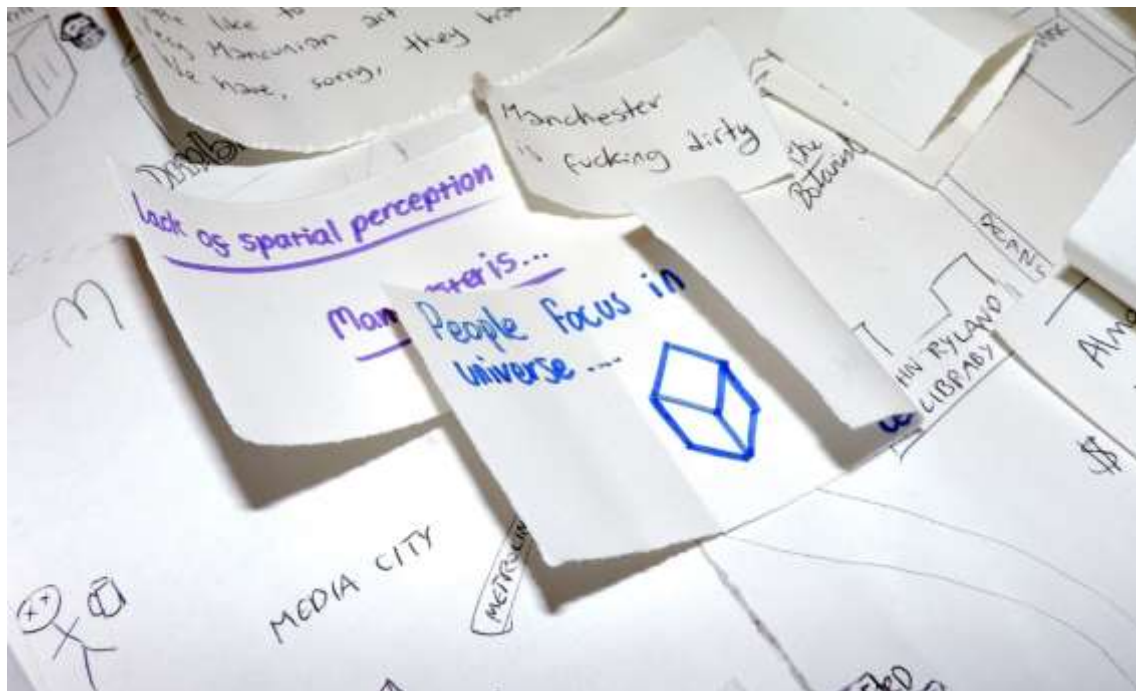
"Self-loathing is very English".

"People [here] like to suffer alone."

