

**Landscape, nationalism and cosmopolitanism in contemporary
Uruguayan and Ecuadorian poetry**

**The cases of Eduardo Milán, Iván Carvajal, Eduardo Espina and Fernando Nieto
Cadena**

Juan Rodríguez Santamaría

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Author: Juan Rodríguez Santamaría

Thesis title: Landscape, nationalism and cosmopolitanism in contemporary Uruguayan and Ecuadorian poetry: Eduardo Milán, Iván Carvajal, Eduardo Espina and Fernando Nieto Cadena.

Research questions:

How do the selected poets express their sense of identity and belonging—national, regional, cosmopolitan or other—in their work?

Why do commonalities occur between the poets' works, and what does this tell us about poetic discourse on nation and belonging in Uruguay and Ecuador?

Hypothesis of work:

There is a demonstrable relationship between the linguistic and ideological expression in certain poems by Eduardo Milán, Iván Carvajal, Eduardo Espina and Fernando Nieto Cadena and, further, with the ethnic, political and historical narratives that communities (whether at a local, national or global level) have constructed to define themselves. I will make this argument on two fronts.

First, the connection between linguistic and ideological expression can be shown through an examination of the circulation and reception of literary works within Latin America. In the case of minor literatures, this is especially important as a way of determining the reception's context, in which these writings can be read, discussed (critically and uncritically), and examined in their social value.

Secondly, the connection between poetry and ethnic, political and historical communities can be evidenced through examination of a dialogue between concepts of ethno-symbolism and cosmopolitanism, placing the notion of landscape at the centre of discussion. The key elements of landscape can be read stylistically, conceptually, and ideologically, as they connect the poetry of Carvajal, Milán, Espina and Nieto Cadena with broader notions of the nation and the global world.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the work of four contemporary poets, two from Uruguay and two from Ecuador, as examples of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of 'minor literatures'. By focusing on references to landscape (understood broadly) in their poems, this work examines how these poets explore questions of belonging to local, national, regional and international spaces. To this end, the thesis draws upon the different 'scapes' that form part of Arjun Appadurai's 'critical ethnography'.

This epistemological journey emerged from an initial question: In what way does landscape (understood in a broad sense) determine or condition the poetic writing of Latin American authors whose work exemplifies the concept of minor literature?

The importance of answering this question lies in some fundamental premises: 1) any poetic writing arises from a sensitive and social experience within the author's world (it is not an immanent, autotelic process); 2) reading poetry is an integral exercise that ranges from syntactic subtleties to reception and dissemination; 3) poetry has a social meaning, and, therefore, we find in it keys to understanding subtle aspects of human relationships in a specific community and within the globalised world; 4) the concept of minor literature is very useful to explain the development and reception of many works of the Latin American literature and; 5) a poem can recreate a social landscape which corresponds to a specific community.

In addition to the main question, a series of complementary questions seek to underpin the meaning and validity of these premises:

1) What is the relationship between the concept of minor literature and the critical, editorial and media response to these works?

2) How is the relationship between poetry and landscape configured?

3) Are there textual elements in poems written by Espina, Milán, Carvajal or Nieto—or at least in certain of their poems in which landscapes are perceptible—that might be characterised as national, cosmopolitan or anything else?

4) How does this research fit within the context of broader discussions of Latin American poetry?

In general terms, the argumentative development of these premises and the answers to these questions (in particular to the main question) configure the structure of this thesis.

The first key point is the concept of minor literature as formulated by Deleuze and Guattari—specifically, what ‘minor’ means in this context. Although the implications of this concept will be developed in later chapters, it is important to set out its fundamental aspects here. Within their schizo-analytic proposal for rethinking the relationships between individuals and power, Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of minor literature to discuss some works (like Franz Kafka’s) that shun centrality and territorialisation, that are refractory to belonging to a specific space, to a self-evident and unquestionable identity. Such works appeal instead to deterritorialisation, a process that supposes the questioning of and even the rupture with official history (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 28). This process can be the result of various factors: power struggles, economic factors, illness or migration to a new territory. The concept of reterritorialisation, on the other hand, is linked to the reestablishment or renewal of relations with a territory. In this sense, any literary work that calls for renewal in relations with the territory, identity and sense of belonging to a human community must be crossed by a process of deterritorialisation, by a deterritorialised writing. Of course, a simplistic view could point out that any literary work is ‘minor’. However, there are certain problems and specific features that verifiably and objectively characterise a minor literature. Chief among these is an antinormative, eccentric use of a major, central and predominant language (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 30). Thus, the problematic relationship that Latin American writers have had with Spain and its territories has led to rituals of accommodation, friction or outright rebellion against official and standard uses of language and major hegemonic norms.

This idea of minor literature (like the exercise of uncovering and dismantling social hegemonic, racial and linguistic boundaries) is convergent with an interpretation of poetry through landscape and of landscape through poetry. Namely, the notion of minor literature is a spatial category that acquires meaning and usefulness insofar as it allows us to identify a territory—sometimes abstract—on which a series of political axes such as belonging or deterritorialisation are established. From this perspective, the literary landscapes of a minor literary writing function as concrete facts of a political-cultural subversive focus where the centre and the periphery, the margin and the metropolis are challenged.

Thus, because of its comprehensive, integrating and holistic nature, the notion of landscape occupies a fundamental place in this thesis. The premise is to make an epistemic shift from the landscape (in its relationship to symbols or emotional attachments) to more abstract categories such as nation, state or global world. Of course,

the aim is not to turn landscape into a conceptual joker, a theoretical place where everything fits. Precisely for this reason, this thesis seeks to articulate these concerns with the concept of landscape, an idea that comes from cultural geography and is permeable to different transversal approaches. In fact, one of the founders of cultural geography, Denis Cosgrove, studied the genealogy and the meaning of the concept of landscape in detail and noted that the concept has recently been adopted by humanistic writers because of its holistic and subjective implications. However, the history of landscape suggests that its origins lie in the Renaissance humanists' search for certainty rather than as a vehicle of subjectivity. Landscape was a 'way of seeing' that was bourgeois, individualist and related to the exercise of power over space. Thus, Cosgrove defines landscape as 'a social and cultural product, a way of seeing projected on to land and having its own techniques and compositional forms; a restrictive way of seeing that diminishes alternative modes of experiencing our relations with nature' (Cosgrove 1998, 268). This idea of Cosgrove is important because it emphasises the political character of any delimitation, boundary, or perimeter. Thus, the idea of 'composition' is related to an exercise of discrimination of certain 'zones' of social, symbolic and affective experience. Thus, a landscape that comes from marginal, minority, eccentric experiences, when formulated in language, should be reinvented or recreated in an eccentric, deterritorialised, minor poetic text.

The limitation of Cosgrove's perspective is that for him and many geographers and landscape scholars, this category (linked to an idea of stable modernity) is restricted to fragments of reality delimited spatially and temporally. By contrast, an influential theorist who has correlated cosmopolitanism and cultural geography, Arjun Appadurai, changed this paradigm of studying landscape. From his perspective, postmodernism has made it necessary to understand landscapes as macro processes, as maps where a series of movements, nodes and elements shape a network where the tension between cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity, between hegemonies and marginalities, between peripheral and central countries, between major and minor literatures becomes manifest. Through the notion of new landscape, Appadurai explains the cultural dynamics of local, national, and global communities. The prospect of macroethnography—proposed by Appadurai—is consistent with the idea of cosmopolitanism as an inclusive theoretical field (Papastephanou 2016, 2) whose methodology may go beyond an understanding of the national issues, based on cultural similarities and differences (O'Neill 2015, 63). In that framework, the ethno-symbolism of Anthony Smith and David Aberbach—with its concern for vernacular and traditional elements—complements the cosmopolitan outlook

with a perspective that is a means of minutely explaining the significance of local, communal and national traditions in poetry.

Aberbach's studies focus mainly on authors sharing three characteristics: they all deal with traditional landscapes (Cosgrove 1998, 26), they are poets who wrote largely in first half of the 20th century, and they are celebrated in their respective countries (Aberbach 2007, 10). Appadurai's macroethnography proposal opens a door which allows us to better understand this problem by integrating the contributions of ethno-symbolism. To some extent, the concern of ethno-symbolism with socio-semiotics—where the understanding of the link between metaphorical language and collective mentality is fundamental (as in Lakoff 2009, 266)—becomes a very suggestive angle for understanding specific, sensitive, delimited landscapes (as in Cosgrove). On the other hand, the landscapes of Appadurai reveal flows and structures that surpass the human scale and that are only manifested in poetry through samples, fragments or pieces that on the one hand reveal a new temporality in human history and, on the other, to some extent include landscapes as Cosgrove understands them. These subtleties can be appreciated through this hybrid methodological formulation, with its focus on the notion of landscape combined with its attentiveness to concepts such as language, thought, culture, nation and place.

The concept of landscape is insufficient, however, without additional articulation through some arguments and theories from other intellectual disciplines, converging in the notion of landscape as understood in this thesis: a merging space of social experience. These concepts come from two different areas, cognitive linguistics and anthropology.

The first key point to complement the idea of landscape comes from cognitive sociolinguistics. Under the influence of romanticism (Lakoff and Johnson 2009, 268), many poets have claimed a radical separation between individual expression and community (and their distinct forms of understanding reality). However, this perspective responds more to a question of faith than to a rational perspective on the phenomena of language. Poetry, as the linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out, is not completely independent of the mentality and values that its author shares with his community of origin, upbringing or filiation (Lakoff and Turner 1989, xi). A detailed analysis of a poem of almost any author can show how a reader's perspective communicates or disagrees with the ways of thinking that author's community has developed. Lakoff and Johnson, in a work that seeks to unravel the relationship between the metaphors of everyday life and the mentality of a society, argue that an imaginative

understanding of the world is not free of impositions (2009, 273). In that essay, these authors demonstrate that humans' appreciation of language forms an experiential and interactional Gestalt. This indicates that our understanding of language encompasses multiple dimensions: politics, language, geography, feelings, and so on. Lakoff's ideas on poetry were developed in *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, where he insisted on the idea that poetry is not an art divorced from objective reality but is specifically interactional (Lakoff 1989, xi).

This perspective counteracts two biases that are deeply rooted in some academic or intellectual work in Latin America: 1) there is no metaphorical language in society (sociological and contextual readings) and 2) society has no place in poetry's structure, (structuralist, formalist and ontological readings). These approaches are based on the apparent insuperability of the gap between language and social experience. In contrast, Lakoff's idea that the phenomena of language occur in an interactional way questions these prejudices and biases even beyond the epistemological frontier of cultural studies. Thus, the challenge of this thesis is to demonstrate that Latin American poetry can be read within the framework of symbols, allegories and metaphors that a community shares. Latin America is characterised by a troubled and turbulent history, which has resulted in a highly complex territorial segmentation. This, in turn, has determined specific characteristics for the literary traditions of each country and region. These symbols have not only cultural, psychological and political roots, but geographical ones as well, taking into account the multiple environments and contexts that Latin American writers have been forced to confront. This is even more remarkable in the case of countries or communities whose literature can be classified as minor, in the Deleuzian sense of the word.

Thus we are led to the second key point complementing the idea of landscape, which points in a similar direction to the first: the anthropological relationship between language, culture and politics. Since this thesis proposes to read poetry as a language capable of cooperating toward a reasonable interpretation of what the shared ethnic, political and historical narratives of a community means, in this way poetry is neither a superior nor inferior type of text within a possible fabric of the social narratives of Uruguay and Ecuador. It is about reviewing how a dissident, anti-normative, deterritorialised language (which is Spanish, but not of Spain), can express a socially shared thought, identified with a community, nation or country. That relationship between

language, politics and culture is complex, and understanding the relationship requires clarifying what we understand as culture:

a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (Geertz 1973, 89)

These symbolic forms arise from webs of significance that human beings themselves have spun. Strictly speaking, culture is those webs, and the analysis of it is an interpretive analysis in search of meaning. These symbolic forms are not neutral but participate in semiotic and political relations with the geographic and political context that determines them, where power relations (centre-periphery, stability-instability, territorialisation-deterritorialisation) create meanings in specific cultural products. About this, the anthropologist and cultural theorist Clifford Geertz notes that the question ‘who are we?’ means asking what cultural forms—what systems of significant symbols—should be used to give value and meaning to the activities of the state and, by extension, to the civil life of its citizens (Geertz 1973, 171). Here the concept of ‘the state’ is key to glimpsing a fundamental problem of an investigation like this: belonging to a symbolic and affective community does not necessarily or exclusively mean belonging to a politically constituted state: there is never an absolute coherence between the nation-state and the symbolic community, except perhaps in totalitarian states. In the case of the poets analysed here, their writing reveals differing degrees and forms of adhesion to established community structures or to nation-states, but also profoundly singular (even individualistic) questionings to the symbolic representations of a community. The civic life of a citizen is not necessarily the subjective and imaginative consciousness: in fact, these usually go in opposite directions. Between the questioning of the state or the national or local community and the attempt to integrate their works into an interpretation of the respective national literary histories, political concerns are constant—even symptomatic—within these poems.¹

¹ It should also be noted that these poets primarily question a specific sense of the nation, that of the official status of the liberal state. Although they are not directly anti-nationalist or post-national—that is, even if they do not declare themselves multiculturalists—their criticism reveals the crisis of modern national states. However, in several ways, they recreate many Western intellectual resources, with the possible exception of Nieto Cadena.

The two aforementioned key points about metaphorical structure—and rhetoric in general—as a social and partially community product and the tense relationship between culture and language (that constantly challenges the political status quo of the society) reveal that the processes of creation are complex. However, the notion of landscape is able to integrate and support both abstract interpellations as well as sensorial ones.

That tension is more evident in some works that could be classified as minor. Although no work is alien to social dynamics, as mentioned earlier, there are certain books where authors leave clues and even explicit assertions about the relationship between their perspectives on the world and the societies in which they live. In such works, poetic writing does not intend to arise exclusively from a purely artistic, individual, authorial decision. Rather, these authors take advantage of the tension between a major language and a minority culture/community to express ideas, styles, tones that the official culture has repressed.

In exposing this link between a majority language and its ‘minority’ speakers, Geertz asked whether post-colonial varieties of Spanish are proper vehicles for modern thought (Geertz 1973, 172). If we investigate that ‘problem of language’ that Geertz points out, minor writings would be unsuitable paths for modern thought—that is, for logical, democratic, Eurocentric thinking. Precisely this irrationalist, asymmetric, anti-syntactic and hermetic character of many Latin American poetic writings (especially viewed in relation to trends in Spanish poetry) responds to an interactional dynamic with economic, social, historical and linguistic processes different from those that have determined life in Europe.

In that sense, the integration of characteristic phenomena (such as colonisation, economic and linguistic dependence, the presence of remnants of indigenous languages as substrates in Spanish or Portuguese, economic underdevelopment, political chaos, etc.) into poetic writing is the most important differential feature of Latin American poetry. In fact, the use of a deterritorialised Spanish that transfigures authors and authorship to create their own imaginative metaphors from vernacular thought systems and unique human experiences has allowed Latin American poetry to exist as such.

In the cases of Uruguay and Ecuador, there is a great variety of works of very different styles that could legitimately fit within the concept of minor literature. The choice of Uruguayans Eduardo Milán (b. 1952, Rivera, Uruguay) and Eduardo Espina (b. 1954, Montevideo, Uruguay) and Ecuadorians Iván Carvajal (b. 1948, San Gabriel, Ecuador) and Fernando Nieto Cadena (b. 1947, Guayaquil, Ecuador, d. 2017, Tabasco)

for the analysis undertaken in this thesis is not arbitrary. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, these poets are part of a specific and, in many respects, unique chronological and political generation who experienced the historical processes of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the left-wing political parties and guerrillas of Ecuador and Uruguay, the attempts at economic modernisation during 1960s and 1970s, the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s and the leftist governments of the first years of this century. All have also themselves experienced migratory processes.

In that sense, they belong to the same generation,² vacillating between processes broadly identified with Western history as the great narrative of modernity (including the notion of nation-state) and post-modernity (with its great challenges to History and Culture) and the most specific, secluded and atavistic aspects of Latin American history. Therein lies much of this generation's importance in the context of a question such as that posed in this thesis, in which the relationships between poetry and national communities are examined. In addition, these poets followed the great figures of the avant-garde and post-avant-garde periods, marking a different set of characteristics in terms of creative processes and critical reception.

Of course, the choice of authors for inclusion in this analysis can be questioned. For example, although it is reasonable to think that a woman—or any other poet—could be part of this study, the concrete generational span chosen suggested this selection over other possibilities, focusing on authors who lived their youth in the 1970s and who faced their maturity in the 1980s and 1990s, in the midst of the historical tension between modernity and postmodernity, between Marxist utopias and the failures of real socialism, between physical and linguistic exiles, et cetera. This clarification is very important, since the generation of Uruguayan female poets immediately preceding this period was probably more influential than the poets included here. However, the thematic concern of those poets rarely relates to national issues.³ For that reason, their inclusion in this study would have been slightly forced.

² In the Western context, more specifically Anglo-Saxon, they would belong to the generation of 'baby boomers', also known as the Me Generation, born mostly following World War II (from 1946 to 1964). Increased birth rates were observed during the post-World War II baby boom, making this a relatively large demographic cohort. That classification does not seem to fit its Latin American contemporaries, marked by geographical periphery and economic dependence.

³ The work of Idea Vilariño (1920–2009), Amanda Berenguer (1921–2010), Ida Vitale (b. 1923), Marosa di Giorgio (1932–2004) and Circe Maia (b. 1932) expresses a display of imagination and concision rarely seen in Latin American poetry. However, their concerns never led to 'the national', which does occur, even insistently, in Espina and Milán. In the case of later poets such as Cristina Peri Rossi (b. 1941) or Silvia Guerra (b. 1961), their works do include major political concerns, but of another nature (diversity, sexuality,

How does this selection of poets (and writings) allow me to answer my initial question about the relationship between landscape and poetic writing on identity and nationality?

One of the premises of this research is that a comprehensive reading of a poem ranges between the subtleties of syntax and the sociocultural aspects about books' reception. In the perspective presented here, the landscape constitutes an open, transversal, centripetal concept, integrating that continuum that is usually analysed fragmentarily. Critical studies on the relationship between geography, nationality and poetry in both Uruguay and Ecuador have been scarce.⁴ In that sense, a specific objective of this thesis is to analyse the links and interactions between the work of these Uruguayan and Ecuadorian poets and the ethnic, political and historical narratives that communities (whether at the local, national or global level) have constructed to define themselves. These narratives should be thought of as the intersection of several shared social myths through a series of political, technological and aesthetic devices and a set of rituals, assemblages and symbolic reinventions.

Thus explained, the task seems incommensurable and diffuse. However, attention to the most significant links and interactions between poetry and the self-referential discourses of a society makes the aim of this thesis more attainable. But what are the most significant social narratives?

Because it is impossible to record all the voices and thoughts of each member of a community, the self-referential narratives of a society—useful in contributing to a cooperative reading of the work of four South American poets—could be the following: 1) non-academic essays about national identity; the importance of such non-academic essays lies not only in the fact that the biases that persist in them in relationship to history, culture, geography and social life are more explicit, but also in that this type of general interest essay usually has hybrid structures (narrative, analytical, and literary) and creates connections with diverse disciplines and knowledge of very diverse nature; 2) essays written by the poets themselves on matters of various kinds, very important for understanding the convergences and contradictions of the authors, as well as the structural

fragmented body, etc.). On the other hand, in Ecuadorian poetry, in general much more traditional, these types of concerns are only evident in very recent authors like María Fernanda Espinosa (b. 1965), former President of the United Nations General Assembly.

⁴ The case of narrative is different, since critics have performed exhaustive readings under perspectives close to the one posed here. In this respect, emblematic books are *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* (1982) by Ángel Rama and *Literatura ecuatoriana* (1968) by Agustín Cueva.

differences between their reflective prose and their poetry; 3) symbols that are part of the general culture and whose circulation is not mediated by hymns, flags, emblematic songs, geographical references, etc.⁵ These elements can bring to light patterns of thought, customs and even social prejudices.

Hence, once the corpus's conceptual and argumentative framework has been established around the concept of landscape and nuanced with some complementary perspectives, it is important to point out that in Latin American cultural history, literary theory and criticism of poetry have taken diverse trajectories. In the first case, over the last 40 years, scholars have used heuristic approaches such as transatlanticism (Stevens 2004, 93-102), hybridisation (García Canclini 1995, 51), transculturation (Ortiz 2002, 35), post-coloniality (Bhabba 1994, 28), and post-Westernism (Mignolo 2011, 10) to grapple with issues of (post)nationhood and cosmopolitanism. These perspectives draw very suggestive philosophical and ideological horizons to interpret the major stages of culture, but their direct application to Latin American poetry has been non-specific and dispersed.

By contrast, the most influential studies of Latin American poetry have, instead, been carried out by poets. These studies have almost always had an essayistic (Paz 1956; Lezama Lima 1957; Yurkievich 1971; Sucre 1985) or philosophical character (Landa 1996). Several more recent studies take an intermediate position, devoting attention to both stylistic and contextual features. These range from studies of specific periods like the avant-garde (Unruh 1994) or feminist focuses (Kamenzain 2000) to academic works close to ecocriticism (Forns Broggi 2012) and approaches between political philosophy and stylistics (Barreto 2015). The body of work is small, but markedly diverse. In addition, current phenomena of globalisation have necessitated the introduction of major theoretical approaches such as transatlanticism (focused on understanding long-distance cultural exchanges between America and Europe) and cosmopolitanism which go beyond, interpellating the strictly Latin Americanist approach. Some interpreters of Latin American poetry have begun to take this approach (e.g., Barreto 2015).

In addition, it should be noted that a series of very relevant studies have been published in the Anglo-Saxon context that have a perspective marked by a linguistic and cultural otherness. Thus, for example, there are monographs such as *A Companion to*

⁵ Some slogans (metonyms) about Ecuador, for example, are: Ecuador país Amazónico (Ecuador Amazon Country), Ombligo del mundo (Navel of the world), República Bananera (Banana Republic), Pequeña Potencia Cultural (Small cultural power).

Pablo Neruda: Evaluating Neruda's Poetry by Jason Wilson (2008) and *Politics, Poetics, Affect: Re-visioning Cesar Vallejo* by Stephen Hart (2013), as well as others temporally closer to the corpus studied here, such as *Spanish American Poetry at the End of the Twentieth Century: Textual Disruptions* by Jill Kuhnheim (2004), *Poets of Contemporary Latin America: History and the Inner Life* by William Rowe (2000) and *Nestor Perlongher: The Poetic Search for an Argentine Marginal Voice* by Ben Bollig (2008). The general shared characteristic of these studies is that they establish sustained dialogues between the work and the biography of the authors.

There are no previous studies of Latin American poetry that approach it through the concept of landscape, let alone any previous comparative studies of the literature of two minor literary traditions or, more specifically, of four minor writers. There are, generally speaking, few studies on poetry and landscape with the exception of that of Daniela Alcívar Bellolio (2016). The fundamental difference between this study and Alcívar's ideas on poetry and landscape is that, although he shares the premise of understanding the landscape as an element of reality that can only be accessed from a Gestalt perspective, that is, from a holistic (multidimensional, integrative) perception, his idea of a landscape without a subject, open to merely phenomenological and naturalistic experiences, does not coincide with the anthropological and political perspective proposed here.

Although not in the field of Latin American literature, the most similar antecedent of this approach to poetry is in a study by Sean Heuston entitled *Modern Poetry and Ethnography: Yeats, Frost, Warren, Heaney, and the Poet as Anthropologist* (2011). In his book, Heuston considers poems to be ethnographies that the literary critic can interpret through an exercise of contextualisation and close reading. Admittedly, there are meaningful differences between Heuston's approach and that proposed in this investigation. The main difference is the role that this thesis assigns to the notion of landscape, because through landscape linguistic, political, stylistic and anthropological aspects are problematised, while Heuston's perspective is moderate, focusing on canonical authors of poetry written in English (2011, 15). The importance of a distinction between the two studies is readily apparent, because the notion of minor literature—which corresponds to marginal geographies and excluded works,⁶ to paratactic or

⁶ Such works can also draw on that exclusion to disrupt the frontiers of literature.

collapsed writings—appeals to peripheral thought models, differing social logics and unusual literary figures that, all in all, reveal unknown aspects of human relationships.

Finally, the structure of this thesis consists of an introduction and seven chapters.

Chapter 1 explains the concept of minor literatures in relation to the reception of the books of the authors under study. Two methodological strategies are employed. The first assesses the reception given to the authors' work, considering not only academic critiques but also the works' visibility through digital platforms. The second strategy critically establishes conceptual and stylistic claims regarding 1) the relationship between poetic writing and the sense of belonging to a national community and 2) the relations between deterritorialisation, language, culture and periphery. Therefore, the first chapter provides a general overview that relates the concept of minor literature to the circulation and reception of the authors' work in the context of contemporary Latin America, paying specific attention to the categories of deterritorialisation, reception and dissemination.

Chapter 2 proposes an experimental method that establishes a dialogue between the notions of metaphor, culture ethno-symbolism, cosmopolitanism, and landscape. This approach is centred on the theoretical contributions of Lakoff, Geertz, Appadurai and Aberbach, but likewise includes references to other important authors in the areas of literary theory, cosmopolitanism, ethno-symbolism and cultural geography. The idea is to cast out a net of ideas and arguments that will help in interpreting the poems of the proposed writers and to identify certain clues as to the belonging of these artistic and linguistic devices (poems) to a particular community, mainly through the notion of landscape (Cosgrove 1998, 26) or new landscape (Appadurai 1996, 51).

Chapters 3 to 6 are more analytical and include close readings of several selected poems by the writers in question, focusing on the conceptual and stylistic aspects of their work in conjunction with certain aspects of their critical reception. Chapter 7 is focused on the interplays, gaps, and possibilities that underlie the material analysed, attempting to determine what commonalities can be discerned in these poets' approaches and why these specific commonalities might occur. Finally, I offer various conclusions to integrate the arguments of this thesis in a critical way and to serve as elements of dialogue with similar future investigations.

Prior to concluding this introduction, it is useful to contextualise the poetic processes in both Uruguay and Ecuador. Poetry of the selected authors at times rejects or assumes concrete political options, but, in every case, it is very peculiar in its linguistic

materiality (specific syntax and sonority). If we downplay the sociological implications for a moment, the device that expresses the negotiation of meaning is the poetic language, with its contradictions and internal articulations. Victor Shklovsky (1990, 13) gives the most precise definition of poetic language: ‘Poetic speech is formed speech. Prose is ordinary speech—economical, easy, correct speech’. This definition indicates, albeit in abstract terms, that poetry is basically a formal, sculpturally verbal art—even in politically committed authors such as the Uruguayan Eduardo Milán. Poetry entails, designs, shapes, and modulates language. For that reason, meaning is not always simple, and the ways in which it expresses belonging to a region, country or state are partial and ambiguous. Poetry is an invention, but it is an invention that participates in concrete issues, including the social and political reality (Lakoff 1989, xii).

In this respect, poetry can in several senses define relationships that until now have been developed in an isolated and rather abstract way: between the poet and history, landscape and politics, language and society, and so on. For instance, in a perspective relatively similar to the one proposed here, the critic Alberto Villanueva (1995, 257) stresses the importance, in the case of Uruguayan poetic history, of ‘*la crisis de los modelos económicos, culturales y políticos que se manifiesta en escalada creciente de violencia y rebelión juvenil en los años 60, la revolución cubana del 59*’ in order to understand the contemporary period in Uruguayan poetry. Villanueva upholds research on ‘*el inventario nostálgico de los giros y expresiones del terruño, de la ciudad, del barrio: la busca, en la superficie, del pretendido origen de lo uruguayo, cuando éste no es otro que Europa ausente*’ (258). This artificiality, this foundational vacuum, is a constant theme in the writing of Uruguayan authors, especially in the case of Milán and Espina. The poetic language used to recreate certain national landscapes leads us to a political and anthropological interrogation of the Uruguayan nation’s significance.

Villanueva estimates that there are essentially two expressive models in recent Uruguayan poetry: colloquialism (deeply influenced by the idea of communication with a reader in tune with Uruguayan political perspectives) and a critical and deterritorialised trend (characterised by a commitment to language as a material). These models appeared as symbolic answers to the tension between the crisis of the democracy in the 1960s and the dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s (Gregory 2009, 38). Villanueva gives specific examples from the works of colloquial authors including Mario Benedetti, Saúl Ibarigoyen, and Idea Vilariño. On the other end of the spectrum, Villanueva (1995, 276) includes authors such as Amanda Berenguer, Marosa di Giorgio, Roberto Echavarrén and

Eduardo Milán, whose use of language is fairly intellectual. This second set of poets wrote during a time when ‘neoliberal economics and the growth and all the pervasive popular culture over the last years of the 20th century have created both a new public as well as a series of different public artifacts’ (Gregory 2009, 3). Several of these authors are related to the notion of the neobaroque, which represented an aesthetic renewal in the context of Latin American poetry. Two of these poets are Eduardo Espina and Eduardo Milán.

Diffusion of Ecuadorian authors’ writings, by contrast, has been more discrete. Despite the importance of the foundational period of Ecuadorian poetry, with widely recognised writer Jorge Carrera Andrade (1903–1979) (Corral 2015, 310; Unruh 1994, 17) and César Dávila Andrade (1918–1967), Ecuadorian poetry has found little influence beyond national frontiers. Following the Cuban revolution, the best known group of poets was *los Tzántzicos* (1960–1969) (‘headshrinkers’ in the Shuar language), a collective of writers and intellectuals who promoted a cultural revolution in somewhat anarchist terms. The movement lacked notable aesthetic results, with the exception of Raúl Arias and his book *Poeta en bicicleta* (1975). Nevertheless, in the late 1970s, authors like Fernando Nieto Cadena (b. 1947) and Iván Carvajal (b. 1948) appeared. These authors reflect a deep tension between aesthetic experience, national issues and formal queries. However, unlike the proposals of Espina and Milán, which can be considered aesthetically linked, Carvajal and Nieto Cadena are radically distinct authors in their use of poetic language and especially in the way they understand their relationship with Ecuador as a nation. Nieto Cadena’s colloquialism expresses a radical scepticism regarding Ecuador as a community, while Carvajal speaks based on a belief in Ecuador as a formed country.

The more general and foundational premise underlying this thesis is that poets do not create meaning out of nothing, but rather reinvent aspects of their culture via the application of linguistic ability and imagination. The apparent paradox that exists between social belonging and absolute imaginative freedom is a rather tense and dynamic relationship, where the unfolding of the imagination must be expressed, at least to a certain extent, in socially shared and understandable terms.

Chapter 1.

General Overview

Minor literatures and small countries: The cases of Ecuador and Uruguay

Our ethnographies of literature can become exercises in the interpretation of the new role of the imagination in social life.

ARJUN APPADURAI

As argued in the introduction, Latin America⁷ is a culturally fragmented and compartmentalised continent, but with some shared metanarratives, including the experience of conquest and colonisation by the Spaniards and Portuguese from the late 15th through the 18th century, the expansion of U.S. influence in the entire region, and the persistence of populism, racism and poverty (Adoum 2000, 66; De la Torre 2000, 28-79). This paradoxical relationship between a historically divided or fractured continent and a series of shared characteristics and processes has entailed a kind of entropy or, at least, ambiguity about the specific meaning of Latin America and its literatures. In that map of disputes about specificity, which is equivalent to identity, the growing academic and editorial interest in ‘world literature’⁸ written in territories traditionally considered peripheral (Damrosch 2003, 281; López-Calvo 2018, 17) has raised a key question about what Latin American literature is—a monolithic block of works, a congruent archive of culturally and aesthetically diverse writings, or a set of scattered and heterogeneous works unified under one abstract and arbitrary concept? This question becomes crucial when thinking about peripheral countries (Casanova 2005, 80; Heilbron 2010, 306–310) such as Ecuador and Uruguay (Chase-Dunn 1998, 292), in particular, if this geographical, economic and political bias is effectively articulated with the notion of minor literary traditions (D’haen 2013a, 4).

Here it is worth discussing how the notion of periphery relates to the concept of minor literature. The idea of periphery expresses a subaltern position in the circulation

⁷ Geographically, the term ‘Latin America’ refers to a set of nations belonging to the regions of North America, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Culturally and linguistically, Latin America is defined as nations in the Americas and the Caribbean whose residents predominantly speak Spanish or Portuguese—two of the many languages descended from Latin. The first use of the term can be traced back to the 1850s in the writings of Michel Chevalier (1806–1879), who employed the term as a way to differentiate the ‘Latin’ peoples from the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ peoples of the Americas, using language to create a geographic distinction (Quijada 1998, 596).

⁸ Which includes, of course, Latin America.

maps of economic or symbolic goods in the world (Bourdieu 1984, 29). In that sense, it is a spatial concept that underlines a marginal or secondary position of a group, subject, or sphere of literary activity (Moretti 2001, 56). The concept of minor literature, in parallel, embodies a work or set of works that confront, dispute or challenge literary centrality. For the longest time, European literature or metropolitan literature constituted 'world literature' for academic and cultural institutions (Damrosch 2003, 281; López-Calvo 2018, 17), but the works of the periphery—that is, those that expressed values or non-Western dynamics (Moretti 2000, 58)—began to gain importance in the dispute for meaning, both in the publishing field and in the academic sphere through processes such as translation (Casanova 2005, 84).

In this sense, the two concepts of periphery and minor literature both reveal a marginal position in front of a state, institution or social group. However, what makes the concept of minor literature distinct is that it reveals a dispute over difference. From the perspective developed by Deleuze and Guattari, a minor literature has three central characteristics:

- 1) A minor literature does not come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs in the context of a major language. This characteristic is linked to the language and its geographical displacement: deterritorialisation occurs because the language in which the work is written is not the dominant one or because the variety of the language in which it is written is not the official one. Examples are the use of German in a Czech context or Andean Spanish in an urban context that privileges peninsular Spanish. Deterritorialisation is a line of escape in the Deleuzian sense, an unstoppable movement that allows writing to deterritorialise itself.
- 2) Given the circumstances of marginalisation or oppression by a political machine, writers of a minor literature do not have the possibility of developing an individual discourse; their work is a line of escape to overcome a political problem. This literature does not develop the conflicts that the author has as an individual: in these authors' philosophical or aesthetic questions, there is a fully political discourse. This characteristic relates the author in an important way with his social collective.
- 3) The expressive movements of minor literature always choose to move from individuality to a collective sphere. The minor literature does not state individualised subjects; therefore, it is also necessary for the writer to carry out

the same deterritorialisation movement with all his writing process, from his own language to the language used (perhaps diverting the normativity to the illegible). In other words, given that the language is outside its territory, language will intensify its poverty to make it a purely intensive use, to resonate its materiality. He is interested in acquaintances and that future where his work becomes a device, a machine that works because he makes movements and they speak, willing to find their entrance into the community (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16–17).

Although these three characteristics seem different and differentiable items, the use of a deterritorialised language, the political bias and the collective meaning of literary works are strongly correlated. This relationship is not merely conceptual or thematic but also encompasses subtle aspects such as syntax. For example, as Doris Sommer illuminates, minority writings⁹ are characterised by absences, rejections and silences and other kinds of no trespassing signs (1991, 31). These signs work as: 1) marks of a non-cooperative syntax with a traditional reading (one that constantly avoids any simplified categorisation through hybridity and the geographical and historical decentring of its language); 2) forms of resistance to the ravages of cultural differences and their own political utopias; and 3) links between individual life and social life (as part of the internal code of a community).

Using this criterion, where deterritorialisation is determined by the use of language, many poetic writings of Uruguay and Ecuador would seem to embody all the characteristics. Of course, no work fits completely into any of the two concepts (minor literatures or major literatures); instead, there are degrees of belonging. In this sense, the works of the poets analysed in this study express a deep correspondence with the concept of minor literatures.

This is the case firstly because, in both countries, the official language is Spanish, which is spoken by 300 million people (López Morales 1996, 4; Sánchez Lobato 1994, 553) and which, within the framework of this investigation, is a majoritarian or major language. However, it is a conflictive Spanish, a linguistic device in dispute, as an evident consequence of the colonial, violent and imperialist character of the Castilianisation of large areas of Latin America during the conquest (Castro and Hidalgo 2016, 4). In that sense, the defence and usage of different dialectal varieties of American Spanish (or its most characteristic features) suppose a dispute over centrality, because linguistic

⁹ It should be noted that minorities do not always write minor literature. It is not an equivalence. When both elements do coincide in the creation of an artistic work, we can talk about minor-literature constellations (Domínguez et al., 2018, 284).

centralisation is an instrument of political centralisation (Marimón Llorca 2006). Even the very idea of an American Spanish is linguistically imprecise and implies an intellectual reduction of a heterogeneous map, a map that tends towards to a deterritorialisation as well.

In that sense, non-orthodox syntax and an unusual lexicon are gestures of resistance to the metropolitan (and historically colonial and monarchical) authority of the Spanish language (Sommer 1991, 33). That is to say, minor literatures (in this case, certain Uruguayan or Ecuadorian poetic works) are not political merely by coincidence or thematic insistence but, in fact, all their respective linguistic and cultural systems work between passive assimilation and the dispute over the difference. In fact, this dispute is ancient and goes back to the very origin of colonisation and the strategies of dialogue and resistance to 'the other' (Todorov 2007, 171). For example, Latin American *independentistas* often wanted to erase the very idea of a Latin American difference or specificity because the content of that difference underscored the colonial character of the newly founded countries (Hatfield 2015, 14).

The double tension of not losing contact with the Iberian Peninsula and assimilating all the novelties, on the one hand, but, on the other, the need of the new American society to identify with its own social and linguistic space (Martí 2002, 21; Rodó 1993, 15; Fernández Retamar 1970, 20) created the forces that have shaped, in this long initial stage, what have become the defining features of the dialect complex that is still spoken in the Americas today (Marimón Llorca 2006).

All the characteristics of the minor literature identified by Deleuze and Guattari converge in a literature based on political disputes and their manifestations in the avatars of the language. The linguistics of politics and the politics of linguistics are related to a basic concept: a dispute over difference that amounts to a dispute over the preservation of identity. That is why it is impossible to separate the three characteristics previously mentioned. Even though many aspects of the poetic works studied here are explicitly political (many of these texts directly or indirectly meditate about the social configuration and the power disputes of their respective countries of origin), it should be emphasised that the political dimension of these writings lies, firstly, in a linguistic dispute over identity, its symbols, its codes, its breaks, its silences, and so on. This study will address the three characteristics as a whole.

The question is thus raised: Does everything acquire a collective value in these works? Or more precisely, to what extent does the work of two Uruguayan poets (Eduardo

Milán and Eduardo Espina) and two Ecuadorians (Iván Carvajal and Fernando Nieto Cadena) acquire (in terms of circulation) and incarnate (in terms of its linguistic materiality) a collective value? In this chapter I will unravel the scope and limits of this question.

First, it is necessary to justify how and why these works of Ecuadorian and Uruguayan literatures meet the characteristics proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. We must acknowledge initially that a fulfilment of these traits is always partial and acquires specific connotations from country to country and from community to community. The main feature is related to language and deterritorialisation, to a possible connection between the political and the literary fields.

The use of these not-conventionally-literary varieties of Spanish is important as the creation of an individual literary territory (Holub 49, 2015; Sommer 1991, 33). In all these cases, these marginal usages are counterpoints to the dominant peninsular Spanish translations, publishing traditions, and so on. It should be noted that the political features of these Uruguayan writers and poets are not exclusively found in the use of political references; they also embrace a deep anthropological dimension (through, for example, customs and rituals) as well as a linguistic dimension. For example, the usage of *portuñol*,¹⁰ or slang, in some of Espina and Milán's poems is already eccentric—and thus political—in relation to the idiomatic norms of peninsular Spanish. In both cases there is a politicisation of language, the search for a political truth that is more faithful to the human experience that inspires them.

The recurrence of the theme of migration is an additional important element in the works of these writers, contributing towards a literature of deterritorialisation. A migrant and deterritorialised language is, necessarily, politicised (Appadurai 2010, 9). This anomalous element is what works as a cultural (and artistic) differentiator: it is a work located linguistically in a hybrid space, in a borderland or, even, in two or three cultures at the same time.¹¹

¹⁰ A mixture of Portuguese and Spanish.

¹¹ The case of Eduardo Milán is emblematic. Born from a Brazilian mother and a Uruguayan father, based in Mexico for thirty years, he writes in a poem without a title in his book *Disenso* (2012): '*no sos, solo eres*'. This extract evidently alludes to a national duality that is both a linguistic and political duality. In the River Plate it is said *sos* and in Mexican Spanish it is said *tú*. In all Spanish-speaking areas the meaning of both expressions is understood, but only in certain countries and regions is *sos* accepted as their own. Thus, in this poem, poetic language is the expression of a deterritorialised, fractured, repaired, flexible and necessarily incomplete identity where political plasticity is also a linguistic plasticity.

The case of Ecuador includes an additional ingredient related to deterritorialisation. Despite its small territorial size, the project of a national cultural identity has been undermined by regionalism. In his book *Ecuador: Señas particulares* (2000), Jorgenrique Adoum (1926–2009) reflected anecdotally on the meaning of Ecuadorian identity. Adoum uses previously described anecdotes about discrimination—exposed in a capricious, even redundant way—to exemplify the paradox that the ‘equatorianity’ that society has accepted is based on the denial of the scarce but authentic basis of a possible national identity: ‘*Quizás porque en con ese resentimiento recíproco con que negamos la Colonia la perpetuamos, negándonos a nosotros mismos; quizás porque sentimos hoy día que el país se nos desmorona, no sabemos bien por qué, y nos guiamos por el ruido de los trozos que caen*’ (2000, 31). Indeed, Adoum questions the emptiness of an identity that is affirmed—neurotic, insufficient—especially for what it rejects: the indigenous, the poor, and so on. He also illuminates the mutual rejection between the two main regions of the country: La Costa (the coastal region) and La Sierra (the highlands). For example, he points out that the regionalist sentiment has a real, historical basis, since the Province of Guayaquil proclaimed itself independent in 1822, before Ecuador existed as a state (2000, 56), and he quotes graffiti painted on a wall of Quito in which the former presidential candidate, the Guayaquil-born Jaime Nebot (b. 1944), was attacked as a ‘monkey’, a characteristic insult for the people of the coast.

For Adoum, a highlander intellectual, this issue is just one among the many complexes of the Ecuadorian population. For Miguel Donoso Pareja, by contrast, this is the main social problem of Ecuador. In his book *Ecuador: identidad y esquizofrenia*, he employs the concept of *quitocentrismo*, which he relates to an administrative, political and cultural centralism that, progressively, has generated an exclusion process of coastal cultural production (Donoso Pareja 2004, 30). For him, this means a significant loss and political and symbolic injustice.

For the purpose of this thesis, the ideas of Adoum and Donoso Pareja express, rather than a solution, the clash of two geographies and social imaginaries¹² that coexist under the regulations of one national state. Faced with these divergent ways of thinking, authors from both regions frequently express a politicisation of regional motifs and themes in their poetry, of specific social practices of each geographical area (where other

¹² A social imaginary is the set of values, institutions, laws, and symbols common to a particular social group and the corresponding society through which people imagine their social whole.

areas of Ecuador are not easily recognised).¹³ The two major sub-national identities, *costeño* and *serrano*, are expressed through distinct social and cultural devices (Itúrburu 2012, 388). One might even say that, within this single country, there are at least two minor literatures seeking pre-eminence in an unstable national culture. Thus, in principle, these two literatures not only express different themes, but also encompass linguistic uses that express differentiated cultural realities and different geographical environments. In this context, no single Ecuadorian speech exists, but rather an Andean (*serrano*) Spanish, in which the Kichwa language functions as substrate,¹⁴ and a Coastal (*costeño*) Spanish, marked by a more Caribbean culture (Quevedo 1981, 65). In that sense, the Gordian knot of Ecuadorian identity is the clash of its two most significant internal identities, of two social imaginaries that also dispute the way in which Ecuador should be interpreted in the global context.¹⁵

Therefore, Ecuadorian society promotes these minor literatures that coexist within a single national canon, although not harmoniously. Iván Carvajal and Fernando Nieto Cadena express these contradictions in their works. Carvajal's political commitment has called into question the dominant political ideologies of recent decades and their mark on the national state (Carvajal 2006, 193), while Nieto Cadena's poetry reflects a fierce criticism against Ecuadorian identity as an official project. In any case, the expression— at times ironic, at times vindicating, at times critical—of certain collective and even national references is necessary in the configuration of minor literatures.

From these considerations, complementary questions arise alongside Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of minor literature: Does a small physical territory with little

¹³ The intellectual rivalry between the coast and the mountains has a long history. For example, in the poem '*Breve Diseño de las Ciudades de Guayaquil y Quito Carta joco-seria por el autor a su cuñado, D. Jerónimo Mendiola*', the colonial poet from Guayaquil Juan Bautista Aguirre (b. 1725 in Daule [now in Ecuador], d. 1786 in Tívoli, Italy) says against the city of Quito: '*Este es el Quito famoso / y yo te digo, jocundo, / que es el sobaco del mundo / viéndolo tan asqueroso*'.

¹⁴ In the case of Ecuador, works in indigenous languages like Kichwa and Shuar have no place in the studies of literature in Spanish, though they certainly deserve space within the literatures of Ecuador as a whole.

¹⁵ For Appadurai, the notion of social imaginary is rather a process of agency and negotiation before reality than a network of shared values. For him, imagination is a 'form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order' (1996, 31). In that sense, artistic works no longer converge with fixed national identities, but instead question and participate in them as dynamic processes. Although everything has become more unstable and fragile in the contemporary world, the concept of minor literature is in force because those atomised, heavily politicised and labile writings are even more fragile in today's world, and the political agencies of these works are often more radical.

political and economic influence imply a minor literature? And is the limited reception of works a reason to consider them minor literatures? Deleuze and Guattari do not address these points, but possible answers can be found through a hypothesis that deterritorialisation occurs more easily in small countries with fragmented literary and cultural communities (Ecuador) or in countries whose population is characterised by habituated movement and migration (Uruguay). The close readings of these poets' work and examinations of their reception and dissemination presented in Chapters 3–6 offer answers to these questions.

Uruguayan and Ecuadorian poetry in the context of Latin America from the 1970s to the present day

The inaugural moment of scholarly engagement with modern Latin America poetry, understood as a whole, was the result of a unifying understanding of the different regional and national traditions and a proliferation of different continental anthologies of very different meaning, method and purpose (and the criticisms of them).¹⁶ The essays included *Fundadores de la nueva poesía latinoamericana* (1971), by Saúl Yurkievich, *Latin American poetry: Origins and Presence* (1975), by Gordon Brotherston, and *La máscara, la transparencia* (1985), by Guillermo Sucre. These books are remarkable because they express not only philosophical but also political queries about the identity issues raised in the poems, underlining how the formal aspects of literary texts illuminate critical perspectives on social reality. The main novelty in these studies is that the phenomenon of poetry is approached in a complex way, attempting to integrate the philosophical, historical, political and aesthetic. In addition, for these critics, the selections of authors, records and traditions studied in their books cease to be a 'revelation' and become expressions of anthologisers convictions (Brown 2014, 54). So, as Joan L. Brown suggests, the canon is a social, political and academic construction in which literary historians are the most powerful force in its formation (2014, 51).

The fundamental difference between these essayists—and some earlier ones such as Octavio Paz and José Lezama Lima—is that these authors are aware that they are

¹⁶ These anthologies are innumerable, but an early example of this process of resignification of Latin American poetry appears in the magazine *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (Liverpool); Liverpool Tomo 45, N.º 1, (Jan 1, 1968): 44. In that text, Jean Franco criticises the selection of Aldo Pellegrini called *Antología de la poesía viva latinoamericana* (1965). The most interesting thing about this relatively short criticism is the effort to show the diversity of styles, cultural processes and national and regional sensitivities, within a volume that paradoxically seeks to exhibit political, aesthetic and anthropological cohesion.

intervening in the processes of Latin American poetry, and they are looking for a consensus on the aesthetic value of certain authors. If the basic principle of the canon is consensus, then, what place do unselected aesthetics occupy? Here, an interesting phenomenon should be noted. The number of Ecuadorians and Uruguayans analysed in these emblematic books can demonstrate how Ecuadorian and Uruguayan poetry fits into the broader dialogue of Latin American literature in this era. Yurkievich's book, as an example, consists of several case studies about canonical authors, none of whom is either Ecuadorian or Uruguayan (Yurkievich 1971, 12). This is likely because these are writings that the book does not need in its necessarily reductionist proposal: they are linguistic devices foreign to the consensus proposals put forward by Yurkievich. This underlines the fact that many Ecuadorian and Uruguayan literatures can be considered minor. Sucre's book, by contrast, sets forth an expanded panorama by developing several short essays and including various Uruguayan poets and one Ecuadorian poet, César Dávila Andrade¹⁷ (Sucre 1975, 275). Sucre gives space¹⁷ to some writers who do not have, or did not have at the time, a critical consensus on their work and who, in addition, practiced experimental or hermetic styles, resistant to normalisation and scarcely accepted in official literary canons.¹⁸

In the construction of such a map of styles, authorial identities and hierarchies that express the different aesthetic proposals of the continent, another relevant factor in addition to the concern of the essayists is the inclusion of poets in anthologies. Anthologies function as filters where diversity is rationalised and systematised, in a political exercise to exclude the strange or the peripheral in relation to the values the critic holds or conceals. In terms of social life, this kind of book is perhaps the most enlightening factor regarding the critical importance acquired by a poet in the literary community. Anthologies of Latin America, Ecuador and Uruguay that include work by the four authors studied here are numerous and heterogeneous in their purposes and

¹⁷ Dávila Andrade lived in Venezuela during the last years of his life and established a relatively active cultural life while there. In 1951, he settled permanently in Venezuela, where he alternated his literary activity with a chair at the Universidad de los Andes of Mérida. In 1960, he published *En un lugar no identificado* and four years later, *Conexiones de tierra*. For several years, he served as Cultural Assistant to the Embassy of Ecuador, until his death by suicide in 1967, in Caracas.

¹⁸ The harsh and somewhat ambiguous criticism that Sucre makes about *El círculo de los tres soles* by Rafael José Muñoz (1969) is important here. About this highly experimental book, Sucre states: '*transgrede todos los límites expresivos en insalvables criptogramas*' (1985, 277). At the limit of a readable writing and marked by esoteric and pseudoscientific issues, Muñoz's writing poses a minor literature perspective that, even for Sucre, was too strange to be considered relevant.

literary interest. However, there are some anthologies whose value lies in their ecumenical character (where examples of minor poetics discuss and disagree in the same book with examples of more acceptable and standardised poetics) or even in their radical commitment to politicised poetics, guided by discrepant syntax, where social life is a filter creating asymmetric and inharmonious texts.¹⁹

Perhaps the most eccentric and radical anthology involving the period concerning our authors is *Medusario* (1996).²⁰ This selection shows dissent strategies against the dominant aspects of Latin American language and culture. This book is characterised by the inclusion of radically experimental writings linked to the baroque heritage of José Lezama Lima (who is included at the beginning of the book) but radicalised through a problematisation of cultural references and dominant orthodox leftist political perspectives. Against this, *Medusario* proposed ‘*mixturas bastardas: transposición americana del barroco áureo, con reapropiaciones de elementos indígenas, africanos, hispano-incaico, hispanonegroide*’ (Perlongher 1996, 15). That decentralised, deterritorialising and wandering outlook includes proposals for 21 authors (among them, Milán and Espina) marked by heterodox political positions, anti-modernity, an anti-western outlook, hybrid writings, instigated by the migration of many of its authors and above all by its liminal perspective open to medley (Calomarde 2018, 211). In addition, there is a search for new poetic forms and, especially, a questioning of colloquialism and conversationalism because both became vehicles of the official power, consensus, and simplification of diversity. In every sample, ‘*cada poema adquiere en función de esta óptica su valor desde la diferencia y no desde la adherencia a una línea común, dado que en cierto modo no la hay*’ (Aguirre Martínez, 2019, 5). Sometimes, on the basis of exuberance and the search for extreme authorial singularity, this anthology includes writings at the limits of rational and comprehensible language. Notably, the book does not include any Ecuadorians, not even in its list of authors that might be there.²¹

Three editions of this anthology have been published: the first one by Fondo de Cultura Económica (1996) of Mexico, the second by Mansalva (2010) of Argentina, and

¹⁹ A relevant example from a previous period is *Poesía viva latinoamericana* (1966), selected by the Argentinian Aldo Pellegrini (1903–1973). There are two Uruguayan and two Ecuadorian poets in this anthology. Its value was to provide an updated look at the political and aesthetic legacy of the avant-garde, especially of surrealism (Wilson 2004, 271).

²⁰ In addition to *Medusario*, another anthology with similar intentions is *Antología Crítica de la Poesía del Lenguaje* (Mexico, DF: Editorial Aldus. 2009).

²¹ Therefore, Ecuadorian authors reveal themselves as either holders of a scarcely known eccentricity or cultivators of official poetics. Ecuadorian authors of that generation were marginal among the marginals.²¹

the third by RIL (2016) of Chile. Here it is worth mentioning a detail related to the publishing market and its political implications. Fondo de Cultura Económica is a massive Mexican state publishing house, while Mansalva and RIL are small but prestigious publishers. Thus, this book has had a revealing life cycle: a new official edition was printed by a small publisher on the other side of the region. Therefore, the interest in discrepant, grammatically conflicting, deterritorialised poetics still seems valid in heterogeneous and distant geographical cultural contexts. It is evident that the book's recent reissue reaffirms its importance as a critical testimony of a specific kind of writing which had its heyday in Latin America in the 1980s (Bollig 2008, 10). It is not only about the resistance of a style, but also a 'sample' of writings that appeal to the criticism of conventional ways to understand the world (Aguirre Martínez 2019, 2). As noted by Mabel Moraña:

Si la modernidad puede caracterizarse como un modelo que funciona a partir de concreciones identitarias 'duras' (sujeto nacional, ciudadanía, disciplinamiento, progreso, roles sexuales, ordenación institucional, etc.), que descartan, regulan o relegan la existencia del Otro, la intervención barroca o neobarroca introduciría estrategias de alterización y distanciamiento en los imaginarios modernizadores, proponiendo desde la opacidad de lenguajes y recursos representacionales, contenidos anómalos (en el sentido etimológico de irregularidad, es decir, de anti-normatividad). (2005, 264–265)

It should be noted that, although *Medusario* (1996) proposes anomalous contents, otherness strategies and a deterritorialising attitude, this book has become the canon of aesthetic eccentricity, taking advantage of the legitimacy of the marginal and the prestige of the rare.

Another meaningful anthology of the period of interest is *Las insulas extrañas* (2002). From its title, the book poses a commitment to values such as strangeness and deterritorialisation (or difference, as preferred). It includes mostly authors with an intellectual and hermetic style, working as resistance to the simplified processes of mere information and realistic aesthetics. Therefore, it is an anthology that rejects communication as the basis of poetic writing. For that reason, it was heavily criticised in Spain, where the so-called '*poesía de la experiencia*' predominated (De Villena 2002). This book is remarkable for bringing together both Spanish and Latin American authors,

an unusual feature in Spanish language poetry selections, although the anthologists do not pay special interest to the economic and political disparities of the regions. The anthology's editors were the Spaniards José Ángel Valente and Andrés Sánchez Robayna, the Peruvian Blanca Varela, and the Uruguayan Eduardo Milán, and it was published in Spain by a subsidiary of *Círculo de Lectores*: *Galaxia Gutemberg*. This book contains a collection of emblematic writings from both sides of the Atlantic. Its commercial distribution covered all of Latin America, and it has a remarkable reputation for the critical rigor of its selection processes. It is an eccentric anthology in its way of departing from the predictable repertoires and its willingness to defend, with the arguments available to the anthologists, the texts that represent the least conformist poetic expression written in our language (Serrano and Valle 2002). In this book, hermeticism works as an aesthetic dissent and as a commitment to imagination (irrationalism) as a political principle to interrogate the reality and idea of a modern, Western subjectivity (Jiménez Heffernan 2002). Apart from Milán, this anthology includes five Uruguayan poets²² out of a total sample of 99 Spanish-language poets, none of which are Ecuadorians (Jiménez Heffernan 2002). Milán's handprint is clearly visible in the wide Uruguayan selection. However, Eduardo Espina is not part of this book, possibly due to a need to diversify the geographical origin of the poets included. In many ways, this anthology is a portrait of its time, and it reveals Eduardo Milán's importance, not only as a poet and critic, but also as a disseminator of Uruguayan poetry.

