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Our Voice

A black canvas with a white dot and tiny bright sparkles, or sometimes, simply the absence of color: that is the representation of the night. As an astronomical phenomenon, the night is simply the time when our side of the Earth stops receiving sunlight. But, beginning with what is written in *Genesis*, the concept of the nocturnal emerges from the chiaroscuro, from the double-sided binomial of lights and shadows, in which good is associated with the day, and bad, the night: "And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." This dichotomy continues to prevail in the social imaginary.

Inverting the values associated with day and night, as Alejandra Pizarnik ventures, *perhaps the night is life and the Sun, death,* may not be enough to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes, but it is undoubtedly a step that takes us closer to inhabiting the night. As one of our authors writes, this is a territory where things happen, where, just like during the day, part of life happens.

Why is *Voices of Mexico* dedicating its 111th issue to the night, to documenting what happens in it? Studying the nocturnal is becoming more and more important, not only in academia, but also in other areas because of its impact on public policy design, in measuring economic variables, and in the importance of different aspects of culture. Some of the authors who write in this issue participate in the Franco-Mexican research seminar about the night hosted by the CISAN and the University of Western Brittany Brest Institute of the Americas. This space for reflection deals with the study of the night from the viewpoint of different disciplines and using various approaches.

A network of interdisciplinary studies exists around this topic, and it deals with cultural activities as a central feature. Here, the articles describe the nocturnal practices of cultural and creative industries in which music is the thread running through the spaces for socialization. They also deal with the night as a symbolic space for liberation. A series of articles talks about the "route of sin," and, leaving to one side moral judgments, presents us with characters and beloved spaces in modern Mexican life. But, in addition to fun and leisure, the night also holds terrifying dreams, like the unending nightmares of the massacres of 1968 and Ayotzinapa, which have still not found justice, or the interminable nights of insomniacs, where a parallel life unfolds. The night from a gender perspective; the night as a right; the night in the everyday, in the home, a place for rituals and celebrations; the night as a pretext to make invisible all those who do not fit into the aseptic image of modernity. The hidden night; the night that is shown; and the resignification of the nocturnal space beginning with the pandemic; not forgetting, of course, the humans and animals that inhabit this territory. This has also been one of the favorite themes that have inspired creation and art. The night calls out through nostalgia, wonder, or terror to music, cinema, poetry, photography, and the visual arts. With the collaboration of creators and specialized critics, these pages fill up with words and colors that give artistic form to the vast nocturnal universe.

Teresa Jiménez
Editor-in-chief of Voices of Mexico
November 2020

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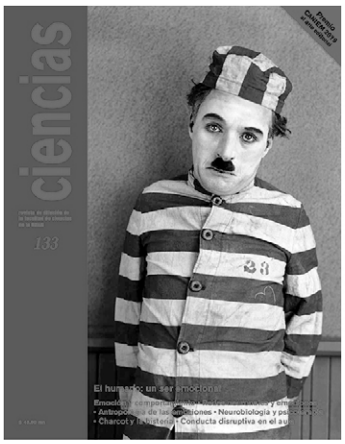

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Will Straw*

Night Studies
Thinking across Disciplines

In July 2020, Montreal, where I live, named its first commissioner of noise and night. The "noise" portion of this title signalled the extent to which controversies over sonic nuisance had become ever more frequent in Montreal, as in so many other cities. The most interesting aspect of this appointment, however, was the reference to "night." With the creation of this position in municipal government, Montreal joined over 50 other cities around the world that, since 2012, have appointed or elected night mayors, night czars, night ambassadors, or nighttime development officers.[1] In September 2020, Montreal's new commissioner of noise and night would host the city's first-ever summit devoted to the question of how Montreal should imagine, plan, and administer its nights.

July was also the month in which academic researchers based in Lisbon, Portugal, held the world's first International Conference on Night Studies. In the original plan for the event, daytime presentations by scholars from a wide variety of disciplines were to be followed by nocturnal explorations of Lisbon's nighttime culture. The COVID pandemic made this impossible, of course, and so the conference was moved online, with three days of Zoom sessions, later posted to YouTube.[2] The title of this event confirmed what had become clear to many of us over the previous decade: a new, loosely interdisciplinary field called "night studies" had solidified into a recognizable network of researchers.

In a set of parallel developments, then, scholars across several fields have turned their attention to the urban night, while city administrations have been moved to reflect upon what is now called "nighttime governance."

The night has always been with us, of course. It has been studied by criminologists, astronomers, sociologists, an-

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thropologists, and scholars of art and literature from the very beginning of each of these disciplines or fields. If we speak only now of something called "night studies," this is the result, I would suggest, of three factors. One, quite simply, is an observable increase in the number of books, journal issues, conferences, and research projects devoted to the night. July's International Conference on Night Studies was one of at least five scholarly events with a night focus planned for the spring and summer of 2020. The same period saw a steady stream of special issues of academic journals devoted to the night.

A second factor is the growing self-awareness, on the part of those who study the night, of being part of an emerging field in which people across several disciplines read each other's work and make reference to it. To engage with the night as a scholar of cinema or literature, for example, now means one is likely to read work by geographers on the temporal dimensions of cities, or by historians on the emergence of the technologies of electricity and illumination invoked in the atmospheric dimensions of fictional texts.

And, finally, scholarly interest in the night finds echoes in the move of city administrations around the world to treat the night as a significant focus of municipal governance. As cities promote the organization of all-night arts events (like *nuits blanches*) or museum nights, those who study the visual arts or museum exhibition are drawn to thinking about how a nighttime context for culture might redefine its audiences, atmospheres, and expressive forms.

In the slow emergence of something called "night studies," we find important groundwork laid by two disciplines, economics and geography. For a half-century or more, economists have spoken of something called a "nighttime economy." The term, it has been suggested, first emerged in the late 1960s in the United Kingdom in reference to geographical studies of small English towns where the absence of nighttime economic activity was deemed a problem. By the 1980s and 1990s, advocates of municipal government support for culture in cities were brandishing the term as a way of drawing attention to the economic contribution made by nighttime entertainment industries to the prosperity of cities.

The very notion of a nighttime economy was intended to overturn two sets of prejudices. One was a deeply-rooted conviction that said that, in the life of cities, economic production happened during the day, while the night was merely the time of consumption. Consumption, spending money on nighttime entertainment, for example, is itself an economic activity, but it was not usually considered central to how cities produced wealth. The other prejudice slowing acceptance of the idea of a "nighttime economy" was the belief that the economy of the night was rooted principally in informal, even illegal, kinds of commerce, such as the sale of alcohol or various kinds of vice. These things were more likely to be seen as problems for cities, to be controlled and regulated, than as resources to be protected and encouraged. This economic activity was, in any case, difficult to measure.

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Since the 1990s, we can distinguish three phases in the development of thinking about nighttime economies. In the first, the challenge was simply to measure economic activity. Various cities, from London to Montreal, have attempted to aggregate nighttime economic activity using data from the leisure and entertainment industries, or by breaking down tourism revenues distinguishing those that might reasonably be allocated to nighttime consumption. This work continues in data-collecting initiatives like that of the UK Live Music Census. This study, conducted in 2017, sought to measure the "cultural and economic value" of live music, a phenomenon associated principally with the night.[3]

In a second phase, city administrations, often in collaboration with academics, took up the challenge of stimulating and developing a nighttime economy. The key to doing so, it was felt, was through activities in which culture was central. In the early 2000s, the spread of nighttime arts festivals, bookstore nights, museum nights, and night markets were intended to expand the public availability of cultural activities —however loosely defined— into the night. This was often rooted in the desire to encourage city-dwellers to visit or linger in those parts of cities that were typically vacated once the normal workday had ended.

In a third phase, in the face of gentrification and other forces shaping cities over the last decade or more, the question has shifted. For many in the cultural sectors, the key

question is no longer how cities might build a nighttime economy. Rather, it is how cities might protect nighttime cultural activity in the face of rising rents for cultural venues, or opposition by inner-city neighborhood residents to the loud music or street gatherings that are often one product of nighttime leisure. Even more recently, cities like Barcelona have moved to reduce the destructive forces of massive urban tourism, short-term accommodation rentals from companies like Airbnb, and an economic logic in which bars and restaurants catering to young tourists displace institutions like the family restaurant, the art gallery, or the small-scale music venue.

It is now impossible to disentangle ideas of the nighttime economy from this broader transformation of cities, in which the spread of expensive residential buildings and high-priced leisure options has had a destructive effect on the spaces and traditions of nighttime culture. The spread of night mayors and commissioners of the night in cities has been spurred by the new kinds of battles in which the urban night is involved, battles over which kind of nighttime culture will survive, and which social groups will have the means to participate in it.

Current conflicts over gentrification have produced a new politics of the night, but the current moment is hardly the first in which the night has been made political. For writers like Canadian historian Bryan Palmer, the night has long been political because it is a time in which a subversive politics may become invisible. The night is the time of the clandestine, a temporal span when illicit meetings, secret conspiracies, and furtive acts of sabotage may occur. In his book *Cultures of Darkness*, Palmer traces the revolutionary character of night back through several centuries.[4] Elsewhere, as in the volume *Buenas Noches, American Culture*, the night is political because it is a time of refuge: it is a time when injured minorities can reflect upon the symbolic violence of the day; the night is restorative, and, in the restfulness of night, energies for political action are renewed.[5]

The night is political because it is a time of refuge: it is a time when injured minorities can reflect upon the symbolic violence of the day; the night is restorative.

This is a common way of thinking about the politics of the night: that these politics draw their strength from invisibility, from a retreat. In the past decade, however, we have seen the night made political in ways that are highly visible, even spectacular. We need only think of the series of movements of nighttime protest: the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul in 2015, Nuit Debout in France in 2016; and then, in 2019 and early 2020, significant nocturnal political demonstrations in Beirut, Sudan, Chile, and Hong Kong. We might ask why nighttime protests in cities, often by citizens who show few other signs of political participation, have replaced the large, daytime manifestations of union and political power that we associate with the twentieth century.

The demonstrations we have been speaking of were *in* the night, but they were not mostly *about* the night. They were not usually about the safety or inclusiveness of the night, but, rather, about the larger questions of state power and political democracy. It is worth looking at those forms of political protest that have been *about* the night, that take transformations of the night as their object. One politicization of the night has taken up Henri Lefebvre's idea of the "right to the city"and expressed it more explicitly as the "right to the night."[6] The right to the night is a key motif in the work of French sociologist Catherine Deschamps, who studies the movement of women in the night in Paris. Her work is about micro-practices that evolve in response to the sense, for women, that the night is a time of vulnerability. While this gendered experience of the night is hardly unknown, Deschamps is interested in the ways in which a knowledge of vulnerability settles into the often-unconscious habits and practices of the body.[7]

Some of the most interesting recent activism concerning the right to the night has occurred in India. The development of a high-tech industry in which women are employed in large numbers has politicized the question of these women's safety when they leave work late at night, either to go home or to go out for food and entertainment. This activism is a response both to the everyday acts of harassment these women are subject to and to a series of high-profile rapes and assaults. Movements employing the hashtag #IWillGoOut, the protests of the Blank Noise collective, and marches to "reclaim the night" in Indian cities have been vital examples of the night-focused politics of the last few years.

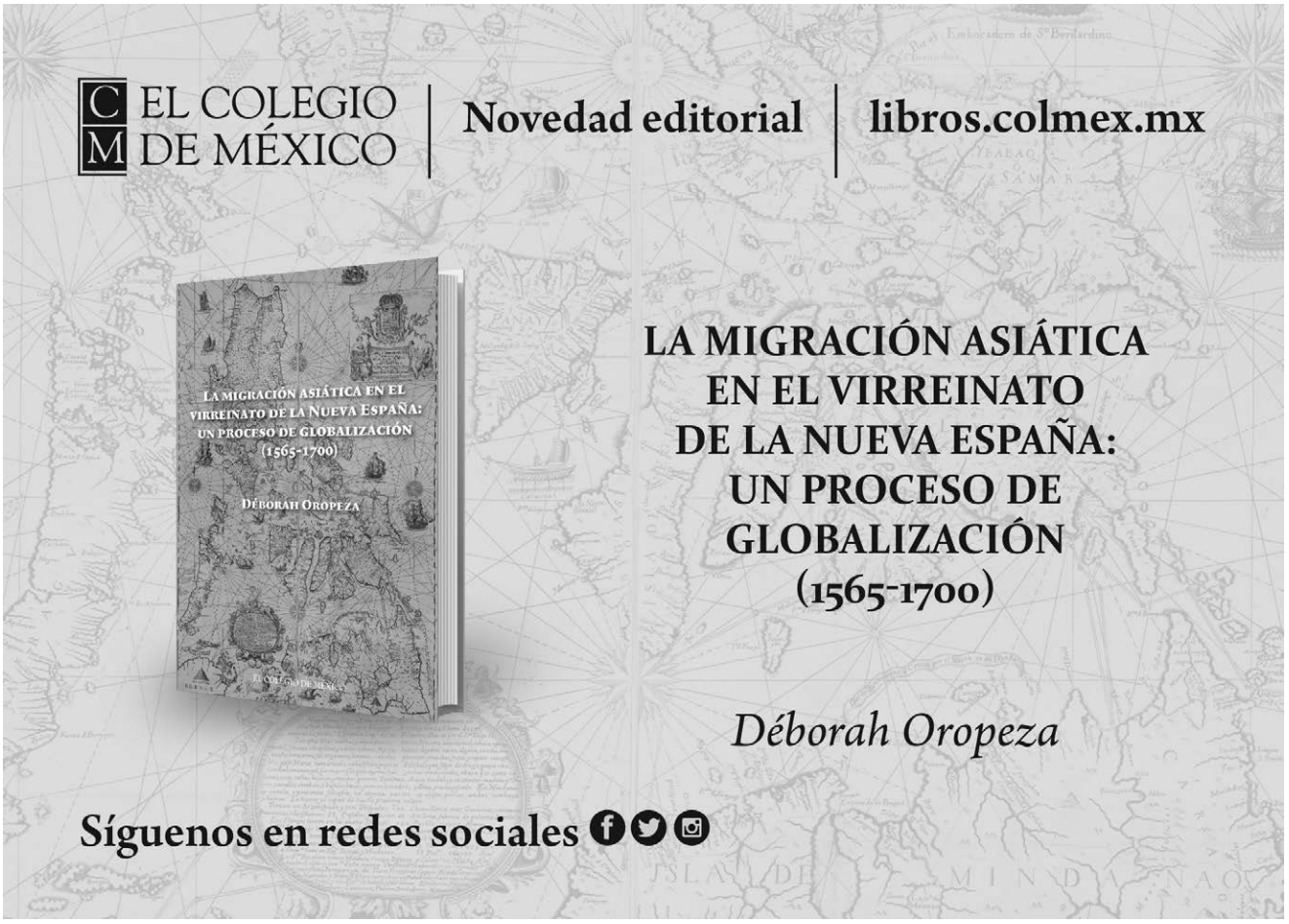
One way of understanding these politics of the night may be found in the work of French geographer Luc Gwiazdzin-

ski, and in his claim that the 24-hour cycle of societies, and of cities in particular, is marked by a discontinuous citizenship.[8] The rights of women, of young people, of sexual or racial minorities fluctuate during the passage from day to night. At night, certain groups invite the automatic suspicion of authorities, or are barred by law and custom from occupying public space. Others, in the night, are simply reduced to their sexualities or other simple tokens of identity and treated as such. In places like nightclubs, people are subjected to quick judgements as to their worth as measured by their physical attractiveness, their age or race, or the extent to which they appear to have money.

In all these respects, the night appears to us, not simply as an interval of time, but as a space, a territory. Indeed, recent initiatives in nighttime governance, such as the appointment of night mayors, explicitly imagine the night as a region to be administered. Artists, of course, have long imagined the night in terms of dream worlds, mysterious lands, or other entities whose character is spatial. If the night is a territory, then we must think more about the rights and responsibilities of those who are its citizens. VM

Notes

1 For an overview of this phenomenon, see Andreina Seijas and Mirik Milan Gelders, "Governing the Night-Time City: The Rise of Night Mayors as a New Form of Urban Governance after Dark," *Urban Studies* (2020), pp. 1-19.
2 A video record of the event may be found at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9Gul3VdwUsebJgmapWUFTA.
3 UK Live Music Census, http://uklivemusiccensus.org/.
4 Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness. Night Travels in the History of Transgression* (New York: Monthly Press, 2000).
5 De Guzmán, María, ed., *Buenas Noches, American Culture: Latina/o Aesthetics of Night* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012).
6 Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* (Paris : Anthropos, 2009 [1968]).
7 Catherine Deschamps, "Le Genre du Droit à la nuit parisienne," in Alain Montandon, Florian Guérin, and Edna Hernandez Gonzalez, eds.
8 Luc Gwiazdzinski, *La Nuit, dernière frontière de la ville* (La Tour-d'Aigues: Editions de l'Aube, 2005).



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Mario Alfredo Hernández Sánchez*

The Right to Non-discrimination And the Urban Night

The right to non-discrimination was originally recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which laid the foundation for the United Nations System. Since then it has been the backbone of international human rights law. On the one hand, this right forbids establishing arbitrary distinctions in treatment on the basis of gender, ethnic identity, appearance, nationality, religion, migratory status, socioeconomic status, disability, or sexual orientation, among other traits that have been used to restrict rights and opportunities. On the other, it creates the obligation to ensure equal conditions to guarantee all people effective participation in society to pursue their plans for a good life, even if, under the legal framework, they are contrary to the ethical values of the majority. Thus, non-discrimination has been considered a *key right* that "makes it possible for entire groups to gain access to the exercise of a system of fundamental rights."[1]

Due to its critical position in the established order, the right to non-discrimination has hermeneutic potential that helps to examine routines of exclusion and disparagement that for a long time have been accepted as natural, invisible, and even legitimate. Furthermore, this right allows us to affirm that discrimination is structural, in other words, that it is independent of individual effort and intent, that it arbitrarily distributes privileges and subordinations, and, therefore, that it transcends generations, inflicting disadvantages on entire populations. This structural nature makes us aware that the spaces and times some people inhabit may reproduce preexisting inequalities or create new ones. This is precisely what Edward Soja has called *spatial justice*, a perspective to evaluate the conditions that allow or deny people access to physical spaces, understood as the sum of infrastruc-

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ture, ideas, and judgments about the value of those who inhabit them. Spatial justice materializes "in the specific conditions of urban life and in collective struggles to gain more equitable access for all residents to social resources and to the advantages the city provides."[2]

In recent years, studies on the urban night have intersected with the perspective of spatial justice to analyze how it does or does not remain open to an egalitarian dynamic of integration. My intuition is that, for that task, the right to non-discrimination may play a central role. In particular, as David Caralt has remarked, the night in the city can be interpreted "as a map based on a system articulated by points of light forming bright lines that branch off and interconnect in the darkness."[3] Such a map would allow us to trace the city's evolution in the modern age as a cosmopolitan and privileged space for experimenting with subjectivity and social cohesion outside the boundaries of tradition and atavistic prejudice. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to briefly describe some of the consequences of an examination of the urban night, as an interdisciplinary object of study, from the perspective of the right to non-discrimination.

In Mexico, starting with the inclusion of a non-discrimination clause in the Constitution in 2001, we have made great strides in reforming the normative frameworks that are directly or indirectly discriminatory, in the design and operation of egalitarian public policy, and in constructing a civic culture that positively values our differences. We have also constructed forms of knowledge and methodologies to raise awareness about and measure the structural nature of discrimination. Such efforts include the National Survey on Discrimination (Enadis) developed, in its 2017 edition, by the National Council to Prevent and Eliminate Discrimination (Conapred).[4] What does the Enadis 2017 reveal about the differentiated ways people inhabit the night in the city and are able to gain access to it safely and without discrimination? Below I present some relevant results and inferences:

- Mexico's population is predominantly urban (62.8 percent), with low mobility (80 percent reside in their birthplace) and low- and middle-income levels (71.2 percent combined). As a result, the majority of inhabitants are exposed to the discriminatory practices seen in cities, especially those related to socioeconomic levels, which are important for rights like recreation and culture, which have been transformed into services accessible or not depending on purchasing power.
- Mexico has an aging population: although 67.3 percent of the population are young adults, low rates of mortality and fertility make the elderly the fastest growing segment. The economy of the urban night depends fundamentally on young people and adults because they are a majority of users of its recreational spaces and employees in activities that never stop.
- While illiteracy nationwide is only 3 percent, it spikes to 20.9 percent among people with disability and 13.3 percent for the indigenous. Although the night in the city has become a space for dissemination and socialization of artistic and cultural expressions, they may not be in reach for those who lack the means of accessibility and cultural pertinence.
- The lowest paying and most insecure jobs, in other words, personal services, support activities, and agriculture, concentrate speakers of indigenous languages (59.8 percent), people with disabilities (41.9 percent), and religious minorities (38.4 percent). Many people work at night in the city and, due to widespread precariousness, may be the farthest from working in accordance with what the International Labor Organization (ILO) considers *decent work*, meaning with fair wages, respect for their dignity, and safe working conditions.[5]
- The people who use private health services the most are Afro-descendants (23.9 percent), religious minorities (23.6 percent), and those living with disability (19.8 percent). The urban night can be risky, especially in contexts of widespread violence due to organized crime; also, people who work nights and are subject to altered sleep cycles may experience stress. If such people need health services, the likelihood of their having to pay for them is relatively high.

Studies on the urban night have intersected with the perspective of spatial justice to analyze how it does or does not remain open to an egalitarian dynamic of integration.

Spatial justice can be conceived for the urban night, and in that undertaking, the right to non-discrimination should play a fundamental part.

Based on this statistical background, it seems to me that we can identify at least three relevant dimensions of the right to non-discrimination for equal access to the urban night.

First, it is a fundamentally festive environment, although it is also true that it has recently become what Jonathan Crary identified as *the permanent possibility of continuity with the day and productive work*.[6] Nevertheless, because it is still inhabited by those who shun the customary practices of the majority, the urban night may offer a field for experimentation with new forms of inclusion and recognition contradicting structural discrimination. For the urban night not to reproduce preexisting inequalities, its inhabitants need to engage in an exercise of ethical imagination to sensitively assume the needs of populations historically discriminated against. This involves rethinking their physical and symbolic spaces to address demands for accessibility, cultural pertinence, questioning of arbitrary privileges and subordinations, and the universality of human dignity, which, precisely, entails the right to non-discrimination. A disabled person, an indigenous-language speaker, or someone unfamiliar with their surroundings on account of their migratory status or fearful when transiting a space they deem potentially violent due to their gender identity or sexual orientation should feel safe and free in the urban night. This does not yet happen today, but rather is a normative aspiration that requires that we adapt our physical spaces and social imaginaries with an authentically inclusive focus.

Second, the urban night is the natural environment for expressions of culture and recreation, which is why it is the preferred time for mass concerts and religious assemblies, theatrical performances, poetry recitals, exhibits, film screenings, or other, less conventional forms of art, which have variable costs. The risk lies in the fact that the rights to culture and recreation are transformed into services in the city at night. It is crucial to state emphatically that culture and recreation are unadulterated rights, specifically social rights. Together, they aspire to form a minimum floor of generalized material well-being that protects people from precariousness and allows them to make autonomous decisions about the most important aspects of their lives. For such decisions, and in general in relation to individual and collective autonomy, culture and recreation play a fundamental role. Michael Sandel has observed that cities are distinguished by their wide range of cultural offerings, and if the state subsidizes many such activities, it is to make them available to more people and promote a sense of public ownership as opposed to the privatization of urban spaces.[7] This is a tendency that, for example, has transformed shopping malls into spaces where, at the same time that they shop and pay for services, people can see a movie or a play or practice sports in indoor gyms. For Sandel, culture and recreation in cities are commodities that, due to their high social and individual value, should not have a price or be sold like other goods.

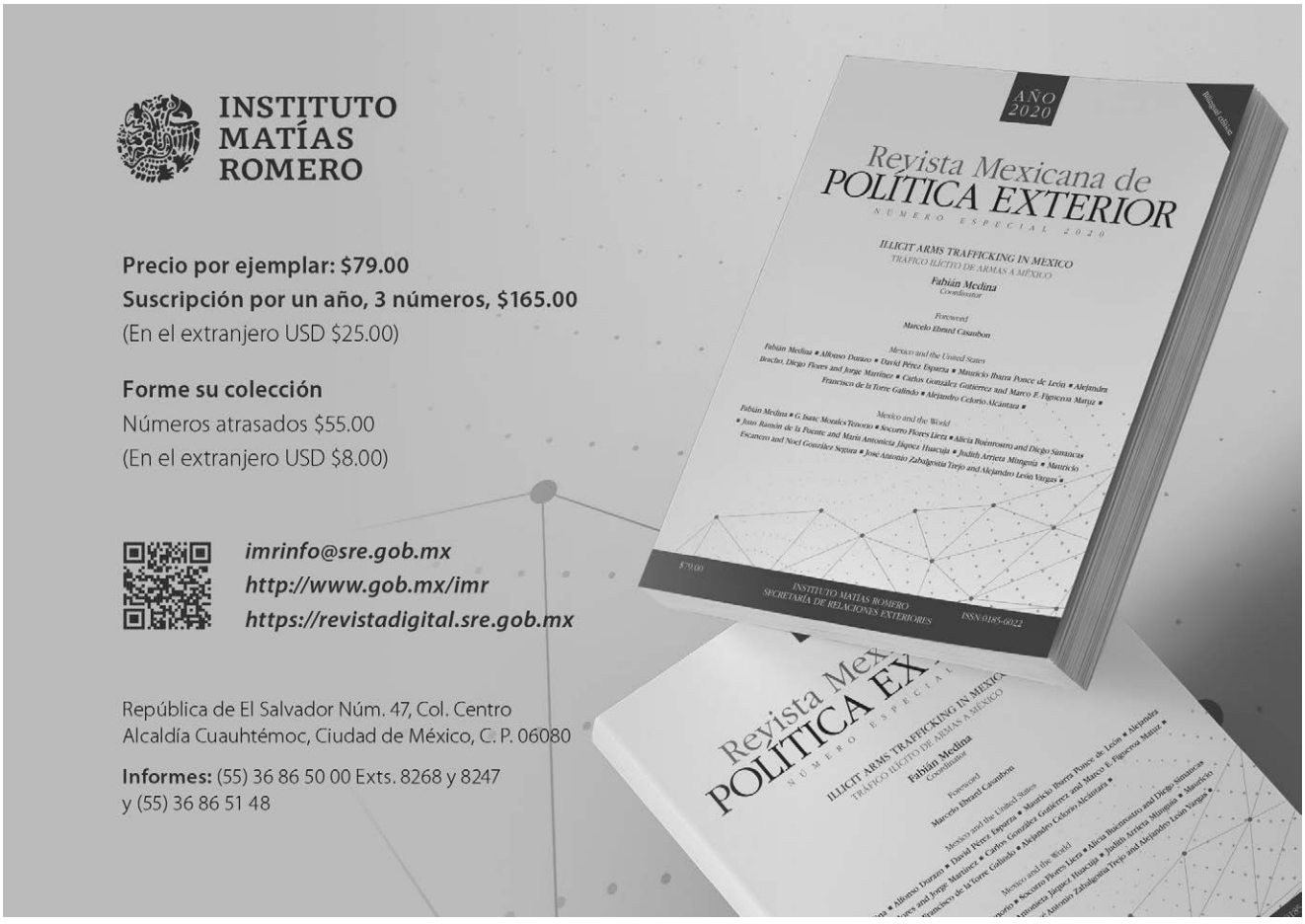
Third, for many people the urban night is their workplace. Needless to say, we refer here to food, transportation, and entertainment services, which traditionally revolve around city dwellers' leisure consumer habits. Moreover, information and communication technologies have made it possible for many goods and services to be available at all hours and without interruption. Digital apps can be used to order food, medicine, household supplies, or other items around the clock that people are unable to acquire in person during their working hours. This has not only changed urban consumer habits but, as Eva Illouz has remarked, has radically shifted our emotional horizon toward a logic of constant dissatisfaction and reduction of freedom in the broad sense of the freedom to consume.[8] The result is that we have sent out into the urban night an army of workers who manufacture, package, and distribute goods and services. Most of them experience what has been called the phenomenon of *uberization* of work, by analogy with app-based ride-hailing services that minimize interaction between driver and passenger. Such workers lack contracts, set schedules, and inputs to use in their activities and ensure their safety, and must always be available and near their mobile phone screens in case someone solicits their services, a problem exacerbated by migration to a digital economy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, we need to rethink the minimum conditions of non-discrimination as they apply to decent work,

to allow those who work nights to fulfill their responsibilities without renouncing their dignity.