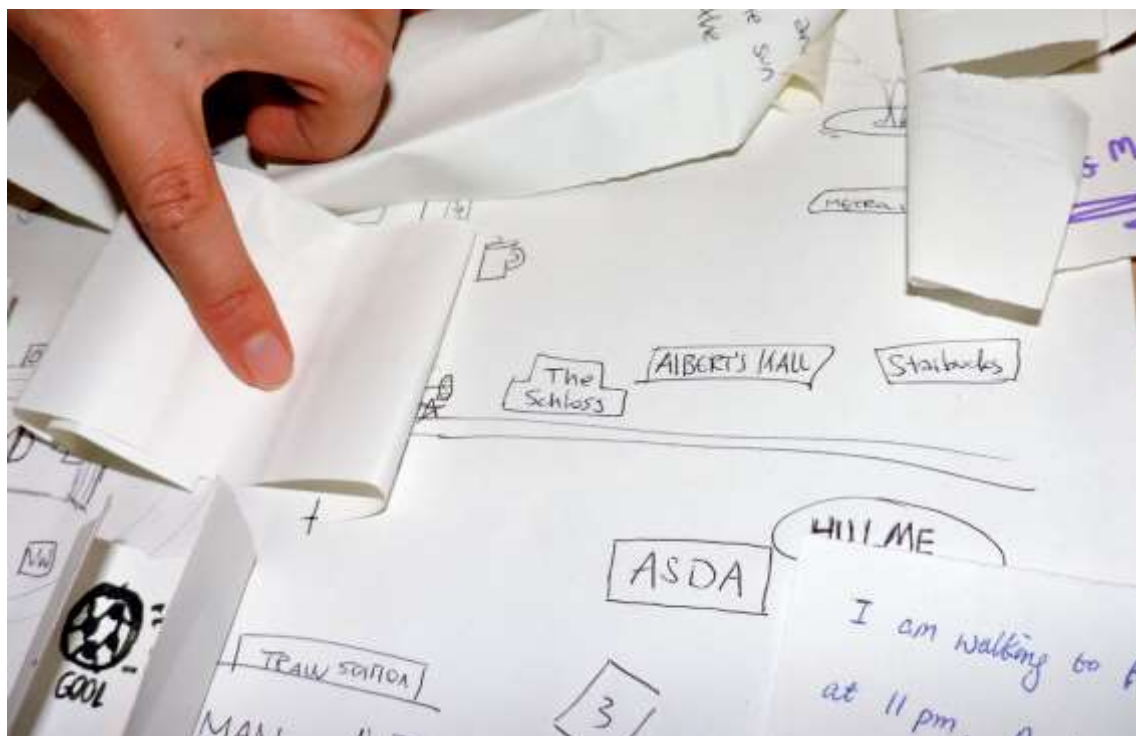
"There is [a specifically] very Mancunian art"

"We have, sorry, they have..."

"For some reason, all the people drinking outside the pub are old".



n. "\$ above £"



o. Peter Street, Hulme and Manchester Airport, made one by perception.

“Libro al viento” (literally “book into the wind”) is an initiative of the city of Bogotá to promote reading and bring books to citizens of all ages and kinds¹²¹. Managed from the townhall since the year 2004, the programme has published more than one hundred and twenty titles, most of them with several dozens of thousands of printed copies moving freely around the city.

There are four categories of books in Libro al Viento. “Initial” is dedicated to children’s literature. “Lateral” is used for literature difficult to catalogue, like independent magazines and graphic novel. “Universal” bundles the big classics together. And then, there is “Capital”, a collection of everything related to Bogotá itself.

“Capital” is a map of sorts, because it describes every street of the city. It is a museum of sorts, too, which gathers recipes, poetry, oral tradition, novels, speeches, photos, anything that can be printed on paper. It is a reference for this section, that collects whispers of word of mouth to create a map of sorts, a museum of sorts, in the very same way.

(Most of the) text transcribed at the speed of speech.

The most beautiful street:

A steep street, rough, full of pebbles, a lot of cars go through it. The buildings around it are houses with white walls, small wooden windows that have no curtains. There are balconies with flowers. Cats, dogs and chickens run around free in the street. Families of tourists walk around, eating chips. It is a sunny, hot place, close to the ocean. Music comes from the shops around, blending with the noise.

The ugliest street:

Very narrow and dark. The floor is broken, usually flooded and full of puddles. There are thousands of old posters in the walls just rotting there. The rubbish bins are overflowing. There is dirt everywhere, and there are almost no sidewalks, so both people and cars struggle to go by. Food rests by the street, rotting.

The place for social gatherings:

Carvery: Sunday roast dinner, a buffet of all things delicious. All Northern people go crazy for it, and it sounds like "cabaret" because of the accent. Set in old timey pubs.

Fellowship: Outside pubs where they serve pepper soup in a cold weather, with a cold drink. Almost no food but a lot of beer. Loud music and neon lights.

Tejo field: Tejo is an aiming game with explosives that takes place in a big, open warehouse. There is a lot of beer and loud music. The place only has yellow lightbulbs.