Other anthologies have generated critical interest as well, two of which include the Ecuadorian poets studied here. One is *Antología de poesía latinoamericana* (2011), compiled by the Colombian Piedad Bonnett. This anthology was published by Norma, which has its widest distribution in Colombia but is also distributed throughout Latin America. In this book, the only Ecuadorian included is Iván Carvajal. The critical impact of this volume was much more modest than the anthologies discussed above. The selection was focused on authors of more traditional and brief poetry, without experimentation.²³ Nieto Cadena, in contrast to the other subjects of this study, hardly appears in Latin American anthologies from the period. However, his inclusion in one

²² The other Uruguayans included are Juan Cunha (1910–1985), Ida Vitale (b. 1923), Idea Vilariño (1920–2009), Jorge Medina Vidal (1930–2008) and Washington Benavides (1930–2017).

²³ The Colombian poet Santiago Espinosa points out about this book, '*no existe aquí la pedantería del que hace una muestra rebuscada para su autismo académico*' (Espinosa 2011). The pedagogical bias of Espinosa is evident, but it seems to point accurately to the purpose of this anthology.

particular selection is significant: *Muchachos desnudos bajo el arcoiris de fuego* (1979). This anthology brought together some of the Mexican poets known as *infrarealistas*, protagonists of the novel *Los detectives salvajes* by Roberto Bolaño—and Bolaño was, in fact, the compiler of this anthology. In several ways, this book is an aesthetic manifesto of his predilections and interests, where aesthetic preference is mixed with affective bonds.²⁴ In several ways, the book has retained its interest because Bolaño selected it, and, in that sense, it is part of the corpus necessary to understand his writing (Bajter 2011, 56). The aesthetic concerns of several of these authors (related to migration, to sexual freedom, to the city as an alienating and epiphanic experience, and to a social criticism where Marxism and hippie anarchism appear adapted to Latin American reality) reveal this book as a space for dissent, where the concept of minor literature fits perfectly.²⁵

An analysis of the previous arguments allows us to identify three models of anthology: 1) the two anthologies mentioned at the beginning (*Medusario* and *Las ínsulas extrañas*) correspond to a model that seeks to canonise the margins, to define the aesthetic and political relevance of certain experimental writings, and to map the degree of deterritorialisation of the languages used in the poems; 2) the anthology of Piedad Bonnett, on the other hand, chooses only to corroborate forms, styles and themes widely accepted as poetic; 3) Roberto Bolaño's anthology reveals a gesture of dissent that does not seek to question the canon but to document a dissent not consecrated only by reasoning but also by chance and affectivity. If, as Brown suggests, 'the most fundamental canons are the ones that are situated in each individual's mind, they are somewhat schizophrenic: the personal canon and the presumptive canon' (2014, 40), these books reveal a process of readings, critics and canonisation in which not only are the compilers' aesthetic preferences meaningful, but the networking (within the literary field) and the specific knowledge about the national poetic traditions throughout the continent and the region turn out to be of great importance.

²⁴ Several of the nine authors included here are Mexicans and Chileans, associated with *infrarrealismo*, and Peruvians, linked to the Hora Zero movement, the aesthetic branch of the *infrarrealistas*.

²⁵ Something that Bonnett's and Bolaño's anthologies have in common is that the prologists (Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda and Miguel Donoso Pareja, respectively) are not the anthologists. In both, somehow, the argumentative responsibility for the chosen poems seems to be delegated through an exercise of depersonalisation, to relativise responsibility for the selected materials.

Critical reception of the poetry of Carvajal, Milán, Espina and Nieto Cadena

To clarify the parameters of reception and dissemination, it is important to note the foremost scholarly studies on the authors under investigation to date. In the case of the Uruguayans, these are theses developed in the U.S., and for the Ecuadorians, theses written in Ecuador. It is evident that the work of Uruguayan poets has a greater editorial reach and social reputation than that of the Ecuadorians.²⁶

Research conducted by Carolina Ferrer of the University of Québec is interesting in respect to this idea of reach and reputation. Although she points out that there are many objections to any kind of statistical reading of references in the humanities, Ferrer takes a mathematical approach to the construction of the literary canon. From the concept of the literary field established by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and the concept of scientometrics (Price, 1963; Garfield, 1980 and Leydesdorff, 1998), she reveals that in a sample of 75,000 documents reviewed according to the MLAIB database²⁷, the importance of different countries in the composition of a Latin American canon is very varied:

Argentina y México representan cada uno 22% de la muestra y sus literaturas se destacan claramente como las más estudiadas según la base MLAIB. Luego, Cuba, Chile, Perú y Colombia muestran una bibliografía relativamente importante con muestras que fluctúan entre 12% y 7% del total. Las bibliografías sobre las literaturas de Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Venezuela y Guatemala acumulan muestras pequeñas que se sitúan entre 2.300 y 1.200 referencias. Por último, Costa Rica, República Dominicana, Paraguay, Ecuador, El Salvador, Bolivia, Panamá y Honduras reflejan una situación bastante embrionaria con bibliografías que oscilan entre 800 y 1000 referencias por país. (2014, 188)

The dissemination of Latin American literature in academic repertoires can thus be separated into four scales: 1) widely spread literature (Argentina and Mexico); 2) moderately diffused literatures (Cuba, Chile, Peru and Colombia); 3) little spread

²⁶ Three different process of dissemination are at work: 1) academic dissemination, 2) sale, import and export of books, and 3) anonymous reading. There are Uruguayan authors, for example, who have sold tens of thousands of books—Mario Benedetti, Eduardo Galeano and Dani Umpi, among others. In Ecuador too, the novelist Kristel Ralston has published more than ten romance novels on Amazon.com, as well as in Grupo Editorial Planeta of Spain and HarperCollins with its Harlequin label. However, many of these authors do not have a place in the academic canon.

²⁷ The MLAIB (Modern Language Association International Bibliography) is an annual bibliography of books and articles concerning literature, linguistics and other related subjects.

literature (Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela and Guatemala), and 4) very little spread literature (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Ecuador, El Salvador, Bolivia, Panama and Honduras). On such a scale, Uruguay and Ecuador are on the penultimate and last step, respectively, among the less critically read literatures.

As noted by César Domínguez, Giovanna Di Rosario and Matteo Ciastellardi in the article ‘On Writing a Comparative Literary History: Delocalizing Minor Literatures in European Languages in the Age of “Big Data”’, a small literature is not necessarily a minor literature. In fact, given the difficulty of conceptualising the minor literatures (Dominguez et al., 2018, 280), since the concept has been used indiscriminately (Dominguez 2018 et al., 282), the authors of this article propose the concept of the minor-literature constellation (Domínguez et al., 2018, 284), defining it as ‘a group of interrelated concepts, including minor literature, small literature (kleine Literatur), and minority literature’ (Domínguez et al., 2018, 287). Essentially, what these authors propose is that these three concepts are related and that they can be useful in describing certain works. ‘Small literature’ is a revision of the original Kafkan concept that refers to devalued works, excluded and usually written in demographically restricted languages. ‘Minority literature’, on the other hand, refers to literature written by minority groups of any kind (ethnic, sexual, linguistic, religious). As is evident, the work of the poets mentioned here coincides in various ways with the three related concepts, though throughout the thesis the Deleuzian concept is privileged by its political potential.

Eduardo Milán, for example, is part of a small literature (the Uruguayan), he writes from the perspective of a minor literature (politics) and is part of a minority literature by Uruguayan authors living in Mexico. Of course, there are other possible intersections, but these are the most relevant for this investigation.

Milán, it is worth noting, is the most public figure among the poets discussed here. His books have been published in at least a dozen countries in Latin America, Spain and the U.S., in small and large publishing houses.²⁸ He worked with Octavio Paz in the magazine *Vuelta* as a poetry critic and he has been invited to literary festivals throughout the world. His poetry can be found, for example, in poetry shops in New York (Prilluck

²⁸ Among them are Fondo de Cultura Económica (Mexico), El Tucán de Virginia (Mexico), Filodecaballos (Mexico), Galaxia Gutemberg (Spain), Amargord (Spain) and Visor (Spain). His literary work has been translated into Portuguese (in the book *Estação da Fábula: Poemas de Eduardo Milán*, translated by Claudio Daniel and published by Fundação Memorial da América Latina in 2002) and into English (in the book *Selected poems*, translated by John Oliver Simon, Patrick Madden and Steven Stewart and published by Shearman Books in Bristol, 2012).

2015, §1). In many ways, Milán's work allows investigations focused not only on his literary work but also on his personal history—as a son of a *guerrillero*—and his political exile. The idea of a minor poetry is very useful to describe his work, since the de-territorialisation as a migratory phenomenon and the practice of writing that constantly challenges the global political order define his poetry. In addition, the difficulty of his work obliges attention in each sentence, in every relationship among words. He also has many detractors (Granados 2014, §2), which is suggestive for considering how criticism constructs the limits of the author as a public figure. These facts reveal how a work's dissemination is linked with the construction of a personal mythology within specific contexts (Holub 2016, 57) and that this is more evident in countries with institutional and governance problems such as some of those in Latin America (Brown 2014, 107). Milán embodies, as the Chilean Raúl Zurita, the figure of the poet who politicises forms by discrediting traditional syntax and conventional themes. His essays appeal to a similar displacement, where Marxism and the idea of the Global South are fundamental elements of his writing. In that sense, the writing of Milán acquires the character of a minor literature where formal experimentation is an appeal to an anti-capitalist and Third World gesture (López Carballo 2017, 11).

Iván Carvajal instead embodies the character of a prestigious local figure—on a smaller scale within the Ecuadorian literary world, but influential in his role as a public intellectual. His work has been published in Mexico and Spain. Compared to Milán, he is an author with less editorial diffusion. There is also less critical and academic literature about his poetic work. However, the reception of his poetry at the local level is very important for his innovative aesthetic strategies (Rodríguez Castelo 1990, 15), for his radical opposition to the manipulation of power (Marín 2015). In addition, his work as a columnist led him to openly confront the government of former president Rafael Correa. His work can be framed by the idea of a minor literature because of the political and philosophical implications of some part of his poetry, where linguistic hybridity (Mejía 2000, 123) appeals to a rejection and questioning of the borders, authorities and institutions of national states.

In the case of Espina, the radicalism of his work, where the traditional metric and the syntactic rupture cooperate, and his work as a heterologous essayist have given him a meaningful place in the Latin American context (Zapata 1993, 722). The aesthetic eccentricity of his work has determined that his poetry is read as a dizzying polyphonic abundance of voices, styles and registers. There is no centre in his poetry, but a constant

proliferation, a linguistic deterritorialisation that links his work with nonsense and minor literature. His work as a university professor in Texas and as editor of specialised journals in poetry (such as *S/N: New World Poetics* with Charles Bernstein and *Hispanic Poetry Review*) have made him a referential figure in the dissemination and claim of a certain current of Latin American poetry—that focused on experimentation, secrecy and hybridism. In addition to his poetic work, it is important to highlight his work as a scholar of Uruguayan identity, expressed in the classic book *Historia universal de Uruguay*, published in 2007 by Editorial Planeta.

Nieto Cadena does not fit the mould of the public intellectual. His work in Mexico was restricted to leading literary workshops in the state of Tabasco. However, in Ecuador he is highly regarded as a poet who renewed colloquial poetry because of his violent, ironic and desacralising style that is without precedent in Ecuadorian literature (Pazos Barrera 1994, 58; Donoso Pareja 1979, 33; Rodríguez Castelo 1990, 17). He continues to serve as a reference for recent generations of Ecuadorian writers. In Mexico, his work is mostly remembered because of his relationship with the aforementioned anthology by Bolaño and because of the literary workshops he offered there and the set of social relationships he consequently created during his stay in that country. Among the authors studied here, his self-imposed long-term exile, the dispersion and limited diffusion of his work, and his disinterest in becoming an authorial figure make him the closest to the concept of minor literature.

While critical texts on the writing of all these four authors are relatively scarce, this is particularly so in the case of the Ecuadorian poets. Perhaps the most important study devoted to one of these authors is *Poesía del lenguaje: de T.S. Eliot a Eduardo Espina* (2008), written by the linguist Enrique Mallén. This volume provides a background of what is referred to as language poetry, and places Espina in the lineage of authors like Eliot, Pound, and the Cuban José Kozler (within the framework of a poetry of complexity). Mallén is a renowned academic linguist who has also published several hermeneutic books on Pablo Picasso. In addition, as previously noted, Mallén published *Antología crítica de la poesía del lenguaje* (2009), which brings together poets like Eduardo Espina and José Kozler. In the case of Eduardo Milán, probably the most intriguing book about his work is the reissue of his book *Errar* (2012), which is preceded by a series of commemorative prologues that function as synthesis or critical breviaries about his writing. Both Mallén's anthology and the commemorative edition of Milán's book were published by Aldus Editorial, a publishing house that privileges the publication

of outstanding works of Latin American literature, indicating that the two Uruguayan poets are frequently included in publishing catalogues of canonical interest.

In the case of Carvajal, the most meaningful book about his work is *Fulgor del instante: Aproximaciones a la poesía de Iván Carvajal*. Published in 2008, it brings together essays by critics and young poets on each of Carvajal's books. In several ways, the book dedicated to Milan and the one dedicated to Carvajal share an anthological, onomastic and canonising spirit, but it is worth noting that the essays on the work of Milán were written by authors from different countries, while the essays on Carvajal were all authored by Ecuadorians. This highlights the differing roles and significance of the authors: Carvajal is an author of more local interest, while Milán is a major proponent of the Spanish language, though both have been published in Visor (Spain), probably the most prestigious Spanish-language poetry publishing house. There are no printed books on Nieto Cadena, but there are some resources about him that can be consulted online, (e.g., Mussó 2011).

In academic studies, the work of Uruguayan authors has received more comprehensive attention and repercussion. Academic works discussing the poetry of Espina and Milán have been published by universities in the United States and have been written in English and Spanish. These are generally more attuned to philosophical, sociological and biographical concerns. Beyond the previously mentioned book by Mallén, the most comprehensive work about Espina is 'In the Name of the Father and the Mother: Mourning, Memory and Imagination in the Poetry of José Kozer, Tamara Kamenszain and Eduardo Espina', written by Diane Rolnick as a doctoral thesis at Texas A&M University (2015). This thesis treats issues of personal memory, bereavement, and the relationship between parents and children from a hermeneutical perspective; however, it does not neglect an intriguing discussion of the relationship between the authors' lives and their work. Another meaningful academic thesis was written by Rosalinda Aregullín-Valdez in 2010: '*Neobarroco y erotismo en la poesía de Eduardo Espina y Néstor Perlongher*'.²⁹ This text reviews the meaning of the neo-baroque as a form of contemporary thinking (justifying its aesthetic relevance) and its cultural role, then focuses on philosophical and social aspects of these authors' readings of love and sexuality. Although both studies have very specific thematic repertoires, it is worth noting

²⁹ Perhaps the most relevant thesis on the neobaroque as a concept, as a style and as a poetic process is Pablo de Cuba Soria's Ph.D. thesis 'La Usina del lenguaje. Teoría de la poesía Neobarroca' (Texas A&M University, 2013).

that in both there are marginal elements linked to the topic under discussion here. In particular, the relationship that Rolnick establishes between Espina's poetry and the *décima* and *gaucho* songs is very relevant (2015, 315), revealing that beyond being thematic, Espina's work creates a Uruguayan creolisation of poetic forms (2015, 316).

About Milán too there are two important works produced within the context of the academy in the U.S. The first and most interesting for the purposes of this investigation and its themes is Judith Iliana Villanueva's Ph.D. dissertation, 'Poetics of Errancy, Politics of Writing: Juan Gelman, Eduardo Milán and Ana Cristina César' (University of California, Irvine, 2009). In this study, the issue of deterritorialisation arises in the context of the poets' migration status (namely in the case of the political poems by Juan Gelman and Milán). Another important dissertation on Milán's writings is the work of Juan Manuel Portillo, entitled 'Negative Poetics in Contemporary Latin American Lyrics: Coral Bracho and Eduardo Milán' (University of Michigan, 2012). Portillo focuses on personal and political memory in the case of Milán and on gender issues in the case of Bracho. The theme of negativity is drawn through this work as a writing exercise against the power of politics, death, and fate, providing a singular reading of some textual devices (Portillo 2012, 5).

In addition to these theses written in English, the most relevant academic papers on Milán have been written in Spanish by Pablo López Carballo. These include his doctoral thesis at the University of Salamanca entitled '*Un vaso que no es vaso. Procedimientos de conexión escritura-mundo en la obra poética de Eduardo Milán 1975–2015*', published digitally in 2015. It is important to note that one of López Carballo's central arguments is that 'despite being Uruguayan, and therefore Latin American, his aesthetic premises are hard to classify in a clear-cut context. We have tried to find a reference framework or contextual delimitation more compatible with the poetic works of Eduardo Milán than the one based on national identities' (2016, 6). As is evident, the approach taken here disagrees with López Carballo's position, considering that the starting points of the Milán's poetry are—even in its moments of greater experimentation and secrecy—minority, exclusion and strangeness. In fact, Milán notes that '*la situación marginal de América Latina en su poesía, adobada con un poco de conciencia, ha dado la condición de su competencia internacional: la transgresión de las formas*' (2014, 87). The key axiom is formal eccentricity equals geographic eccentricity.

The position of power and intellectual prestige of Milán and, in some ways, of Espina have allowed their work to be read in less restricted contexts beyond their nearest

cultural environment. Of course, it should be noted that Espina has taught in the United States for several decades and Milán has had a similar experience in Mexico.

One master's thesis has been written on each of the Ecuadorian poets under consideration here. Both were written at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Ecuador's most important centre for arts and humanities. The thesis on Carvajal's poetry is called '*La apariencia del barro: Polifonía y narratividad como estrategias poéticas en Iván Carvajal*', by Juan Carlos Mejía (2000). This study reviews Carvajal's poetry using theories by Mukarovsky on concretisation and indetermination. It analyses the author's entire poetic production from a stylistic perspective. It is worth noting that the relationship between the theoretical proposal and the analysis of the poems is somewhat predictable, but certain aspects of the conclusion are useful, in particular the concept of hybridity. This is not the case, however, with the thesis on Nieto Cadena, entitled '*Fernando Nieto Cadena: Épica de lo cotidiano*', by Luis Carlos Mussó. The study is centred on Terry Eagleton's Marxist approach, as the author believes it appropriate for understanding Nieto Cadena's critical view of the Ecuadorian social reality (Mussó 2011, 25). Mussó's perspective coincides with the idea of a Caribbean identity in Nieto Cadena, but is radically distant from the perspective of the current study, since he combines a Marxist and structuralist perspective.

Dissemination of the poets' writings via digital media

In the context of the dissemination of these poets' work on digital platforms, it is difficult to determine the horizon of expectations of potential readers. The logic of the internet—prone to decentralising, the ending of hierarchies, and the erosion of elite legitimisation—may have decreed the end of criticism, the space traditionally reserved for interpretation, and the construction of taste and canon. Distant from the power of critics, cultural content is now circulating on the internet through two modes, user recommendations and search algorithms. In many contexts, the presentation and selection of content is more important than traditional argumentative criticism.

A good starting point for understanding the degree of importance an author has acquired is to investigate the number of times his name appears in Google search results. Although this procedure already has a bias in favour of numeric procedures, it is important to understand its meaning in a context in which eBooks and other similar types

of files circulate freely, even in pirated versions.³⁰ The distinction between these platforms and those studied in Ferrer's research (2014) is mainly the stability of the collected data.

A useful example may be Pablo Neruda. The Chilean author appears on 419,000 occasions.³¹ However, the comparison between this author and others does not seem fair—the figure of Neruda is canonical and belongs to another historical and cultural era—but nevertheless it is useful to contrast with current examples. Two examples of well-known poets contemporary comparable to those studied here are the Chilean Raúl Zurita (b. 1950), who appears 69,500 times, and the Argentinian Néstor Perlongher (b. 1949), who appears 59,000 times. Regarding our authors, Fernando Nieto Cadena appears 17,100 times, Eduardo Milán 42,300 times, Eduardo Espina 25,800 times, and Iván Carvajal 22,500 times.

These results give us a measurable idea of these authors' level of digital dissemination in non-specialised contexts. Considering that Ecuador's population is 17.08 million while Uruguay's is 3.41 million, it is evident that the Uruguayan authors are far more widely known outside their own country than the Ecuadorians are. Digitisation of poetry easily breaks down the limitations on the trade of books imposed by national borders. Of course, this analysis may be arbitrary in the sense that it makes an analogy between number of related pages and the true interest in these poets, but these results corroborate what has already been noted in the context of anthologies, editions, and academic and essayistic studies. Thinking in terms of reception, Ecuadorian literature is perceived as a minor literature among minor literatures or, more precisely, as a small literature that in certain authors expresses itself as a minor literature. On the other side, Uruguayan literature has managed to overcome that small character through a diaspora of minor creators and an intensive exercise of dissemination and deterritorialisation to break down institutional, geographic, and demographic barriers.

Considering audio-visual platforms, YouTube can provide a great deal of information about the interest in specific authors, given the number of interviews and readings by them. Once again considering Neruda, the video with the most views, more than 2 million, is one in which his most publicised work is read, *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada*. A comparison with any of our authors would be so unfair as

³⁰ In performing searches, I have used quotation marks to narrow the search and avoid confusion with homonyms.

³¹ This and further data registered as of October 8, 2016.

to lead us to consider whether this methodology is correct. However, a comparison with Raúl Zurita, the most significant political poet of recent years in Chile (Rowe 2000, 10), may suffice: he has 14,680 reproductions for a video in which he reads his best-known poem, '*Canto a su amor desaparecido*' (Zurita 2011, 5:10), which is an amatory and elegiac monologue about a person killed by Pinochet's dictatorship in 1973. This figure is quite small compared with that of Neruda's poem, but it is a more realistic indicator of what other poets of the same generation in Latin America may achieve.

In the case of the authors considered in this study, besides the numerical index, another significant consideration—albeit qualitative and subjective—is the topic and focus of the videos. In the case of Milán, a very diverse menu of readings, interviews, and performances of his work is available. The video with the highest number of views has 1,018 reproductions and is an image of him reading a poem (Milán 2015, 2:30). This number of visits is insignificant in relation to Neruda and low in comparison to Zurita. The video was uploaded in August, 2008, and has comments such as '*excelente ensayista y poeta atípico*' and '*el poeta más impactante y conmovedor que he podido conocer*'. One of the endorsers is Viktor Gómez Ferrer, Spanish poet and critic.

In the case of Eduardo Espina, the menu of possibilities is somewhat shorter. There are only readings and interviews. The video with the most views is a recording of the Medellín poetry festival, Latin America's largest. It has 1,451 reproductions (Espina 2008, 6:22), a bit more than Milán's most popular video. It is a reading of the poem '*Es la fe o es la vida*', and the sole comment reads, '*solo lo sublime y genial permanece eterno, como en este caso todo lo dicho por Eduardo Espina*'. In both cases, the comments are exaggerated, although they apparently speak of a genuine interest in these voices.

Iván Carvajal's most watched video has only 456 views. In this video, the poet reads one of his emblematic texts, '*La ofrenda del cerezo*'. This poem was uploaded to YouTube by the Mexican journal *Círculo de Poesía* and has no comments. In the case of Nieto Cadena, there is nothing more than a video collage about the author with 71 views. It is evident that the Uruguayan poets, once again, have a greater digital presence.

These seemingly insignificant figures—in comparison with Neruda at least—reveal a deeper change on the horizon of expectations of the possible readers as listeners of Latin American societies, rather than of the specific importance of individual poets. The kind of diversified and complex cultural consumption that characterises today's

world has prevented the consolidation of (the names of) new poets in the social imaginary and has denied admission of poetry into other spheres.

The crisis of the poetic genre worldwide has led some theorists to speak of its marginalisation (Perelman 1996, 34). Now, in the global village, poetry is a genre understood by few and to which the majority is indifferent.³² In this regard, a distinction should be made between the reception of these authors in the contemporary context (rather insignificant) and the relationship of their texts to collective identities (very significant). A small literature now lives a double marginalisation in the context of global capitalism. This is true for all four authors, but especially for the Ecuadorians. Therefore, this research embodies a political gesture in at least two ways. The first is to place these poets of Ecuador and Uruguay on the map of global poetics and see what they say about their national communities in this chaotic time. The second involves defending the critical space for minor poetics (and small literatures) in order to understand how they use language to express collective experiences. Perhaps one of the key clues to understanding how a set of texts fits in a minor-literature constellation (Dominguez et al., 2018, 284) is the specific reading of the texts in their context of production.

³² Here I am referring specifically to ‘poetry printed in books’, because sung poetry, digital poetry and visual poetry move in other circuits. However, the recent phenomenon of Spanish authors such as Marwan or Elvira Sastre selling tens of thousands of copies is worth mentioning. An essay on the subject appears at <http://vicenteluis Mora.blogspot.com>, authored by the blog owner (Mora, 2019).

Chapter 2. Theory and Methodology

Metaphor and ethno-symbolism

Social reality is inconceivable outside of symbolism.

ANTHONY D. SMITH

One of the key arguments of this thesis is that poetry has a socially comprehensible meaning based on a series of social knowledge and shared experiences. That is why it is necessary to demonstrate that the apparently most irreducible element of literary language comes from the conceptual structure of each society. This same idea—that the symbolic, allegorical and metaphorical language explains and recreates the ideas of a society—lies within the epistemological premises of the ethno-symbolic approach initially developed by Anthony D. Smith. In several ways, this perspective emerged as a response to the approach of ‘modernist’ historians and political scientists such as Benedict Anderson (1936–2015), Ernest Gellner (1925–1995) and Eric Hobsbawm (1917–2012). The fundamental difference between the two views is that the modernist approach considers the nation as a community of participants who share common values and purposes, suited to an era of economic growth and political emancipation. This idea of the nation arises from the premise that there is no nation without a state (Shumway 1997, 61) and responds to the challenges of the modern condition, defined loosely as the compendium of ‘traits such as industrialisation, urbanisation, and the emergence of a market-industrial economy; the growth of centralising and unifying state institutions with the accompanying development of specialised occupations tied to them’ (Todorova 2010, 5). Ethno-symbolists, on the other hand, highlight the existence of atavistic and archaeological elements that confer meaning and coherence to a community, as well as subjectivity’s role in motivating collective actions (Smith 2009, 16). In the perspective of Nicolas Shumway, the history of Latin America is conditioned by the confrontation of both positions: 1) a modernist one with origins in the ideals of the French Revolution, which was assumed by the independence’s leaders and argues that the nation is essentially a construction; and 2) an essentialist or ethno-symbolist one that seeks to organise cultural vestiges to give a consistent foundation to a community (Shumway 1997, 61). From this perspective, those who most insisted on the essentialist character of the origin and senses of the American nations were the poets (Shumway 1997, 64). In this context, the

predominantly subjective nature that characterises poetic creation can be understood as something that linguists like Margaret Freeman call ‘minding’ (2009, 169), consisting in ‘establishing the role of forms of feeling in language use’ to understand how human feeling is expressed through symbolic forms (Langer 1953, 241).

How does the transition between a linguistic artefact of an emotional nature and a linguistic artefact with a meaning for a given society occur? Smith created a category for describing the social role of poetry and other kinds of cultural production: mythomoteur or myth-engine. Such an engine employs a useable past that reunites ‘a complex network of histories, myths and symbols that are instrumental in (re) inventing, justifying or otherwise reinforcing a nation’s self-image’ (Engelen 2007, 6). Concurrently, this concept treats artistic and cultural products that create a sense of community and social meaning from subjectivity. In its peculiarity and variety, poetry works to create emotion through language, in the context of a self-defined human community whose members possess shared memories, a common territory and a shared language (Smith 2009, 24–27).³³ However, the key question is, is the concept of nation suggested by Smith applicable to Latin American societies? What kind of mythomoteur does a fragmented society with different levels of social, scientific and economic development use? In the specific case of Latin America, the idea of a nation has been considered problematic primarily because Smith, Gellner or Hobsbawn’s models seem not to fit. As Nicola Miller suggests, ‘the real difficulty posed by Latin America is not that it is wholly different from the implied norm but that everything partly applies. The conventional identifiers of nationalism are all present, but in complicated ways’ (Miller 2006, 202). Leaders in the field like Smith or Gellner did not consider Latin America in their analysis of the phenomenon of nationalism basically because it violated two fundamental premises: 1) a nation-state is equivalent to a single national language and 2) the concept of *mestizaje* is a homogenisation and assimilation project (Miller 2006, 204). In this context, the functioning of a mythomoteur is no stranger to the specific features of Latin American societies, such as the shared feelings of the members of a community and their methods of organising their language and society. In the context of a complex and unstable reality, a poem is always part of a conceptual system (even when it seeks to subvert it) that has been culturally learned and that shapes and delimits it as a social subject (Lakoff and Johnson 2009, 236). Furthermore, a poem acquires a significant role departing from a

³³ From this convergence, political and cultural institutions often have consecrated poets as icons of cities, communities and nation-states.

rather paradoxical feature: it expresses deep collective traits despite its radical subjectivity. This idea can be appropriately explained by the figure of speech synecdoche, in which a specific part of something is used to refer to the whole, as in certain optical illusions where micro-portraits of figures of Latin American society (for example) configure a face, a map, a flag or any other image. However, it is necessary to imagine that the remaining micro-portraits do not exist, are unintelligible or simply do not claim our specific attention. If a poet, like the Catalanian Jaime Gil de Biedma, says '*Bienamadas imágenes de Atenas / en el barrio de Plaka /, junto a Monastiraki, / una calle vulgar con muchas tiendas*', he interprets a Spanish traveller on a street in Athens from his experience of a trip through a Mediterranean port. The social meaning of a poem is then always related to two combined processes, the displacement that goes from concepts to images (metaphorical) and the displacement that goes from the part (sensitive, concrete) to the whole (an interpretation of the social and symbolic life of a community). By way of a recreation or 'translation' of some elements, an artistic subjectivity expresses conceptual models that characterise a community as a whole.

Nation, nation-building and nationalism in Latin America

Hobsbawm was an exception among major theorists in explaining that Latin American societies did not fit the most characteristic descriptions and models of the nation-state because the region 'remained largely immune to modern ethnic-cultural nationalism to this day' (Hobsbawm, 313). The problem with this statement is that it is based on an argument that is complex to endorse, such as a hypothetical—and rather debatable—immunity to dialogue between the most atavistic features of communities (rites, remnants of pre-Hispanic or African languages, culinary traditions, cosmogonies) and the configuration of national states. Hobsbawm's argument corroborates the fact that the former Latin American colonies of Spain and Portugal have usually been regarded as incomplete or artificial nations. Among scholars of comparative nationalism, state came before nation in the region (Miller 2006, 201), and, therefore, Latin American nations are realities with heterogeneous, unstable traits. Given this assumption, the most interesting possibility is, in the case of Latin America, heterogeneous, eccentric and unstable mythomoteurs.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, novels (and certain epic poems) contributed to shaping national identities. Thus, they functioned as mythomoteurs. Through the educational system, they became sources of local history and literary pride. National

novels were often anthologised in school books or adapted in movies, series or television dramas and were often considered national symbols: for example, *Cumandá* by Juan León Mera (1879) or *Tabaré* by José Zorilla (1888). In addition, the links between literature and public administration become evident in the number of presidents, deputies and ministers who were also writers (Sommer 1991, 6). This relationship between the configuration of the state, education and the processes of literary creation were analysed extensively in books such as *Transculturación narrativa* (1982) and *La ciudad letrada* (1984), by Angel Rama, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* (2002), by Jean Franco, and *Foundational Fictions* (1991) by Doris Sommer. Rama's position is especially relevant because in some ways his outlook was the starting point for any interpretation of the links between literature and power in Latin America, although many of his conclusions were subsequently questioned.³⁴ In Western societies, throughout the 19th century, literature and art were the primary vehicles of the mythomoteurs of nationalism because they conveyed national myths that appealed to the popular imagination (Engelen 2007, 7).

Nonetheless, in the case of Latin America, the relationship between the emergence of national states and foundational myths has always been confronted with a complex cultural and historical conflict. Here the concept of transculturation, adopted by Ortiz, is useful for understanding the specificity of Latin American culture. The term 'transculturation' was created by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s and is connected to the functionalist school of anthropology, founded by Bronislaw Malinowski. In principle, the idea of transculturation sought to find an explanation for the cultural dimension of migratory processes in Cuban society, emphasising the reciprocity of encounters that are both conflictive and asymmetrical, especially for the receiving culture (2002, 98). According to Ortiz, transculturation usually occurs through migration processes, official power policies or the influence of the media (2002, 101). For his part, Rama adopts the focus of Ortiz, but modifies it by including the concept of cultural plasticity that, according to Rama, is the core of the strength of a social group. Theoretically, transculturation is a process in three steps: first, the loss of one's own cultural elements, then the incorporation of foreign elements, and finally a recomposition

³⁴ Françoise Perus considers that the interpretative scheme of Ángel Rama incurs a binary and paradoxical structure in which lawyers are classified as privileged individuals (and ultimately the lettered culture as the elite culture) and, on the other hand, the lettered city will in the end establish a democratisation process for all layers of society (2005, 363).

according to both. Therefore, according to Rama, a strong culture is also able to select some elements of the culture that invades it and convert them into something representative of itself, of the difference that distinguishes it from other cultures. In that sense, Latin America looks for an identity, according to Rama, in its desire for separation from Spain. He identifies a ‘principle of representativeness’ to signify the particularity of culture in Latin America. Representativeness is given by those original elements that can account for a nationality, region or a culture (2008, 32–35). Originality, meanwhile, is what makes a culture representative, giving it its distinguishing characteristics. In the literary field, this process operates in three convergent structures: language, literary structures and worldview. Somehow, these elements can reveal points where a literary text shows the conflict between two disputed or convergent identities: a poem where marginal, obliterated or peripheral cultures seek to manifestly link that text with the notion of minor literature.³⁵

Of course, these transculturation processes not only occur among a culture, its symbols and a group of literary texts (here, poems), but also in relation to institutions, their laws and hierarchies. It is worth noting that the intention of Rama in the posthumously published *La ciudad letrada* (1983) is to show the evolution of relations (sometimes close, sometimes antagonistic) between intellectuals and power in the same social space. In that sense, the distance between the mythomoteur (a set of symbolic works) created in the lettered city (understood as the space where realities and symbols coincide) and the society as a whole has set the map of the influences of literature in social life. Theoretically, Rama’s proposal is that in a progressive movement the literate city would reach a revolutionised city status in which a democratisation of writing is consolidated (under the banners of popular education and nationalism). With the extension of the literacy base, the base of members of the lettered city is also expanded (Rama 1998, 103–106). This type of lettered city should coincide with contemporary cultural reality, but the phenomena of globalisation and digitalisation have structurally modified that panorama, revealing its utopian character.

Franco’s response to this analytical scheme is a critique of its incomplete prophecy, fundamentally related to the utopian and slightly positivist character that Rama

³⁵ As the Peruvian philosopher David Sobrevilla points out, there are two key concepts for understanding the problem of the encounter (or clash) between two cultures, transculturation and heterogeneity. The fundamental difference between the two is that the first prefigures the possibility of cultural mixing and the second believes that there are literary works where the two cultures are irreducible and intransitive between them (2001, 21).

evidences in his outlook.³⁶ For Franco, the concept of transculturation, ‘a cultural counterpoint in which one culture did not dominate the other’ (2009, 10), has revealed its failure in advanced capitalism. The starting point of Franco’s criticism of the contemporary status of the concept of ‘lettered city’ is basically the impossibility of a balanced and stable relationship between cultures at the time of the great global movements, conditioned by the abstract flow of money and big data’s contents:

In search of new ways of thinking about late capitalism and its cultures, many critics have drawn on the writing of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose concepts—‘lines of flight,’ ‘deterritorialisation,’ ‘minority writing,’ ‘becoming-animal’—are common currency in Latin American intellectual debates as well as in left political thinking in Europe. [...] Capitalism, in their view, is the ultimate global movement, functioning axiomatically rather than to a code; in other words, it is indifferent to content and functions as an immanence rather than in obedience to outside control. Although, in their view, deterritorialisation (or abstraction) is not exclusive to capitalism but is a process that begins with the simplest gesture—eating, for example—it is a particularly powerful way of rethinking the fetishism of the commodity, the money form, and the contemporary global financialization. [...] The globe is not divided into oppositional blocks, one of which is destined to triumph over the other, but into flows, coagulations, escapes. Resistance is not putting up a fight to the death but the detection and intensification of ‘lines of flight’ that transform individuals. A new vocabulary of resistance valorises margins, the minor, defections from the state, and active experimentation rather than global revolution. (2009, 264-265)

From Franco’s perspective, the concept of minor literature seems to be useful in describing not the literature of a state, even of a small one, but rather a literary practice that opposes a higher power in a specific context. Here the concept of minor-literature constellation seems to make sense for understanding the changing and ambivalent dynamics of the contemporary world (Domínguez et al., 2018, 287). To this must be added the changes of a society where the emotional education of people is conditioned

³⁶ In several ways, Rama's scheme recalls the Marxist teleological dialectic on modes of production.

by the media: ‘the effects of mass culture disseminated by the media had a considerable impact on the intelligentsia, for whom the printed book was no longer the emblem of cultural literacy’ (Franco 2009, 9). From a lettered culture, we have moved to a digital culture where literature is much less culturally relevant than in the past. As Franco explains,

As state patronage weakens or disappears and corporate patronage takes over, the enemy of artistic endeavour is no longer an overtly repressive state but the standardizing effects of commercialization and the market that have effectively driven poetry and avant-garde fiction to the margins of culture. (2009, 270)

Thus, for Franco, the contemporary cultural situation is linked with the ubiquity of capitalism and its flexible logics. Nonetheless, her argument about the marginal character of poetry in the contemporary world is meaningful. In that sense, when discussing poetry or a particular poetic work, we must imagine that the sum of these and other devices (visual, digital) work together as a transcultural mythmoteur, capable of creating collective sense in small spaces that, as a mosaic and by association with other works, offers images from a specific community.

Another of Rama’s critics was Antonio Cornejo Polar, for whom the concept of transculturation was not too different from the notion of *mestizaje*. For him, as for Nicola Miller, ‘*el concepto de mestizaje, pese a su tradición y prestigio, es el que falsifica de una manera mas drástica la condición de nuestra cultura y literatura. En efecto lo que hace es ofrecer imágenes armónicas de lo que obviamente es desgajado y beligerante, proponiendo figuraciones que en el fondo solo son pertinentes a quienes conviene imaginar nuestras sociedades como tersos y nada conflictivos espacios de convivencia*’ (Cornejo Polar 1997, 341). In this respect, Cornejo Polar pointed out the coexistence of different literary systems that corresponded to the different historical and social subjects of a society as diverse as Peru. This coexistence, however, entails discrimination regimes that eclipsed the valuation of the immense production in indigenous languages and in popular Spanish within the same territory. In this way, Cornejo Polar’s approach went against the sacralisation of a merely Western canon as had been the case in the analyses and cartographies of Peruvian literature. Accordingly, Cornejo Polar proposes the concept of heterogeneous literatures as ‘*aquellas en las que una al menos de las instancias de comunicación artística es ajena al ámbito sociocultural al que pertenecen*

las demás' (Perus 2006, 104).

The concept of heterogeneous literatures is closely related to the concept of minor literatures in its focus on writing that emerges in a social context that is reluctant to assimilate it (because of some specific aspects of its structure). The novels of Arguedas and the poems of César Vallejo are examples of that heterogeneity, of that irreducible difference. When we talk about the concept of mythomoteur, we talk about works that have different meanings for different people and social groups. The state takes advantage of the political significance of some works and makes them part of a monolithic project:

¿realmente podemos hablar de un sujeto latinoamericano único o totalizador? ¿o deberíamos atrevernos a hablar de un sujeto que efectivamente está hecho de la inestable quiebra e intersección de muchas identidades disímiles, oscilantes y heteróclitas? Me pregunto, entonces, por qué nos resulta tan difícil asumir la hibridez, el abigarramiento, la heterogeneidad del sujeto tal como se configura en nuestro espacio. (Cornejo Polar 2003, 14)

The way in which the work of these poets is related to the configuration of a national mythomoteur is complex. First, they accentuate the local and partial in their work over totalising projects. Second, reality has become problematic, disintegrated and unstable—therefore, a phenomenon difficult to assimilate and to represent. Products of it are the experimentalism in the formal, the fragmentary writing, the search for new supporters of expression. Third, in these poets there is a will to re-establish a particular and sometimes collective identity. These try to link the elements of a disintegrated cultural tradition (Torres 2005). The work of the poets studied here is part of several mythomoteurs: Uruguayan identity, Ecuadorian identity and Latin American identity. Beneath this surface, it is even possible that there are several overlapping mythmoteurs, such as the Latin American migrant community or, in the case of Ecuador, regional communities. Therefore, we must think of transcultural mythomoteurs as the only possibility for convergence between poetry and community identity in the postmodern era.

Minor national poets? Two Ecuadorians, two Uruguayans

The poetry of Uruguayan poets Eduardo Milán and Eduardo Espina expresses two main elements: 1) the will to build a contemporary nationalism and 2) a linguistic project built on the legacy of historical vanguards. In the poetry of Ecuadorian poets Iván

Carvajal and Fernando Nieto Cadena, aesthetic innovations are subtler, though they express two very specific political and social views about their country. Carvajal, a writer from the Andean region, speaks from the perspective of the culturally central highland capital city of Quito. Nieto Cadena, by contrast, was from the historically and politically marginalised coastal region of Ecuador. His writing highlights the peculiarities of coastal speech as an expressive vehicle for that identity, giving the marginalised voice a literary form and opening new scenarios for traditionally non-literary themes. As William Rowe explains, ‘a major dynamic of Latin American poetry has been the opening of the field to territories previously excluded from the poem, and these include, very importantly, poetries written in, or influenced by, native and African languages’ (Rowe 2004, 166).

In the ethno-symbolist framework, the role of poets in the development of mythomoteurs is clearly synthesised in the following statement: ‘the historical novel, the tone poem, history and genre painting and landscapes were created, in part to evoke and convey the sense of national community, tied to a specific time and place’ (Smith 2009, 33). The poems of the authors studied here express incomplete, subtle, oblique and eccentric forms of nationalism and, in parallel and sometimes paradoxically, two very specific characteristics of art in this era, a sense of artistic autonomy very characteristic of 20th-century poets, and the chaotic, unpredictable and unstable political characteristics of recent decades, especially in Latin America. However, the poetry of Carvajal, Milán, Espina and Nieto Cadena represents distinctive cultural features about the place they occupy within their communities. For this reason, the selected texts can be understood as political readings/interpretations of the national communities they are part of (Smith 2009, 39).

If we consider that the dissemination and reception processes are slow and contentious in Latin America, particularly in small countries with limited publishing industries (as is the case in Uruguay and especially Ecuador), the process of generating collective meanings from poetry is slow and frequently weak. Smith calls this mechanism ethnogenesis, a process of symbolic cultivation that presupposes ‘the rise of a specialist class of communicators with the skills to select, interpret and apply elements of common heritage to the new situations’ (Smith 2009, 49). Smith suggests that the communicators have historically been the intellectual class, the members of the lettered city (Rama 1984). Among them, the poets have occupied places both prominent and marginal, although their place in the contemporary world is strictly marginal (Franco 2009).

Due to its intrinsic levels of indetermination, poetry is a dual device that can work within and outside of the normal frontiers of nationhood. In many ways, we can say that poets build nationhood using devices (poems) that are able to transcend a radically personal aesthetic level towards a collective feeling. So, can poets express a collective sensibility in the contemporary world? Or, more precisely, can these poets express a collective feeling? Are Milán, Espina, Carvajal and Nieto Cadena effective interpreters of a collective heritage according to new situations? I argue that they indeed articulate effective linguistic artefacts, and throughout Chapters 3–6, I present detailed analysis in support of this argument. Another problem has to do with the characteristics of our time and the phenomena of transculturation, migration, and globalisation. A crucial question that needs be posed in order to understand these phenomena is linked to the notion of ethnic group and its articulation in the global world. Smith believes there to be two categories in correlation: ‘the open, polyethnic and inclusive society of “cosmopolis”; and the exclusive, monoethnic and the authentic world of ethnopolis’ (Smith 2007, 325). Smith attributes authenticity exclusively to local phenomena, pointing to a connection with the idea of minor literature: minor literature is, in this context, ‘localised’ literature, where singular conflicts are brought to light. Working in a similar theoretical perspective, Aberbach (2015, 94) argues in *National Poetry, Empires and Wars*, ‘poets use myth and mythical history as a shifting tapestry of national identity. They explore or invent the unique character of the nation, emphasising what seems most original and distinctive’. Both Milán and Nieta Cadena, for example, are effective literary interpreters of their community myths.

As discussed above, it is a paradoxical characteristic of poetry to express deep collective feelings of belonging from the most subjective perspective: ‘some of the greatest national poets rebel against the nation and their national role. The individuality thereby expressed becomes paradoxically emblematic of the nation and its own struggle for independence’ (Aberbach 2015, 8). Thus, I would add to Aberbach’s argument that the tapestry of national identity is not only an expression of a society’s worldview, but also an invention of poets. The poet negotiates the semantic, syntactic, and phonetic patterns of his or her language: it is part of an empathetic process of inner life (with all of its background of memory) within a nation’s history—a metabolic process that has a great deal of fictive aspects but is no less real in an anthropologic and social perspective (Rowe 2004, 160). This convergence could be understood as a synchronicity, where the sensitivity of the poet and national history seem to coincide in an author’s writing or at

least in particular poems. American writer Robert Pinsky, in his book *Democracy, Culture and the Voice of Poetry* (2009), suggests that this process is authentic and fully convergent only if the poet understands the fragile equilibrium between two forms of alienation, a subjectivity without social ties and a society without roots or subjective processes. Pinsky (2009, 8) demands a transversal perspective that could include historical roots and social links: ‘Memory resists uniformity because it registers fine gradations; memory resists the factional because it registers the impure’. The key element here is ‘the register of the impure’. The impure can be understood as something that resists simplification into statistics and abstract schemes: the stories of street slang, the abject, censored, and excluded characters. When a poem is able to offer information about the time and place in which it was written, there will be a tension between official languages and peripheral languages, between the regulations of the legal city and the volatile records of orality, pointing out cross-cultural spaces where social, political, economic or legal reality is in dispute.

Although poets ‘rarely have a clear impact on the nation; the changes they bring are usually invisible and long-term’ (Aberbach 2015, 14), they frequently use their public presence as a vernacular tool for education and national identity (16). Very often their social status is significant, but not necessarily or exclusively as authors of poetry, but as members of a hypothetical lettered city: these poets have been academics, publishers, bureaucrats, journalists, or writers in other literary genres. Eduardo Milán, for example, is an academic and lecturer. Eduardo Espina and Iván Carvajal have taught in universities for decades. The case of Fernando Nieto Cadena is the most unusual, as he dedicated himself to teaching in literary workshops (informal versions of creative writing programs) in Mexico. This has to do with the characteristics of the Latin American version of print-capitalism or electronic capitalism (explained below). The market of symbolic goods will determine the importance and velocity of poems in becoming part of a communal memory or national heritage.³⁷

The social role of poetry is not always obvious to poets themselves. In many cases, in fact, poets are hardly conscious of the imaginary reader and the specific social conditions in which they are writing, since, even today, a naive transcultural poetic sensibility prevails in certain romantic perspectives.

³⁷ See Chapter 1 above for discussion of the circulation and reception of poetry in this context.

Ethno-symbolism and the notion of landscape in the poem

From a Marxist perspective, Cosgrove defined the more interdisciplinary field of cultural geography as a subfield of human geography. This field of study focuses on ‘the patterns and interactions of human culture, both material and non-material, in relation to the natural environment and the human organization of space’ (Cosgrove 1994, 111). In fact, Cosgrove and Daniels (2002a, 1) distance themselves from some empirical approaches by identifying a tendency ‘to reify the landscape as an object of empiricist investigation’. The relationship between Cosgrove’s concept and ethno-symbolism (Smith and Aberbach) lies precisely in the symbolic character that Cosgrove attributes to the notion of landscape:

Como concepto organizativo y analítico, el paisaje tiene una historia compleja en el marco de la geografía cultural. Su uso ha pasado de ser una referencia a lo tangible, un conjunto mensurable de formas materiales en un área geográfica determinada, una representación de esas formas en medios variados como son los cuadros, los textos, las fotografías o las representaciones teatrales hasta llegar a convertirse en los espacios deseados, recordados y somáticos de la imaginación y los sentidos (Cosgrove 2002b, 64).

In this brief conceptualisation proposed by Cosgrove there are three key ideas: forms, representation and spaces of the imagination and the senses. This shift from a positivist vision of the landscape to a more intuitive perspective, marked by subjectivity, exposes the landscape as the formalisation of our sensory experience. Cosgrove understands that this formalisation corresponds to a collective construction (as a way of integrating space and human concerns), but does not attribute a specific value to the configuration of a national identity. The approach of this thesis is to use the concept of landscape proposed by Cosgrove as a starting point for understanding the way in which poetry selects certain references of reality through language. Aberbach’s perspective is more ideological and assumes that the references of reality selected by a poet can mean something to the national identity of a human group. The convergence of Cosgrove and Aberbach’s theoretical backgrounds suggests that the poem can be understood as a linguistic mechanism with a consensual social value. Both Cosgrove and Aberbach agree on the importance of human aspects in determining the meaning of a landscape.

In addition, there is an even more specific relationship underlying the reductive parameters of the two outlooks. On the one hand, Cosgrove’s landscape has temporal and

spatial limits and a stable structure.³⁸ Similarly, to some extent, this notion of landscape coincides with the idea that the nation has a series of components that characterise it (in respect to which other elements are foreign)—the essentialist perspective on social groups proposed by ethno-symbolism. Are these landscapes necessarily translated into poems if an author attempts to reflect them? This is true to the extent that the aim of those texts is to express the character of the social experience that embodies the real landscape. Cosgrove defines the landscape as a ‘social and cultural product, a way of seeing projected onto land and having its own techniques and compositional forms; a restrictive way of seeing that diminishes alternative modes of experiencing our relations with nature’ (1998, 269). The notion of composition is significant because the landscape becomes a restricted way of seeing from which a social group makes its living space. When talking about poetry, the idea of composition can be translated into three elements, syntax, semantics and phonology. Regularities and anomalies in the use of language characterise the way in which the poet has ordered the reality that surrounds him. In that sense, a cooperative and hybrid work can advance from the social and natural elements to the close reading features, marking a coherent path from one to the other. For example, in ‘*La ofrenda del cerezo*’, a poem written by Iván Carvajal (2015, 384), the poet reflects on the natural landscape in a play of subtle physical interactions:

Simulacro de la escarcha
en el día soleado,
mapa de un cielo de estrellas
albas y enanas, o un firmamento
que apenas se sostiene
de las cuerdas mecidas
por un rumor de niños que se alejan.
Las flores del cerezo
copan el cuadro de la ventana.

In this extract, the first of ten stanzas, the poet mixes a series of images that work metonymically to refer to the sky: 1) ‘*simulacro de la escarcha / en el día soleado*’; 2) ‘*mapa de un cielo de estrellas*’; 3) ‘*un firmamento / que apenas se sostiene*’. Together,

³⁸ Using a perspective akin to Cosgrove’s, the cultural geographer Don Mitchell (2000, 123) suggests, in considering the relationship between landscape and political economy, that a landscape is ‘a system of signs, signs that themselves may very well be unstable and open to revision’. Mitchell’s review is moderate and framed within the limits of a bounded and traditional vision where the relationship with static nature is an essential element. According to Mitchell, a landscape corresponds directly with an idea of stability with small variations.

these images complete the sensation of sky, air, lightness. Likewise, the image of children is connected with those ethereal impressions, acquiring that trait. The poem develops a slightly asymmetric non-rhyming structure, with hexasyllable (en-el-día-so-lea-do) and decasyllable lines (al-ba-sye-na-nas-oun-fir-ma-men-to).

Ninguna necesidad tiene el cerezo
que venga de tan lejos y me detenga
a contemplarlo en su milagro.
Nada es necesario para el árbol
Salvo la luz, la noche, el agua,
Los fermentos, la brisa del Potomac
y el vuelo de las moscas.
La rotación incesante de la Tierra.

How does this passage correlate with the real landscape? It is composed of a structure of eight lines where eneasyllables, hendecasyllables and dodecasyllables are combined. Visually, the extract has the appearance of a square, which evidences regularity, symmetry, balance. The author introduces a topology with the Potomac River and, indirectly, the Chesapeake Bay. These images are followed by a series of narrative, historical, and artistic elements related to this area of the United States. The poet asks us to embed the poem's other elements on that geographic axis. This is a thoughtful and naturalist stamp regarding the tree and the surrounding elements: the cherry-tree appears as a self-sufficient entity in relation to the human being, although other elements of nature are harmoniously linked with it. In several ways it is a naturalistic, even ecological, allegory. However, it is also a cosmopolitan dialogue: the vision is that of an Ecuadorian poet observing a landscape in North America. The landscape fits within Cosgrove's concept, but the poet's outlook is, by default, that of a visitor.

That outlook differs from the ethno-symbolist perspective because the cosmopolitan thought suggests the possibility of a community in which individuals from different locations (physical, economic, etc.) enter into relations of mutual respect despite their different beliefs (religious, political, etc.) (Appiah 2006, 8). The different toponyms Carvajal uses throughout his poem suggest the possibility of an ethic based on the fragility of the human experience in face of biological, social and natural changes—an ethic of vulnerability where the only constant is transformation and movement. When the poet mentions specific places in Ecuador (Chigchirián, for example, in which this fictive cherry-tree also grows), he points to the possibility of travel, of a human gaze pierced by

the possibility of being in different places of the planet and living a similar sensitive experience (with the ethical consequences of human mobility as something essential for the experience of individuals):

Siembro un cerezo en Chigchirián.
Tal vez un día alguno de estos petirrojos
parezca un sol del tamaño de un puño,
la mancha de un corazón sobre el manto
blanco del cerezo. Tal vez estaré
sentado en una silla del jardín
esperando el milagro. Otro cerezo
distinto de aquellos que contemplé
plantados en una avenida que va al Potomac
y en un jardín que da al Mediterráneo.
Otro cerezo: hoy mi mano abre
su nido en el suelo. Y espero la lluvia
con unción.

The cherry tree becomes a symbol of deterritorialisation because a specimen of that tree grows in Chigchirián, next to the Potomac or near the Mediterranean. Once again, the poem alternates lines without rhyme (eneasyllables, hendecasyllables), with links that create a feeling of fluidity, of internal connection. The passage, when presented as a block, suggests internal unity and cohesion, despite its apparently disparate ideas, situations or places. The poet creates the illusion that this tree is both one and many; it is a symbol of human mobility and also of changes in nature as the scene of life. Thus, the game between perennialism and the expiration that characterises human existence is the emotional engine of the text. There is also an effort to show the sensitive, conceptual and cultural differences between the different protagonists: the tree blooms, the poetic 'I' cannot contain, subsume, reduce that experience, and the flowering of the tree is a fundamental experience in the awareness of the poetic 'I'.

Contemplo al cerezo en su milagro.
Florece. Y aunque me embriaga su aroma,
no estaré aquí para probar sus frutos.
Mi vida depende del cerezo apenas
mientras dure este instante. Un blanco manto
que cae y se mece, un fresco olor,
mi júbilo. Me iré en unos minutos.
Mi vida no depende del cerezo.
Y sin embargo irá el fantasma
del árbol conmigo para siempre.

Despite the movement that the poem suggests, despite the deterritorialisation of the poetic 'I', the syntax of the text is relatively conventional and does not propose a dissent to normalised poetic language. Here it is important to note that the poet seems to seek a consensus about the way his ideas are understood: an ethic of mutual understanding.

The Uruguayan Eduardo Milán (2013, 51), by contrast, proposes a more abstract reflection, but a perspective conceptually closer to the ethno-symbolic:

'Bemvindos a Santana
Livramento, Brasil', mirados desde allá
'Bienvenidos a Rivera, Uruguay', no existe aquel cartel
tampoco existe este otro.

In this case, the places described in the poem are part of the author's personal memory, his subjective mythology. However, these images are translated into a reflection on a very specific kind of poster. The passage repeats a grammatical structure 'to welcome', but changes the language and place: 'Bemvindos a Santana', 'Bienvenidos a Rivera'. The lines ponder the meaning of the border between Uruguay and Brazil, but also reflect on the poet's Brazilian mother and on Portuguese as his mother tongue. For Milán, that border is a ritualistic and mythological place, with ethno-symbolic value, whose motifs are recognised by the inhabitants of the borderlands of both countries as their own. This is not exclusively an ethno-symbolic reflection but also a cosmopolitanism of the 'borders'. As will become evident in the next section, ethno-symbolism and cosmopolitanism are not always opposing perspectives. In many cases, these perspectives are complementary in enlightening the relationship between national identities and poetry in the contemporary world.