Finally, I would conclude that it is possible to conceive spatial justice for the urban night, and in that undertaking, the right to non-discrimination should play a fundamental part. Creating inclusive cities after sundown poses two superlative challenges: first, imagining how to create conditions of freedom, autonomy, and human safety for all people without discrimination; and second, building political and social consensuses that help build the human and material capital to translate that intuition into cities favorable to diversity. We need to acknowledge that it is a privilege —often born of inertia and certainly undeserved— to inhabit the city without the need for specific aids, adaptations, or protections such as those needed by those who suffer from disability; speak an indigenous language; or are women, members of the LGBT+ community, or migrants. Against the logic of privilege, as Luigi Ferrajoli has affirmed, human rights are *the law of the weakest*. In particular, the right to non-discrimination constitutes a legal protection and a challenge to the collective imagination to construct an urban night capable of accommodating many ways of inhabiting and moving about in it. VM

Notes

1 Jesús Rodríguez Zepeda, *Iguales y diferentes: la discriminación y los retos de la democracia incluyente* (Mexico City: Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, 2011), p. 128.
2 Edward W. Soja, *En busca de la justicia espacial* (Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2014), p. 65.
3 David Caratl, "Caracterización de la noche metropolitana. El espectáculo de la luz eléctrica a finales del siglo XIX," *Bitácora Arquitectura* no. 28, 2014, p. 33.
4 Conapred, *Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación 2017. Prontuario de resultados* (Mexico City: Conapred, 2018).
5 ILO, *Trabajo decente*, http://www.oit.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--es/index.htm, June 28, 2020.
6 Jonathan Crary, 24/7, *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013).
7 Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy. The Moral Limits of the Market* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2013).
8 Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts. A Sociological Explanation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).



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Ana Emilia Felker*

Exhuming the Night

In 1971, Elena Poniatowska published *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (The Night of Tlatelolco),[1] her iconic chronicle of repression of the student movement, which consecrated her in Latin American journalism. In 2017, writer Diana del Ángel published *Procesos de la Noche* (Processes of the Night), in which she narrates the agonizing bureaucratic process faced by the family of one of the 43 students from the Ayotzinapa rural teacher-training school who were the victims of forced disappearance the night of September 26, 2014. The book has a prologue by Poniatowska, in which the veteran author raises a question that marks the generation gap between the two: "What country is this . . . where a little girl has to sit down and write not only about killing but about flaying?"[2]

The prologue makes explicit the connection between the two works, joined by an unending night with constantly increasing violence. The story of these two state crimes, Tlatelolco and Ayotzinapa, reveals the continuity of structural violence affecting both students and the journalists who research their stories in search of the dawning of the resistance.

More than a half-century after the Tlatelolco massacre, and despite the historical consensus on the event, the guilt of those responsible has yet to be formally established. A chasm still exists between the death count reported by civil society and that recognized officially, of 300 and 30. *La Noche de Tlatelolco* opens with a series of black-and-white photographs that narrate the conflict in chronological order, from the joy and solidarity of the protesters to the installation of altars to the fallen. "Next to the Church of Santiago Tlatelolco, a confident multitude assembled that half an hour later would lie bleeding outside the doors of the convent, which never opened to offer sanctuary to the children, men, and women terrified by the

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The story of these two state crimes, Tlatelolco and Ayotzinapa, reveals the continuity of structural violence affecting both students and the journalists who research their stories.

hail of bullets."[3] Captions like this use testimonials to shed light on what the official figures hid.

After years of investigative agencies and refuted official versions, the Ayotzinapa case faces the risk of suffering the same impunity as Tlatelolco. In *Procesos de la Noche*, Diana del Ángel denounces the callous attitude taken by the authorities: "The main focus is always to use technical, non-human language. The more technical the better; the fewer people see the victim the better. Why would you say, 'Julio, age 22, father of a baby, husband of a woman, son of a mother?' That would —I don't know— bring us a bit closer to the victim, allow us to feel for a moment that we might be like the people targeted. It's better to use the word 'cadaver.'"[4]

In 2019 the Commission for Truth and Access to Justice in the Ayotzinapa Case was created and has shown positive signs; however, much remains to be known about the events of that night to identify the persons responsible from the lowest to the highest ranks of government and the armed forces.

Lacking institutional avenues, investigating state crimes forces us to rely on testimony as the primary source to reconstruct events. The testimonial tradition in Latin America had its heyday between the 1960s and the 1980s, as a means of expressing the traumas inflicted by dictatorship, recovering the memory of those erased from history, and forging a counter-history. It has also been a vital tool in the legal sphere, not to weaken but, on the contrary, to preserve its strength in transitional justice and historical memory.

Argentinean theoretician Beatriz Sarlo proposes a critical approach to testimony; she raises concerns about its moral hegemony in the post-dictatorial period.[5] This narrative mode, she states, demands blind belief. In search of "truth," a concept she questions, we forget that it is constructed from the present. As we strive to find meaning in chaotic events, in reconstructing the past we often fall into the trap of re-presenting teleologically and even mythologically. Because memory is by nature a fiction, a subjective retelling, Sarlo takes the view that a more fruitful means of understanding past events is through literature.

Both Poniatowska and Del Ángel avoid the trap of the testimonial genre analyzed by Sarlo and find ways to make the form as expressive as the content. They reject the individual truths common in the classical heroic journey, of pure chronological narrative, and opt to frame the multiple perspectives of a social movement in a literary polyphony.

Sarlo is Bakhtinian when she claims that the problem with testimony is that it is too closely aligned with capitalist consumption, which classifies individual experience as true. The closest we can get to truth is to attempt to understand the friction between subjectivities expressed in dialogues, in the passions that dominate actions, in the confusion of collective events.

The Mexican authors, in contrast, seem to recognize the dilemma between reconstructing events from testimony and creating a literary text. They realize that the dazzling protagonism of individual testimony can transform it into myth. The only way to penetrate the darkness of the past is by feeling our way almost blindly, catching glimpses between blinks, aware that our senses may deceive us. That is exactly what both the writers mentioned do: allow the voices and the terrain to engage in dialogue, not to recreate a linear history, but to invoke the hidden forces that drove events.

It is impossible to recall October 2, 1968, without thinking of *La Noche de Tlatelolco*, translated into English as *Massacre in Mexico*. In Spanish, the title recognizes the palimpsest of the site: in the same square where protesters were massacred by the army, Spanish conquistadors massacred the Mexicas in 1521. There began the long night of the indigenous peoples, as the Zapatistas call the oppression that has lasted 500 years and can be tied to massacres like those in Acteal, in Chiapas, or Ayotzinapa.[6] Tlatelolco Plaza's polyphonic architecture lays bare the multiple layers of history and oblivion: the pre-Hispanic ruins, the colonial church, and the functionalist housing projects that ring the square and from which sharpshooters deployed by the Gustavo Diaz Ordaz (1964-1970) government gunned down the students.

After the massacre, Poniatowska interviewed survivors in numerous sessions; it is said that she spent almost as much time in Lecumberri Prison as the political pris-

Antonio Cruz / cuartoscuro.com

Parents of the 43 disappeared Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College students marched and held a rally in Mexico City on October 2.

oners. The result was a revolutionary tome that interspers-es eyewitness accounts, including those of residents who watched petrified from their windows, with the testimony of others who learned what had happened only from the press or third parties: parents, ordinary people, police of-ficers, and the captive audience of the Olympic Games, which Mexico City hosted that year. Some ideas are repeat-ed in the voices of different people, recreating the atmos-phere of the day and the mosaic formed by public opinion: conservatism, but also social upheaval.

The writer and journalist seems to stay on the side-lines as she records the words of others; however, there are at least two moments when her gaze is explicit: in the con-troversial dedication to her brother and in the introduc-tion, which attempts to produce the effect of a crowd: "There are many of them. They're on foot. They're laugh-ing. Here come the kids, they're coming toward me, there are so many." Poniatowska says, implicitly, "I am here": "They're coming toward me," a rhetorical gesture because we know she was not in the plaza. Finally, her authorship is also visible in the selection and order of fragments, especially at the precise moment of the shooting, since

The only way to penetrate the darkness of the past is by feeling our way almost blindly, catching glimpses between blinks, aware that our senses may deceive us.

she chose those that helped produce tension and resem-ble, by way of a calligram, bullets on the page.

Despite this intention to limit the first person, Ponia-towska was accused of appropriation. Gilberto Guevara de Niebla, from Sinaloa state, one of the student leaders she interviewed who later published his own books on the subject,[7] wrote that she homogenized the voices. He added ironically that in *La Noche de Tlatelolco,* everyone speaks "Poniatowskan" instead of Spanish. That may be, but in giving it her personal style, the author shows that evok-ing the past requires fictional art because framing events, narrating them from a point of view, implies a certain dis-tortion. The goal, then, would be to acknowledge that sub-jectivity without ceasing to aspire to a truthful narration.

Diana del Ángel seems to take this debate over first-person narrative and appropriation into account. Her voice is less noticeable in the testimonial sections; at the

Like Poniatowska, Del Ángel makes polyphonic connections with the past, with pre-Hispanic flaying practices, and even with the Tlatelolco massacre itself. The voices of the past are part of the present.

same time, her discursive perspective attempts to take ownership of her emotions and political positions. Her voice is much closer to activism than Poniatowska's. In the pulse of her text, the narrator is clearly witnessing the exhumation: "The bandages, still white, cover what remains of Julio's faceless head; it is impossible to tear your gaze away from that painful image and not feel that a piece of you is left behind when the forensic examiners reseal the coffin."[8]

Many books have been published about Ayotzinapa, but *Procesos de la Noche* is an intimate tale that seeks to reconstruct Julio Cesar's face and, with it, his dignity, as well as the chance to continue to struggle for justice in a country with Mexico's level of violence.

Like Poniatowska, Del Ángel makes polyphonic connections with the past, with pre-Hispanic flaying practices, and even with the Tlatelolco massacre itself. The voices of the past are part of the present. She reflects on the ineffable nature of violence and how the lives of the poor have become expendable. Under the title "Rostro" (Visage), the testimonials interrupt the chronicle, presenting the fragmented memories of Julio Cesar's friends and family. She invokes voices that express themselves in different directions without trying to create a univocal meaning.

Seen in the light of Sarlo's reasoning, exhumation becomes more a symbolic act of constructing the past from the present than the search for scientific and demonstrable proof of how Julio Cesar died. It is also the need to unearth systemic violence against social movements, to let the light shine on them so that justice can be done.

Academics and writers like Laura Castellanos argue that after the Tlatelolco massacre, the path to a non-radical option closed.[9] The government showed that it was unwilling to listen or negotiate. Nineteen sixty-eight was part of what is known as the *Guerra Sucia* (Dirty War), a low-intensity conflict waged against revolutionary actions and groups in several parts of the country. In the south, a peasant guerrilla force in Guerrero state was made up of militants shaped intellectually in the network of rural teacher-training schools in place since the 1930s. One of the most renowned professors and leaders was Lucio Cabanas, a graduate of the Isidro Burgos Rural Teacher-training School in Ayotzinapa, assassinated by the army in 1974. To show how alive such conflicts remain, we need only need recall that his widow, Isabel Ayala, was also assassinated, but in the year 2011.

Students at the rural teacher-training schools have a longstanding tradition of militance in social activism. The disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students reopened old wounds from the Dirty War. The image of Julio Cesar's flayed face marked a climactic point in the visibility of violence in already bloody years.

As Sergio Gonzalez Rodriguez explains,[10] Guerrero is a state where poverty and inequality merge with a history of guerrilla warfare, cultivation of opium poppies, drug trafficking, the presence of several criminal groups, the army, the navy, foreign investment, Canadian mining companies, and U.S. intelligence agencies. The flaying was understood initially as message from organized crime in a complex territory.

La Noche de Tlatelolco and *Procesos de la Noche* connect two periods in the same history and are part of a genealogy of Latin American narrative journalism, in this case polyphonic, which draws on collective power, creating a counter-history in which the memories of the disappeared find space and all faces count, as we continue to count the 43 Ayotzinapa students.[11] VM

Notes

1 Published in Mexico by ERA.
2 Diana del Ángel, *Procesos de la Noche* (Mexico City: Almadía, 2017), p. 17.
3 Elena Poniatowska, *La Noche de Tlatelolco* (Mexico City: ERA, 1971), unnumbered page in the section of photographs.
4 Del Ángel, op. cit, p. 74.
5 Beatriz Sarlo, *Tiempo Pasado. Cultura de la Memoria y Giro Subjetivo: Una Discusión Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005).
6 The author refers to the Zapatista insurgency that produced the January 1994, mostly indigenous social uprising. [Editor's Note.]
7 Guevara Niebla wrote, for example, *Pensar el 68* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 1988), *La libertad nunca se olvida. Memoria de 1968* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2004), and *1968: largo camino a la democracia* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2008). [Editor's Note.]
8 Del Ángel, op. cit., p. 105.
9 Laura Castellanos, *México armado* (Mexico City: ERA, 2007).
10 Sergio González Rodríguez, *Los 43 de Iguala* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2015).
11 The author is referring to the fact that marchers typically chant in unison the numbers from 1 to 43, to remember the 43 students. [Translator's Note.]

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Alejandro Mercado Celis*

Tonight, Let's Not Talk about Work

In contemporary urban societies, the night is identified with entertainment and the relaxation of the social norms that apply by day. We spend the day in a display of disciplined behavior: arrive on time, comply, deliver, participate, concentrate, start, finish. The night permits relaxation, arriving late, leaving at any time, celebrating, dancing, drinking alcohol, seeking out sexual encounters, talking about everything and nothing, dispersing, forgetting the daily grind and work, leaving our worries behind.

The separation of day-work/night-entertainment is not always observed. Daytime work bleeds over into the night and invades nocturnal entertainment. Around this day-night dichotomy —at times undesirable, at times functional, and at others even enjoyable— firmly entrenched, lasting nocturnal cultures have evolved, in which, from time to time, we all partake. It is to those cultures that I dedicate this article. I deal with them not only as a particularity of nocturnal socialization but as an approach to constructing a relevant field of study to understand the workings of certain economic activities and the functional mechanics of day and night and work and play in contemporary cities.

Contact between daytime work and nocturnal entertainment occurs in different dimensions and with different objectives and outcomes. We see nocturnal entertainment first as a source of inspiration for creative endeavor. It is familiar terrain for anyone knowledgeable about the visual arts; cabarets, nightclubs, brothels, dance halls, casinos, and other venues for nocturnal entertainment have been a source of inspiration, whether for realistic works that portray and document the nocturnal cultures that thrive there, or to inspire artists to produce different interpretations and depictions of social nightlife. Henri de

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Toulouse-Lautrec is, of course, the best known example due to his series of paintings done at the Moulin Rouge in Paris. Numerous examples also exist of artistic work inspired in nocturnal socialization throughout modern and contemporary history; each reader will assuredly have in their memory some image of such depictions. The visual arts are only one example of nightlife as creative inspiration, but many more can be found in other, widely divergent areas of creative endeavor, such as fashion, architecture, advertising, and, of course, literature.

Another cultural expression of the nocturnal that links daytime work to nighttime entertainment are awards ceremonies, which communities in various fields hold for their members. Periodic recognition for performance by companies and workers is a practice that permeates numerous economic and non-economic activities, but the nocturnal and public celebratory practice of bestowing awards is dominant in cultural and the creative industries. Awards ceremonies of the film, music, theater, and gastronomic industries, to mention some of the most visible, draw the attention of those who are directly involved in those industries, but also of their consumers, who will attend the ceremonies as a guide for their likings. Awards ceremonies are prolonged into the night with private parties attended by the award recipients and their inner circles, which, however private they may be, allow them to be observed so they can be narrated and photographed by the specialized press, which will report the details of the night's proceedings the next day.

Professional communities pertaining to a given occupation or type of work tend to frequent certain kinds of night spots. Journalists, politicians, artists, models, musicians, writers, academics, intellectuals, and businesspeople, to mention a few professions, tend to prefer places that offer socially relaxed settings. Such spaces for gathering emerge without an explicit agreement and are formed and made known in social circles and eventually give a place its characteristic flavor and subsequent reputation for attracting a certain type of person. Such places tend to be unstable, because professional communities are constantly moving, finding and building new nocturnal homes. Those out of touch realize that where "everyone" used to go, now there is "no one." Social places for professional communities, in some cases, have a specific timeframe; for example, they go only one day a week or there is a circuit of places that are "in" or where you can find members of your circle on different days of the week. On this temporal plane there are clubs where a given professional community can be found only one night a week, while the other nights they are frequented by night owls with completely different profiles. Also, a person visiting a restaurant, bar, or nightclub may not detect the presence of a specific professional community that has assembled there unnoticed. The reasons why professional communities gather in certain night spots are numerous: the most obvious are that members may learn through the grapevine what is happening in their professional circle and who is doing what, where, and with whom. They find out about leaks and tidbits of gossip that are not only amusing but professionally useful. Not only can informal access to information about colleagues be advantageous, the mere fact of knowing which establishment one's peers are frequenting confers a kind of reputation in the workplace.

Other nocturnal practices of cultural and creative industries involve inauguration ceremonies for events and new product launches. In Hollywood, it continues to be a tradition to hold film premieres at night, in a single theater, with floodlights, a red carpet, and a parade of leading actors and guests. In Mexico City, plays premiere with a single performance closed to the public, for members of the performing arts world only: journalists, actors, directors. Galleries open new exhibits by offering wine or mezcal for groups of guests to celebrate the featured painter. At their openings, galleries offer a Hopperian view from the street, in which the outer darkness, like in the painting *Nighthawks* (1942), contrasts with the bright interior lighting. Publishing firms, particularly small and independent ones, increasingly choose to launch new books in bars and nightclubs, or transform small bookshops into temporary bars, where writers and readers mingle among wine and books. Nocturnal launches lend importance and visibility to the beginnings of a literary career or cultural enterprise, as well as to new products.

Christmas parties that companies and other organizations give constitute a category of their own within the

Spaces for gathering emerge without an explicit agreement, are formed and made known in social circles, and eventually give a place its characteristic flavor and subsequent reputation.

At Christmas parties, the utilitarian and hierarchical relationships that regulate day-to-day working life are transposed onto the context of nocturnal entertainment.

nocturnal culture of daytime work. Some interesting anthropological essays have been written on the subject, revealing the complexity of these rites and their meaning for organizations and employees. Michael Rosen, a social anthropologist, observes that at Christmas parties, the utilitarian and hierarchical relationships that regulate day-to-day working life are transposed onto the context of nocturnal entertainment, and consequently encourage the relaxation of the behavioral standards and acceptance of hierarchy that undergird a company's internal structure. This exceptional situation creates a rite in which labor relations are symbolically transformed into a community united by a sense of friendship that transcends the terms of employment and the differentiated compensation participants receive, which define their position in the organization. The practices of eating, drinking, dancing, and conversations among personnel from different areas and organizational levels are part not only of an entrenched custom, but of a symbolic process of adhesion and social commitment to a working community. At the same time, the ritual of the Christmas party helps perpetuate such hierarchies and adhesion to one's employment in ways that go beyond monetary compensation.

The episode of the series *The Office* entitled "The Dinner Party" offers an ironic portrayal of another deep-seated practice in the convergence of work culture and use of nocturnal entertainment. When Michael Scott invites his favorite employees to his home for dinner it triggers a series of events that underscore the tension between the intimacy of a domestic environment and the utilitarian social relationships of the workplace. The episode plays with this rite, showing the forced courtesy and comradery of the dinner guests, the revealing of hidden personality traits of the boss and his wife, and a disastrous ending with the portrayal of a family fight and the arrival of the police. Even without this kind of drama, dinner with one's boss from the office has multiple meanings and is a means toward various work-related ends. From the outset, an invitation to the domestic space at night has overtones of intimacy, proximity, and commitment between the organizer and the guests, three categories which, linked to labor relations, carry a specific weight that is by no means negligible for any worker. A party with the boss sends implicit messages not only for the guests, but also for those who are not invited or are left off the list only on that occasion. This nocturnal-occupational rite may be one of the most formalized and coded of those we have described thus far. If the reader Googles "dinner with the boss" in their preferred language, they will get an endless list of websites offering practical advice on what to say, what not to say, what gifts to bring, how long to stay, and how to dress for a dinner with the boss. Some of their titles seem taken straight from the series *The Office*: "Company dinners: how to swallow the bitter pill of having dinner with your boss and making it more fun," or "Tips on etiquette and protocol for a dinner with your boss," or, my personal favorite, "11 mistakes to avoid at dinner with your boss." Recommendation number one: "Don't talk about work that night." VM

Further Reading

Rosen, Michael (1988), "You Asked for It: Christmas at the Bosses' Expense," *Journal of Management Studies* vol. 25, no. 5: 463-480, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.1988.tb00710.x

Yunming Wang / Unsplash

Michaël Spanu*

Setting the Night to Music[1]

Do we experience music differently at night than in the daytime? The answer reveals how important the musical night has become in Mexican and world urban life, where the rhythms of rest and festivities are in constant tension.

One of the particularities of what is called night studies is that they are carried out by experts trained in popular music studies,[2] as can be seen in the recent publication of *Nocturnes: Popular Music and the Night*.[3] This book is a collective effort coordinated by Geoff Stahl, known for his work on the musical scene in Montreal, Berlin, and Wellington, and Giacomo Bottà, a specialist in European punk and post-punk, especially in de-industrialized cities like Manchester, Düsseldorf, Turin, Bologna, and Tampere.

Another scholar of the music scene, Will Straw, underlines in this work that historically, studies on urban nightlife often use music as either a crosscutting theme or a point of departure for shedding light on this hidden part of social life. In the case of Mexico, one example could be *Vivir la noche. Historias de la Ciudad de México* (Experiencing the Night. Stories of Mexico City).[4]

In fact, bars, cabarets, clubs, or even concert halls are essentially nocturnal. They are part of that collective, in-person culture that Stahl and Bottà counterposed to individualistic and/or pragmatic uses of music in the daylight hours (the music listened to in earphones on buses, the Muzak that filters through the air in malls, etc.). Venues destined for music have this ability to congregate groups of people in the middle of the night around an emotional and corporeal principle that goes beyond or dilutes other classical identity categories.[5]

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In addition, in the best of cases, research about popular music takes this nocturnal dimension as a given, and in the worst, ignores it completely. Actually, for a very long time, the history of that kind of musical production has focused exclusively on the works, leaving to one side the venues where they are created and executed (rehearsal and recording studios) and performed (festivals, concerts, public spaces, etc.). Using cases from around the world as a starting point, Stahl and Bottà's book aims to fill this vacuum around the intimate, complex link between the night and popular music.

The Musical Night, A New Avatar Of the City as a Creative Entity

Nocturnal musical activity in the great European and North American urban centers has become one of the avatars of the modern city, as shown by government authorities' interest in promoting it, but also in instrumentalizing it, as brilliantly revealed in the article by Myrtille Picaud, who uses Paris and Berlin as examples. The attraction of clubs and the re-appropriation of spaces abandoned due to deindustrialization have put the musical night at the center of strategies to make these capitals "creative cities." Berlin's transformation dates from many years before and has been used as a model for what has been happening in the French capital, where short-lived "warehouses" abound, a product of the synergy between authorities and big companies. The protagonists of nocturnal musical life have been ambivalent about this transformation since it both affects them negatively and benefits them. In addition to the advantage of being easily dismantled, these spaces provide a certain glamour to previously marginalized areas, and even makes it possible, at the end of the day, to carry out important real estate projects. This can be observed in North America, above all in Toronto and Montreal,[6] but also —and perhaps even more ambivalently— in Mexico City, in abandoned venues like a former flour mill in its northeastern Azcapotzalco industrial neighborhood, while more and more independent venues are closing in the city's downtown area (such as Caradura, El Imperial, and Japan, among others). This city adds another specific problem: the epidemic of the extortion of nighttime establishments and the authorities' lack of response.

The existence of a nocturnal musical life accessible to all requires a constant struggle, even in places with an authentic street music culture, as is the case with the samba in Rio or Mexico City's *sonidero* street music.

Nevertheless, according to Straw, public policies regarding nightlife have distanced themselves from music and certain activities that could be perceived as subversive. In contrast, they have diversified the nocturnal palette of activities (museums, sports arenas, libraries, etc.), even directly attacking venues dedicated to music. This is the case in Mexico City, where administrative control is used to bring pressure to bear, turning into yet another obstacle for musical activity at night. These nocturnal developments are part of a general trend in expanding urban spaces: rent hikes, privatization of public spaces, the emergence of settings for standardized consumption, and residents who see nighttime musical activity as a bother.

These trends pose the issue of modes of governance and the regulation of nightlife,[7] as well as the measurement of musical venues' impact on the quality of life of a neighborhood or city. Mexico's capital does not as yet have these mechanisms, although consultations are being carried out in certain neighborhoods, and a proposed bill about independent cultural spaces recognizes the specificity of music-focused nighttime venues.[8]

The Wellington case Stahl describes is paradigmatic with regard to the traps that should be avoided. The same company is responsible for noise control for the city government and provides most of the bouncers who work in the city's clubs. Aside from these kinds of conflicts of interest, quite typical on a local level, local regulations in urban areas are frequently incompatible with any kind of nighttime musical activity in the public space. Jhessica Reia shows this in her article about street musicians in Rio de Janeiro and Montreal, who are the first to be affected by the power structures designed to set the rules about —and even neutralize— nightlife, above all due to the stigma attached to it, often associated with begging and poverty. The existence of a nocturnal musical life accessible to all requires a constant struggle, even in places with an au-

thentic street music culture, as is the case with the samba in Rio or Mexico City's *sonidero* street music and dances.

The Search for Nighttime Spaces for Emancipation

Murray Melbin's classic article is a window onto the nighttime scene,[9] in particular with regard to two complementary aspects for night-dwellers and musicians: risk and opportunity. On the one hand, the nocturnal functions as a space of confinement and repression, where music is considered a vector of disorder and risky behavior (drug consumption, unbridled sexuality, etc.). Michael Drewett's article about black musicians under South African apartheid reports that, in addition to the legal obstacles for nighttime concerts, such as curfews, others of a symbolic nature existed, since the apparent calm of the South African nights covered up acts of extreme violence, often committed by the police. Musicians' songs from that period speak to those dangers. In Mexico, we would have to mention the recent murder of ten members of the Sensación Musical group by a local cartel in the state of Guerrero as they returned home at night.

On the other hand, the hidden dimension of the night is of capital importance for the expression of cultural minorities, openly marginalized during the day. For example, using archival material, Jarek Paul Ervin explains the point to which the nighttime is a foundational element in New York's queer culture, a space for experimentation and emancipation. Analyzing it in the light of Lou Reed's song *Walk on the Wild Side* and his characteristic self-assured vocal style, Ervin also underlines part of the queer community's fatalism regarding the idea of their real recognition by day-time society. In Mexico City, high-energy culture has performed similar functions.[10]

A great deal of research has been done on alternative nighttime practices, frequently with the aim of overcoming the division between security and commercial entertainment embodied in the concept of the nighttime economy. While this alludes to a design of nocturnal rhythms that benefit the famous "creative class" that Richard Florida talks about,[11] based on the exploitation of cheap, sleep-deprived labor —as can easily be observed in Mexico City—, the urban night includes non-commercial, community, and emancipatory activities. In addition to the aforementioned street musicians and the queer community, we can include Australian amateur breakdancing aficionados, studied by Rachael Gunn, a very similar case to the different nocturnal groups that appropriate Mexico City, like cyclists.[12] One of this volume's greatest contributions is to direct the reader's attention to dynamics that, while geographically far-flung, are close by because of the anthropological ambivalence to the urban night: between violence and solidarity, dispersion and homogeneity, interests and creativity.

> Nocturnal musical and artistic activities cannot be reduced to being simple bastions against the alienating, colonizing trends of urban society and contemporary capitalism.

However, it is not a matter of idealizing every kind of nocturnal behavior. Jorfi Nofre and Daniel Malet Calvo explain, for example, how Lisbon's *laisser-faire* authorities have fostered the development of a misogynist, negative nocturnal tourism centered on alcohol consumption, in which, in addition, the local musical culture occupies a very marginal place. Therefore, the Portuguese capital seems to be only a stage, a soundscape for a cheap redeployment of an alcohol culture where rape culture dominates. That problem exists elsewhere and in other musical contexts, such as concerts or festivals, although it is only now becoming a topic for university research.[13] In Mexico, we can mention the sexual tourism in nighttime festive, musical districts, above all along the U.S. border.

Therefore, nocturnal musical and artistic activities cannot be reduced to being simple bastions against the alienating, colonizing trends of urban society and contemporary capitalism. In fact, their relationship with new technologies marks the nocturnal experience to a great extent with these tendencies. The current make-up of urban societies has made it possible for an "eternal night" to emerge through the offering of continual, automated services, as well as an increasingly blurred border between leisure and work, the real and the virtual.

One example of this is DeepDream. As Christopher M. Cox explains in his contribution to the book, this Google algorithm supposedly provides a virtual substitute for our dreams. It acts as a kind of numerical, musical spec-

ter of Internet's playful cannibalization of our sleep time. Yolanda Macías develops another more concrete example of this trend involving young, middle-class, Mexico City youths' nocturnal leisure.[14] She demonstrates that the existence and popularization of certain technologies that change domestic musical and cultural consumption do not necessarily make it more democratic and may maintain certain gender inequalities.

Conclusion

The vitality of the studies about the night of this period and its link to musical practices is clear. Nevertheless, Stahl and Bottà's work shows that they are still initial, still developing. Several of the articles display a weak, complex theoretical link between the night and music and even with other aspects of social life. Since the night is something natural, abstract, and fleeting in our surroundings, it is difficult to grasp. It is similar to a "hyperobject," that is, something massively propagated in time and space in relation to humans, as Morton says, and that can be experienced concretely although without being easily delimited and requires a particular style of thinking and writing.[15] In my opinion, that style has yet to be invented. In the articles included in this book, the concept of the night is almost always presented as something volatile, with only slight theoretical underpinnings, when what is required is precisely a solid framework in order to deal with it thoroughly.