You or an archetypal person of your country:

Grumpy as hell, proper moody, loves tea. I love my tea and my Sunday dinner. Because of your disability, you are ostracized. I am proud to be British, even if they are racist (in that way, I am not British). I am proud to be of the North. Because I'm disabled, my people put me in a corner that forces me to explain myself. Britain is a free country, but I am not free in it. British think they are free but it's a government lie. I love biscuits. I try to distance myself; I try to show that I'm better because people just see the disability.

The average Nigerian is hardworking because the environment is challenging and full of disadvantages. There is always something lacking. Education/driven, try to get success at all costs and with all sacrifices. They are proving themselves all the time, super motivated, no incentive needed because the certainty of the hardship of life. Nigerian kids in Britain cannot relax, they must grow the Nigerian way. We shout when we talk, nobody is gentle or quiet. At all costs.

Colombians are a mix of everything. We have many faces, minds and voices, even languages. We are nothing alike, yet we are forced to see ourselves as a family. It goes wrong. I have always said that what unites us Colombians is our infinite creativity for violence. War is everywhere, yes, but in Colombia, destruction is a hobby and a discipline. I am so tired of it. We all are, but at the same time, we are very competitive. Other thing that people in Colombia say is that we are the second place at everything, I guess we try very hard, but we are afraid to win. I don't know, the more I think about it, the more I want to sit down, learn German already and tell everybody I am just German.

8.2. SOUTH WING. Behind the scenes.

8.2.1. Log book, day in:

There were three participants. Although the minimum number was four, it was soon established that none of the current attendants could make it to a rescheduled session, so it was better to continue. The initial exploration revealed that participants felt more comfortable with precise tasks that didn't involve lengthy written descriptions. To accommodate the workshop design to this condition, the initial activities were simplified.

To reply to the questions posed in the workshop, some participants decided to draw instead of writing. Others would write key words and give a long oral explanation to them, and others would give more than one answer for one question and none for the next. The conversation prompted by the presentation of answers resulted in some interesting thoughts that were collected as context to incorporate at the end to the map, the main product of the session.

8.2.2. Log book, day out:

The second session had two participants, therefore, there was not a formal workshop. However, because none of the present attendants could make it to a rescheduled session, and one was there despite having a disability that compromised her mobility, it was decided to carry on a smaller version to honour their commitment to the project.

The tasks proposed had as their objective to compliment the geography of the territory done the day before, with scenes out of the borders of the map. The first section was a collective description of imaginary places, where each person would contribute one

sentence at a time. The second was focused in individual descriptions of locations with social importance in each participant's country, and then of the people that populate each country.

This last exercise was particularly interesting due to the fact participants had the option to either describe someone from their countries or themselves. The result was a constant switching between the two categories, evidenced by the change of pronouns and the addition of commentary that explained how individual and collective correlate or contradict each other.

8.2.3. Extracts of interest from the Ethical Approval Application Form.

- Project focus:

The contemporary identity of Latin American subjects is unstable. Cultural definition floats between the erasure suffered during the colonial European past and the oppression that reigns in the neo-colonial American present, with violence the only common denominator. Centuries of turmoil have uprooted every certainty and mixed everything that was deemed impossible to mix, giving a liquid nature to the current cultural landscape, one where the self cannot stand, but one in which it can flow.

My intent is to search for the sense of belonging that can be found in this unstable state of innate foreignness and uprootedness, to understand some of the mechanisms of identity definition used by the millions who, like me, must make a homeland out of the roads. The overarching investigation has been developed through practice-based research, to take the best out of the opportunity that is offered by my mixed background, which includes family connections in Jewish

Germany, and personal circumstances that define my process of creation. For this stage of the process, I aim to widen my scope with the perspectives of other creators, which will inform the particular position given to me due to my circumstances in a world made of immigrants, refugees, expats and travellers, and reveal the dynamics we all use to remain firm in our identity while wandering outside our borders.