Appadurai's gaze in the context of cosmopolitanism

The implications of Appadurai's thought for reading poetry in terms of a cosmopolitan view of the contemporary world are of great significance. Although this study does not intend to focus on conceptual discussions regarding cosmopolitanism as a theoretical concept, it is necessary to review in what sense Appadurai's approach is cosmopolitan and how these aspects determine the relevance of the conceptual proposal. First, it is important to point out that Appadurai does not elaborate an explicit method for analysing poetry. Thus, the approach proposed here is an adaptation of his methodological

proposal in Area Studies. The method proposed is called cosmopolitan ethnography, or macroethnography (Appadurai 1996, 52). This approach reveals how the new dynamics of globalisation determine the formal characteristics of cultural production. As noted in the discussion of ethno-symbolism above, Cosgrove's landscape is related to the notion of nationhood. Appadurai, instead, questions the relationship between national identities and landscapes. Therefore, the central point is to show that the most sense-based aspects of a nation-state are usually different from the official ones. (In fact, Appadurai develops a new typology, which will be analysed in the next section.)

I begin by outlining the conceptual features of cosmopolitan ethnography. Appadurai's cosmopolitanism is a theoretical finding based on a number of specific pieces of evidence about cultural changes around the globe. It differs from the perspective of other cosmopolitan theorists. Political theorist Ulrich Beck, for example, has a militant view of this theoretical current and develops it under the concept of 'cosmopolitan outlook': '[A] sense of boundarylessness... reveals not just the "anguish" but also the possibility of shaping one's life and social relations under conditions of cultural mixture' (Beck 2006, 3). The basic difference between the concepts of cosmopolitan outlook and cosmopolitan ethnography in the study of poetry is that the cosmopolitan outlook belongs mainly to the field of political theory. Appadurai, by contrast, proposes an ethnographic view of cultural processes.

However, there are several concepts of Beck's proposal that merit inclusion in a cosmopolitan ethnography of contemporary poetry. Perhaps the most important is the notion of 'glass world', which suggests that a reading of any aspect of today's world must proceed from a view in which 'differences, contrasts and boundaries must be fixed and defined in an awareness of the sameness in principle of others' (Beck 2006, 8). In reading the poets in this study, this exercise of reading the other is essential—identifying what we share with an author from another social reality. Indeed, the poems of Milán or Espina could be read in contrast to the writings of Carvajal or Nieto Cadena in order to distinguish their cultural and aesthetic aspects, but under the premise that they all share the field of humankind. Although this statement may seem obvious, such a perspective can provide useful information about cosmopolitan, communal, or radically subjective issues.

Another relevant concept in contextualising the relationship between cosmopolitanism and poetry is the notion of pluralism developed by Anthony Appiah. His concept largely coincides with Appadurai's, because both authors believe there are

certain universal values and that others are necessarily local (Appadurai 1996, 191; Appiah 2006, xxi). Pluralism in the sphere of production and reception is meaningful because minor literatures are outside the centre of the canon (Rama 1998, 34; Hatfield 2015, 20). There is a need for an open and dynamic horizon of expectations in order to understand questions posed by other cultures, societies, authors and readers. This notion of plurality is closely related to the notion of hospitality in Jacques Derrida (2000, 47). Derrida expresses the idea of hospitality quite clearly, explaining that the idea of boundary or limit is crucial, because only this can explain that someone is within or outside of the law (whether it be immigration law or a certain authoritarian literary canon). In that sense, hospitality involves recognising the rights of the foreigner in the context of a space regulated by certain values. The possibility of crossing the border and being accepted is hospitality's guiding principle.

In the case of poetry, how are cosmopolitan outlook, pluralism and hospitality related? In all these scenarios, the space of culture is a hinge between the local and the global. Thus, Nieto Cadena, Carvajal, Espina, and Milan's writings are positioned in terms of values, themes, and cultural references in various points (never just one) along this blurred borderline. If we think of poetic creation as a virtual reality game, poets are creating maps with moving boundaries—borders for their own poetic styles, but in dialogue with geographical and political boundaries. Within or outside those maps, there are imagined landscapes that often refer to real landscapes of nature, human movements, and technology. Of course, some poets express greater variety, mobility and flexibility in their social and cultural references, but none is located either wholly inside the global sphere nor wholly inside the local constraints. In this sense, our task as literary critics is to read poetry from multiple positions, whether these are postnational, transnational, intranational, relational, or national (Hooper 2011, 35). In his prospect of macroethnography, Appadurai (1996, 173) includes a comprehensive theoretical understanding of culture, but also proposes a method for reading the landscape (essential for the scope of this research) and, by extension, for understanding how a poet expresses a sense of identity and belonging.

New types of landscapes, new types of poems

To understand the ideas of landscape developed by Appadurai and their applicability to poetry, it is necessary to review the modernist perspective. Cosgrove and Daniels (2002, 2) remark that 'a landscape park is more palpable but no more real, nor

less imaginary, than a landscape, painting or poem. Indeed, the meanings of verbal, visual and built landscapes have a complex interwoven history'. Considering that Cosgrove's theoretical writings are focused on static landscapes, and that a landscape that does not fit into these parameters is no longer a landscape, do landscapes exist within a postmodern scenario? Yes, but to follow this perspective we must understand Appadurai's scope regarding new sensitive realities.

The transformations that occurred in the world during the 20th century, urbanisation processes, and the industrialisation of some countries worked to define cities as central axes. It is possible to view cities as places where urbanisation and industrialisation processes meet, cross, mutate and develop. These places bring together different cultural traditions that result in hybrid forms (Crang 1998, 173). Some contemporary poets (like Espina or Milán) have tried to include a variety of reference systems in their poetry, moving away from conventional patterns. A contemporary landscape—understood as a conjunction of topological, natural, and cultural elements (in a poem or in space)—must include other contemporary elements in order to be useful as a mirror of a society.

Appadurai (1996) proposes a new typology of landscapes. These landscapes are devices of what he calls imagined worlds—that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of people and groups around the planet. However, these landscapes not only do not fit but overlap each other (Achugar, 2003). Unlike the concept of Cosgrove, the new landscapes that Appadurai identifies are rather the dimensions which he believes are the simplest way of exploring the 'disjuncture' within the global economy. In recent decades, the disconnect between the static landscapes that shaped the puzzle of a nation's map has as its counterpart the appearance of these new landscapes that are, rather, abstract networks that operate in a deterritorialised way along different points of the planet:

- 1) An ethnoscape is 'the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers' (33).
- 2) The technoscape is 'the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology and the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries' (34).

- 3) Financescapes are the dispositions of global capital as a landscape, which is more mysterious, rapid, and difficult to follow (34).
- 4) Mediascapes refer to the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (35).
- 5) Ideoscapes are concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and, frequently, have to do with ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented towards capturing state power, or a portion of it (36).

Appadurai did not create this typology to analyse poems, but rather landscapes and cultural products in a broader sense. I intend to use his outlook to interpret figurative images in contemporary poems. Although this classification may seem a radical departure from a traditional, stylistic analysis of lyric poetry, I argue that it has significant usefulness in accounting for contemporary sensibilities. Strictly speaking ‘new landscapes’ are maps of a new syntax or architecture of cultural, economic, political and ideological relations. The proposal of this thesis is to point out passages where, even if as a flickering or minimal outline, these new complex maps are visible. Throughout the development of this study, my proposal is to show how modern, stabile, static landscapes are combined, mixed or overlapped with new landscapes in the configuration of nations in the context of minor literature and globalisation. Considering these arguments, some applications of Appadurai’s concepts in the field of poetry are:

- 1) Ethnoscape: An example of a possible reference to this type of landscapes in a poem occurs in an untitled text from the book *Tres días para completar un gesto* by Eduardo Milán (2013, 68): ‘*unos tenis de dos mil pesos son la quinta parte de un vuelo en avión a Uruguay / Hemisferio Sur abajo pasando por Santiago por Lima –le digo / la cercanía de Hollywood puede hacerte daño en serio*’. The poem is situated in a kind of choppy dialogue (‘*le digo*’) about the meaning of human movement between North and South America, with the respective political and cultural implications in regard to migration, politics, and economic struggles. This text locates not only the problem of human movement, but also the subjective implications of the usage of money.
- 2) Technoscape: A reference to this type of landscape can be identified in the prose poem ‘*Los juegos de la tribu*’, from the book *Inventando a Lennon* by Iván Carvajal (2015, 333): ‘*Se agrupan en torno a las pequeñas máquinas electrónicas,*

pulsan botones y palancas. Apuestan, salvan escollos, trepan sortean abismos, bajan, saltan, aplastan al enemigo con sus tanques, lo bombardean con las escuadras de aviones invisibles a los radares, lo aniquilan'. Although this poem seems to describe video games, the reader can also refer to a war room in a battle. In both cases, there is an obvious reference to electronic processes and virtual reality mechanisms, where a territorial dispute between countries (real or imagined) arises. The problem of cybernetics and telematics is posed through an enumeration of actions (*salvan, trepan, bajan, saltan*) that the poetic 'I' confirms neither as real nor as virtual, while retaining an ominous ambiguity.

- 3) Financescapes: Although it is relatively difficult to explain the references to this type of landscape without being too literal, an intriguing example appears in the previously quoted poem by Eduardo Milán (2013, 68), in the first line quoted: '*unos tenis de dos mil pesos son la quinta parte de un vuelo en avión a Uruguay*'. This line is a meditation on the meaning of money. Why does a pair of shoes cost the same as a fifth of a plane ticket to Uruguay? How does money move to create that kind of equivalence (even in the mind of a poet)? Given the abstract flow of capital, the ethical conflict is in the hands of the consumer who must decide between two very different instruments of human mobility: shoes or plane ticket. The *dos mil pesos* is not only the physical circulation of money during a regular purchase, but a node within a network of complex economic exchanges. The previous image is effective in revealing the internal dynamic of this kind of landscape, because it draws abstract dynamics in sensorial terms (though it is rarely possible to find texts in which these flows are clearly described).
- 4) Mediascapes: In this case, sensory images refer to images that come from the mass media. An example of this convergence is in a poem written by Fernando Nieto Cadena (2009, 7): '*Y pasan los minutos las tres horas a las que me confina cada vez que viene porque / debe regresar a su trabajo después a casa donde las escenas del dulce hogar aunque / no haya chimenea son una mezcla de telenovelas noticieros*'. In this segment, the sweet home appears as unreal, as its origin seems to correspond to the characteristics of a television format. In the poet's vision, reality is a mixture of TV fiction (*las telenovelas*) and televised reality (*noticieros*). Thus, the way in which social memory is constructed at this time has as an emotional and narrative parameter to television formats. The scene portrayed is ironically common in many homes in contemporary Latin American

societies where electronic screens are at the centre of family emotions, imagination, and social bonds.

- 5) Ideoscapes: These landscapes are more explicit and tend to appear in larger colloquial or baroque texts. In another untitled poem, Nieto Cadena (2009, 5) demonstrates this type of sensitive construction: '*Guayaquil se lanza contra Chávez y va mi cantaleta de que Nebot es otro lameculos del imperio un chupamedias de Bush un curuchupa*'. References to Latin American political struggles tie with Nieto Cadena's anti-imperialist view that criticises his city—though not his country—for its servility (including its mayor for more than twenty years, Jaime Nebot). The vulgar language gives the text a riotous tone. The line does not even use punctuation, suggesting an accelerated rhythm that seems relevant to the sequence of ideas expressed.

It is important to note that this axiology of landscape proposed by Appadurai relativises the concept of nation—and in some ways that of community—and is replaced by several universes or imaginary worlds that coexist in a deterritorialised world. In that sense, the centre-periphery and metropolis-margin relationships lose meaning. How would the idea of a national, regional or communal poet make sense in such a context? A possible answer is posed in the book *Planetas sin boca* by Hugo Achugar, who discusses the complexity of applying the arguments of non-place (Augé 1995, 8) and the end of the nation (Appadurai 1996, 191) in the case of Latin America, since there the struggle for the past and memory is overriding (Achugar 2004, 77). In that sense, Achugar believes it is necessary to add the category of landscapes of memory, 'memory-scapes' or 'monument-scapes', with the premise that they work together with the landscapes proposed by Appadurai.

This additional concept discusses with his claim on local identities. Achugar's idea of memory-scapes is closely related to mythomoteurs. If in Latin America the past is an area of dispute between heterogeneous identities (Cornejo Polar 2003, 14) and heterogeneous temporalities (Lund 2006, 35), identity is not merely assumed, but constantly reviewed. Some Latin American poets propose a minor literature that reflects that complex heterogeneity. In those texts, social memory itself seems to be in dispute. The 'new landscapes' are part of a new kind of societies that some poets (spoken-word poets, visual poets, poets who adopt the heritage of the avant-garde, among others) have tried to encapsulate through new junctions of images, unusual syntactic strategies, and other elements of interplay within a poem. Within this new context, Cosgrove's landscape

might appear outdated, but his idea forms is the conceptual starting-point for the notions of landscape proposed by Appadurai: there is no new landscape without traditional landscape. This is a fact evident in Latin American societies, where people live under heterogeneous temporalities (Lund 2006, 35).

The authors studied here—particularly Milán and Espina, but also Carvajal and Nieto Cadena—have interpreted these new landscapes in various ways, sometimes combining references to new landscapes with references to stable, sensitive landscapes. Hence, a poem might be read in light of these new combinations, which may contradict the preconceived relationship between a landscape and a poem.

Poetry and ethnography of places: neighbourhood, nation, globality

Often, poets place landmarks in their texts that refer to real and specific geographical sites.³⁹ However, this does not necessarily mean that these places have a subjective meaning for the author. Hence, the key point is to understand whether or not they express the social and cultural practices of his community or communities. As we have seen in the previous section, Appadurai, a leading theoretician of cosmopolitanism, questions not only the idea of the nation but also the concept of a stable landscape, linking it with a concept of fixedness that is no longer possible in most contemporary contexts. Appadurai outlines several categories and analytic strategies as part of an interpretive method called ‘cosmopolitan ethnography’. If we transfer the essential elements of this method to the study of poetry, it is necessary to clarify the terminology in order to understand landscapes not only aesthetically but also as sites of social life. In the era of globalisation, place names travel in digital networks and seem to have lost any specific cultural significance. In that sense, it is necessary to understand how social relations and daily life work within these poems. Here, the concept of neighbourhood is important, because it can add a concrete dimension to the analysis, giving anthropological and ethnographic perspectives to illuminate what a poem expresses about a society.

In this interplay of concepts, the notion of neighbourhood could be understood as the opposite of abstract phenomena like the global world or the nation-state. For example, if the cosmopolitan world is abstract, the neighbourhood is concrete. For Appadurai (1996, 191), ‘neighbourhoods are ideally stages for their own self-reproduction, a process that is fundamentally opposed to the imaginary of the nation-space, where

³⁹ There are a few very abstract poets who make no particular references to specific landscapes: the Argentinian Roberto Juarroz and the French André du Bouchet are examples of this aesthetic trend.

neighbourhoods are designed to be instances and exemplars of a generalisable mode of belonging to a wider territorial imaginary'. Thus, the neighbourhood is a place where contemporary landscapes are humanised; that is, felt and understood. A poem can express ideas or images that are based upon a country's physical geography, but on many occasions the analysis of its relationships with the neighbourhood (understood as part of the mythomoteur of a certain community and as the lifeworld⁴⁰) can explain those elements and give them a collective meaning. This process is complex and may include many levels of belonging. While the global tends to multiply the differences between landscapes, often in a chaotic fashion, the 'nation-state conducts throughout its territories the bizarrely contradictory project of creating a flat, contiguous, and homogeneous space of nationness and simultaneously a set of places and spaces' (Appadurai 1996, 189). Globality means dispersion of cultural references, while a nation-state expresses an artificial homogeneity. Between the two realities, the neighbourhood appears as a space

⁴⁰ There is a relevant intersection between Appadurai's neighbourhood and Habermas's concept known as lifeworld. Habermas thinks that the world of life is made up of culture, society and personality. Each of these elements refers to interpretative patterns or basic assumptions about culture and its influence on action, appropriate patterns of social relations (society) and human behaviour (personality). While these components are inextricably linked in archaic societies, the rationalisation of the world of life implies a growing differentiation between culture, society and personality. The three elements of the world of life can be characterised as follows:

- 1) Culture, articulated as the 'objective knowledge' shared within a society. I enclose the term 'objective knowledge' here, as I follow Habermas's definition of culture (a collection of knowledge in which participants rely on interpretations to understand something in the world) and the conclusions he draws. Such knowledge is not universal objective data, but rather 'safe' and 'stable' data, which are taken as true by the members of a culture. The original 'truthfulness' of such knowledge often becomes an absolute truth. In addition, this type of knowledge can act as a cultural symbol like a waving flag.
- 2) Society is for Habermas the set of legitimate ordinances through which participants regulate their belonging to social groups, thereby ensuring solidarity. As in the previous case, here too the social integration of the world of life ensures that new situations are connected to pre-existing states of the world. Unlike culture, it is not a question here of the semantic dimension, but of the social space. With its 'social' character, we can say that society expresses the coordinated aspect of action.
- 3) The personality is, finally, the set of competences of an individual that allow him to learn, understand and use a language and, therefore, make him capable of producing an action, that is, to take part in processes of understanding. Personality is the first psychological filter for any novelty that comes through communication and, in sociological terms, it is the necessary ladder to achieve the process of socialisation.

The world of life is then the space of creativity where subjectivity becomes social and where society is subjectivised. Habermas calls this instrumentalisation process of the world of life 'colonisation'. Laws, national institutions, trade rules or technology networks can become interferences in the field of life. The systematisation of the world of life entails its instrumentalisation and its consequent exhaustion. This argument coincides with the idea of a space (the neighbourhood) where life is in constant feedback, in contrast to the instrumental world (Habermas 1989, 25). The minor literatures are also affected by these forms of social fragmentation. Therefore, it is more practical to talk about minor-literature constellations, a more plural and comprehensive concept (Domínguez et al., 2018, 284).

of counter-hegemony, of marginality, of minority. These three categories work within this thesis to show how poems and their component parts fall within frameworks of belonging and geographic maps:

1. The neighbourhood embodies the space where human beings meet, discuss, and interact. In the analysis of a poem, it allows us to observe the relationship between social life and the symbolic aspects of a poem. Frequently, Eduardo Milán (2013, 33) creates scenarios in the suburbs of distant cities—always with a subtle political gesture. For example: *‘crepúsculo en las afueras de New Orleans / – todavía no empieza el carnaval del centro / en la esquina izquierda de la baranda una mecedora se mece sola’*. Local customs appear in the neighbourhood, which is what makes it distinctive. In this case, there is a reference to the New Orleans carnival, which is considered the most important in North America in cultural, economic, and touristic terms. However, a meaningful detail appears in the last line, where the image of a rocking chair reveals that someone inhabits that place outside the communal party. The ghost of individual life intersects with the ghost of collective life.
2. Nation-states ‘are everywhere seeking to monopolize the moral resources of community, claiming perfect coequality between nation and state’ (Appadurai 1996, 39). Although this conceptualisation is clarifying and useful, the Uruguayan and the Ecuadorian states are not metropolitan, and their ability to monopolise the social meaning of the communal resources is limited. In this sense, the neighbourhood and the traditional landscapes acquire a leading role in shaping the identity of social groups. One example appears in the poem *‘La invisibilidad viene cada vez más joven (menos años en el medio)’*, by Eduardo Espina (2009, 96). As with most of Espina’s poems, the text has a regular meter but with a twisted and baroque syntax: *‘Nación o azor / al sur del cielo / a empecinarse / con mariposas’*. These lines are almost a statement of principles as to what Uruguay is for the poet: a space of natural landscapes and vivid imagination. The state repatriates the difference in the form of signs and styles (Appadurai 1996, 42), but the exiled poet is also able to do this through his poetic work.
3. In this interplay of concepts, the notion of global reality could be understood as an abstract and unstable net. If the neighbourhood is concrete, the global reality world is abstract. In terms of poetic analysis, the globality appears as a new syntax to organise the images of the world. This can be seen, for example, in the poem

'La ofrenda del cerezo', by Iván Carvajal (2015, 383): *'El mundo podría seguir rotando sobre su eje / aun si no estuviese este cerezo en marzo / sobre la acera de una calle en Washington./ Tal vez ninguna necesidad tenga la Tierra / de su color, de su perfume o de su peso'*. Globalisation interacts with the poem, demonstrating how societies are now in a worldwide economic and cultural moment, historically-speaking. Even though a natural element (a cherry tree) is at the centre of the poem, the underlying issue is political and speaks of the world as a whole, including streets and real cities connected to one another.

If the idea of cosmopolitanism is that it is not possible to understand contemporary cultural processes around the world with the category of *nation* only (as in earlier periods), Appadurai's analytical tools can be used to explain the relationship that these poets establish between identity and society in the contemporary world, from micro-levels (the traditional landscape, the neighbourhood) to meso-levels (the nation-state) or macro-levels (new types of landscape, global reality).

Towards an interdisciplinary reading of poetry: From stylistics to macroethnography

A truly comprehensive reading of poetry through landscapes cannot be restricted to a purely conceptual interpretation of poems. By conceptual interpretation, I mean a strictly abstract reading that focuses all its attention on the ideological aspects of a poem. This would be tantamount to performing a didactical reading of handpicked passages that would illustrate an anticipated conclusion. Rather, this methodology must yield to subtler readings of references to social practices, places or linguistic uses in countries, states, indigenous communities, cities of birth and other meaningful places for the poets.

These elements can give a more concrete perspective on the texts. They may offer information about the relationship between the literary creations of the Ecuadorian (Carvajal and Nieto Cadena) and Uruguayan (Milán and Espina) poets and how their writings express a sense of belonging to a community, not necessarily through explicit gestures of ideological adherence to a national project, but perhaps through the symbols of local cultures. In the previous sections, I interpreted selected passages in light of the concept of new landscapes. However, to complete the macroethnographic outlook—and to understand the places where these landscapes acquire a real, concrete, and tangible complexity—a sound theoretical starting point is the previously conceptualised notion of neighbourhood.

For Appadurai (2010, 191), while the nation-state takes no account of particularities, simplifies differences, and disregards diversity, the neighbourhood exhibits differences and integrates and promotes diversity. Within the neighbourhood, social practices become concrete and social life exists. How can we observe this category's usefulness in a specific poem? Throughout this study, the notion of neighbourhood will be understood in the way Appadurai understands it, but with emphasis on its appearance as a social and cultural link. In this interplay of extended concepts, the notion of neighbourhood speaks for concrete relations and social ties, even if they are strange or dysfunctional (Appadurai 2006, 191). For example, in *Parajes*, a collection of poems written by Iván Carvajal (1983), Quito becomes a spectral unnamed city where the crowds seem to move around with little purpose or meaning, like walking in circles. The poetic voice in this book is slightly surreal and expressionistic, creating a thrilling combination of images that collide amongst themselves. Nonetheless, the theme of traveling is still evident (Carvajal 2001, 65):

Cabargar sobre el duro espinazo
Sobre la áspera cresta erizada de espadas
Encaramados sobre el lomo de espinos

Despite its apparently prosaic character, the poem maintains a regular line length and uses a metrical pattern to bring the phrases together and create harmony. The combination of the consonants *s* and *p* (*sp*) repeats on four occasions, giving the extract a phonetic coherence of flux and movement. These linguistic movements echo the idea of traveling. This trip seems to take place in an inhospitable moorland, in a foreign land. However, in several passages of the volume, it becomes evident that the poems are related to Quito, the capital of Ecuador, and to its atmosphere. Quito experienced a radical urban transformation in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The rise of oil extraction and the military dictatorship of General Guillermo Rodríguez Lara that began in 1972 prompted a process of internal migration (Ayala Mora 2002, 107). Consequently, Quito became a city that sought to match the concept presented by high modernity. The next passage fosters an appreciation of the movement in an increasingly crowded city (Carvajal, 2001, 69):

sobre las calles estrechas que trepan a las plazas
y entre Santo Domingo y San Blas
ese murmullo de la gente que se apretuja
en un apurado ir y venir sin término

hacia los mercados hacia las tiendas de bagatelas
hacia peluquerías de espejos infinitos
bodegas oficinas copadas por amanuenses calvos

The visual rhythm that guides the thoughts of this neurotic walker through the city is accentuated in the poem by the elimination of commas, resulting in an abrupt reading pace. The imaginary people in the poem move as fast as the reader's eyes. As Michel de Certeau points out, in contemporary cities, the walk has its own rhetoric where it appeals to a discontinuity in the use of space and an arbitrariness in the selection of destinations (1984, 110) These stylistic findings come from the avant-garde through the figure of Pablo Neruda (1935), especially from his remarkable book *Residencia en la tierra*. What is special about Carvajal's work is the introduction of a more analytical, metapoetic, and metahistorical trait that transcends even the most spectacular of the concerns that motivated Neruda and other poets of the historical avant-garde. This is evidenced in the following passage, most particularly in the first two lines (Carvajal 2001, 72):

Y la memoria despliega historias subterráneas
La murmuración trama la novela
Y en esta vieja Plaza de San Francisco
Donde la piedra congelada por los siglos
Las almas piadosas de los Libres ¡oh estupor!
Los indios se ganan con sus cuerdas un mendrugo
Los indios que mendigan un nombre con sus cuerdas

The first two lines are not exactly images; they are complex conceptual constructions. Carvajal relates the memory of a community rather than an individual memory. The story tells something that is beneath the official tale, a murmur that will somehow explain the later images referring to the colonial city centre of Quito: San Francisco church, the indigenous workers. This angle makes us think that in *Parajes*, and perhaps in all Carvajal's poetry, there is a profound and tense dialogue between an ethno-symbolic vision (*la trama del mundo indígena*), a neighbourhood (in this case, San Blas and its social dynamics) and a cosmopolitan view about interpersonal, sensory and symbolic relationships.

The method employed here is Appadurai's macroethnography applied to literary objects, sustained by several stylistic strategies. Broader conceptual considerations of the historical, social, and anthropological elements of cultural production can be analysed in relation to the way poets use language as an aesthetic device. Additionally, if the aesthetic strategies these authors use express collective features (the *portuñol* in Milán's poetry,

the pace in the Carvajal poem quoted above), a stylistic analysis can contribute to enriching the view that a poetic work can belong to a certain community or nation.

The poem as a convergence of contemporary identities

A poem is a virtual bridge over black holes. The metaphor is pretentious, but it adequately encapsulates the importance of poetry in explaining aspects of a specific social order (Lakoff 2009, 267). As in an empty garden, a writer invents a poem that intuitively explains that void. Through this metaphorical work, the poem interprets social spaces that otherwise might appear not to make logical sense. It also works as an ideological mediator between the nation-state and a neighbourhood, in the sense that focusing on a neighbourhood works as a counter-hegemonic project. On the other hand, nation-states monopolise a community's moral resources, claiming identity between community and nation-state (Appadurai 1996, 39). Poetry is often a useful way to make evident this impossibility, this incongruity. For example, countries may acquire an abstract appearance through their maps and, in a poem, they may become characters in a global theatre. Between a rooted memory and the ethnoscaapes of global movement, there exists a gap where different cultural and political identities are possible.

For example, Eduardo Milán identifies his avant-garde stylistic choices with a certain political commitment. For political and artistic reasons, he believes that his nation 'is' the Third World. His notion of community exceeds the nation-state's idea (Milán 2014a, 16):

con hijos, con mujer, de Ámsterdam a Londres,
de allí a Suchil.

This short excerpt suggests that the poet understands the community as global. However, the global world is an abstract community. This gesture does not explain the whole of Milán's work, but rather characterises certain moments of this work when his poems seem placed within unexpected frameworks of collective identity.

The gestural character of this verse does not invalidate its authenticity, but it does reduce its practicality. The symbolic bridge between marginalised societies throughout the world and a sense of political solidarity is merely virtual, but it is not banal. The anthropological barrier persists, but the political and artistic bridge can connect individuals across a range of both ethnic and national origins. Milán strongly believes that his political identity includes the Third World as a whole: an emotional identification

between the poet and a heterogeneous set of territories. Through the whole of his work, Milán at times compares Uruguay and Mexico, or Mexico and other countries. It can be suggested that Milán practices an appropriation of references without a specific link to a neighbourhood or an ethnic group.

However, technological changes in recent years have created virtual neighbourhoods that are no longer bounded by territory or passports (Appadurai 2006, 195). Following this argument, Milán's poetic identity could be considered cosmopolitan, understood as a cosmopolitanism whose roots are political. As noted earlier, the Uruguayan and Ecuadorian states are not metropolitan, and the opportunity they have to monopolise the social meaning of political, historical and cultural facts is limited. The metropolitan-periphery and core-periphery categories explain relations between regions that have experienced capitalist development and concentration of wealth and those that have not (Ramírez 2009, 286).⁴¹ This has not changed, despite Appadurai's geographical relativism. In that sense, Milán is not only expressing his allegiance to a small country—and to a minor literature—but he is also seeking an identity of global implications: the periphery and, with it, an inclination towards a minor literature.

From this perspective, Milán, Carvajal, and Espina's poems are counter-hegemonic, even if this fact is not wholly coherent with the poets' political stances (as in the case of Espina). The poem functions as a bridge between these apparently irreconcilable outlooks. Nowadays, Google Maps allows us to find any country or street easily because territories are fathomable. However, the inclusion of locations on a literary map is not always encyclopaedic or merely technological, but primarily political and affective. Recent studies of geography and affectivity have produced remarkable findings about this situation. As a reply to cold rationality, the affective geographies approach proposes a type of map that would 'elicit and visualize "affective meaning"—the perceptions, interpretations, and expectations one ascribes to a specific topological and social setting' (Fogli & Giacardi 2008, 2). The choice of certain images for the construction of a poem drains through the sieve of emotional decisions that are ever-crossed by social memory: a poem is an emotional map with references to sense-based landscapes.

One of this thesis's primary aims is to make evident that a poem is a hospitable and plural vehicle for the expression of identity consciousness. This transversal and

⁴¹ Other binary pairs are also used to describe the same phenomena: developed-underdeveloped, metropolis-satellite, modern-traditional, and North-South.

fluctuating identity can be appreciated not only in the semantic aspects of language, but also in its raw materiality. The poem works as a mediator between the community, the nation-state, and the global sphere. The poet integrates these levels of identification through language. Here, we must reflect on the difference between the concept of landscape (as described in the previous sections and developed in the reading of several poems) and the concept of place. For Eric Prieto, ‘place is conceived not as a unitary concept but as a complex network of overlapping elements out of which a coherent image or idea or sense of what place means can be formed’ (2013, 27). The concept of place does not reflect a sense of scale, as it could refer to a house, a neighbourhood or a country. By contrast, landscape is somehow a kind of place where the sensory experience and the specific details are concrete and tangible (Prieto 2013, 29). In that sense, a neighbourhood is always framed with a stable landscape of houses, streets, shops, people, dogs, children and smells, where neither globalisation nor the state have instrumentals and systematised everything. The bonds of that community are alive because it is undergoing the affective intervention of each person, making it eminently changeable.⁴²

In an exercise of wisdom, Jorge Luis Borges establishes the importance of poetic landscape by characterising the membership of a community. He says that the difference between Uruguayan and Argentinian poetry is the use of certain symbols: ‘*Aquí la pampa o su inauguración, el suburbio; allí los árboles y el mar. El desacuerdo es lógico: el horizonte del Uruguay es de arboledas y de cuchillas, cuando no de agua larga; el nuestro de tierra*’ (Borges 2007, 330–331). Through the image of a landscape, collective identities of the neighbourhood and the nation-state seem at last to converge. Borges was not able to see the contemporary transformations, however. Today it is possible not only to speak of suburbs in Uruguay, but also of digital neighbourhoods that could include Uruguayan poets living in Mexico or Texas: the new landscapes speak about these new

⁴² The anthropologist Marc Augé suggests the concept of anthropological place that coincides in some ways with Prieto’s landscape concept. These anthropological sites have three common features: they are identifying, relational and historical. The plan of the house, the streets of the neighbourhood, the public squares, the delimitation of the territory correspond to a set of possibilities, prescriptions and prohibitions (Augé 2006, 61). The mythomoteur appeals precisely to the premise of cohesion and promotion of the identifying and historical elements referred by Augé. In return, the relational elements are linked to dialogue with other territories and cultures. In the contemporary context, the idea of the technological and systematised world would seem to disintegrate the notion of landscape (Prieto) or anthropological place (Augé), promoting the existence of non-places. However, the idea of a relational policy (where the identity of a place is built through relations with other places) seems fundamental for avoiding a simplistic binary relation (Massey 2005, 117) between, for example, centres and peripheries. It is necessary to realise that there are no longer pure landscapes but instead landscapes correlated through hybridisation processes, which consist in the intermingling of people from different cultures and is the fruit of late capitalist globalisation (Hutnyk 2007, 79; Kraidy 2005, 8).

dynamics. A similar phenomenon occurs in the case of Ecuadorian poets, where ethnic groups, neighbourhoods, the nation-state, and the entire world (if we take migratory processes into account) appear to be linked and overlapped upon landscapes that, like chemical elements, always expresses the poet's cultural belonging.

The poem as mechanism for critical expression of national identity

It is impossible to speak of one unified history of Latin American poetry, because this always supposes processes of exclusion and ideological, cultural, economic and aesthetic biases (Brown 2014, 99). In addition, Latin American poetic historiographies are consensual versions of different historical temporalities (García Canclini 1995, 46; Lund 2006, 31) within a much bigger corpus (Brown 2014, 52). Thus, the most appropriate angle for this study is to use individual cases as samples for regional, national, or even subnational identities in Latin American poetry—in this case, in Uruguay and Ecuador. Considering the amount of material available, this selection is necessarily biased, though it provides productive points for comparison and contrast. In order to provide a clear explanation of these cases, the trajectory of the processes has been reduced to an outline divided by the examples mentioned, intended to be useful in contextualising their cultural and topological regions (Livon-Grosman 2009, xxxv).

These sociocultural boundaries between Uruguay and Ecuador are expressed in different understandings of the poet's specific role in each society. Latin America's situation—existing between a pseudo-Western modernity and a conflictive and varied web of ancestral roots (not always wisely assumed)—creates a blurred, fragmented and hybrid map. The construction of a canon must go through 'the norms of cultural representation and material access that play out in a biopolitical field that regulates who participates, who belongs, and the naturalisation of this inclusive exclusion' (Lund 2006, 25). That construction is regulated and conditioned by broader cultural determinations and interactions (Brown 2014, 51). In the case of poets, the distinction between subjective and social identities is a disputable element, particularly in the contemporary context, where the configuration of cultural forms does not have regularities (Appadurai 1996, 46). The interplay between inner life, the community, the nation-state, and the global circulation of symbolic goods has created new conceptual and perceptual problems that contemporary poets must address in order to create something that is coherent with the reality of the present time. For example, the 20th century was characterised by the appearance of transcendental poets, who in some aspects defined the character of what

could be called poetry of images and landscapes. The idea of a national membership was subtle but significant. Rubén Darío, Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Jorge Carrera Andrade, and José Lezama Lima, among others, have marked distinctive imaginative geographies (Said 1979, 54) and cultural frontiers.

However, globalisation, the digitalisation of culture, the segmentation and proliferation of political alternatives, and the massive migratory crisis together transformed poetic sensibility.⁴³ From the 1970s onwards, poetic expression has undergone a great deal of change throughout Latin America, in the midst of resistance from the local literary canons and institutions. A relatively recent text by Nieto Cadena (2009, 31) questions the place of enunciation of some 20th-century poets, and attempts to introduce the idea of globality through a reference to financescapes:

La crisis alimentaria es mundialmente mundial documentan desde Etiopía y
Biafra
auguro que dentro de tres mil quinientos veintitrés años luz se producirá un
diluvio
arena por culpa del sobre cachondeo de la Tierra y su lesbica satelital Luna

In this excerpt, Nieto Cadena is attempting to sketch out the global atmosphere of media circulation. Without a metaphoric display, but with an insightful cynicism, the poet paints an allegory of the global media and the noisy but humorous interaction among the finance and videoscapes and a food crisis that happens amidst an absurd apocalyptic scenario. The naive locality is attested as something in movement through the images of Ethiopia and Biafra. The production of locality and the imagined community (Anderson 2006, 25) seems to be unreal for Nieto Cadena or, more precisely, meaningless. Every identity element (inner, local, national, or global) appears unstable: a performance. For Nieto Cadena and for other contemporary poets, identity is a reality show in which it is a blissful, self-defensive construction.

Is a macroethnography of poetry possible?

In his book, Heuston cites a quote from Appadurai which notes that while there have been few ethnographic perspectives on literature, they are necessary at the present time (2011, 18). Heuston's study involved reading several authors of the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition from different ethnographic perspectives. His work, eminently

⁴³ The Nobel Prize for Bob Dylan (2016) is an expression of that change.

experimental, is perhaps the most comprehensive approach to an ethnographic reading of poetry. The researcher becomes a metaethnographer or macroethnographer, in part because he is not carrying out direct observation, but more precisely because he is using objects created within social experience and collective living.

The current study is not the first to focus on issues of this nature, but it is the first that reads the minor literatures of Latin America through landscapes. The perspective of Aberbach's ethno-symbolism is highly suggestive in this regard because of its detailed interest in poetic features capable of expressing national belonging and its revelation of historical and anthropological insights in the poetry of Carvajal, Nieto Cadena, Milán, and Espina. As noted in a previous section, concepts like the ethnic group or neighbourhood may be used jointly, as together they weave the symbols of the past and the present. Without them, this work's orientation would be incomplete. In addition, the proposal to identify references to landscapes, rather than abstract messages or general scenarios, in a poem is much closer to an ethnographic exercise. Also—and this may be a key point—the structure of the poetic voice is of great importance: it is an ethical view that is necessary in order to discuss an issue such as belonging. The reader must believe that poems are forging a link with something beyond the poet's subjectivity.

But in what sense this can be considered ethnography and not some other methodology? Heuston claims that this mode of working with non-traditional ethnographic objects shows that ethnography today is something akin to the classic horror film *The Blob*, as it seems to cover and swallow everything (2011, 20). This is a disadvantage, as it presupposes a disciplinary risk, but it also harbours the possibility of working in new scenarios. Here the ethnographic method proposed by Appadurai, which essentially involves interpreting not only the materiality of linguistic devices but also their cultural background in the context of landscapes and minor literatures, seem comprehensive and useful. It is a second-hand ethnography, because poets are the first ethnographers of their own cultural realities (Appadurai 1996, 10). The proposal of the following chapters is to show how macroethnography can combine methods of reception theory, close reading, and an ethnographic vision about the poets under consideration here.

Chapter 3.

Eduardo Milán: Migration, Forms, Mourning

Esto es cierto / en el Norte. Puede ser mentira en el Sur

EDUARDO MILÁN

In the context of Latin American literature, Eduardo Milán's poetry occupies a singular place. His writing is situated at the crossroads between experimentation, left-wing political commitment and intellectual reflection. Milán exhibits a pendular movement that oscillates between transcendentalist symbolism and the usage of anecdotal elements such as references to football, Barack Obama or computers. Milán's writing excludes almost nothing. In that linguistic carnival,⁴⁴ Uruguayan themes are issues of significance, and in that sense, his work can be read as an extended meditation on small countries. This reflection permeates the whole of his writing. In several senses, Milán's poetry creates a political ethnography of the era, taking as points of reference certain cultural and social landscapes of the contemporary River Plate area. It is also a canonical work in the context of Uruguayan poetry, since, as the literary critic Amir Hamed points out, '*la escritura de Milán parece funcionar para la cultura poética del Uruguay, como la de un termostato. Es decir, vigila las pulsiones más fuertes y las readapta, cortándolas a medida*' (2010, 93). This argument does not imply that his poetry excludes the meaningfulness of other poetic works, but rather that it is a synthesis of the Uruguayan poetic tradition.

This chapter's central question is thus the following: in what way and to what extent does Eduardo Milán succeed in configuring a map of Uruguayan symbolic identity within the framework of contemporary capitalism?

Eduardo Milán: poet, essayist and cultural critic

Eduardo Milán was born in 1952 in Rivera, a village near the border with Brazil. At the age of two he lost his mother, Elena Damilano, a Brazilian. He studied literature

⁴⁴ The notion of carnival that will be used in this and subsequent chapters is drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin. In his book *Rabelais and His World* (1984), the Russian theorist identified four features of the carnivalesque: 1) free interaction between people, 2) eccentric behaviour, 3) carnivalistic misalliances and 4) sacrilegious behaviour. All of these elements act under the premise of orchestrating a liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order which, in the case of this study, should be understood as a strategy for questioning the established order and the dominant language (Bakhtin 1984, 10).

at the Faculty of Humanities at the Universidad de la República in Montevideo. Following that formative period, he decided to migrate to Mexico for political reasons, primarily because his father—a member of the Tupamaros, a left-wing urban guerrilla group—was arrested by the military dictatorship. The poet's father, José Milán, was in prison from 1973 to 1985. These struggles appear as a foundational myth in his poetry and are visible in several poems.⁴⁵ After migrating to Mexico, he became an influential poetry critic, mainly for the journals *Vuelta*, directed by Octavio Paz, and *Novedades* (Landa 2012, 38). In 1997, he won Mexico's most important poetry award, the Aguascalientes Prize, for his book *Alegrial*, but his most celebrated book is probably *Errar*, published in 1991 after a period of silence (Appratto 2012, 17) and recently reprinted with several prologues. During this decade (1990s), he suffered a liver disease that kept him in the hospital for long periods of time (Leyva 2005, 177–193).

These biographical details are intimately related to three specific creative periods: 1) His early collections of poems (*Cal para primeras pinturas*, 1973; *Secos & mojados*, 1974), while not the most original or singular of his work, are both rhetorically and propositionally coherent. Their prosody is sustained by an emphatic confidence in the power of brevity and offers some similarities with Concrete poetry⁴⁶; 2) starting with *Errar* (1991), his poems display a more disrupted syntax. In addition, their lexicon is wider, but the relation between words in the poem seems to be further enhanced by phonetic iterations (puns), simulating a clash of tones between locutions; and 3) after *Cosas claras* (2001), Milán has been writing syncretic poetry that combines the reticulations and scrambled propositions of his second period with an openly narrative and argumentative style. Nevertheless, from his first poems, Milán has formulated a radical critique of the poetic models assimilated by the literary tradition. In the opinion of critic María de los Ángeles Saiz Angulo, the formal proposal of Milán's poems

⁴⁵ Probably the clearest example of this personal memoir is this: '*Cuando salí del Uruguay en 1979 perdí una parte de mí. No se puede ya estar parado sobre la tierra con esa seguridad de quien tiene en la tierra apoyo. Yo había perdido muy temprano a mi madre. Creí que una pérdida esencial temprana prepara cuerpo y mente para mayores pérdidas. No es así: no se puede ya estar parado sobre la tierra con la seguridad perdida de quien tiene en la tierra apoyo. Mi padre estaba en la cárcel en 1979: llevaba allí seis años y estuvo allí seis años más*' (Milán, 2014, 39).

⁴⁶ Concrete poetry is an arrangement of linguistic elements in which the typographical effect is more important in conveying meaning than verbal significance. It has become an inclusive term that, from 1950 onwards, seems to encompass visual poetry in general. The movement was enthusiastically joined by writers around the world, but in its strictest definition, its foundation is due exclusively to Eugen Gomringer in Europe and simultaneously to the Noigandres Group in Brazil (Solt 1970, 8).

distances itself from logocentrism.⁴⁷ In the face of bourgeois, rational and conventional poetic forms, he has constructed a work that seeks to muddle the idea of a disciplined poetic language, using an ambiguity-driven rhetoric:

La ambigüedad a través del deslizamiento de los significados elimina los referentes desapareciendo el vínculo entre el signo y el objeto. Este uso del lenguaje poético conlleva por tanto un desafío al discurso poético tradicional. El descubrimiento de las posibilidades asociativas y fónicas del lenguaje produce una dificultad y un efecto de frivolidad aparente bajo las que subyace una crítica a la convención (Saiz Angulo 2006).

The idea behind this criticism of logocentrism is the necessity of dismantling the simulacrum of a world whose self-representation is unfair. On the subject of the poems related stylistically to *Errar*, Néstor Perlongher has said that: ‘*otro extremo de la articulación neobarroca estaría dado por las escrituras vecinas a lo que se ha dado en llamar “poesía pura”, como es el caso del uruguayo Eduardo Milán, que a la proliferación de otros poetas opone la concisión*’ (1996, 23). While it is true that the neo-baroque poetry of Milán (in his second period) tends towards concision, it is actually far from the so-called pure poetry, essentially because he allows himself to write using ambiguous constructions that exhibit apparent frivolity and absurdity—a fact not visible in the so-called pure poetry of authors such as André Du Bouchet (1924 [Paris]–2001 [Truinas]) or Alejandra Pizarnik (1936–1972, Buenos Aires). This point is important because the political character of Milán’s poetry becomes even more evident during his third creative period.

This third phase is characterised by an open and hybrid idea of speech. As is evident, the criticism of logocentrism has mutated throughout his work during recent years. In the majority of his later poems, a heterodoxical and problematic speech constantly intervenes in the regular, logical or lyrical pace of the verses, where poetry ‘*ya no se posa, se desplaza*’ (Cabral 2012, 41). Throughout this third period, references to

⁴⁷ Logocentrism should be understood here as the idea present in Western thought (since Plato) that written language is a mere extension of oral language and, in turn, that oral language lies in rational thinking and absolute truth. In this sense, in the Western world, written language becomes a testimony of blind faith in reason. Milán and other Latin American poets subvert the apparent parasitic relation of writing to speech, because they include not only elements that avoid a rationalist and reductionist interpretation but also symbols that escape the traditionally Western cultural references.

international politics, social memory and daily events become more explicit. The most relevant works of this moment are *Acción que en un momento creí gracia* (2005), *El camino Ullán seguido de Durante* (2009), *Tres días para completar un gesto* (2013), *Chajá para todos* (2014a) and *Derrotero: sentido de un destino* (poetic and essay anthology, 2014b). This style could be defined in its relationship with the idea that speech is not something ready to be copied or imitated in the poem, but a problem of poetic language: ‘*la poesía conversacional repite una norma del habla. El habla que yo quiero va contra la normalizada, a la que [se] puede identificar como una ortodoxia*’ (Milán 2014c, 46). Thus, if his early writing was remarkably hermetic and self-referential, the second and especially the third periods of his poetry are notoriously political. The reference to ‘normalised speech’ is not gratuitous, since Milán does not pretend to translate orality into writing, but rather demonstrates the conflicting nature of this transference: the ideological (left-wing politics, globalisation, exile) and cognitive features (irrationality versus logic) that are at stake.

For Milán, this purposeful difficulty in his writing has political implications, since experimental writing resists bourgeois domestication—that is, a symptom of capitalism. Paradoxically, the radicality of his poetic work places him in the core of the Uruguayan poetic tradition: risky and self-critical. In this sense, political references to national identity and experimental forms together create a conceptually coherent hybrid. A reflection by the historian Peter Burke on the relationship between language and society is relevant here. He notes that: 1) different social groups use different varieties of language; 2) the same individuals employ different varieties of language in different situations; 3) a language reflects the society or culture in which it is used; 4) language shapes the society in which it is used (1996, 19). Based on an intuitive understanding of these axioms, Milán intends to create poems that reflect the feedback between Uruguayan society and the language used by its contemporary speakers (not only speech, but also speech limits). Aside from the fact that poetry is a marginal genre with limited circulation, Milán’s work speaks about Uruguay using a somewhat difficult style as a kind of ‘memorabilia of the difficulty’, as a ‘record of a complexity’ (Sommer 1991, 32) that he insists on pointing out as political. However, this rarity prevents his poetic proposal from being read pedagogically: it rejects one-dimensional readings.

The importance of Milán’s writings has been further expanded thanks to the critical essays he has published in various countries, particularly in Mexico and Spain, such as *Justificación material* (2004), *Un ensayo sobre poesía* (2006), *Sobre la capacidad*

de dar sombra de ciertos signos como un sauce (2007), *Ensayos Unidos* (2011), *Visiones de cuatro poemas y el poema que no está* (2012) and *En la crecida de la crisis: ensayos sobre poesía latinoamericana* (2013). The basic premise of his essays is the aforementioned relationship between poetic radicalism and political compromise, between experimentation and social justice—an impossible exercise to reverse the polarity of the literary field so that minor literatures (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 29) or minor-literature constellations (Domínguez et al., 2018, 284) have a more significant place in Latin American literature. This strategy involves several anthologies in which he meditates on the poetic canon of Latin America and on the cultural map established by a continental anthology. Some of these books have been very influential in Latin America, including, for example: *Pristina y última piedra* (with Ernesto Lumbreras, 1999), *Las islas extrañas* (with José Ángel Valente, Blanca Varela and Andrés Sánchez Robayna, 2002) and *Pulir huesos* (2007). Milán's social standing as a poet and a critical spokesperson for Uruguayan culture has been further enriched by various translations of his work into English.⁴⁸

Minor literatures, dissemination, style and canon

Milán's poetry is thus important in the Uruguayan literary canon for five reasons: 1) his work is formulated as an area of confluence of the Latin American and, above all, Uruguayan poetic tradition; 2) reflections on national identity are recurrent in the latter two stages of his work; 3) political exile has given to his literary work singular characteristics related to nostalgia, the past, an imaginary reinvention of Uruguay, and an appropriation of his exile as a trait of national identity; 4) he has sought to expand the perimeter of his intellectual and artistic inquiries through his essays, which are immensely useful for understanding his poetry; and 5) although poetry is a marginal genre, his work has been published in various countries around the world by small, medium and even large publishers.

In this clash between marginality and prominence, identity is not only a political or cultural problem, but also a linguistic, philosophical and economic one. In the Latin American context, a poetic work with persistent ethno-symbolist gestures is traversed by a series of dynamics, including the circulation of books and the inevitable ghost of peninsular Spanish as a colonising language. Thus, here it is worth considering

⁴⁸ Some of his translators include John Oliver Simon, Patrick Madden, Steven Stewart and Leora Fridman.

transcultural mythomoteurs, based on the difficulty—or even impossibility—of thinking about closed and hermetic identities in a region defined by the mixture of or, more precisely, specific forms of transculturation (Ortiz 2002; Clifford 2019). The etymology behind the concept of transcultural mythomoteurs is relevant to this discussion. According to the *Dictionary of Sociology* by Abercrombie et al., myth is an explanation in the form of a story of the sacred that embodies collective experiences and represents collective consciousness. This definition is quite general and abstract, but it acquires more precision through the example of three emblematic authors: 1) Malinowski states that a myth provides legitimacy to social dispositions; 2) Lévi-Strauss explains that the function of myth is cognitive, giving reason to the fundamental categories of the mind; 3) Barthes understands myth as a communication system that involves not only written language but also photography, cinema, and so on (Abercrombie 1992, 176). All these notions seem complementary in explaining how a text can contribute to the configuration of a national myth.

However, these transcultural mythomoteurs often operate in lattice-like, inefficient, reticulated ways. An example of this inefficiency can be demonstrated by my visit to Montevideo's largest bookstore, *Puro verso* (comparable in size to Leeds's Waterstones), on February 2, 2017. There, I inquired after Eduardo Milán's books and the attendant consulted the computer database in order to locate books written by him. The seller's ignorance of Uruguayan books points to problems of circulation, reception and interpretation networks that theoretically should configure a fundamental and functional part of the transcultural mythomoteur that in turn creates and recreates Uruguayan identity. After searching in the digital database, the seller found three books available, including *Chajá para todos*, a book that will be analysed at various points in this chapter. It is precisely this book that can serve as a useful example for understanding how Milán's work is related to the Deleuzian idea of minor literature: the circulation mechanisms of Uruguayan books worked, although with problems. It should be noted that the concept of mythomoteur is based on a mechanistic metaphor ('motor' is equivalent to a framework that configures the identity of a group), which suggests that the processes generated through it are rigid and stable. It would be suggestive to also think of it as a living organism or as a social motor.

The idea that identity also operates through language is evident when reflecting on how the use of a single word ignites the mythomoteur of Uruguayan identity. Eduardo Espina, another of the poets studied in this thesis, reflects in his book *Historia Universal*

del Uruguay that the Uruguayan population frequently uses words with the letters ‘c’ and ‘h’ combined (Espina 2007, 20). In Spanish, the combination of these two letters was until only a few decades ago considered a single letter: *ch* was part of the Hispanic alphabet. A political and cultural dimension exists behind this usage. The words that Espina points out—such as *choripán* or *pichicatero*—are part of a cultural background that Milán places at the forefront of his poetic proposal: *Chajá*. The *chajá*⁴⁹ (*Chauna torquata*) is a bird typical of Uruguayan pampas, as well as a famous dessert made with custard, strawberries and peaches. In some ways, Milán uses the Uruguayan linguistic background as a flag. There is an ethno-symbolist gesture and an awareness of the political dimension in the use of a minority variety of Spanish, such as that spoken in Uruguay. Thus, Milán’s poetry is a minor literature because the author sets out his poetic strategies: 1) he uses a majority language (Spanish) and he seeks to generate a collective sense (*uruguayidad* or ‘Uruguayan-ness’); and 2) this collective sense emphasises a cultural specificity (following which there is a political choice).

This clash between such an explicitly Uruguayan detail and the ignorance of a bookseller reflects the chaotic and imprecise way in which the mythomoteur of a Latin American society works, as well as the commercial marginality of poetry. Although titles by the author are generally available, in other Montevideo bookstores Eduardo Milán is nonetheless relatively unknown (with the exception of *Libros de la arena*, where the Venezuelan poet and bookseller Jairo Rojas knows his work). This highlights poetry’s status as a marginal genre in terms of its distribution: it circulates mainly through other poets, critics or scholars (a caste of ‘lettered citizens’). However, while circulation of Milán’s work in Latin America may be scarce, it is enthusiastic and has enjoyed sustained dissemination with large, medium and small publishers throughout the region. In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish the Uruguayan publishing industry from Uruguayan literature: the two do not necessarily coincide. It is also crucial to distinguish Uruguayan poetry from the poetic work of Milán.⁵⁰

Although Milán has been published by several publishers (see above), his poetry remains marginal compared to the literature of, for example, Mario Vargas Llosa, and much more when compared with the best-selling authors of epic fantasy or detective novels. The choice of a traditionally marginal literary genre, an experimental style, and a

⁴⁹ In addition, in the context of the poem, the *chajá* is an ethno-symbolist allusion to the poet’s father.

⁵⁰ Nonetheless, while contemporary Uruguayan poetry has circulated in a random way throughout Latin America, its dissemination has been far more significant than that of Ecuadorian poetry.

minority variety of Spanish—in addition to being the work of a migrant and a political exile—suggest that Milán’s work is minor or part of Latin American minor-literature constellations. The dialogue between this minority place in which Milán is widely recognised and the publishing market as a whole can be explained using an analogy: Milán is an outstanding representative in a virtual community (Latin American poetry), originally from a small country (Uruguay), whose publishing industry is incipient or reluctant to export and disseminate the work of its compatriots. In fact, one of the reasons why Milán is known in many countries is because he resides in Mexico and because he has published most of his work outside of Uruguay. On the other hand, in a Google search conducted on February 14, 2017, the digital reach of his work on the internet included a total of 211 videos—low in comparison to Lady Gaga or Gustavo Cerati, perhaps, but a meaningful diffusion within the sphere of poetry.

Due to the previously mentioned aesthetic peculiarities and to slow dissemination over a broad geographical space (the Hispanic world), Milán is the most representative author of his generation in Uruguay. In this process of hierarchical positioning and canonisation, his poems have been included in almost all recent anthologies of Uruguayan poetry, including *Orientales: Uruguay a través de su poesía* (edited by Amir Hamed, HUM, 2010), *La poesía del siglo XX en Uruguay* (edited by Rafael Courtoisie, Visor, 2011), *Contemporary Uruguayan poetry* (edited by Ronald Haladyna, Associated Univ Presses/Bucknell University Press, 2010) and *Hotel Lautrémont: Contemporary poetry from Uruguay* (edited by Ken Johnson and Roberto Echavarren, Shearman Press, 2011), among others. Indeed, it is evident that Milán’s poetry is an essential part of the canon of Uruguayan poetry (Hamed 2010, 92), although, as pointed out in the prologue, it also appears in important Latin American selections. To those already mentioned it is worth adding *Jinetes del aire: Poesía Contemporánea de Latinoamérica y del Caribe* (edited by Margarito Cuéllar and Julio Ortega, RIL Editores, Santiago, 2011).⁵¹ Despite the fact that the idea of ‘monumental author’ is no longer useful, Milán is a poet of national importance in the context of the crisis of the nation-state, the questioning of aesthetic universality and the emergence of digital platforms as a means of dissemination.