On the methodological level, we know how difficult it is to do research in the nocturnal space, to gather data, and get everything out of the object of study productively and ethically.[16] The articles are also vague in that sense: it is not possible to know how much time the researchers spent on site, what kind of interaction they had with night-dwellers, etc. In more general terms, the massive, boundless nature of the nocturnal leads to an explosion of topics and approaches that are not always fruitful, above all in the case of analyzing works that refer, perhaps rather tangentially, to the night. I have no objection in principle to bringing together different approaches to the topic and diverse focuses for the analysis of the matter, but they are never juxtaposed, and they create the sensation of an unproductive disciplinary compartmentalization. Even though we know that this book could not resolve all the intellectual challenges associated with the study of such a vast object as the night, I think that those disciplinary and methodological questions are a priority for developing night studies, particularly in Mexican academia. VM

Notes

1 Translated from the original French to Spanish by María Cristina Hernández Escobar, and from Spanish to English by Heather Dashner.
2 S. Frith, *Taking Popular Music Seriously* (London: Routledge, 2007).
3 All authors or works mentioned in this article without a specific footnote are chapters in this book.
4 Iván Restrepo et al., *Vivir la noche. Historias de la Ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Tintable, 2014).
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Eugenio Pastoral / Unsplash

Juan Carlos Barrón Pastor*

The Nocturnal under Lockdown

Sun,
You don't understand what's happening here.
This is the night, and to the night
Belongs the soul of love.
Kumbala
Maldita Vecindad

When the editors of this magazine invited me to contribute to an issue about the night, I found it unsettling to know that, after so many poems, so many novels, so many celebrities, and so many studies, I decided to share something that starts off with the danzon *Kumbala*. My hope is that this article will contribute not only to remembering certain nocturnal fragments that 2020 has left us, but also to rethinking the imaginary of the night as something dark and sinister to also recognize its luminous, liberating side. That is, the night can shed light on what we are seeking so we can get through the day, which is, paradoxically, what harbors the bleak, routine part of our lives.

For many, the night is a space of rebellion, since it is the time when they get a breather from the social mandate of producing something. This is even more the case now, when our work responsibilities are symbiotically mixed on our telephones and other devices that also include our personal lives and our —very necessary— leisure time.

Of course, among the inhabitants of the night are also those who live from it and whose every day begins when that of others is ending; and it is thanks to them that night-dwellers have somewhere to go. However, the dominant discourses are the ones that tell us that nighttime is for resting; that it is for our own good and health that we should get seven to eight hours sleep, preferably at night. Sleeping is just as important as exercising and eating fruits and vegetables, but so are recreation and

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nocturnal activity. The night has also been taken over by hoodlums, nocturnal parasites, those who live on the dark side of the state, which is, supposedly, the body that has a monopoly on violence. We can only hope that someday we can have nocturnal activity without them.

For many, nighttime is the place where the last remnant of their freedom lies. It is the space and time where our internal home calms and we can reencounter ourselves, our memories, our dreams, and our nightmares for a moment. It is also the place for love, for leisure, and for doing whatever you want. At night we can be once again. Dream, make love, listen to music, dance, read, talk to our ghosts, sext, watch movies, or binge-watch a series. The night is ours.

Before the pandemic, night owls used to go out on the weekends, and sometimes even on weekdays; they would go somewhere that music was playing that fit their mood. That would be a night that would be full of half-lights and glows, until we returned to our miserable routine the next day, possibly with a hangover, sometimes fair and sometimes not.

In the long night of the pandemic, some night owls created new ways of meeting up and at the same time respecting the physical distancing measures that we were appropriately subjected to. One peculiar thing that had already existed in recent years, but during these months grew notably, are concerts, parties, and get-togethers in cyberspace (see box).

So, electronic platforms were not only useful for giving classes or holding work meetings, but also so artists, mainly musicians, could create cyber-venues to set pleasures free. At times, they seemed to try to emulate Dionysian celebrations in a non-face-to-face version, and, in some cases, as a transnational social interaction in real time.

This year has seen an unprecedented boom in nocturnal activities in these cyber-venues: remotely broadcast concerts, raves at home, meetings of friends and relatives, and even clandestine meetings, and, given the open social and media disapproval, authentic Bacchanalia have been organized, as well as the so-called COVID parties.

> For many, the night is a space of rebellion, since it is the time when they get a breather from the social mandate of producing something.

Artists connected with their followers through remotely broadcast concerts on digital networks with previously unknown versions that went from live performances from their living rooms to free access to rare materials or previously broadcast concerts. The French artist Jean Michel Jarré went a step further with regard to interconnectivity between face-to-face and remote spaces when he and his avatar gave the June 21, 2020 *Alone Together* concert, using VROOM immersive technology.[1] The electronic music was performed live and broadcast over almost the entire world on Internet and digital network platforms, with 2D and 3D surround sound experiences; and it even included a silent performance on a giant screen that the Parisian audience could watch in person, but listening to the music on earphones connected to their cell phones or tablets.

At the raves from home, some artists created private events on platforms like Discord. At those events, a DJ usually asked participants to turn on their cameras and mute their microphones. That way, the DJ could select the images of what was going on in each space the participants were connecting from, allowing them to get the feeling of a crowd, raucousness, exhibitionism, and voyeurism. The DJ could be anywhere in the world, as could all the participants. The night could even break down the time zones.

Cyberspace exists in the convergence of the media system, of telecommunications and energy, and can be understood as a territorial dimension made up of cyberspatial social locales in the process of emerging and being built. Cyberspatial locales co-produce based on social practices, symbols, and devices that originate behaviors, negotiations, disputes, and conflicts involving the aggressive capture and production of spaces and symbols that certain of the system's actors and devices create in accordance with their own interests. In these cyberspatial locales, multiple human structures unfold, which we call social interactions, and which are my object of study when they are transnational in the region of North America.

Throughout this long night, the humanities and the arts, precisely, showed us once more that they are the most indispensable human activities.

The key was to connect with the experience and become part of the event to the beat and volume of the music, perhaps aided by alcohol or drugs. After a few hours, participants would experience ecstatic dancing, catharsis, and euphoria, and they would occasionally even strip naked, not only in the intimacy of their room, but, above all, in the sheltered outburst of the paradoxical sensation of being in a crowd, anonymous, and alone in their rooms.

Less spectacular, but perhaps more widespread, get-togethers of friends and relatives largely moved to cyberspace during the months of lockdown. A little later, but still in time, given the success of platforms like Zoom or Meet, WhatsApp and Messenger improved their group video-calls of up to four people in the former case and even up to 100 in the latter. This offered a very different usage from tools like Facebook Live, that already existed, but that offered more one-way broadcasting and more limited interaction. In contrast with the dynamic of broadcasting an event, group video-calls make it possible to reproduce the sensation of meeting with relatives and friends to talk about everyday things or even have birthday parties, organize remote karaoke performances, watch a sporting event together, or play videogames in the company of other players and not just as avatars at a console or computer.

Because they violate the norms of social distancing and in some cases even the law, clandestine in-person parties are more stigmatized. Some, such as COVID parties, had the express purpose of transmitting the disease; others, not as much. But in all cases, these events were held in open defiance of the ban on unnecessary, recreational gatherings. Mexico City witnessed parties with the sound turned up so high that the neighbors could dance on their own rooftops without violating social distancing norms. On other occasions, instead of dancing, the neighbors called the police to complain about the noise. Other times, musicians were hired to play in the street or in other open spaces. And sometimes people even gathered in small groups on terraces, in apartments, homes, or in places of business closed to the public but open to distinguished clients. It was common to hear about twenty-somethings who met, in some cases, each with his/her headphones connected to listen to the same music, chatting on their phones despite being in the same place, some wearing masks and others not; sometimes arm-in-arm, sometimes distancing, as though confused, without knowing if they should guiltily follow their inclinations or stick to the new social norms that had already been internalized.

Nocturnal behavior also became laxer and the scheduled times more spread out. On the one hand, nocturnal activities suddenly cropped up during the day and staying up late became more frequent. So many excuses to prolong the feeling of freedom! Some reading, others playing, and still others watching series . . .

Platforms like TikTok clearly showed many people's boredom, stunning those who had more work than before. On the other hand, anxiety and violence in the home, above all directed at women, also grew as a response to the lack of jobs, ratcheting up of addictions, the stress of lockdown, and possibly a poverty of spirit that only the arts and the humanities may be able to nourish for its transformation and flowering. Throughout this long night, the humanities and the arts, precisely, showed us once more that they are the most indispensable human activities, that a nocturnal environment, at any time of day, can feed their luminosity, and that their absence increases the danger and misgivings about living together.

All darkness is followed by the dawn. Danzon gives way to jazz, and, like in Haruki Murakami's novel *After Dark*, the Curtis Fuller Quintet performs *Five Spot after Dark*,[2] as we wait for the sun to come up. We are together in solitude at those extended nocturnal hours. Fears, anxieties, uncertainties, and melancholy pile on top of one another. So much bewilderment, so much injustice! But wakefulness and proximity can still bring us together and help us heal the wounds of loneliness, closing the abysses that this crisis has accentuated. It is the dawn of a new night, in which confinement turns into another opportunity to take flight, allowing us to experience the break of day. VM

Notes

1 https://jeanmicheljarre.com/alonetogether.
2 *Five Spot after Dark*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BlHRPXPx-4.

Megan te Boekhorst / Unsplash

Federico Guzmán Rubio*

Insomnia Is a Place: Nighttime

Luckily, I have rarely been there; at one time I visited more than I would have liked, whether on account of daytime anxieties, getting up later than I should have, or mere whim —whether physiological or psychological I can't say— since I really don't know if sleep is a function of the body or the mind. Needless to say, I still visit some nights, fortunately not very often, because for me insomnia remains a distant, and to a certain point unfamiliar, place. Nonetheless, the few times I went there, added to the sporadic nights when I still visit, authorize me to write about it, not from the perspective of a citizen but from that of a traveler who arrives, looks, and departs, taking with him some anecdotes, two or three images, some sensations. In addition to my own experiences, I have also heard the testimony of others who have done battle in those dark regions, and on returning, puffy eyed, found words to describe their experiences in the fearsome land of wakefulness.

I say insomnia is a place because one enters, spends time there, and leaves; because while there are variations —from the color of your bedsheets to the season of the year— the landscape is always identical, recognizable, and true to itself, and because, unlike time, by nature intangible, it is so palpable that in fact one can toss and turn in it, wander around in it for hours on end and feel it in one's entire body, almost weightless but unquestionably present. To get to insomnia one need only want to sleep, at night, as people do, and not be able to; you must be meticulous and keep your eyes wide open, since, in a moment of carelessness, you can miss the station and leave it

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irrevocably behind for a night or forfeit your right to enter, as if, just before crossing the border you realize your passport has expired.

Once in its territory, the decor of insomnia is monotonous and unbroken by any surprise: always the same warm sheets, the darkness that, as the minutes pass, becomes mere gloom and announces objects reduced to their shadows; the ceiling that, while not clearly visible, feels low, almost stifling. The gloom makes insomnia a place more of sounds than of objects. No silence is more misleading than the silence of insomnia, which is there only to amplify sounds, to isolate them and let them echo in all their wildness. Because all the sounds of insomnia are earsplitting. If you sleep with someone else, the snores of your bedmate, invasive to the point of being insulting, are emitted by a beast rather than a sleeper; the distant music from a party sounds as close as if the band were playing in your living room, and the rasping ticktock of the clock changes its exasperating predictability for the digital arbitrariness of cell phone messages. Of course, you can move to another room, another house, even another city, but sooner rather than later you will be looking at the same landscape, because you do not get to insomnia by following a route on a map, but, as if it were a magical place in another dimension, by means of a simple ritual that consists of wanting to sleep, at night, as people do, and failing.

It might seem that in insomnia nothing ever happens, that time stands still and you are transported out of this world, the world of those awake, but also of the other world —the dark, the oneiric, the unknown— of the sleeping. Real insomnia is jealous and brooks no distraction; it wants your full attention for itself; it demands that you think of nothing else than the fact that you cannot sleep. It is a lie. Insomnia is like that because it hums with activity, because in it events are condensed, projects take shape, and frustrations and regrets, always punctual, put in an appearance to sign the attendance sheet. In these interminable nights, some of which last only an hour or two, irrelevant events from the day merge simultaneously with distant scenes from one's own life, which may as easily be transcendental as insignificant in one's life, to the point that they had gone unremembered until then, and might not have resurfaced had it not been for that sleepless night in which the brain, perhaps as revenge for its lack of rest, wandered onto unexpected paths. This immediate or distant past alternates with the future, either in the form of optimistic enthusiasms or justified fears, which, for better or worse, will linger the morning after —albeit faded— when one has to make breakfast and brush one's teeth, activities providentially remote from existential reflections.

As if it were not enough that past and present overlap in insomnia, parallel worlds, the existence of which is confirmed by both quantum physics and science fiction, also coexist there. In insomnia we respond with the right words —ingenious and opportune— to the hurtful remark someone made which left us slack-jawed and resentful; in insomnia we make the choice —yes or no—opposite to what we chose before, without being overly aware of it, which ultimately shaped our destiny; in insomnia we have a whole parallel life, in which we remain ourselves even if we are almost unrecognizable, because we live somewhere else; we have a different profession; and we are single or married, as the case may be, as long as it is not what we are in the daytime of this world. How many lives are lived in insomnia, as insomniacs know better than anyone, which is why they do not want to fall asleep to awake and discover that, like every other morning, they are still themselves and their lives are still the same as they were the day before and will be the day after.

There is nothing more different from an insomniac than a night owl. The insomniac, person of habits, retires at the same time —it matters little if it be early or late— only to confirm that he or she cannot sleep. The night owl, in contrast, undisciplined to the point of scandalizing the routine-bound insomniac, spends the night in revelry and drinks at the city's gayest parties if she is sociable, or spends the night reading or watching Netflix if she prefers solitude, and as soon as she lies down she falls asleep. In fact, the night owl needs to fall like a sack of rocks in bed and sleep like a log, because that is how she

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shows that if she stayed up it was not because she was unable to sleep, but to dance or read or whatever she might like to do. Nothing resists the night owl, who can as easily imbibe as sleep, whereas for the insomniac even the simplest activity of all, sleeping, which in principle requires only that one shut one's eyes, is complicated. Assuredly mornings are equally hard on them both, but while one will remember the night before with hurried guilty nostalgia, for the other it will be a storm that presaged that which will return the following night and the night after.

It is disturbing that the insomniac enjoys literary prestige, as if literature were written merely because he/she cannot sleep and not, on the contrary, to create a targeted dream, as Borges defined it. Apropos of Borges, for whom one man is everyman, it would appear that in the nights of the worst insomnia, one would become the protagonist of several of his stories. In insomnia memory is sharpened, cruelly, and one remembers everything. Borges confessed that he conceived the plot of "Funes the Memorious" in a night of insomnia, when memories were rattling around in his brain, lengthening the night, as if it would last forever. And the fact is that sleeplessness triggers memories, which may as easily be of something that happened the previous afternoon as events from childhood, because insomnia, among many other things, is also the realm of memory. And insomnia is also a miniscule and obscure aleph, that magical point that simultaneously reflects every point in the universe: in the dark of insomnia one sees all. It is a pity that sooner or later one falls asleep and loses all the knowledge and sensations acquired with such sacrifice.

To classify insomniacs, we can divide them into the enthusiastic, the greedy, and the resigned. The first, realizing they will be unable to sleep and with absurd airs of self-importance, get out of bed and proceed to read long novels, write letters to people they have not seen in decades, get ahead on the week's work, or, even, like someone I know, try to learn German (and thereby neither sleep nor memorize the declinations). The greedy ones, in contrast, make several trips to the kitchen; first, hypocritically, they go for a clear glass of water, and on the second or third visit they reveal their true intentions and have a second supper or early breakfast. Last, the resigned stay in bed, having renounced their intention to make good use of their time, and spend sleepless nights wondering why they cannot sleep until, always too late, just when they were about to find the answer, they fall fast asleep.

If the insomniac is mysterious, more enigmatic are those who have never suffered from insomnia for even a few nights. Does nothing ever worry them? Is their imagination so limited? Is never having insomnia proof of a shortage or surfeit of willpower? No one denies that they are fortunate, and in the morning always appear refreshed, active, optimistic, but they must have missed something. And it is not that the insomniac has brilliant ideas, solves problems, or finds the impetus necessary to make important decisions; on the contrary, the insomniac is good for nothing, not even to fall asleep. Nonetheless, there is a time for the insomniac where, in spite of himself, of the frustration and exhaustion brought on by lack of rest, he stumbles upon a small, useless but decisive discovery. This moment, when we are not fully awake or asleep, may be when we are truly ourselves just when our thoughts start to resemble dreams and our dreams are still thoughts. Then, inevitably, the insomniac tells himself that that is how it must always be, that the days should be more nocturnal and the nights more luminous. But that is not how things work. And against that certainty, that things don't work that way, nothing is to be done but to spend the night wondering why, and when no answer is forthcoming, the ruminations will continue through the next night, and so on successively.

The night is the hell in which insomniacs burn, and it is a uniquely cruel hell because there is nothing heavenly about the daytime. Nevertheless, insomniacs persist until their disorder ultimately becomes an identity. No one defines him- or herself as someone who sleeps soundly; in contrast, insomniacs claim membership in a sect of loners. Before their nationality or their profession, those who cannot sleep at night define themselves as insomniacs, because only they know the secrets the night holds for those willing to pass the hours looking it straight in the eye. VM

Problemas del DESARROLLO
REVISTA LATINOAMERICANA DE ECONOMÍA

ISSN:0301-7036

Volumen 51, número 203, octubre-diciembre 2020

Publicación trimestral del Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, UNAM
Suscripciones y ventas: revprode@unam.mx
Teléfono: (52-55) 56 23 01 05
https://www.probdes.iiec.unam.mx

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The Night and the Authoritarian Cultural Nightmare

The night symbolizes the freeing up of the deepest, most uncontrollable instincts, which are also the creative drive. Our most direct precedent is romanticism and its excesses. Both in content and in form, urban musical culture arose from the spaces of prohibition and otherness inhabited by nineteenth-century poets and intellectuals: full of passion, intensity, the sublimation of instincts, but also of alcohol and absinthe. The scandals of the *poètes maudits* (accursed poets) have come down to us as an inspiration in the archetype they created for the night and its excesses.

Jazz, boleros, rock, and electronic music have all depended on nocturnal ramblings to create and disseminate almost all their varieties and create specialized audiences. Even the music of academe, although performed in concert halls, has found a privileged place in alternative forums. We could not understand the work of Michael Nyman, Angelo Badalamenti, Philip Glass, or Stockhausen outside the hybrid circuits of film and those non-conventional venues located in cultural surroundings, including universities and cabarets.

In the early twentieth century, cabarets, and cafés became the places where the emerging aesthetic avant-gardes reverberated. The night was and has been the great meeting place for different groups for creating cultural and aesthetic trends and disruptive ideas, as well as the succession of generational emblems: from the Voltaire Cabaret, which gave birth to Dadaism, to Studio 54, the prototype of disco culture, Birdland, and the Village Vanguard, venues where jazz musicians like Miles Davis, Bill Evans, and John Coltrane transformed the music of the

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last century, and the techno musical circuits in Detroit in the 1980s or Berlin, with its Tresor, the club with the most influence and tradition.

In Mexico, as mentioned above, it was literary cafés and cabarets where the new rhythms and dances first appeared. Generations like the Stridentists and the Contemporaries met up at them —even in the most sordid of them, like those Salvador Novo describes in *La estatua de sal* (*Pillar of Salt*).[1] The Café de Nadie (Nobody's Café) became the emblematic home to the Stridentists, the place where they discussed and designed publications like the legendary *Irradiador* (Radiator magazine);[2] while the Café París was a gathering place for the Contemporaries and the Workshop Generation (called that after the magazine of the same name), whose members included essayist and poet Octavio Paz, poet Efraín Huerta, narrator José Revueltas, poet Octavio Novaro, and playwright Rafael Solana, among others.[3]

International phenomena like the mambo, the chachachá, and the bolero gained popularity in cabarets, nightclubs, and even tent shows.[4] All of that great cultural effervescence came crashing down due to a moral crusade by the government and greater state intervention in cultural content. For the Mexico governed by the then-hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party, economic stability, social control, and cultural corporatism were supreme values, at least for the official ideology. All of this came together in the early 1950s to create a moral crusade by the enemy of the night, Ernesto P. Uruchurtu (1906-1997), for 14 years mayor of what was then Mexico City's Federal District, from 1952 to 1966.

The work of great authors developed in that Mexico in which the paternalistic state intervened and controlled nightlife, deciding what was good or bad for several generations. Writers Carlos Fuentes, José Emilio Pacheco, José Joaquín Blanco, and Carlos Monsiváis would live in the country that contrasted with the one whose cultural life had seduced intellectuals who arrived from the world over like Edward Weston, Tina Modotti, Malcolm Lowry, Aldous Huxley, and William S. Burroughs. As late as 1955, Jack Kerouac would have a short-lived initial experience as he sought to free up his literary impulses in communion with Mexico's rich, diverse, original culture.

Octavio Paz characterized that state control of cultural and political life in his essay *El ogro filantrópico* (The Philanthropic Ogre) (1979). In that same vein, Mexico's production became virginal and good, in the face of the evil, decadent influences of foreign cultures, alien to our national idiosyncrasy, the family, and the institutionalized ideals of the Mexican Revolution, a movement *cum* single party and monolithic power.

The loss was incommensurable: until before the moral crusade, of all the musical licenses between the United States and Mexico, 80 percent were Mexican. Not only was war declared against cabarets, nightclubs, and spaces frequented by the young, but also people were arrested for how they looked in raids organized in which anyone who went to a certain place or a meeting the authorities considered suspicious was detained; and any meeting of young people was considered suspicious *a priori*.

By the end of the 1960s, young people began to broaden out their tastes based on radio, television, and magazines. Media culture appeared on the scene and its effects were immediate. Rock became a popular, transgressing medium. A Mexican variant of rock emerged, which demanded its own cafés and meeting places. Luis Buñuel offers us that apocalyptic image in his film *Simon of the Desert* (1965), depicting Silvia Pinal dancing in a café while the group Naftalina plays wild, strident tunes.

It just doesn't let up: the October 2, 1968 repression is followed by that of June 10, 1971, events that consolidate a policy of control, authoritarianism, and cancellation of Mexico's democratic life. Those who were only fighting for a cultural transformation received a disproportionate answer after the Avándaro Rock and Wheels Festival (State of Mexico, September 11 and 12, 1971): all centers, halls, cafés, and other spaces where young people got together, including rock festivals, were closed.

In response to this brutal control emerged what were called "funky holes," so-called by writer Parménides García Saldaña, who would be their chronicler and would explain their ideological underpinnings, characterizing them as a lumpen proletarian re-creation of the privileged venues that played the rock to the taste of the elites in Mexico's large cities. Alex Lora, the leader of the Tri rock

group, bluntly describes this state of things in their song *Abuse of Authority*: "The only one who's going to be able to play is Díaz Ordaz's son." This is in reference to the fact that Alfredo, the son of Mexico's President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), would be the only one they would respect and not arrest for the way he looked, for being in the funky holes or being caught in a raid.

By the 1980s, everything continued under government control, but some spaces survived as symbols of cultural resistance: funky holes, clandestine festivals, and the Chopo University Museum. When writer Ángeles Mastretta became its first director, this National Autonomous University of Mexico off-campus space opened its doors to popular music, blues, and rock, previously exclusively found in the funky holes, as well as to the new 1980s music, like the progressive rock group MCC (Música y Contracultura) and Las Insólitas Imágenes de Aurora (The Unheard-of Images of Aurora), which in turn gave rise to Los Caifanes (The Pimps), today the Jaguares.

A countercultural space *par excellence* was also born at the El Chopo University Museum: the Chopo (Black Poplar) Street Market. Though not part of the nocturnal circuit, its activities continued into the Saturday nights through concerts, *chelerías* (bars where mainly beer was served, or "brewskerias"), diners that turned into improvised nightclubs, and the festivals that could exceptionally get permits or were held in areas that had been swimming holes like the Bahía or the Olímpico in Pantitlán, the eastern part of the city.

In 1989, the image of the mayor/authoritarian father-figure, guardian of Mexico City's morals, Manuel Camacho Solis, was demolished in a public debate with intellectual Carlos Monsiváis. The recently appointed mayor announced Mexico's economic modernization with the same authoritarian paradigm;[5] Monsi, as the writer was affectionately known, questioned the basis for that paradigm: the round-ups or police raids. Camacho Solís defended them, as well as his political-moral actions against both male and female homosexuals, rockers, or just young people, who he would throw in jail for a night or a few days simply for the way they looked. After losing the debate, the mayor finally stopped the raids and proposed legal reforms to protect the constitutional rights that had been violated from the time that Uruchurtu began his moral crusade.

That same year, the government opened up and allowed the official radio, the Mexican Institute of Radio (the IMER group), headed up by Gerardo Estrada, to broadcast the late-twentieth-century alternative musical genres on its station Estéreo Joven (Young Stereo) and the IMEROCK specials. This change opened up the radio to Nacho Desorden, on the program *With the Punkta Hairdo*, from the Lost Acapulco group; Edmundo Navas, the director of Opción Sónica; Benjamin Salcedo from Altered Frequencies and current editor of *Rolling Stone México* magazine; and my program, *XX-XXI Music of Two Centuries*, were productions where we flooded the airwaves with the music, concerts, and performances from U.S., European, Canadian, and Latin American indie movement record companies.

> The early 1950s to 1970s "moral crusade" for state control of cultural and political life declared war on cabarets, nightclubs, and venues frequented by the young.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the nightclub circuit scene diversified: rock, disco, electronic music. Places that offered these and other options opened up; we witnessed the "reveal" of venues offering these and other options, for people that Monsiváis called "those reluctant to accept extreme safety," audiences who wanted to soak themselves in sensations, adventures, and free themselves from the moral order. Those spaces, including those of sexual otherness, where you could find the wealth and sins of the city, were the 9, La Tirana (The Female Tyrant), Metal, El Catorce (Fourteen), La Diabla (The She-devil), La Chaqueta (Handjob), Rockotitlán, LUCC, Rock Stock, and Medusas, among many others.

Radio also diversified with stations like Rock 101, piloted by Luis Gerardo Salas, and the preppy and aspirational WFM, captained by film-maker Alejandro González Iñárritu when he was a radio announcer and producer.

In 2000, the Mexico City government, headed by the federal opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (1997-1999) opened up public plazas like the central Zócalo square and the Monument to the Revolution to mass rock concerts, electronic music, and hybrid genres.[6] The unthinkable happened: hundreds of thousands of young people attended these big productions and musical proposals celebrated that new freedom with groups like Café Tacvba, Manu Chao, Mr. Coconut, and festivals like Radical Mestizo, Tecnogeist, and Berlin's Loveparade. Mexico City

became one of the world's big cultural circuits, alongside cities like Berlin, New York, Montreal, London, etc. But, given the lack of exercise and respect for constitutional rights, free spaces are intermittent in Mexico.

In 2002, Mexico City Mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2000-2005) canceled mass festivals in the Zócalo and took measures against the Tecnogeist Festival. Police Chief Marcelo Ebrard was the operator of the government actions, even threatening to use the police to prevent the parade and concert in the Zócalo.[7] [8] For certain sectors of society, the mayor was reviving Uruchurtu's spirit and becoming the authoritarian father-figure of Mexico City youth. But he was defeated when Tecnogeist turned into a political demonstration in defense of culture. In response to the cancelation of certain cultural activities, two rights were included in amendments to the Constitution: the access to culture and respect for creative freedom.

Paradoxically, in the last two decades, an enormous number of mass concerts of all the twentieth-century currents have been held. This is despite the fact that the state gradually adopted a more conservative cultural outlook and policy and conceded spaces to the monopoly of entertainment promotors like CIE-OCESA. Now, the pandemic means that the night of culture will not be liberating, but a night of negligence, abandon, de-capitalization, precariousness, and unemployment for thousands of artists and workers in the field.

The spirit of Uruchurtu survives in the cultural policy of the populist, relief-based governments that won the 2018 elections and now administer some states and the federal government. To austerity and induced poverty are added the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. While countries like Germany, the United States, Canada, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom, China, and Japan talk of investing billions, in Mexico, we are being given up for dead. As Monsi used to say a few years ago, urban violence and crime add up to laying siege to the night. Perhaps the only alternative is to take back the streets, fill them with culture, and finally bury any and all attempts at an authoritarian state. VM

Notes

1 Writer Carlos Monsiváis considered this book, written in 1945, the underground autobiography of Salvador Novo (1904-1974), Mexico City's official chronicler. Translated into English by Marguerite Feitlowitz; introduction by Carlos Monsiváis, and published by the UTP. [Editor's Note.]

2 This legendary space, located on what is today Álvaro Obregón Avenue, was baptized that by Stridentist poet Manuel Maples Arce because "there was nobody . . . in the establishment. He went into another room, where there was just a bubbling coffee pot. He served himself, went back to his table, and drank the coffee. Since nobody came to charge him, he paid nobody, and left a tip for a waitress he never saw. That's how it was, and that's how he came back other nights to the café where he never saw anybody." "El Café de Nadie," in Wikiméxico, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, http://www.wikimexico.com/articulo/el-cafe-de-nadie. [Editor's Note.]