During two sessions, I will conduct exercises to create a multi-layered map of cultural identity, seeking meaningful connections between the participants' understanding of home, land, roots and foreignness, while collectively creating a fluid, ephemeral territory made of language and lingering paths, the liminal space that forms the nation of outsiders.

Participant information sheet

PROJECT TITLE:

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

All of us find ourselves in a situation of foreignness at one point in our lives, either because we move or because the world moves around us. This research looks for the different facets of foreignness in the present day, their implications and how they affect the creative process. I focus on the way individuals express their relationship with territory through the notions of nationality, culture and borders, and I seek meaningful connections between different people's understanding and creative expression of home, land, roots, travelling and migration.

This workshop aims to the collective creation of a multi-layered map made of poetry, prose and visual expression, where all the participants can register their movements and transformations within their experience and particular understanding of foreignness. This will give us a glimpse of the cultural landscape we share and will allow us to see where our roots connect, while also helping us understand just how organic, ephemeral and ever-changing this abstract territory is.

TIME COMMITMENT:

The workshop is divided in two sessions of two hours each. It is not required to attend both sessions.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS:

You may decide to stop being a part of the research activity at any time without explanation, with no penalty. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn and destroyed. You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you. You have the right to decline your participation in any activity proposed during the workshop. You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions after reading this information sheet, you can ask the researcher at any point.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY:

The sessions will not be audio or video recorded. You have the right to choose whether you want to be credited for your contribution to the workshop or not, and with what name. Your contact data will be strictly confidential, and the records will be destroyed after the activity ends. The material produced in the workshop will be destined to the research document exclusively, and you will not have your participation used for commercial purposes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

My Supervisors Dr. Ursula Hurley and Dr. Judy Kendall and I will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time.

You may contact Dr. Hurley through the e-mail U.K.Hurley@salford.ac.uk and Dr. Kendall through the e-mail J.Kendall@salford.ac.uk

Participant recruitment material

Text to be distributed via e-mail and public boards:

Are you a foreigner?

All of us find ourselves in a situation of foreignness at one point in our lives: we travel on vacation, we move out of town or go to live abroad, we change places constantly. Society changes beyond recognition, and it includes or excludes us based on arbitrary traits. From our experience as foreigners, translation, travel literature, ethnographies and clickbaity travel blogs arise, but also family trees, autobiographies and the retelling of myths.

Join me to explore the influence of foreignness on the creative process during two sessions to take place on August ____ and ____ at ____h. For two hours each day, we will talk, write, draw (and probably laugh) to create a multi-layered map of experiences, seeking to trace the transformations our movements cause in the creations we make, and trying to find the places where our roots connect. Try your hand at prose, poetry and doodles even if you have never done it before: previous experience in the creative field is not necessary, the only thing you need is an interest to share your experiences within your particular understanding of foreignness, even if you are a Mancunian who has never gone past Bolton!

This is a free to join activity for the research project "With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness" for the MPhil in Creative Writing at the University of Salford. If you are interested, please tell me so at A.Schuster1@edu.salford.ac.uk so I can get the necessary amount of tea and cake.

See you there!

Research instrument

Day 1: The head

This first session of the workshop will focus in the present experience in a foreign setting. In the opening conversation, we will explore the meaning of foreignness for each participant and the details of their situation. Then:

- Each participant will write a description of themselves as if they were the character of a novel.
- Each participant will write another description, this time focusing in highlighting the traits they consider make them foreigners.
- The group will draw a map of Manchester collectively, where each participant will add the places most important to them. This will be done without references.
- The group will set up a narrative with the characters described in the locations drawn in the map, to recreate a day in the life of a foreigner in Manchester.