⁵¹ In fact, in this anthology the same Uruguayan authors of their generation appear: Milán, Espina and Echavarren.

Despite his paradoxical and lateral place, Milán has become a spokesperson for Latin American poetry in Spain,⁵² since his poetic style integrates major intellectual and aesthetic concerns of European origins (persistent strategies of metapoetic reflection) and a Latin American mood (neobaroque, experimental style and political concerns). In the context of the nation-state crisis, Milán is not a national poet in the same sense that this expression had in the past. This instability of national symbolic references in the context of globalisation means that a national community known as Uruguay is better expressed through aesthetically unstable and hybrid works, whose reflection on their subjects' identity is polymorphic. Beyond aesthetic considerations, Milán's poetry can be read as a testimony to the clash between the sweeping pace of global capitalism and the resistance strategies employed against it. Hence, this chapter's purpose is to construct a map of Milán's aesthetic and political choices based on Uruguayan cultural landscapes and global identities.

A nostalgic mapping of nature, countryside and homeland

This section presents an ethnographic tour through Eduardo Milán's poetry, using as reference several extracts from his books. It is a thematic selection obtained from a comprehensive reading of all his work, but with particular attention to the book *Chajá para todos* (2014), which is highly related to this subject. The passages I have chosen are those most closely tied to this study's purpose of understanding the use of poetic language in representing Uruguayan identity. The objective is to determine how Milán reflects on Uruguayan references in the context of globalisation and to what extent his poetic work achieves the goal of expressing coherent characteristics regarding Uruguay in relation to the contemporary world. In its extensiveness, Milán's poetry encompasses not only diverse expressive registers but also very heterogeneous thematic references. Thus, the dynamics—apparently binary, but often filled with nuances and paradoxes—between ethno-symbolic and cosmopolitan elements often appear in his poetry. Of course, as was suggested in the introduction to this study, these ideological references are not merely

⁵² An example is an important doctoral thesis written by the Spanish writer Pablo López Carballo. The title of this work is *El vaso que no es vaso. Procedimientos de conexión escritura-mundo en la obra poética de Eduardo Milán, 1975–2015*. Here, he insists on the idea that behind the critique of language carried out by Milán, there is a contemporary perspective on reality, politics and humans (López Carballo, 2016). The fact that a Spanish writer analyzes Milán's poetry in an academic context of philological orientation clarifies the diffusion of Milán's books and its importance in the context of the Spanish language.

conceptual in their nature. In this author, the references to landscapes—and its typologies, which embody thematic concerns—acquire a vast diversity.

First, it is possible to observe the work of personal memory concerning the countryside. In his classic book *The Country and the City* (1975), Raymond Williams suggests that in order to analyse the relationship between the countryside and the city, one must understand that the landscape is a point of view rather than an aesthetic construction. Since the beginning of modernity, according to Williams, the landscape is a social distance (1975, 370), and pictorial, photographic or cinematographic representations that have been made of the countryside are an exponent of the attempt at political, economic and ideological control of the rural space and its inhabitants by the class that dominates the urban space. Thus, representations of the rural environment have almost never been made by farmers—their artistic production has not been taken into account (Williams, 376). This does not seem to be the case in Milán, because the structure of Latin American capitalist modernity is different from that of Europe and because his references to the countryside seem honest given his biography as a child in a small town. In addition, Milán developed a Marxist perspective that gave complexity to both his essays and his poetic work.

In a passage of *Chajá para todos*—which, like almost all of the author's texts, is untitled—the poet introduces a reference to the film *Andrei Rublev* (1966) by Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovski. This movie, which refers to a 15th-century Russian painter, has a seemingly distant relationship to Latin American cultural contexts, but it is the horse motif that establishes the symbolic link between the poet's memory and the history of the Russian painter portrayed on screen:

Sí, yo también vi esa escena de la caída del caballo en Rublev. Pero antes de la escena del caballo cayendo con su épica sobre el suelo yo vi al caballo cayendo en realidad en el patio de mi infancia, caballo en el campo. (Milán 2014a, 85)

In this passage of prose, a rare stylistic choice in the case of Milán, the 'cinematographic horse' follows the 'horse of childhood memory' that seems to be located in the Uruguayan countryside. Strictly speaking, we go from a reference to videoscapes to a static landscape and from a cosmopolitan outlook to an ethno-symbolic view of the world.

For that reason, the idea of transcultural mythomoteurs is central to understanding these exchanges, these forms of negotiation and dispute. Here are two elements outside

the Uruguayan countryside: a linguistic element (Rublev's horse) and a metalinguistic element (the cinematographic experience). However, these elements are also in a subtle dialogue with the horses of the Uruguayan rural areas and the cinematic contiguity and assemblage of the remembered and fabulated experiences. This movement gives us the impression that the field and its slow dynamics are a substantial element in the Uruguayan poet's emotional background: the transition seems to go from a cinematic horse to a horse that only lives in an emotional biography. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the notion of countryside is very important in the Uruguayan context and has defined that country's history.

This happens even in those poems where the subject is related to personal experiences, linked to the natural landscape and the father figure. Specifically, in those poems, the image of the father is deeply associated with the countryside. In this context, the father is akin to an emotional and sensitive guide. That image is evident throughout all of Milán's poetry, but it is most visible and palpable in the book *Son de mi padre* dedicated to his father:

Es el mismo padre el que señala: 'el campo'. Y luego,
efectivamente, hay que ir al campo, quemar
campo y quedarse un tiempo en soledad

Milán 1999, 184

In this extract, the word *campo* is repeated in a semantic pattern that converges with a half-rhyme between the words *quemar* and *soledad*. The pun in that word (*el campo* = the countryside) creates a rhythm that lends certain characteristics of rap⁵³ and spoken word to the passage. This particular landscape mentions the countryside almost as a mantra: as if the poetic intensity resides primordially in *that* word, and not in all the words and phrases. In addition, there is a sonorous pattern that creates the sensation of internal coherence guided by the repetition of the syllable *que*. Milán frequently uses a sequence of similar line-lengths, but with enjambments which create a thrilling, cinematic sequence and the appearance of a random structure. Milán's constructions are apparently chaotic, but they have demanding symmetrical relationships that, in this case, display a tranquil scenario with a highly ingenious control of prosody. In this poem, the father is the unique

⁵³ Milán's rapper intonation can be seen in emphatic usage of puns, in the improvisational appearance of these puns, and in the anti-hierarchical usage of the words that he chooses.

static figure. Hence, he seems to ordain the symbolic movements that are both geographical and vital. Father and landscape are part of the same scenario. As an intimate link, the memory of the father connects the literary landscape to the notion of the past and loneliness.

As an essential counterpart to his adulthood, the Uruguayan countryside is constantly referred to Milán's poems. The rural nature of his childhood in Tacuarembó (Hamed 2009, 92) is seen through the lens of time, as a reserve of meaning against time, and as a sensory nostalgia:

Sobre el lomo de las vacas de leche, cuando
había campo había leche. Ahora ya no hay campo
para el poema, hay nostalgia de nosotros, tal
para cual

Milán 1999, 77

In fact, there is an evident remembrance of the past as something which is definitively lost. This yearning in plural, in 'we', is important in the construction of Milán's poetic writing: it is perhaps an affectionate, familiar 'we'. The separation between countryside and city is not merely the distance between past and present; it is also a distance between a past childhood and a present adulthood. In this recomposition of personal memory through the landscape, the poet uses various natural symbols. An example is Milán's constant reflection on trees:

Árboles referí que estaban al costado, esa paisajística
ingenua: yo y al costado árboles en prolongación, voy con ellos,
rasgos de una querencia con un yo central, pampa
en el dibujo, charreteras de mi camisa, hombros de mi cabeza

Milán 2014b, 33

In this text, trees along the way are ironically referred as a *paisajística ingenua*. Irony serves to display an emotional distance to contrast with the following intimate images. The concept of *un yo central* creates an axis for the movement of anything else around it. However, this *yo central*, this selfhood, seems to be in displacement, as the successive commas lend to this passage a cinematographic scope and an unnatural pace. Whether in a cinematic or literary way, Uruguay's rural landscapes are reflected in these extracts, revealing some of the national territory's visual limits. Despite the enumerations of cities

in distant countries (for example, New York or Bruges), the return to the homeland is necessary in order to observe what is original:

ella lo vuelve el meollo de la transmisión (Homeland)
el hijo entierra en su cabeza el cadáver de su padre
Milán 2014b, 49

The father is a phantom presence who links the entire linguistic and poetic experience to bygone times, and who usually opens the door to a social, linguistic, and emotional past. In these lines, there is an abstract image, almost a conceptualisation (*el meollo de la transmisión*) before which the poet establishes an equivalence with his home ('Homeland'). Here, the reader faces a paradox: the homeland is in English. In such spaces, the poet makes visible the participation of ethnoscapas in an expression of contemporary cultural shocks and exchanges. *El meollo de la transmisión*, the home, is the central issue of this work, as it is a centre of emotional gravity, a symbol. Geertz's anthropological understanding of symbol is everything (object, act, fact) that serves as a vehicle of a conception. In other words, a symbol is anything that, devoid of its mere factuality or actuality, is used to dispose meaningfully the events among which men live. Symbols are, it can then be said, frozen experiences. Being abstractions of experience fixed in perceptible ways, human thought is nothing more than the traffic or exchange of those symbols (Sánchez Durá 1999, 21). Hence, amidst intimate landscapes, Milán has also created a personal textual and topographic map of Uruguay, one that is recognisable and that problematises the limits between collective and personal identity, demonstrating, for example, the linkage between the subtle rhythms existing in the remote (in time and place) countryside and his father's memory. Here, the Uruguayan rural areas appear as a central literary theme. The persistent mourning of his father's death (and his childhood and youth in Uruguay) reveals the importance of rural life through the way in which a Uruguayan person remembers his own past.

To the natural landscape shaped by emotional memory, Milán adds references to the world's ancestral cultures. For him, ethnic identity is somehow related to authenticity: his poetry believes in collective identities, particularly in those that have historical links tying them together:

hay tierra para arar, para tararear incluso, hay

In spite of this ethno-symbolic invocation, the grammatical construction does not reflect a static, immobile landscape: it is a flexible, vindicatory and committed text. In fact, Milán tells us little about the Tarahumaras, except that the ancestral people deserve the right to exist. However, these are not merely decorative or gestural appeals. The Tarahumaras are an ancestral Mexican people, and Milán, through his poetic writing, endorses them. The writing here, however, guided by an unstable syntax, creates a semblance of instability, of channel flipping, of speed. In these lines, the letters ‘t’ and ‘r’ are repeated, creating an elliptical, slightly hypnotic effect. There are other phonetic repetitions here as well: *arar*, *rear* and *gar*; *tara* and *tara*. This feature places Milán in a poetically non-traditional place and, as previously mentioned, makes him a kind of *culterano* rapper. In this sense, static landscapes, when they appear, evoke elements of a fissured past, of an identity in crisis.

This linkage with his past, which travels from Uruguay to Mexico, is the most essential and personal theme within the poet’s repertoire. Milán looks for ways of conveying emotional endurance, linking personal history with the social history of the world. This interest in endurance leads Milán to extend his concern for emotive, symbolic and communitarian symbols to the whole of Latin America; including certain ancestral architectonic constructions that have little or nothing to do with Uruguay:

Nazca es eterno/ no tuvo el tiempo de ser viejo

Milán 1999, 193

In these lines, Milán asserts the timeless character of the Nazca geoglyphs in Perú.⁵⁵ These ancestral and archaeological references seek to create a network of symbols

⁵⁴ The Tarahumara or rarámuris are an indigenous community of northern Mexico, living in the Sierra Madre Occidental that crosses the territory of the state of Chihuahua and the southwest of the states of Durango and Sonora. The name rarámuri means ‘runners on foot’ and comes from rara (foot), and muri (to run). Ninety percent of the population (57,000 inhabitants) is based in the state of Chihuahua. The inhospitable lands the Tarahumara inhabit impose the existence of small families, since their plots can hardly support more than four or five family members, in which a teenager of 14 years is already considered an adult. Generally, Tarahumaras lack health services and because of their poor diet they are overwhelmed by diseases, including: dyspepsia, acute enteritis, alcoholic congestion, liver cirrhosis, pneumonia, whooping cough, pulmonary tuberculosis and mange (Heras 1994, 10). Despite these challenges, this group has been important in Western literary history because of the philosophical newspaper by Antonin Artaud called *México y Viaje al país de los Tarahumaras* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica; 1984).

⁵⁵ The Nazca lines are ancient geoglyphs found in the pampas of Jumana, in the Nazca desert, between the towns of Nazca and Palpa, in the department of Ica (Peru). They were traced by the Nazca culture and are

that is capable of integrating a complex and self-sufficient identity. In several ways, this claim of the ancestral seeks to create ‘moments of truth against the aesthetic overproduction of the contemporary world: *‘la cobertura—la cobertura—de una ausencia, o sea: la sobrepoblación de productos estético-simbólicos sirve para un ocultamiento’* (Milán 2014c, 73). What is being covered nowadays? The existence of numerous electronic devices, television sets, and laptops with an enormous variety of applications and games has changed our perceptions of reality (Appadurai 1990: 4) and is saturating people’s senses (Virilio and Rato 1998, 5; Calabrese 1994, 23-30; Sartori 2012, 66). Nevertheless, Milán’s perspective is slightly optimistic, because he claims that beyond all of these veneers lies something real: a collective and personal background. In his own poetry, Milán introduces certain rhythmical and topological elements that could be qualified as a part of a real core, a genuine community. Despite the fact that the majority of Uruguay’s indigenous population was exterminated prior to the country’s political independence, there is a symbolic (and invented) legacy which persists in place names, colloquial words and accents among the few *mestizos* who survived the brutalisation (Bracco 2004, 100). In addition, there are now increasing numbers of people in Uruguay who self-identify as indigenous *charruas* that were an ethnic group who lived in the southern zone of Uruguay. As suggested above, Milán’s poetry contains words and intonations that are part of a Uruguayan legacy:

Gualeguay es lo que se dice el Gualeguay
 -ay, les dice
 lo mismo les dice el Uruguay
 -ay, les dice.

Milán 2014b, 37

This metric and rhythmical construction recalls the tone of popular traditional and even indigenous songs. The simple rhymes (*gualeguay* and *Uruguay*), the usage of an interjection (*ay*) and the inclusion of certain words that are Guaraní in origin (whose sonority is similar to Spanish, but whose significance in Spanish is unknown to many people) reveal the author’s intention of restoring atavistic symbols to the Uruguayan territory. *Gualeguay* has various semantic implications, but there is no agreement

composed of several hundred figures that range from simple designs such as lines to complex zoomorphic, phytomorphic and geometric figures that appear drawn on the earth’s surface. In 1994, UNESCO named the Nazca and Pampas de Jumana lines and geoglyphs a World Heritage site. However, in recent years they have suffered serious damage from the construction of the Pan-American Highway and travel by SUVs (Kauffman Doig 2002, 4–6).

whatsoever about its meaning. Nevertheless, today the *Gualeguay* is a river, as well as an Argentinian town in the province of Entre Ríos. Despite this ambiguity, the fact that the Spanish conquerors tried to call the aforementioned river *Río de los Charrúas* is historically meaningful (Ministerio del Interior 2016). With the extermination processes that occurred during the wars of independence, the survivors decided to move to the frontier region of contemporary Brazil, and they assimilated with other ethnic groups. Hence, in this poem, the name *Gualeguay* works as a restitution of a hypothetical pre-Hispanic identity. Frequently, in Milán's poems, these lost communities receive a particular homage:

de nada sirve nada cuando te echan la caballería
guenoas, arachanes.

Milán 2014b, 47

Milán shows that he is aware of his country's history. In several ways, the passage appeals to minority aspects of the historical narrative (such as disappeared indigenous communities of the independence era). That appeal to a non-European past is a way of seeking authenticity behind the erasure, formulating a partially mythical memory to demonstrate the artificiality of official history: in the lines just quoted, the Indians could not do anything before the cavalry of white men. *Guenoas* and *arachanes* were ethnic groups that lived in Uruguay during the period prior to Independence. These names are included as links to a national mythomoteur—undermining preconceived ideas about belonging. Likewise, Milán includes political commentaries on the usage of certain ingredients characteristic of Latin American gastronomy:

Cocinar se ritualiza cuando se toma
conciencia de que la papa es de origen crudo, sin lágrimas
Milán 1999, 244

The meaning of potato—the use of the word *papa* rather than *patata*—is important to Latin America because it is an ancestral food whose cultivation and consumption is an essential activity for many people. In Spanish, the word *papa* is a linguistic loan of the Quechua term *papa*, with the same meaning. A cross between the name for sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*), a word originally from the island of Hispaniola, and *papa* resulted in *patata*, a name that, due to the similarity of forms, was initially applied by the conquerors to both the potato and the sweet potato (Navarro 2000, 1). Although currently the potato

is consumed almost everywhere in the world, its origin is South American, specifically Andean. The native peoples of the Andes cultivated many varieties of potatoes for centuries. In 1970, anthropologist F. A. Engel found fossilized potatoes from about 10,500 years ago in the central region of Peru in the Chilca Canyon south of Lima (Hawkes 1990, 259). Of course, the cultural history of the potato encompasses centuries of domestication, industrialisation and westernisation. In that sense, for Milán, *cocinar se ritualiza*, that is, it can be narrated with a collective sense, when the ancestral, primordial, primitive character of the potato is understood. When Milán says that *la papa es de origen crudo, sin lágrimas*, he refers to the fact that the potato is ancestral and that its history contains no pain or violence. Food appears as a cultural practice with ancestral implications. For Levi-Strauss, the tribes who do not know the cooking of food, of course, do not have the word to express *cocido*. But, consequently, they do not have a word for *crudo* either, since the concept itself cannot be characterised (Levi-Strauss 1983, 17). *Lo crudo* effectively does not exist for cultures that do not know cooking, so the reasoning of Milán begins from something that the first potato's harvesters did not know. In that sense, the raw potato only exists as such from a *mestizo* perspective, encrypted in a western language that the poet tries to subvert towards a critical, political space of a minor literature. In several ways, this is an attempt to deal with linguistic colonial status by showing the heterogeneity of the language used (Cornejo Polar 1997, 342). In this way, Milán subtly confronts us about the way we access reality, about the relationship between the words we use and the reality we name with them. That past is a mitigating fiction, a utopia of language to interrogate history.

Identity, migration and affectivity

A counterpart of these atavistic images is in urban life. While not his most characteristic approach, the poet's memory at times describes aspects closer to a neighbourhood's social dynamics. The images of a neighbourhood appear surreptitiously in Milán's poetry, not only through references to his own childhood and to his children but also in his reflections on social relationships in Uruguay and Mexico. The neighbourhood explains the everyday ritual of children's games as a practice of affectivity. In this case, Andrés and Alejandro, the names of the poet's children, engage in a simple ritual of play and fun:

Andrés juega con Alejandro,

Alejandro juega con Andrés.
A veces hay pelea, otras abrazo.
Hay canicas, carros, lego,
dibujos, fútbol, pesca,
lluvia sobre los dinosaurios
Milán 2005, 54

The structure of the poem is simple: it is essentially a series of anaphoras and enumerations that express a continuity of actions and quite diaphanous elements: *Andrés juega, Alejandro juega*; or *dibujos, fútbol, pesca*. Some of these children's games are quite traditional and, in a number of cases, conventionally masculine (*canicas, pesca*). In that sense, they refer to antiquated play practices which are connected with Milán's experiences in bygone days. Marbles (*canicas*) are scarcely used today, but they were quite common in Latin America in the past. Nevertheless, social life in countries like Ecuador and Uruguay is closely related to this manner of understanding leisure time. The relationship between neighbourhood and family life is profound. This is evident not only in children's games but also in the role of the mother as a child's protector:

Y me senté como un hijo de madre/
brasileña en la brasa de sus rodillas o en la
rodilla de sus brasas, no recuerdo bien,
Milán 1999, 109

Both the scene about children and the scene about the mother seek to delve into individual memory while establishing relationships with the ways of feeling and experiencing affection. A nostalgia that seems transversal to every atavistic phenomenon is evident in several moments in Milán's work: it is a nostalgia for what is true, for the essential, for the true community.

From these allusions about homeland ('*¿Será posible que siempre el alejarse / del origen debe ser dolor, el escribir / pesadilla?*', Milán 1999, 187), a traumatic writing is constantly activated by intimate memory. Nonetheless, in this poem, history intersects with individual memory. This mixture provides new ways to see a living archive of Uruguay and to understand its particular meaning for an intellectual and migrant artist such as Milán. This is fragmentary and fragmented writing, where the fissures and collapses of the social contract and the life of each person are evidenced. This clash between the individual and the collective spectrum sometimes also occurs between

spontaneity and formality (that is, in this case, the military dictatorship). The idea of a minor literature in the sense of a critique of the established linguistic order works among these aspects of human life. In the next passage, for example, the sensorial experience is a way of relieving oneself from the systematisation of life (Habermas 1989):

el cambio permitido, el cambio de estación que aún bajo una dictadura militar, la de Uruguay que viví, por ejemplo- renueva en la gente una conducta de piel, la piel que se conduce sola si no hay otra piel que se ofrece al olfato, a la vista, en sus cuerpos que se cruzan con la calle. Mujer del Uruguay que pasa liberando instinto

Milán 2014a, 83

For Milán, these emotional links involve not only Uruguay but also, by extension, Latin America as a whole. In these prose extracts, where the writing appears as a line without cuts, the poet works like a filmmaker or a geographer who, at times, pulls back his lens to take in wider scenes. Thus, this phantom camera travels among children's games, maternal care and physical contact. It is a way of 'hacking' the restrictive codes of national literatures, putting Uruguay at the mobile centre of a land-based and eccentric literary experience:

la ciudad encierra, incrusta, empotra en las laderas. México, Río de Janeiro, Quito, muestran el cobre—el oro banca dentro, menciones de ciudades como a través de una cámara fantasma

Milán 2014a, 93

Strictly speaking, these approaches and mixtures—sometimes forced or unresolved—between dissimilar experiences and phenomena appear to unify a disjointed and sometimes incomprehensible world. For example, while traditional practices have essential elements for understanding concrete life, the abstract and inhumane city can only be seen through a reductive, summarising camera that ultimately reflects the symbols of industrialisation and capitalism: *el cobre—el oro banca dentro*. This is a strange metaphor regarding the confinement that characterises the cities of advanced capitalism. In addition, Milan's poetry seeks to reveal the very impossibility of language's ability to unify a fragmented reality and, thus, reveal the contradictions of the world. This is the case in the following extract, where Milán combines a historical anecdote with the Portuguese origin of Uruguay's capital city:

El vigía que viene desde la torre: Monte-vid-eu,⁵⁶
 El sueño revela una carabela, la carabela en que venía
 Toda la eucaristía, cara de Europa que en el agua se mecía:
 Monte-vid-eu. Vela que bajaba, velamen que subía, eran la misma
 cúpula del mar. Monte-vid-eu, Monte deve-nus, Monte-divi-no:
 Milán 1999, 113

In these lines, written in an apparently hesitant mumbling, the sacral character of Montevideo is compared with female sexuality, in a message of proximity to the earth. Montevideo is perceived as the promised land in an augural sense. The phonetic resource (the pun), characteristic of many of Milán's poems, gives to the text a sensation of circularity and even of infinity. From the perspective of national ethno-symbolic belonging, these phonetic remarks could be interpreted as an eternal return to the homeland, to the neighbourhood.

In that sense, this reference to topography is not purely subjective but rather embodies an important historical and anthropological dimension. Milán thus makes very relevant use of symbols to establish a geographical reference. Thus, just as the poet referred to life in Uruguay in the previous extract, here he speaks about his host country, Mexico:

antes de México era grave el ave
 después de México grave es el agave
 Milán 2014a, 30

Milán has resided in Mexico for many years, and these lines reveal this transition. Through the anaphoric structure, in the manner of the trompe-l'œil or *trampantojo*, the phonetic and syntactic repetition creates the illusion of a semantic repetition (*Mexico, grave, ave, agave*), but the ideas presented are opposed. Although it would be forced to identify the bird of this poem with the eagle of the Mexican national shield, what is evident is that the reference to agave seems to be the translation of a Mexican symbol in a global context. Additionally, this extract refers ironically to a displacement from a generic landscape to a concrete landscape: *después de México grave es el agave*. The genus *Agave* was made known scientifically in Europe, in 1753, by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus, who took it from the Greek *agavos*. In Greek mythology, Agave was a

⁵⁶ In his book *Léxico de afinidades*, the Uruguayan poet Ida Vitale se refiere así a Montevideo: 'Me someto hace años, por amor a Montevideo, a la creación de una ciudad mágica y tormentosa, establecida entre aguas y vientos, que bien podría llamarse con ese nombre inventado, discutido, extraño: Montevideo' (2006, 149).

maiden daughter of Cadmus, king of Thebes who, in front of a crowd of bacchants murdered his son and heir to the throne Pentheus. The word agave alludes, then, to something admirable or noble. In Mexico, different ethnic groups gave different names to this plant: *metl*, *mecetl* (Nahuatl), *uadá* (Otomí), *doaba* (Zapoteco) and *akamba* (Purépecha). For their part, the Spanish used the Caribbean word *maguay*, and this, perhaps, is its most common denomination. Currently, its cultivation extends from the southern United States to northern Argentina. However, it originated in the border area between northern Mexico and the southern United States (Parsons 2012, 6). This reference to a plant around which there is an entire production chain (including the production of tequila) indicates that Milán seeks to point out the particular, the specificity of a territory. This problematisation of identity seeks to point out the minority and make sense of what is usually marginalised in cultural maps of the world. Milán thus underlines a Mexican symbol on the map of capitalist globalisation.

Ultimately, the ethnic map that Milán creates in his poems is a movement between nostalgia for ancestral ethnicity (ultimately blurry) and the historical and personal evidence of migration. Juan Soros, a Spanish-Chilean writer, has said that ‘*Milán emigra, como sus antepasados. Hay un corte. Nada sabemos de antes, pero en un momento se cruzó el Atlántico, se quemaron unas naves, se volvió a partir*’ (2012, 45). In another poem, Milán corroborates this idea: ‘*Yo soy uruguayo. Yo espero. / Yo espero ser uruguayo*’. This question of identity suggests a kind of psychological flexibility, a kind of pendulum swinging, chameleonic identity. The poet’s identity seems to be in perpetual motion or, at least, open to transfiguration. For example, if in the previous extract the poet underlined the meaning of agave, in the following lines, Uruguay becomes a river, a house and, finally, a being and a territory:

El Uruguay es un río
 un animal manso que pasó a casa
 se puso sólido, levantó pared.
 Habitó, fue habitado por gente
 peleadora, dio la vida en la pelea, leal

Milán 2014b, 24

Despite the apparently arbitrary punctuation, rhythmical patterns create a sensation of continuity and playfulness. A combination of salient sounds results from the interplay of consonants. First of all, the consonant ‘r’ is repeated in the first line of this excerpt. In the second and third lines, Milán combines internal rhymes (*pasó, levantó*)

with words that have the same vocalic pattern but whose accentuation does not match (*manso*). In addition, he maintains a consonant pattern that continuously changes the salient letter, like a techno-rap mixture of several musical sequences.⁵⁷ The sound sequence is consistent with the idea of a stony river, and above all with the idea of historical landscape transformation through time as a consequence of a country's invention and evolution. In fact, at the semantic and contextual levels, there are more concrete references to Uruguay and its location near the River Plate, whose shore borders the southern region of Uruguay. The river thus creates a natural border with Argentina, and this is a defining factor in the spirit of the country. The image of River Plate is a metonym of Uruguay itself, portraying Uruguay not only as the continental territory but also—and perhaps more importantly—as the contiguous waters. Bordered by the sea, the River Plate, Argentina and Brazil (and its Portuguese language), the importance of watersheds in Uruguay is undeniable, and Milán highlights this importance, sometimes naively: '*blanco y celeste, junto al Amarillo / los colores de la bandera uruguaya*' (Milán 2014a, 52).

These reference are related to the inescapable step from the minor community (the family in the countryside or the neighbourhood and its people, characterised as spaces of affectivity and real exchanges) to the nation-state, with its eminently conventional and arbitrary symbols. As a kind of poetic Google Map, the poem expands its lens, but in doing so, it loses sensory details—the images turn out pixelated. Milán's relationship with the nation is a paradoxical migratory root. In many interviews, he insists on the importance of being *uruguayo* as a foreigner or a migrant:

el error sería considerar el 'proceso cultural uruguayo' estrictamente dentro del área geográfico-nacional llamada Uruguay, sólo con los que 'están' dentro del ámbito de la aceptación del lugar, sin la mancha de los nómades o de los que no encuentran lugar dentro de fronteras. El proceso cultural es una dinámica, nunca un estar ya hecho, el nombre 'proceso' lo dice. ¿Cuándo empieza ese proceso cultural uruguayo? ¿Con el silencio de (José) Artigas, con su negativa al retorno?
(Milán 2007)

As the Uruguayan writer Nicolás Alberte has noted, the most recent books by Milán include Artigas as a foundational myth: '*como si algo hubiese terminado y*

⁵⁷ Here, with the emphasised consonants in bold, it is possible to appreciate the rhythmic pattern: *El Uruguay es un río / un animal manso que pasó a casa / se puso sólido, levantó pared. / Habitó, fue habitado por gente peleadora, dio la vida en la pelea, leal.*

comenzase un exilio (eso que tan bien conocemos los uruguayos desde Artigas)' (2012, 13). Artigas represents a hero who, following independence and once the Uruguayan republic had been founded, chose not to return. In a lucid explanation of the reasons for Uruguayans' migrant nature, Abril Trigo claims that the reduced territory is fundamental in explaining the uncertainty in the desire to emigrate to another country, an instability arising from not being able to effectively colonise other territories as was possible, for example, in Argentina (2005, 1056). Trigo's claim is enlightening, but it should be pointed out that the real territory does not necessarily coincide with the symbolic territory that people invent through social discourses and artistic objects. In that sense, Milán refers to Artigas as an example of how Uruguayan identity is apocryphal, unstable and essentially migratory.

Hence, between a reluctant founder and a small territory, Uruguay is not just an established and officially recognised territory but also a uniquely invented country, a community that includes insiders, outsiders and especially migrants (with Uruguayan passport and their own set of traditions). In one poem, Milán fictionally quotes Artigas as saying:

Igual, la lujuria del anonimato. Artigas
es un arte, una magia
que escapó de la mentira de ser
verdad, padre simbólico, un silencio rodeado de jesuitas
como jacintos, dice la historia⁵⁸

Milán 2014b, 25

A partial translation of this excerpt is 'Artigas / is an art, a magic / that escaped from the lie of being truth'. In this apocryphal quote, Milán is suggesting that Uruguayan identity has a paradoxical, swinging and lateral nature. Yet, this lateralisation is the chance to believe in Uruguayan-ness as a fictive process, as work-in-progress, as a utopia. Milán tries to place Uruguay in what Theo D'haen calls the 'exceptional particular'. This concept refers to writing that is recognised 'by the dominant West as having attained the validity of universality while paradoxically also serving as most typical representative of the reified identity posited by global multiculturalism for his or her culture' (D'haen 2012,

⁵⁸ Aberbach claims that 'European poets speak of nationalism in relation to country, while African and South American poets do so more in relation to continent than country' (2015, 25). Aberbach's affirmation of the Global South countries seems correct but incomplete, because there are also far greater feelings of local belonging.

101). Migration, as a totalising concept, in a way underlines the convergence of many realities, sometimes antagonistic. However, in Milán these worlds are not in balance but in provocative imbalance, where the usually marginal appears in the centre.

A global poetic outlook

As a counterpoint to a hypothetical primordial territory, Milán assembles another class of movement—related to non-traditional landscapes—in which the dynamics of capitalism are exposed and even denounced. In the following extract, for example, a financial scenario lays out how the great economies control the world:

sopa de Buenos Aires, sopa de Atenas, sopa de Dublín caen
las economías al centro
se frotan las manos con guante, sin guante
Milán 2014a, 26

These lines are not a mere conceptual exposition, but a hybrid literary image (between metaphoric and descriptive) that confronts both ordinary meals (soup) and great central economies (with their ‘invisible hands’). It is an ideological, but above all economic reflection on the impoverishment of economies which, curiously, are not only those of the Global South, but also include First World countries Greece and Ireland. These references indicate that Milán considers those countries to be controlled by economic empires and that he views the border between rich and impoverished as changing and mobile. This extract reveals that Milán's decision to include either developed, underdeveloped or developing countries in his poetic enumeration is part of a conceptualisation of the paradoxes of financial development.

Although radical supporters of capitalism argue that only capitalism enables political freedom (Hayek 1990, 10), Milán's criticisms seem powerful because they are framed in an emotive perspective about memory. In some ways, they express dynamic processes amidst a structural disequilibrium or at a tipping point. This sometimes journalistic⁵⁹ attitude in some of the author's texts is, however, linked to a left-wing political thinking that challenges the abstract dynamics of global markets. This ideological background characterises much of Milán's poetry, where he integrates, mixes

⁵⁹ In Milán, poetry possesses both transcendental and informative elements. At certain moments, this poetry can be considered a poetic documentary.

and combines Latin American images with reflections or assertions about contemporary globalisation:

Como si el capital fuera un niño de pecho que necesita amamantarse en los antiguos matriarcados de los Andes o en los más recientes patriarcados del Cono Sur.

Milán 2014a, 119

In Milán's poetry, this *capital* takes on an almost mythological character, like a hungry baby or a ubiquitous monster. Milán's comparison between capital and a monstrous baby, considering Andean matriarchies (an indigenous mother? A mountain?) and the patriarchies of the southern cone (the military dictators?), ironically refers to the role that financial systems occupy in Latin American societies. Thus, capital feeds on states, on the concrete lives of citizens. His criticisms of trivial cosmopolitanism are somewhat similar. For example:

Se necesita una mujer llorando su origen/
perdido en el mundo de los Giorgio Armani,
Milán, 1999, 100

The trademarks and logos of capitalism appear as impersonations of a genuine identity, such as false devices. With that in mind, the poet relates static landscapes with the intimate world and new landscapes with the more contingent world of global trade.

Thus, when the poet considers larger spaces in the world, he becomes a political geographer who virtually traverses communities and countries with an eye to analysing them. For example, in the following anti-imperialist allegory, his gaze focuses on the eagle that symbolically observes Latin America with a political and geographical superiority. Here Milán cites United States' instrumentalisation of the eagle myth as a threatening symbol (Noboa González 2019, 1):

despega del suelo, levanta vuelo
con toda la propiedad del águila:
allá abajo queda América Latina
Milán 2005, 79

Through wide shots that appear to have been taken from a small airplane, Milán registers—as a poetic documentarian—travels through cosmopolitan landscapes in a

quickly rotating exercise. This kind of poetic documentary is transverse to the poet's desire to repoliticise a depoliticised postmodernity through a panoptic and obsessive look at the globe and the communities inhabiting it. Milán's purpose seems to be to politicise places (or their topological references) through poetry. This exercise begins with the premise that we live in a depoliticised world whose dialectical connections are invisible to the common person. For example:

mundo estado de cuenta, cuerpo estado de gracia
una avalancha de religión sobre el suelo
dos, tres cucarachas, ateas, indias, palestinas,
Milán 2014a, 31

In these lines, the comma and the slashes work as visual pauses in a frenetic series of enumerations. Although the short lines recreate the traditional metric, the enumerative strategy used by the poet recreates the accumulation so characteristic of many aspects of contemporary life. Here, he dismantles the simulacrum of economic democracy (*mundo estado de cuenta*), underlining that, despite this world turning into a bank, ethnicities persist in their heterogeneity. The cockroaches to which Milán refers are allegories of people who, as in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, have been reduced to bugs by the dehumanising processes of globalisation to which the poet refers as a *enredadera venosa* (Milán 2014a, 99).

The poet wishes to point out that human beings are not alone in a bourgeois bubble, but that the news reported by CNN, for example, corresponds to real people, to real countries, to real situations. Thus, Milán depicts the *prisa* in which everything happens. When the poet uses the adjective *derramados*, he displays some geographies that seem decentred, deterritorialised and unstable:

Hay prisa en los continentes
derramados, en las Áfricas, en las Américas,
en los canguros de Australia, continentes,
Milán 1999, 199

Here, global reality is a scenario in which Milán's poetic consciousness seems to run its course, focusing not only on the actors in certain situations but also on the meaning of the scenarios where these situations occur. This set of country names, natural symbols, and historical icons is a method for the poet to stress that nothing in the world is foreign to

him, and particularly to uncover global inequalities. The extraterritoriality that Milán configures seems radical: *‘más allá de la frase / más allá de un lugar / más allá de nación, país, territorio’* (2013, 64). However, are these references mere banal cosmopolitanism that would be the commercial simplification of cultural differences? (Beck 2006, 10; Kuipers and De Kloet 2009, 99–100) Milán identifies avant-garde with a political commitment, and these unusual references attempt to show that he includes his political commitment even where it is not common. For political and artistic reasons, he believes that his macro-nation is the Third World. Following this idea, the gestural character of this resource does not invalidate its authenticity but clearly reduces its utility (again, an avant-garde gesture that simultaneously coincides with the idea of minor literature) (Dominguez et al., 2018, 282).

The symbolic bridge between marginalised societies and a political sense of solidarity is merely virtual, but it is honest. It may be naïve, but not banal. The fact that it is a purely linguistic and artistic object does not negate the ethical gesture behind it. It circumscribes its influence to a small area, but does not annul it. The anthropological barrier persists, but the political and artistic bridges can conjoin both ethnic and national origins. Milán strongly believes that his national political identity includes the Third World as a whole: a constellation of ‘minor’ countries. In a more restricted scene, Milán regularly creates comparisons between Uruguay and Mexico or between Mexico and other countries:

con hijos, con mujer, de Ámsterdam a Londres,
de allí a Súchil⁶⁰

Milán 2014a, 16

It is important to note that Milán’s early poems are highly abstract, but in the 1990s he began to include place names as a geographical testimony. It is difficult to determine to what extent technological changes have conditioned this turn in his work, but such influence cannot be ruled out. Today Google Maps allows us to find any street easily, but the decision to include certain places on a virtual map is very personal and affective. Nevertheless, the political implications of this strategy are clear when Milán says, *‘La globalización benéfica para los países latinoamericanos es más una posibilidad que está por verse que una realidad visible’* (Milán 2014, 59). This procedure could be qualified

⁶⁰ The municipality of Súchil is one of the 39 municipalities within the Mexican state of Durango, located in the southeast of the state and bordering with Zacatecas. The municipal seat is the town of Súchil.

as an emotional comparison between nations or places, but there is a rational—or at least a conscious—component behind these comparative procedures: *‘Me interesan las imágenes porque vuelve en México, en España, en los centros urbanos de economías tocadas por las políticas de reajuste dictadas por el FMI—aquella cosa en movimiento de los sesenta, con una diferencia: sin horizonte o con horizonte bloqueado, invisible, no se ve nada’* (Milán 2014a, 41). Therefore, this Uruguayan nation is at times the Uruguayan-Latin American nation or the Uruguayan–Third World constellation: Milán, like a cameraman, opens the lens of belongingness whenever necessary. He bets on a Third World cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, this is sometimes sustained in the most atavistic, primordial, and subjective ties, such as with the father and the mother (*‘cielo arriba que se llame José, cielo arriba que se llame Elena’*, (Milán 2013b, 83). In this sense, it is a rooted cosmopolitanism (Cohen 1992, 82), whose centre of gravity lies in the family and in the small community, but from which the poet moves to virtual and real territories where political geography and symbolic geography seem to be intertwined through a punctuation without punctuation marks (emulating acceleration) showing and revealing the fast rhythm of the contemporary world.

However, this heterodox vision is not limited to social and economic dynamics. It also includes other philosophical aspects, such as technological changes; for example, *‘luz de pantalla daña los ojos / algo que recordar, daña / lo demás de pantalla, la memoria’* (Milán 2014b, 47). This extract highlights the alterations technology produces in human sensibilities (Sartori 2012, 38-40). However, Milán does not dwell on philosophical meditation about the linkage between humanism and posthumanism, but rather relates this problem to the structure of power and the meaning of affectivity at this time. These technologies do not seem to occur only- in specific scenes, but they appear out of place, as if they belonged to any space on the globe:

los controlados mentales por las máquinas plurales del poder
diseminadas al final del beso

Milán 2014a, 63

This citation establishes, for example, a mediation between alienation (as a social phenomenon) and technological devices. There are references to ideoscapes and tecnoscapes superimposed on the same poetic lines. This demonstrates that modernity does not arise in a pure and specific way; rather, it is usually visible in an ambiguous manner). Milán pays attention to these ‘plural machines of power’ for both their

ideological and their technical implications. For Milán, landscapes have a defined temporality: the past is local and intimate, the present is essentially global. Again, these gestures in his writing characterise ‘the new’ as collective and contingent (sketched from a leftist cosmopolitanism), while the past is atavistic, of small groupings and concrete sensoriality. Thus, his work lies between a core of essential and atavistic traits where, as discussed above, Mexico and particularly Uruguay, constitute a profound heritage of emotional landscapes and a series of contingent, informative, and moving surfaces.

In spite of this commitment to historical reality, at certain moments in his work, Milán makes a slight shift from a lyrical documentary towards an imaginary map where hemispheric polarities seem to be decentred, misplaced, and reimagined. Occasionally in his poems, reality appears spectral, as if it were somehow elusive, fleeting. Places take forms that do not correspond to a historical fact or a concrete anthropological reference. This imaginative deployment is related to the search for a utopian, imaginary, poetic justice. But what is this justice in this context? Essentially, it is the possibility of an anti-hierarchical order in which world geography is represented with a Latin American focus. Milán understands that behind that representation, the entire political and economic system is encrypted and that, in a way, the poet is a hacker of the status quo and a symbolic judge (Nussbaum 1997, 80) of the poverty and inequality that characterise the Third World:

¿Vas a quedarte con la boca abierta mirando las nubes que cruzan Londres?
Justicia sería bautizar el cielo con estrellas africanas.

Milán 2014a, 67

In this example, Milán refers to the injustice of a world that has been colonised by Western symbols through military, political, cultural, and technological power. Milán creates bridges between an unfair world and a poetic language where this trauma becomes evident (Sommer 1991, 32). Many times, Milán does this by citing First World cities as a destination for Latin Americans. In Milán’s view, Latin Americans can place these cities on their symbolic map, questioning their references and converting them into playful, fictional and imaginary spaces:

el
gorjeo del pájaro de sangre en Inglaterra: pío, pío.
Milán 1999, 69

Why does Milán use these references to England? The text portrays a city in flux in which the sensorial experience of the world runs. The poem crosses psychological planes with the childish *pio pio*, the sublime *gorjeo* and the expressionist *sangre*. The use of metropolitan place names as part of the poetic discourse, as reinvented spaces, deactivates their official character as metropolises of power.

This exercise of inserting many places in the world is an exercise of counter-minoritisation, placing different parts of the world like New York into a Uruguayan perspective.

El aleteo de una mariposa en Nueva York
para siempre. Dicho así, como de pasada, dicho
así, como verdadero. El aleteo de una mariposa
en NuevaYork, como de pasada.

Milán 1999, 86

In this passage, the slash underlines the versal cut, creating a sensation of circularity through the prancing, back to the beginning of the poem. Between eternity (*para siempre*) and transience (*el aleteo, como de pasada*), New York appears as a non-place where nothing stays and, somehow, as the place of a mystical experience close to Taoist spirituality. That is perhaps the radical difference from other poets who have sought to symbolise that city, such Federico García Lorca or José Hierro;⁶¹ Milán is more interested in the emptiness of visiting such a place than in its emotional atmospheres. In fact, in certain of Milán's poems, the imaginary geographies exhibit a fictional construction that refers to the absence of a primordial place, perhaps inescapably lost:

El lugar que querías está muerto para ti. No
hay lugar. Extranjero como un jeroglífico
en un muro de mil años, egipcio. La gesta

Milán 1999, 66

In Milán, that emptiness, that alienation, is not only mystical or emotional, but also geographical, linguistic and historical (*jeroglífico / en un muro de mil años, egipcio*). Are these imaginary or real geographies? The answer is both. In large part, Milán plays with the reader to dismantle the binary relationship between realistic maps and imaginary maps, but also between centre and periphery, between minor countries and major

⁶¹ *Poeta en Nueva York* (1940) by Federico García Lorca is a book of surreal style, while *Cuaderno de Nueva York* (1998) by José Hierro has an elegiac intonation.

countries. This deterritorialisation arises from the intention to create a space in movement, an instability that not only translates contemporary global movements into a poem, but also traces a new distribution of symbolic references on the globe:

contribución a la feliz holografía, geografía
toda—árboles, bosques, Amazonia, huertos,
abismos, mares, quintas, desiertos, Tajo-

Milán 1999, 94

This redistribution is important because of the poet's willingness to situate the Third World's real and imaginary elements onto the real and imaginary maps of literature. Milán builds a minor poetry, with the awareness that it is minor. Politics works through language and vice versa. This occurs through poetics of fragmentation and enumeration. Milán does not achieve this through great epic songs, but rather through representative lyrical poems of a rarefied and multiple mosaic. Thus, for example, he refers to ethnoscares of contemporary migrations from Latin America to Europe, and even to Operation Cóndor, a program of U.S.'s Central Intelligence Agency that forced the migration of many inhabitants of Uruguay, Argentina and Chile to Europe:

Yo me imagino un 68 en marcha contra los colmillos del trabajo de planta, las
plantas asalariadas del sudor diario que cumplían en Europa algunos sudacas
cuando un cóndor operado los corrió del sur

Milán 2014a, 125

Milán still believes in the spirit of May of '68, in the hippie left and, in a broader sense, in utopia, but in this passage, 'imagine' is a sort of translation of that historical event to the Latin American context. This implies understanding that this event was interpreted by the intelligentsia of Global South as an imaginative revolution. However, in Milán's poetry, this utopia is cartographic and attentive to human flows, under the premise that maps include within them human stories, emotional geographies, and myths:

¿Por qué un mapa? ¿Por qué no se puede escapar de las montañas,
espíritus que detienen a los dones con el pecho? *Topografía*

Milán 1999, 152

For Milán, maps are spaces in which authentic features must be traced, opposed by inauthentic ones, denouncing the abstraction or concealment of concrete features

(mountains or rivers, for example); this is where human movement occurs. Milán is a large-scale cartographer who often places the real and the imaginary in tension with each other to demonstrate with some frequency that the real does not coincide with the true, just as the false does not always coincide with the imaginary. A kind of imaginary construction that Milán often builds includes something that refers to ethnoscapas of global movement. To the definition of ethnoscape proposed by Appadurai, Milán adds the idea of the movement and re-drawing of maps, because the displacement of populations appears ironic, playful and abstract. These scenarios are backgrounds in an apparent movement, without permanent residents.

Between rooted memory and the references to ethnoscapas of global movement, there is a gap in which everything has a place, even emptiness. For example, Milán creates small vignettes related to places that seem to exist more in the mind of the writer than in the real world:

ni canto, aquí o en Sinaloa,
viento sin elegía con un vacío por dentro

Milán 2014b, 16

The word *aquí* could be anywhere. This absence is metaphysical, but also social. Hence, Sinaloa is located in the northern region of Mexico, but it could be anywhere the poetic voice decides to imagine it. Additionally, as noted earlier, all of Milán's poems are untitled—clearly a statement of orphanhood, of a lack of roots, as well as an intriguing way to avoid predictable and unipolar readings. Milán's imaginary trips create imaginary geographies. If we follow the metaphor of the poetic documentarian, Milán purposely places erroneous names in the cities he quotes in order to use geography as a language that can be transfigured by affections, as Marc Augé explains: '*si algunos nombres de países hacen que me conmueva, es porque de algún modo me pertenecen*' (2012, 31). This belonging seeks to problematise the cultural marginalisation of peripheral countries and minor literatures (including Milán's poetry), with the aim of placing them in a utopian scenario.

Conclusion

In Milán's case, it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish the thinker from the poet, the essayist and the imagist (Cussen 2012, 25; Benítez Pezzolano 2012, 51). All his writings straddle both genres in a movement where the flows of poetic imagination seem

filtered and interspersed with conceptual and abstract twists. As a matter of fact, Milán recognises himself as a poet-thinker (Milán 2013a, 19), which means, in principle, two things: 1) he is a poet aware of his linguistic procedures and also of the ethical and political implications of such procedures; and 2) in his writing, the boundaries between poetry and essays are ductile, plastic and flexible.

In his poems, this analytical and inquisitive attitude has led him to seek out unusual relationships between formal innovation and political ideas. A declaration he made some years ago is revealing: '*yo insisto siempre en las consecuencias formales –en la forma del arte- de los conflictos sociopolíticos*' (Milán 2013a, 16). In his work, therefore, there is a tight link between three elements: thought, politics and formal innovation. In his perspective on poetic language, a dialectic process that works among these elements.

As time passes, these political ideas have come to determine a kind of poetic oeuvre that Milán modifies by adding new poems that alter the compass of the previous ones. Poem after poem, Milán disfigures and reconfigures his framework: his poetry is crossed by a language that seeks to express the uncertainty and disorder of contemporary life. This experimental poetics implies not only a left-wing political search about contemporary reality, but also queries the concept of national identity. Thus, collaterally, he underlines that Uruguayan identity is an unstable, flexible, eccentric and unfinished work-in-progress:

desde la orilla un trazo en la arena con un dedo/

nace así el uruguayo proyectivo
nace así el hombre ladeado.

Milán 2014b, 50

Accordingly, this Uruguayan 'man' represents a lateral and flexible identity that paradoxically remarks on certain topologies and places. This paradox is apparent because Milán's proposal is to demonstrate that, if there is an essence of Uruguay, it is laterality and deterritorialisation. The Uruguayan 'being' is rooted to a non-rooted country and identified with a territory in continuous symbolic and, admittedly, artificial movement. In that sense, Eduardo Milán is not only a poet-thinker, he is also a national myth-creator. The creation of the myth no longer arises exclusively from references to the nation, but instead from a global contextualisation of those references. Milán thus constructs his

poetic identity by combining different types of identities, from the profoundly intimate to the most radically abstract of postmodern globalisation. In his work, Uruguayan identity is interpreted through a leftist and postmodern view.

Milán continuously conducts a political exercise of the imagination: through his writing, he seeks a relocation of world's landscapes. This procedure does not necessarily respond to an aesthetic objective, but rather to a political intention involving globalisation. Milán's poetic voice depicts and names cities that are more a part of felt and imagined otherness than something empirically known. This usage has a poetic effect as well, because it underlines the distances behind them: 'imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away' (Said 1979, 55). This effect is very characteristic of Milán's poetry, in which the reflection on landscape is also a vision regarding the globalised world. Here we must meditate on the difference between the concept of landscape—as described in Chapter 2 and as worked through in the reading of several poems—and the concept of place. A place could refer to a house in Montevideo, a neighbourhood in Guadalajara or even a mountain on Mars. By contrast, a landscape is a specific type of place in which sensory experience and specific details are concrete and tangible (Prieto 2013, 29). In that sense, place is an abstract idea, and landscape a more figurative one. In Milán's poetry, place and landscape have an interlocking relationship that creates the illusion of geographic movement and uncertainty. For Milán, this fictionalised deterritorialisation creates the illusion that the Uruguayan passport is a 'Global South passport'. It can be argued that this transverse identity is the main conceptual characteristic of his poetry.

In a pedagogical twist, the poet speaks many times with the intonation of a journalistic article. This intentionally adopted attitude is constant in his poetry, which creates a world map and attempts to restore a symbolic justice through poetry. Despite the use of certain autobiographical elements, Milán resists being merely an intimate poet: he shows that intimacy is political and that politics can be intimate and affective. He works with seemingly antipoetic materials in the manner of a lyrical documentarian, trying to create a historical counterpoint to the intimacy that is often included in his poems. With conjunctural words about contemporary geopolitics, the poet questions the personal biography that shapes his writing to show that both sides are genuine, the lyrical poet of his Uruguayan past, and the politically committed poetic documentarian and thinker. Both sides work together through a grammar that seems to find its final meaning

in a repetition of sounds rather than in a logical set of ideas. This underlining of sound shows that the least rational level of language is the most appropriate for depicting an identity in perpetual shock, and for building a minor oeuvre where politics, intimacy and language are shown as whisper, music and noise.

An obsessive sound management and an unusual syntax portray an unwillingness to be domesticated, merged, reduced, and flattened by the politically correct discourse of liberal democracies. All of these expressive strategies seem to return to an intimate history that is none other than the fable of an artificial nation that the poet tells himself, and tells readers often, always trying to anchor Uruguay somewhere on the global map, somewhere in the constellation of the world's literary works (Damrosch 2008, 12; Thomsen 2008, 20), underlining the cultural and political heterogeneity between Latin America and the developed world. Each new poem reveals the endlessness of this project, his utopia.

Through this combination of a doubly utopian proposal because of its experimental character and its political adhesions, Milán places his poetry within the framework of minor-literature constellations (Dominguez et al., 2018, 280). Additionally, the great paradox of Milán is that his poetry, with its difficult aesthetic-political message, reveals capitalism's effectiveness as a system, as it demonstrates that his books of poetry must be bought and sold. Nonetheless, it also expresses that, to be read seriously from the margins, a poet must speak in a peripheral language with a peripheral strategy—with all the contradictions that this supposes. Milán's utopia is therefore situated in an area of conceptual, geographical and aesthetic frontiers, and in that multifaceted place lies its uniqueness as an aesthetic testimony to Uruguayan identity.

Chapter 4.

Iván Carvajal: A Reluctant National Poet

Tiempo y espacio urdidos
para que yo no arribe
jamás hasta mi patria

IVÁN CARVAJAL

Against the frivolity of the present times, the poetry of Iván Carvajal (b. 1948) has been read as an intellectually ambitious project. In a bibliographic consultation carried out in the library of the Universidad Católica de Quito on February 4, 2017, the librarian in charge, a man with a wizened beard, asked me, ‘are you seriously going to read it? He’s a very difficult poet’. This assertion exemplifies the prevailing perception of Carvajal’s poetry. This difficulty does not really have much to do with the text (Molina 2015, 15). There are even more hermetic poets among his Ecuadorian contemporaries: Bruno Sáenz (b. 1944), Sonia Manzano (b. 1948) and Humberto Vinuesa (1944–2017). The problem with Carvajal is that his poetry boasts and exhibits high-cultural and philosophical references in a fairly overt way. Thus, it is a poetry that claims its complexity from those most explicit intellectual references. In addition, Carvajal’s poetry magazine, *País Secreto*, which was published from 2001 to 2005, was focused on the relationship between poetry and thought, through a cosmopolitan but sometimes contradictory perspective.

The hypothesis of this chapter about the poetry of Carvajal is that he is a reluctant national poet whose pro-cosmopolitan perspective has been subjected to the restrictive circumstances of a small and marginal country. This fact has conditioned not only the circulation of his work but also his style and his ideological preoccupations: the apparent darkness of his work is marked by his intention to show human conflicts in their authentic complexity and universality, but in perpetual conflict with the features of Andean identity and Ecuadorian nationality. In several ways, Carvajal’s work intends to be in dialogue with the Western poetic tradition, altering or dislocating the anthropological place of the constellation of Ecuadorian literatures (Campaña 2005, 1). Paradoxically, its most singular features appeal to places, landscapes and specific cultural practices of Ecuador. This tension reveals that cultural heterogeneity is sometimes not only irreducible, but even necessary for the existence of certain literary works.

In his case, despite Carvajal's effort to assign his work to a cosmopolitan, humanist and universalist archive, his individuation process is marked by a radical distancing from the Ecuadorian nation-state and a evocation of what Rosella Salerno calls minor landscapes that are 'less known places, particularly the "inner areas"—rural landscapes, inlands, places far from urban areas and from the flows of globalisation and tourism attractions—preserving at the same time traces of common roots and differences of identities' (2019, 3). These minor landscapes function as heterogeneity marks of an oeuvre that seeks to place itself in a utopian non-place (Augé 1995, 4), but within the referential framework of the great literary tradition of the Western world.