3 Known as the "cathedral of coffee," the Café París has been a meeting place for artists and intellectuals, as well as the birthplace of many cultural anecdotes. *Enciclopedia de la Literatura en México* (ELEM), http://www.elem.mx/estgrp/datos/1322. [Editor's Note.]

4 A kind of traveling theater popular in Mexico in the early twentieth century, which disappeared in the late 1960s. [Editor's Note.]

5 At that time, Mexico City did not elect its mayor; Camacho Solís was a federal appointee. [Translator's Note.]

6 Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was the first elected Mexico City mayor in late twentieth century. [Translator's Note.]

7 The government permit to hold the festival was conditioned on guaranteeing respect for security norms for attendees, residents, and the physical space; the authorities and the organizers were not able to come to an agreement on this. Fabrizio León and Jorge Caballero, "Definen hoy la realización del Tecnogeist," *La Jornada*, April 2, 2002, https://www.jornada.com.mx/2002/04/02/08an1esp.php?printver =1. [Editor's Note.]

8 López Obrador is currently Mexico's president and Ebrard is its foreign minister. [Translator's Note.]

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Gabriela Pulido Llano*

The Atlas of Sin in Latin America
Nightlife and Its Urban Geography

In the early 1920s Mexico City, at the beginning of the revolutionary "pacification," nighttime entertainment venues appeared spontaneously and moved around from one neighborhood to another. The best examples of this are tent theaters with their plays and music, although the same happened with cabarets. A decade and a half later, President Lázaro Cárdenas's policies in the capital (1934-1940) legitimized these venues, which began to operate with a very specific management structure, supervised by authorities in charge of shows and entertainment. Ricardo Pérez Montfort notes that by 1937 and 1938, when radio had become a daily means of communication, station owners preferred to broadcast from certain cabarets.[1] Even so, entertainment continued to be dominated by venues like the Politeama, Arbeu, Lírico, and Follies Bergère Theaters, and the Grillon and Waikiki cabarets.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Mexico City nightlife, associated with theaters, ballrooms, and nightclubs, had inherited the "suggestive" (indecent, obscene, licentious, sinful) show that had been in vogue two decades before. The productions in these venues, "entertainment for men only," and their fellows in tent theaters, whose spectacles were considered "racy," plus shows in first-and third-class nightclubs, would set the parameters for interpreting, measuring, and setting social values in Mexico City. Points of view about these social values were elaborated upon in the press and on film, to cite only two examples of communications media.

Cultural magazines and newspapers offered space to different authors for whom nightlife became a pretext

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and excuse for a diatribe about what was moral and what was immoral. In fact, journalists played a decisive role in the construction of the image of the immorality of nighttime shows, morality, and its imaginary. The press constructed an ideal of social values, many related to the perception of the female body. These print media also published journalistic opinions by intellectuals and the political class that closely followed a censoring Catholic morality. While the city's physiognomy corresponded to that expected from a large modern capital, the mechanisms for social control, identified with censorship and greatly influenced by the Catholic Church, categorically increased.

The reconstruction of post-revolutionary productions, vaudeville, and other shows, among many other elements, demonstrate how conceptions of the female body were forged that spurred the "guardians of public morals" not only to express their complaints and doom and gloom, but to carry out campaigns of "moral prophylaxis." These campaigns can be followed in the media, revealing a society in a constant state of confusion about what values like honorability, decency, integrity, virtue, and dignity should be, as well as about women's and men's behavior. Local media in those years abound with these kinds of issues.

I said that the existence of venues for nighttime entertainment delineated a specific urban geography. By 1940, both downtown Mexico City and the adjacent Guerrero Neighborhood reigned supreme as the territories of nightlife. In the following decade, with capital investment in these areas, mainly by media-owning businessmen, other centers for middle- and upper-middle-class patrons began to shine. Some examples were La Fuente, at 890 Insurgentes Avenue, opened in 1950, and El Patio, at 109 Atenas Street, opened five years before, ushering in a vigorous campaign of moral hygiene headed by the Mexico City government.

In the 1940s, nightlife was centered in the same area that two decades before had been demarcated by ballrooms and nightclubs: the downtown area and its bordering neighborhoods, the Doctores, Obrera, Nonoalco, Buenavista, Morelos, and Guerrero. The Guerrero Neighborhood, for example, was bordered on the south by Hidalgo Avenue, on the north by Nonoalco (today Ricardo Flores Magón), to the east by what is today the Lázaro Cárdenas Central Boulevard and Reforma Avenue, and to the west, by the West Guerrero Boulevard 1.

The thread running through journalists' chronicles of these activities and their participants was the association between the night and sin. This created continuity and fostered the image of the city as the capital of vice.

In mid-1950, the government used street widening as a pretext to decree the disappearance of most of the cabarets and ballrooms used by poorer patrons. This process took time and involved three mayors: Javier Rojo Gómez (1940-1946), Fernando Casas Alemán (1946-1952), and Ernesto Peralta Uruchurtu,[2] in office from 1952 to 1966. The Tívoli was the last of these venues, closed in 1963 after its final performance on November 10. The impact and effectiveness of this clean-up policy was such that, by the end of the 1950s, most of the old cabarets and ballrooms had disappeared and existed only as memories.

To recap: in the 1940s and 1950s, the social atmosphere in Mexico City was one that had been generated by World War II and the post-war period, with the economic and cultural benefits momentarily experienced by some Latin American nations. According to Emma Yanes, what was then the capital's Federal District was the center of the country's economic and political life, the reflection of a new industrialization-based national project.[3] A list of issues corroborate this: an increased birth rate; the growth of tourism; making money off the value of land; the concentration of government and company offices in the capital; feverish construction; the appearance of the first large hotels; the rivers being enclosed in pipes; the installation of deep drainage; the emergence of mass media (radio and television); and the building of new neighborhoods (the Petrolera, Azcapotzalco, Nueva Industrial, Periodista, Prohogar), schools, and stadiums; and the inauguration of University City in 1954, as well as housing projects for public employees. All this sharpened the increasing contrast between different sectors of society. Along with urbanization, poverty was sent to the periphery of the city, arranged to project the image of a great progressive metropolis.

During the first half of the twentieth century, a perimeter was established within which nightlife activities were carried out. That area, which stretches from the Roma Neighborhood to Nonoalco and from the Guerrero Neighborhood to the Circunvalación Outer Ring, was portrayed

in many ways by writers, journalists, photo-journalists, film directors and cameramen, and chroniclers. Daily life in that area linked to ballrooms, nightclubs, cabarets, and hotels designed for daytime and nighttime trysts was recorded by a kind of photo-journalism soaked in sensationalism and by the film genres that represented the urban night. I have called this area the geographical and sociocultural "Map of Sin." The thread running through journalists' chronicles of these activities and their participants was the association between the night and sin. This created continuity and fostered the image in the mass media of the city as the capital of vice.

In later decades, from 1960 to 1980, journalistic genres with a racier tinge created x-rays of the nighttime city. They told of processes that changed the geography, extending nighttime activities and offerings, but also of the social stigmas and prejudices aimed at those who participated in these venues.

Similar processes were underway in other Latin American cities, particularly Buenos Aires and Havana. They coincided time-wise with the Mexican capital and with regard to the identifiable urban perimeter as well as in the development, expansion, and representation in the media of subjects and scenarios of nightlife. Buenos Aires back streets and Havana's nightlife appropriated the proposals of other latitudes, assimilating them into their own contexts and specific perspectives. These spaces were the site for constructing the nighttime based on domestic and foreign models. Other cities, like Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, underwent *sui generis* development following well-known cultural modes, distributed by industries like the cinema or illustrated magazines, combined with Afro-descendent modes in areas like old neighborhoods.

A group of colleagues living in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Havana, and Cartagena de Indias and I undertook to develop an initial list of nighttime activities in these four cities, from where cultural proposals were projected to the rest of the continent. The construction of an "Atlas of Sin in Latin America" is a project that proposes, in the first place, to identify the spaces linked with those activities, such as cabarets, ballrooms, and nightclubs, applying the model of the "Red Map of Sin" in Mexico City.[4]

First of all, the aim is to identify nightlife venues on old maps of each of the cities, pointing to them by postal or zip code. To that identification, we add "social x-rays" both of the venues and scenarios where the activities occurred and of the subjects involved. In all cases, for the years between 1920 to 1960, journalistic sources, illustrated magazines, weeklies, and some film footage exist that have left traces of Latin American clean-up policies and their scope in each of the social locales. With this, we aim to center on urban behavior and a log of nightlife in these societies, the changes they underwent for four decades, at least in the aforementioned cases, as well as the similarities and differences with regard to the record of processes and specific contexts involving nighttime leisure, the subjects who participated in and benefitted from these activities, the characteristics of the scenarios, the urban moralizing campaigns, and the media as purveyors and promoters of social values.

From prejudice to prejudice, the media has left traces of the conflicts, predicaments, setbacks, quandaries, and labyrinths sparked by the clash between Morals —with a capital "M"— and the proposals for nighttime entertainment in Latin America. Just as an aesthetic was formulated for decency and morality, so, too, was another formulated for their opposites, circumscribing indecency and immorality to the territory of nightlife and its entertainment. These complex processes, inserted in urban social forms of behavior, are what, at the end of the day, we are interested in diagnosing. VM

Further Reading

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Notes

1 Ricardo Pérez Montfort, "La ciudad de México durante el sexenio de Lázaro Cárdenas," in *Juntos pero no revueltos. La ciudad de México durante el sexenio del General Cárdenas y otros ensayos* (Mexico City: Ediciones ¡Uníos!, 2000), p. 45.

2 Better known as Ernesto P. Uruchurtu, the "Iron Mayor." [Editor's Note.]

3 Emma Yanes, "Los cuarenta: seductora ciudad," *Historias* no. 27 (October 1991-March 1992), pp. 171-177.

4 Gabriela Pulido Llano, *El mapa "rojo" del pecado. Miedo y vida nocturna en la Ciudad de México, 1940-1950* (Mexico City: INAH, 2017).

Norma Lee. Photographer unknown.

Alejandra del Moral. Photographer unknown.

Horacio Muñoz Alarcón*

Showgirls or Strippers?

The origins of the cabaret in late nineteenth-century France is linked to the birth of showgirls; they were one of many kinds of artists who performed in entertainment halls, spurring from then on the rise in nightlife the world over.

Strictly speaking, a showgirl —or *vedette*, as they are known in French— is an actress, dancer, and singer. Some became famous in different eras not only because of their physical attractions and charisma, but also because of their lavish shows. The spectacles included dazzling costumes and novel choreographies, in which these artists were usually accompanied by a dance troupe and a band.

In Mexico, specifically in the capital, at the beginning of the last century, the pioneers in this art form (Esperanza Iris, María Conesa, and Celia Montalván) performed in venues like the Colón and Arbeu Theaters.

During World War II, theaters like the Tívoli, the Lírico, the Politeama, and the Margo began to offer revues or variety shows. The Margo would become the famous Blanquita Theater a few years later. Among other artists, exotic dancers like Yolanda "Tongolele" Montes, Su Muy Key, and Eda Lorna headlined at these theaters. A very different category of cabarets or nightclubs like El Azteca, El Burro, El Gusano, El Carrusel, El Olímpico, Waikiki, El Tío Sam, and the Club de los Artistas, where many showgirls performed, also made an appearance. Nevertheless, showgirls like Ana Luisa Peluffo, who did one of the first nude scenes on screen, and later Sonia Furió or Ana Bertha Lepe, created their own shows.

The year 1968 left a tragic mark on our history with the explosion of the student rebellions that ended in fe-

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All photographs are courtesy of the Horacio Muñoz Alarcón Collection.

rocious government repression, whose bloodiest expression was the Tlatelolco massacre just before Mexico's Olympic Games. After these turbulent events, the country's nightlife took off again, a kind of unleashing of energy that brought with it a considerable number of cabarets and revue theaters. The golden age of showgirls was beginning.

These performing artists produced very elaborate, flamboyant shows in the most luxurious, exclusive cabarets like the Capri, the Terazza Casino, and the Villa Florencia. By contrast, in the lower-class cabarets, shows that included on-stage nudes and live sex acts were the rule.

Something similar happened in the sphere of theater. Here, audacious, innovative works like the very erotic ad-

Some showgirls became famous in different eras not only because of their physical attractions and charisma, but also because of their lavish shows.

Eda Lorna. Photographer unknown.

Sonia Furió. Photographer unknown.

Irma Serrano. Photographer unknown.

Audacious, innovative works like the very erotic adaptation of the novel *Nana*, starring Irma Serrano, rubbed elbows with light, racy comedies that boasted a great deal of dialogue with sexual innuendo.

aptation of the novel *Nana*, starring Irma Serrano, rubbed elbows with light, racy comedies that boasted a great deal of dialogue with sexual innuendo, such as *¿Cuánto por el anillo?* (How Much for the Ring?). Former showgirl Alejandra del Moral confirms this: for her the fundamental difference between them and a stripper is that the former studied music to play an instrument as part of their shows; they took dance lessons to create their own choreographies; and they designed their own costumes.[1] A burlesque queen, stripper, or "bumper-and-grinder," on the other hand, who might well be the predecessor of a 1990s table dancer, took off her clothes, and might even feature live sex on stage as part of her act, such as the case of Norma Lee.

Beyond these contrasts, many of them spent their artistic careers performing in revue theaters and cabarets, or modeling for dozens of photographers who launched them as actresses in photo-comics. They also graced the pages of newspapers and magazines dedicated to the entertainment industry, such as *Cine Mundial* (World Cinema), Órbita, ¡Ay! (Whoa!), *Chulas y divertidas* (Gorgeous and Fun), *Cinelandia*, *Bellezas* (Beauties), *Estrellas* (Stars), *Venus*, and *Jaja* (Haha). Only the most popular among male audiences (Olga Breeskin, Lyn May, Princesa Lea, Wanda Seux, Rossy Mendoza, Princesa Yamal, Amira Cruzat, Grace Renat) became very famous by appearing semi-nude in publications like *Su otro yo* (Her Other Self), a Mexican equivalent of *Playboy*. Others appeared on live nighttime television programs like *Midnight Variety*, becoming media figures.

Those preferred by filmmakers, like Sasha Montenegro, Rebeca Silva, or Angélica Chaín, became stars thanks to the so-called *fichera* films, about women taxi-dancers. These did colossal business up until the early 1980s, with very low-budget, low-quality films, but right up the alley of the taste of a broad sector of the public.[2]

The nighttime scene in Mexico's capital gradually deteriorated in the late 1980s because of the severe economic crises, the September 1985 earthquake, and the

Wanda Seux. Photographer unknown.

Angélica Chaín. Photographer: Jesús Magaña.

emergence of nightclubs with table dancers. The latter had started up in the 1960s and boasted erotic dances, usually by women, performed on tables, runways, or bars in bars or "gentlemen's clubs." Their services can include sexual exchanges and prostitution.

This sparked the decline of the cabarets, and, with them, the extinction of the showgirls. In recent years, artists like Maribel Guardia, Lorena Herrera, or Ninel Conde have tried to perform these acts in very different venues from nightclubs, but without achieving the success of the great figures of the past.

In 2016, María José Cuevas's documentary *Beauties of the Night* offered resounding recognition to the iconic showgirls of the 1970s, recreating the history of Olga Breeskin, Lyn May, Rossy Mendoza, and Wanda Seux, who the director interviewed for the film. Previously, visual artist and cultural promotor Grace Quintanilla had given voice to several showgirls in *Adventuress*, a TV documentary about women in cabaret.[3] Works like these spark nostalgia as they vindicate their subjects, whose glamour and artistic talent indelibly marked Mexico City's nightlife. VM

The Mexican capital's nighttime scene gradually deteriorated in the late 1980s because of the severe economic crises, the September 1985 earthquake, and the emergence of nightclubs with table dancers.

Grace Renat. Photographer: Jesús Magaña.

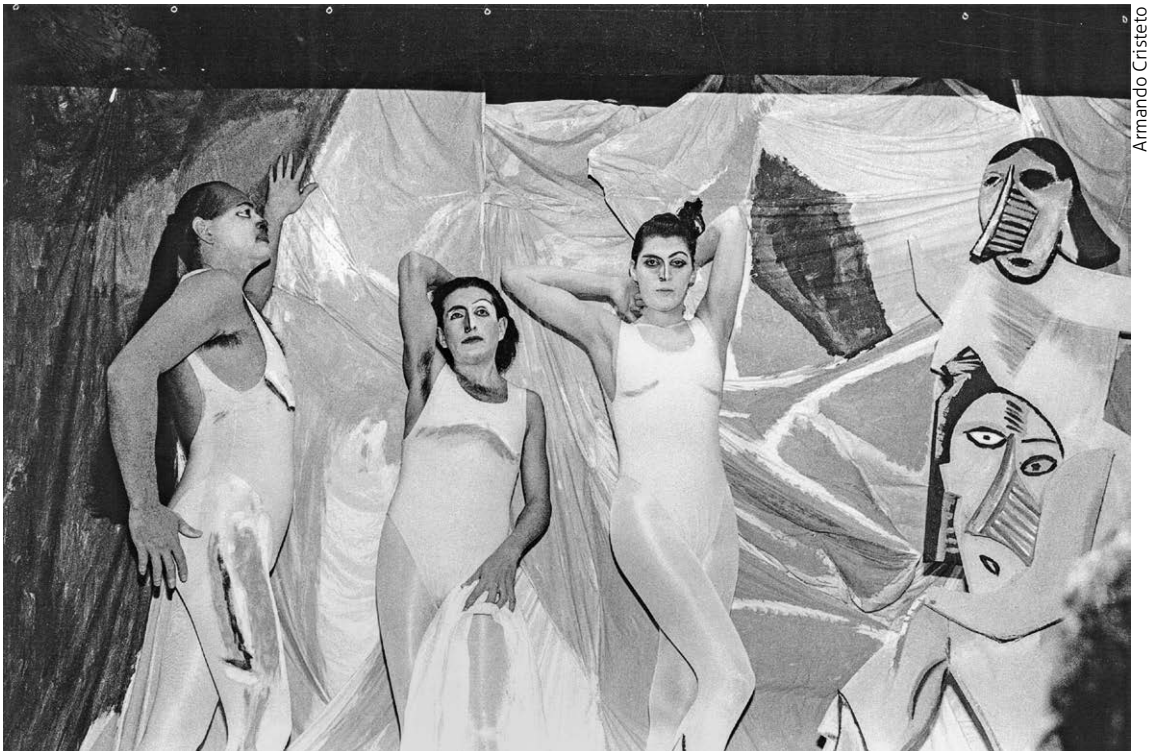
Rebeca Silva. Photographer: Jesús Magaña.

Notes

1 Iván Restrepo et al., *Vivir la noche. Historias de la Ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Conaculta/Tintable, 2014), pp. 74-93.

2 The *fichera*, or taxi-dancer, films are specific to Mexico. They took their cue from Italian erotic comedy and rumba films, also specific to Mexico. The first film of this kind, directed by Manuel M. Delgado in 1975, was called *Beauties of the Night (Las ficheras)*.The term in Spanish refers to the *fichas*, or tickets, that the women dancers collected as a fee for dancing with a partner in dance halls.

3 This three-part documentary series is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BDzVA6SkFA&list=PL4q6mqIj4iypuTAtkHSjz5EcPROG3NpNh.



Armando Cristeto

The Kitsch Company, *The Young Ladies of Avignon or the Whores of Avignon*, El Nueve Bar (background by Armando Cristeto), 1989, Arkheia Documentation Center, UNAM Museum of Contemporary Art Collection.

Zazil Collins*

All Roads Lead to El Nueve

The night is silence and noise; waking and dreams, chaos and ghetto, the place to build new imaginaries, collectivize ideas, build civic conscience. The night is public square, network, pact, confidence. Anonymity and truce, fear and curfew, for totalitarianism. To inhabit the night is to gain the civic, public space: to exercise freedom in the midst of despotism. When fear breaks down, one gains the street. When there is no night, our notebooks are left blank. Today, the night is nostalgia.

Since the forced shuttering of night spots due to the Covid pandemic —known locally as the *antropausa*, or hotspots-on-hold— Mexico City residents miss a series of cultural venues/bars like El Bósforo, 316 Centro, El Foro Alicia, Bucareli 69, La Cañita, La Bota (Casa Vecina), Barba Azul, and La Botica, among many others. Like the night, these locales have transformed certain notions of the communal, based on encounters in nocturnal, musical, literary, and visual happenings among artists and audiences. Among memorable precursors of those places, we also recall others: El Virreyes, La Quiñonera, El Mestizo, Fixion, El Galaxy, Foro Ideal, Bar Milán, El Hábito, El Hijo del Cuervo, and much earlier, iconic epicenters like Rockotitlán-Rockstock and El Nueve.

La Disco Bar 9, as some people refer to El Nueve, was practically the first club to host some of the underground bands that would be foundational in the history of rock in Mexico: Casino Shanghai (probably one of the first groups to incorporate poetry), Size (one of the first punk groups), Maldita Vecindad, Santa Sabina, and Las Insólitas Imágenes de Aurora, to name the most emblematic, which used to perform every Thursday. At the club, which opened Tuesday

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A combination of glamour, eccentricity, and the mystery of an only vaguely remembered past was the perfect ingredient for the mythification of characters and spaces.

Photographer unknown

Jaime La Vite as Divine at El Nueve Disco Bar (background Henri Donnadieu), ca. 1983, Arkheia Documentation Center, UNAM Museum of Contemporary Art.

to Saturday from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m., protest songs and their codes coexisted with the "enlightened" upper and middle classes, and even institutional outsiders, looking for an atmosphere of creative freedom amidst their struggle to build a civil society out of diverse artistic expressions.

It was not always like that. In its beginnings, El Nueve was limited to the "closeted" political élite, including people in show business, and the upper and middle classes, forming a kind of ghetto with membership-based restricted access, giving the club an air of entrenched social and political conservativism, with which Henri Donnadieu —one of the founders— never fully agreed. In response, as conditions changed, a more Trotskyist —or at least anti-Stalinist— mentality gradually infiltrated El Nueve, incorporating culture in the club as part of a revolution intertwined with the battle against AIDS and in favor of the rights of Mexico's gay community. In the words of filmmaker Angeles Martínez, who is producing a documentary on El Nueve, to be published in mid-2021, "Its freedom and uninhibited spirit endure, and that is its legacy."[1]

Similarly, in the wake of the devastation left by the 1985 earthquake, and the ensuing economic vicissitudes and power struggles, little by little the place started to expand its interests and attract a different clientele, offering more affordable prices and loosening controls on access. A combination of glamour, eccentricity, and the mystery of an only vaguely remembered past was the perfect ingredient for the mythification of characters and spaces. This, added to the prevailing social and political climate, made El Nueve a reference point for the nightlife of modern Mexico City, a sanctuary from persecution and repression, even among people in the political elite and entertainment, directly linked to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and former elite members of police forces friendly with city mayor Hank González.

However, those times were distinguished by *forgetting the being*, both historical oblivion (that of PRI dictatorship censorship and of the media, which to this day continue to conceal their official records), and forgetfulness triggered by traumas: the trauma of 1968, of course, which marked the collective memory of several generations, followed by the traumas of 1971, the HIV pandemic, the 1985 earthquake, and the 1988 electoral fraud.

El Nueve operated from 1974 to 1989, 15 years in which, in the words of the journalist Guillermo Osorno —whom I had the good fortune to assist researching his book *Tengo que Morir Todas las Noches* (I Have to Die Every Night) (Debate, 2014)—: "The adventures of Henri Donnadieu and the bar El Nueve are like the flip side of the official story." In those years, Mexico City forged its cosmopolitan spirit, whose human origin lay in *collective* action. Starting in the mid-1970s, in contrast with the institutional persecution that drove political groups to avoid meetings, elite social circles started to pursue *la fiesta*, an intrepid act, to be sure, but one they could afford, with capital and contacts.

Excesses and fancies came and went until a group known as The Untouchables founded El Nueve on the premises of a former restaurant named Le Neuf. Accounts of the event recall that the controversial actress Irma "The TIgress" Serrano and another mythical character, the queen of transvestites, "La Xóchitl," immortalized by a cameo in the film *María of My Heart* (1979), written by Gabriel García Márquez and directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, presided over the grand opening. Subsequently, the bar's daily routine was broken down into cocktails, theme nights, homages, and even an Oscar awards ceremony. Singer and dancer Lola Flores put in an appearance there, as did María Félix, Pita Amor, Isela Vega (the first Latina Playmate), Carlos Monsiváis, La Chiquitibum, Carmen Salinas… and as the word spread, the club was overrun by countless members of Mexico's political, cultural, and showbusiness communities. Each deserves his or her own biography, including the music groups that made their home at El Nueve, and visual artists like Mathias Goeritz or Juan José Gurrola, who, invited by Diego Matthai, painted temporary murals on its walls month after month.

El Nueve innovated in many areas, went through several stages of renewal, and at the same time found ways to adapt to the city's evolution, which was no small task. As a result, it consolidated *la fiesta* in the culture: the cherry on top, including its own theatrical company, the Kitsch Company, and a film club. The anecdotal history makes it appear that all roads lead to El Nueve, largely due to the management of Henri Donnadieu. He can still be seen from time to time on the streets of the Roma Neighborhood and naturally in the Pink Zone, and even occasionally in series like *The House of Flowers* (Netflix, 2020), hosting *El 6*, a nod, of course, to El Nueve. Also, the Chopo Museum keeps on its premises a personal collection of Henri Don-

Excesses and fancies came and went until a group known as The Untouchables founded El Nueve.

Membership card, courtesy of the author.

Juan Carlos Juarena

The Union of Terror, performance at El Nueve, 1989.

A city's democratic thermometer is based on how it lives its nights: legality, safety, mobility, and cultural offerings and strategies; we need to ensure that those experiences remain public.

nadieu, which includes his management of El Nueve and his career as a producer in Mexican theater.

In addition to creating El Nueve in the Pink Zone and its branch in Acapulco, visited by public figures like Grace Jones, for example, Henri was also involved in creating El Metal. This legendary 1980s discotheque opened for only a couple of days and was an attempt to compete with top New York nightclubs; one remaining part of its origins, a piece by artist Diego Matthai, is displayed at the National Autonomous University of Mexico University Cultural Center. Time passed and Donnadieu took over management of the bar Amour, on the ground floor of Casa Roma, a public house project that at night operated as a night club in principle for locals, which, like El Nueve, was founded on the former premises of a French restaurant at 76 Orizaba Street, near the corner of Colima Street.

Casa Roma operated for a short time, between 2009 and mid-2011, as a confluence of desires, good intentions, and experiments by a group of young partners, starting with the search for a locale for what became a nomadic record store called Discos Camaleón. Coincidence brought together the owner of the house, Cesar Regino; Raúl Santoscoy of Discos Camaleón; and a duo of French artists, Ruy and Inigo Villamil (director of the Bahidorá Festival). Even Quentin Tarantino was present for one of its eccentric nights. The project evaporated just when the Roma Neighborhood began a period of gentrification that pushed out many of its original inhabitants.

Finally, Henri's dream of getting back to doing what he enjoys and does best materialized on June 21, 2018, when El 9 reopened in the Pink Zone, with new premises at 58 Amberes Street, with Arianne Pellicer and Carlos Robledo of Casino Shanghai cutting the red ribbon.

That day I went convinced that Donnadieu would still have the same magic touch as he had in the past, when El 9 was at 156 Londres Street, three decades before, but the Pink Zone has changed. It changed in the 1980s after the earthquake, and between then and now, when proprietors pay protection money to criminal gangs. The audiences have also changed: most attendees know nothing of the history of the original El Nueve. And the new El 9 has not managed to take off and attract the cultural circles that gather in different parts of the city, unlike the 1970s and 1980s. Given the multiplicity of gathering places, groups, and currents, today it is hard to mention a single bar or venue that has anything like the impact El Nueve achieved. Also lost in the mists of the past is the repression that prevented assembly and democratic partying. Today we live under the dictatorship of disappointment. In the words of Angeles Martínez, Mexico City "needs poems that help us continue to experience it and to love it," an affirmation that informs the spirit of her forthcoming documentary, which "will be narrated by one living man and another who is dead, with a narrative and esthetic conceit based on a deck of cards (custom designed), with portraits of the leading characters that will allow me to nimbly tell my story visually with the aid of archival material (recordings, photographs, press clippings) and animations that will make it possible to explain issues for which no visual record exists."[2]

In the aftermath of the *antropausa* that began in 2020, the night will be redefined. Rates of violent crime in Mexico have risen exponentially and the army has authority to patrol the streets, if so ordered, under a legal framework unprecedented in Mexico, which in many areas will undoubtedly alter the nightlife of a citizenry seeking to defend its freedoms.