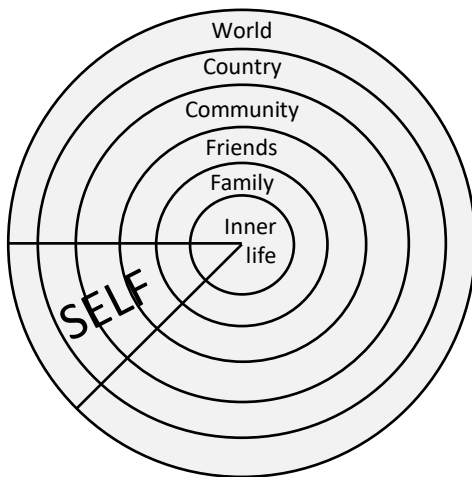
Day 2: The feet

This second session of the workshop will focus on the memory of homeland, and the creative impulses that come from remembrance and nostalgia. The opening conversation will be about the places and settings the participants grew up with, the things they miss and the things they don't, the characteristics of their community and the challenges faced by their societies. Then:

- Each participant will describe an archetypal person of their community as if this was the character of a novel.
- Each participant will write straightforward accounts of two or three childhood memories, trying to think the reason why these stories stick to them as adults.
- Each participant will write a short account of a myth of their community.
- The group will swap the descriptions of characters to pair them with the accounts of stories and create new, hybrid characters.
- The group will populate the map of Manchester with the character and stories written, reflecting on the reasons behind the placement of each one.

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

“Everyone has the right to a nationality” [...] “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality”
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15.



All dimensions of the self are constantly moving and changing. In addition, the story of the self relies on memory, which is unstable and fragmented. We recognize ourselves in our memories, but at the same time, we are aware we are not the persons we used to be. We are adrift in never-ending transformations, but we refuse to float with no identity. We claim a name, a heritage, we re-tell our story until it makes sense. We search for our kind and we gather, we adapt on order to belong somewhere.

We don't want to be foreigners.

p. Adapted from BARRINGTON, Judith.
“Writing the Memoir”, 2002. p. 148

“We are observers and participants of our own experiences.
You cannot separate who you are of what you do”

MUNCEY, Tessa. “Creating autoethnographies”, 2010. p. 8



9. CURATOR'S CONFERENCE

"Culture consists in the way according to which people establish analogies between the different realms of their worlds"¹²²

Being doesn't obey the physical law of impenetrability. That means we are mysterious particles of light, those that exist in multiplicity and keep scientist awake for countless hours.

Explaining Multinaturalist Amerindian Perspectivism, Viveiros says that this system of thinking considers the body a bundle of affects, because materiality is affinity: the only thing that exists is the border, and subjects experience only one side of it, thus accessing only one of its affects⁴⁵. Because the object is always reached through a defined perspective, it is the subjective perception of it what is real: it is a case where epistemology is constant, and ontology is variable⁴⁷.

The different approaches taken during the exhibition have drawn fragments that outline the approximate of a border. In this last room, we invite you to consider it abstractly as an interdimensional line of convergence:

Subjectivity happens when an action is performed from a given position. When subjects define their perspective, they stand in one point of the plane they are acting upon. Their action gives away their coordinates, which could determine whether they are inside or outside a delimited territory. However, borders, as objects of the world, are the sum of subjective vectors, and because of it, they are not a straight line crossing a surface, but rather an infinitely complex curve. As the border extends through time and its perceived form mutates under the subjective lens, the category of foreignness must transform accordingly, for it is not possible to define a Great Division between one side and the other: there is no definitive belonging nor pure non-belonging.

The vibration of the line of convergence proposed here justifies the need of movement exhibited in the Motion/Feet section of the museum, where a vector-like quality is posed to understand subjectivity (see Oscillation) and then applied in several creative instances (IN-Motion). Displacement is a transformative force of the subject, but also of the

environment. This gets mirrored in the next section, Voices/Mouth, where this geometry of being is applied to language ([The Shape Of]).

Under the idea that “perspectives tend to arrange perpendicularly” so it is necessary to “position [oneself] parallel to the perspective of the object of study to be able to produce an instrument of knowledge”³⁷, a meeting in language, expression of subjectivity, is a required step to move. However, parallel lines don’t have tangent points. When applying the principle of infinite complexity prompted by subjective action to language, considering it in terms of territory, it gets condensed, harmonizing with the general model presented here, in a single line, that of essential equivocation.