Iván Carvajal: poet, essayist and philosopher

Carvajal's life has been lived against an intellectual and philosophical background since his early years. He was born in San Gabriel, Ecuador, a village in the north of the country near the border with Colombia. He was the eldest child of intellectuals that were part of the political life of Ecuador's recent history. He published his first poems in a newspaper in Quito and, under a pseudonym, in a school magazine. Then he published two poems in *Procontra*, magazine of the Cultural Front (*El Frente Cultural*).⁶² His youth was spent in Quito, where he participated in various groups of the radical left and was linked with the last period of the *Tzántzicos* Movement. His first book of poems, *Del Avatar*, appeared in 1981 but collected poems written between 1971 and 1977. He delivered the book to the publisher of the Casa de la Cultura de Guayaquil in 1978. He wrote the poems in his next collection, *Poemas de un mal tiempo para la lírica*, between 1978 and 1979, but this collection was published by Universidad Central de Quito in 1980, when his first book was still waiting to be printed in Guayaquil. Hence, these two books contain poems written over a decade (Carvajal, 2012). In 1984 he received Ecuador's National Prize for Literature, the Aurelio Espinosa Pólit Prize, for his work entitled *Parajes*.

From his youth, Carvajal was immersed in academic activities. He earned a Ph.D. with a thesis called '*Genésis de los procesos estéticos en la vida cotidiana*', and he worked for many years as a Professor at the Universidad Católica del Ecuador. In February 2013, he won the Juan Montalvo Prize as acknowledgment for his work in

⁶² The *Frente Cultural* was an artistic group created in 1968 that elaborated a more disciplined perspective for writing literature able to be part of a leftist revolution. This group published *Bufanda del sol*, a literary review that tried to bring together the short stories and poems of its members.

defence of civil rights and freedom of expression. He directed the poetry review *País Secreto* and was project director of Corporación Cultural Orogenia. Most of his work is devoted to poetry, though recently he has published some of his reflections on Ecuadorian poets (*A la zaga del animal imposible*) and culture and politics in Ecuador (*Volver a tener patria?*). In recent years, Carvajal has been an opinion leader in important Ecuadorian newspapers against the government of Rafael Correa (2007–2017). In this sense, the philosophical poet and the critical intellectual have moved in various directions that only occasionally coincide.

Minor literatures, dissemination and canon

It should be noted that Carvajal's poetry has been published in countries with important publishing industries in the context of the Hispanic world—Mexico (UNAM, 1991) and Spain (*La casa del furor*, La poesía señor hidalgo, 2004). However, as will become clear, this dissemination can only be read as meaningful in the context of a literature primarily concerned within its own frontiers. This idea, ultimately political, supposes that the work of Carvajal has broken national borders but in a very restricted way. Considering the lack of institutional mechanisms for disseminating the national literary corpus, Ecuadorian oeuvres has had little impact on Latin American poetry. Therefore, publishing in other countries is meaningful considering the local reviews rather than the critical reception of that work abroad:⁶³ it is a legitimation mechanism within national borders. This fact is connected with the absence of a metanarrative⁶⁴ of Ecuadorian literature that integrates the heterogeneous literary oeuvres and poetic expressions under a national summary as a whole (for example, 'Chilean poetry is experimental and epic'). Thus, there is no specific preconception about what Ecuadorian poetry means or could mean. The set of works that make up the Ecuadorian national canon has been selected in a random way and, for that very reason, any explanation of its

⁶³ It is necessary to distinguish here the editions of living authors who 'work' in the disclosure of their writings from the commemorative editions of dead authors who have become canonical after several decades: some examples are *Huasipungo* (1934) by Jorge Icaza and *Siete lunas, siete serpientes* by Demetrio Aguilera Malta (1970). The fundamental difference lies in two aspects: in the first case, the author becomes the protagonist of a hypothetical social success, while in the second case the writings claim greater autonomy.

⁶⁴ A metanarrative is a narrative *about* narratives of historical meaning, experience, or knowledge, which offers a society legitimation through the anticipated completion of a (as yet unrealised) master idea (Lyotard 1992, 29). Another relevant definition suggests that a metanarrative is 'a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience' (Stephens and McCallum 1998, 8).

coherence will necessarily be inconsistent and fragmentary (even contradictory and mutually exclusive).

In that sense, Carvajal's poetry is placed in bookstores not only as part of a marginal tradition but also of a literary tradition that has not reached an institutional understanding of the parameters of this marginality. In the absence of a metanarrative of Ecuadorian literature (a seal of identity that can be sold academically, critically and commercially), this relatively complex poetic oeuvre is situated in a kind of unconscious margin of a minor genre in a constellation of minor literatures.⁶⁵ Hence, the difference between what a literary work pretends to be and what it can effectively be in aesthetic, social, cultural and political terms is significant. When Damrosch defines world literature, he indicates that it involves a field of literary production that transcends nations and other conventional geospatial and temporal boundary markers (2003, 4; Ganguly, 2008, 130). What happens if a literature does not circulate effectively beyond its borders? Can be part of world literature? In the case of Carvajal, we speak of a poetic oeuvre that seeks to be read as world literature, but due to the persistent inclusion of minor landscapes (Salerno 2019, 3) and the immense difficulty of achieving circulation, cataloguing and recognition in a global context, it should be read as a minor literature as well. This double standard for reading Carvajal's poetry reflects the cultural isolation of Ecuador. Hence, without a metanarrative, without a concept of tradition, any achievement of an author (publications, prizes, translations, invitations to festivals or congresses) becomes meaningful.

In several senses, Carvajal's writing is a reaction to isolation and its resulting networks of patronage. His poetry stands as a counterpoint within the family tree that constitutes the canon of Ecuadorian poetry. The most revered author of previous generations was Jorgenrique Adoum (1926–2009), who developed a style close to colloquialism, focused in a Marxist reading of history and historiography. Adoum inserted his poetic discourse into the debate about Ecuador as a nation. In short, Adoum tried to reinvent national history through his poetry. Carvajal, by contrast, seeks to place himself—in a reluctant gesture—outside the national narrative by means of a poetry that seeks a direct dialogue with the Western world's poetic traditions. This dialogue aims to omit national history and focus on the metaphor at the centre of the discourse. Despite the fact that Carvajal sceptically insists in interviews, essays and poems on a cynical vision about the links between poetry and nation-states, he has prepared an anthology of

⁶⁵ This is particularly true in the case of a poet like Carvajal who is not adept at lobbying, given the patronage practices that are characteristic of the artistic world.

Ecuadorian poetry (in collaboration with Raúl Pacheco), a volume of essays on Ecuadorian poets,⁶⁶ and a long political and philosophical essay on national states.⁶⁷ Is this a contradiction? In reality, the two views are antagonistic and complementary: he is a cosmopolitan author who, due to circumstances of destiny, must apply his cosmopolitan look to a fairly national context.

The incomplete journeys and their reluctant national and ethno-symbolic outlooks

In Iván Carvajal's poetry there are two recognisable focal points. The first is the inner life and the natural environment; this focus is best appreciated in books like *Opera* (1997), an allegorical construction with a few symbols playing the role of characters in a silent and enigmatic theatre. The second focal point is the human being surrounded by the crowd, which can be seen in examples like *Del Avatar* (1981) or *Inventando a Lennon* (1998). In both focuses, there is a dialogue with a tone that argues for a rooted cosmopolitanism (Cohen 1992, 82).⁶⁸ *'la apertura cosmopolita, el sentido de contemporaneidad con las grandes tendencias poéticas latinoamericanas, el surgimiento de voces que producen obras vigorosas a partir de una indagación acerca de nuestro modo de ser, de nuestro mundo histórico-cultural. Surge un movimiento de la poesía que inquiere por la especificidad de lo andino, de lo ecuatorial'* (Carvajal 2005, 13). Carvajal formulated this idea about Jorge Carrera Andrade's oeuvre, but it matches his own poetic work perfectly.

In Carvajal's perspective, this specificity is expressed implicitly in a contrast between the unfinished and experimental forms of the avant-garde (expression of unfinished institutional developments) and a search for dialogue with various symbols of the Andean world. Early poetry of Iván Carvajal is characterised by syntactic deviations and symbolic language that evidences the influence of Pound and Eliot as tutelary authors. After the turn of the century, these and other poets that influenced his poetic work 'abandoned the practice of writing metrically, a practice which had informed poetic

⁶⁶ Carvajal, I. 2005. *A la zaga del animal imposible: lecturas del poesía Ecuatoriana del siglo XX* (Vol. 1). Centro Cultural Benjamín Carrión.

⁶⁷ Carvajal, I. 2006. '¿Volver a tener patria?' In: Albán, F. ed. *La cuadratura del círculo*. pp. 191–297.

⁶⁸ The difference between the concept of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' and notions like 'glocalism' lies in the fact that the former claims the articulation between the primordial wisdom (ancestral inclusive) of a community and the corresponding knowledge of other cultures across the globe. On the other hand, glocalism refers to the new places generated by globalisation, mainly virtual and fragile, which have resulted in a permanent intertwining of local and global. In addition, rooted cosmopolitanism is a way of looking at the world, an ethical and political position before reality: not just a fact of contemporary modernity.

composition for nearly three millennia' (Steele 1984, 26). These British and American authors did not include metrical patterns in their poems, creating a more relaxed and colloquial expression. This colloquial prosody exerted influence in Latin America during the 1970s as a result of a political emancipation and a hypothetical opening towards the reader (Triviño 1997, 41). In addition to this colloquial ingredient, Carvajal uses other elements of the avant-garde and concrete poetry. The visual construction of poems as typographic ladders and the peculiarity of certain lexical usages and certain verbal phrases give an asymmetric shape to the poem. His work with phonetics and syntax gives to the verses the appearance of a fragmented draft written in haste. Nevertheless, the tone is lively, and the symbol of Sinbad seems to travel throughout the broken verses of *Del Avatar* as an allegory of journey:

Simbad el mendigo tiene que contentarse
Soñando la historia del marino Simbad
Todo gesto queda abolido en su retorno
Toda meta acaba en el olvido
Las naves
Acabarán donde empezaron
Carvajal 2001, 44

Through the relationships of the lexis, it is clear that this symbol recreates the notion of impossible travel. Thus, rather than an imaginary trip, it is an unfulfilled journey. It is difficult to establish the biographical or historical context of this passage. What is certain is that Iván Carvajal employs the notion of travel quite often. It is always travel that takes place outside the house, the neighbourhood, the community or the country. Even where the journey is not made, as in this case, Sinbad the sailor is an incarnation of notion of trip, because through his name he refers to a legendary character, included only belatedly in *One Thousand and One Nights*.⁶⁹ This untaken trip reflects a

⁶⁹ Sinbad the sailor is a legendary story known throughout the world due to this collection, a work to which he did not originally belong but into which he was incorporated between the 17th and 18th centuries. The original seed of this complex narrative was a story written in Egypt around 2200 BC about a shipwrecked sailor. It was then impregnated with elements of Homer's *Odyssey*, as well as with the Alexander Romance (a biography of Alexander the Great narrated by Pseudo-Callisthenes composed at the end of the 3rd century or beginning of the 4th century AD). To these elements (and many others) were also added the Book of Animals of Al-Jahiz (9th century) and the oral stories referred to by royal navigators of the 13th century. The first edition printed in Arabic of *One Thousand and One Nights* (Calcutta, 1814–1818) includes it as an appendix at the end of the book, and it is only integrated into the scheme of the Nights in the Egyptian edition of 1835, but in an abridged and expunged version (Pinault 1998). It is possible that Carvajal's text also refers to the poem 'Sindbad el varado' by Gilberto Owen, which is part of the book *Perseo vencido*, originally published in 1948.

kind of impossible cosmopolitan movement whose ‘passenger’ seems to circulate to the same site, a homeland that is assumed as a reluctantly.

However, sometimes, the theme of travel acquires more abstract connotations and political concerns where nostalgia, more reflexive than sentimental in this case, makes us think about the meaning of the trip in terms of a return to the old homeland:

¿cuántos de los que amas y permanecen lejos, en tu antigua patria, continúan vivos?

Carvajal 2001, 46

In this line, ‘death’ seems to be some kind of limit or second border. Here, the passage of time becomes a second boundary intersecting with the limits of the country. This portrait of the nation-state as a social institution and as an emotive symbol is an expression of the poet’s mistrust in identifying himself with Ecuador as his *patria*. A reading of the whole poem, entitled ‘*Del sitio*’, included in *Del Avatar*, reveals this convergent frontier: a philosophical and a geographical frontier meld together. Given the situation, this coincidence fosters a territorial and subjective nostalgia, embedded in this small but dense extract in prose. Frequently, Carvajal uses symbolic elements to express philosophical questions. This compositional procedure enriches the suggestiveness of the poem’s language: it straddles multiple semantic thresholds. For example, the sea is the predominant symbol behind the notion of travel in the early poetry of Carvajal, often as a space of exchange and frenzy:

Hacia dónde van estos caminos
En noches de luna llena
En noches de tempestad
Con quién toman su vino
Por los puertos del mar dónde se van

Carvajal 2001, 57

In the final line of this passage, the trip implies not only uncertainty but also infinity and, in that sense, it is not subject to categorisation. Carvajal has said in several interviews and essays that, for him, the poem does not keep a representational relationship with the world, but is the result of a subjective experience (Carvajal, 2012; Carvajal 2005,

304).⁷⁰ Carvajal presents here a radical notion, perhaps not fully aware of its own implications—the instant leakage of cosmopolitanism, related to a notion of history that somehow opens its most unexpected possibilities. This notion of history is, in turn, a notion of open time and political questioning. Where does hospitality happen? In our house? Or in our house that, being hospitable, is also of others? Carvajal seems to answer that our house is the world.

Under this cosmopolitan conviction, the approaches to domestic images show a questioning of the provincialism, enclosure (*aldabas*, bolts) and frugality (*garbanzos*, chickpeas) of local life in Ecuador, as in the book *Parajes* (1983):

tal vez me estoy muriendo en esta ciudad de provincia
a las ocho corren las aldabas
en este cuarto
con el plato de garbanzos

Carvajal 2015, 90

These symbols of austerity and enclosure express a laconic hermeticism that is not only textual but also social. This silence of social life is expressed through a philosophical tone that essentially describes a space where almost nothing occurs. After an almost Spartan dinner, expressed in lines of varying length, we have the impression that the provincial town lacks charisma and even sense. However, the countryside acquires a significant role in the configuration of the poetic cartography that the author unfolds. The cosmopolitan poet observes the rural environment of Ecuador as a suffocating, limited, insufficient context. The portrait that the poet paints of the province is not idyllic but a sinister and sceptical one. In addition, Carvajal includes a kind of spectral journey across the field where verbs speak of breaking a limit (‘emerging’, ‘descending’): these vignettes of private life express melancholy and abandonment.

This trip includes scenery where the poetic speaker observes several elements of the Andean countryside. Somehow, the poet immerses the reader in the symbols of rural coexistence in the moors:

en las chozas de los ovejeros
allí los rostros amoratados
emergiendo de los ponchos de los sombreros

⁷⁰ In fact, Carvajal’s rejection of the idea of representation is a refusal to identify himself with the collective experience that, in the case of Ecuador, is embodied in the social literature of the 1930s. Novels like *Huasipungo* by Jorge Icaza (1934) or *Los Sangurimas* by (1934) are examples of literature of this period.

donde anida el piojo
y luego descendí vertiginosamente
entre el frailejón y las chilcas
por la maraña de arbustos espinosos
descendí por la vía de los arroyos

Carvajal 2015, 140

This is an immersion into very characteristic aspects of a traditional Andean landscape. Although Carvajal rejects the idea of the nation-state, the space of the moors allows for a labyrinthine integration of the human being into the natural environment. The solemn tone functions as a gesture of distance and as an anchor point of support so that these symbolic elements of minority and peripheral cultures do not become mere folklore⁷¹: here the concept of minor landscapes (Salerno 2019, 3) makes sense in correlation with the idea of minor literatures. In this text, *las chozas de los ovejeros* are surrounded by plants characteristic of the Andes: *frailejón*⁷² and *chilcas*.⁷³

There, people live with ‘bruised faces’, probably by the sun, dressed in ponchos and hats; the clothing and the context marks them as indigenous. Curiously, short lines (especially hendecasyllables) and the absence of commas give the poem a cinematic rhythm, like that of a man running through the moors. Esoteric intonation allows the poet to flee from the pedagogical indigenism that characterised Ecuadorian literature for much of the 20th century. In many cases, this *Indigenista* literature was Manichaean (essentially establishing a non-problematic scheme of Indians = good, white = bad) and pedagogical.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the philosophical and hermetic tone of Carvajal allows him to develop an ambiguous view, open to multiple interpretations. This semantic inertia breaks the binary pattern of inside and outside and questions the internal structure of the indigenous literature: the world is again open.

⁷¹ At present, to folklorise ‘means to remove traditional expressive culture from an original point of production and relocate it in a distance setting of consumption’ (McDowell 2010, 182).

⁷² This is a genus of perennial subshrubs in the sunflower family. The genus, which is native mainly to Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador, was first formally described in 1808.

⁷³ This is a blooming shrub native to the sage community and desert southwest of the United States and northern Mexico, as well as parts of South America. It is a large bush with sticky foliage which bears plentiful small, fuzzy, pink or red-tinged white flowers.

⁷⁴ As Jean-Marie Lemogodeuc explains, ‘*Las sociedades tradicionales con mentalidad mágica, fijas en su equilibrio y su desarrollo, se opusieron de manera sistemática a un mundo neo-colonial agitado por las mutaciones y el cuestionamiento del capitalismo. Es la naturaleza de la historia indigenista la que explica este dualismo a menudo maniqueísta, e impone a los escribas borrar las contradicciones y las tensiones del mundo indígena, ya que en toda historia indigenista se presentan los mismos elementos meta-sociales: una sociedad inca mitificada, una comunidad indígena celebrada en sus estructuras y su funcionamiento, una cosmogonía y una ecología glorificadas*’ (2006, 95).

Carvajal proposes a cross-cultural reading of social life, where urban and rural, traditional and postmodern images can coexist and influence each other in a non-traumatic way. This creates the sensation of a modern observer looking out onto a field. In that sense, we can speak of the conflictive interaction between a cosmopolitan poet faced with a traditional world:

una Conjura
empezada tiempo atrás con la fermentación del maíz
en la olla de las chichas

Carvajal 2015, 147

In this case, for example, in an act of reification of the indigenous rites, Carvajal portrays ‘the fermentation of maize’ as an act of restitution of power to conjure destiny and history from everyday tools and practices. This extract is an observation about the meaning of magic in the Andean world. In Carvajal, these gestures should be understood as a strategy of placing the life of the Andean world in dialogue with a cosmopolitan context. The apparent illegibility of certain references (*frailejón*, *chilcas*, *chichas*) creates an untranslatable landscape that seeks its difference through a subtle inventory of traditional cultural practices that outline, even against the poet’s will, an idea of an atavistic, primordial community. The use of *chilca* for production, the growth of the *frailejón* in the *páramos* or the preparation of *chicha*⁷⁵ as a ritual drink creates mental images that belong specifically to the Ecuadorian Andes. This specificity corresponds to a specific human landscape that needs to be translated by the reader. The cosmopolitan poet seeks to export these references to the Western world, thereby expanding the frontier of Ecuadorian literature, using the margin to break the margin.

Despite his cosmopolitan affiliation, the poet cannot give up the small, minor landscapes as part of an authentic psychological and spiritual experience. As D’haen illuminates, many of Carvajal’s emblematic Latin American or Caribbean works appealed

⁷⁵ In Ecuador, *chicha* is consumed mainly in the Ecuadorian highlands and Amazon region. However, it is also prepared in smaller quantities on the coast. It is the typical drink of the indigenous communities, who consume it at parties and celebrations such as those of the Mama Negra, the Carnival, the Passage of *El niño viajero* and others. It is usually drunk from plastic cups or *pilche*. The Ecuadorian *chicha* is made from the fermentation of corn, quinoa, rice, barley or flour accompanied by *panela* or common sugar. Likewise, fruits of the region such as the tree tomato, blackberry, pineapple, chonta palm, taxo and naranjilla are used as ingredients, with aromatic herbs in some cases. Generally, it is allowed to ferment for periods ranging from three to twenty days. It is also drunk by indigenous communities in the Amazon, such as the Shuar, Cofanes and Secoya, with cassava or cooked and fermented *chontas*. Sometimes, these are chewed before fermentation (Abercrombie et al., 1993, 40).

to a continental European legacy to anchor them work in world literature, while other more recent works have adopted multiple and heterogeneous legacies to hold out the possibility of adherence to world literature (2012, 22) That inclusion also involves the remote landscapes of the Andes that appear as bugs and viruses, unusual details that would be anomalous in a prototypical Western text. The images of the *chilcas* and the *frailejones* seem like landmarks of the obliteration of an authentic original community that is beyond the needs and problems of modernity and postmodernity. The poet performs an historical survey to identify the ethno-symbolic elements that give an anthropological and aesthetic singularity to his literary universe. Of course, Carvajal inhabits a middle ground that seeks to mediate between the history of the Andean world and universal history. Again, the image of the navigator appears:

¿llevé grandes piedras a Sacsayhuamán?⁷⁶
Al otro lado de la isla solitaria del pensamiento
Graba la uña: Francis Drake, pirata isabelino

Carvajal 2015, 93

As we have seen, the image of a navigator is iconic in the literary work of Carvajal. Between the stillness of the stone and the journey of the pirate Francis Drake, the poetry of Carvajal dips between what is geographically near and what is stranger. In addition to effective phonetic aspects (for example, repetition of the phoneme 's'), the semantic and lexical levels stand out. In this poem, the great themes and motifs of Western culture are mixed with very local references, defined by the historical circumstances of a small and marginal country. The reference to English navigation and its ambiguous participation in the processes of conquest and colonisation of South America seeks to establish a symbolic counterpoint that enriches the worldview that the poet reflects. The poet seems to ask himself two things: What can the story of Francis Drake mean for Sacsayhuaman? And what can Sacsayhuamán mean for Francis Drake? These are questions about a transculturation process between the Western world and the indigenous references of the past (Pre-Incan ruins). As will be demonstrated below, the poetry of Carvajal reflects a distrust of the modern world and its implications for human sensibility. In that sense, its

⁷⁶ A citadel on the northern outskirts of the city of Cusco, Peru, the historic capital of the Inca Empire. Sections were first built by the Killke culture about AD 1100; they had occupied the area since AD 900. The complex was expanded and added to by the Inca from the 13th century; they built dry stone walls constructed of huge stones. The workers carefully cut the boulders to fit them together tightly without mortar. The site is at an altitude of 3,701 m (12,142 ft). In 1983, Cusco and Saksaywaman together were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List for recognition and protection.

adherence to certain icons of the indigenous past is not only an invocation of the communal past of Latin America, but to the past of humanity in general. His adherence to the historical and cultural references of the remote past reveals an interest in being part of an authentic, dense, self-sufficient and complex world. Nicola Foote points out that this concern for granting authenticity and legitimacy to the institutions and cultural practices of this ‘new country’ called Ecuador has been a constant since colonial times.⁷⁷

This hinge between minor landscapes and an intellectual universal background is a constitutive part of Carvajal’s entire work, but this link seems to be conflictive, tense and irresolvable in the first part of his work. For example, in the following lines of the book *Parajes*, the poet seeks to reinstate the sacred character of the indigenous myths:

y en centro del valle
el Yavirac⁷⁸ prosternado ante su dios

Carvajal 2015, 136

Is this really a restoration or, at least, a claim of the sacred role of the Panecillo hill? Or is it simply an intellectual literary reference to the evocative power of a knoll in the pre-Hispanic history of Quito? It seems that both questions warrant an affirmative answer: 1) because of the degree of personal involvement and 2) because of the precision of the reference. Moreover, this conflict of cultural and historical translation, usage, appropriation, re-appropriation and self-revelation acquires more emphasis by the expressionist tone of the poems where the author is placed in a loop that is part of the rite that reformulates. He is, then, a participant ethnographer, an aesthetic researcher who delves into the indigenous myths and rites without being completely involved: there is a metaphysical, ontological, historical distance, very close to the concept of heterogeneity proposed by Cornejo Polar (2003, 14). Indigenous symbols appear as ideal elements for processing the distance between the human mind (influenced by the individualistic logic of the West) and collective experiences.

Thus, for example, in the following passage the modern individual (which could be Carvajal himself, or the poetic voice imagined for the text) is crossed by a series of transgenerational atavistic elements that seem to create an enumerative, torrential and

⁷⁷ This phenomenon acquired the characteristics of a national cultural project that even meant the ‘invention’ of a hypothetical Kingdom of Quito, whose historical existence has been widely refuted and dismissed (Foote 2010, 111).

⁷⁸ In pre-Hispanic Ecuador, the Yavirac was a centre of worship to the Sun god. The Spaniards renamed it as Panecillo, according to the basic shape of the mountain where the old temple was.

palingenetic experience showing the paradoxical relationship between contemporary man and the historical ghosts—perhaps obliterated—of a collective past in which the poet is momentarily placed at the centre of a telluric moment. We face the paradox of a poet who seeks not to be subjected to the rigid values of collective myths, but who needs them in order to explain a cosmic, political, ethical and sensitive experience:

y desciende mi sangre por generaciones de ceramistas
de los agricultores del maíz y de la papa
comedores de cuy benévolos mascadores de coca
a torrentes desciende la sangre como agua indeleble

Carvajal 2015, 157

The poetic speaker seeks to restore a lineage, a genealogy that, through history, builds his personal identity: ‘generations of potters’, ‘maize and potato farmers’, ‘guinea pig eaters’, ‘benevolent coca masters’. These forms of life are connected in the poet’s blood like indelible water. The poet’s proposal is to metabolise collective myths and transform them into personal myths. The result is reinventions of such rituals that are situated between the individual and the collective, among an ethno-symbolic collective reinvention, a ‘worldling’ method and a radically subjective proposal.

In the same book, these historical genealogies have a counterpart in an inventory of orographic landmarks that seek to create a telluric atmosphere and, at the same time, a record of the Andean landscapes of Ecuador. Again, the poet suppresses the punctuation to generate a more unstable, accelerated and flexible reading rhythm:

las cenizas de cien épocas
el Pichincha abriendo sus gargantas
y alrededor los mantos encanecidos en la inmovilidad
Cayambe Antisana Sincholagua Ilinizas
y el Cotopaxi la pirámide
que parecía esperar por el geómetra.

Carvajal 2015, 136

References to the mountains of the northern highlands of Ecuador—many of them active volcanoes—seek to become elements of a personal inventory. Here, for example, metaphorical procedures (for example, *los mantos encanecidos en la inmovilidad* to talk about the snow) are combined with visual poetry, perhaps influenced by Stéphane Mallarmé or Octavio Paz. The white spaces between the words create the optical illusion that the reader is looking at singular landmarks. Thus, both the historical past and the

mountains are elements that the poet tries to congregate within a personal symbolic map that, in turn, reflects collective experiences in the Ecuadorian Andes. In spite of this, the reluctant nationalist poet has created a palimpsest where Andean social geography and life are portrayed as universal symbols. These inscriptions are doubly sceptical because there is no will to become a nationalist poet nor to use a poem as a catalogue of exotic references. Ignacio López-Calvo claims that this scepticism can be translated as ‘worldliness’, because in his perspective the idea that literature can be considered part of world literature just because it circulates outside its production context is a purely mercantile conception. López-Calvo believes, rather, that world literature should be distinguished by its ideological and formal structure (2018, 15). In a similar vein, Carvajal seeks to show that these mountains are not so different from those found in metropolitan literature: he aims to demonstrate that the exceptionality of a culture is, in fact, a minor difference compared to the aspects that all human beings have in common. To this we can add that the mountains in the pre-Hispanic Andean cosmovision⁷⁹ had a sacred character and, almost always, were part of a polytheistic cult. Carvajal tries to include these references in the archive of Western literature and in a reflection on the modern individual.

In the book *Los Amantes de Sumpa* (1983), this proposal can be seen more clearly. This long poem is a reconstruction of an archaeological discovery, where two lovers are found in an embrace within a hole. This ‘tomb’ was found in the Santa Elena Peninsula, in 1964, where the first archaeological research into the pre-ceramic settlement of Las Vegas was being conducted. Archaeologists found about 200 skeletons, whose brittle condition suggests that they had been buried about 7000 years. But who were the lovers? The remains were of a man and a woman who died at the ages of 20 and 25 years old, respectively. They were buried with the man’s right hand on the waist of his partner, and the woman in a flexed position with one arm over his head. This burial was the motivation for this text about love and its relationship to time. Some clues help contextualise this

⁷⁹ In all the original American conceptions, but especially in the Andean, light and dark, day and night, the sky and the underworld, the feminine and the male are equally respected. The entire world, both natural and social, is conceived and organised following the patterns of division into halves, rooms and their successive subdivisions. According to this conception, nothing is born as a unique being nor is it isolated in the world. All that exists, whether it is a real or conceptual object, necessarily has its pair, its complementary opposite (Llamazares 2011, 463). This holistic perspective of the complementary opposites conflicts with the rationalist perspectives that characterise Western thought, particularly because it must exclude in order to define and organise any reality (and any society). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that, in historical terms, the Inca cosmovision arrived in the current land of Ecuador at a relatively late period and that, despite numerous links and similarities, maintained cultural and linguistic differences from pre-Incan ‘Ecuadorian’ cultures.

text. In the prologue to the book, the poet himself includes a reference to focus the interest of the reader on certain aspects of the text:

La edad de los restos está calculada en unos diez mil años. Al enterrarlos,
colocaron sobre los cadáveres seis piedras, quizás con el propósito de protegerlos
de los espíritus malignos

Carvajal 2015, 173

The poem combines long and short lines, following a regular and symmetrical structure. This structure results in a dry and solemn poetic style, very appropriate for expressing such philosophical questions about the passage of time and imminent death.

This metrical and grammatical pattern evidences the poet's preference for a difficult semantic construction over complex syntax; while its syntax is not simple, it is not deliberately opaque. In fact, the syntactic construction in this poem is relatively simple. Despite the obscurity of some symbolic features, the references to the pre-Hispanic past of this ossuary are very concrete, and they are linked with a historical notion of the human condition that is, at the same time, a line between the cosmic and sociological perspectives with an intimate view into the survival of something through the passage of time:

diez mil años
el abrazo defiende
el agónico gesto

Carvajal 2001, 77

Throughout this poem, the meditation on time does not exhibit nostalgia or mourning but instead acceptance and serenity, even coldness. Time is a constant concern in Carvajal's poetry, exposed fundamentally in abstract terms: again semantic inertia is very important in creating texts where emotion does not betray what images and ideas are capable of expressing. In addition, the anonymity of the lovers creates the impression that the characters are transcendental (Barreto 2003, 127), and their archetypal character expresses a sense of timelessness or, more accurately, a mythological and religious time that interplays with the idea of eternity. Nonetheless, there are sometimes very concrete images that can dialogue with an ethno-symbolic perspective.

The *ocarina*, for example, is a wind instrument of the ancestral past that can be played in ritualistic circumstances:

quedan los restos de la fatiga humana
huesos arcilla máquinas ocarina
tránsito del hombre por los lechos
que el Tiempo desnuda

Carvajal 2001, 79

As in *Parajes*, Carvajal abolishes punctuation as a mechanism to accelerate reading and to give fluency to the poem. This text, composed in seventeen stanzas, is compact and fairly abstract. Abstract language has two biases when is used in poetry: its apparent depth and its cosmopolitan appearance. In a country where everything seems to be a historical contingency and an expression of chaos, Carvajal's writing seems to speak of a semi-mythical past that becomes a perpetual present, that is, something similar to infinity. Indeed, with few specific references (allusions to the Andean world and Ecuador), the notions of time and space lose their link with the history and geography of a specific place. Both appear as open, indeterminate, ambiguous concepts and, for that reason, more flexible and hospitable.

Despite, the main contextual ethno-symbolic anecdote (the indigenous archaeological discovery), Carvajal avoids linking the ancestral references with the Ecuadorian nation-state. In this way, the poet includes remote references but distrusts the idea of Ecuador as a country. He validates the authenticity of the original tomb and its meaning after the passage of time, but rejects the political use of these archaeological finds to make sense of abstract entities such as the nation-state. In connection with this, Carvajal has said that in conventional nationalist poetry, '*se narra la sustancia autóctona de la nacionalidad, elaborada por la ideología del estado nacional que se va tornando dominante de modo paulatino*' (2005: 22). In that sense, his style, which subjectivises the ancestral rites and excludes the official narratives of the nation-state, is congruent with a concern about the artistic universality (or worldliness) of the poem he is trying to create. The poet tries to adapt rather precarious symbolic capital and minor references to Ecuadorian landscapes to his broad-minded and cosmopolitan perspective.

In this adaptation, in this exercise of linguistic, anthropological and aesthetic transculturation, the defeat of any one-dimensional perspective for understanding the reality of the world is evident. Through that process, Carvajal's scepticism seems to question everything, especially the phenomena that depend on power. In a certain sense, his adherence to an essential philosophical problem (time) underlines his rejection of the ideological aspects of contingency.

In fact, the major part of the poem develops a solid structure of concepts about transcendence in a metaphysical scenario:

pacientes
entre los escombros de esas órbitas
y de las bocas
 el gusano y las lluvias
despojaron la piel
 desnudaron al hueso
 Carvajal 2001, 78

What is especially interesting about this poem is that the lexical items can be tightly organised in a main semantic set of three abstract concepts: bones, body and time. Despite the theoretically infinite possibilities of lexical choice, the poem circulates around these three notions, showing the imminent transformation from a body to a pile of bones, following the march of time. The absence of adjectives throughout the poem reinforces its austere character, its expressive self-contention and its poetic decorum. It is difficult to distinguish precisely the ideological and philosophical notions behind this circle. However, it describes a combination of an existential notion of life and death as something irreversible and an ancestral and indigenous conception of returning to the earth as part of the sacredness of the rooted life. Again, despite his cosmopolitan outlook, Carvajal clearly combines an ethno-symbolic background and a traditionally Western philosophical persona. The poet's intention is to create a homogeneous poetic diction where philosophical vocabulary can craft a unified vision of the Sump'a's lovers and, in a broader sense, of humankind.

Nature, cosmopolitan landscapes and high-modernity

After a period of silence and the publication of *En los labios, la celada* in 1996, Carvajal went in a different direction with his poetry, insisting on a hispanophile system of stylistic references and resources. In this latest phase, Carvajal has written about two basic central interests, memory and natural landscapes. He abandoned the questioning and queries of syntactic structures and visual movements, instead attempting to construct neat and figurative visual vignettes, even avoiding complex metaphors and syntactic deviations. The result is a convincing fresco of landscapes that seem suspended in time. For example, *Inventando a Lennon* (1997) is a book that tries to invent a biography of a human being in the context of high modernity, fusing autobiography and mass culture

spectra. He decided to focus this work on poetic images, creating an allegorical, elegant and cinematic panorama of our time. The poet of *Del Avatar* here uses a clear syntax in an attempt to create a balance between clear exposure and complex phenomena. Carvajal explained,

Cuando comencé a escribir *Inventando a Lennon* vivía en México, y la complejidad, los laberintos de esa ciudad, su magia, se combinaron con la experiencia del video-clip. Traté de que el libro fuese una especie de sucesión de ‘video-clips’ verbales, a la vez que reprodujese las múltiples voces de trenes, calles y mercados que podía oír o las imágenes que podía ver a la salida de un estadio. ¿Cuántos jóvenes perciben hoy de manera distinta un video-clip?

Carvajal, 2012

It is evident that there is a difference between ‘zapping’ as a perceptual phenomenon and ‘zapping’ as a grammatical construction in a poetic text. The process requires an adaptation from psychological experience to linguistic structure. In the case of Carvajal’s book, the poetic result does not exactly replicate the velocity of a video-clip, but it effectively recreates a cinematic experience, like a silent movie showing contemporary images on medium speed. In reality, the psychological experience of being confronted with the technologies and dynamics of high modernity does not have a specific correlate in language, but poets have used devices such as the suppression of punctuation, syntactic distortions, enumerations and heterogeneity of lexicon. Carvajal certainly uses these devices, but in moderation, attempting to offer a clear aesthetic experience.

An example of this is in the poem ‘*Final*’. The pace of alienating cities is revealed in images where skyscrapers and cornices appear:

Habitamos en Babel. Circulamos sus rincones, sus trampas, sus máquinas.
Moradores de las torres, equilibristas al filo del andamio, vagamos por colonias
laberínticas

Carvajal 2015, 323

These are construction techniques that, in many ways, reveal the features of postindustrial cities. The concept of labyrinth leads us to consider the poet’s sceptical view of capitalist modernity and its social dynamics. The main idea behind these images expresses that the contemporary human being is an tightrope walker who wanders in a contemporary Babel.

In any megalopolis like Mexico City, many languages and dialects are spoken and, above all, different cultural backgrounds are in contact, about which Carvajal states, ‘*cambiamos de creencias, dejamos atrás convicciones que creíamos arraigadas muy hondo en nuestro ser. Más bien, lo característico de nuestra época es que somos seres desarraigados, y eso me parece maravilloso*’ (2012). However, this argument must be nuanced. It seems that the poet subscribes to the mobility of political and cultural identities of this time, but not necessarily their technological and emotional consequences. Here there is a contradiction in the meaning of high modernity, because his poetry is crossed by multiple cultural references (with a certain emphasis on the Andean world): it is impossible to write without one—or many—historical, anthropological or artistic anchors. In fact, Carvajal relies on the meaning of ancient history, nature and the imagination of many cultures and artistic traditions, as long as they have a meaning for the human being who writes. As in other quoted extracts, this cosmopolitan vocation is seen in images where the protagonist is a navigator who appears as the symbol of a man without borders. For example, in the poem ‘*¡Tierra!*’:

Un nao de marineros que perdieron la razón se adentra en la tormenta. Danzan en cubierta bajo la lluvia, mientras se bate el casco. Quizás cruzan el mar de los Sargazos, quizás descienden por los rápidos torrentes hacia el gran río
Carvajal 2001, 129

The word *quizás* adds an ingredient of uncertainty to the scenery that the poet constructs, revealing the uprooting that is perceived as a space for the reader to determine the degree of truth in what is said.

Although nature imposes its meteorological designs, this passage returns to the sea as the symbol of dissolution of the *logos*, as an open border where hospitality is finally possible. Notably, the ship may be taken as a reference to some kind of retro-technoscape embedded in imagery of nature, particularly of water (*t tormenta, lluvia, mar, ríos*) that express uncertainty as an unstable landscape. Importantly, throughout all his poetic writing Carvajal has given primary significance to natural features rather than artificial ones: trees, flowers, animals and sensitive aspects of the human being appear insistently throughout his work. The connection between this concept of nature and the flux of information and technology in high modernity is clearly contradictory, but Carvajal’s outlook relates both because, for him, the imposed map that represents high modernity is

a mobile and contingent scenario, but the main actors are the natural, mythical and historical elements.

In that sense, in spite of his constant cosmopolitan gestures, Carvajal insists on ancestral landscapes. Obviously, this writing seeks to inscribe the Andean references within the map of myths and universal references. In the poem '*Ceremonia ritual*', he writes:

Agazapado entre la maleza, en las proximidades del río, el Viejo chamán⁸⁰ sopla
Tabaco y aguardiente alcanforado sobre los cuerpos

Carvajal 2015, 314

As in a supermarket, a computer archive or a physical library, Carvajal seeks to include Ecuadorian and, specifically, Andean rituals within the map of global literature. As noted above, the anxiety of universality forces a moderation in the various references and styles that the poet uses. In his texts of this period, a philosophical intonation lends seriousness to the Andean world conventionally seen as a chaotic and carnival zone. Thus, Carvajal faces a dilemma, to simplify the rhetorical procedures of his poetry to 'fit' into existing literary maps, or to radicalise the conflicts of his aesthetic proposal, with the obvious risk of being marginalised or not being adequately understood. Ultimately, Carvajal deploys an intermediate, moderate, social-democratic path that seeks to break from the exoticising lens of Western literary maps that rationally enclose and conceptually reduce some small literatures. To some extent, this attitude can be understood as nostalgia for an intellectual and editorial centrality to which Ecuadorian society never belonged, but also as an appeal to dialogue.

Here the central problem of Carvajal's poetry appears: identity as a space that must be open to dialogue and transformation, whose components must be assumed and assimilated freely. Likewise, its atavistic elements—national identity, local customs, maternal dialect—must be reinterpreted from a humanistic, integrative perspective. In that sense, a writer without roots could be part of the world in a flexible and fluid but, at the same time, free way (and thus, nothing human is out of his or her interest). This

⁸⁰ The shaman is a person who practices the rituals of shamanism in ancestral cultures. In shamanism, the shaman has the ability to modify reality or the collective perception of it according to the people's religion and respond to a kind of causal logic. This type of person has been present mainly in hunting and gathering societies in Asia, Africa, America and Oceania as well as in prehistoric cultures of Europe. In some cultures, it is also believed that the shaman can indicate where the hunting is and even alter climatic factors. The term comes from the noun *shaman* in Tungu (Siberia), in turn derived from the verb *shahia*, to know.

concern with the tension between nature and modernity is even clearer in Carvajal's next book, *La ofrenda del cerezo* (1997), which is an intimate and mnemonic version of *Inventando a Lennon*. With esoteric intentions, Carvajal builds enigmatic landscapes, taking into consideration the relationships between places and nature, and how these links express fundamental aspects about the human being. As in the poem 'La ofrenda del cerezo', which is part of the homonymous book, analysed previously in Chapter 2, there is a subtle dialogue between a cosmopolitan outlook and the construction, configuration and invention of the inner life. In that sense, it is difficult to determine whether the images of the Andean world that appear in that poem (and throughout Carvajal's work in general) have been reluctantly chosen or accepted as a geographical and cultural condemnation. The images appear mostly likely as a middle ground, reshaping, recreating the traditional landscapes. For example, in the poem 'Altura', he states,

Quito se enfunda
en su sábana gris,
desaparece

Carvajal 2015, 345

In these brief lines, Quito appears registered as a city of the moors, wrapped in clouds. The idea of using these references in a poem is eminently political, because its place in the history of western literature is non-existent. However, it is also an exercise of emotional and imaginative freedom to give meaning to the Andean city as a living space. Through this gesture, Carvajal includes an Ecuadorian city on the map of Latin American poetry, but he also exercises his imagination in order to transfigure the city of Quito. Of course, he is not the first to do so. Nonetheless, if we think that Carvajal is an author of cosmopolitan pursuits, to include the capital of Ecuador as poetic seems slightly paradoxical. In reality, Carvajal's understanding of cosmopolitanism must be understood as close to the notion of worldism, where minor landscapes cease to be minor through geographical relativism against the backdrop of deep humanism. In fact, as mentioned above the poet only reluctantly places the symbolic heritage of Ecuador into a hypothetical cosmopolitan context, where it is read not as an exotic souvenir but as a self-sufficient poem in Western aesthetic terms. In fact, this movement to ignore, naively or not, political, economic and cultural boundaries reveals a utopian exercise. Here is the strongest relationship between Carvajal's poetry and the concept of minor literatures,

even if not stated explicitly: the deterritorialisation of identity as a space to make sense of minor landscapes, of excluded traditional sensibilities.

For example, in the poem ‘*Montecristi*’ of *La ofrenda del cerezo*, Carvajal writes, ‘*Venidos al amanecer los ceibos / son cómicos abrazos y los nidos / de pájaros que ponen a volar / en vez de nubes sobre Montecristi*’ (2015, 347). These images are relatively simple, with a slight surrealism where they create tension against the logic of physics and biology: *ceibos* as hugs, nests as clouds. There is not too much mystery in these metaphors. However, to the attentive reader, the *ceibos* that are characteristic of the desert coast of Ecuador appear as symbols of a specific geography.⁸¹ These trees not only imply a natural experience but also the symbolic relationship that humans have established with the natural environment. The place name Montecristi settles the text in a specific region on the coast of Manabí, whose history has complex meanings for the Ecuadorian state.⁸² In several ways, Carvajal cannot escape from Ecuador as a system of references against which he maintains a radical scepticism, but from whose minor landscapes he cannot detach himself. This book manages to draw a constellation of concrete landscapes that seeks to deterritorialise the poem and turn it into a purely aesthetic experience. Strictly speaking, this is impossible, but Carvajal constantly attempts to destabilise the centre-periphery relationship. For example, Carvajal adds references to First World areas. For example, in the poem ‘*Colorado*’ he writes:

Abril, pero aún la nieve cubre la pradera
Y el automóvil se desliza sinuoso
sobre mojado pavimento,
yendo hacia el norte.

Descienden los bosques
Por las blancas montañas del poniente

Carvajal 2015, 350

⁸¹ The *ceibo* is a typical tree of the tropical dry forest, which in Ecuador is distributed mainly between Manabí, Santa Elena, Guayas, El Oro and Loja. This tree has greater presence in the Machalilla National Park and Montecristi Hill; Gulf of Guayaquil, Puná Island, Cerro Blanco and the Manglares-Churute Ecological Reserve, Guayas; and in the southwest of the provinces of Loja and El Oro, on the border with Peru. Within the dry forest, this giant grows to keep the soil fixed with its enormous and strong planar roots, the main ones protruding from the ground. Meanwhile, if it is close to water sources, it helps to maintain and regulate the hydrological cycle, because by storing liquid in its trunk and filtering it to the ground during the dry season, it keeps the soil active.

⁸² Montecristi is located in the centre of the coastal region of Ecuador, on the slopes of the homonymous hill, at an altitude of 600 meters above sea level and with a dry, tropical climate and average temperature of 25° C. It is called ‘Cradle of Alfaro’ because it was here that Eloy Alfaro was born on June 25, 1842. Alfaro was the leader who initiated and consolidated the liberal revolution of Ecuador. In the 2010 census, Montecristi had a population of 46,312, making it the 28th most populous city in the country. It also hosted the constituent assembly that shaped the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008, led by Rafael Correa.

In this case, the position of the poetic speaker is observational and maintains a distance between the landscape and the poetic persona's experience. The car in the poem is simultaneously insignificant and paradoxically powerful. It is the sole modern element in the middle of a natural background, an exercise in contrast. In this text, again, Carvajal maintains a cosmopolitan discourse through a timeless perspective. The car is a symbol of mobility in the 20th century and of the industrialisation of North America, which contrasts with snowy land and trees. In this sense, the poet extends the perimeter of the natural and ancestral landscapes to a wide scope, including the coast of Ecuador, in a constellation of landscapes that encompass the wintery scene of Colorado in the United States. On this topic Carvajal has said,

No se puede ser hombre planetario⁸³—que no significa lo mismo que cosmopolita—sin contar con una raíz, una particularidad cultural, social, histórica
Carvajal 2005, 38

Here, Carvajal certainly identifies the planetary man with the idea of rooted cosmopolitanism (Cohen) and not with radical forms of cosmopolitanism (Beck). Perhaps the eminent risk of seeing absolute and radical forms of deterritorialisation and uprooting as political utopias lies in the argument by Malini Johan Schueller, who points out that a cosmopolitan theory and world system, arising from global theories, can operate as colonising forces (2009, 236). In that same sense, Emily Apter indicates that a literary one-worldism (a particular vision of cosmopolitanism) can become a set of machinery to erase unevenness and absorb difference into a global monoculture (2006, 366). In his texts, Carvajal evidences a metaphysical impossibility of a complete break with the references imposed by chance of birth. While there is in these texts a relativisation of the symbols and emblems of Ecuadorian culture, the poet includes national landscapes in a constellation of places whose political and aesthetic significance in the framework of globalisation he can only imagine.

In Carvajal's poems, the mythological perspective on ancestral rites, literary references or mythological notes, seeks to be integrated into a 'worldlist' or cosmopolitan

⁸³ The idea of the planetary man comes from the homonymous book (*Hombre planetario*, 1957) written by the poet and diplomat Jorge Carrera Andrade. The ideological premise underlying the texts of this book is that an Ecuadorian can be a legitimate traveler across the political borders of the world. The distinction from the concept of cosmopolitanism is that this is a much more intellectual concept, starting with the idea of having a common literary language or, at least, the possibility of translation.

vision, free of contingent references. The impossibility of integrating these systems of references and approaches to life—due to their anthropological and political incompatibility—seems to come from a structural heterogeneity that is completely possible only through imagination. In these texts, the imagination ultimately works as a hospitable dwelling, a personal place that is non-transferrable to the social world.⁸⁴ Imagination is the core of Carvajal's political utopias. Political reality becomes an obstacle that the poet transfigures from a perspective worldlist. Although the poet frequently rejects direct references to the social world, the intrusion of spurious material and local features appears as traces of a marginal experience: it is a reluctant minor poetry. Carvajal's writing refers to natural features that are common to almost every known culture (woods, mountains), but the necessity for an anchor—or multiple anchors—to draw a self-sufficient geography consistent with the aesthetic project reveals a poetry that, with reluctance, needs Ecuador, its places and problems.

There is a curious paradox about Carvajal. In a conservative world, a minimal style and regular syntax could be a good strategy for enacting a democratic usage of poetic language, but the resultant poem might be quite conservative, harmless. The integration of various social and cultural realities of the world is subtle, particularly in the poet's later writings, but it also reveals the limits of the author's individual experience. In this sense, although the syntax and thematic neutrality of the latest poems seek to domesticate and standardise the experiences of a marginal and peripheral Third World country, the constellation of minor landscapes that Carvajal exposes refers to the tensions and problems of Ecuadorian reality.

From the neighbourhood to the imaginary travels

Not everything in Carvajal refers to landscape constellations where elements of nature or historical and artistic references are protagonists. Despite its marginality in relation to other spheres of his poetry, the neighbourhood has a subtle but meaningful place in his work. Reflections and images of the districts of Quito appear in his first published book *Del avatar*, if only briefly. In the poem '*No es sordo el mar, la erudición engaña*', a quote by Luis de Góngora y Argote⁸⁵, the poet writes,

⁸⁴ For other poets (like Eduardo Milán), this interchange is absolutely necessary to include other voices outside the literary text.

⁸⁵ Luis de Góngora y Argote (born Luis de Argote y Góngora) was a Spanish Baroque lyric poet. Góngora and Francisco de Quevedo are widely considered the most prominent Spanish poets of all time. His style is characterized by what was called culteranismo, also known as Gongorismo.

murmillos
de una mujer a mi costado
en un cuartito azul
en el barrio Aguarico

Carvajal 2015, 94

The excerpt portrays the frugality of a humble bedroom in the historic centre of Quito where the poet shares a bed with an anonymous woman. The diminutive expressed through the suffix *-ito* is characteristic of the Andean Ecuadorian when he speaks of something small and insignificant (or when he expects his interlocutor to perceive the object in that way). The usage of blue colour contrasts with the narrative tone of the rest of the extract, creating a heavenly atmosphere in a prosaic context.

The Aguarico neighbourhood establishes a sentimental topology from which the poet evokes a feeling of nostalgia. The city changes, and the poem is a testimony to that transformation. Similarly, like photographs in sepia, in the poem '*Pasión del actor Barahona*' from *La ofrenda del cerezo* he writes,

Hacia arriba el actor, chapoteando en los charcos
que ha dejado el aguacero en las calles
empedradas que suben a San Juan

Carvajal 2007, 376

In this poem, a reflection on the San Juan neighbourhood is illustrated by a character who was part of the cultural life of Quito. The poem refers to the actor Marco Barahona, who lived frugally in that central neighbourhood. The poetic character climbs the main slope of the neighbourhood with difficulty in the scenery of an eminently rainy city. From there, the poet establishes an idea about poverty in the slums of Quito and the fiction of the artistic world in peripheral countries. In fact, the poet insists on showing that frugality: '*trepa el actor a su cueva en San Juan. / Ahí le espera el camastro, el mendrugo*' (2007, 376). The neighbourhood of San Juan is located on the outskirts of the historical centre of Quito, just where the colonial city becomes the uptown. The loneliness of a poor artist acquires the dimension of an ascetic figure. This urban poverty, lived with elegance, is typical of the image of *el chulla quiteño*, an archetype of traditional Quito.

The neighbourhood concept appears in Carvajal in other more intimate ways, without personifications. For example, in the poem '*Reconstrucción*', he writes,

Militaremos hacia abajo,
hacia el parque de El Ejido,
por sobre los tejados

Carvajal 2015, 379

The poet reconstructs a personal map of Quito where memory configures the limits of a subjective city. El Ejido Park,⁸⁶ located on the border between the historic centre and the banking north, is a landmark in the inventory of its traditional places. A different image depicts the penitentiary (now abandoned) towards the west of the city centre:

vamos a las canteras sobre el Penal
y la casa se llena de molones

Carvajal 2015, 379

Strictly speaking, this poem discusses the refurbishment of a house for which improvements are required. The poet refers to a stone quarry located behind the García Moreno Prison.⁸⁷ Here, the social dynamics of a family in the 1950s and 1960s are expressed through an objectivist proposal, without emotional or linguistic excesses. In this way, the poet avoids corny evocation and the text acquires, rather, the characteristics of a photographic record. It can be concluded that this disassociation is part of a strategy of avoiding any commitment to the conceptual limits of a social and cultural background. As in many moments of Carvajal's poetry, these images seek to translate above all an individual and cosmopolitan experience, beyond any collective implications. They pretend to be worldlist texts insofar as the emotional and contingent features of social life are scarcely present in them. Despite the scarcity of specific (always linguistic) details of social life, some meaningful urban landmarks are present.

⁸⁶ On January 25, 1535, a few weeks after the Spanish foundation of Quito, the Cabildo pointed to the boundaries of the so-called Ejidos del Rey, including the Ejido Norte or Ejido de Añaquito, which as public property would be used to graze horses and cattle during the next four centuries. At the beginning of the 20th century, an important historical event occurred within the Ejido Norte, when on January 28, 1912 the so-called Hoguera bárbara took place in which an angry crowd burned the inert bodies of the President Eloy Alfaro and three of his followers after having dragged them through the streets from the García Moreno prison. By 1914 the so-called Larrea Citadel had already been consolidated on the western side of the Ejido, a neighbourhood full of stately mansions with historicist fashion styles at the beginning of the 20th century, while by the 1920s the north began to configure the wealthy neighbourhood of La Mariscal, in which the palaces of Quito's 'aristocracy' were surrounded for the first time by large gardens on four sides (Peralta and Moya Tasquer 2007, 330–331).

⁸⁷ The former García Moreno Prison was an Ecuadorian panoptic jail, currently a museum, built during the government of Gabriel García Moreno and designed by Danish architect Thomas Reed. It was inaugurated in June 1875 as the National Penitentiary and closed on April 30, 2014, replaced by the Latacunga Prison. It reopened as a museum on December 19, 2014 (Larco Chacón 2011, 8–25).

This prudent distance from urban dynamic, which also implies a distance from colloquialism, becomes a radical rejection when considering concepts such as homeland, state or nation. The poet explicitly rejects it throughout his work and explicitly in his last published book, *La casa del furor* (2004). It would seem that, in poet's perspective, a sort of metaphysical condemnation or ironic randomness was against an encounter between the poet and his hypothetical country:

Tiempo y espacio urdidos
para que yo no arribe
jamás hasta mi patria

Carvajal 2015, 421

The homeland to which the poet refers is not necessarily Ecuador but a utopian homeland. These abstract and brief lines formulate the homeland as an impossibility or as an imaginative construction. This impossibility is, in some ways, necessary for building or conceptualising an unrestricted cosmopolitanism. For Carvajal, the geographically defined and legally limited territory of a nation-state is essentially antipoetic, but above all it fixes an identity that is much more potent if it is unstable, deterritorialised, nomadic.

It is difficult to determine to what extent instability and uncertainty characterise the literature of small countries. What is clear is that the poetry of Carvajal seeks to abstain from any positive reference to the idea of Ecuador because it would weaken the open and cosmopolitan identity that the poet intends to sustain. However, Carvajal's rejection of the idea of country does not mean that he is not interested in the state and globalisation as human phenomena, but that he does not identify with the political or even cultural dynamics that support these institutions. For example, his poems also include deep reflections on the use of military technology in wars. In that context, a homeland is assumed as an instrument of collective vanity and as an artifice that is ultimately against human life:

¿Adónde va esa columna de aviones tan temprano?
¿qué propósito arrastran por las vías polvorientas
esos tanques con su danza de muerte?

vanidad es la Gloria y vanidad es la patria
y la causa que hoy defienden
podría horrorizarte en poco tiempo

Carvajal 2015, 449

As a testament to both the cosmopolitan and the domestic atavistic writer, this poem proposes the nation-state as an essentially violent project, as an essentially counterproductive, gregarious and artificial construction. The lexicon that the poet employs conceives nation-states as institutions that find their meaning in the annihilation of the other, of the foreigner.