A city's democratic thermometer is based on how it lives its nights: legality, safety, mobility, and cultural offerings and strategies; we need to ensure that those experiences remain public. We have embarked on a new era, with an opportunity to redesign and inhabit nocturnal spaces, from parliaments representing all the city's communities, business owners, and residents. It would be historic to see new legislation on spaces abandoned since 1985 and that could be donated to the cultural community to be refurbished and administered as open spaces. This is what one would expect of a cultural capital like Mexico City. VM

Notes

1 Email to the author, July 29, 2020.
2 Ibid.

Universidades

Año LXXI · Nueva época · núm. 85 · julio-septiembre, 2020.

http://udualerreu.org

Day and Night, Indistinguishable

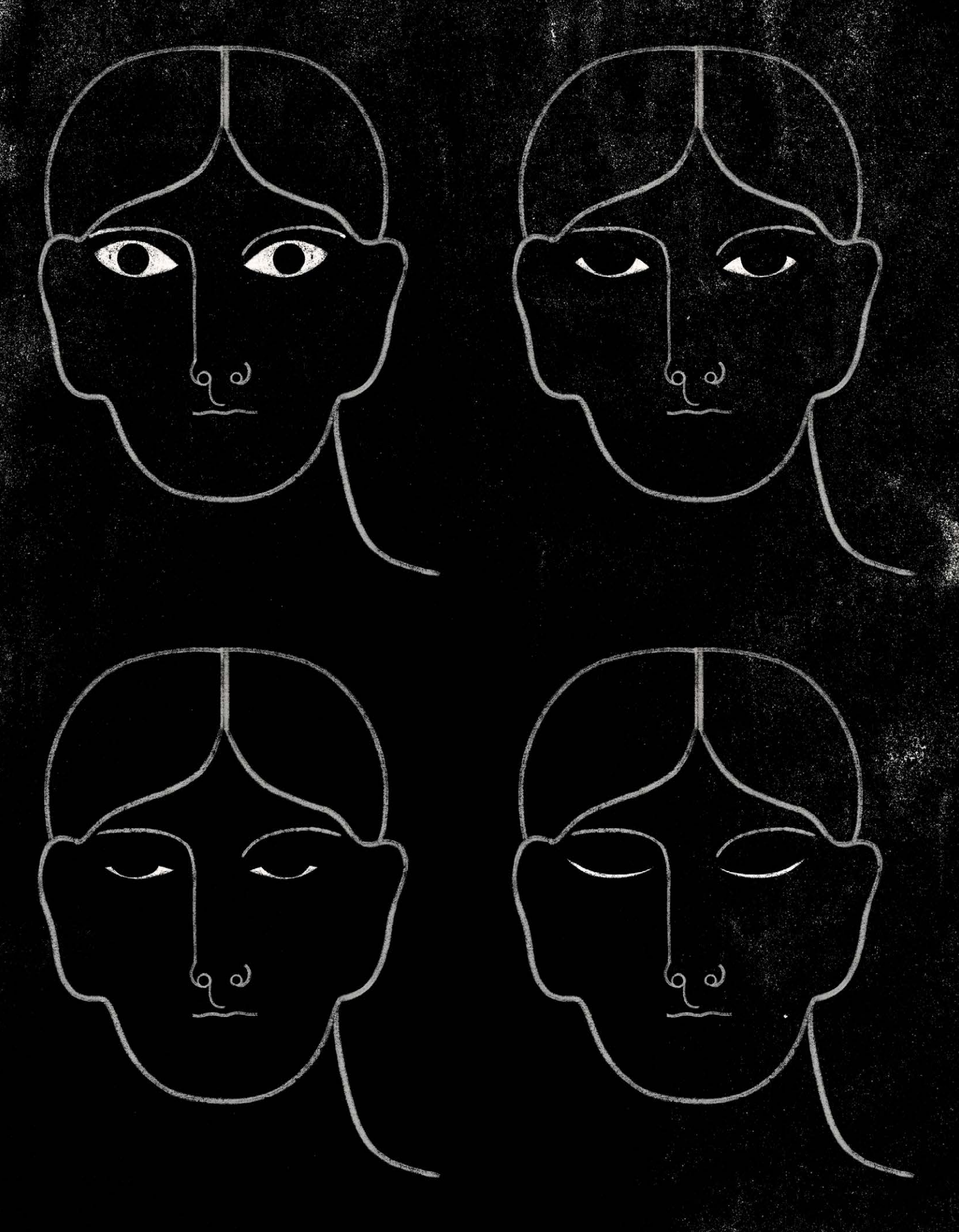
Amanda Mijangos*

The day sounds like white and the night, like black. White is what is visible; black, what is hidden. White is good; black, bad. White is safe; black, dangerous.

Those who live in the white are honorable; those living in black are not to be trusted.

Based on a flat binary, without intervals, Amanda Mijangos's art puts in black and white the continuity between day and night, creating possible spaces between these two moments that transcend prejudices and stereotypes.

* Visual artist; @amandamijangos.



Night Notes

*Pablo Rulfo**

Night falls Stone In the deep

The solar woman walks away Whispering her steps

Lets her body float

Wind Foliage Waves

In the sea of night

Colors fade away Flee Disappear

The dark window

* Mexican painter; pablorulfo@gmail.com.


The silver mirror
Draws our face
Wanting to touch it
I extend my hand
My fingers float
Escaping fish


Of the night
The stars
Seeds of promises
The night lives
Deconstructs
Reconstructs
Memories

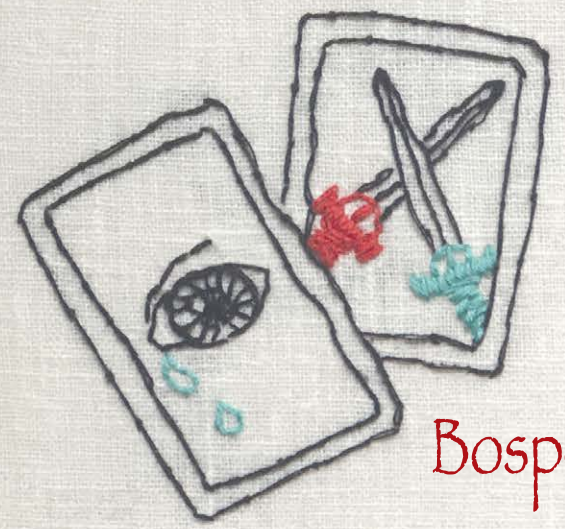
SEAMOON (DETAIL), 2020
(OIL AND TEMPERA ON CANVAS).

Poems

by Odette Alonso*

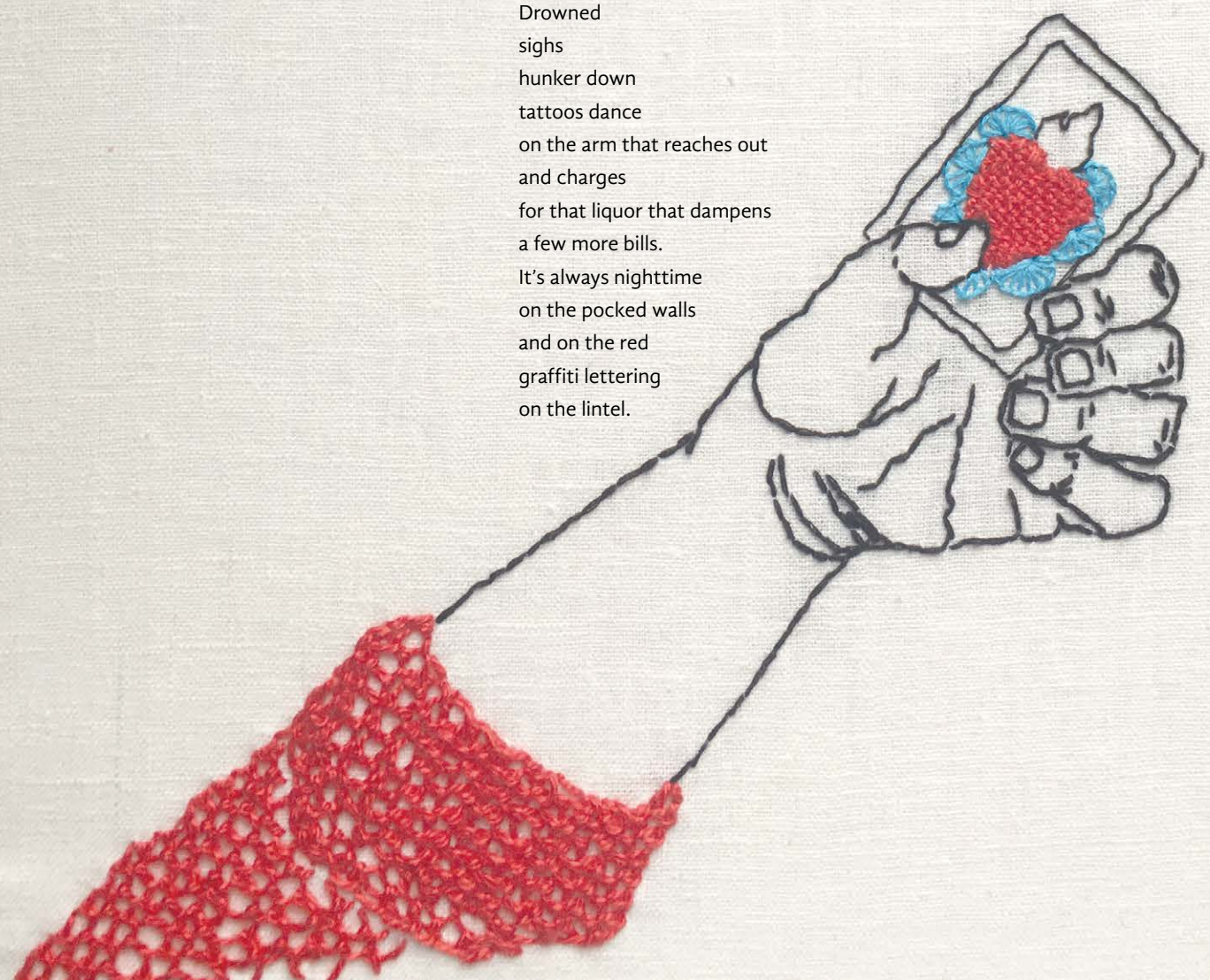
Illustrated by Erika Albarrán* and Cristóbal Henestrosa**

* Poet; odette@libros.unam.mx.
** Visual artist; liebredemarzomx.
*** www.estudio-ch.com.



Bosporus

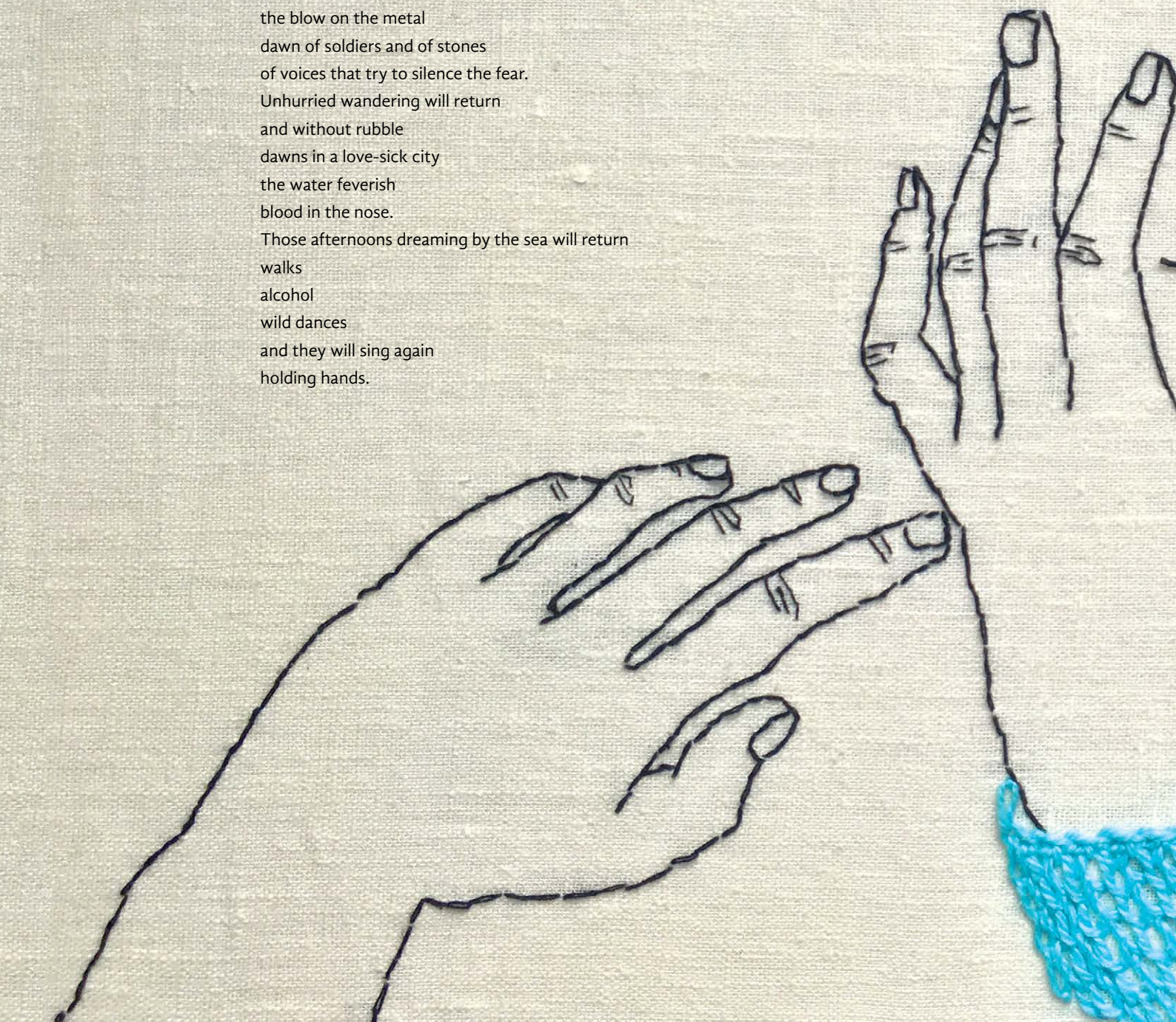
Behind the curtain of the Bosporus
an old woman sells stamps
powerless
heroes or saints
and comic books.
Drowned
sighs
hunker down
tattoos dance
on the arm that reaches out
and charges
for that liquor that dampens
a few more bills.
It's always nighttime
on the pocked walls
and on the red
graffiti lettering
on the lintel.

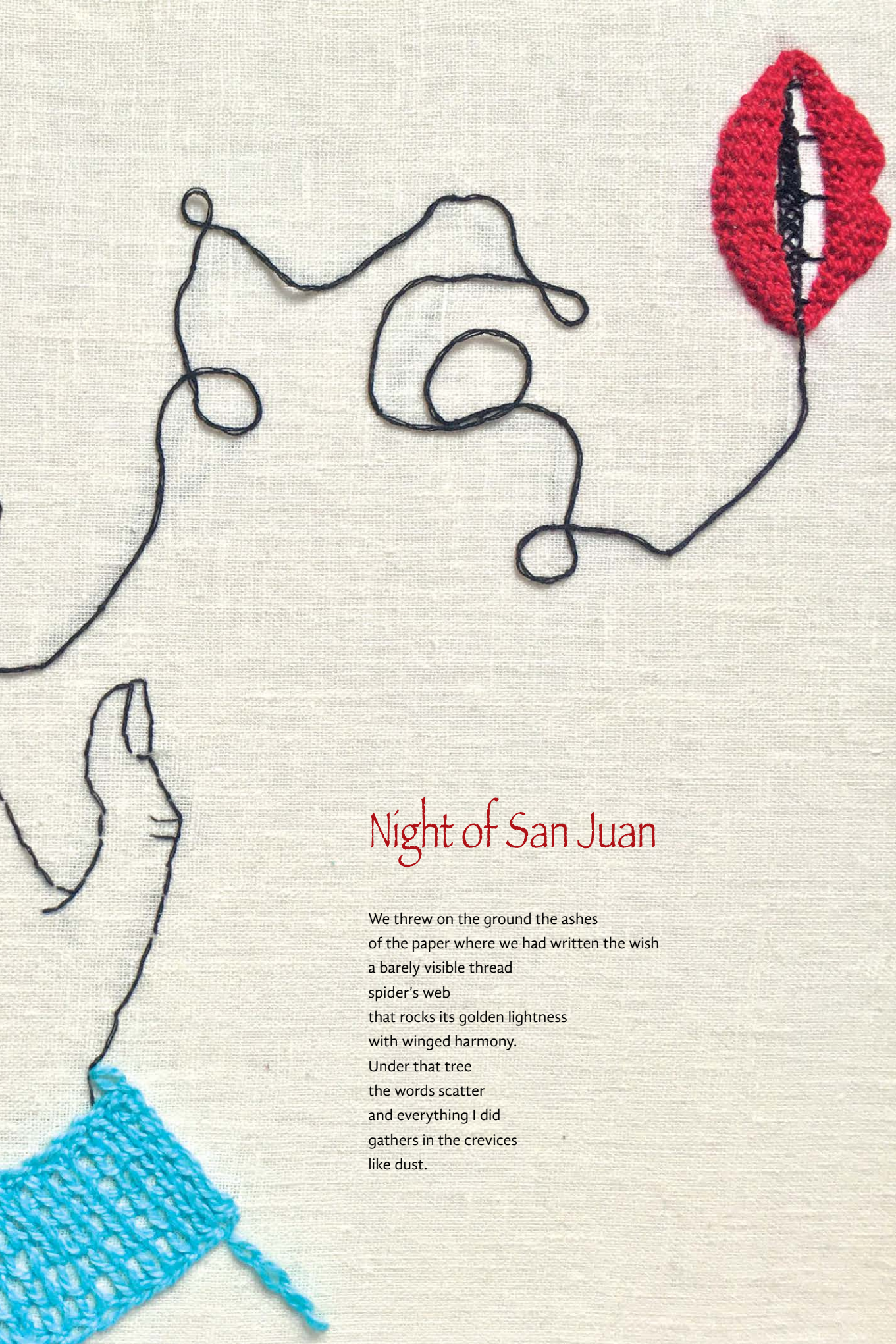


After

with Paulina

The young girls
rub their hands together
in the subway
dust
under their fingernails
passion in the kiss they don't give.
The sound of the glass shards
booms in their ears
the blow on the metal
dawn of soldiers and of stones
of voices that try to silence the fear.
Unhurried wandering will return
and without rubble
dawns in a love-sick city
the water feverish
blood in the nose.
Those afternoons dreaming by the sea will return
walks
alcohol
wild dances
and they will sing again
holding hands.





Night of San Juan

We threw on the ground the ashes
of the paper where we had written the wish
a barely visible thread
spider's web
that rocks its golden lightness
with winged harmony.
Under that tree
the words scatter
and everything I did
gathers in the crevices
like dust.

Orphan

by Inés Arredondo

Illustrated by Juan Palomino
Visual artist; @juanpalomino.ilustrador

For Mario Camelo Arredondo

I thought everything was this dream: on a hard bed, I was covered by a stark white sheet, a little girl with her arms cut off above the elbow and her legs amputated above the knees, dressed in a little gown that revealed the four stumps.

The room she was in seemed to be a run-down doctor's office with old-fashioned windows. I knew we were on the side of a U.S. highway, where the whole world had to go by sooner or later. And I say we were there because next to the bed, in profile, was a young doctor, happy, perfectly shaven, and clean. He was waiting.

My mother's relatives came in: tall, beautiful, filling up the room with sunshine and bustle.

The doctor explained, "Yes, it's her. Her parents had an accident not far from here and they both died, but I was able to save her. That's why I put the sign up so that you'd stop."

A very fair woman who reminded me vividly of my mother stroked my cheeks. "How pretty she is!"

"And what eyes!"

"And that curly blond hair!"

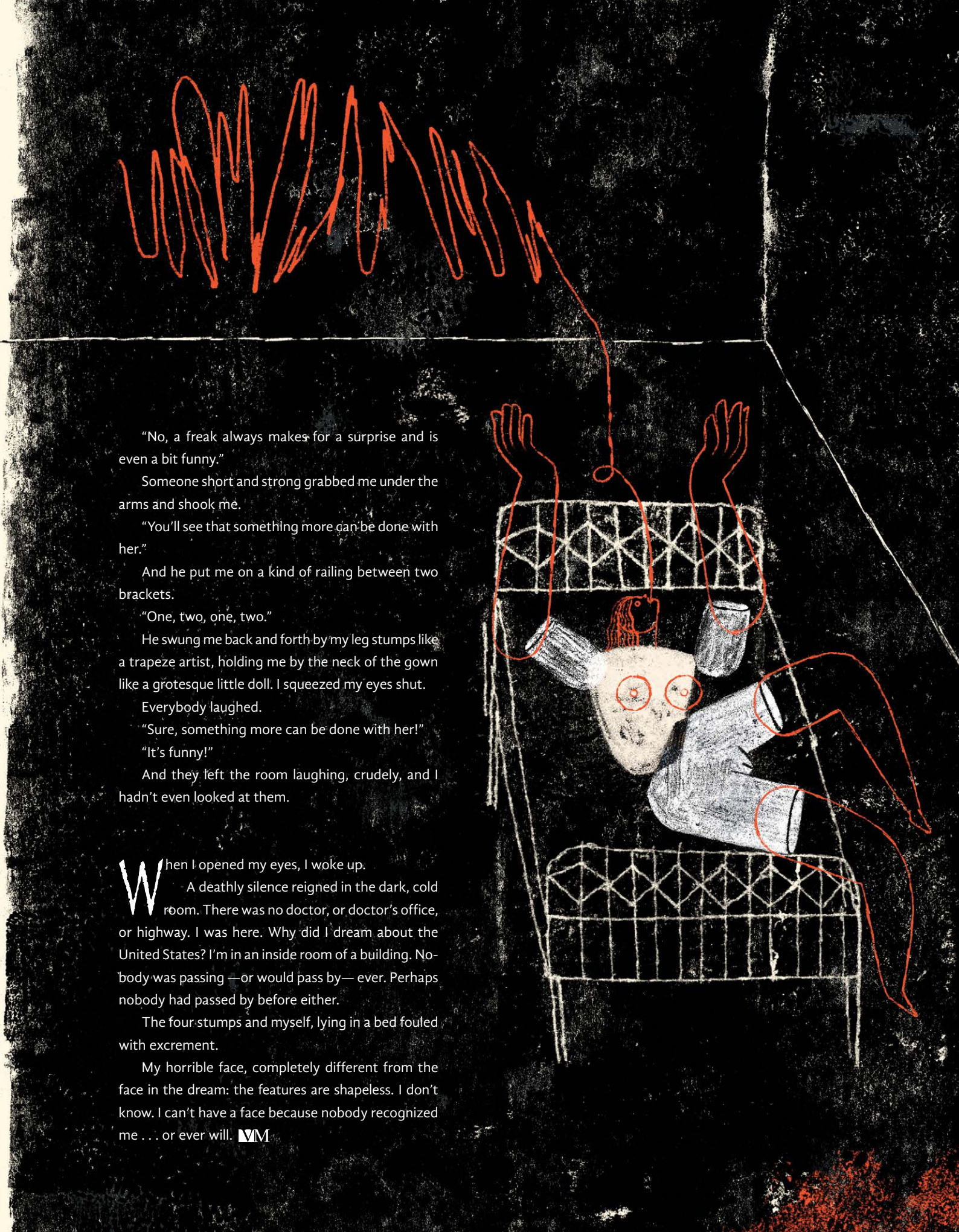
My heart leapt with joy. The time for comparisons was here and, amidst that fiesta of praise, not a single mention was made of my mutilations. The time for acceptance was here: I was one of them.

But for some mysterious reason, they left happily, chattering and laughing, without looking back at me.

Then my father's relatives came. I closed my eyes. The doctor repeated what he had told the first relatives.

"Why did you save *that*?"

"That's just inhuman."



"No, a freak always makes for a surprise and is even a bit funny."

Someone short and strong grabbed me under the arms and shook me.

"You'll see that something more can be done with her."

And he put me on a kind of railing between two brackets.

"One, two, one, two."

He swung me back and forth by my leg stumps like a trapeze artist, holding me by the neck of the gown like a grotesque little doll. I squeezed my eyes shut.

Everybody laughed.

"Sure, something more can be done with her!"

"It's funny!"

And they left the room laughing, crudely, and I hadn't even looked at them.

When I opened my eyes, I woke up.

A deathly silence reigned in the dark, cold room. There was no doctor, or doctor's office, or highway. I was here. Why did I dream about the United States? I'm in an inside room of a building. Nobody was passing —or would pass by— ever. Perhaps nobody had passed by before either.

The four stumps and myself, lying in a bed fouled with excrement.

My horrible face, completely different from the face in the dream: the features are shapeless. I don't know. I can't have a face because nobody recognized me . . . or ever will. VM

Graciela Martínez-Zalce*

Night of Ice, Night of Fire

Border cinema is characterized, among other things, by building its stories based on stereotypes both of the characters populating the border area and of the illicit activities that take place there. The space-time of the night is another way in which border cinema develops its narrative, reinforcing or deconstructing the stereotype that darkness favors the illicit. One example of this is *Paradox of Praxis 5: Sometimes We Dream as We Live/Sometimes We Live as We Dream* (2013),[1] a video by the Belgium artist residing in Mexico, Francis Alÿs.

Both to the north and the south of the United States, border spaces have been reconfigured in cinema as places where porousness oscillates and unleashes conflicts. One example is the contraband of goods, arms, and drugs, human trafficking, confrontations between authorities on both sides of both borders, and crime, as though being located on national borders gives the space the connotation of crime and danger.

Refuting this stereotype, however, is the following film, which deals with the night to comment on the space from the darkness.

Night of Fire

Just as darkness is a luxury for some, the relationship between night and sleep is a luxury for others. The nighttime space-time also belongs to those who work to provide services to those with the privilege of sleeping or being entertained.[2]

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> The inhabitants of the night are those who sleep and those who revel —but they also include the security staff, bar staff, bottle collectors, and police of the working night. . . . Night's capacity for violence cannot be ignored. . . . Joys of night walking are haunted by fears sharpened by instinct and experience. Night is conflated with the unknown and with darkness in the symbolic imagination.[3]

Francis Alÿs's *Paradox of Praxis 5* begins with the epigraph "Sometimes We Dream as We Live/Sometimes We Live as We Dream. Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, November 2013." In English, the viewer can appreciate the poetic play on words; in Spanish, the coordinates of time and place: the border region. And, in the space of film, the night to connote the border and embrace all its inhabitants.

Darkness, an incandescent point of light and a trajectory, a line over the Line.[4] Why fire? Why Juárez?

Alÿs has traveled through other cities and borders exercising a poetics of movement; most of his travels have been those of a daytime walker accompanied by the light of different latitudes, of Europe's grey suns or Mexico's luminous ones. And this temporality is what makes the fifth paradox in Alÿs's work a very different text: the night, literally lit by a burning object, is the space he chooses for wandering, accompanied by a camera that follows him at very different distances.

In the foreground, a ball of fire, and a man's feet begin walking on sandy ground, kicking. It's nighttime. The only light comes from the ball. On this trajectory in a city stigmatized by the violence characteristic of the Mexico-U.S. border, Alÿs traces a line on the Line in a piece different because it takes place in darkness, the leading role played by a glowing light; and, based on that difference, the artist presents a poetic, political reading of what goes on in Juárez.

The road takes him to an populated space: a store and some poor homes; in one of them a person sits in front of his house with the door open and the light on. Darkness in the street: poverty in the neighborhood.

Schøllhammer thinks that fascination for the streets can be explained because that's where people's lives and artistic endeavor coincide.[5] Alÿs often brings with him an object that defines a specific route and behavior in its performative displacement through the city: a main objective of these journeys, he says, is to formulate a critique of modern disassociation from the different dimensions of life and at the same time show the complexity of the relationships between space, society, and art.

The ball is that object, and it functions not only as the definer of the route, but as a guide: its light, which erupts in the blackness of the city's outskirts, points out that darkness characterizes its poor areas. When the ball separates from the ground, the fire fills the screen. The ball lights up the houses and the silence of the suburban night is interrupted by the sound of the fire.

Alÿs is particularly interested in intervening in spaces where people come together to reveal the many dimensions that make them up.

Tim Edensor has noted that, in the shorts that document Francis Alÿs's interventions, sound is a revealing component of space.[6] In *Paradox of Praxis 5*, the sound of the flaming ball in effect indicates aspects of the city such as the consistency of the soil or the velocity of movement; sometimes it occupies the video's entire audio track and at other times, it must compete with the noises of the city.

Edensor explains how the act of walking gives the viewer an experience of space-time: the rhythms of the walk make it possible to have a particular flow of experience such as attachment or detachment, physical immersion, mental wandering, memory, and recognition and unfamiliarity. As it walks, the body weaves a contingent path, partially conditioned by the physical characteristics of place.[7]

The inhabitants of this nighttime Juárez work in entertainment. Female legs in platform sandals and miniskirts: prostitution accompanied by the constant barking of dogs. A shot of a walker through the rubble of a building: the reality of a part of the city that functions as a metaphor for the rest of urban life.

Inhabiting the night does not always mean that we live as we dream nor that we dream as we live.

More demolished buildings, the city in decay. The man comes upon paved streets with street lights and passing cars. The nightclubs start: La Rubia, Club Pigallie. On one corner, a puzzled man lit by the ball against a wall painted with a sign for a *palenque* performance arena: the walker crosses the avenue. Techno music, a hybridization typical of border areas, pours out of a truck with polarized windows.

Alÿs is particularly interested in intervening in spaces where people come together to reveal the many dimensions that make them up; for that reason, his artistic interest and political commentary end up being a logic of response to a border city like Ciudad Juárez; a city that, in the year Alÿs walked through it, was struggling to stop being the world's most dangerous.[8]

Another wide shot: the camera opens up to put the walker in context. A train track crosses the avenue; once again, the man is shown with his back to the camera, and in front of him the avenue is badly lit. Buses drive by and vans are parked.