Equivocation is the base of most pieces in the IN-Conversation selection, while The Política of el Spanglish focuses more in the vibration of language due to the forces of subjectivity, some of which come from the problems presented in Presentation/Face.

This third section is the most social of all, as it deals with widespread conventions that determine subjects in their political spheres. It is where the fascination of theoretical elaboration collides with practical labels and the majorities and minorities they help to define. Difference stops being a circumstance in constant and neutral change to become a system of pejoration, one that “indexes power according to the metaphysical arrogance of a subject that feeds structurally upon the bodies of devalorized others”⁴⁴. The reference point of Ezequiel, an indigenous man who navigates the social systems brought by foreigners, serves to consider how the categories explored before, movement and language, are ingrained in power dynamics (Common ground), while IN-Question confronts the resulting status quo through subversions and alterations of the given conditions.

It is at this point where the ideas of Metamorphic Anthropophagy really begin to resonate. To subvert the fixed categories of belonging is a way to decolonize the subject, even if said subversion works as an iterative reproduction of the categories it negates³⁷. Forms of government are fought with forms of government; a preconceived idea of a human group is replaced by another set of pre-made ideas for the same group. The feeling of uprootedness and non-belonging is counter-actualized with the proclamation of belonging to an alternative space (like the no-space, or the liminal space).

Underlying all, there is an anxiety attached to the sense of belonging, that surfaces in the last thematic section, Position/Guts. To belong means ownership but also dependence. It is jurisdiction and protection. Rights and duties. It grants and removes autonomy in equal measure. It is, again, a linear object that is experienced only through its affects.

Das Geistjäger and Incoherence are two narrations of this very tension, the first in a personal level and the second in a creative one. The subject, described before as a vector, a transformative force, struggles to define its value, to find the appropriate trajectory with which to intervene the objects that it determines, but that also determine it: border, language, power. The subjects of IN-Truth must face their anxiety and seek an enabled, viable position to be and create these realms of the Self and everything within them.

"In-between" is a snapshot of this process of self-determination. Movement is the core in multiple stances of the permanent exhibition, in which it is considered as a phenomenon that takes place in a stretch of time as well as space. With the reduction of these dimensions to an instant and a single point, it can be illustrated how multiple natures exist separate from them: the subject is rejected and retained in both

the country of origin and destination, it belongs and doesn't belong. Foreignness is a superposition of heterogenous states, one that works alike to shamanic metamorphosis, with the implication that this carries.

The workshop illustrates this superposition with more detail, for the participants bring their perspectives on dimensions that were not deeply developed before. One of the most prominent examples is the consideration of disability as a barrier and as a border, one that determines more than one country of Great Britain within the same territory. More exercises could be used to access a wider spectrum of the collective conceptual imagination around foreignness, but the museum already benefited from valuable contributions and has new takes to dive in: the relationship between abstract and practical geography, the influence of memory, the implicit violence of territory definition, are all considerations worthy of being furtherly explored, probably by the hands of another curator, some foreigner who can tackle the friction of the liquid theory here proposed with identity politics, an dive into the social implications of engaging with this non-conventional way of creating knowledge.

10. LIBRARY

In our catalogue, you can browse through the documents required for our different activities, look up some of the external resources that are part of our collection, as well as enjoy further readings.

We thank you for your visit.

Don't be a stranger!

10.1 DOCUMENTS

Ethical Approval.



Research, Innovation and Academic
Engagement Ethical Approval Panel

Research Centres Support Team
G0.3 Joule House
University of Salford
M5 4WT

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www.salford.ac.uk/

13 August 2018

Dear Angela,

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION AMR1718-18 – ‘With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness.’

Based on the information you provided, I am pleased to inform you that your application AMR1718-18 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project and/or its methodology, then please inform the Panel as soon as possible by contacting A&M-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Newbery'.