Although Carvajal assigns a certain importance to the intersections and interactions between the affective, the social and the commemorative, collective life seems to be a vitiated space for poetic creation, essentially because it is based on the creation of institutions and abstract social paradigms that reduce the possibility of an authentic imaginative expression. At the end of his work, the poet finds the main meaning of his poetry in the interaction between nature and human beings. This approach presupposes that the poet ultimately considers that social and historical aspects are secondary, and he directs his attention to nature as transcendental, pure and innocuous:

Nada hay que valga tanto
como este rincón
que ahora es mar ilimitado
y luego un bosque que se yergue
con sus olores vírgenes y salvajes

ninguna patria hay más allá

el cielo
y los valles
el manantial
y el páramo

Carvajal 2015, 450

The images of nature imply a turn towards a transcendence that seeks to surpass not only the limits of the country, but of humanity itself. That gesture is not strictly cosmopolitan; it also has primitivist, deep-rooted and essentialist implications. It is related to certain mystical ideas that, curiously, could be related even to pre-Hispanic animistic forms. Through this vignette, the poet rejects or denies the importance of the technological evidence of capitalism, but also denies any ecological footprints: it is an idealisation, an emotive exercise of the imagination, and also a utopian form of aesthetic and political freedom. Paradoxically, the Andean moor appears again, certainly idealised, but also as

a clear statement that the poet has not been able to avoid certain delimitations that geography imposes on his work.

In these later texts, the country (Ecuador or any other) appears as a product of the society and, in that sense, is a mobile, flexible and labile construction, susceptible to multiple forms of deterritorialisation and transfiguration. For example, in the poem 'Memories' from *Inventando a Lennon*, the poet lists a series of events that look like a 'zapping' performed with a TV remote control. It is a chain of images where nation-states or other geographic segments can be linked through a sequential image (an expression of mediascapes) that speaks of different countries that, strictly speaking, are primarily connected by the circumstances of war. In a way, this text shows the banalisation of places, but also of death:

¿Cuántas recuerdas? Reportajes en la pantalla:
viste caer miles en Argelia, Corea, Vietnam,
en África, en América, en el Pérsico, en Sarajevo.
Y llegó el día en que ya no te sorprendió
la contabilidad de los cadáveres... ¿Hubo
cedro en el Líbano, ébano en Ruanda, azafrán en Irán?,
te preguntó entonces la muchachita tonta.

Carvajal 2015, 302

The 'silly girl' is the voice of those who are unable to understand the violent changes imposed by capitalist modernity and warlike conflicts. Somehow these informative images (*reportajes en la pantalla*) contrast radically with the images of cedars and saffrons. In this passage, Carvajal shows that a concept of the world is in ruins, but if we follow his concerns in other texts, this historical world is not too important: nature, ancient wisdom and imagination are above any casual circumstance.

One of the main concerns in Carvajal's work is to avoid the impositions of political geography. In his final poems, the most radical strategy the poet uses to avert the determinations of the landscape is an imaginary geography where the notion of nation-state seems outward, anecdotal. The imagination works with remote historical issues that are reinvented in the text. An example is the following extract of the poem '*In partibus infidelium*'⁸⁸ from the book *Del Avatar*:

⁸⁸ *In partibus infidelium* is a Latin expression that means 'in lands of infidels'.

Las negras naves abandonan la bahía
 las bodegas repletas del botín
 disputan en los puentes las esclavas
 arde la ciudad

los capitanes
 atrás

Carvajal 2015, 61

‘The slaves’ or ‘the captains’ are part of a spectral construction that happens in a geography that seems to avoid any specific location. Of course, this is not the exclusive property of Carvajal’s writing, but in his case the explanation is also related to an interest in creating timeless poetry, free of any temporal implications. Geography appears as an invention that stuns: *‘aunque acabé por encegüecer / confrontando los mapas / descifrando los códigos’* (Carvajal 2015, 62). In that sense, geography appears more real if the imagination of the poet intervenes:

¿Volveré con los míos? ¿Vivirán para entonces? ¿Encontraré mi hogar? ¿Habré permanecido siquiera semejante a aquel que fuera a la hora de partir? ¿Tendré los mismos sentimientos? ¿Seré reconocido por los míos?

Carvajal 2015, 73

The country and the birth house appear as places in constant change. Thus, for Carvajal, it is impossible to cling to them as ontological anchors or markers of identity. It is a profoundly philosophical question that ultimately includes a reflection on the peremptory sense of the country for a radically individual vision. In that sense, the country and the individual move in opposite and perhaps antagonistic directions.

The landscapes that Carvajal builds are created with remote and prestigious—emphasising distance and hermetic symbolism—geographies. The geography of national borders appears in many passages as an impossibility, as nonsense. That nonsense is an ideal method for conveying the frustration of living in a country where any cosmopolitanism seems provincial. In a way, a belated cosmopolitanism is a form of provincialism because any avant-garde debate and movement always arrives late. Cosmopolitanism begins from the premise that cultural exchange happens in common, but the political and cultural specificities of each country alter that possibility. The relationship between Carvajal’s last poetry and the concept of minor poetry occurs when local references are inexorably filtered in a text that is ideologically sceptical of what they

mean for Ecuadorian society. For example, in section VII of the poem ‘Explorations’ in *Del Avatar*:

Por estas tierras
andaba Diego de Almagro⁸⁹
plantando sus emblemas
borroneando planos
inventando ciudades de niebla
(pero en fin ciudades).

Carvajal 1998, 82

Cities are drawn in a spectral way as a ludic exercise that goes beyond any doubt about society: the same reality appears fragmentarily. These fog cities, founded by remote conquerors like Diego de Almagro, appear as unreal creations—which is not the same as claiming that they are false. Their truth lies in the way they affect the consciousness of human beings.

Actual travels also seem to matter less than the mental travel that can happen around the corner. Chance and contingency better explain the meaning of any trip. Thus, the poem ‘*Puerto*’ in *Inventando a Lennon* underlines the peremptory nature of any decision:

no voy para Ítaca, ni a hacer las Américas.
Mi puerto de embarque está al cruzar la esquina

Carvajal 2015, 293

Odysseus’s homeward journey to the island of Ithaka, which forms the plot of Homer’s *Odyssey*, is compared here to a trip to buy something in the supermarket. Something similar can be said of the transatlantic crossing that goes from Europe to America to found a colony (*hacer las Américas*).

The equation of these two types of travel supposes that reality itself is contingent: the mind is the sole thing of which we have evidence. However, the poem shows that there are trips that exist as impossibilities, as ethnic fantasies, as actions loaded with absurdity and poetic dignity. For example, in the poem ‘*Nudos*’, the journey is an act emptied of meaning, open to any interpretation:

Y aquí salto,
desde una silla,

⁸⁹ Diego de Almagro (1475–1538) was a Spanish conquistador known for his exploits in western South America. He participated with Francisco Pizarro in the Spanish conquest of Peru.

desde un balcón,
desde la cresta de la roca al filo de los Andes
Carvajal 2015, 294

These lines insinuate an image of suicide, but as a matter of fact, it is the abandonment of reality to the pure imagination: a text enhanced by the imagination into a tribute to individual freedom: a leap into the void, into indeterminacy. However, even in this radical leap, the poet manages to detach himself from Andean geography (*al filo de los Andes*). This impossibility of completely escaping from social life's implications is the great paradox of Carvajal's poetry: the search for the cosmopolitan and transcendent element is impossible without a starting point in rooted community life.

Conclusion

Carvajal's poetry has been read prejudicially as philosophical. This has generated a critical silence that has prevented a wider dissemination of his work (Carrión 2008, 35). Indeed, Carvajal's writings are not exaggeratedly complex: in fact, this reception phenomenon is more related to the emotional indifference that can generate some of his most reflexive lines, stanzas or passages: the use of certain abstract words, for example, and especially the deliberate distance of colloquial language can create an emotional distance from the reader. In that sense, it is not a matter of difficulty, but of a lack of empathy between the poet and the hypothetical audience. Thus, Carvajal could be placed in the orbit of the intellectual poets who have a long tradition in the Western world, such as Paul Celan, André du Bouchet, Octavio Paz or José Ángel Valente. From this perspective, the limited dissemination of Carvajal's work in Ecuador is related to five aspects: 1) his poetry is perceived as textually and contextually difficult; 2) he himself has not lobbied for wider publication; 3) his poetry is emotionally distant, and Ecuadorian society does not recognise this way of interacting with literature; 4) the deliberate anachronism of many of his references places him outside the cult of chaos and frivolity that characterises this age; and 5) he is reluctant to use national references. How do these conclusions relate to the concept of minor literature? The ideal of a 'worldlist' literature implies the need to subsume or co-opt minor literatures on a democratic map without structural hierarchies. The reality is that Carvajal's work, despite its suggestive appeals to Western culture, has become relevant to Ecuadorian culture because of the connections he establishes between Ecuadorian cultural heritage and Western culture. In that sense,

Debjani Ganguly seems correct in her claim that ‘rather than trying to fit literary worlds—ancient, premodern, modern—within a single Euro-chronological frame culminating in a world capitalist systems model—where the non-European worlds appear as invariably inferior—it is worthwhile to see them as several polysystems with variable valences within a heterotemporal planetary literary space’ (2015). Taking this argument as a reference point, the idea of several polysystems of symbolic plots and literary landscapes (rather than hierarchical masterpieces) allows us to understand more effectively the meaning of Carvajal’s work. When considering Ecuadorian literature, the difference between a constellation of minor landscapes or simply a constellation of landscapes can be the starting point for the aforementioned perspective. If the aesthetic decisions about a text indeed determine its political potential and vice versa, a minor work (specifically in its condition as a minor text) is conditioned by the way in which the political is manifested in the author’s syntactic and semantic choices.

Is Carvajal’s poetry an example of minor literature in the Deleuzian sense? In several moments of his early work, his aesthetic decisions radically confront the idea of the Western subject, the concept of power, and there is a deliberate search for asymmetry and overflow to interrogate the logical structures of language. In his second phase, his poetry is simpler in a formal sense, and this questioning is barely noticeable, but he draws maps of an imaginary, unresolved or unfinished migration whose starting point is Ecuador. In general terms, the cosmopolitan poet seems unintentionally and reluctantly anchored to a certain portion of his intellectual references. This anti-demagogic attitude has resulted in his work receiving less attention than it might deserve. At all events, a process of cultural translation operates in many of Carvajal’s poems. The poet has deployed a primary strategy for this, adapting the themes and styles of Western poetry to a work inscribed in the plot of a marginal literature, and vice versa. Thus, this creative work navigates against a difficult, cosmopolitan, intellectual background and the interpretation of many elements of the Andean cultural landscape (the vegetation of the moors, small villages and towns, Latin American cities and their unfinished modernisation, and the rites of pre-Hispanic tradition). The points of his work where both perspectives converge solidly are the most singular and powerful: in those poems, the subjective focus manages to amalgamate the ethno-symbolic and the Cosmopolitan features, circumventing the legality of Ecuadorian identity and, paradoxically, placing that concept in a wider space of reception and discussion. That transculturation process from a Latin American style to a worldlist style can be read as a transatlantic voyage of

appropriations and aesthetic re-readings. This stylistic and thematic translation/adaptation is accompanied by the allegory of the journey that appears throughout Carvajal's poetry. This poetic cartography encompasses a movement through history, attempting to consider humankind and its behaviour rather than a hypothetical nation-state's citizen. His writing is important in the genealogy of Ecuadorian poetry for its eccentricity: it is important precisely because it goes in the opposite direction from the pedagogical structure of many works of Ecuadorian literature. In short, Carvajal's intention is to dialogue directly with Western poetry, without the burden of historical underdevelopment. However, for all the reasons discussed above, this is impossible. His poetry has been largely concerned with the national context.

In thematic terms, there are two focal points that characterise Carvajal's writings. The first is the hinge between social life and individual life. In general, there is great scepticism in these texts regarding society and gregariousness. Most of the texts discussed in this chapter contain this characteristic. The second focal point is the creation of radically intimate texts. The border between these two types of focus within a literary work is not always completely clear and, in much of Carvajal's work, they are in fact in conflictive dialogue. It should also be noted that the first period of Carvajal's poetry, which ends with *Los amantes de Sumpa* (1984), often uses avant-garde devices such as alliteration, parallelism or the suppression of punctuation. It is not a radically anomalous syntax, but some grammatical freedoms are allowed. Nonetheless, the second period of his poetry is simpler: there is a quest for precision, for an expression adjusted to the ideas he intends to convey. That margin of the West (and its constellation of minor literatures and minor landscapes) potentiates and limits the poet's writing. The modern observer visits/reads an Andean world that is alien to the great national narratives and, for that reason, supposedly alien to history (as an official narrative). Social life and subjective life appear in Carvajal as paths that, despite touching each other circumstantially, are ontologically distinct. More precisely, his poetry assumes that the individual and his imaginative are the highest forms of human expression. Thus, we can synthesise Carvajal's proposal in three key points: 1) in his work, especially in the last part, there is a rejection of abstract stories about the nation, the state and the community; thus, a poetic of the individual emerges. In fact, the absence of a unifying ideological structure reveals the rejection of any dogmatic perspective on life; 2) imaginary geography appears as a corrector of style, as a method to avoid the discursive regulations of national history. It must be deduced that this mistrust in history lies not only in the cosmopolitan will of the

poet; it is also rooted in a rejection of a deeply unstable and marginal nation-state; 3) although it cannot be said that Carvajal's poetry fits into the concept of minor literature, the use of syntax and the constellation of landscapes of all kinds that are evident in his work reveal a deep relationship with the search for a political-linguistic identity in Latin American poetry. Carvajal's writings are focused on ignoring, filtering or questioning the nation-state's official tales, and on creating a dialogue with ancestral myths in a simpler way, through a personal aesthetic elaboration. The importance of his poetry for a national literature lies in the uniqueness of his reluctant gesture.

Chapter 5.

Eduardo Espina: Baroque Writing and National Identity

feliz de serlo, uruguayo, cuando ya no

EDUARDO ESPINA

How does one read Eduardo Espina without dying in the attempt? His poetry uses a series of ornamental linguistic devices and plays on words whose number seems infinite. The complexity of these devices requires the reader to use sharp and creative strategies to interpret what the poet is trying to say. However, a close reading of his poetry reveals a set of conceptual, syntactic and rhythmic constants, including the use of convoluted verbal structures and an excess of visual elements. Espina has named this style *barrococó* (baroque) (Mallén 2008, 54). Also evident is that Espina's *barrococó*—particularly in *El cutis patrio* (2007)—integrates Uruguayan speech patterns and the landscapes of the River Plate in a profoundly imaginative and innovative form of writing (Bollig 2008, 73). This chapter's main argument is as follows: from his essays, interviews and, above all, his poems, it can be inferred that Espina believes Uruguay itself to be small yet extravagant, peripheral yet complex. Furthermore, he elaborates a nomadic syntax (De Cuba Soria 2013, 163). In that sense, there is no paradox in his work as a writer/poet and his role as spokesperson for Uruguayan literature. Although his work circulates primarily amongst the intelligentsia within and beyond this small country, he also appears on national television, and his name is relatively well known among general public, even if his poetry is difficult to read because of its constantly changing syntax patterns, among other aspects (Mallén 2008, 63). The fact that he believes Uruguay to be an extravagant country leads him to radicalise his writing with complex imagery and innovative structures to show the peculiarities of a peripheral country, decentralising the symbolic relationships between metropolis and periphery, between locality and foreignness (Pino 2009, 147). His is thus a poetry of strangeness and deterritorialisation where the unstable logic is also an attribution of a unstable territory. Hence:

el lugar de extranjería de Espina, en que lo nacional implica su lugar de nacimiento y residencia parcial, también *se hace* desde EE.UU. Se trata entonces de una doble agencia que enriquece la relación entre el neobarroco y las políticas de la lengua. (Pino 2009, 148)

This idea of ‘the politics of language’ treats the relationship between the decisions made regarding the use of language in the different institutional spaces of human life and how these decisions are articulated with the aesthetic proposals of each author. In that sense, this ‘double helix’ that characterises Espina’s poetry fosters dialogue between the paradoxical linguistic, anthropological and psychological implications of the author’s human bilocation and its aesthetic consequences. This interaction works as a symptom of singularity that has given Espina a significant space as the representative voice of a minor literature’s constellation. This recognition is not strange, because it works from the exceptional nature of the rhetorical procedures and thematic allusions that Espina uses, in many cases linked to Uruguayan geography and culture. In this chapter, I am interested in exploring 1) how and why his poetry is rooted in Uruguay, 2) the values and problems involved in proclaiming this author as Uruguay’s national poet at home and abroad, and 3) the hermeneutical obstacles and the multiple resonances in his poetic oeuvre.

One of the central hypotheses here is that Espina’s baroque, proliferating and experimental poetry is a faithful expression of his understanding of Uruguayan culture. Amidst these textual dynamics, this chapter seeks to ascertain to what extent this is true throughout his poetry. This relationship is important in the context of this study because it allows us to observe how the specificity of Uruguayan identity (a minority language) is expressed in his intricate poems. For Espina, this minority dialect (the River Plate and Uruguayan Spanish) is potentially an exceptional literary language. Espina’s literary proposal is based on the possibility of establishing a bridge (or a premeditated coincidence) between Uruguay’s symbolic, historical and geographical heritage and his unique and baroque poetic work. The strategy employed for interpreting this relationship is a detailed analysis of the contrasts among his conceptual framework, his use of a specific lexicon, and the recreation of the landscapes that he projects about local, national and global identities.

Eduardo Espina: baroque poet, essayist and academic

Eduardo Espina was born in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1954. He moved to the United States when he was invited to the University of Iowa’s Creative Writing Program in 1980. Since then, he has lived and worked in the U.S. and received his Ph.D. in Spanish in 1987 at Washington University in St. Louis. He teaches creative writing and Latin American literature at Texas A&M University, where he also publishes the *Hispanic Book Review*. As an academic, Espina is a specialist in Latin American poetry and in

19th-, 20th- and 21st-century essays. He is also the editor, together with Charles Bernstein, of *S/N: New World Poetics*, a magazine that publishes English-language poetry in Spanish translation, and vice-versa. Among the awards he has received are the Guggenheim Fellowship in Poetry in 2010 and the AFS Distinguished Achievement Award for Research in 2016. These literary activities mean that his poetry is intellectually aware of certain contemporary conceptual debates. In fact, his writing interrogates the debate between artistic radicalism and peripheral identity. Among his books of poetry⁹⁰ *El cutis patrio* (2006) contains the most effective answers to the questions raised in this study. Nonetheless, this chapter also examines certain excerpts from others of his books, collected in the compilation entitled *La imaginación invisible. Antología (1982–2015)* (2015). The relationship between a mannerist writing style and an extravagant country appears even more frequently in his books of essays, particularly in *Historia universal del Uruguay. Ensayos del yo nacional* (Buenos Aires, 2008) and *Las ideas hasta el día de hoy* (Montevideo, 2013).⁹¹ In fact, in *Historia universal del Uruguay*, Espina claims that ‘*no es fácil hablar como uruguayo. Por eso somos tan pocos*’ (2008, 26). In that sense, this minority dialect (the River Plate and Uruguayan Spanish) is, for Espina, a potentially exceptional literary language. Espina’s literary proposal is based on the possibility of establishing a convergence, or a premeditated coincidence, between Uruguay’s symbolic, historical and geographical heritage and his unique and baroque poetic work.

Espina carries out this research through an extremely personal form of writing. Here it is worth noting that Espina does not believe that all Uruguayan poetry is exceptional. In fact, he discusses ‘*la tan quieta poesía uruguaya, en su panorama de obras mínimas*’ (2013, 137). What he believes, rather, is that the core of Uruguayan poetry consists of exceptions ‘*en un país que por suerte tuvo varias*’ (2013, 119). In that sense, Espina’s poetry seeks to be an exception within that exceptional nucleus. Thus, his texts reveal a deliberately unique structure. Most of Espina’s poems are notably long and

⁹⁰ His other books of poetry are *Niebla de Pianos* (Montevideo, 1975), *Dadas las Circunstancias* (Montevideo, 1977), *Valores Personales* (Buenos Aires, 1982), *La caza nupcial* (Buenos Aires, 1993), *El oro y la liviandad del brillo* (Mexico, 1994), *Coto de casa* (Jalapa, 1995), *Lee un poco más despacio* (New York, 1999), *Mínimo de mundo visible* (Guadalajara, 2003) and *El cutis patrio* (Mexico City, 2006).

⁹¹ Among his books of essay, the most important are *El disfraz de la modernidad* (México/Montevideo, 1992), *Julio Herrera y Reissig: Las ruinas de lo imaginario* (Montevideo, 1996), *La condición Milli Vanilli. Ensayos de dos siglos* (Buenos Aires, 2003), *Historia universal del Uruguay. Ensayos del yo nacional* (Buenos Aires, 2008), *Festivas formas. Poesía peruana contemporánea* (Medellín, 2009) and *Julio Herrera y Reissig. Prohibida la entrada a los uruguayos* (Montevideo, 2010).

have no stanza breaks: this creates a feeling of density, agglutination and opacity. They unfold down the page in lines of equal length (although exact length varies from poem to poem), in a combination of writing forms that are at times essayistic, at times lyrical and at times narrative, creating a mixture propelled by associations of exuberant sound and unusual meaning. The appearance of these texts is exceptionally compact, with a characteristic aspect of verticality (like towers of words), and a rich vocabulary that has been described as neo-baroque (Sefamí 2000, 424; Mallén 2008, 219) or *barrococó* (Zapata 1993, 285; Rolnick 2015, 318). Due to their recalcitrance, these texts oblige the reader to pay heed to their workmanship and to the materiality of their language. The rhythm, prosody and pace of these works is a combination of Hispanic traditional metrical patterns with elements of *gaucho*⁹² vocabulary, the Uruguayan landscape and an expansive construction of phrases and verses.

Espina's writing has generated a very diverse critical interest. In addition to the academic works by Aregullín-Valdez (2010) and Rolnick (2015) mentioned in Chapter 1, another key text dedicated to Espina's poetry is contained in the book *Spanish American Poetry at the End of the Twentieth Century: Textual Disruptions*, by Jill Kuhnheim (2004), where the author reviews the formal and cultural implications of the work of the Uruguayan poet. Some more circumstantial texts include a poem written by Eduardo Milán in the magazine *Vuelta* (then directed by Octavio Paz) about the book *Valores personales* (Milán 1988) or the text 'Derrames del abanico', part of Amir Hamed's prologue to his anthology of Uruguayan poetry entitled *Orientales* (Hamed 2010). Nevertheless, perhaps the most canonical texts for the study of Espina's poetry are those written by the linguist Enrique Mallén: *Con/figuración sintáctica: poesía del des/lenguaje* (2002) and *Poesía del lenguaje: de T.S. Eliot a Eduardo Espina* (2010). To a certain extent, this chapter establishes a dialogue with the arguments formulated in the latter two texts, in the light of this chapter's central theme—the relationship between a uniquely singular writing and the hypothetical eccentric identity of a country called Uruguay.

Uruguay is a constant topic of reflection in Espina's essays. In fact, he often insists on pointing out the uniqueness of the 'Uruguayan way of being', even writing a book to reflect on Uruguay's cultural and symbolic meaning: *Historia Universal del Uruguay*. Elements such the consumption of meat or the use of words that include the letters 'ch'

⁹² A gaucho is a horseman and a national symbol in Argentina, Uruguay and southern Brazil. Gauchos have been represented in folklore and literature of their regional cultural tradition.

configure a map of the social life in his native country. For Espina, Uruguay is an absolutely unique country and, thus, its literature is bound to be equally unique: the exuberant Uruguayan landscapes are better expressed through an exuberant form of writing. The hypothesis proposed in this chapter is that Espina's neo-baroque poetry and his declarations of the exceptionality of Uruguayan identity work in dialogue in an exercise of constant feedback: the conceptual construction of Uruguay as a singular geography is so radical that it is only possible to represent it through equally exceptional, extravagant, and unusual writing. Uruguayan literature (in its constellation of minor literatures) can only exist as an extraordinary event. For this poet, the rarity of his country is susceptible to linguistic interpretation and metaphoric reconstruction.

Minor literatures, dissemination and canon

An initial concept useful for understanding the interaction of the radical and experimental style of Espina and Uruguayan identity is that Espina views his poetry as minority or, more precisely, aristocratic. In fact, he suggests that he writes for author-readers—that is, for readers who are involved in literary activity of some kind (Espina 2015, 324). His opposition to Montevideo's airport's being renamed Mario Benedetti (a prolific and popular Uruguayan writer) exemplifies this elitist perspective on literature (Espina 2008). In some ways, his writing strategically anticipates a limited reception, but with the expectation that the reception will expand over time. His work has been published in Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, and Ecuador, among other countries, although never as a bestseller: rather, he has published in small to medium-sized but very prestigious publishers.⁹³ It should also be noted that although there is abundant information on the internet about Espina (11,000 results in a restricted search for 'Eduardo Espina' + 'poeta'),⁹⁴ it is not an overwhelming amount of data or references compared with the amount that exists about Mario Benedetti (791,000 results in a restricted search for 'Mario Benedetti' + 'poeta'). Thus, the dissemination of his poetry is restricted to specialised circles, but where are these specialised circles? The answer to this question can be found, for example, in the theme and location of the audio-visual records on Espina. A striking observation is that, while the audio-visual records on his poetry exist from festivals in Mexico, Chile, Nicaragua and the United States, interviews with Espina as an intellectual about books, culture and other conceptual problems occur

⁹³ Some examples are Aldus (México), Mansalva (Argentina) and Cuarto Propio (Chile).

⁹⁴ Google search (26 de enero de 2020).

on Uruguayan television. Hence, the poet expresses his language in a (cosmopolitan) mobile place, but the speech of the intellectual is of greatest importance in Uruguay.

In this respect, it is no coincidence that his poetry seeks to integrate a cosmopolitan and avant-garde perspective with the specific concerns of Uruguayan identity. For example, in *La poesía del lenguaje: de T.S. Eliot a Eduardo Espina*, Mallén claims that this kind of syntactically and conceptually complex poetry is the most enduring core of Western literature. Mallén, a Spanish linguist, *de facto* integrates Latin American poetry (Uruguayan, in this case) into the corpus of Western poetry, placing Espina's writing on the map of accepted and acceptable poetry:

cuando se habla de 'poesía difícil' o 'poesía ilegible' incluso, no ha de sorprender que sea solo una minoría la que pueda verse felizmente arrastrada por la corriente lingüística que generan poetas como T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound o Eduardo Espina. (Mallén 2008, 160)

This statement is key to understanding the place that Espina seeks for his writing: his poetry is minority because it is exceptional. If we follow Espina's argument that Uruguayan identity is based on exceptional elements, his baroque poetry is simply—but not only—a faithful expression of Uruguayan identity. In fact, it is possible to affirm that this poetry explores the symbols of the national identity of this small country in order to find a part of the exuberant baggage that the author uses to create this poetry, at once very Uruguayan and very cosmopolitan. Of course, as demonstrated above, at least because of its eccentric character, Uruguayan identity is in fluid dialogue with a cosmopolitan perspective of the world.

However, there are two details not considered in Mallén's argument: 1) some languages are privileged in terms of dissemination (and translation) and 2) some countries have weak publishing industries. Thus, Mallén's proposal underestimates, ignores or evades the contextual elements of reception and dissemination so as to focus on poetry's formal and historical features. This gesture could be read in two ways: 1) Mallén subscribes to Espina's elitist perspective of seeing himself as an author of limited diffusion but with profound influence over time; and 2) Mallén believes that Espina's poetry does not need contextualisation to be explained. The radical differences between my reading and Mallén's approach lie in my belief that cultural geography has a fundamental relationship with Espina's poetry and that the sociocultural relations in

which Espina's writing is confined determine the place it occupies within the historical context of Spanish-language poetry. Espina possesses a deep awareness of these interactions and coherently elaborates the virtual map that integrates them: a fabled Uruguay through a radically singular poetic work.

In contrast with Mallén's fairly linguistic outlook, Hamed's short anthology *Orientales*, in which he brings together the most important 20th century Uruguayan poets, contains a hermeneutic approach to Espina's poetry. It is a book that compiles the work of just a dozen authors, among them Eduardo Milán and Eduardo Espina. In his foreword, Hamed claims that Espina's work is, in some ways, a radicalisation of Milán's proposal (2010, 97). Both have been classified as neo-baroque, experimental poetry, and language poetry, among other appellations. However, Milán has received more critical and social reception in the Spanish-speaking world than Espina. The explanation for this lies in two aspects: Milán's essays have a wider Latin American concern in seeking to prefigure a canon or an alternative canon, and his poetry is grammatically simpler and stylistically more varied. This difficulty of being read can be expressed through a circular syllogism: 1) Uruguay is radically singular, 2) Espina's poetry is deeply and paradoxically Uruguayan and, therefore, 3) Espina's poetry is radically singular (and vice versa). This abstract argument acquires more concreteness when considering the landscapes that Espina builds, particularly in *El cutis patrio*. In these poems, Uruguayan geography appears to be 'adapted' by a rarefying exercise that the author considers to be propitiated by the strangeness of Uruguayan identity. Espina chooses a rarefied language in order to explain Uruguay's uniqueness as a country, although he also—and perhaps primarily—highlights Uruguayan cultural exceptionality to defend its link with his proposal of an avant-garde, exuberant and baroque writing. His place in the Uruguayan canon, more experimental than other Latin American poetic canons, makes his work even more strange in the continental context, where at times it can simply lead to perplexity or astonishment.

Throughout this chapter, I review several extracts of Espina's poetic work in pursuit of the previous arguments. Additionally, I emphasise certain discussions about Uruguayan culture in his essays as a counterpoint to my interpretation of his poems.

Baroque style, baroque geography, baroque community

In the poem '*Lo que la página encuentra (Las frases nunca tienen frío)*', Espina evidences his interest in articulating the poetic discourse through phonetic sequences. The peculiarity of these sound patterns is visible in a heavily crafted and falsely symmetrical

structure of wordplay. The relationship between vertical appearance, extremely controlled metrics and recalcitrant phonetics exhibits the semblance of a classical façade with a delirious and postmodern interior. This exaggeration in the use of stylistic devices is characteristic of the baroque (Mallén 2008, 17). For example, we can see that there is an internal rhyme between the words *lengua* and *venga*. The repetition of the phonic sequence ‘e-a’ is an example of how Espina seeks to create a hypnotic effect with an alternative sonority:

Según la lengua venga, sus criollos
cincharían del poncho por escuchar

Espina 2015, 121

Likewise, in these lines the lexicon appeals to a relatively specific cultural context: that of the River Plate area. *Cinchar* is a verb that has no specific meaning beyond that geographical context, but against the Uruguayan cultural backdrop it means ‘to push’, ‘to do something with care’ or ‘to pull’. Understanding the third meaning of the verb, the sense of this extract is simple: someone would pull the poncho to hear some words. Here, the most interesting revelation is the specificity of vocabulary. The poet does not intend to use a neutral Spanish, but rather, the exact opposite: it is a Uruguayan, a Creole Spanish. Something similar occurs in the poem ‘*Naturaleza, lección del contemplante (Por una vez el Río de la Plata tiene razón)*’, where the phonetic chains work through words that we could consider part of an ethno-symbolic lexicon:

el mundo dura en cuanto cabe y
aquí, ibiscus y cuis, ecos como querría

Espina 2015, 123

The *cuis* (guinea pigs) are characteristic animals of South America, and they are a part of the food industry in many parts of the region, including Uruguay.⁹⁵ Again there is a set of phonetic repetitions, in this case configured with the vowels ‘i’ and ‘u’ and the phoneme ‘k’ (expressed by the graphemes q, c, c, c, c, q). This wordplay creates a veneer of impenetrability, since the text’s meaning seems subject to mere artificial sonority. A linear reading is impossible, but an exercise of interpretation (or simplification) leads us

⁹⁵ It should be noted that the *Cavia Apeerea Pamparum* (present especially in the River Plate area) and *Cavia porcellus* (or guinea pig, present in the Andean region, although today it is spread over several areas of the world, including as pets) are different species, although both are called *cuis* and belong to the genus *Cavia*.

to think that the place *aquí* is inhabited by *ibiscus* and *cuis*. That complex image is only divisible after unravelling Espina's altered syntax.

The difference between the bucolic landscape that appears as background and the intricate syntax that appears as foreground is explained in an enlightening line in the poem '*El nihil (la nada no sabe por qué)*': '*hace rato que occidente está quieto*' (Espina 2015, 128). A timeline in the west and a timeline in an area of the periphery of the west (like Uruguay) are different (Lund 2006, 35). In the poet's perspective, his language full of anacoluthon and syntactic breaks emulates a similar chaotic speed to the rhythm of the postmodern western world in which he lives and works (Texas). The problem of cultural heterogeneity (Cornejo Polar 2003, 14) appears very clearly here: the line's syntactic and phonetic complexity invites attention to the dissimilar cultural references that the poet couples in his verses. Apparently this frenzied, exuberant and seemingly uncontrolled syntax is divorced from the pastoral scenery with *ibiscus* and *cuis*. However, there is again a reciprocity between the two. In Espina's perspective, this bucolic landscape is denser than it appears, and only an ornate language can express it faithfully: it is a way of approaching written text in a three-dimensional perspective.

In fact, Espina's images are deeply crossed by specific details of Uruguayan culture and River Plate Spanish: they are not merely plain or self-evident texts. In this sense, for Espina, the Uruguayan landscape has always been an avant-garde poetic toolbox. In his aesthetic and ideological perspective, the postmodern landscape (and its accelerated pace) and the Uruguayan landscape (and its eccentric temporality) share the same rhythmic complexity: in Espina's poetry, a Uruguayan temporality is created.

In this respect, he knows that the West's historical features are very different from the features of the peripheral country known as Uruguay. This difference is visible, for example, in the behaviour of animal species. In the poem '*La edad en ningún idioma (La quinceañera cuando habla mal de todos)*', the author points out, '*no atañe a los ñandúes el dolor de los / otoños, la falta de abundante infancia*' (Espina 2015, 133). The mild nature of the River Plate autumn invites the poet to underline the incongruity between an exotic bird (the *ñandú*) and traditional autumns, widely represented in Western literature. The oxymoron evident between these two conceptual realities can be translated as a space where the concepts of transculturation and heterogeneity are put into play. Cornejo Polar notes that Latin American works are crossed by a '*red de encrucijadas múltiple y acumulativamente divergentes [donde] el otro [antropológico] se inmiscuye en la intimidad, hasta en los deseos y en los sueños; y la convierte en espacio oscilante, a veces*

contradictorio' (2003, 13). In the aforementioned extract of Espina's work, this contradiction is not resolved in a *mestizo*, cross-cultural, self-sustaining organism, but in a collage or textual patchwork quilt whose components reveal their mutual incongruity. This distance between a metropolitan worldview and a minor (Uruguayan) outlook is the gap between two confronted cultural understandings of life. The poet seeks to underline this difference thoroughly as a mechanism to give his writing singularity, but also as a way of expressing a very specific aspect of Uruguay. Thus, Espina uses this demarcation of cultural and natural differences to characterise the virtual link existing between his writing and Uruguayan identity.

In this case, the difference that Espina seeks to illustrate is the conceptual clash between a cosmopolitan bird (the cormorant) and a playful, flightless and exuberant South American bird (the *ñandú*): '*la luna no lo explica, el clan / del cormorán haría añadir al / ñandú adulto jugando al ludo*' (2015, 138). The inner rhymes (*clan, cormorán; añadir, ñandú; adulto, ludo*) create a feeling of frantic continuity; in fact, they provoke an illusion of coherence in a discourse that presents a series of seemingly disjointed and complex symbols: the key in the interpretation of this passage is the word *añadir*. The cormorant, a seabird bird, also includes those who do not fly in its game *clan*: the *ñandú*. 'Add' is a key verb to understand the functioning of Espina's poetry. One way of inhabiting extravagance is the inclusive enumeration of the traditionally non-poetic. In fact, enumerations such as the following would pass for mere folklore if not for the syntactic and phonetic wordplay the poet proposes. What Espina intends is to confer a structure (in which the heterogeneity of the indicated materials is preserved) to the chaotic Uruguayan exuberance. Hence, in the poem '*Lo mejor de Magallanes (Un poema estrecho)*':

chinchulín, chancleta chica
por aquí y allí cuanto tirita,
bicho, carpincho, piripicho,
digo más, chifle, cachimba,
palabras que han encausado
hasta ser en secreto criadas

Espina 2015, 141

In a combination of hendecasyllables and octosyllables, Espina configures a regular metric pattern and extrapolates it with phonetic repetitions, thus creating a sensation of comedy and delirium. In addition, the vocabulary (*chinchulín, carpincho*—very typical of River Plate Spanish) works as a counterpoint to the traditional verse pattern used by

Espina. Very often, as in the aforementioned extract, Espina demonstrates the possibility of transculturation, of the creolisation of many words in his poetry, but at the same time reveals their strangeness. To be more precise, in the lines cited, there are foods prepared from intestines (*chinchulines*), comfortable small slippers (*chancla chica*), insects (*bicho*), giant South American rodents (*carpincho*), a small appendix of an object (*piripicho*), a vessel made of cow's horn (*chifle*) and cistern (*cachimba*). Although some of these words have other meanings in different geographical contexts, Espina includes them in their River Plate and, in some cases, specifically Uruguayan meaning. The regular metric pattern (with the visual appearance of a column) creates an illusion of order and symmetry against the enumeration of such dissimilar words, whose only commonalities are the presence of the letters 'ch' (and their phonetic expression) and their Uruguayan origin. In fact, the entire extract is a sociolinguistic reflection that observes how people actually use language in the speech and writing of their lives and how some words are incorporated into a language. When Espina says '*palabras ue han encausado / hasta ser en secreto criadas*', he reflects on the words transfigured into a socially shared language (in his Uruguayan dialect variety, in this case).

In the poem '*La persona, algún día de pesca (Otro recuerdo que fue casi diferente)*', Espina also links language and Uruguayan culture, through a paradoxical reconstruction of a memory, again through phonetic patterns. Here, the phonetic scenery (the use of 'f', 'l' or 'p'), masks nostalgia and prevents the poem from becoming a merely bucolic reflection: first, it fixes the reader's attention on the artificial sound that the poet creates. It also creates the illusion of congruence from the sound it builds:

El chingolo alado y el ibirapitá donde pía
ponían a la palmera a pensar en el pasado,
en ese mar de plata para el bolsillo vacío,
cima marina donde rima herida la mirada

Espina 2015, 149

The *chingolo* (bird) and the *ibirapitá* (tree) are species endemic to the Paraná basin and, in the poem, they refer to a distant memory in Uruguay in which Espina even refers to concrete money, in contrast to the abstract financescape that works silently through electronic networks ('the empty pocket'). In these poems, closeness and life only function as an expression of Uruguayan identity. In fact, in the poem '*Miss Literatura (El infinito definido)*', for example, Espina insists on naming the world through a series of words

(nouns and verbs) that only have a specific meaning in the context of Uruguayan culture. Organising the historical and geographical contingency, Espina takes Uruguayan identity to its limits and signals its contradictions: ‘*sémenes de los arachanes, los achiques*’ (2015, 223). The seed of the *arachanes* (a pre-Hispanic indigenous people from the area of Uruguay) appears as a wordplay that paradoxically prefigures a possible Uruguayan identity. Thus, the poet artificially adopts the identity of the Arachanes to give conceptual cohesion to his text. In addition, the delirious enumerations that Espina sets in motion underscore the peculiar lexicon he uses. In this way, the author alerts us to the uniqueness and radical heterogeneity of the landscapes he is revealing and, of course, contributes to expanding and recreating them through language.

The baroque country: an exuberant idea of community

In the poem ‘*La invisibilidad viene cada vez más joven (Menos años en la mitad)*’, Espina suggests, ‘*nación o azoro al sur del cielo*’ (2015, 174). The title, enigmatic like all of Espina’s titles, is a reflection on the passage of time. What does the South look like from a distance? Evidently, the conflictive nation that is seen in the South is Uruguay, but it is a conceptual Uruguay, elaborated by the poet as an imaginative and ideological exercise from the real references. However, Espina does trace a story. As discussed earlier, this exuberant country functions in Espina’s mind as a catalyst or pretext for his own exuberant writing: ‘*Nace el Sur a durar / rauda, en desorden*’ (2015, 178). These lines are a reflection on the cultural landscapes that configure Uruguay. The correlation between these hexasyllabic lines and the already mentioned disorder suggests Espina’s intention to organise the chaos (of a chaotic Uruguay) into an album of extravagant scenarios, supported by the singular linguistic structure he invents.

Strictly speaking, Espina’s gaze seeks to play with the baroque procedure known as anamorphosis,⁹⁶ where objects can only be seen from the most unexpected angle. That distorted perspective requires the viewer to occupy a specific vantage point in order to reconstitute the image. Of course, this is not exclusively a game, but rather a method for demonstrating that the rational gaze, under certain circumstances, can be marginal, secondary or useless. For that reason, Espina’s poetry is a complex toy and an oblique

⁹⁶ Anamorphosis is ‘an ingenious perspective technique that gives a distorted image of the subject represented in a picture when seen from the usual viewpoint but so executed that if viewed from a particular angle, or reflected in a curved mirror, the distortion disappears and the image in the picture appears normal’ (Britannica 2019).

portrait of River Plate Spanish. It could be said that this unstable poetic perspective is characteristic of the historical baroque, but the capricious or simply absent punctuation suggests an accelerated rapidity, typical of the contemporary world (Hamed 2010, 99). Thus, Espina integrates at least three frames of instability over his landscapes: 1) a subjective affiliation to the historical baroque, 2) Uruguay as an exuberant country, 3) the intention to represent the rhythm of contemporary life.

In the case of the following extract of the poem '*Vejez de Wittgenstein (Un año antes de ser él mismo)*', the inclusion of digressions unrelated to the narration of an anecdote (perhaps imaginary) on Ludwig Wittgenstein⁹⁷ suggests a back-and-forth movement between a logical story and a diffuse and delirious tale. Again, Espina uses phonetic patterns to create an illusion of continuity, through alliterations (*la lavanda a la; lleno, brillos, llega*), paronomasias (*lavanda, banda*) or rhymes (*oriental, natural*). Once the sensation of a coherent text has been overcome, we observe the discrepant syntax and an apparent nonsense. In fact, the sense of these lines is simpler than it seems and refers to an imaginary tour of Wittgenstein through Uruguayan landscapes.

Va de la lavanda a la banda oriental
hasta tal hora y al oro yendo natural
lleno de brillos mientras la luz llega
y la bruma, en brazos de la mucama

Espina 2015, 205

This chronic delirium arises from the will to settle Wittgenstein's thinking in an unlikely space. That impossible scenery is eminently a play of fiction around a cosmopolitan will to merge symbolic (even antagonistic) territories: Uruguayan land and the life of one of the 20th century's most outstanding philosophers. Espina's suggestion is to put Uruguay's possibilities into play as a transcultural mythomoteur, to create a tense, hybrid space where language becomes antagonistic to its meaning: the passage shows heterogeneity without rationalising and simplifying the differences between the components of the poem. In the manner of Lego blocks of different colours, Espina builds verbal towers whose elements preserve their difference, even within a cohesive structure.

⁹⁷ Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889–1951) was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked primarily in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of the mind, and the philosophy of language. The relationship between Espina's poem and this philosopher lies in the fact that Wittgenstein's works sought to establish the relationship between a private language and socially constructed language games.

This kind of procedure, where the concepts of transculturation and heterogeneity reveal their complementarity rather than their antagonism as explanations of an ongoing process, seems to find its most precise reference in the following excerpt from the poem ‘*Sin taxis, sin Texas (Canta del país el aprendiz)*’:

Pocos por una payada lo hallarán oral
al ser uruguayo, porque la partida a la
pleamar del mapa empezó con la niñez

Espina 2015, 217

The tension between spoken language (*lo hallarán oral / al ser uruguayo*) and writing reveals, for example, two relationships: 1) the relationship between an atavistic Uruguayan community and its oral and traditional *payada*, and 2) the way in which this *lo*, this singer, this poet called Eduardo Espina, identifies his ambiguous, mutant or unstable identity with the deterritorialisation of his life as a human being (towards *la pleamar del mapa*) that began with the child’s imagination. In these lines, Espina points out that even if he sings or writes as a *payador*, the readers will not find a Uruguayan, Third World or Global South orality: the identity of the poet called Eduardo Espina seeks indeterminacy. He continuously aligns contrasting levels: spoken language, writing; Uruguay, the north side of the map (the U.S.?); the writer’s childhood, adulthood; etc. Thus, in Espina’s poetry, the style is constructed from elliptical paradoxes in which identity is often at stake: ‘*Ah, esas cosas de los uruguayos yendo / a la lluvia de donde huyen*’ (2015, 217). These images appear collapsed in the middle of the spiritual or cultural paradoxes posed by the poetic voice. In some respects, these images could be classified as references to Appadurai’s ethnoscaapes (1996, 33), because they refer to partial migrations (the journey occurs, but is never completed).

These ethnoscaapes are visible through these images, which seem to settle everything somewhere between the departure and the return. In terms of language, they are constructed through paradoxes that reveal a particular situation about the long-term migrant: his identity is blurred and paradoxical. Thus, Espina writes, ‘*feliz de serlo, uruguayo, cuando ya no*’ (2015, 218). The identity of the poetic subject works through a series of permutations that brings us to an exuberant face: Uruguay’s native labyrinth is extravagant, paradoxical and utopian. Something similar can be appreciated in the poem: ‘*Cuando incluso el tiempo está de más (Viaje de ida al deseo de las preguntas)*’:

En estos días de ratos previos al pasado,
la vida cambiaría por darte horas nuevas,
la ventisca cambio por un verano boreal,
cambio, todas estas imágenes ajenas por
volver a oírte en tu tono natal, tal cual ha
sido la síntesis del Sur donde fui yo, otro

Espina 2015, 156

In a simpler tone than that of *El Cutis Patrio*, this extract from a poem included in his anthology *La imaginación invisible* reveals a concern similar to that of previous poems: Uruguay as a nostalgic, southern scenario, in contrast to the ‘foreign images’ of the north where the poet and professor Espina has lived for decades. In addition, these images also reveal a linguistic nostalgia for the old River Plate Spanish (Rolnick 2015, 131) and how this language is marked by the emotions of people who live in a certain landscape. In some ways, language functions in this poem as a fourth dimension of reality, as long as it is a geographically situated and emotionally remembered element. In this excerpt, where he talks about his deceased mother, the poet wants to hear his father again in his native tone’, ‘in his native language’, where all the geographical, cultural, political and spiritual aspects of ‘his South’, ‘his Uruguay’ are synthesised. As Miriam Pino writes:

un fuerte compromiso con una lengua de un Uruguay–otro, una cultura rioplatense/otra, un Sur/otro; lugares construidos desde la potencia polifónica de la lengua que se torna audible cuando se produce una estilización paródica [...]. La obra de Espina invita a regresar a esos lugares, hechos de un tiempo extemporáneo al de Occidente, un lugar donde se desliza la riqueza del lenguaje. Uno de los aspectos más sobresalientes del texto es la importancia que adquiere la presencia de la naturaleza del Sur como cronotopo donde es posible advertir el despliegue de la poética neobarroca. (2009, 149)

In Espina, language is not only evidence of identity and affectivity, but in fact its central element, its most essential constitutive feature. Therefore, the intimate past is not the historical homeland but rather an emotional homeland, where geography (especially the proliferant nature) is obsessively invoked and renamed in a baroque and saturating gesture.

Words as cells of a flamboyant *patria*

Images of streets and neighbourhoods constitute another dimension of the unstable scenarios that Espina builds. As noted earlier, the sequences of wordplays that delineate Espina's work create an illusion of continuity, even if the relationship among the semantic elements seems illogical or absurd: the phonetic structure integrates words, ideas and concepts in a train of thought that would otherwise appear chaotic. This compositional strategy seems adequate for expressing the heterogeneous and disordered relations of Latin American symbolic maps, especially in the cities. Thus, for example, Espina pays attention to absurd and extravagant situations that occur somewhere in Uruguayan cities, as in the poem '*Personajes populares (¿Qué dedo es el gordo del pie?)*':

ante el tambaleo de bailantas
tales como luego calma traen
a estrenar tangos y polcas

Espina 2015, 158

The humorous title alludes to the extravagant content of the poem in which the writer carefully refers to the adventures of a 'Uruguayan foot'. Amid the apparent absurdity, the selected lines refer to a dance ritual that Uruguayans practice—all this, of course, within the framework of the baroque and experimental strategies that Espina prefers. The second line shows a strong syntactic deviation: it is a baroque strategy that masks its asymmetry through the phonetic sequences developed by the poet. The repetition of the phonemes /t/ and /l/ creates an illusion of fluency and internal coherence. The words do not convey anything overly specific in this line, but they hint at a possible meaning: 'such as those that then bring calm'. In clarifying this idea, lines 1 and 3 become more diaphanous in their meaning: in the *bailantas* of the neighbourhoods, tangos and polkas⁹⁸ are performed. These dances are very characteristic of the urban outskirts of many cities in the River Plate area. The word *bailanta*—a place to dance, especially for the working class—places the scenery in a town or city.

This phenomenon also happens with the city's gastronomy, as in the poem '*Dieta de la adivina (Por favor, dice el menú)*': '*La garbanzada le lleva del puchero / al*

⁹⁸ Polka is part of Uruguayan popular culture, influenced by the large number of Swiss and German immigrants that the country received. The polka arrived to Uruguay from Europe around 1845, first as a scenic dance, but it quickly extended to the dance halls of Montevideo, along with other innovative rhythms for dancing couples. Towards the end of the 19th century it had spread to the rural environment, where different variants appeared.

escabeche sin ceder al sancocho / que bastante varían los altramuces' (Espina 2015, 167). This poem is a kind of game about various dishes (*puchero*, *escabeche*, *sancocho*) and the ingredients that would turn those dishes into something else. The *garbanzada* (chickpeas), and the *altramuces* (white lupine beans) are typical ingredients in Uruguayan cuisine, but in the context of Western gastronomy they are uncommon and even exotic foods. In this poem, Espina depicts the delirious culinary diversity of the small country called Uruguay. The idea of minor literature is essential for understanding how this gallery of dishes and ingredients is read, accepted and understood by people outside its cultural context. Espina's radical gesture consists in emphasising the singularity of the cultural and linguistic dynamics existing around Creole food in relation to the neighbourhoods as living spaces. Here the extravagant syntax reveals the impossibility of completely westernising the logic that integrates the series of heterogeneous materials and references that Espina uses:

cháchara que caldos a la ira diera,
 bendito pollo en el brillo cuyo yo
 desoyera el huellerío de payadora
 adonde llegan olores a mondongo
 un domingo y la suerte del sabor
 vacío hablando a toda velocidad

Espina 2015, 170

The discrepant syntax creates a sensation of vertigo that underlines the baroque character of the culinary ritual in any Uruguayan suburb. Further, these ingredients and dishes (broth, chicken, *mondongo*⁹⁹) exemplify a vast culinary diversity which, in turn, expresses an extensive linguistic diversity and conceptual complexity. *El sabor / vacío hablando a toda velocidad* is the sensation of tasting the 'empty flavour' that this food offers: a flavour whose meaning and value is completed by the diner. The word *cháchara*, an animated and inconsequential conversation about unimportant topics, reveals the meaning of the scene that Espina creates: it is a Sunday meal where people talk while eating typical food. Here, the Uruguay that Espina depicts for his readers is a collage of historical and sensuous memories. Food transforms the collective experience into a shared experience, even to the point of establishing a space of tranquillity for the poetic speaker, as in the poem '*Quién estuvo primero de los dos (Respuesta a la pregunta del*

⁹⁹ The casserole of *mondongo* is a typical Uruguayan winter dish. The *mondongo* is a piece of cow's stomach which can be bought from most butchers in Uruguay.

mundo): ‘*la vida es hermosa pero más cuando la mesa / está servida y un olor a locro hierva valiente*’ (Espina 2015, 229). The *locro* (from the Quechua *luqru*) is a kind of stew of pre-Hispanic and pre-Incan origin, typical of several Andean villages, based on squash, beans, corn and potatoes. The relationship between food, society, affectivity and language is characteristic of the language used by Espina. As can be seen, the vivacity of Uruguayan cuisine finds its expression in the fast pace of an everyday life, where a poetic *cháchara* organises the baroque experience of eating. In this sense, the poet creates a new syntax, a new language to express the particularity of these encounters: the poetic language is radicalised to expose experiences which are equally collective and individual.

Gastronomy is an example of how Espina fabulates Uruguay out of a small-scale image of the neighbourhood. In Appadurai’s conception, the neighbourhood is the concrete way in which a structure of feelings (that he calls locality) exhibits itself (1996, 179). Thus, the physical neighbourhood, located geographically, has no meaning without the emotional communities and the symbolic and imaginary ties of individuals. In that sense, each fragment of Uruguay can effectively be a set of houses, fields, hydroelectric facilities and highways, but the emotional communities are the substance and meaning of that idea of a nation-state. In fact, Espina poses incisive questions through paradoxes that reveal an uncertainty about national identity: ‘*La patria, el premio por haber nacido / El lenguaje, patria para vivir a través*’ (2015, 165). There, although the author considers his homeland as a gift, he identifies his poetic language as his homeland: language as a scenery for poetic creation and emotional re-creation of his country, his singularity, his authorship and his personal memory. The idea of authorship is equated with the concept of homeland, which opens up the possibility that Uruguay is invented through language or, more radically, that Uruguay is simply a language. Hence, homeland is his language, and his language is his homeland. For example, in an imagined political geography, as in the poem ‘*Dieta de la adivina (Por favor, dice el menú)*,’ Espina writes, ‘*¿La musa naciente / a causa del cielo en la posibilidad / el eco a los costados de Occidente?*’ (2015, 167). In these lines, the poet points out that a possible Uruguayan imagination (that ‘nascent muse’) arises from the borders of the western world. Espina’s minor poetry seeks to reinvent the nation-state’s language and, in this way, question homeland’s limits. Through his work, this poet seeks the periphery and all its complexities and nuances.

This imaginative re-creation of Uruguay in the context of contemporary global geography (essentially under the north/south and periphery/metropolis dyads) also arises in historical and ethnographic terms:

el verano abandona el dolor anual
de algunos antes de ser uruguayos,
arrima el mal a razas con charrúas,
al cuaderno adoptivo de las fechas

Espina 2015, 196

The key expression is *el cuaderno adoptivo de las fechas*, because in that line the word ‘adoptive’ expresses the artificiality of Uruguayan identity. The Uruguayan man is an ‘adopted son’ of that territory, because his identity had an oblique development: this fact can also be seen when Espina writes, *arrima el mal a razas con charrúas*. Heterogeneity seems to be the flag that foreshadows an unfair, impossible, unbalanced mix where the colonial empire *arrimó el mal* (approached evil) to the pre-Hispanic population. There is a reference not only to the migration that created the country as we know it today, but also to the Uruguayan population as a potential new diaspora. In that artificially founded territory, the summer (*el verano*) with its intense yellow light is different from the suffering that Uruguayans experienced even before becoming Uruguayans.¹⁰⁰ Although the dates of Uruguayan national identity are artificial, Espina intends or pretends to incorporate the relationship with an adopted ancestral past: the *charrúas*. Something similar happens in the poem ‘*Del país de donde soy (Tiempo convertido en geografía)*’, where the *ibirapitá* (a yellow-flowered tree with a Guaraní name) appears as a natural symbol that expresses the ‘very being’ of the recent nation:

en fin, es el
ibirapitá pintado en el pájaro principal, es el
Ser de la nación similar a la de siempre, una
cuyas cifras hubieran merecido mejor suerte
entrando por atrás al cielo iluminado de más,
¡qué situación! el país nace de cuanto ha sido
pero qué sería de su gente, de sus hazañas

Espina 2015, 245

In this extract, an element characteristic of the poet’s perspective on Uruguayan identity is the constant displacement of references and points of view: here, identity is a playful

¹⁰⁰ A movie that seems in tune with this idea is *Whisky* (2004), a Uruguayan tragicomedy directed by Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll. This is a film about simulation and the difficulty of establishing authentic relationships, with a grey and timeless atmosphere. In Latin America, when someone says ‘whiskey’ during a photoshoot, people smile, but they do it falsely. In the context of the poem, the summer, like the light of a photographic flash, seems a simulacrum, while spiritual life is deeply tormented.

project. This invites the reader to wonder whether it is perhaps not merely a game. Despite the ludic ingredient in this poetry, Espina invites us to believe that this game is a serious one in which personal and collective identity are subject(ed) to definition and redefinition. For example, the *ibirapitá* is a symbol which has not been assigned by Western literature; in that sense, its meaning is literally untold. If, indeed, this tree is a metonym of *el Ser de la nación*, of its territorial and political identity, its meaning broadens the perspectives from the fusion of a traditional landscape (ethno-symbolic) with a reference to financescapes (*cuyas cifras hubieran merecido mejor suerte*). What are these figures? Since the middle of the 20th century, Uruguay's political and economic situation placed it in the geopolitical space called Global South. In the framework of a series of paradoxical statements expressed as anacolutha (*el país nace de cuanto ha sido / pero qué sería de su gente*) and deliberate tautologies (*el país nace de cuanto ha sido*), the poet points out that Uruguayan identity is in a process of configuration, in a constant movement where the individual and the collective seem intertwined in a virtual knot where history and the present are the same thing. As the philosopher Lucas Andino noted, this demonstrates that nation-states need a remarkable political plasticity, understood as the ability of the components of a country to interrogate their relationships with each other and also a language that reveals an unfinished configuration (2018, 80).