A taxi from the Lucerna Taxi Stand sports a green-and-white advertisement on top that says, "Together, Let's Clean Up Juárez," and despite the fact that its illustration shows a figure throwing garbage into a trash can, the fact that it's shot in a close-up gives it a broader meaning, since the sound track features the shrill noise of sirens. Cleaning up Juárez would imply sweeping away the violence, the threat of feminicide, the unfair working conditions in the maquila plants. We must not forget that fire is an element of expiation; when it consumes something, it performs an extreme cleansing.

The ball comes back to the foreground. The train goes on its way. The man walks down the side of a culvert and the train is now over him; the ball and the streets that once again come into the foreground return to darkness. The close-up is so tight that the fire fills the screen and the viewer can see the red, yellow, and orange overtones and the sparks: only fire and the night in a moving abstract vignette. To one side of the slope, the wayfarer once again is alone in the darkness on the dirt; the ball is once again the only source of light. When the camera moves back, the ball is a small orange dot amidst the blackness; it retreats; you can hear engines.

The fire returns to the foreground: white, blinding, with yellow, orange, red edges; it speeds up again, emitting sparks, leaving a trace. It's a latent danger: it could turn into a fire, end everything. The camera stops at a point where the viewer can see the back of the walker disappearing into the blackness, almost in silence.

Craig Epplin states that some of Alÿs's interventions are cognitive maps of the present.[9] That is, they produce the experience of space at the same time that they situate us in ideological, spatial coordinates. The means through which the artist documents his movements also occupy a central place in this cognitive mapping.

Epilogue

Lukinbeal has used the term "cinematographic geography" to describe the transdisciplinary field that studies the representation of geographical spaces in cinema and that analyzes how social and cultural meanings interrelate with space. According to this discipline, despite cinema's immateriality, films act as maps for sociocultural and sociopolitical imaginaries.[10]

The names of border cities have "a referential value. However, they construct a diegetic space underlining precisely the extratextual reference point and, therefore, giving their existence great weight in reality."[11]

The stereotype that characterizes gender joins the one that considers that night is a space-time where we are vulnerable; the film text reflects the lack of security implied in living on the border.

Darkness accentuates the precariousness and poverty; the presence of the authorities is necessary so those who must wander through the nocturnal space can feel safe. Inhabiting the night does not always mean that we live as we dream nor that we dream as we live. VM

Notes

1 *Paradox of Praxis 5: Sometimes We Dream as We Live/Sometimes We Live as We Dream,* directed by Francis Alÿs, in collaboration with Rafael Ortega, Julien Julien Devaux, Alejandro Morales, and Félix Blume (Ciudad Juárez, Mexico: Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, 2013), http://francisalys.com/paradox-of-praxis/.
2 Sophie Hamacher, "On the Night Bus," *Night Scapegoat* no. 10 (Spring-Summer, 2017).
3 Will Straw and Christie Pearson, "Editorial," *Night Scapegoat,* no. 10 (Spring-Summer, 2017), p. 5.
4 In Mexico, and particularly in the North, the border is known as "The Line." [Translator's Note.]
5 Karl Erik Schøllhammer, "A Walk in the Invisible City," *Know Techn Pol* no. 21 (2008), pp. 144 and 148.
6 Tim Enderson, "Walking in Rhythms: Place, Regulation, Style and the Flow of Experience," *Visual Studies* vol. 1, no. 25 (2010), pp. 75-76.
7 Ibid., p. 70.
8 Óscar J. Martínez, *Ciudad Juárez. Saga of a Legendary Border City* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2018).
9 Craig Epplin, "Francis Alÿs: Maps of the Present," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* vol. 50, no. 2 (June 2016), p. 403.
10 Graciela Martínez-Zalce, *Instrucciones para salir del limbo: arbitrario de representaciones audiovisuales de las fronteras en América del Norte* (Mexico City: CISAN, UNAM, 2016), p. 22.
11 Ibid., p. 17.

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Caspar David Friedrich, *Mountain Landscape with Rainbow*, 70 x 102 cm, 1809-1810 (oil on canvas).

Christian Gómez*

At Night, the Scale of Human Existence

A disquieting news item was published in early September this year about the collision of two black holes. According to media reports, the violent encounter gave rise to a new black hole 142 times the mass of our Sun. The resulting gravitational wave of the event seven billion years ago was detected by a signal that lasted barely one-tenth of a second. According to the report, this was the most violent explosion since the Big Bang. If black holes have their origins in the death of massive stars, what was disconcerting about this event was that that size range of these masses had never been seen before, and scientists do not understand how they were formed.

The way I have related this scientific news probably includes some errors, misunderstandings, or certain media sensationalism. But, in the process of writing this article, this data about the scale of our existence changed my focus. Writing about the night could no longer be done merely in opposition to the day, but within the context of a broader understanding. As science and the sky show us, it is in the absence of solar light, the awareness of *what-is-outside*, that the scale of human existence is revealed to us.

Analogously, in art, we have exhibitions, registries, and news that turn our eyes again toward our own scale. Even the artworks produced many years ago activate small, potent collisions between ourselves and others. They affect us with their strength and force us to put into perspective our notions of time, origins, and our own scope: to recognize our inability to represent the world's phenomena and to inhabit our universes differently. Like in astronomy, in art it is precisely at night when we can *see more*.

News from Another Time

The night has been a constant topic and stage in the history of art. It is the place of the sleepless, caring for the ill, nostalgia, the clandestine, passion and desire, parties and dancing, anguish, terror,

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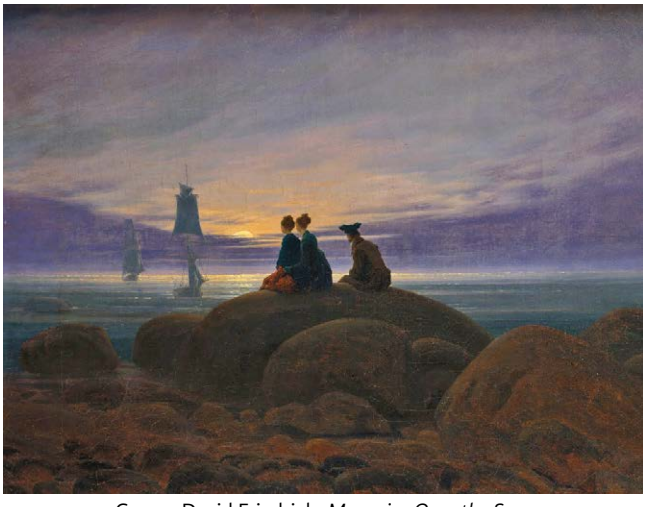
Like in astronomy, in art it is precisely at night when we can *see more*.

and the terrors. It is a space of dreams, daydreams, and wakefulness; its time seems malleable and ungraspable to us. In a year like 2020, when the cycles of waking life and sleep have been altered, the night has taken on prominence in the ways of experiencing the different crises springing from the COVID-19 pandemic. From there, we can point to certain works about the night as someone who looks at a starry sky and knows that there are different times there.

That is where *The Moon* (1928) appears, a work by Brazilian painter Tarsila do Amaral, which recently has become appreciated again because the New York Museum of Modern Art paid US$20 million for it in 2019. Painted in the same year as her emblematic *The Man Who Eats People* (1928), an image that accompanies the *Anthropophagite Manifesto*, it features in the foreground a cactus that looks more like a person with his/her back turned, in front of a horizon of solid colors: a body in front of a landscape bathed in the light of a waning moon.

That seductive work of modern Brazilian art leads our gaze to romantic painting, motivated by the emancipation of artists *vis-à-vis* the aristocracy and the church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. Amidst the hard-won freedom to pick their topics, nature and its power in the face of human beings' smallness took on a prominent role. They conquered the freedom to look at the sky. *Mountain Landscape with Rainbow* (1809-1810), by German painter Caspar David Friedrich, shows us a walker resting to look at a light that would be impossible in the face of such



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Caspar David Friedrich, *Moonrise Over the Sea*, 55 x 71 cm, 1822 (oil on canvas).

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Francisco de Goya, *Bad Night*, 31.5 x 22.3 cm, 1799 (etching and burnished aquatint), from the "Caprichos" series.

a black landscape. The incommensurability of nature and the reminder of the human scale play a leading role in others of his works like *Two Men Contemplating the Moon* (1819) and *Moonrise Over the Sea* (1822).

Very nearby, the light of all the moons is reflected in the work of Rufino Tamayo. In his painting, the negotiation of the problem of a national/universal identity permeated by dialogue with the pictorial avant-gardes of his time, we encounter *Dog Barking at the Moon* (1942) and *Moon Dog* (1973). Man before the Earth's natural satellite would be a theme of his work, which in its breadth situates us as the central figure of *Man Before the Infinite* (1950).

At a point that feels closer shine the works of Remedios Varo, an artist of the surrealist diaspora who found in daydreams a way of facing up to the horrors of her day. She reminds us, for example in her *Disturbing Presence* (1959) that we are not alone, as well as the power of the women she portrays in different towers, like the one feeding the captive moon in *Celestial Pabulum* (1958).

Looking from one side to the other, we stop to think about nocturnes as a genre of poetry, music, and painting. Just to mention it, we could recreate with our eyes closed the lights of the modern, electrified city in Camille Pissarro's *Montmartre Boulevard, Night Effect* (1897) or the gestures of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* (1942). It would be interesting to know if Vincent van Gogh's famous *Starry Night* (1889) came before his *Starry Night over the*

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▲ Francisco de Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 2.68 x 3.47 m, 1814 (oil on canvas).

*Rh*ône (1988). The night is also inhabited by multiple images by Francisco de Goya, such as his "Caprichos," where, from the gaze of the patient, he painted the expression of a *Bad Night* (1797-1799).

If we lower our eyes from that universe to what is around us, we find ourselves in a play of light that reveals or hides multitudinous dimensions of the human. It is nighttime in the installation *Trial-1929* (1979), which the Grupo Proceso Pentágono presented to barely suggest to the visitor what it would be like to have his/her body in the labyrinth of police repression and torture in Mexico.

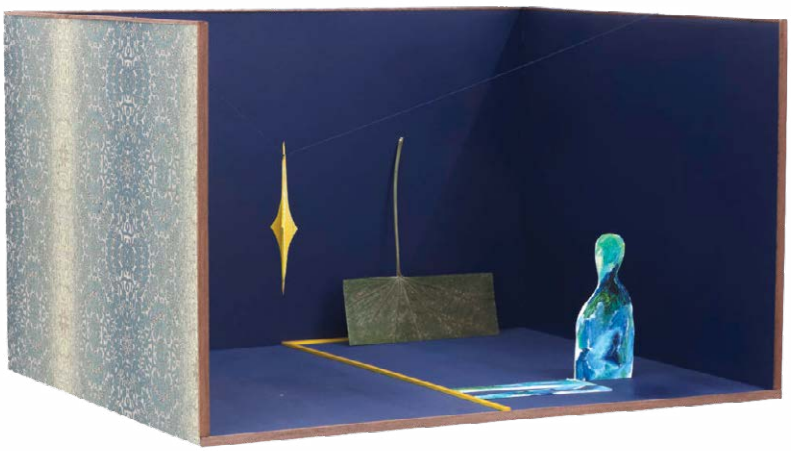
As Woody Allen's film *Midnight in Paris* (2011) suggests, it is in the night that life's excesses touch on artistic motifs, that artists find each other and exchange in spaces that surpass the academic and the intellectual to cross over into emotions. This is confirmed from another perspective in *Paris Is Burning* (1990), Jennie Livingston's emblematic documentary that portrays voguing nights in New York and the light they shed on the vulnerability of the bodies that escape the hegemonic heterosexual system to embody a radical proposal of looking after one other.

At night, we also talk to the dead, without distinction, just as Juan Rulfo has told us. We give ourselves opportunities as well of transgressing against what has been imposed. "Living intensely is getting an impression of living," says one of the characters in *Los Caifanes* (1967), a Mexican film directed by Juan Ibáñez with a script by Carlos Fuentes. The film dealt with a group of young people during a rapturous night when social categories and public order, impossible to escape in daytime, are overrun. A night that foreshadowed the eruption of the youth in the years that were to follow.

In *We Turn in the Night, Consumed by Fire* (1978), Guy Debord's last film, the writer uses a nocturnal image to once again denounce the alienation that consumer society sinks us in. At the same time, in *Paradox of Praxis 5* (2015), artist Francis Alÿs walks the streets of Ciudad Juárez kicking a burning ball; in the darkness, the fire lights scenes of the social and economic crisis.

We could continue to identify the flashes that make different realities visible, but we'll settle on a recent story in which the night plays a central role as the scene for many discoveries. In the film *This Is Not Berlin* (2019), directed by Hari Sama, two adolescents rediscover the limits of the city; they encounter their desire and the possibilities of the collective body. As the background party that

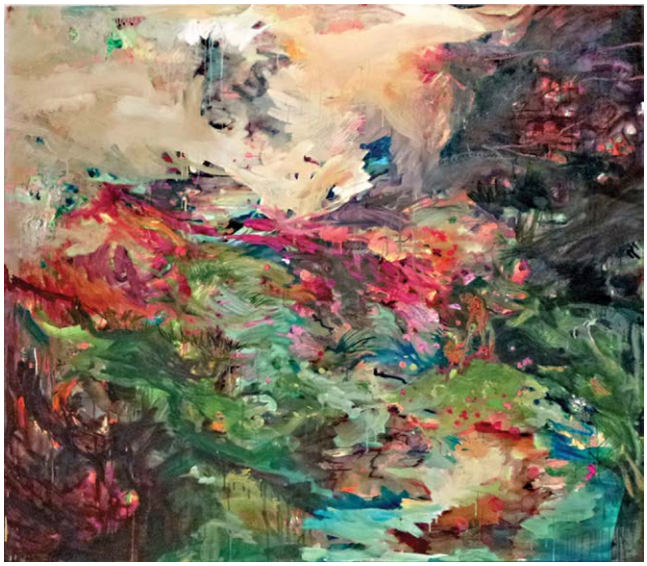
If we lower our eyes from that universe to what is around us, we find ourselves in a play of light that reveals or hides multitudinous dimensions of the human.



▲ Christian Camacho, *Composition for the Night*, 2019 (enamel, foamboard, balsa wood, oil paint, thread, nails, glass, and foil). Photo courtesy of the Arróniz Contemporary Art Gallery.

> At night, we also talk to the dead, without distinction, just as Juan Rulfo has told us. We give ourselves opportunities as well of transgressing against what has been imposed.

brings them together, the story proposes a portrayal —or perhaps just a glimpse— of the emotional, festive dimension of the rise of the contemporary artistic scene in Mexico City in the 1980s. At a distance, this radiance reminds us of the pleasure of sharing the night with others and the hope of once again dancing at night.



▲ Lucía Vidales, *Gravediggers*, 140 x 170 cm, 2016 (oil on canvas). Photo courtesy of author.

Fade to Black

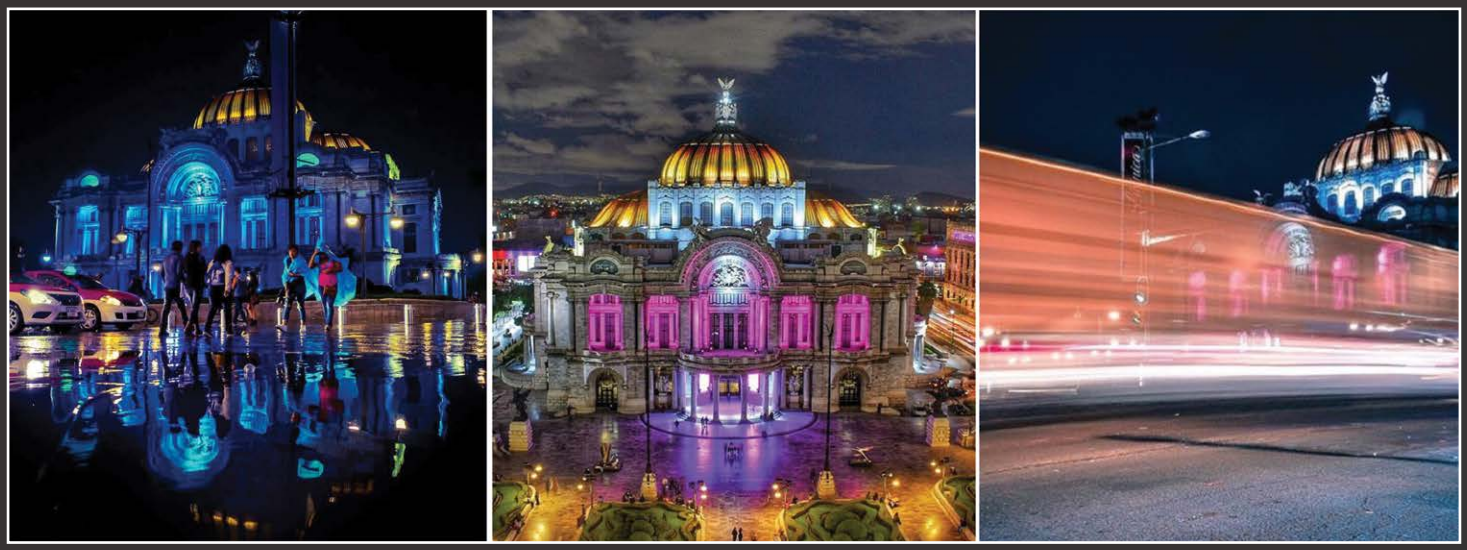
It is in the darkness of the night that we think of light: from the stars to the candles, from the countryside to the modern city. Like exploring an eternal night, light has been an unavoidable problem of art; in painting, for example, the problems of chiaroscuro, landscape painting, impressionism. In that sense, for decades and decades, the French painter Pierre Soulages has insisted on asking questions about light in the black. Given the timeliness of these questions —and before concluding—, I will look now for a moment at the work of two contemporary Mexican painters.

In a series of unpublished texts titled *Soles negros que llamo pinturas* (Black Suns that I Call Paintings), dedicated to painters she dialogues with, Lucía Vidales (Mexico City, 1986) proposes different approaches to black: that of the night, of gunpowder, and of ink. In the text about the night, centered on the work of Christian Camacho (Mexico City, 1985), she asks herself, "The imagination is neither entered nor left. If the imagination has neither beginning nor end, where does the nocturnal light come from for the imagination? Or, I should ask, what is its time and not its place? What connects it? What lightens or darkens it? In this way, the nocturnal sun does not enter and leave: it appears."

In her exposition "Night during the Day" (Gallery of Mexican Art, 2019), Lucía Vidales's paintings and sculptures are presented in a dialogue with the works of Leonora Carrington, Pita Amor, Cordelia Urueta, Joy Laville, Olga Costa, and María Izquierdo. Beyond the notion of prestige, the images cross over and reverberate against each other based on the colors and the tensions in the life and death that inhabit them. From the nocturnal light that feeds the imagination, a tangible problem in her own work, Vidales made visible fragments, extremities, and organs of beings of today and of other times; tensions of the living and the dead that, through the emphasis of the materials in her paintings, are more a presence than a representation.

Christian Camacho's 2018 text "Introducción al astro multiple: pintura, imaginación y gravitación" (Introduction to the Multiple Star: Painting, Imagination, and Gravitation) was written for artist Marco Treviño's project "A Multiple Expression. A Publication, a Mounted Exposition, A Pictorial Meeting." Like in all his work, here Camacho elaborates on the implications of a phrase by the U.S. American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne: "Moonlight is sculpture; sunlight is painting." Starting from there, he speculates about the implications of many artistic problems based on a gravitational relationship resulting from the direct or indirect rays of the sun. As a result, in his exhibition "Sleep and the Underworld" (Arróniz Contemporary Art Gallery, 2019), Camacho brings to wakefulness, as he himself has said, the recovery of his own dreams in works that are a constant tension —a gravitation— between the conditions of sculpture and painting.

What was to have been a glance at recent artistic productions emerging from thinking about the night appears more clearly as a collision of gazes; just like the news about the stars, these pieces return to us other visions of the world. In them, like in the rest of the works glimpsed in this essay, is a confirmation that nocturnal approximations always return us to the problems of light and the possibilities of seeing. If, like in astronomy, in art it is precisely at night when we can *see* more, we must thank both disciplines for the constant reminders of the human scale, since it is only in that dimension where the night comforts us with the promise of tomorrow. VM



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Violeta Rodríguez Becerril*
Carlos Fortuna**

Post-photographic Images of the Night In Mexico City's Historic Downtown

From its beginnings, photography has documented the material and sociocultural dimensions of cities. The use of the flash, filters, and other analog camera accessories allowed for greater proximity to parts of nightlife. Today, smartphones, with their cameras and web apps, make it possible for digital images to multiply in virtual space. They are making it easier and more and more common to capture our sojourns through the city.

We are witnessing the arrival of what Joan Fontcuberta called "post-photography,"[1] that is, the production of digital images with new technological communication devices that make it possible for photographs to circulate in the net's virtual space in a matter of seconds. Today, Instagram is one of the most commonly used communications networks for the exchange of images and messages. Its users can send out photos in seconds, edit them with app "filters," add key words, and indicate the place where the image was taken. The post-photographic images of the urban night on this platform reveal the lighting, the multiple rhythms, and the social relations created there. Our research interest, beyond the aesthetic analysis of the image, focuses on underlining the visual narratives that make up the construction of the nocturnal in a historically and symbolically important space: Mexico City's Historic Downtown.

Today, downtown Mexico City is an obligatory reference point for local nightlife. For the last two decades, nighttime activity has increased there with the opening of entertainment venues and cultural and sightseeing tours (for example, Museum Night and the Big-Red-Bus-type Turibus tours). As the work to renovate the city's plazas and streets was underway between 2006 and 2010, a new kind of street lighting was introduced to underline the architectural characteristics of historic buildings and monuments.

To seek out the images for a "night downtown" on Instagram, we used the labels #nocheCDMX (Mexico City night) and #CDMXdenoche (Mexico City at night); most of the places photographed are within the downtown area's "A" perimeter. The following is a brief reflection about those images.

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City Lights

In the late nineteenth century, the downtown's main plazas, streets, and avenues were the first to have electric lighting. In the sphere of urban planning, its design focuses on the creation of "atmospheres" that aesthetically combine the lights with the architecture.[2] It is no surprise that the first places to be lit were government buildings and the main plazas. Thus, the Zócalo Plaza became a place for nocturnal gatherings and promenades.[3]

For its part, the staging of the illumination of the National Palace framed its architectural details and made it seem perceptively larger. Just like in theatrical staging, urban spaces are transformed by the lighting, which exalts their historic and symbolic capital, creating a celebratory atmosphere.

Light shows were first projected on the buildings around the Zócalo Square in December 1963. Christmastime and around Independence Day celebrations are the times when the area's main streets are dressed with special lighting. At Christmastime, for example, figures made out of lights, like stars, piñatas, poinsettias, and Christmas trees, festoon the buildings with a kind of "urban masks."[4]

Every year, the design becomes more and more spectacular. Francisco I. Madero Street, a well-known pedestrian mall boasting international brand stores, steps up its lighting at this time of year. From there, visitors can see the huge Christmas tree set up in the Zócalo Square. Added to these Christian values are the "consumer aesthetics" of the stores near the plaza, which also illuminate their facades and windows.[5] The rituals in the display windows continue until the wee hours with the help of this lighting, showcasing products.

Walking through the city no longer has as its only objective "practicing it," as Michel de Certeau would say.[6] The art of wandering —with knowledge of the location of shops and large stores— would be prompted by the visual stimuli of nocturnal consumption. So, we should ask ourselves how many hours we could lose ourselves looking for Christmas presents.

> The postmodern condition, charged with meanings open to a multiplicity of interpretations, manifests itself in parallel to the images of the blurred metropolis.

Within the category of images of illumination, we encounter that of "patrimonial lights," those that, as mentioned above, are place on monuments and buildings with high symbolic-identity value. In Mexico, archaeologists, historians, and conservation specialists have criticized their excessive use in these spaces, but in most cases, the aim is to attract national and international visitors.

One of the buildings that boasts the most complex lighting is the Fine Arts Palace. The art nouveau and art deco marble building was commissioned by President Porfirio Díaz to introduce a "Frenchified" style into the city's image. It has been photographed at night from different angles and perspectives, its architecture accented and dramatized by pink and blue neon lights. In Instagram photographic compositions, the urban elements and dynamics of, for example, the Central Alameda Park and the movement of automobiles and pedestrians along Juárez Avenue serve as a frame for the palace.

Most patrimonial buildings have a lighting design that changes with the seasons or to support a social cause, such as the use of pink for the fight against breast cancer, or purple to symbolize the fight against gender violence.

One of the most noteworthy photographic compositions uses different-colored diffuse reflection framed by the urban night. The Latin American Tower, known as "the Latino," one of our local modern architectural symbols, is the theme. In this case, the identification and reading of symbols is dual: the night appears as a series of faded lights and the silhouette of the Latin American Tower, symbol of the city, is recognizable even when blurred.

The postmodern condition, charged with meanings open to a multiplicity of interpretations, manifests itself in parallel to the images of the blurred metropolis.[7] Different possibilities of appropriation and use by heterogeneous urban groups thus constitute the nocturnal. The postmodern night is therefore open to different meanings.

Nocturnal Rhythms and the Sociabilities of the Night

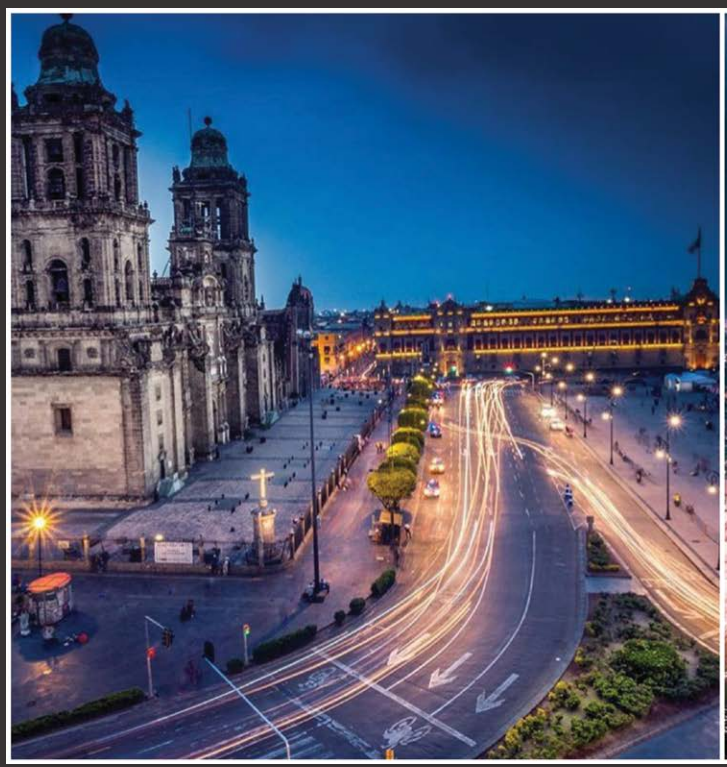
In cities, life at night marks clear borders between spaces considered dangerous, venues for nocturnal fun and leisure, places for sleeping, and nighttime economies that lengthen daytime productivity.[8] The rhythms of the night, which Lefebvre called "polyrhythm," are marked by the activities of those who inhabit it.[9]

At night, traffic and movement on the streets are identified by the lights of stopped or moving automobiles. Traffic in the Historic Downtown area is worse when concerts, celebrations, and political demonstrations are taking place in the Zócalo Square.

Other downtown rhythms are created in the areas of nighttime entertainment and leisure. In bars and discotheques, waiters, cooks, bartenders, and pop singers make every effort to make the night shine in all its splendor. Nightcrawlers experience a festive, relaxed atmosphere where they can forget the dynamics of daytime work. While for some the night means breaking with daytime drudgery, for others, it is the beginning of an exhausting work day behind the scenes.

Different images show that belonging to the night implies upping the singularity of your dress. Living in those hours demands certain shared social codes and rules of etiquette, since at night, "not all cats are black." Some night owls go out dripping in sequins and spangles that complement the ambiance and lighting in entertainment venues. The night's many possibilities are clear in the transgression of moral codes and the bohemian lifestyle of those who inhabit it.

Downtown, Garibaldi Plaza turns the night into a great street party, attended by national and local tourists alike. Mariachi musicians and others make it their place of work, while visitors are



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looking for its festive atmosphere and fun. Once again, light and sparkles are absolute essentials for setting the scene.

Final Comments

In times when visual culture has intensified, "new, citizen photographers" capture the city's places and rhythms with their smart phones. Nightlife, with its multiple orchestrations and meanings, is continually reproduced and disseminated on platforms and social networks. In Mexico City's Historic Center, Instagram images (post-photographs) display the different facets of the night and its aesthetics of leisure and nocturnal consumption. Rehabilitating the downtown's public spaces included the design of lighting for its plazas, streets, and avenues. The tones of the lights invite passers-by to admire the different architectural details and compositions. As the poet Francis William Bourdillon (1852-1921) said, "The night has a thousand eyes/And the day but one."[10] Artificial lights, the eyes of the night, can be manipulated, increasing their power to expand spatially or to select and define specific places. Today, the urban night is both a conquered territory and a moment that conquers us. VM

Notes

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4 Piñatas, made of clay pots or colorful papier-mâché, are an important part of the identity of Mexican celebrations. The poinsettia is the typical flower of the December festivities; in other countries it is also known as "flor de Nochebuena" (Christmas Eve flower), "flor de Pascua" (Easter flower), and "corona del Inca" (crown of the Andes).
5 Bauman states that in the aesthetics of consumption, work is stripped of its autotelic nature; that is, it stops being "an end in itself." The symbolic efficacy shifts from the sphere of production to that of consumption. Z. Bauman, *Trabajo, consumismo y nuevos pobres* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2000).
6 M. de Certeau, *La invención de lo cotidiano* (Guadalajara: ITESO, 2000).
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9 H. Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* (London/New York: Continuum, 2004).
10 Francis William Bourdillon, "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," in Edmund Clarence Stedman, ed., *A Victorian Anthology, 1837–1895*, https://www.bartleby.com/246/979.html.