Dr Samantha Newbery
Chair of the Arts & Media Research Ethics Panel
Lecturer in Contemporary Intelligence Studies
School of Arts and Media
Crescent House, CH210
University of Salford
Salford M5 4WT
t: +44 (0) 161 295 3860
s.l.newbery@salford.ac.uk

Consent forms.

Participant consent form

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

Name and contact of researcher: Angela Schuster
School of Arts and Media,
University of Salford, Manchester
Tel: 074 277 87 410

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and what my contribution will be.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, with no penalty.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I understand that all the information that I give will be used solely for the purpose of research.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, telephone and e-mail).

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I agree to take part in the above study.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I agree to the use of quotes in publications.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


I understand this is an exercise of collective creation and that I cannot take other participants' contributions to my own benefit.

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I want to be credited in the study as:
(name/pseudonym/anonymous)

Cameron Clews

Name of Participant: Cameron Clews
Date: 24/05/17

Signature: 

Participant consent form

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

Name and contact of researcher: **Angela Schuster**

School of Arts and Media,
University of Salford, Manchester
Tel: 074 277 87 410

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and what my contribution will be.

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I want to be credited in the study as:
(name/pseudonym/anonymous)

Yes ✓	No
Yes ✓	No
Yes ✓	No
Yes ✓	No
Yes ✓	No
Yes ✓	No
Yes ✓	No

A participant

Name of Participant: Oscar J. Lawrence

Date: 24th Aug. 2018

Signature: 

Participant consent form

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

Name and contact of researcher: Angela Schuster

School of Arts and Media,
University of Salford, Manchester
Tel: 074 277 87 410

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Yes	No
-----	----

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, with no penalty.

Yes	No
-----	----

I understand that all the information that I give will be used solely for the purpose of research.

Yes	No
-----	----

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, telephone and e-mail).

Yes	No
-----	----

I agree to take part in the above study.

Yes	No
-----	----

I agree to the use of quotes in publications.

Yes	No
-----	----

I understand this is an exercise of collective creation and that I cannot take other participants' contributions to my own benefit.

Yes	No
-----	----

I want to be credited in the study as:
(name/pseudonym/anonymous)

Name of Participant: Georgie Harrison

Date: 25/05/18

Signature: G. Harrison

Participant consent form

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

Name and contact of researcher: Angela Schuster

School of Arts and Media,
University of Salford, Manchester
Tel: 074 277 87 410

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and what my contribution will be.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, with no penalty.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------------

I understand that all the information that I give will be used solely for the purpose of research.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------------

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, telephone and e-mail).

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------------

I agree to take part in the above study.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------------

I agree to the use of quotes in publications.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------------

I understand this is an exercise of collective creation and that I cannot take other participants' contributions to my own benefit.

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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I want to be credited in the study as:
(name/pseudonym/anonymous)

Vas.

Name of Participant: Vashti

Date: 25/8/19

Signature: [Signature]

Participant consent form

With the feet elsewhere: creative approaches to foreignness

Name and contact of researcher: Angela Schuster
School of Arts and Media,
University of Salford, Manchester
Tel: 074 277 87 410

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and what my contribution will be.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, with no penalty.

I understand that all the information that I give will be used solely for the purpose of research.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, telephone and e-mail).

I agree to take part in the above study.

I agree to the use of quotes in publications.

I understand this is an exercise of collective creation and that I cannot take other participants' contributions to my own benefit.

I want to be credited in the study as:
(name/pseudonym/anonymous)

Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No

Yuan/An Ren

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Yuan/An Ren
24/08/18
[Signature]

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10.3. Further reading.

- May, A. (2013). *Myth and creative writing: the self-renewing song*. New York, NY, USA. Routledge.
- Naffis-Sahely, A. (2017). *The Promised Land: Poems from itinerant life*. London, UK. Penguin.
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- Shields, D. (2010). *Reality Hunger: a manifesto*. London, UK. Penguin.
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