Espina's questioning of the symbols of Uruguayan identity is so radical that he reviews the components of the national coat of arms (a hill, a bull, a horse, a set of weighting scales):

las cuatro cosas que están en el escudo patrio,
un toro a toda hora, un cerro de cuyos errores,
ese caballo y la balanza que pocos saben para
qué está, igual, en el país, todo pesa lo mismo

Espina 2015, 254

The scale which *pocos saben para qué está* has traditionally been a symbol of justice. However, for Espina it becomes a pretext to meditate on the insignificance or neutrality of everything that constitutes the Uruguayan landscape (*igual, en el país, todo pesa lo mismo*). The grey colour attributed to Montevideo, the neutrality of the Switzerland of America, and social democracy as a national symbol seem to be expressions of a quasi-metaphysical identity where hierarchies seem unnecessary, self-defeating. Hence, the poet de-hierarchises the most essential iconography of Uruguayan identity: in the

preceding lines about its coat of arms—under a rising of a pre-Columbian-looking sun, an ellipse is divided into four sections, within each of which there is respectively a bull, a hill, a horse and a scale—the poet displays love and cynicism, not always easily distinguishable. Espina’s irony to treat these symbols (the hill, the Monte-vide-eu, which is the cause of ‘errors’; the bull, like a boring and trite constant; the horse, on which nothing is said¹⁰¹) reveals the artificiality that the poet attributes to Uruguayan identity. In that sense, Uruguayan identity exists in its own need to dismantle itself. Espina radicalises this Uruguayan principle of non-hierarchies with a ‘minor’ eye, ready to give equal weight to the vulgar and the sublime, to the opaque Montevideo and to the profuse richness of its traditions and landscapes. That game with the simulacrum—with this *cutis patrio*—leads the poet to configure a text in full motion, where he tries to create a complex, hypertextual, synesthetic experience.

In his most recent poems, this reflection on Uruguayan uniqueness is less intellectual and is crossed by an enigmatic relationship between nostalgia and time zones. Learning about cultural difference expressed through opposite geographical coordinates plays out like an emotional exercise of the physical and psychological distance between major and minor landscapes. Hence, in the poem, ‘*Un pasado en construcción (Era más fácil abrir las ventanas que decirlo)*’, there is a reflection on time and the manner in which it is perceived both in the Texas plains and in the Uruguayan pampas:

Ocho y media de la mañana, diciembre 3, a esa hora yo
dormía por diferencia horaria, eran cuatro horas menos
en la planicie texana, el alma al maldecir lo que vino no
prestó atención a las noticias traídas de arrastro, dormía
como si fuera lo más seguro para mantener la respiración
Espina 2015, 290)

Far from being trivial, this spatial and temporal difference (plains and pampas, English and Uruguayan Spanish, here and far away) is important in understanding the geographical character of Espina’s poetry. *Ocho y media de la mañana, diciembre 3* is a phrase that places the poem in specific temporal coordinates. The ‘time difference’ between Uruguay and ‘the plain of Texas’ is, for Espina, not only a distinction between

¹⁰¹ According to a Uruguayan law of July 12, 1906, the national shield’s horse represents freedom. It will always be represented in black, with an attitude of movement. It should be noted that the horse is an animal of European origin and its presence is unequivocally related to the Hispanic conquistadors. (blogs.montevideo.com.uy, 2016).

two temporalities but above all a more difficult cultural difference to discern and catalogue. The concept of heterogeneous temporalities (Lund 2006, 35) seems useful in contrasting these two landscapes, whose dissimilarity can reveal not only the psychological bilocation of the migrant, but also that of an adult man whose parents have just died (those are *las noticias traídas*) who remembers his childhood. Espina chooses to depict this anecdote in a more explicit and narrative manner than in previous poems: the lines are long, the semantic structure is logical, the syntax is relatively conventional and the puns are scarce. It is an intimate journey where the clash between very different sensitive experiences creates the scenario of a poem marked by nostalgia, not only personal but also collective: the emotional deterritorialisation of a Uruguayan experience. Here, the mind seems to be in two different places and, in that sense, it needs a language to organise that odd paradox. About this period of Espina's writing, Rolnick has noted that these poems create a virtual place where personal memory is linked with the vivid landscapes of childhood, while the adult world seems the realm of migration, nostalgia and mourning (Rolnick 2015, 130).

Baroque language: a compensation for the imperfections of the motherland

The imaginative map that Espina builds around Uruguayan identity is an effort to interpret the layers of chaos and disorder that make up a national community in formation. The poem works as a virtual organisation of that apparent disorder, which appears as symbols, images, customs and concepts about Uruguay. Rama explains that the role of literary works in the Latin American context is to '*traducir una nueva realidad interna [...] que se forja dentro de lo nacional, que pacta en distintos grados con algunas tradiciones y que, sobre todo, busca incrustarse en la realidad. El grado de eficacia que se derive de este proceso tendrá su correlato en el sesgo de la autenticidad de la creación*' (1975, 106). Authenticity and authorship appear, in that case, as the ability to embed into the literary culture aspects still unknown in social life. These hybrid, unstable objects are suggestive symptoms of the creation of an authorial identity in Espina's poetry, but they are also useful as an example of hypothetical transculturation and of conflictive and irresolvable heterogeneity. Hence, in the poem '*Las palabras al parecerse tanto (Unas y otras, delante y detrás)*', the author ironically defines poetry as an intellectual process (*Seso: poesía no ha de ser más que eso*). Thus, the poet transports the image of a brown bird to a space where a Uruguayan guava grows:

Seso: poesía no ha de ser más que eso
según siguen los adjetivos a un pájaro
pardo de mal agüero, como quien dice,
al estado dormido del yo cuando halla
la guayaba que por baguala, uruguaya

Espina 2015, 190

The poet translates that abstract bird to a culturally specific geographical setting. Further, this intellectual ‘transfer’ of a symbol that belongs to a foreign cultural context seeks to express the relationship between the metropolis and the periphery. The *pájaro pardo de mal agüero* is integrated into the Uruguayan landscape, where guava grows. However, it is not an ordinary guava but *baguala* guava—in many parts of South America this means indomitable, wild. The mere existence of this fruit seems to wake up the sleeping self to the dark/black bird of a bad omen, perhaps a raven. The *sudaca* poet finds his authorial identity in this awakening to the untamed and the wild. Despite the fast pace of the syntax helping to express an undifferentiated flow of language in which everything has the same weight (*el pájaro pardo y la guayaba baguala*), this exchange depicts the borderlands between the American, minor, marginal elements and the Western literary ones. In that space of discovery and revelation of possible and impossible cultural mixtures, the cultural identity of the poet appears suddenly in those landscapes that resist being reduced or simplified. Uruguay appears as the indomitable, the irreducible, the guava that grows where it wants. Besides, these transfers between a cosmopolitan thesaurus and an atavistic and indomitable background reveal the oral relationships between the spontaneous dialect and the institutional regulations imposed on language. This can be seen, for example, in the poem ‘*El anónimo orden del lenguaje (La vida como una suma de interjecciones)*’:

¿Cómo sería tal país, si prohibiera el gobierno desde
hoy ¡las! interjecciones, uf, ¡guau!, ay, oh, ah, eh, ea?
¿Y si las hiciera obligatorias, de qué manera detener
a la multitud diciendo ¡uf!, guau, ay, oh, ah, eh y ¡ea!

Espina 2015, 231

In this excerpt, Espina claims spontaneity in the construction of oral language as a form of emancipation against the government. This speculation about the use of interjections works as a defence of oral communication as a legitimate source of literary language and also as an absurd and ironic utopia. The use of exclamation and question marks underlines that linkage between the use of interjections and orality. Each of these interjections has a

specific meaning (*guau*, surprise; *uf*, tiredness; *ay*, pain; *oh*, surprise), but the lines refer to their functioning as a vehicle for spontaneously expressing the speakers' emotions. The baroque gesture is clearly apparent in this text: the interjections that the poet includes seem both interminable and, paradoxically, insufficient. How many interjections are needed to develop a baroque, inexhaustible dialogue? In the process of filling the ontological void of Uruguayan identity, the words are excessive and, at the same time, scarce. Hence, these interjections are pretexts for linguistically expressing the peremptoriness and contingency of a small and recent country. In the same poem, Espina plays with the semantics of morphemes and the relationship that some of these have to Uruguayan identity. The poet relates the morpheme *ay* and the interjection *ay*, pointing out that its presence as a suffix in the word Uruguay is not coincidence, but a deep link to a literature that grows through the codes and dynamics of oral and everyday language:

¿Y si hay más de un Uruguay se justificará decir guau
en lugar de ay, días como estos que siempre son hoy?
¿Y si fuera Uruguay, un Paraguay posterior? Entonces
sí, qué problema, ay por lo que hay, ay, porque no hay
ni ¡ay! para ayudar a los del Ayuí¹⁰² y a muchos por aquí?

Espina 2015, 231

In this poem, it is possible to appreciate that Uruguay's unstable identity is interrogated with some irony. Where is Uruguay? Through references to language and geography, Espina draws and imagines Uruguay's place in the world. In that sense, the interjection is a subtle symbol of a political, geographic and linguistic identity. His poetry pays attention to this kind of detail that most writers might consider meaningless. Of course, this deterritorialised, unstable, baroque identity involves not only aspects such as symbols (a bird) or certain types of words (interjections); there are also abstract elements, such as cultural notions about time: an example of this is the idea of nostalgia for an archaic territory. This suggests the possibility that poetic language functions as a machine for time travel or, more precisely, for demonstrating the artificiality of time as a conceptual construction. This idea is evident at many points in Espina's writing. For example, when he says '*El país de ayer llegará como llamada telefónica*' (2015, 252), the telephone call is an intruder and a demiurge that allows the journey to be possible, even if the message is about his parents' deaths.

¹⁰² Ayuí Grande is a stream in the province of Entre Ríos, Argentina.

Espina's strategy for dealing with unstable identities and discourses in flux is occasionally driven by pure play, by pure expenditure. Thus, Espina writes, '*lar o caraos a rodear al ibirapitá / pareciendo a lo lejos un pirarajá*' (2015, 171). The similarity of two words of Guaraní origin (*ibirapitá* and *pirarajá*), for example is used to create an illusion of identity and sameness between the words. In this extract, the *ibirapitá* (a tree) was surrounded by *caraos* (limpkins, characteristic birds of Uruguay), creating a scenario like an aquarium (with a *pirarajá* swimming). This is a disconcerting metaphor, but it is surprisingly accomplished. Through all these radical procedures, Espina creates a map of landscapes whose logic oscillates between the surprising and the absurd. This questioning of logic aims to demonstrate the particularity of the cultural and geographical reality he portrays. Espina emphasises Uruguay's exuberance, exposing in his poems the unusual relationship between Uruguay's people, language, and natural landscapes. In several senses, this exuberant inventory emerges from an artificial country that must be insistently corroborated: a cultural identity that requires a lush linguistic display to complete and fill the gaps that exist in its historical and social configuration. Thus, as Espina points out in the poem '*El pacto de los significados (Una interpretación en cuotas)*', '*en medio de la patria trunca / todo está por existir seguro*' (2015, 187). These lines clearly point to a radical perspective: the 'real' existence of Uruguay takes place in a hypothetical or utopian future. This homeland will exist in an infinitely postponed movement: that trip, oblique and baroque, towards a definitive identity is what Espina imagines through his writing.

In Espina's poetry, the South (as well as the Global South) appears as a utopian space. It is not a political utopia but rather an emotional and imaginary one: it is the territory where reality can be invented. It is not just a cardinal point, but an entire perspective on the world: a symbolic and political space where some realities are transculturated and some show their mutual heterogeneity, where history is postponed and unfinished, where institutions have yet to be configured, where language still has realities to name (objects, animals, plants, relations, etc.). An example of this can be seen in the poem '*Del país es Hidalgo (Bartolomé)*':

Al Sur, iba al Sur, al alrededor a cuyo ruido los
arrayanes darán los nombres que podrían tener.
Sur, siempre ¡al! Sur, donde las causas existen

Espina 2015, 243

This South is not only a utopian place, but the space *donde las causas existen*—a place where the relationship between ideas and actions makes sense and is projected in real life and in art. That South is the scene of spontaneity, where all kinds of events are still possible. But what events? In the poem, ‘*El palacio de la práctica (Arte poética)*’ gives the following answer: ‘*será para el país la página otra patria*’ (Espina 2015, 262). Indeed, the utopian territory where (poetic) language expands and complements its linguistic and cultural archive is Espina’s Uruguay. In several senses, Espina’s poetic proposal works to include those elements of Uruguayan identity that remain hidden to historians. These gaps in social discourse are exposed through paradoxes that form part of a linguistic framework that seeks to integrate everything. Uruguay, as a whole, only seems visible in language.

Conclusion

As previously discussed, Pino points out the links between the nature of the South and a non-Western concept of time as the central elements in Espina’s neo-baroque poetics (Pino 2009, 148). However, nature as a concept seems insufficient in describing the type of relations that Espina’s poetry has with Uruguay. Through his essays, poems and even as a guest in television forums and interviews, his proposal has been to establish solid lines of convergence among his thought, Uruguayan culture (understood as a unified whole) and poetic language (as a space where literary Spanish and orality seek to integrate into hyper-literary, complex, difficult, reluctant linguistic devices). This complex poetry, like a puzzle or literary sudoku, justifies its difficulty in deciphering and breaking down a very eccentric national identity. This eccentricity is what Espina has sought to use for a dialogue in the hypothetical context of world literature or several minor-literature constellations.

This is not paradoxical: Espina’s poetry seems susceptible to a wordlist reading, but the conceptual and contextual explanation must be made in Uruguayan terms. He has developed an oeuvre strongly encoded by means of a symbolic, syntactic, phonetic and lexical plot that requires sufficient knowledge of Uruguayan and River Plate culture to be read. The learnedness demanded to read this work supposes a modification of any previously established reading policy. Hence, his poetic language must be read as conceptually minority and peripheral (for example, in cosmopolitan social spaces of Latin America, the Iberian Peninsula or the United States) because the misunderstanding and

confusion it causes forces readers to read more slowly, between the lines, in detail and to immerse themselves in the aesthetic-cultural codes that the poet has created and recreated. In this sense, Espina's work is determined by its 'Uruguayan-ness' because his inclusion in a panorama of contemporary poetry is limited by the specific dynamics that condition literary works written in River Plate Spanish by an eccentric and experimental Uruguayan author.¹⁰³ Consequently, his writings must be read in a direct dialogue with eccentric Uruguayan identity, whose configuration can be observed when carrying out a contextualised reading of his poems. Likewise, any analysis of his work's dissemination should consider the relationship between Uruguayan eccentricity (and its marginal and peripheral location) and the eccentricity of Espina's own work. Hence, a basic premise for reading Espina's work is that the eccentricity (geographical and cultural) of Uruguay and the eccentricity of his poems are mutually convergent and complementary.

Espina achieves this convergence through painstaking work in regard to four primary points, the first of which is his use of ethno-symbolic vocabulary. He uses a very specific lexicon to name specific Uruguayan realities and to name some realities already familiar in the Western world with Uruguayan words. Furthermore, his poems mix conventional words of peninsular Spanish and words very characteristic of River Plate Spanish. Secondly, by dismantling the linearity of the phrase, he uses a syntax that creates the illusion that the entire poem is internally coherent. Thus, the combination of scenery, the intricate texture, and the collage structure that simultaneously contradicts its references reveal the limits of transculturation and the structural heterogeneity among different cultural backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives.

The anomalous syntax is not only an authorial gesture but also a symptom of the disagreement between the poetic language and the reality of Uruguay.¹⁰⁴ Thirdly, Espina's images are so extravagant that they are unthinkable outside the historical context of postmodernity. This means that the structural conflict of Uruguayan identity and the accelerated dynamics of the contemporary world are combined in his poetry. In that sense, although Mallén's *Poesía del lenguaje: de T.S. Eliot a Eduardo Espina* is a comprehensive study, it does not seem that the 'illegibility' of Espina's poetry noted by Mallén is a purely authorial search; instead, there is an inquiry about the limits and

¹⁰³ A similar case in Uruguayan narrative writing is Mario Levrero (1940–2004).

¹⁰⁴ As noted previously, Sommer explains that minority writings are characterised by: 1) a non-cooperative syntax; 2) their own political utopias; and 3) a linkage between individual life and social life (2006, 31). In Espina's work, the relationship between a minor poetic language as possibility and accomplishment is the bridge between the lyric puzzle and the political-imaginative utopia.

transformations of Uruguayan identity (especially in *El cutis patrio*). The frenetic rhythm, without pauses or silences, expresses a desire to simulate a contemporary ‘acceleration’ in his poems. In that sense, Uruguayan identity and his writings are not only interrelated but also merged with the historical present. In fact, the rhythmic construction is the main connection to the cultural and social characteristics of postmodernity: a possible conclusion is that the Uruguayan poetry he defends has a chameleonic nature, always in tune with its time: repetition, simultaneity, and acceleration attempt to express that capacity for cultural mutation. Finally, frequent plays on words create the appearance of impenetrability, which gives these texts an almost sculptural character. This makes the reader pause and observe the poem’s structure in its mere materiality: the writer does not allow us to ignore the strangeness he has created.

All these mechanisms converge into a form of writing that makes strangeness its calling card. For Espina, the basic premise is that Uruguayan identity is strange and, in that sense, a coherent Uruguayan poem must be written in an eccentric way. In that sense, the key assertion is that this rarity is not an arbitrary construction, but rather coincides with the sociolinguistic features of Uruguayan Spanish and with the natural landscapes of the River Plate region. Throughout this chapter, I have analysed how Espina’s poetic discourse and certain features of Uruguayan identity mutually interact. It is impossible to determine to what extent the poet plans this performance, or whether the effect simply happens as a sublimation of a subjective experience which is deeply marked by the reality of this eccentric country, with its minor landscapes and its minor Spanish. Nonetheless, there is coherence between the radicalism of his poetic language and the whole idea of an eccentric country. In fact, Espina’s poetry manages to be located in the mobile centre of a minor literature and, for that reason, it manages to extend the register of Uruguayan poetry in an unusual direction.

Espina pushes Uruguayan identity to its limits, extrapolates it, and points out its contradictions. His baroque language develops a possibility—probably the most radical—for highlighting Uruguay’s contradictions as a country and as a cultural and linguistic identity. In the case of this author, the inquiry about identity includes an intelligent meditation on the role of the migrant subject and the intellectual and emotional strategies this subject must use to preserve his original national identity. In several senses, his poems are allegories of these incomplete travels and deterritorialisations: in fact, everything in these poems seems to be in transition, undergoing mutation. Thus, this style—in apparent ‘fracking’ or internal movement—reveals a self-awareness that

Uruguayan identity itself is a work in progress, implying that its social and cultural dynamics are alive.

Perhaps the strongest and most notable tension in Espina's poetry occurs between this erratic syntax and the verbal landscapes where the poet appeals to home, nature, neighbourhood, traditional dishes, patriotic symbols, and family. However, for this poet none of these experiences is isolated, and his aesthetic proposal takes them as a point of departure to reveal the most complex, unusual and hidden aspects of Uruguayan identity. A good allegory for describing his creative process is an album of unfocused photos, always placed in the same manner (like columns), portraying sudden and unusual transitions among them. For example, his poetry transits from abstract meditations on death in the Texas plains and the Uruguayan pampa, to humorous and absurd discussions of birds and mammals. His baroque language dissimulates the abruptness of certain transitions. Breaking the conventional hierarchy of these elements, Espina offers a mask, a skin, a countenance for that artificial country known as Uruguay. His poetic language invents a simulacrum that, thanks to its effectiveness and insistence, seeks to become the true face of a minor, recent and eccentric country.

Chapter 6. Fernando Nieto Cadena: Ironic National Identity

te iba a decir un chiste que se puede contar en los desfiles
Contar por ejemplo 'te amo patria mía'

FERNANDO NIETO CADENA

Fernando Nieto Cadena belongs to a lineage of writers who are both out of place and deeply anchored in two countries and cultures (in this case, Ecuador and Mexico). Despite that suggestive place of enunciation (with a significant trace of deterritorialisation), no critic from either national canon has had the interest or curiosity to incorporate his writing into a national or transnational literary canon.¹⁰⁵ Nieto Cadena's marginality in the context of Latin American poetry occurs due to his eccentricity in the context of national and Latin American traditions. In both cases, this marginality resides in two interrelated phenomena, Ecuador's bi-regional character and the poet's long self-imposed exile in Mexico. Nieto Cadena's poetry is a symptom of the amalgam or superimposition of anthropological and historical archives—often antagonistic—that configure the fragmented Ecuadorian identity. It should be noted that these anthropological and geographical heterogeneities and asymmetries correspond to a fragmented social history, which has not been integrated into a single comprehensive story. In this sense, there are two fundamental questions in this chapter: 1) How could there be a national Ecuadorian poet if there is no established narrative surrounding national identity? 2) How can a poet represent national identity if he ironically rejects it, and if he represents a local or regional identity? One of the structural components of the economic, political and cultural fragmentation in Ecuador is the duality between the highlands (with a strong indigenous Kitu-Inca component) and the coast (predominantly Afro-Caribbean). As will be demonstrated below, Nieto Cadena obsessively highlights his Caribbean origins throughout his poetry. Through a colloquial and ironic discursive strategy, his exile is expressed through a nostalgic relationship with the city of Guayaquil and the reconstruction of an eminently *costeño* identity.

¹⁰⁵ A notable exception is the master's thesis by L. C. Mussó Mujica, discussed above (*Fernando Nieto Cadena: la épica de lo cotidiano*, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Sede, Ecuador, 2011). In addition to this critical text it is worth adding the novel *Tatuaje de naufragos* (2009) by the Guayaquilean writer Jorge Velasco Mackenzie, where Nieto Cadena is one of the leading characters.

Both elements have a link with the dissemination of Nieto Cadena's work and its place in the map of Ecuadorian poetry. Thus, the central thesis of this chapter is that Nieto Cadena's poetry articulates symbolic, allegorical and linguistic references to Guayaquil with a nostalgic, sarcastic and nihilistic outlook in order to reject the notion of Ecuadorian identity (understood as a political and bureaucratic imposition). Instead, his oeuvre affirms an individual identity configured through connivance and creolisation (Glissant 2010, 33) as a radical opposition to power as institutional coercive control.

Fernando Nieto Cadena: expatriate and poetic humourist

Nieto Cadena's work must be contextualised within the framework of academic, historical and political dissidence. He was born in Guayaquil in 1947 and died in Villahermosa, Tabasco (Mexico) of diabetes-related causes in 2017,¹⁰⁶ following almost four decades of residing in Mexico. He studied literature and psychology at the Catholic University of Quito, but he did not complete his studies. Nonetheless, he held the Chair of Literary Theory and 20th Century Latin American Literature at the Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo until his journey to Mexico in 1978. In that country, he coordinated many literary workshops—an intellectual heritage gained from his teacher, Miguel Donoso Pareja—in cities such as León, Villahermosa, Orizaba, Mexico City, Bacalar and Ciudad del Carmen. He was general coordinator for the system of literary workshops of the Instituto de Cultura de Tabasco, among other institutions. His most disseminated works are the collection of short stories *Si quieren los vuelvo a escribir* (1971) and several volumes of poetry: *Tanteos de ciego a mediodía* (1971), *A la muerte a la muerte a la muerte* (1973), *De buenas a primeras* (1976), *Somos asunto de muchísimas personas* (1985), *Los des (en) tierros del caminante* (1988, winner of the Jorge Carrera Andrade National Poetry Prize of Ecuador), *De última hora* (2003), *Duro con ella* (2003) and *Sobresaturaciones* (2014).

Distracted and sedentary in his lifestyle, Nieto Cadena developed a lyrical style that in Mexico and Ecuador is still perceived as minor: colloquial humour. Confronted with the metaphysical earnestness that has characterised Latin American poetry and

¹⁰⁶ Regarding the poet's last years, the Guayaquilean novelist Jorge Velasco Makenzie points out in *Tatuaje de naufragos*: 'Una isla, la del Carmen en el Golfo de México donde el poeta vivía, atacado por una diabetes que lo estaba matando. Un muelle, en el malecón del río de la ciudad de los manglares. Un parque, Centenario de años frente al bar Montreal. Una iglesia, de la Victoria, en cuyos alrededores creció huérfano de padre. Una casa de los abuelos atestada de libros. Una cantina, el salsa na má, donde solía ir a escuchar música tropical' (2009, 108).

which, consequently, has defined certain expectations regarding what a poem ‘should’ be in that context, Nieto Cadena’s poetry is characterised by two elements that many intellectual readers would reject: acidic comedy that critiques any form of regulation or power, and a casual colloquialism that accumulates all kinds of everyday references.¹⁰⁷ The axiom and prejudice that affirms that ‘non-telluric poetry is always minor poetry’ is related to the need to emphasise the sacredness of poetry and its place in a ‘respectable’ cultural archive. This reductionist heuristic approach has placed Nieto Cadena’s poetry in an uncertain and peripheral position. If we add to this the peripheral location of his town of exile in Villahermosa (considering the Mexican centripetal structure around of Mexico City), the narrow diffusion of his poetry is not surprising. Now, perhaps the most complicated issue is evident in the relationship that this writing establishes with institutional power as a system of organising the metanarrative of the Ecuadorian nation. To a large extent, Nieto Cadena’s writing reveals the incongruity and incompleteness of national identity from an aesthetic perspective. In this poet, the articulation of specific linguistic procedures and some thematic concerns appears concretely; both are portrayed as mechanisms to unbalance the fragments of national history claimed by official institutions (at school, in the media, in the workplace) by placing them in a complex and slightly chaotic poetic discourse about Guayaquilean identity (as part of a tropical, baroque cosmos).

This argument about Nieto Cadena’s poetry is also noticeable in interviews he gave. An example appears on the personal blog of writer and professor Fernando Itúrburu:

de pronto me encontré con que no tenía, literariamente, un pasado al cual asirme por lo que debí inventarme una tradición fuera de la histeria patriotoide. Uno de mis descubrimientos, vía la revisión de ese cuento de la patria, fue el hallazgo de unos recuerdos infantiles donde la música afrocaribe era el armazón de unas noches marcadas por las películas mexicanas de los años cincuenta. (Nieto Cadena 2017)

Nieto Cadena evidently cultivated an outsider persona in such interviews, but there is a very strong coherence of this image of an ‘anti-patriot’ cynical migrant within his biography, his poetry and complementary documents like this interview. When Nieto Cadena affirms that there was no ‘past to hold on to’, that does not imply that there was

¹⁰⁷ This is exemplified by the following lines: ‘*Hago pis bizantinobaustismal en Platón y su pandilla / me limpio los zapatos con las barbas de Darwin o del Cid / Voy al parque y me cuelgo de los pechos de Minerva / hago el amor al descuido y me fugo con Dulcinea*’ (Nieto Cadena 1973, 32).

not an official and institutional past in Ecuadorian culture (exhibited in monuments and taught in schools and colleges), but rather that this past is perceived by the poet as a *histeria patriotoide*. Hence, it is clear that this writer interpreted his personal experiences through a critical view of what it means to be a Guayaquilean citizen confronted with Ecuadorian national tales. In that gesture of Nieto Cadena lies a radical, revealing attitude about the intrinsic heterogeneity that exists between the official culture and a culture related to the neighbourhood and the world of life (Habermas 1989, 27). In this way, for example, Afro-Caribbean music (salsa,¹⁰⁸ *danzón*) converges in writing whose rhythm, character and references introduce a style contrasted with the hermetic, serious and metaphorical intonation that has characterised Ecuadorian poetry. Nieto Cadena not only confronts the axiom that identifies Ecuador as an Andean nation—with the reductionism and simplification that this implies—but he also invents, exhibits and imagines a specific Caribbean symbolic territory. As stated above, this interpellation to specific models of expression and conviviality has left his work in a marginal or at least problematic place in the conflictive map of Ecuadorian poetry. To this must be added his exile—or migration—as a personal choice, the self-regulation of the conventional circuits and the dissemination of his publications.

Minor literatures, dissemination and canon

The dissemination of Nieto Cadena's writings has been very limited. For example, the first anthology of his work published in an academic context, *Detrás de mí queda un barrio a oscuras* (2019, Quito: Pontificia Universidad Católica), appeared only after his death. The fact that most of Nieto Cadena's poetry collections have been published primarily in Ecuador while he himself was based in Mexico has created a phenomenon of publishing dispersion. Also relevant is the reluctance or indifference of the poet, perhaps ironically, to organise his work during his lifetime. In consequence, the relative invisibility of his work has fragmented the criticism of it. All these circumstances have resulted in two key difficulties in reading his work: his poems have been published in a disorderly manner (perhaps without canonical intention), and his style and themes challenge the concept of a unified and unifying story about Ecuadorian society.

¹⁰⁸ Salsa is a dance music genre resulting from the synthesis of Cuban *son* and other Caribbean music genres, with jazz and other American rhythms. Salsa was consolidated as a commercial success by Puerto Rican-born musicians in New York City in the 1960s (García, 2009).

Contributing to the first difficulty, Nieto Cadena himself repeatedly proclaimed the uselessness of writing.¹⁰⁹ The most specific relationship that can be found between this sarcastic and ironic conception of poetry and other preceding works of Latin American literature is primarily in antipoetry, a concept invented by the Chilean writer Nicanor Parra (1914–2018) (Mussó 2011, 20).¹¹⁰ Edith Grossman explains that Parra

[...] has consistently affirmed the essential unity of the linguistic artefact, wherein the distance separating ‘real’ language from ‘poetic’ language is bridged by the fact of antipoetry. His purpose has been to force poetry into the occupancy of what he has called ‘real space’ as opposed to ‘literary space’: to make of the poetic art a vital means whereby reader and poet share an intensely felt response to familiar realities (1971, 72).

In that sense, antipoetry is, rather than a personal style or an author’s imprint, a mode of thinking about the relationship between poetry, reality and literary space. The point where Parra relates to Nieto Cadena is his interest in integrating into his work ‘nearby’ realities, personal memories, or what Robert Pinsky calls ‘the impure’ (2009, 8). In addition, unlike Milán or Espina (and perhaps Parra himself), ‘the impure’ is not incorporated into the poem from an intellectual, calculated perspective. Instead of dismissing nearby realities as unworthy of emotional attention, everyday life is included in the text in a spontaneous way. The point where Nieto Cadena exhibits certain intellectualisation is his scepticism (shared with Parra) towards the grandiloquence, the aesthetic canon of high culture, the solemnity and the transcendence of the poem (Mussó 2011, 12). Hence, Nieto Cadena’s poetry takes a nihilistic perspective on writing: ‘*para qué escribir cosas que usted nunca leerá que no sean estados de cuenta*’ (Nieto Cadena 2003, 99). In this sense, his authorial self-parody implies an anti-canonical and self-consciously peripheral perspective. Thus, his erratic publications in Ecuador and his reluctance to organise his work prior to his death reveal a certain laziness—one can speak

¹⁰⁹ An example of this perspective on poetic writing is ‘*pienso que Descartes a lo mejor lo que quiso escribir fue coito ego sum y le falló el pulso tipeó mal letra sobró la g / qué otras obviedades más puedo escribir*’ (Nieto Cadena 2003, 131).

¹¹⁰ Parra explained the origin of antipoetry in the following way: ‘*Bauticé los Poemas y antipoemas posteriormente. Había comenzado a escribirlo en 1938, pero sólo di con el título en 1949 o 1950, en Inglaterra. Andaba rebuscando por una librería cuando me fijé en A-poèmes, libro del poeta francés Henri Pichette. ¡De modo que la calificación de antipoema se había empleado en el siglo XIX —aunque probablemente los griegos ya la usaran! En cualquier caso, el término me vino a posteriori; o sea, yo no escribí la obra de acuerdo con una teoría completamente articulada desde el principio.*’ (Parra 1971, 8).

of a poetic of inefficiency in his life and work—in disputing the centrality of Ecuador’s national literary canon, which is solidly represented in the leading figure of Iván Carvajal.

Regarding the second difficulty, it is evident that Nieto Cadena’s style cannot be easily assimilated in a feudal and classist country, as Ecuador remains today. In several senses, the literary works that the official cultural institutions and academic centres have endorsed are those which are symmetrical, balanced and serious, and those that endorse the official cultural identity, that extend it, but that do not problematise it. Because Nieto Cadena’s writings do not fit into these aesthetic and ideological criteria, his work has been marginalised and postponed. However, globalisation has generated a broad phenomenon of rethinking political borders, auto-biographical stories and national literary cultures. This phenomenon has problematised the very existence of national literatures and has created a favourable context for the claim of specific eccentric literatures: with satirical, ethnic, kinky and postmodern ingredients. Although many artistic and academic institutions are linked with conservative geopolitical powers, the new intellectual scenario is unstable enough to examine critically Nieto Cadena’s place in Ecuadorian poetry. A possible starting point for a revision of his work is a letter sent by the writer Fernando Itúrburu, which Nieto Cadena quotes in a poem:

lee en tu correo electrónico que eres responsable del producto poético más elaborado, contradictorio, innovador del Ecuador en los últimos treinta años/ relees la carta de Fernando Itúrburu donde se lamenta ecuador simplemente ya no existe, la gente sí, pero ya no hay nada de nada

Nieto Cadena 2003, 118

As noted above, Nieto Cadena includes antipoetic or extrapoetic elements in his poetry such as, in this case, an email where it is indicated that his work *es el producto poético más elaborado, contradictorio, innovador del Ecuador en los últimos treinta años* (a quotation apparently taken from the letter by Itúrburu). That statement, beyond the vanity it exposes, indicates an alternate authorship, with sampling as a form of collage, expanding the limits of what a poem could be. Of course, this effect contrasts with the next statement of the above extract, *Ecuador simplemente ya no existe*. This idea is controversial because it is related to a very subjective perception. In that sense, it is worth distinguishing the world as an objective reality and the literary world that the author builds:

[Literary worlds] no matter how they form themselves, are, among other things, always relations to and theories of the lived world, whether as largely unconscious normative constructs, as re-articulations, or even as active refusals of the world-norms of their age. (Hayot 2012, 137)

Literary worlds are not, in that sense, autonomous entities, oblivious to real-world experiences, but rather re-articulations and reformulations of that real world. What can be determined is the degree of correspondence with the social world and with the world-imperatives of Nieto Cadena's time. The crisis of a post-national world has allowed literary works to be visible not only as peripheral exceptions or marginal oddities of the Global South but as integral literary worlds. In the case of Nieto Cadena, it is appropriate to discuss an aesthetic world, since his work is able to constellate a series of minor landscapes that correspond to a subjective outlook encompassing several emotional geographies (Guayaquil, Puerto El Carmen, Caribbean culture, sex, etc.). Perhaps Iturburu's suggestion is that Nieto Cadena's poetry should be read in the framework of post-national literatures: it is a political and emotive reading of what Ecuador means today. Specifically, for Nieto and Iturburu, Ecuador is today an uncertain administrative fiction—and not an integrated country. Within that space, Nieto Cadena's poetry seeks to question this administrative fiction, emphasising the psychological and spiritual congruence between the scenarios he constantly visits throughout his work. Its aesthetic singularity lies in the radical methods this poet uses to expose that Ecuadorian-Caribbean-migrant world. The impurity that Pinsky points out becomes the aesthetic code through which Nieto Cadena intends to hack Ecuadorian identity presuppositions.

The creation of a unique aesthetic world from a set of cultural referents scarcely visited previously is the focal point of the critical work *Fernando Nieto Cadena: la épica de lo cotidiano*, by Guayaquil-born writer Luis Carlos Mussó (b. 1970) who states in the abstract of his thesis, '*quiero desentrañar la manera en que se construye esta lírica, poblada de elementos cercanos a los pobladores de la costa ecuatoriana, con mucho de influencia caribeña: son ellos quienes, al acercarse a esta poesía, podrán leer/se* (2011, 4). Despite certain affinities, there is a critical difference between Mussó's work and the current study. Although his theoretical framework (drawing on the arguments of the Marxist author Terry Eagleton) points in the same direction, Mussó's main argument focuses on Nieto's style, explaining it through his sociocultural context. Instead, this study aims to analyse how these expressions are representations of a minor collective

sensitivity to the authority and authorship of the Ecuadorian nation-state. These unprecedented correlations between eccentric cultural landscapes and Ecuadorian culture are the nodes of Nieto's messy and politically uncomfortable oeuvre. Here, I seek to understand how this ironic poetry dismantles official stories about Ecuadorian identity through the construction of Guayaquilean-Caribbean (eloquent and brazen) nostalgic maps.

Neighbourhood and colloquial style

Neighbourhood images are decisive for the construction of Nieto Cadena's work. In several ways, his poetry is a GPS or radar reading of the modulations and textures of everyday Guayaquilean speech. In his poetry, a neighbourhood's streets, doors, schools, stores, restaurants, and extensions of parks and playgrounds create a map of movement where life happens: '*atrás de mí queda un barrio a oscuras / miro correr a la gente / darse golpes*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 27). In his poetry, the neighbourhood gathers and brings together people and affections (Appadurai 1996, 91; Mussó 2011, 50). The neighbourhood functions as an affective and symbolic ecosystem where life matters more than institutions and regulations. In a way, the relationship between oral language and spontaneity that Nieto Cadena builds throughout his work requires a fluid diction that only the use of long lines (sometimes expanded until they become prose) seems to order properly. A detailed presentation of everyday actions needs to develop a fluid and descriptive shape: '*En este momento, ellas estarán bailando en el festival del Salón Colonia*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 24). These everyday references organise an almost journalistic line, in which otherness and the evocation of feelings are scarce and concealed (visible here in the verb *estarán*). From there, the urban chronicler incorporates poetry into everyday life, established as an uninterrupted flow of apparently harsh elements:

en el parque las putas floean sus cuerpos
no hay un gil por la chucha

Nieto Cadena 1988, 59

Here, for example, Nieto's fidelity to his style is fundamentally fidelity to the circumstance and biographical contingencies that provoked the poem. In a way, this lack of plan becomes a poetic of the randomness that functions as a critique of logic, institutions, administration of language, rationalism, and rigid political identities. Thus, the carnivalesque character of his poetry lies not only in the lexicon he uses, but also in

randomness as a method to organise lines, poems and books. The obscene language intersects with tawdriness (*las putas florecen sus cuerpos*), revealing a mixture of vulgarity and tenderness, of sexism and innocence. The poet's neighbourhood appears in images of a park, where the scene takes place, to subsequently show an unusual expression: *no hay un gil por la chucha* instead of *no hay nadie*. A scene about the solitude of a park is turned into slang, the raw solitude of the neighbourhood. In his poetry in general, the structure of the phrase plays with an enumeration of everyday words—even swearwords—that function as anticlimactic gestures which, like Parra's antipoetry (Mussó 2011, 13), use vulgarity to defamiliarise the poetic language. Against domestic or domesticated poetry, Nieto Cadena uses slang words to undermine the poetic normality of the text. For example, when the poet says, '*él se pone muy solemne muy mierda muy jodedor*' (1988, 11), words like *jodedor* (instead of *fastidioso*) express a willingness to reinterpret not only what a poem is but also the geographical and anthropological elements that can be considered poetic.

In that context, neighbourhood music acts as a backdrop and catalyst for emotions and events. It is not an aim in itself, but rather, it causes events to happen: '*Lo ha dicho Rubén Blades*¹¹¹ / *la música sigue siendo solo un pretexto*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 12). In these lines, music seems to be an expression of social life, emphasising that the vital experience precedes the language—and not the opposite. The verse about the Panamanian salsa singer expresses the aim of violating the propaedeutic idea of what a poem is, introducing cultural references related to pop culture and pointing out its symbolic specificity in contrast with the Andean world's bureaucratic opacity: '*de iniciar una vez más la audición vespertina / Willie Colón*¹¹² *con Héctor Lavoe*¹¹³ / *coros e Johnny Pacheco*¹¹⁴ *y Justo Betancourt*¹¹⁵' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 31). The references to salsa music refer to the ethnoscaapes of a cultural migration that runs from the Caribbean and New York atmospheres to streets and parks in Guayaquil, without asking for authorisation

¹¹¹ Rubén Blades Bellido de Luna (b. 1948), known professionally as Rubén Blades, is a Panamanian singer, songwriter, actor, musician, activist and politician. Musically, he performs most often in the Afro-Puerto Rican, salsa and Latin jazz genres.

¹¹² William Anthony Colón Román (b. 1950) is an American salsa musician and social activist. He began his career as a trombonist and also sings, writes, produces, and acts.

¹¹³ Héctor Juan Pérez Martínez (1946–1993), better known as Héctor Lavoe, was a Puerto Rican salsa singer.

¹¹⁴ Johnny Pacheco (b. 1935) is a Dominican musician, arranger, composer, producer, and bandleader of Salsa music (*guaracha*, *son montuno*, *danzón*, *cha cha chá*, *guajira-son*, *pachanga*). His name is misspelled in the original poem.

¹¹⁵ Justo Betancourt (b. 1940) is a Cuban singer famous for his interpretation of '*Pa' bravo yo*',

from the unspoken rules of what is or can be ‘national music’ (for example, *pasillos* or *yaravíes*). As the musicologist Juan Mullo points out:

el aparecimiento de expresiones artísticas musicales generadas desde la colonia dentro de procesos interculturales, posteriormente denominadas nacionales, no son evidenciadas como tales sino luego de las tres primeras décadas del siglo XX, cuando luego de haberlas calificado de nativas, criollas, etc., los medios de comunicación de ese entonces, la radio principalmente, comienzan a identificar así, en primer lugar, a los distintos géneros musicales surgidos con una vinculación territorial nacional (2009, 29).

The rather recent demographic growth and diversification of the coastal population, and the presbyopia of the intellectuals, journalists and bureaucrats who defined the perimeter of what is and what is not Ecuadorian music at the beginning of the last century are the main two reasons for Nieto Cadena’s ‘old-fashioned’ Caribbean musical outlook. In his poetry, tropical music reveals a radical heterogeneity between Ecuador’s official identity and each region’s cultural identities. This can be observed in his claim about the Antillean influence in Guayaquil: ‘*irán a cenar con la medida de una familia no muy acostumbrada a las fiestas cosa rara en una ciudad que como sucede en todo el Caribe (y Guayaquil a pesar de estar en el Pacífico tiene una fuerte influencia antillana) no perdona ni el bautizo de una muñeca para armar un guateque*’ (Nieto Cadena 2003, 22). As the poet explains in this prose extract, the exaggeration and scandal of a party, or *guateque*, functions as a link between countries whose cities or regions have cultural components in common. Thus, for example, the neighbourhood as space of belonging and attachment functions as a mediator among the appropriations from American English (for example, *creisi*), salsa music and Caribbean slang (for example, everyday words such as *jeba*, ‘young woman’): ‘*lo más creisi jeba rica es que mientras venías ya te adoré*’ (Nieto Cadena 1988, 55). This gesture of Nieto Cadena exemplifies his willingness to sketch an alternative cultural identity (in this case, an ordinary masculinity of the street) on hybrid speech, where the colloquial language intersects with Spanglish. Somehow, he expands poetic language (particularly the lexicon) and simultaneously reinterprets the cultural borderline of what Guayaquil means. Thus, the imagined and remembered neighbourhood functions as a node among peninsular Spanish, the jargon of the Ecuadorian coast during the 1970s, and a set of unusual Anglicisms. In

fact, this poetry challenges the concept of an Ecuador based on mannered and aristocratic pseudo-Spanish customs: the poet proposes an identity based on exchange, flow, and commerce where a wide variety of localisms (Mexican, Caribbean, New Yorker or specifically Guayaquilean) and other cultural references are in dialogue within a bustling, street, anarchist and violent voice:

Así, Nieto es en el Ecuador una ruptura total, pero viene, a mi juicio, del escándalo tzántzico por un lado (en cuanto actitud, como luchador, en su caso solitario) y de los de Hora Zero.¹¹⁶ Sin embargo, se mete en lo coloquial con mayor agresión que éstos y la construcción verbal se acerca más a la de Jorge Reyes¹¹⁷ (poeta ecuatoriano contemporáneo de Carrera Andrade) que a la de Vallejo. La agresión de Nieto es fuerte e ideológica. (Donoso Pareja 1979, 18)

When Donoso Pareja discusses an ‘aggressive’ voice, this argument must be understood in terms of an incisive, intrusive and biting attitude towards reality. Nieto Cadena’s poetry effectively recognises heterogeneity as the constructive principle of its texts and virtually erases the frontier between text and context: the exterior and the interior layers, the spiritual and the mundane worlds seem to be the same thing. He creates a poetics of haggling, variety, scandal and ironic violence where, through long soliloquies, the poet seems to be negotiating and altering the definitive meaning of his words. This kind of trade as a dynamic element of social life—typical of Guayaquil—is evident in the existence of the *Bahía*. This place is a crowded commercial area of Guayaquil, where all kinds of goods are sold (from technology and jewellery to fast-moving consumer goods like food and drinks. In many senses, this poetry works as a linguistic ‘bay’. Since this word originally evoked a place of arrival and unloading, this poetry calls into question the traditional forms of social life, allowing more space for new words and new relations among them. In that context, money seems mixed with popular religiosity: ‘tanto milagro portentoso de a un sucre la estampita’ (Nieto Cadena 1976, 24); or ‘deambulando nomás sobre este Puerto / esta ciudad / donde mi amigo mi bróder

¹¹⁶ Hora Zero was an avant-garde poetry movement that emerged in the 1970s in Peru. Jorge Pimentel (b. 1944, Lima) and Juan Ramírez Ruiz (b. 1946, Lambayeque, d. 2007, Lima) were its founders. Hora Zero’s poetry was characterised by the transgression of the border between cultured language and popular language, the link between individual and society, and the questioning of traditional syntax (and of traditional poetic forms). Nieto Cadena’s poetry contains all of these characteristics.

¹¹⁷ Poet and journalist from Quito (1905–1977).

mi compañero / quiso vender tarjetas en la iglesia y le dijeron que no / que eso era una desleal competencia a las estampitas / que el sindicato de oraciones y anexos podía disgustarse' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 35). These concrete references to money are antithetical to electronic financial management, because every coin and every banknote is part of a sensitive and empirical situation where contact and affectivity are protagonists: both are characteristics of Nieto Cadena's writing method, which frequently portrays a subject who seems to be wandering through Guayaquil, feeling and exhibiting the situations of everyday life.

Irony against the nation-state

In Nieto Cadena's poetry, specific linguistic devices (slang, for example) function as anomalous elements within an institutionalised language. Irony is the most frequent rhetorical strategy for putting such elements into play. That irony is occasionally direct and points specifically against Ecuador as a country or nation-state: '*ahora sí los chingamos / ahora sí tenemos patria como cuando el petróleo*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 14). Here there is a double irony: for the poet, there was no homeland at the time of the 'oil boom', but neither does it exist now. This country's nonentity appears not only as something related to its economic history (in particular to the extractivist economy) but as something uncertain and hypothetical. Interestingly, this reference to ideoscapes uses the word *chingamos* (originally a Mexican word) to emphasise the chimerical success of Ecuadorian society. The use of this word expresses a linguistic loan to achieve a more powerful and ambiguous expression, whose ascription to a single geographical environment (a Mexican word used by an Ecuadorian-Mexican poet) is impossible. His willingness to question the power of the unifying—and, therefore, disciplinarian and authoritarian—stories is reflected, for example, in the following extract:

Anuncian desde Los Pinos cuál va a ser la tanda del señor presidente
repiten los mensajes represivos contra el habla
me pregunto de qué idioma nacional hablan

Nieto Cadena 1988, 14

In this case, the scenery is not Ecuador, but Mexico.¹¹⁸ These lines express a declaration of principles: the very act of speaking (that is, orality) is repressed by the nation-state—and journalistic or vernacular discourses that aim to offer a unified image of it. The poet shows that in both countries (Ecuador and Mexico) the institutional control over expression is immense, but subtle. In addition, Nieto Cadena shows that any control over language is necessarily control of the people's expressions and beliefs. The very idea of an atavistic perspective on identity is, for this poet, a prison or, at least, a question: '*la memoria de mis antepasados / ¿significa algo? / ¿significa algo la patria?*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 34). These lines reveal a critique not only of the abstract and artificial values that organise collective life, but also of the power that organises and regulates those values. At several moments throughout his poetic work, certain sentences express the poet's intention to question any notion of homeland: '*ahora resulta que de una vez por todas desdibujé ¿mi patria?*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 45). In this game of chained ironies, the poet uses the expression '*now it turns out*' as indicating that someone blames him for a reprehensible action: blurring the homeland. The word 'homeland' between question marks reveals Nieto's interest in discrediting the official grand narrative¹¹⁹ about *la patria*. Strictly speaking, it is difficult to distinguish whether the poet denies: 1) his belonging to the homeland that he was lucky to have, or 2) the very concept of homeland. In any case, the process of blurring what does not exist supposes that the poet sees the fatherland as a phantom construction, as a contingent and arbitrary elaboration. Thus, beneath this cynical writing, Nieto Cadena sketches a scenery of leisure, play and affections.

This dismantling of prejudices about his homeland progresses metonymically, and the poet's criticisms of national identity focus on enumerations of concrete elements such as, for example, heroic acts related to the origins of Ecuador: '*Ellos fueron la consumación el fracaso todos los abortos constitucionales / fueron el valor el temor la hidalguía el bastardismo del héroe nacional / Ellos son los atletas de nuestras olimpiadas republicanas*' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 73). Concepts such as the *bastardismo del héroe* not only exhibit Nieto Cadena's scant faith in heroism (and, thus, in the relationship between army, homeland, and transcendence), but also reveal an anarchist position toward any

¹¹⁸ The Residencia Oficial de los Pinos, referred to colloquially as Los Pinos, is the official residence and office of the President of Mexico. Located in the Bosque de Chapultepec (Chapultepec Forest) in central Mexico City, it became the presidential seat in 1934.

¹¹⁹ According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, grand narrative is a term for 'ideas, concepts, notions, or beliefs which can function to legitimate certain social actions and practices' (in Buchanan 2010, 210)

outlook that is not deeply individual. In this sense, the Caribbean identity that Nieto Cadena elaborated is certainly the recreation of a collective experience, but also a questioning of the relationships among myths, history and everyday life: the country's hero has no father and, therefore, does not represent anyone other than himself. Strictly speaking, it is a type of writing that systematically distrust official historiography. Its emphasis is on the difference between history as a real event and the discourse that the state ultimately organises to recreate—and speculate on—such events:

Coincidimos en confundir la historia
para buscar tres carabelas
un babieca
y un manco del espanto
Sólo hallamos la fosforera de Atahualpa¹²⁰
el condón de Moctezuma
un carnet profiláctico de Manuela Cañizares
Nieto Cadena 1976, 25

The graphic artist Miguel Capellini Obradora, Nieto Cadena's personal friend, has written in his text '*Setenta años de Fernando Nieto: Postmortem*' that the poet used irony as resistance to human emptiness and ferocious ambitions (2017, 7). This is inaccurate. Rather, Nieto Cadena uses banality and trivialisation as ways to question power and institutions. In the extract cited above, a list of historical characters or objects are falsified and ridiculed through absurd and implausible associations: for example, there is no evidence that any type of condom existed in pre-Hispanic times. The demystification of these historical references is a kind of erasure and graffiti on the surface of official texts. The poet parodies the relationship between certain emblematic —perhaps mythological— figures of Latin American and Ecuadorian history, and several references to utensils or devices of modernity (*fosforera, condón, carnet profiláctico*), reveal the ridiculousness and vulgarity of the human species. Through these oxymorons between the magnificence of historical figures and the vulgarity of these objects, the poet questions the sacred character of the official history.

This procedure of discrediting social myths is articulated through two fundamental notions: 1) the perception of the national story as something fragile, and 2)

¹²⁰ Atahualpa (1500–1533) was the last Inca. His father, Huayna Cápac, died around 1525 without leaving a successor. This provoked the bloody Incan civil war between Atahualpa and his brother Huáscar. After winning the confrontation, Atahualpa became very briefly the last sovereign emperor of the Incan Empire (Tawantinsuyu) before the Spanish conquest ended his reign.

the need to highlight an alternative symbolic territory through poetic language. For this, Nieto Cadena uses what Mussó calls *sermo plebeyo* (2011, 29), which means a literature of everyday life, vulgarity and contingency. An example of the latter can be seen in the following passage:

Sigo pensando que en un rato cualquiera
se desploman se caen se humedecen
dos terceras partes de nuestra mala historia

Nieto Cadena 1985, 23

The awareness of the fragility of the stories merged in Ecuadorian social history is expressed in the use of verbs that work with a parallel structure (*desplomán, caen humedecen*) and with similar meanings (to tear, to ruin). For Nieto, the national history is a weak and fragile construction whose bureaucratic absurdities he exhibits through extravagant vignettes: '*los de prensa titulares / los juicios seguramente certeros de los editorialistas / bien sabes que no hay lógica en el fútbol / que nada se ha escrito sobre gustos y colores / que más vale ministerio en mano que diez revoluciones volando*' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 81). Again, the poet uses an enumerative and metonymic structure where the most dissimilar facts are accumulated in unusual and, paradoxically, everyday lists. In these poems, Ecuadorian society is ridiculed, as the absurd logic of many everyday situations is revealed, through the saturation and amassing of them. For example, when the poet affirms that '*un ministerio en mano es mejor que cien revoluciones volando*', he makes ironic the utopian character of social revolutions and the absurdity of human societies. In addition, there is a gesture of support for leisure, laziness and minimal effort: the immobility of a ministry is preferable to the uncertainty of a utopia. That attitude, in the context of highly competitive societies, is an anarchist gesture.

In several senses, the poet determines nation-states to be delusional experiments, and something similar happens with social utopias:

Cada uno se sentía el más marx de los marxmasés
cada uno soñaba entrar vencedor en los pueblos con la boina roja

Nieto Cadena 1988, 62

Here, Nieto uses a complex phonetic game. In Ecuadorian colloquial Spanish, the expression *el más más* is used to refer to someone very prominent in any activity. The homophony between Marx and *más* serves Nieto Cadena in his creation of a neologism

(*marxmases*) to parody the purported moral superiority of many leftist militants. This wordplay works as a critical device against ideologies and their concrete expressions through a humorous wordplay (*el más marx de los marxmasas*) that reveals that even theoretically egalitarian spaces are controlled by forms of power. This discrediting of political life assumes a vaguely Dadaist character, like an ironic and dislocated chronicle: ‘*Los diarios y discursos dicen que la revolución es incontenible / (Por voluntad suprema del Alto Mando). / Uno da vueltas y ve que todo es igual / Las flores han crecido en el parque, / llegan los cerdos, las pisan y se alejan / Es la revolución nos dicen*’ (Nieto Cadena 1973, 23). Although Nieto Cadena demonstrates that his generation configured its identity through the political processes in Cuba and Chile (in addition to keeping Marxist thought as a reliable reference), he makes a radical critique of leftist critical thinking. In fact, what Nieto Cadena proposes is a radical questioning of any social configuration arising from power. Strictly speaking, he appeals to the vindication of minority thoughts, landscapes and writings.