Photos

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3 @_cholulteca, Twitter, October 15, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/cdmx_oficial/.
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10 @jasnieoswiecona, Twitter, November 18, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/B9NUDoipQXL/.

Daniela Serrano Martínez de Velasco*
Illustrated by Armando Fonseca**

Urban Nocturnal Animals

The night is fascinating; it offers so much to be discovered. It is never-ending. Members of the human species have become alien to it. We've let ourselves be blinded by the darkness, and we're content with the idea that what we see is what there is; but appearances are deceiving and our fears stop us from seeing more. When we look closely, when we listen carefully, and above all, when we inquire more deeply, we find in the details the description of something new. We realize that the silence is full of sounds and the darkness, full of colors. We forget that the night is full of life. Nocturnal animals are more present and closer than we think. We only have to ask ourselves about them. There is no reason to fear them; in reality they are not the threat our imagination makes us think. They are part of our lives. Even in the city we're connected with the whole nocturnal world that we barely know. When we explore it, we open up a path to new questions, new paradigms, and we realize the mistakes we make because we're unfamiliar with our dark side. We fear the darkness instead of aspiring to know it.

> When the Sun sets and the stars come out, the landscape changes and fills with new colors and sounds. Hunters and prey exploit the advantages and opportunities that the cover of darkness offers; they exploit their senses to navigate in different ways. With bigger eyes, animals like the tarsius take advantage of the scant amount of light and can climb and hunt with agility. Sounds let predators like the owl find their prey, despite the fact that their night vision is similar to ours. Frogs and toads communicate through their song. Some animals, like insects, crustaceans, and arachnids, are capable of seeing the universe in ultraviolet light. Others, like serpents, see it in infrared. Humans only know these spectrums of light through specialized technology. The sense of smell allows several kinds of beings to discover their surroundings through aromas. The moon lights up open spaces and the stars are their GPS. Suddenly, the night doesn't seem as dark or as silent. It's an explosion of life, sounds, colors, sensations, and contrasts.[1]

The night in the city is greyer because of our artificially lit streets and without starlight. It's difficult to find the details; they're lost in the sound and in the lights. So, we've come to assume that the night is empty. We're wrong. While we sleep, outside our walls a whole other side of the city awakes. Creatures roam our streets that during the day hide in parks, gardens, and gullies. They don't cross our paths, so we're indifferent to their existence. However, they determine to a great extent the environmental balance that our lives depend on. The land where we live used to be invaded by species before we paved it over to create one of the world's largest, most highly populated cities. Each one of them plays a unique role in the ecosystem.

Many of these species were displaced. Now, you find them only in forests and protected national parks, and generally in small numbers. Nevertheless, some remained. They found a way to adapt to the new reality and to re-

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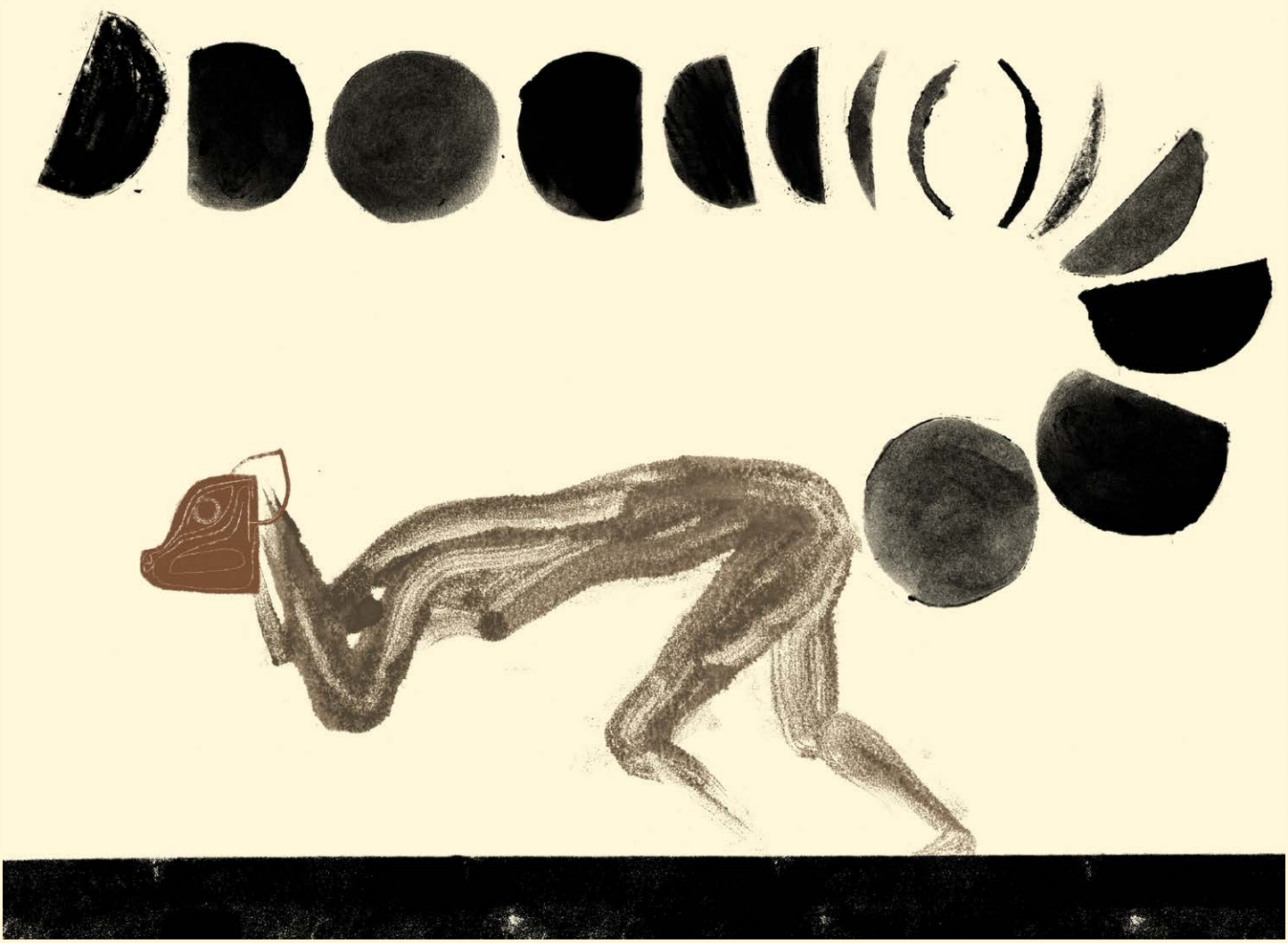
main unnoticed among us. This is the case of some small and medium-sized mammals like the opossum, the shrew, the grey fox, and the cacomistle or ringtail. The latter, particularly, lives in more and more corners of the city. With the flight of the large predators, their numbers have grown in the cities. This is a small, sweet mammal with a thin face and a ringed tail that used to live among our pre-Hispanic ancestors. Today, it lives among cats, flees from dogs, and eats out of garbage cans. It doesn't have such a bad life in the city, and today, it is a full-fledged urban animal. Its diet is flexible, making it easy to find food among what humans leave behind. Its small size allows it to easily take refuge in parks and reserves in the city. People very often like how it looks. Denizens of the capital welcome their sightings, describing them as looking like a cat, but with the tail of a racoon. In any case, they know how to hide and disappear from our view right away. Their only battle lost is the one against plastic, which causes their death due to intestinal blockage from ingesting it by accident, something that also happens to birds and mammals the world over.[2]

The ringtail owes much of its success in the city to its good relations with humans. It has a good reputation; it

Nocturnal animals are more present and closer than we think. In reality they are not the threat our imagination makes us think: they are part of our lives.



bothers no one; and it looks friendly. Another of its cohorts does not have the same luck, a smaller mammal but one burdened with a bad reputation. The city offers it many places to hide, like bridges, mines, and empty vaults. But here it faces the same problem that it does in the countryside and nationwide.[3] It is often judged and feared. On the news it is associated only with disease. Stories paint it as a being to be feared; it has been reduced to being a monster that sucks blood in the movies, and its presence is almost always associated with evil. In addition, its appearance is off-putting for many, who even describe it as a flying rat.

The reality is very far from all the myths. First of all, bats are not even rodents. They belong to the *Chiroptera* order, closer to humans than to rats. Only 3 out of the 1390 known species of bats feed on blood, and, of those three, only one hunts mammals. The diseases they have been associated with actually spread due to human activity, like the destruction of ecosystems and illegal trafficking in animals, which increases the contact between wild and domestic species, thus creating chains of contagion in which viruses and bacteria mutate and spread. The role

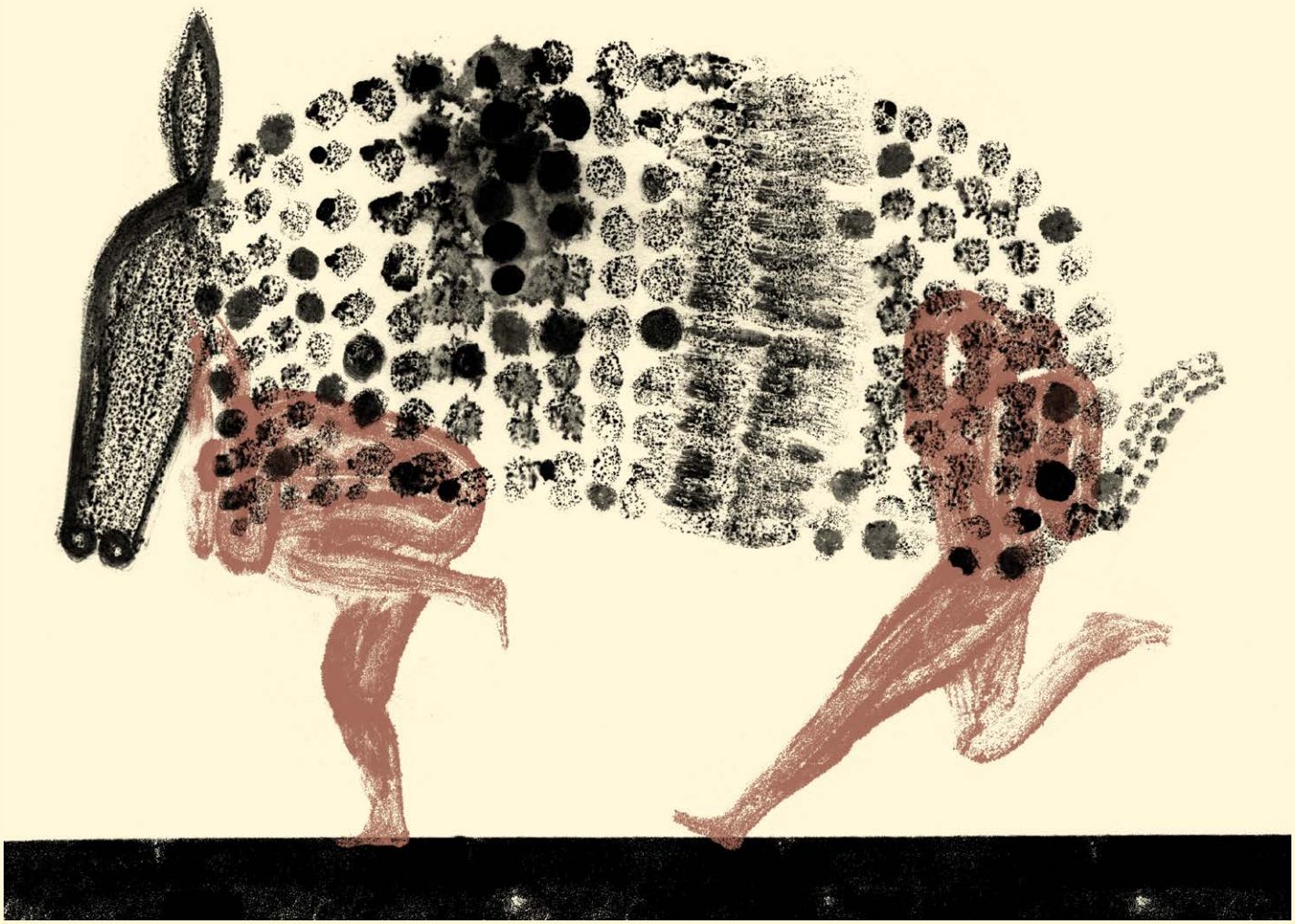
We assume that the night is empty. We're wrong. While we sleep, outside our walls a whole other side of the city awakes.

of bats in this process is minimal, since they are only one link in these chains.[4]

If we disregard all that and allow ourselves to look a little deeper, we'll see that this is nothing compared to all the good bats do for our ecosystem and ourselves. They manage to prevent more diseases than they spread, since most of them (70 percent of their species) feed on insects like mosquitos, which are important vectors for diseases like dengue, zika, and chikungunya.[5] They also play an essential role in regenerating forests since they disperse the fruit seeds that they ingest and their excrement acts as a fertilizer. In addition, they pollinate several species of plants, many of which are important for human agriculture and animal husbandry. In fact, since we are on this topic, we owe them our thanks for every shot or drink of tequila, pulque, and mescal we have ever enjoyed: they're the ones who pollinate the agave plant![6]

With all of this knowledge, we can almost laugh at the fairytales and accept that our fear of these in many cases extraordinary beings is unnecessary. What is more, we can help share the truth and stop the killings that happen

Bats are the perfect example of how appearances are deceiving. We get stuck in our fear of an animal beneficial for us, and we make bad decisions.



all over the country due to disinformation, which leads many people to believe that the solution is to eradicate them. People set up bright lamps in their nesting places to scare them away, poison them, and even burn them in their caves, pushing many species to the brink of extinction.[7]

Bats are the perfect example of how appearances are deceiving. We get stuck in our fear of an animal that actually is beneficial for us, and we make bad decisions. While turning our backs on them, we even protect another animal that really should concern us. This is one that is in the city because of our own activities. They have killed people who come across them by accident, and some just keep multiplying while we do nothing about them.

At first, they look like stray dogs on the street, but they're different. Behind that familiar appearance is a wolf, literally. Feral dogs are dogs that have returned to their wolf instincts. Let's go a little slower, here. Feral dogs are domesticated dogs that were abandoned and then join together in packs, where new generations are born in isolation. Their distance from humans have made them return to their primitive state little by little and become a new species: a city dog that behaves like a wolf. In the daytime they behave one way and, at night, another. In the daytime, they move in pairs; they're quiet and evasive, and don't go near anyone. At night, they become aggressive; they organize in packs and take up community hunting again in which they surround their prey and attack as a group. They don't go near humans except to defend their territories. In Chapultepec Forest, frequent cases have been reported of severe attacks on joggers. In one case in the Iztapalapa Municipality, a pack killed five people in a single attack. Stories like these are not uncommon in Mexico City, and the more you look into them, the more cases you find. As if that weren't enough, these animals, like other feral fauna, are important vectors for diseases and parasites that put both the population and the biodiversity of wildlife, animals that have lived here for a very long time, at risk. The generation of feral fauna is a problem the world over, and its growth is owed to human beings' worst practices: wars, over-population, and globalization. Besides dogs, these kinds of fauna include cats, rats, cockroaches, mosquitos, and many more species. They are here because of our mistakes and negligence.[8]

Among those who recognize the problem, many bravely try to eradicate them by catching, sterilizing or putting them down for everyone's good. However, their efforts fall short and they're attacked by self-appointed defenders of animal rights. In many cases, people even leave food out for these dogs that irresponsible owners have abandoned. This is once again a paradoxical truth, where we feed the problems that we ourselves have created. The solution to all of this lies in education and dissemination of information.

We have the power to change all this and better determine our way forward. The future of the biodiversity of wildlife and the balance of our ecosystems is in our hands, whether we want to recognize it or not. What happens at night is not alien to us; we're part of that reality. When we refuse to recognize that, even without realizing it, we push the scales against ourselves. The night and darkness are not frightful, but ignorance and disinformation are. We have sufficient senses and tools to take advantage of and explore the nocturnal world that surrounds us. It's anything but empty. We have to look beyond appearances and explore the unknown to find the truth and define our future. Let us explore the night. It may take a moment for our eyes to adjust, but then we'll be able to see a landscape rich in sensations and a sky full of stars appear before our eyes. VM

Notes

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Rob Hampson / Unsplash

Edna Hernández González*

Mobile Apps and Women In the City at Night

Analyzing and occupying oneself with the social dynamics, the ups and downs of city dwellers at night is a research field that is expanding by leaps and bounds in academia. In 1978, Murray Melbin published the article "Night as Frontier," in which he dealt with the "conquest" of the night as a temporal extension of human activities in industrialized societies. He based his idea on the hypothesis that, just like space, time can be occupied by human beings. Melbin showed that nocturnal social life in urban areas was similar to that of the pioneers in the old U.S. West. And, in effect, for four decades now, the conquest and colonization of the night by traditional daytime activities have not stopped increasing.[1]

In this context, the 24-hour city also poses multiple challenges, such as the right to occupy it at night regardless of its users' social, ethnic, or gender characteristics. In the case of women, the social group the majority of whom say they feel at risk or insecure as they move through public space at night, this is a factor of alert that continues on the rise.[2] In recent years, the perception of insecurity and, above all, the rise in cases of gender violence have become the main argument for new tech products: cell phone apps. However, it is pertinent to look at the arguments that their creators use in terms of the image and representation of women *vis-à-vis* insecurity and the extent to which these tools can be of help.

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A New Business Niche

If you do a simple Internet search in three languages (English, Spanish, and French) about digital security apps, you will find more than 60.[3] Most of them are similar: a list of possible contacts and geolocator broadcasting. In the first apps, the user had to push several buttons to activate and send an alarm, but the most recent versions activate with a simple shout or by vigorously shaking the cell phone. The latter are much more intuitive. Some even offer the possibility of recording video and sound, such as Bsafe and Noonlight.[4] [5]

Some digital apps in Spanish (from Mexico, Argentina, and Chile) are proposed directly by local governments, such as, for example "Safe Woman Pink Alert" and "I'm Not Alone" in Ciudad Juárez,[6] [7] just to mention two. Very few have been developed by associations or activists, such as the case of "You're Not Alone," a self-organized app in Argentina developed in collaboration with engineering students.[8] Other examples are the French apps "Elles,"[9] which is completely free, designed by an association and a group of activists and researchers, and "Flag,"[10] where an association and a research committee work to analyze and follow up on the data that its use provides for assessing and influencing the public policies that should be adopted.

Other apps put violence and the security crisis that affects mainly women in the foreground, but they have been created by start-ups. This is the case of "We Help,"[11] which is truly useful and effective, but a paying version. "Shake2Safety" is another, created by developers specializing in other kinds of apps.[12] Some security companies have also created their own products, such as the Asegurarte consulting firm, which has identified a niche by adapting its AST panic button to the #niunamenos (#NotOneLess) movement in Argentina by adding the "protest function."[13] This adaptation consists of changing the graphics and colors. However, it does not include any specific reflection about women and the use of urban space.

Certain apps can actually be counterproductive because they are based on the idea that they are collaborative: they create a help network for when a woman finds herself in danger; this is the case of "Women Safety Totem sos Help" and "Zeifie."[14] The latter writes, "Hence, by downloading the Zeifie app, we create PeerSafety and thus form a community of Good Samaritans that wish to make the society a safer place for all. . . . If they respond to the alarm, they will then be able to see your position, your first name, photo, and any medical information that you may have included in the app."[15]

> The perception of insecurity and, above all, the rise in cases of gender violence have become the main argument for new tech products: cell phone apps.

The Zeifie app shares personal data with a community of "good Samaritans." However, it provides no filter or control of the individuals that want to be a part of it. While the intention of creating a help network is generally the basis for collaborative tools, in the case of the many apps that are fighting against gender violence, it is dangerous because it shares personal data without knowing who is part of the "good Samaritan" community. In addition, different studies show that physical and verbal aggressions are generally inflicted by individuals close to the victim (friends, a partner, or an ex-partner). In that sense, how much could these tools put their users at risk?

Discourse and Image

Eighty percent of the apps present the night as the stage *par excellence* for attacks, whether in a dark parking lot or any other urban space after the sun goes down. Equally, although some do not exclusively target women, they do use feminine images in their ads.

In effect, the night is the representation *par excellence* for danger, but above all, it underlines the supposed fragility of the female body. Without denying the violence and growing number of feminicides in Mexico, different studies show that women's fear and the perception of insecurity in the public space are intimately linked with a social, sociological, and historical construction.[16] In that sense, the body with feminine traits is that which is frequently violated in the imaginary linked to the night in literature, cinema, and advertising.

The number of women who move through the city at night for enjoyment or for work continues to rise. Their presence in the nocturnal public space is much more common, but this does not guarantee them the right to the

city. If we take another look at the work of Henri Lefèvre about the right to the city, we can see that the night, as a practiced, inhabited space-time, is and continues to be the scene for new forms of exclusion and inequalities. This is due to the absence of clear regulations that limit and create a framework for night work, to the increased number of homeless people, among them more and more women, and to nocturnal public spaces destined exclusively to nocturnal tourism.

Remembering the Real Debate

The team of urbanists who worked on renovating Paris's seven plazas used different methodologies to evaluate the degree of urbanness of public spaces. One of the parameters was how long a woman could remain alone in a place without being bothered or made to feel uncomfortable. The results showed that during the day, this happened without great difficulty, but that during the night, undesired solicitations and interactions with other users of the space could become complicated.[17]

At night, women's right to the city —or that of any person with a female body— must be justified even more than during the day, whether for work or entertainment reasons. As a result, feminist groups occupy the streets at night more and more, using as an example the first "Take Back the Night" marches in Montreal, which are now held in Paris, London, Buenos Aires, and, in 2017, in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico. The objective of these marches is to reclaim full rights to the nocturnal city, its use and enjoyment, but above all to protest sexual violence against women.[18] However, this right cannot be achieved without greater awareness about the image and social representations of the female body.

In August 2012, the French Ministry of Labor published "Advice for Women" on its website. This text makes several recommendations like, "Avoid deserted places, badly lit streets, dark places where a possible attacker could hide."[19] Many groups objected because, in effect, this deepens women's "confinement," the fear of the night, and therefore reinforced ideas about the genders that limited daily space-times. The text was taken down in October of that year. Another example of the perception of women's safety can be found in the following paragraph of a paper presented by app designers: "In the present-day scenes women safety [sic] is considered to be the major problem in both urban and rural areas. It is quite difficult to change the mind-set of the entire society, but we can provide several security devices for the women who are facing sexual harassment, acid attacks, molestation."[20]

> Different studies show that women's fear and the perception of insecurity in the public space are intimately linked with a social, sociological, and historical construction.

As can be gleaned from the foregoing, it is difficult to change how society thinks, and therefore, women must be protected. But, more than protected, a way must be found so that they and individuals who do not fit into the female-male binary can occupy and appropriate urban spaces like any other user. In that sense, creating apps is useful and effective if their objective is not solely based on a business model and if they are accompanied by an assessment and follow-up that impact urban public policies. Until now, no analyses or studies exist that show who the users of these apps are or in what conditions and urban contexts they use them. For example, in the data I obtained from a brief survey of 98 people (80 women and 18 men), only 8 (7 women and 1 man) said they had an app to feel safer and only 2 said they used them every day.

The Importance of Collaboration Between Groups and Researchers

Studies with a gender focus about daily mobility have shown that women's itineraries and planned activities are much more fragmented than those of men. This is due to the large number of women's activities that involve taking care of themselves. Equally, it has been shown that the way they enjoy the city and appropriate urban spaces is completely different.

We can conclude that inventing digital tools is not a definitive solution for gender violence in our societies. Undoubtedly, they help make visible the anomalies of a city that is non-inclusive and non-accessible for everyone, men and women. The use of "high-tech" solutions must continue, but associated with a "low-tech" solution that

includes local actions on a neighborhood level, as has already been done: leaving a light on to create a safer environment on the street during the night; proposing more frequent public transportation —and why not? making it gender-friendly, too—; holding collective nighttime marches; and, above all, creating more interest in gender socialization from childhood on, since that is the stage of life in which sex and gender codes are forged. VM

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Yolanda Macías*

The Domestic Night: Transformations, Relevance, and Continuity

Sergey Nikolaev / Unsplash

Nighttime is the equivalent of half of a lifetime. However, in the social imaginary, it has been subsumed by daytime and is seen almost always as a secondary category. In contrast with the day, people do not see it as part of normalcy; they think of it, rather, as the sphere of emptiness, darkness, and rest, or, to the contrary, the festive, the noisy, and also the sordid and dangerous. Probably because the representations of the night oscillate between the extremes of irrelevance and the extraordinary, its day-to-day specificity is systematically ignored.

These polarized, stereotypical representations have produced and reproduced blind spots about the social transcendence of the night, which is why it has only very recently been recognized as a temporal space with its own characteristics, very different from those of the day. It is thanks to these explorations that it has been possible to recognize how both legitimate and illegitimate nocturnal activities and bodies have been created: for example, who can do what, where, and when, depending on the social space he/she/they occupy in the world. As a result, demands have arisen, among others, for the right to the nighttime city, women's right to recognize themselves in the public space when the sun goes down, and to do so safely. In this intersection between academic research and social demands, interesting, fruitful work has been done about the weight of nightlife in the economic sphere and the creative and cultural industries, among other topics.[1]

Even given that these concerns have been gaining ground in both the practical and the academic world, one dimension continues to be ungraspable: the domestic night, or night at home. This belongs irrefutably to the category of the day-to-day, which, paradoxically, is the remaining piece that is the most laborious to clarify. What is most familiar to us is the first thing that escapes our gaze and the most difficult to figure out. My interest in studying this aspect lies in trying to analyze this fragment of life that we question the least.

The domestic night includes —but is not limited to— rest, self-care, and the care of others (the ordinary kind, like meals and hygiene, and the out-of-the-ordinary kind like celebrating special occasions). It can include work and leisure; it is the space *par excellence* where courtship is woven and intimacy shared, where one seeks out one's friends since, for most people, it is the kingdom of free time.

A historical look at the domestic night can show how even what we conceive of as biological processes, like sleeping, are actually social acts that have morphed down through time until they have produced the domestic night that we know today. In that sense, I describe the contemporary domestic night as a resource for exploring and forging people's most important emotional links, and I identify the sexual division of labor that is the basis for the creation and the maintenance of the rituals that nourish those links.

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The Night that Has Not Always Been

By definition, the night is the period of darkness between sundown and sunup. This fact is the only thing static about it. Its practices, meaning, representations, legitimate uses and users, its objects, the nocturnal repertoire of people, and even the technology that molds it change from one culture to another and over time. All in all, these peculiarities seem invisible in the face of the inertia of everyday living. They have probably been ignored because they seem irrelevant. Historically, people have assumed that everything that happens at night (magical thinking in general; the socialization that fosters intimacy; rest and sexual encounters; recreational activities; and the emotional states they generate) has no consequences on daily life.

In addition to the night/day binary, most of the night in almost all cultures and eras has been dedicated to rest, and sleep is thought to be a biological process, whose characteristics are determined by *Nature*. This naturalization of sleep has prevented it from being researched historically; most hypotheses are based on present-day assumptions using a medical perspective. Advice and products for sleeping have colonized popular culture and affirm that sleep patterns obey a biological mandate, that they have always been as they are because it is a *natural* event, when recent discoveries have revealed that the current scheme of uninterrupted sleep has existed for only two centuries.

In an exhaustive review of texts mentioning the night dating between the years 1300 and 1800, scholars have found abundant references to two stages of sleep: the first lasted about four hours, followed by a period of wakefulness of about two hours called "nocturnal resurrection," followed by a second period of sleep of about four more hours before waking in the morning. The period of wakefulness in the middle was used to visit neighbors, have sex, or reflect on people's dreams. In times when territories had not been pacified, neighboring households organized to sleep together in a large common area while the men took turns standing guard.

Little by little, the domestic night began to be the stage for different social activities. In the seventeenth century, the beds of the aristocracy served as the place for births, marriages, and deaths. They were semi-public, where people who were not necessarily intimates but with whom one had some kind of social commitment were entertained. Nocturnal space served to socialize and promote social links.

With the proliferation of different kinds of artificial illumination, nocturnal life was revolutionized the world over. In the United States, homes that could afford the cost of interior lighting began to experience domestic night based on two essential but separate activities: rest and sociability. Rest began to demand rooms exclusively for that purpose: dark, private, and quiet. And the two-part sleep cycle was abandoned: we became creatures of a single sleep cycle, which also took place in private with only people from the closest family circle or alone. Nocturnal domestic sociability began to require specific objects to be able to gratify guests; items like candles, tables, tablecloths, chairs, and cutlery became popular. The quality of the objects depended on the finances of each family, but the custom of stimulating social ties through celebrations, rituals, and festive routines permeated all social classes in the United States.[2]

This complex transition gave rise to the domestic night dominant in urban North America today. I must emphasize that, regardless of the specific activities that have been carried out in domestic night down through history, we must emphasize their social function. The relevant aspect for my approach is not only what is done, but what its aim is. At the center of nocturnal domestic sociability, we find the creation, maintenance, and reinforcement of emotional ties.

Our Domestic Night

Contemporary homes are configured in ways that were not possible in the past: households with fewer or no children, those headed by women, those consisting of romantic partners, or roommates without any romantic or blood ties have necessarily changed the urban domestic night. In addition, life stories are now segmented into different stages; people accept that childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age are different moments in life with unique characteristics. And it is precisely in the nocturnal domestic space where the rituals associated to the transitions between the stages are most frequently put into action.[3]

For children and teens, spending the night in someone else's house gives them a glimpse of other ways of living, revealing the powerful truth that not everyone lives like

The contemporary domestic night allows for exploring and forging people's most important emotional links. The sexual division of labor is the basis for the creation and maintenance of the rituals that nourish those links.

they do. They experience different ways of eating and sleeping; they adjust their behavior to different rules; and they discover other ways of being and doing. Equally important is the stage in which, through the domestic night, people try out different ways of being an adult and deciding about what and how to do things where they live. The most powerful emotional experiences that young adults associate with becoming functional adults are linked with the purchase of objects that allow them to host evenings of entertainment for their friends. The variety of objects and services involved in contemporary nocturnal leisure goes far beyond what is needed to set the table; now they include television sets, sound equipment, and subscriptions to streaming services, among other items. Finally, the ritual of transition that marks a new stage in life the most is the moment in which they become the hosts of a family celebration.

Like any other kind of social link, the family that people decide to form requires rituals, living together, and memories to bind the relationships in the long term. This means that family celebrations, ranging from birthday parties to religious festivities or intimate commemorations, are highly symbolically charged. The repetition of these family rituals implicitly brings with it the responsibility of creating happy memories, reinforcing the group identity, and serving as anchors to identity. This work, like most domestic issues, has been delegated to women.

While parity in housework and child-raising has become a priority among young couples, the work needed so that leisure and celebrations can happen has not been recognized as such. Leisure work is disguised as devotion and dedication. Although successfully organizing festive domestic rituals does produce satisfaction, it also involves an enormous amount of both physical and emotional work. Feminist researchers have initiated a line of research until now only minimally explored about leisure and women. They have managed to identify gendered and class-based inter-generational mechanisms of transmitting knowledge about domestic leisure. Not only is adulthood practiced; so is femininity.

These rituals are reproduced because they are one more of the complex contemporary manifestations of self-care and care of others. Solidarity, friends, and romances are not only woven in routine, but in rituals, specifically those that happen at home, at night. The festive in the domestic night stimulates closeness and provides the links with the solidity needed for people to deal with life together, in each other's company.

Situating the domestic night at the center of reflections both about the social sciences and daily life allows us to recognize, make visual, propose, act, and practice more equitable domestic arrangements. Those new arrangements would allow for a better distribution of the work needed for nocturnal domestic leisure, which in turn generates the spaces necessary for happiness and solidarity. VM

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Notes

1 The CISAN is host to the first permanent seminar on night studies in a Mexican research center. It is coordinated by Dr. Alejandro Mercado (CISAN), Dr. Michaël Spanu (CISAN), Dr. Edna Hernández (IDA-Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest), and Dr. Will Straw (McGill University). Most of the research about the night in North America has been socialized in this seminar, which covers, but is not limited to, the examples I mention in this article.

2 This process happened in stages; the cities began to have artificial lighting, hastening the disappearance of sleep in stages. The rituals of domestic sociability also became more sophisticated first in cities and in the most opulent homes. Historians agree that both models of sleeping and sociability coexisted for a period of up to two centuries.

3 These ideas come from the fieldwork I did for my doctoral tesis, "Emociones y desigualdades en el ocio urbano nocturno" (Emotions and Inequalities in Nighttime Urban Leisure).

Luis Carbayo / cuartoscuro.com

Mauricio Patrón Rivera*

Circadian Rhythm

In the artificial glow of electric lights, avenues are repaired and sidewalks and public squares are cleaned. In Spanish we use the passive voice, preceded by "*se*" when the subject of the sentence is omitted. An action is taking place without an identified subject. It reads as if avenues, sidewalks, public squares, trees, public lighting, and other infrastructure maintained themselves, as if their state were free. The subjects of such work are rendered invisible on account of their standing as handlers of excesses. It is a job conceived to eliminate what we do not want to see and the workers who do it share the same fate.

Keeping a place like Mexico City clean involves repairing, removing, or scrubbing a seething mass of imperfections with no beginning or end. It is the work of hundreds of thousands of hands kept busy so that the rest of us can move through it. Their goal: to remove time that has been transformed into dirt; it is a relentless task.

Maintain means "to have in one's hands." They grasp every square inch of city, tentatively, to make sure it is in

Cleaning the urban apace is the work of thousands of anonymous hands; their goal: to remove time that has been transformed into dirt.

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good shape; they examine and feel, making sure it is sound. Their work is of such importance that, in times of epidemic, they have been recognized as essential workers.

Cleaning crews advance with motorized and manual sprayers and high-pressure power washers, disinfecting the city's main business districts and subway stations. They spray sidewalks, curbs, street furniture, posts, and handrails with a mixture of bleach and water.

Today, cleanliness and health are nearly synonymous, but it has taken hundreds of years to align those two universes to the point where they look alike to our common sense. Understanding health as a consequence of hygiene is a tendency that emerged in medicine in the nineteenth century and is known as "social hygiene."

The social hygiene movement has its origins in the fight against epidemics; it treats people as cells in a larger system, and imposes order and cleanliness not on an individual but on the social body. To eradicate epidemics, it manages the population as a whole. Its goal is preventive and it applies medicine on the scale of public policy. Its soul is in the order of bodies. For that reason, social hygiene found its way into the logic of governance, urbanism, and architecture; its application was assigned to groups regulated with military logic: police corps, doctors and nurses, cleaning crews, etc.

The social hygiene movement in Mexico City began with the late eighteenth-century Bourbon reforms. Count Revillagigedo made cleanliness, control, and order his priorities when he took over the government of New Spain in 1789. His reorganization brought with it the first public lighting project; works were undertaken to create the first underground sewer system; paving streets with cobble stones was planned; and the first public transportation system was created, transforming the city's landscape and health.

From this enlightened perspective, the public spaces of colonial life, streets and public squares, should no longer be places to spend time but to move through. People and goods, along with their fluids and soil, should only pass through. These ideas took more than a century to become part of the population's common sense, first with the Reform laws and then with Porfirian positivism.

Prior to this transformation, people used the streets as an extension of domestic life. Public squares were a Baroque whirlwind. It was common to defecate in public, pile garbage at intersections, use the street as a workspace for various trades, or set up vending stands. People washed

Health as a result of hygiene is a tendency that emerged in medicine in the nineteenth century and is known as "social hygiene," a movement that originated in the fight against epidemics.

clothing and animals drank from public fountains. People occupied and conducted their affairs in the streets, but Revillagigedo wanted them to be merely a place for movement, where nothing stood still.

Inside homes, where people's private lives played out and which were their preferred space for socializing and entertainment, architecture also underwent notable changes. Priority was given to outhouses and baths; the former were placed on the upper floors far from the rest of the rooms, while baths were rooms with tubs for bathing.

Maintenance efforts linked private spaces, like the bathroom and kitchen, with the rest of the metropolis. Water, electricity, and telecommunications are services that form a territory over the territory and connect homes and buildings with one another.

Hygiene combined personal cleanliness with large hospitals and public health policies. This extension allowed habits to be managed as another form of governance. Order would allow policymakers to make uniform decisions about a larger population in a shorter time. Order is the prerequisite for control.

This reordering included a change in the thinking of the city's inhabitants. Public space began to be seen as a necessary condition for private space and, at that point, urban services began to be a decisive factor in property values. Already hygiene was linked to medical and military logic and its strategies dominated urban planning.

The changes that shaped the modern city included many other theories beyond social hygiene, and according to the ideas of the Enlightenment, a clean city was also a beautiful city. In fact, it was in that period that Mexico was named the City of Palaces and people began to feel repugnance toward their own collection of feces, urine, blood, and other fluids. For Mexico to be spectacular, it was necessary to hide its waste, dispose of its garbage, and eliminate its foul odors.

The modern city installed its taste, its light fixtures, asepsis, and cobblestone streets, its government of sewers and drainpipes, over a larger, chaotic city. That other city

continues to multiply in the incessant hum of activity, cultivates popular culture, and finds ways to survive.

That city lacked running water; in its slums and neighborhoods, a wagon still collected its human waste, hauling it away to hide on the outskirts. The social hygiene plan imposed its aesthetic and its morality, but forgot to urbanize, to construct its project, in that other city without palaces and with no court.

Today, the fantasy of the city crumbles at every turn. The urban scenery is as thick as a layer of dust. You need only cast your gaze about to find what social hygiene considers imperfect, ugly, and dirty. Crushed soda cans, used pieces of chewing gum, potholes, and cracks in the pavement are the rubble making the way to the other city, where the multitudes in charge of maintenance prepare to make their entrance.

When I see cleaning crews at work, I observe that social hygiene has failed as an ideal to extend health to all. Urban maintenance personnel lack decent working conditions; however, their work is what dignifies our lives. To date, some 50 of them have lost their lives to COVID-19.

The patterns of our production, consumption, and waste give rhythm, shape, and flow to our communal existence. The city is a hub where increasing population density accelerates exchanges and the production of garbage. However, society places greater value on producing and consuming goods than on disposing of them.

Day after day the cry is heard: "We buy mattresses, bed frames, refrigerators, washing machines, microwave ovens, or any scrap metal you want to sell." In Spanish, the spectral recording uses the impersonal voice of "*se*," —these items are bought, "we" don't buy them—, reminiscent of the waste wagon of colonial times. It is broadcast by a loudspeaker in the voice of those who recycle scrap. You see them only if you have something to sell.

When the day's collecting ends, the cleaning of the whole scenery begins. On the dark side of the day, by law the night shift starts at 10 p.m., an hour defined based on biological time. Night workers contradict their own circadian rhythm; their bodies release more of the stress hormone cortisol, altering their blood pressure, and are forced to change their digestive habits; they sleep much less, either because they go against their natural cycles or because they work a second job by day.

On this stage without an audience appeared the first workers of the night, the night watchmen. They were responsible for regulating street lighting, and their position as guardians of the light also made them police-like figures, linking their work to cleanliness, order, and control.

In the lamplit gloom, a labyrinthine roster of trades before dawn unfurled. Street sweepers, gardeners, cleaners of street furniture, watchmen, restorers, laborers . . . sleepless people, because if they dreamed, the city would fall to pieces.

Underpaid and laboring in unsafe conditions, hundreds of workers wield brooms and hoses, drive tank trucks with chemicals, suit up in coveralls, or prepare paint and mortar to restore historic buildings. Plastic barriers and cordons of reflective tape go up in the streets, workers tear up the asphalt carpet while others lay new asphalt or pour cement to pave the sidewalks. It hardly matters that somewhere a dog immortalizes its footprints, because they will do it all over again anyhow. Their job is to erase the passing of time from the streets and bring them back to the present; and the work never ends.

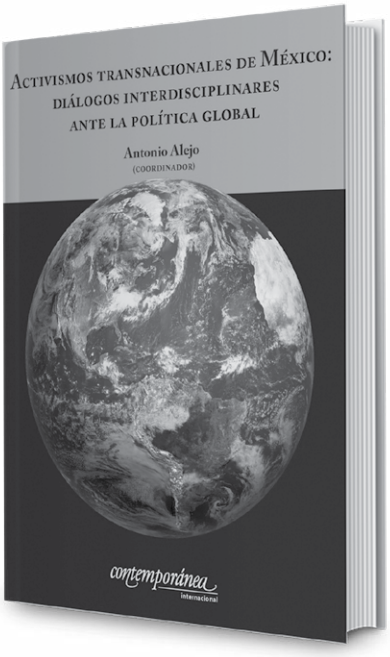
The time for cleaning and maintenance contrasts with the time for production, which is why it is usually done at night. The city that makes and spends money should not be interrupted. That city forgets that the city of maintenance has been scrubbing and repairing until sunrise.

In the historic downtown, 200 people are in charge of sweeping, applying high pressure water spray, watering plants, and removing graffiti after protests. How must it feel to scrub "killer government" off marble hundreds of years old?

It is thanks to its maintenance workers that Mexico City functions, but they do not even receive a decent wage and benefits. On the contrary, social hygiene has seen to it to classify its workers below the threshhold of decency, the poverty line; they clean and maintain a city they are unable to enjoy. Today, maintenance workers toil through the wee hours, underpaid and underappreciated, resisting a pandemic.

Early, as denizens of the daylight stumble about finding our coffee makers, the multitudes of maintenance workers migrate back to the city's outskirts. VM

These workers' job is to erase
the passing of time from the streets,
returning them to the present;
and the work never ends.



Activismos transnacionales de México: Diálogos interdisciplinarios ante la política global
(Transnational Activisms in Mexico: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Context of Global Politics)
Antonio Alejo, ed.
Mexico City, Instituto Mora (2018)[1]

A rich —although still incipient— literature on citizen and alternative diplomacy exists in Spanish. The book *Activismos transnacionales de México: Diálogos interdisciplinares ante la política global* (Transnational Activisms in Mexico: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Context of Global Politics) is an excellent sample of a collective project meant to offer new theoretical definitions and real case studies of citizen diplomacy.

This combination of different theoretical perspec tives, such as decoloniality, feminism, corporate citizenship, alternative diplomacy, and Mexican migrants' activism in the United States, makes the book a rich compendium on how to approach alternative politics. Paraphrasing Rebecka Villanueva, author of the prologue, it is not only a book on politics for the people, but on the politics of the people, of the actions of citizens who make global democracy possible.

According to editor Antonio Alejo, this work centers on how transnational activism contributes to the decentralization of international relations. Alejo writes, "The relationships between citizenship and politics go beyond the nation-state and lead to, among others, the various discussions on the state of citizenship in an intensely globalized world" (p.16).

The book's 12 chapters by authors from various institutions in Mexico, Spain, the United States, and the Netherlands has intrinsic educational value, as it provides a valuable state-of-the-art of previous studies in transnational activism. I was unable to find a similar piece of work in Mexico that combined such a wide range of interdisciplinary views on the outcomes of global activism in international politics.

The background is varied. Transnational activism in Mexico has been addressed in more than 4 000 scientific articles that focus mainly on case studies and social protest. Among international forerunners of this scholarship, I recall the article by Thomas Olesen, researcher at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, published 14 years ago in the journal *Current Sociology*.[2] At that time, Olesen wrote of the plurality of transnational publics as part of a transnational public sphere. For Olesen, the infrastructure of transnational publics resembled a polycephalous network, that is to say, simultaneously centralized and segmented, combining direct and indirect connections. Although at the time Olesen was writing that article, the rise of Twitter and other social networks had not yet occurred, he had a visionary perspective when he stated that communication and connections are the essence of transnational audiences ("the blood"), both for direct communication and mediation. At the same time, Olesen identified the existence of counter-publics, which responded to the need of democratizing the flow of information and political actions.

Other authors, such as Ruud Koopmans,[3] also highlighted the need for alternative movements to gain visibil-

ity and resonance in the national and transnational public sphere. Visibility refers to the degree to which leaders are seen and heard in the public sphere. Resonance refers to the degree to which leaders respond to stakeholders, such as political media and social movements. The key social movements of transnational audiences constantly move between transnational audiences and one or more national public spheres.

It has not been that long since Olesen's and Koopmans's publications. Dialogue and discussion continue in a framework of complex global emergencies that force us to think and sometimes be part of global activism. Antonio Alejo offers a new approach on alternative publics and networks in the chapter called, "NGO Diplomas: Equipo Pueblo and Beyond 2015 in Mexico." In a similar way to that of previous authors, he analyzes NGO diplomacy in the context of globalization, interconnectivity, and interdependence, a required theoretical framework still valid today. To put it in Alejo´s words, the actors who carry out NGO diplomacy are "agents of social appropriation of diplomacy in an environment of intense multidimensional globalization, characterized, among other components, by their weak democratic institutions and the lack of transparency in their global policy decision-making processes" (p. 303).

The present collective work is structured in three equally important parts: a) global governance and transnational activism in Mexico; b) the sociology of collective action and transnational activisms in Mexico; and, c) the study of international relations and transnational activisms in Mexico.

It provides novel and relevant case studies of transnational mobilization, among others, the global actions and the international caravans of the families of the Ayotzinapa students; the establishment of the Amnesty International regional office for the Americas in Mexico; and the binational mobilizations of the Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations from California in support of the San Quintín day-laborers' demands.

One of this book's vital themes is migration diplomacy, understood not as the sole task of diplomats or the responsibility of diasporas, but as a combination of the two. In this regard, the work of Xochitl Bada and Shannon Gleeson is a great contribution based on ethnographic work at the Labor Rights Week in the United States. Their article is about collaboration between official, citizen, and media diplomacy to defend migrants, especially low-income and undocumented migrants, from labor abuse. The authors note,

Transnational actors that participate in global activism are vital for the democratic process worldwide, as well as for political plurality.

> A prevailing issue for Mexican immigrant workers, a third of whom are estimated to be undocumented (Passel and Cohn, 2009), is retaliation by employers and the threats of detention-deportation they receive, particularly during union organizing campaigns. (p. 244-245)

The chapter also has historical value, since it analyzes the operation of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad Advisory Council, an older initiative that no longer exists. Bada and Gleeson outline consulates' central role as intermediaries between companies, unions, and migrant workers, as well as the need for their assistance in signing memoranda of understanding with local and federal bodies in the United States. While not always binding, these agreements help to at least prevent theft of wages.

On the whole, the book presents complex proof of how citizen diplomacy has to be anchored abroad in order to survive. In this sense, transnational actors that participate in global activism are vital for the democratic process worldwide, as well as for political plurality. According to editor Antonio Alejo, citizen diplomacy is "a form of social participation and advocacy in the decision-making processes of global politics that have repercussions in the life of the population" (p. 315).

The book *Activismos transnacionales de México: Diálogos interdisciplinares ante la política global* invites the reader to reexamine the concept of new diplomacy and enrich its new meanings to respond to a complex international reality. Above all, it offers a profound perspective on how activism may help diplomats through opposition.

Antonio Alejo has spent more than a decade on his research about "organizational and narrative repertoires for influencing the decision-making processes of global policies" (p. 304). Despite the existence of inherent tensions in the interaction between official and track-two diplomacy, the editor observes a historical improvement

in the quality of the formal relationships among actors from civil society, international organizations, and governments. However, he also points to the constant deterioration and fragility of this relationship, which breaks down easily as both citizens and diplomatic institutions find collaboration difficult. In this sense, further research could address the impact of non-traditional diplomatic actors on opening up international negotiations. VM

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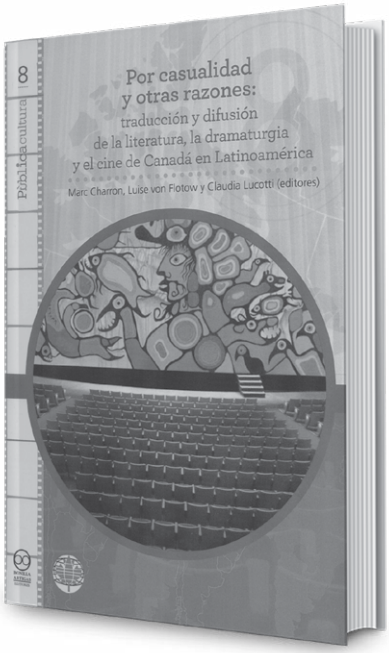
Notes

1 Antonio Alejo is a researcher at the Instituto Galego de Análise e Documentación Internacional. He was a visiting scholar at CISAN in autumn 2019 and is part of the Network of Researchers on North America.

2 Olesen, Thomas, "Transnational Publics: New Spaces of Social Movement Activism and the Problem of Global Long-sightedness," *Current Sociology* vol. 53, no. 3 (2005), 419-440.

3 Rudd Koopmans, "Protest in Time and Space: The Evolution of Waves of Contention," in David A. Snow, Sarah Anne Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), pp. 19-46.

Por casualidad y otras razones: traducción y difusión de la literatura, la dramaturgia y el cine de Canadá en Latinoamérica (By Chance and Other Reasons: Translation and Dissemination of Canadian Literature, Drama, and Cinema in Latin America)
Marc Charron, Luise von Flotow,
And Claudia Lucotti, comps.
Bonilla Artigas Editores and Consejo
Internacional de Estudios Canadienses
Mexico City, 2018, 172 pp.



This volume presents a brief but substantial and plural review of some of the cultural ties among Canada, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil constituted not through literature, theater, and film *per se*, but through the translation of Canadian literature, theater, and film into Spanish and Portuguese. Perhaps both end up being the same if we recognize openly and consciously —the underlying meaning of several of the ideas put forward in the book— that the translation of a work, of whatever kind, is usually the pre-requisite for approaching it and is a necessary, constituent element of it.

The panorama proposed by the body of *Por casualidad y otras razones…* is framed by certain hypotheses explored from the point of view of translation studies. This field, inaugurated in the 1970s by a series of academic voices interested in the systematic, descriptive, critical, and not exclusively linguistic study of the textual, cultural, social, and political phenomenon of translation, aids in understanding the position, functioning, and circulation of these works. This book can also be examined in light of the discussions of translation, comparative literature, and world literature by Emily Apter and Pascale Casanova when they delve into the historic role of translation in the construction and consolidation of cultural and literary objects, which in turn will form traditions and cultural hegemonies that it is fundamental to reflect upon.

From these visions, then, it is significant that the first two articles ("La diffusion de los cines anglocanadiense y quebequense y la possible formación de un público Mexicano" [The Dissemination of Anglo-Canadian and Quebec Film and the Possible Formation of a Mexican Audience], by Graciela Martínez Zalce, and "El teatro canadiense en Latinoamérica: traducción y diffusion" [Canadian Theater in Latin America: Translation and Dissemination], by Hugh

Hazelton) very concretely inaugurate the argument made throughout the book that certain basic, persistent problems exist. Both articles pinpoint the lack of recognition of translation work and lead us to reflect on the fact that due attention is not given to the name of the person who writes the subtitles and the dubbing script for audiovisual works. Among other consequences, this can lead to a lack of awareness that the translations used are marked by the historicity of the specific dialogue involving the translator and not merely the author.

Both these articles also emphasize, as do others in the book, the issue of institutional support for translation projects. They mention that in Quebec, above all, this kind of support does exist; this is politically and culturally very important for the profession due to the special characteristics and role that the province has played in this regard. They also mention it in their critical comment about the systems of corruption and cronyism that are barriers to fostering the translation of Canadian texts. This can be understood given the attention that contemporary translation studies pay to the media and conditions in which translations are produced. In this sense, it is fundamental to point out the cultural policies and political customs in cultures, which affect translation, and, therefore, communication and the relationship between linguistic and cultural traditions.

Also, speaking of certain concrete and even material elements involved in circulating the text makes it possible to observe that literature depends on translation for its construction and placement in national and international literary spaces. Douglas Kristopher Smith deals with this in his article "La traducción del exilio, en el exilio; el exilio en traducción: el caso de Chile" (The Translation of the Exile Community in Exile; Exile in Translation. The Case of Chile). As Walter Benjamin points out in "La tarea del traductor" (The Translator's Task), this serves to prolong its life, but it is not due only to the will of the translator, but to the convergence of the mechanisms of publication and dissemination of interested, willing, and ideal actors.

Smith's article, on the other hand, makes us aware that translation is both an individual and a collective act, and that it participates in national and international processes marked by the extra-literary that need to be seen, from the translation itself, in its full historicity and as a part of complex socio-cultural and political developments. This is the case of the Chilean exile community and the way it has affected cultural production in more than one country.

Marta Huertas Prego, in her "Traducción y difusión de obras de teatro canadienses en Uruguay" (Translation and Dissemination of Canadian Plays in Uruguay), points out a daily translation practice centered on the real dimension of dramatic performance and the work done by people who actually work in the theater. She underlines that in the Uruguayan theater something happens that we can also see as a general problem facing translation: the participation and payment of professionals who have specific training in the field are thought to be unnecessary. Huertas Prego adds another crucial issue: the non-existence or deficiencies of translation criticism seen not as a curiosity or journalistic condescension, but as a serious, specialized practice of analysis and cultural and literary criticism that can see this task as much more than a vehicle for getting to the original text.

A close relationship exists between translation and the formation and problematization of identities. This is the central discussion in the other two articles, "De Quebec a Brasil: la traducción como un diálogo fructífero entre *Américanité* y *Americanidade*" (From Quebec to Brazil: Translation as a Fruitful Dialogue between *Américanité* and *Americanidade*), by Marc Charron and Luise von Flotow, and "*Born in Amazonia* de Cyril Dabydeen en portugués: la cultura en traducción" (*Born in Amazonia* by Cyril Dabydeen in Portuguese: Culture in Translation), by Miguel Nenevé and Simone Norberto.

In the discussion of their translation of poems that touch on Canadian and South American mythical elements —and are therefore culturally determined and located—, Nenevé and Norberto postulate that those who study specific translations often do not only reflect on something given, but also construct their own object of study. This constitutes an approach on at least two levels (the origin and persons responsible for the object being explored, and the origin and those responsible for the observation and exploration of the object), and implies an exercise of self-criticism.

Through their observations about what nourished their translation process, Nenevé and Norberto delineate notions of identity marked by cultural and literary plurality, in what turns out to be a concern shared by the text contributed by Charron and Flotow. The latter show the relationship between the two connected concepts that

deal with notions of identity (*américanité* and *americanidade*) and explore their links to the translation into Portuguese of Jacques Godbout's *An American Story* (1986).

This article offers a series of commentaries about the novel's paratextual elements, and, with that, makes more flexible and broadens out the notions of "translation," since it goes beyond the "strictly linguistic" to consider other textualities and mechanisms for constructing meaning, representation, and circulation. The authors' clear problematization of the relationship between the identity-linked concepts of *américanité* and *americanidade* —following Edwin Gentzler's *Translation and Identity in the Americas* (2008) and Emily Apter's *Against World Literature* (2013)— also leads them to question translatability and the transfer of concepts and tools that we use to talk about, in this case, identity and translation.

That is, the article discusses the mobility of base concepts transported through translation and that become the point of departure for our argumentations about issues of culture and identity. It takes us through translation as an actor in the construction of concepts and ideas, a crucial epistemological element, and leaves behind the image of translation as a factor of transmission with a secondary, derived function. Flotow and Charron open an indispensable discussion:

> If these are Quebec novels in which *américanité* is a distinctive trait, what does this mean in translation? Is it precisely this quality that makes it easier for them to travel to the rest of the Americas? If that is the case, what remains of the Quebec *américanité*? Is it preserved in the translation? Does it mix with —or perhaps resist— the other possible forms of *américanité*, whether they be Anglo-Canadian *Americanness*, Hispano-American *americanidad*, or the Brazilian *americanidade*? (p. 126)

To the negative response and the suppositions derived therefrom by Flotow and Charron (the possibility that it had occurred with non-fiction texts and that *américanité* had even been a criterion for choosing the work for translation), I would add a question about the awareness that the translator may have had of these issues. With that arises the need to explore the figure of the translator and the motivations that explain and justify the strategies chosen.

This book is proof that translation is a relevant process for the task and development of diverse interests and areas in literature and the humanities. This confirms what studies about translation have put forward for decades: the proposal to broaden out its field of action and observation beyond the linguistic and the literature considered in a conventional sense.

In addition to touching on these specific, clearly delineated areas, *Por casualidad y otras razones…* makes us aware of the way in which translation is crisscrossed by issues that have been pointed out for years by eminent theoreticians of translation like María Tymoczko, Edwin Gentzler, and Lawrence Venuti: translation is a process and, also, in and of itself, an analytical, critical reflection on the construction and functioning of identities, collectives, institutions, political, social, and cultural structures, and the power dynamics based on cultural and linguistic hegemonies that may be observed in the life and circulation of texts and the creation of literary traditions.

Until recently, in Mexico a gap has existed with regard to the practice, dissemination, and publication of studies of translation, above all from the point of view of the concrete experiences of translating and reflecting on this topic in Latin America and specifically in Mexico. The title of the Bonilla Artiga Publishing house "Pública cultura" (Public Culture) and "T de traducción" (T for Translation) collections show that this vacuum is no longer as big as it was and that these kinds of study are by no means lacking, nor is their publication, but rather, their wider distribution, which would turn them into authentic fields for inter- and intra-institutional discussion. It is no small matter that my exploration of the topic of translation has discovered above all theoretical, methodological, and critical proposals from Eurocentric academic circles. Our vision of what we do tends to be filtered and ruled by the tools and gaze of those spaces that, paradoxically enough, translation itself can disrupt. In that sense, this book is one way of doing that. And to that must be added, as also happens in this case, the possibility of establishing more equitable dialogues among the different parts of the hemisphere and constructing proposals that show the diversity of approaches that could arise out of the conversations among countries with different linguistic, cultural, and academic traditions, and that display the complexity of the notions of identity, culture, tradition, and translation. VM

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