Hence, these references to Appadurai’s ideoscapes reveal the chaos, self-parody and vulgarity underlying the most hopeful and egalitarian projects. All this expresses a humorous perspective on institutions of any kind:

quise declararme apátrida y no hubo cómo/
demasiados trámites para un triste pasaporte azul avalado por la puta ONU
Nieto Cadena 2003, 95

It is evident that all these gestures appeal to a ‘neighbourhood philosophy’ of individualistic leisure, of subjectivity as the main subject of life and poetic experience. In several senses, that leisure is constrained by the laws that make up the Ecuadorian nation-state, fundamentally because it has subtly repressed Guayaquil’s most profound identity: the Caribbean and the Pacific coast. That identity is anchored in a kind of dispersed Eros, open to multiple linguistic coordinates. For example, here, transitive verbs turn into absolutely unprecedented actions: ‘*Si supiera ruso, árabe, sueco, escribiría AMOR en las paredes, escribiría poemas en presente en verbos transitivos nunca oídos por los críticos*’ (Nieto Cadena 1973, 11). That irony about cosmopolitanism or ‘worldlism’ is evident in the verb *supiera*, which indicates that the fictional passage that goes through the ethno-

landscapes of migratory flows is impossible (and that even that linguistic and emotional Caribbean is utopian).¹²¹

Guayaquil as Caribbean scenery

In several senses, Nieto Cadena's opposition to the official tale of the Ecuador nation goes hand-in-hand with the persistent affirmation of a Caribbean identity, in which the tropical scenery and African and Afro-Antillean influence are decisive (Mussó 2011, 25; Capellini Obrador 2017, 7). Like later poets such as Luis Carlos Mussó or Pedro Gil, Nieto Cadena becomes a cartographer of the city: '*requiere un plano de ciudad fundada el 25 de julio de 1537*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 80). Thus, it is evident that the poet sees himself as a founder of an alternative, specifically tropical identity for the city of Guayaquil. That fluid and utopian identity encompasses the premise of taking a chaotic inventory of Guayaquil's landscapes, situations, anecdotes and characters. From this perspective, there is an ethnographic purpose to the more diverse scope which includes, for example, '*elaborar lista lo más completa posible de cuanta cantina congala putero exista en esta ciudad y puerto*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 70). Nieto Cadena's oeuvre is a comprehensive inventory that ranges from childhood postcards about the city to the list of brothels and bars where salsa or Cuban *son* are played until dawn. That enumeration works as an analytical, documentary, amplifying mechanism where the abstract name of Guayaquil is distributed into components or parts (*cantina, congala, putero*). In this way, Nieto Cadena breaks the border between text and context in an attempt to elucidate the image of a Caribbean Guayaquil, to make it comprehensible or plausible to readers (and to himself). However, since this is not a rational but a capricious and intuitive enumeration, it does not resolve ambiguity but instead exacerbates it.

As mentioned above, this jumble of words incorporates elements of Afro-Antillean cultures, such as music. This hybrid writing integrates references to rhythms, music styles and instruments: '*Ese frenesí de güiros restallando el paso distraiendo el*

¹²¹ In Latin American thought the concept of utopia has been claimed in many ways. Perhaps the most unique is the one developed by Martin Hopenhayn in *Ni apocalípticos ni integrados* (1994), where utopia is presented as a set of outlooks that escape (or seek to escape) from the visual and linguistic hegemonic maps created by the media and politicians. In this way, utopia becomes an emancipatory possibility (Vera 1997, 145). These arguments by Hopenhayn emerge as a critique and reinterpretation of the book *Apocalittici and integrati* (1964) by Umberto Eco. There, the Italian semiologist theorised about two opposite positions in the face of mass culture: apocalyptic and integrated ones. The integrated are those who take a benevolent interpretation of the results of mass culture. Those of the apocalyptic outlook, on the other hand, believe that this mass culture destroys the characteristics of each social group, creating an artificial consensus with what it offers them. Hopenhayn distances himself from Eco's arguments because he considers Eco's outlook excessively rationalistic.

bembé hacia el amanecer / ese rumor de cumbia' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 22). Thus, the poet not only interprets the 'Caribbean' scenery of Guayaquil in relationship to an Ecuadorian national identity, but also investigates its links to very specific aspects of Caribbean culture. In fact, Nieto Cadena makes this ethno-symbolist affirmation as a gesture of affective congruence with his hometown, with the city containing his most specific emotional links: '*esta ciudad es mía sin guineo sin tráfuga / maduro guineo y verde / Guayaquil nunca pierde / este es mi rincón mi pedacito de camote que no me desampara*' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 37). These links operate through images of everyday foods (*guineo, camote*) and catch phrases or formulaic slogans ('*Guayaquil nunca pierde*'). Thus, Nieto Cadena's Guayaquil is not only spatial but also temporal: the scenery he creates is figurative and linked to the nostalgia for a rushed youth, whose colloquial language is 'imported' from increasingly distant historical and vital coordinates. On the one hand, this writing intercalates generalities about Guayaquil and, on the other, very precise images (*maduro guineo y verde*). In this brief list, the punctuation has been removed to create the illusion of acceleration and undifferentiated flow. In fact, Nieto Cadena moves naturally and self-consciously from enumeration to metaphor (Guayaquil \approx piece of sweet potato) and vice versa to encompass synthesis and analysis, concretion and exuberance, constantly attempting to catalogue this urban scenery.

This territory functions as a unifying node for a set of minor landscapes that were not part of the great national story or narrative. This minoritised set of the experiences and symbols of the Ecuadorian coast regularly appears in his poetry: '*Este puerto que descubro en cada travesía / que se abre y no puedo abarcar de un bocado*' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 36). Nonetheless, Nieto Cadena is aware that these elements fit into the great pre-existing (although partially alien in geographical terms) story of Caribbean culture. Although imprecise, it is not absurd to suppose that a minor constellation of landscapes is equivalent to the configuration of a minor literature. Thus, the poet himself points out that in an imaginary (or at least unpublished) essay, there is a foundational linkage between the Caribbean and Guayaquil: '*mi ensayo el cuento de la isla en búsqueda de una caribeñidad perdida*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 79). As Margarita Mateo Palmer and Luis Álvarez Álvarez point out, Caribbean culture is founded on a baroque structure. If the baroque of Mexico or Peru was anchored in the magnificence and complexity of the pre-Hispanic indigenous cultures, the Caribbean invented its own baroque from a much more violent and expansive mix:

la insularidad y, por tanto la imprevisible inmensidad marina; su laberíntica genealogía, su infinita mezcla de razas, su capacidad de superponer culturas heredadas y, por tanto, convertidas en remembranza onírica, paso previo a la superposición gozosa y ciega de mitos incontables; la voluptuosidad, en fin, de una relación humana mediada una y otra vez por el irónico humor, por la música y por la danza serpenteante. (2004, 201)

In the explanation of these theorists, the sea is an encompassing metaphor that, under the premise of flow, voluptuousness and dreamlike display, contains three key elements: humour, music and ‘meandering’ dance. These three ingredients are characteristic of Nieto Cadena’s poetry and the minor identity that he tries to create in his work. Perhaps it is worth noting that the adjective *serpenteante* is translated in Nieto Cadena’s poetry as long lines, as multiple changes of tone and as a resistance to traditional syntax. In turn, these are expressions of a social baroque life. Mussó argues that Nieto Cadena’s compilation of popular language and orality is a way of transferring traditionally excluded—and, therefore, novel—knowledge into literature (Mussó 2011, 50).

However, the Caribbean Guayaquil is also marked by its ambivalent relationship with the Andean world (in the context of Ecuadorian conflict). Nieto understands that and uses irony to generate slightly absurd political gestures: ‘*una ciudad mezcla costeña y serrana donde supuestamente habito en medio de un harlembroxx de poca mecha*’ (Nieto Cadena 2003, 83). Thus, Guayaquil is a confluence of the Caribbean and Andean mentality that complements and sometimes contradicts the *costeño* identity), but it is also an apocryphal New York, where salsa and reggaetón music circulates in a random and unconventional manner. That circulation is closely related to the city’s commercial character. With Nieto Cadena, the writing of Guayaquilean poets incorporates a fluid and open dynamic in the usage of language. The free market of words is an expression of the Caribbean waste: ‘*Llego al Mercado / y el gran poema está en los rostros y a manos de hombres y mujeres / en sus listas de compras / en sus cálculos en sus regateos por el precio de las cosas*’ (Nieto Cadena 1985, 71). It is a mixture of references in which the market works as an allegory of linguistic, emotional, cultural and, of course, economic exchanges, appropriations and translations. That Guayaquilean Caribbean street market leads Nieto Cadena to develop complex anecdotes about the important relationship

between money exchange and culture where the poem is also *una lista de compras, un regateo*.

Nostalgia for the imagined city

After his migration to Mexico in the late 1970s,¹²² Nieto Cadena settled in the outskirts of the state of Tabasco. He did not plan this as an exercise in self-promotion, but rather as an extended period of creative leisure. The poetic voice and the author's voice interact very closely in Nieto Cadena's work. It therefore appears that Guayaquil remains a central theme of his writing, but now it seems a set of memories reconstructed as nostalgia: *'esta ciudad no es mi ciudad / por eso vuelvo a mi inventario de sombras y nostalgias / reconstruyo mis caminos hechos con descuido / los sueños son sueños mientras dura el sueño / voy a los buses que me llevan al parque de béisbol'* (Nieto Cadena 1988, 101).

In a way, this writing reveals its difficulty in transferring, translating and reproducing life experiences between Guayaquil and Mexico (and vice versa), between two heterogeneous temporalities (Lund 2006, 35), between two sets of cultural landscapes. The dream—and its amplification in imaginative, delusional devices—become real through a vital and scriptural mechanism for sustaining and safeguarding those memories. Nieto Cadena interprets Guayaquil's map as a cartography that deserves to be vindicated: it is a peripheral cultural scenery that gives origin to a minor literature. This is clear in some passages where irony is absent and, rather, the poet relates an almost innocent, diaphanous perspective: *'nunca me ausenté de mi barrio de mis calles de mis esquinas favoritas / nunca estuve lejos del muelle / de los lanchones / de la ría'* (Nieto Cadena 1988, 28). As in other of his poems, punctuation has been removed here, adding fluency to the writing/reading (perhaps as a mimesis of *ría* to which it refers?). This is an example of the connection between a writing and a set of emotions. It is the written record of an urban space: *'No tengo más nostalgias que una ciudad / un muelle un malecón un cerro un barrio'* (Nieto Cadena 1988, 73). Guayaquil is the core of the emotional pseudo-diary of an 'old teenager' who also uses his writing to reject any abstract nostalgia for a country called Ecuador, of which he only reluctantly admits a formal, political and legal document.

¹²² Although there are no documents to certify it, the reasons for his trip to Mexico were apparently extremely personal.

In his account, Nieto Cadena recreates the streets, the parks, the brothels and the squares of a phantom neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is recreated as a way to expose vivid and close realities in front of the imposed norms, artificial symbols and abstract links that the nation-state proposes (in this case, called *República del Ecuador*). The language and the imagination of Guayaquil's middle-lower and lower classes are recorded in this poetic mockumentary, where the daily life of a culturally Caribbean city through his poetry appears blatantly in the literary archive of Ecuador: '*No he sido más que un urbano deslíz sin justificaciones / salí de una ciudad que es mi obsesión*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 79). That obsession leads him to examine details that are significant only in the context of a geographical and temporal distance: '*El corazón es una mujer cansada de llorar en medio parquet / es una colegial [sic] que llora su embarazo / es una viuda que llora y llora y no encuentra consuelo / es una puta que salió al camino como una bendición para mi pena*' (Nieto Cadena 1988, 86). These vignettes, which mediate between sarcasm and feeling, reflect the poet's will to link his own experience with a city that still exists but is no longer the one that endures in the most residual areas of his memory; they are lyrical records of 'insignificant' and 'impure' anecdotes, which the poet claims as literary ones. In this extract, the passage of time configures solid emotional ethnographies of everyday life in a Guayaquil neighbourhood during the 1960s or 1970s:

Ahora el barrio ha cambiado
 Hay otras gentes en las casas donde antes vivimos
 Crecimos más de la cuenta creo
 Debe ser que la vida es así
 La niña Wila se casó y nadie se acuerda más de ella
 La vida es así de reputísima

Nieto Cadena 1976, 65

Again, Nieto Cadena uses the enumeration of actions to set up a self-sufficient map of a memory of his neighbourhood. This album of scenes and characters is not ceremonious, but neither is it ironic: it is playful and sad. This nostalgic game groups two types of memories, childhood games and sexuality. Both are above all a heritage of the past. The first type of memory includes scenarios of mainly Caribbean sports such as baseball ('*rompe la cábala pitcher*'; Nieto Cadena 1985, 79), but also of football and traditional games in a random Latin American neighbourhood: '*la cometa el trompo el aro los trompones / todo se hizo viento se achicó en los pliegues de tu camisa nueva*' (Nieto Cadena 1985, 102). The relationship between individual experience and collective experience, between the individual's memory and the collective's memory, seems to be

the frontier that the writer insists on violating. The second type of memory involves sexuality and affection: '*descubres que tu patria toda tu patria es sólo el cuerpo de esta mujer a la hora de ser tuya*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 18). In both cases, nostalgia works as a method of emotionally approaching a symbolic archive, where the poet makes a series of remarks about the cartography within which his poetic language is integrated (as an expression of artistic subjectivity) and the colloquial language (as an expression of a slightly forgotten identity). In this obstinate exercise of translation, nostalgia appears as a background in emphasising the poet's uniqueness, not only geographically or politically, but also affectively. Thus, before the official history of academics and bureaucrats, Nieto proposes an emotional memory of Guayaquil: a random, fragmentary, joking, lyrical memory. It is about the creation of an autonomous though chaotic psychological territory, where humour questions any alien control of any personal choice or individual value.

All those Guayaquilean recollections seem to invade—like shadows—even the landscapes of Tabasco, a place to which the poet transfers and acclimatises his obsession for Guayaquil and the Caribbean. For example, Nieto Cadena approaches Appadurai's ethnoscapas when he points out, '*la caribeñidad perdida en Ciudad del Carmen*' (2003, 47). The landscapes of the Ecuadorian coast cannot be effectively translated into the landscapes of the Mexican present. In this extensive menu of geographical possibilities, Ciudad del Carmen seems the appropriate place for Nieto Cadena to locate, recreate and juxtapose his mental map of the 'Caribbean' Guayaquil: the result is a dense collage, a poetic mockumentary where reality and language seem to be in constant overlap. The thread that guides this gesture is ideological: Guayaquil reappears as a virus that contaminates everything, that confuses and upsets reality through a viral *latinidad* (Beasley-Murray 2003, 223) or a baroque machine (Benítez-Rojo 2001, 18). However, Nieto Cadena's gaze is part of that viral Guayaquil: a proliferating and dislocated perspective that seeks to organise reality around an extravagant nucleus. In this case, it is a ghostly nucleus, barely sustained by the fragility of a writing that disaggregates landscapes in emotional album of Guayaquil.

Can all this Caribbean-Guayaquilean heritage be read as cosmopolitan literature, as world literature? D'haen has noted that authors belonging to minor languages (languages used by small demographic groups) and minor literatures (for D'haen these are equivalent) who are ambitious 'to enter upon the scene of world literature could use a strategy of drawing on multiple legacies to reach as wide and broad, and as international

as possible a public, and thus consciously invite dissemination beyond their original linguistic or cultural habitat' (2013a, 9). The poetics of ineffectiveness and laziness that characterise Nieto Cadena's oeuvre do not seem to coincide with a cosmopolitan desire, but his violent playfulness with identity and his anthropological instability reveal a perspective where multiple legacies appear (more as an intimate need than as a calculated claim). Indeed, Nieto Cadena's poetry can be read from a cosmopolitan perspective or as a work of world literature, but his motivations are so specifically Guayaquilean and so ambivalent politically that the notion of minor literature seems to be the most adequate for understanding what is happening in his poetry and how it relates to Ecuadorian society and a 'viral *Guayaquileñidad*', a baroque transcultural mythomoteur.

Modernity, industrialisation and imagination

A paradox that appears in Nieto Cadena's poetry is the figure of a Guayaquilean poet mixing experiences of high modernity with the ethno-symbolic identity of Guayaquil that the author defends as essential. The relationship with technology appears as a journey through references to mediascapes, which work as critical nodes: '*maya inn 3531 ac a visitantes distinguidos en playas descontextualizadas*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 63). The decontextualisation referred to by Nieto Cadena is in conflict with his claim for the minor local identities that he defends. The viral *Guayaquileñidad* works not only by contagion but also by invasion and assimilation. These decontextualised beaches become part of a catch-all Guayaquil mythomotr where many technological devices promote the mobile places and the imaginary journeys offered by late capitalism: '*trepo a internet / me cuelgo de la hamaca a chatear*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 54). This reference to technoscapes makes the poet seem relatively comfortable in the face of fragile identities: '*guarda los cambios y aguarda que el equipo se apague / click click y click*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 117). The onomatopoeia that the poet uses to refer to the correlations between fingers and keyboard (*click click click*) is part of a receptive but playful and imaginative attitude towards the virtualisation of everyday experience. This passive attitude is part of a smiling and adolescent perspective on the social and cultural mutations related to technology. In many ways, his poetics are that of an observer laughing at technological absurdities: '*a la manera de un arcaico waltz con mandolinas electrónicas piáfanos ecualizados laúdes digitales sonajas estereofónicas para concierto*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 62). Once again, the enumeration becomes a viral, cumulative, haggling device that seems to postpone a complete, closed, definitive truth. Furthermore, these references to technoscapes—in this

case, about music—reveal the poet's deep sensitivity to the chaos of contemporary cultural experiences. Of course, this chaotic scenario is presented in a lucid and sardonic way where each noun (musical instrument) appears as an antithesis of the adjective that follows it (references to a technological quality).

Perhaps the only technological area of which Nieto is seriously critical is television comedy: '*después de todo la ironía ha cedido su lugar al humor televisivo*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 66). Here, where his scriptural method is trivialised, he observes a crisis in human life. For him, the method of understanding reality begins with an irony that doubts itself. However, generally, his poetics of a humoristic ethnographer are allowed to travel through technological devices and contemporary cultural relations. In various ways, the volatile identities that globalisation imposes on geographical spaces can be better assimilated by societies that are culturally more commercial and more open to exchange, such as Guayaquil. In fact, the poet seems to feel comfortable in the mobile gap between reality and 'virtuality' that globalisation has created.

In fact, global exchanges—which are traditionally overlooked by overly benevolent perspectives—are visible in his poetry. For example, the commercial transactions related to sexually transmitted diseases are evidenced in this line: '*tarifas móviles desde 50 a 200 pesos más gastos de hotel gratis los contagios*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 35). Through images that combine references to ideoscapes, the poet shows the radical flow of events put into action by language and money. Guayaquil is not present here, but the Guayaquilean transcultural mythomoteur works like an orchestral sensibility, capable of integrating disconnected and contradictory elements: '*por supuesto que yes poliglotizo mi entusiasmo*' (Nieto Cadena 2003, 37). The neologism *poliglotizo* reveals that for the poet, the new plural landscapes are also linguistic. New places are mediated by deeply irrational circumstances that logic is unable to organise. For this reason, this techno-language that Nieto Cadena occasionally uses provokes in the reader a feeling of unreality, of strangeness, but also of contemporaneity. In these extracts, the virtualisation of the experiences that occur through the technological devices reveals life as a combination of layers of reality and fiction. Internet, cinema and television 'samples' invade the poet's subjectivity, and he only registers them as hilarious facts (in a gesture of political ambiguity).

Faced with the harassment of media discourses, the poet works as a satirical documentary-maker, training his lens on the absurd circumstances generated by modernity. In these contexts of alienation and globalisation, irony works as a mechanism

to avoid any compromise with the discourses of control, to distort centrality and to put affectivity at the centre of life: *'pastillaje antidiabético dieta jamás por favor como cree usted no me conoce no sabe que soy ateo gracias a dios'* (Nieto Cadena 2003, 56). When the poet thinks sarcastically about his disease—which ultimately ended his life—the reader has the impression that the poet's journey through technology and simulacra has much to do with his perception about Guayaquil: a Caribbean-Ecuadorian virus that adapts to any situation, an ironic and baroque chameleon that uses any subject to have fun and to resist any abstract power (including the Ecuadorian nation-state). It is a decentralising, anti-hierarchical and deeply affective poetic where the re-creation of minor landscapes only occurs through an accumulation of intimate memories.

Conclusion

Nieto Cadena has created a style with many elements of colloquial humour. The questioning of seriousness and solemnity as conservative values has led to the marginalisation of his writing. However, the term minor is also appropriate, due to the political questioning of any form of linguistic conventionality. The canon of Ecuadorian poetic anthologies and critical studies have shown little interest in this type of diction, as it challenges the seriousness that power needs to represent itself. In this sense, this literature is archived as part of Ecuador's artistic heritage only as an eccentricity, a rarity. Behind this apparently aesthetic exclusion is also the exclusion of a collective sensibility: 1) popular origins, 2) based on hypothetical bad taste, 3) *Costeño*-Caribbean, 4) overwhelming and uncontrolled diction. Nieto Cadena constantly contradicts shared expectations of what a poem should be—a philosophical text addressing higher truths of the human condition. Conversely, his poetry is characterised by humorous details that sabotage the patrimonial, aseptic and falsely universal patterns of much of Ecuadorian poetry. These comic details are not mere invention or re-reading of Parra's antipoetry; the everyday speech of Guayaquil has been adapted to this writing model. Baroque humour is a viralised verbal bug that infects the neutral style that Ecuadorian authors have frequently sought. This acidic humour and slightly chaotic colloquialism challenges decorum and courtesy (dangerously assumed as aesthetic values). For these reasons, Nieto Cadena's poetry has had little presence, and has not been read deeply. As discussed in this chapter, critics have decided to exclude it because it oversteps the boundaries of emotional sobriety and culturally and aesthetically 'respectable' topics. The risky gestures of this author and the conservative gestures of the specialised do not fit

reciprocally because Nieto's work does not belong to a well-known minor-literature constellation. In fact, although it seems that this poet invents his own constellation, in reality his work belongs to a minor-literature constellation that corresponds to a possible Caribbean political, marginal and anarchist context.¹²³

To this should be added Nieto Cadena's attitude about the canonical space: he always preferred to publish in a scattered or circumstantial manner. Neither his work nor its diffusion are premeditated or calculated: he never worried about 'placing it' in prestigious publishing houses or academic contexts. That makes him a prickly, uncomfortable character for a literature based on political, ethnic, economic or linguistic hierarchies. His writing reveals the incongruity and incompetence of national literary archives in explaining the sensitivity of fragmented societies. The central issue is that his work commits not only a risky aesthetic irreverence, but also a political and anthropological one. Ecuadorian critics could conclusively claim that: 1) an Ecuadorian national poet does not publish in a disorderly manner, 2) an Ecuadorian national poet does not write comic poetry, and 3) an Ecuadorian author prefers solemn themes over others. Thus, Nieto Cadena's poetry not only interrogates the nation-state, but also questions all intersectionalities of officialdom, at the risk of making him a marginalised poet in a normative and conservative literary context. This is not strictly related to the aesthetic qualities of his work, but rather to the inability of Ecuadorian literary critics to read it contextually and unprejudicially. Besides, he makes recurrent references to writing's uselessness. Why read something that celebrates its own worthlessness? In reality, his writing is organised from a non-transcendentalist, anti-canonical and peripheral perspective. Thus, his reluctance to organise his work to better fit into Ecuador's national literary canon reveals that Nieto Cadena settles his writing in a utopian place, in a fabled ethno-symbolic Caribbean constellation of minor literary landscapes.

These details indicate that Nieto Cadena's poetry should be read within the framework of postnational geographies (Legler 2013, 330), where Ecuador is more a purely administrative territory than a culturally integrated country. Through a critical position on what it means to be *Guayaquileño* in the face of Ecuadorian national narratives, he interprets the neighbourhood scenery as a node for emotional learning and

¹²³ Nieto Cadena's literature can be framed in a context of works where Caribbean cultures are in the minority and struggle to endure. An emblematic case is the Nicaraguan poet Carlos Rigby (1945–2017), in whose work English, Miskito and Spanish are mixed within a literature that reflects the characteristics of the Caribbean.

political questioning. In fact, his language functions as a GPS locator of Guayaquilean speech. These textures work as anticlimactic gestures that collide with the expected solemnity of a poetic text, but also with the speech of the highland middle or upper classes, educated in restraint and moderation. His will is to sketch an alternative cultural identity through a hybrid speech that expands the limits of poetic language (particularly the lexicon) and the cultural frontier of what Guayaquil means. The separatist movement, supported by many generations of politicians and entrepreneurs since the birth of Ecuador, has an aesthetic and anthropological origin that has been metabolised not only in the writings of Nieto Cadena but also in those of other Guayaquilean poets of his generation, such as Fernando Artieda (1945–2010) and Agustín Vulgarín (1938–1986). In these oeuvres, neighbourhood rituals (tropical music, baseball, dance, jokes) create a hinge between the dispersed Caribbean memory and the literary work that seeks or refuses its influence. The neighbourhood works like a linguistic *Bahía* market where official and folklorised Hispanic or Andean-Quechua customs come into question, giving more space for marginal usages of language and an accelerated rhythm of social life. In Nieto Cadena's poems, this rhythm, as a form of the movement of singular and collective association (Durkheim 2008, 440), is translated as an assortment of writing forms to question Ecuador as a self-coherent nation-state, but with the awareness that poetic language is useless in creating social change.

In particular, this poet demonstrates that control over language is simultaneously control over people's expression, knowledge and behaviour. Through a series of oxymorons between the magnificence of historical figures and the vulgarity of the situations in question, he interpellates the sacred character of official history. This procedure of discrediting social myths is articulated through two fundamental axioms, the perception of the national story as something fragile, and the need to create an alternative symbolic territory through poetic strategies. That alternative identity is somewhat alien to the geographic situation of Ecuador: the Caribbean Sea does not have a coastline in that country. In fact, Nieto Cadena makes this ethno-symbolist, unrealistic and neurotic affirmation as a gesture of affective congruence with his hometown and the aesthetic novelty of a new literary territory. This symbolic place functions as a unifying reconstruction for a set of historical symbols and experiences that were not part of the great national story. In the Ecuadorian context, Guayaquil works as a free market of language, where the Caribbean 'waste' reveals an economy of words that do not intend to keep control but instead to lack control. However, in Nieto Cadena's final poems, the

city becomes an ironic and nostalgic labyrinth in the face of official history. Against this backdrop, he offers a deterritorialised collection of writings about a utopian city whose aesthetic geography is yet to be written.

Chapter 7.

A Conclusion: Mapping National Identities

The central proposal of this thesis has been that poems, even those that are deeply experimental or hermetic, can be read within the framework of geography. The first conclusion is that this geographical perspective is mediated by a series of intersectionalities that, in several ways, are beyond precise articulation, and any choice in this regard implies a reduction of a highly complex map. Despite this slightly sceptical argument, the concepts employed throughout this thesis drawn from cultural geography and macroethnography reveal scarcely analysed aspects of poetry, especially the relationships between literary expression, the social and spiritual life of a community (and of the poets) and the territory in which these realities occur. Furthermore, in the cases of Uruguay and Ecuador, notions such as minor literature, periphery and marginality are useful for understanding the works of Eduardo Milán, Iván Carvajal, Eduardo Espina and Fernando Nieto Cadena. Why are they useful? In most literary analyses, the relationships between empirical reality and poetic language occur without any kind of cultural, economic, or legal filter. To the contrary, though, only by identifying the cultural limits within which a poet works is it possible to determine the meaning of his or her work. Of course, the interpretations of a poem are potentially infinite, but above all a reading must be useful to reveal the place that an oeuvre occupies within its area of influence.

The methodological formulation of this thesis has applied two fundamental ideas: 1) geography is something fluid and unstable that can be read both as a context and as part of the text; this reading has sought to avoid the idealistic dualism that presumes that the poem is a closed object and that context does not participate in its meaning. Concepts such as neighbourhood, nation-state and in particular, landscape are useful in guiding the analysis, but they do not completely encompass a heterogeneous and changing reality; 2) the literary landscape is structurally different from the objective, real landscape, but both are conditioned by a society and structured through the connection between language and the senses). Thus, the work presented throughout this thesis develops experimental ethnographies (Heuston 2011, 15) that seek to combine social, anthropological and geographical contextualisation, the circulation and reception of works, and the close reading of some poems and excerpts.

The belonging of these artistic and linguistic devices (poems) to a particular community is primarily mediated through the notion of landscape or new landscape

(Appadurai 1996, 51), because the landscape works as a conceptual focus that organises reality and concentrates individual and collective experiences through a scenario whose linguistic materiality (specifically syntax and phonetics) is susceptible to analysis. The language reveals its sociocultural implications, as well as the different levels of tension between the subject and society. In that sense, the landscape is always a political zone, in which power's structures, ideological contradictions, and aesthetic couplings are expressed. Hence, poetry should be understood as a political exercise that intervenes between institutionality (the nation-state, economic regulations) and individual expression (the ability to use language to dismantle the commonplaces that are, ultimately, accepted and acceptable places). It is not, of course, a linear path between the self and the community, but rather a series of complex exchanges where any position happens on a changing surface of multiple factors.

Mapping poetic and cultural differences between two poetic traditions

One of the general conclusions of this thesis is that a poem belongs to a specific community through the interpretation (not always grounded or thorough) of certain signs of political, aesthetic and ideological identity. In a way, this study is an exercise to determine and elaborate that belonging. In the case of the four poets studied throughout this work, the fundamental premise was to locate those signs that have traditionally been dismissed or underestimated in literary analysis. The conclusion reached here is that some tools of cultural geography reveal the relationships between geographic contexts and specific poems in an attempt to mutually display aspects that enhance knowledge on both side of those relationships. The writings of the Uruguayan (Eduardo Milán and Eduardo Espina) and Ecuadorian (Iván Carvajal and Fernando Nieto Cadena) poets studied here incarnate some collective values, because they frequently seek to establish bridges between individual and collective expression. A key point here is that for these poets, their societies' peripheral character provides an opportunity to reinterpret the world, to establish singular and, at the same time, faithful emotive 'frescoes' of the relationship they have with their specific societies. The deterritorialisation—not only that promoted or sought by these authors but also that imposed by the dynamics of the contemporary world—is a factor that destabilises the identity of these works, but, at the same time, politicises them by demonstrating their paradoxes, incoherencies, heterogeneities, transculturations and voids.

In the case of Ecuador, Carvajal and Nieto Cadena are not only poets disputing a place in the national literary archive, they are also refined—and sometimes violent—interpreters of a specific way of experiencing the world. The two major sub-national identities (the *costeño* and the *serrano*) work surreptitiously in both poets' writings, disputing the interpretation of what Ecuador means. As this thesis has demonstrated, these authors speak not only from different places but from different countries. Reading these poetic works reveals the incongruity between the state (as a political legal institution) and the community (with its linguistic, emotional, anthropological ties). Strictly speaking, the political nature of these works lies precisely in their insistence on pointing out the proximity, distance or conflict between the abstract identity of the passport and another more subjective, sentimental identity linked to emotional communities, subjective experiences or, more specifically, to the world of life, in Habermas's perspective (89, 25). Although this thesis set up a virtual dispute between two different aesthetic sensibilities, both poets exhibit complementary outlooks on a peripheral South American country. In reality, each poet deploys a series of aesthetic resources to configure an aesthetic 'opinion' about the very meaning of Ecuador and, perhaps more importantly, about the meaning of Ecuador for their experiences as individuals. Lacking the international visibility of other artificially created countries whose legal and political configuration similarly does not correspond to their cultural reality, the map of Ecuador is a cultural puzzle whose structure these poets try to identify, question and even completely discredit, as in Nieto Cadena's oeuvre.

On the other hand, the concept of Uruguay can operate as an encompassing lens that organises the idea of society formulated by both the Uruguayan poets examined here. This idea is based on three fundamental arguments: 1) landscape and geography are described through language; 2) the awareness of the small country, understood from a perspective of diaspora and nostalgia, are characteristic features of Uruguayan identity; and 3) a troublesome cosmopolitanism acts as a bridge between the global and the local. Here, the fundamental difference between Milán and Espina lies in the fact that Milán's linguistic work is permeable to the most contingent aspects of journalistic language and daily life. Espina, on the other hand, elaborates a hermetic poetry, built to resist lazy or capricious interpretations: it is a poetry that requires an immersion in its codes and strategies. In the writings of both authors, the notion of minor literature is a linguistic process, a project under construction rather than a mere sum of works.

In terms of reception, Ecuadorian literature has been perceived as a small literature among small literatures: that is, it still remains relatively unknown in the Latin American context. This phenomenon is the result of a combination of factors related to Ecuador's cultural and institutional history, to the limited dissemination of Ecuadorian literature and to certain peculiarities of the literary works themselves. However, the primary problem is that critics have not adequately situated these works within the Latin American context.¹²⁴ This has to do not only with the poems' reception and dissemination, but also with the interpretation, analysis and contextualisation of their place of enunciation—from which they write as an ideological and geographic position on the dialectic processes between individuality and collective myths that can be interpreted as representative of their culture's value. Uruguayan poets, by contrast, have managed to utilise the concept of Uruguay, understanding its political implications and extending its aesthetic possibilities. Perhaps unintentionally, they have accepted and adopted with notable critical awareness the geographical, political, economic limits of the Global South, of their country and of their minor literature, in order to convert those difficulties into an opportunity to say something singular. Under that premise, these poets have understood better than Ecuadorians how to integrate their texts into the national mythomoteur (Smith 2009, 24). In addition, the production of social meaning from subjectivity in order to constantly reinvent the idea of literary Uruguay has been well complemented by a diaspora of creators and critics and a constant interest in placing and questioning literary Uruguay into the intellectual debate.

In spite of the necessary distinction between the reception of these authors' works in the contemporary context and their textual discoveries about collective identities, both outlooks coincide usefully and in concrete terms when it comes to documenting the ideological characteristics of a community's sensitivity. In the specific case of Ecuador, the limited diffusion of most literary works is a precise allegory of the incompleteness of

¹²⁴ Ecuadorian novelist Leonardo Valencia (1968) wrote the essay *El síndrome de Falcón* about this subject. He identifies the cause of the limitations of Ecuadorian literature as the perpetual need to solve social, political and economic problems through literature. Valencia uses the allegory of Juan Alberto Falcón Sandoval, who usually carried Joaquín Gallegos Lara (1909–1947, Guayaquil) on his shoulders. Gallegos was an outstanding representative of the Ecuadorian social novel. Specifically, Valencia's image alludes to Falcón bearing the weight of social literature and its excessive purposes. In this sense, he points out the need to think about literature beyond the unresolved conflicts of Ecuador, searching for a radically imaginative oeuvre (Valencia 2008, 27). Although it is true that Ecuadorian literature was for many years an extension of the revolutionary left, the works of Nieto Cadena and Carvajal are located precisely at the point of breaking with Stalinist, Trotskyist and Maoist dogmas. Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that, although literary works do not change the social or economic life of a community, they can express the sensitivity of an era through plots, metaphors and syntactic resources.

a comprehensive idea of Ecuadorian history, of its geographical and anthropological diversity. In the case of Uruguayan poets Milán and Espina, these processes for building or reinforcing a community's identity gain effectiveness through the search for a deep synchrony between their respective literary works and Uruguayan cultural baggage, trying to encompass *Uruguayidad* as a totality, certainly minor, but a totality nonetheless. Between linguistic underlining and the avant-garde ornamentation of their ideas, they send hyperbolic signals that critics would potentially read with interest or, at least, suspicion: the somewhat self-propagandistic spirit of their aesthetic innovations are meant to call attention to small and peripheral sensibilities and territories in the context of the contemporary world.

The political traces in the aesthetic work by the Ecuadorian poets Carvajal and Nieto Cadena, on the contrary, are more nonspecific and imprecise, but also less exaggerated and artificial. One of the main reasons can be encapsulated in the premise that the literary Ecuadorian self-image has been refuted, distorted, and even rejected by these poets. In fact, the stylistic and ideological features used by Carvajal and Nieto Cadena speak clearly of two very contrasting outlooks on Ecuador. Iván Carvajal, an intellectual writer of the Andean region, speaks from the perspective of the culturally central highland capital city of Quito. His poetry portrays in a precise manner the social closedness of the Andean world, its solipsism and its self-regulated openness to external influences and interventions. By contrast, Nieto Cadena portrays the open, dialogical, mercantile sensitivity of the historically marginalised city of Guayaquil.¹²⁵ Thus, the very idea of the 'national poet' cannot be an efficient vehicle for a monolithic or, at least, convergent identity—which, in the case of Ecuador, is far from existing. In any case, a cooperative reading of both poets' work allows us to discover the points of contact between two very different aesthetic interpretations of what Ecuador is—or, more specifically, what a hypothetical Ecuadorian self-image might be.

Poets thus create moving maps from which only imagistic phantoms can be taken. From such phantoms, this thesis has performed ethnographic work regarding both the abstract reflections included in texts and their most sensitive elements. The idea of contemporary landscapes proposed by Arjun Appadurai and his idea of a cosmopolitan

¹²⁵ In the framework of relational dialectics, the relationship between the coast and the highlands could be defined as a link between the values of openness and closedness (Baxter & Montgomery 1996, 10), where climate, history and geography have created a relationship of opposites that need to blame the other to explain the general national failure.

literary metaethnography expands the traditional notion of landscape and, in that way, complements the concept of culture. The typology of landscapes proposed by Appadurai is useful for interpreting poems that can be mapped by a possible ethnography of literary processes in the global context. Despite the fact that several of his categories point to general, abstract and complex processes, ethnoscapas, technoscapas, financescapas, mediascapas, and ideoscapas all appear in each of these poets (although certain ‘scapes’ appear more in some poets than in others). Nonetheless, this bias is fundamental for understanding the way in which these poets construct their own maps of reality. To these concepts, we must add the notion of neighbourhood, because it functions as an allegory for a series of vivid processes that are made invisible by interpretations that are too ideological or too abstract. Through this concept it is possible to channel more concrete perspectives about what a poem expresses in regard to a particular society. It is not a question of denying the importance of concepts such as global world and nation, but of interpreting them within frameworks of concrete landscapes. The idea of neighbourhood complements the idea of landscape insofar as it can more precisely explain the interactions between human beings: daily rituals, common stories, and anecdotes as part of a specific community.

Of course, within the framework of minor literatures and eccentricity, all the findings based on these concepts have been considered in light of what Appadurai calls repatriation of difference (1996, 42). In the case of these poets, this is a deeply subjective repatriation of difference in the form of signs and styles where individual traumas give way to a collective voice or, rather, where such traumas are also the collective voice. Thus, the first aim of this thesis has been to investigate the way in which this repatriation of difference—this construction of mental maps in the context of a minor literature—occurs.

The Uruguayan corner: Milán versus Espina

Milán and Espina are two authors who, in various ways, dispute the place of ‘the poet and essayist’ within the context of their generation. Both have tried to build for themselves the image of thinker, creating a coherent universe of both essays with poetic features and poetry with essayistic ingredients. In both authors, philosophical thoughts function as a conceptual substrate of writing that constantly appeals to the avant-garde, in a gesture of aesthetic and political connection with the seductive and risky canon of Uruguayan poetry. More specifically, both use words in a very similar way in their essays

and in their poems. In addition, both authors' poems include axiomatic elements, delirious assertions, delusional syllogisms and lucid aphorisms among other common elements.

However, a fundamental difference between the two is that Espina's primary concerns have to do with Uruguayan identity. Throughout his books of essays (composed mainly of collections of short texts), he develops multiple themes with a specific emphasis on Uruguay's anthropological, linguistic and historical features. He has built his work around the figure of the national intellectual as a contemporary, postmodern version of the 19th-century intellectual. Even in his most anecdotal essays, his writing seeks to organise a symbolic and ideological constellation of issues regarding the matters that deserve to be archived and problematised in and for Uruguay. This strategy thus suggests that his references to Wittgenstein and Tarkovski, for example, can be read in contrast to the Uruguayan landscapes: from cows to *chinchulines*. This is a subjective repatriation of the difference: 1) from the periphery to the periphery (the characteristic lexicon of the River Plate area is restored to its poetic dignity or prestige), 2) from the metropolis to the periphery (Western references are translated in and for the poetic work of a South American speech), and 3) from the periphery to the metropolitan centres (a baroque and hybrid poetic oeuvre is put into circulation in the context of the Spanish language).

Milán speaks from the perspective of the Global South: in a general way, his reflections discuss the aesthetic identity of Latin America and, tangentially, Uruguayan aesthetic identity. However, a careful reading of his poems and essays leads to a curious conclusion: Uruguay may be a sample of the most eccentric aspects of Latin America. His work, in a way, aims to place Uruguay at the epicentre of a permanent aesthetic earthquake. In addition, his proposal is that the aesthetic radicalism of Latin America is (or should be) equivalent to a political radicalism. In that sense, for him, an aesthetic vanguard without a political vanguard is unthinkable and, if it is thinkable, necessarily useless. For Milán, then, the repatriation of the difference is not only a cultural or symbolic process, it is also a political process. Moreover, Uruguay is only possible as a political and aesthetic vanguard, and Latin America is the great map for reading Uruguayan reality. Thus, Milán's locus of enunciation seems attentive to the specific transformations of cultural globalisation. To a large extent, his work can be read as a minimal ethnography of the global world that places its magnifying glass on Latin America's surface and, in certain cases, on the Uruguayan soul.

Thus, for Milán, the margin or periphery is a Latin American project, while for Espina it is a Uruguayan one—at least in its intellectual outlook. In this sense, although

his work is widely disseminated, the core of Espina's work is the hypothetical universality of the Uruguayan difficulty and the idea that this universality is empowered or limited by the specific dynamics affecting literary works written in Spanish by an eccentric Uruguayan author. Espina's poetry must thus be read in a direct dialogue with the eccentric and difficult Uruguayan identity that he meticulously underlines throughout his work, especially in *El cutis patrio*. Therefore, the dissemination of his poetry has had to deal with two types of eccentricity: 1) a geographical, economic and geopolitical eccentricity (which has caused Uruguayan literature to be relatively relegated) and 2) a cultural, linguistic and symbolic eccentricity (which is both attractive and repellent). The dissemination of Espina's writing is tightly entwined with Uruguayan marginality/eccentricity (which the poet emphasises in his poetry and essays) and with the eccentricity of his own work. Thereby, a premise for Espina is that Uruguay's eccentricity (geographical and cultural) and the eccentricity of his poems are essentially one and the same. In some ways, his oeuvre is guided by some conventions of authorial design that seeks to identify both elements as the same.

On the other hand, the author that Milán seeks to construct is more transversal, unpredictable, and specifically Latin American and Global Southern. Unpredictable, among other things, because this thesis has vindicated the aesthetic value of his political and historical contingency. Milán has created a poetic map which is much more permeable to political and aesthetic contingencies (even trivialities and gossips) than Espina's map. Thus, his is a writing that is fluid and constantly altered by the aesthetic contrast among recent, older and future books. That openness to disorder, destruction and, occasionally, banality makes his poetry overwhelmingly plural and intrinsically heterogeneous. The Latin American character to which he refers comes from the need in his essays and poems not only to problematise the continent's poetic history but also to discuss the political sense of being Latin American in this century. Thus, his work's experimentation and eccentricity—less radical than Espina's—are supported by some authorial choices that go beyond Uruguayan identity and that, by contrast, go from outside to inside, like a centrifugal force that traps all kind of ideas, rhetorical formulations and aesthetic experiences. In this sense, it can be said that Milán's writings are dialogical and always seek their own alteration, their own instability.

Despite the fact that both authors appeal to an avant-garde notion of art, they do so for significantly different reasons. Espina creates images using a singular language that seeks to recreate Uruguayan realities (linguistic, cultural, and even zoological and

botanical) for a hypothetical cosmopolitan reader. His syntax dismantles grammatical linearity, creating a kind of infinite palimpsest: in that sense, the interpretation of Espina's poems is theoretically inexhaustible. However, it is a controlled chaos: that is, it is a puzzle that seeks to be reorganised. All the same, his poems have a frenetic rhythm despite his constant use of the traditional metre. Although Espina occasionally recreates vintage or bucolic scenarios, the apparent impenetrability of his work—seemingly irrational collages constructed using an intellectual method—leads the reader to make constant detours around the phrases: in several senses, it is a celebration of the world's illegibility and a vindication of the illegibility of the melting pot called Uruguay, within the framework of a minor-literature constellation called Uruguayan poetry. Furthermore, the heterogeneous relationship between a colonising language (Spanish) and a Creole reality that constantly surpasses (and renews) it is evident here. Based on concepts developed by Sommer (2006, 31), the claim of this thesis has been that these poems can be read as authorial-minority writings. Indeed, Espina takes a series of authorial decisions aimed at displaying a refractory and eccentric attitude and also manages to be in dialogue with many aspects of Uruguayan identity.

Conversely, Milán creates a very political exercise of imagination in every poem, a cosmopolitan form of appropriating the world's landscapes. He creates a poetic and philosophical documentary about the relations between the inhabitants of the Global South and the new world order. Poem by poem, scene by scene, book after book, Milán quotes or refers to the names of cities, public figures or historical circumstances as a way to characterise distances and large global flows in the contemporary context. In this scenery, Latin American identity (and, by extension, the Uruguayan) represents a marginal, eccentric, but flexible and open connection to world dynamics. Like Espina, Milan uses a blinking or zapping technique (like a trick of illusionism) where the meaning of the poem is artificially elided, but Milan's political compass always makes his poetry more realistic, even everyday. Perhaps, in that sense, Milán participates in the formulation of a discrete but powerful allegory: a moving Uruguay within a moving Latin America within a moving world, in a projection scale of different kinds of identities. Under this reading, the Uruguayan minor-literature constellation can theoretically scroll effectively on the complex map of world literature. In the case of Espina, his poems work as strange artefacts, as anomalous engines that, in their strangeness, express the underlined—and sometimes invented—uniqueness of Uruguayan literature and landscape. Although this strangeness is not mere aesthetic artifice (the images of the Eastern River Plate region are

continuously cited and reformulated in his texts), his perspective on the artistic work is not reduced to a mechanical process of representation of the country. Instead, Espina disrupts and questions the Uruguayan melting pot in such a way that the poems display authorial devices as symptoms, able to depict a dramatic shock between a very personal and dreamlike baggage, many characteristically Uruguayan references and the Spanish language. As previously noted, Espina's poetic radicalism has been constructed as a hermetic authorial translation of a hypothetical Uruguayan radicalism: the only way of being visible from the periphery of the periphery is to be radical among radicals.

In Milán, the periphery refers not only to Uruguay but to the entire Third World. The country is part of a macrocosm called the Global South that is a marginalised area of global dialectics. He builds his poetic identity through a documentation-based approach—at times precise, at times capricious—to Latin America, but prevents it from being domesticated and flattened by the politically correct discourse of liberal democracies. In several senses, his generally very lucid essays about Latin American poetry contextualise his own poetic work. Rather in the manner of a game, he seeks to question the place of the oppressed and marginal societies on the world map, and for Milán, the oppressed are not only a class but fundamentally a place of enunciation and a way of feeling. The collapsed syntax that Milán frequently uses is not merely a trick; it is an expression of the collapse of human relationships in capitalist contexts. It is not only a celebration of the difficulty, as in Espina's poetry, but also a demonstration of the complexity of social and economic relationships.

A decisive detail in Espina's work with respect to collective life is that his most recent poems express a journey through migration, memory, and language. Historically, diaspora characterises Uruguayan identity: that non-place seems to be convergent with the great human migrations of the last decades. Indeed, in Espina's oeuvre, the poetic language seems to express that diaspora. In the specific case of *El cutis patrio*, its reading aims to perceive Uruguayan society from a standpoint of fluid deterritorialisation. Among those poems where the poet appeals to home, typical meals, patriotic symbols or family, the frequent anacolutha in his writings reveal the impossibility of objectively reconciling the world. Finally, Espina's Uruguayan identity is, in the first place, aesthetic; politics is relegated to the second or third plane. In contrast, for Milán identity is mainly ethical and political, and everything else is derived from there. In the context of the digital age, Milán's writing appeals to a utopian interpretation of the world through an articulation

among a marginal homeland, an experimental attitude and a political message. It is an attempt to repoliticise the language and, perhaps, to repoliticise the society.

The Ecuadorian coin: Carvajal versus Nieto Cadena

¿nieto o carvajal?
como el segundo no cree más en tus poemas
buscas en el primero la lisonja

FERNANDO ITÚRBURU

It is difficult to find two other poets who differ from one another to such an extreme as the two Ecuadorian wordsmiths Carvajal and Nieto Cadena. Their aesthetic conception and political stance, as well as the manner in which their works have circulated, are starkly divergent. However, one commonality connects them: although Carvajal's poetry can be considered philosophical and Nieto Cadena's colloquial and humorous, both reflect on the meaning of Ecuador. In both cases, their authorial gestures and the perspective they develop about the country are usually rather explicit. Since an avant-garde, self-consciously eccentric outlook is not the core of their aesthetic oeuvres, their use of aesthetic devices is more transparent and, in general, allows for a linear and informative reading of their texts, at least in certain moments.

Nevertheless, the dissemination of Carvajal and Nieto Cadena's work has been relatively limited. In the specific case of Carvajal, the image of the intellectual-poet that he shares with Milán and Espina has not been accompanied by the construction of an authorial figure able to attract widespread interest. In several ways, his work has maintained a subtle dialogue with many traditions, but without problematising them in all their possibilities and gaps. In addition, there is no 'Ecuadorian' style in his writings, nor a worldview that supports the deployment of a specific style. This observation supports one of the conclusions of this thesis: it is not possible to think about art outside of culture and geography.

The minor-literature constellation that makes up Ecuadorian poetry has not undergone a process of international critical consolidation, for reasons ranging from the precarious publishing industry and the lack of effective and comprehensive national self-characterisation to the stagnation of certain aesthetic and ideological perspectives. For that reason, Carvajal's oeuvre seems to be a structured island, set apart from the literary traditions of the Western world: in fact, following the theoretical allegory of the constellations, his work would be a slightly artificial solar system, too harmonious in a

chaotic galaxy. Nieto Cadena, on the other hand, has exercised a poetic of daily life, a collage, a mash up of anti-power messages—not only in language, but even in the construction of an authorial figure, an issue that did not seem to be meaningful to him throughout his life. His writing must be read as sloppy chaos or inconclusive self-sabotage. For that same reason, an expanded reading of Ecuadorian poetry should place Nieto Cadena as an eccentric 'file' in its archive.

Carvajal, by contrast agrees with the figure of a poet who asks to be read from an intellectual perspective. This reductive reception is conditioned by the authorial intellectualisation—and westernisation—of symbols, images, landscapes and ideas related to Ecuador. His writing evinces a willingness to translate or adapt peripheral geographic or cultural references to metropolitan contexts, and vice versa. Hence, he cares about the readability of his poems beyond Ecuador and Latin America. His writing does not use eccentricity or peripherality as an ideological basis, grammatical strategy or underlined place of enunciation. He carefully chooses what elements of the Andean cultural landscape are susceptible to incorporation into an oeuvre that is—or seeks to be— westernising. Comparatively speaking, Carvajal only very rarely uses Ecuadorian periphery as the regulating compass of his poetic language.

Nieto Cadena's work has had less diffusion than Carvajal's. This has happened fundamentally, though not exclusively, because of to the kamikaze character that his idea of the author configures. Between the author's risky performance and his conservative gestures toward specialised readers, his work underlines a disinterest in the canonical dispute. Even today, after his recent death, his books are still scattered, and it is very likely that some time will pass before a critical edition of his poetry is published. In the context of this study, it should also be noted that Nieto Cadena is the only poet who is not also an essayist. This fact implies that he did not want to prop up an authorial figure based on the argumentative and analytical discourse of the essay: all the clues that Nieto Cadena gives us regarding identity are in his poetry. Nevertheless, among the authors discussed here, he is the most radical in questioning the idea of authority, because he questions even his own authority—the very idea of an efficient and monolithic author. Of course, humour constitutes a definitive element in the task (in reality, the 'anti-task') that he sets forth: his oeuvre foreshadows its own implosion.

In Carvajal, by contrast, there are hardly any traces of humour. Carvajal's work asks to be read in a serious way: as a transatlantic cartography that encompasses movement through history, attempting to reflect on humanity and on humans' behaviour

as a species, rather than on the nation-state or the peculiarities of the Andean world. Of course, he uses Andean place names and other nodes of Ecuador's sociocultural history, but his premise is a serious dialogue with a hypothetical universal tradition, particularly one that highlights an idea of transcendence and thoughtfulness as a creative method. Therein lies its peculiarity, in that obstinate gesture of placing an incipient or minor poetic tradition in dialogue with metropolitan literary traditions. In addition, all this effort appears sustained in a writing that continuously pursues its own moderation and that seeks self-containment, thus distancing itself from the trademark of Latin American poetry: formal experimentation and an overflowing, fluid, baroque and telluric sensibility. Furthermore, there is a great scepticism of society and gregariousness in his texts: it is a poetry centred on the individual (sometimes alienated, sometimes hyperconscious) who nonetheless seeks to move amidst hostile, alienating, strange contexts (fundamentally, urban areas) and, only occasionally, amidst serene and peaceful ones (nature itself, or perhaps natural elements in urban contexts).

Although both poets perhaps agree on the social futility of poetic writing, Nieto Cadena makes of that a 'vandalistic' gesture, in the best sense of the word. His writing only works well from a non-transcendentalist and anti-canonical perspective: it is a linguistic connection between real and constructed periphery. In several ways, he requests—even demands, though that does not fit with his own perspective—the status of marginal. Like Milán, Nieto builds his poetry as a utopian space, but it is not a collective utopia, but rather, an individualistic, teenage, narcissistic and nostalgic utopia where an ethno-symbolic community called Guayaquil is expressed, in all of its cultural potential and discourse, as a minor landscape on the Caribbean map. To understand this perspective, his poetry must be read through a postnational gaze, because both the poems he wrote in Ecuador and those he wrote in Mexico express the sensibilities, textures and nostalgias of everyday Guayaquilean speech. He is constantly outlining an alternative identity to that of *serrano*—which in the Ecuadorian national context is perceived as a complement/nemesis of the *costeño*. Here, a Guayaquilean neighbourhood, as a set of contexts and social dynamics, calls into question the most Western forms of social life.

In Carvajal, an outline of national identity appears in a subtle way. In fact, it could be said that his method of dealing with this issue is to elide it and depict a dialogue, often tense, with complex works of Western culture, locating the features of his individual identity in the evolution of this heritage. Although he uses rhetorical figures characteristic of the avant-garde (and of the baroque), he uses them in a moderate, ecumenical manner.

This gesture is related to a philosophical assumption that human experience is indeed translatable and potentially universal. Thus, the risk of this approach is an artificial narrowing of how Latin American heterogeneity is understood: in this sense, Carvajal is above all a humanist. His representation of Latin America shows certain neutrality or a sceptical distance. Although Ecuador (and its minor-literature constellation) determines many aspects of this poet's writing, he seeks to organise his images and grammar, attempting to evade a territorial fixedness. In fact, his inquiry into the relations between history and time is guided by a fundamental premise: the experience of the human species transcends the ethno-symbolic particularities of a place or culture and, still more, the frivolities of social life in the contemporary world.

Thus, it is evident that the forms for understanding Ecuadorian society in these two poets are vastly different. In Nieto Cadena, irony works as a mechanism to question Ecuador as a country and nation-state. The poet demonstrates that governmental control over language from the state is meaningful: ultimately, control of language is control of people. Through the ironic oxymoron where the magnificence of historical figures is compared with the vulgarity of everyday objects, the poet vigorously challenges official history, continually appealing to a reference that he perceives as culturally and emotionally meaningful (albeit geographically distant): the Caribbean world. In Nieto Cadena, there is an ethno-symbolist affirmation of a nostalgic, utopian and idealised landscape related to the possibility of a new literary and symbolic territory known as Guayaquil (which, in turn, supposes a new way of thinking about Ecuador). Carvajal goes in an almost opposite direction. In a marginal context, his poetic voice creates a modern and elegant observer who refuses any commitment to the great national narratives and the contingencies of history. Rather, the imaginative reinvention of natural landscapes and the sensitive aspects of human existence seem to be the motivations of his poetry, in a cosmopolitan gesture that seeks to avoid the institutional, discursive and interest-based regulations of national history. Thus, the key point of agreement between the two is to reject the nation-state as a fundamental unit.

The concern of both poets, rather, is to dialogue with the collective myths and the inter-subjective world they know, through a singular aesthetic oeuvre. Perhaps the fundamental difference is that Nieto Cadena has created an adolescent, comic, nostalgic, and realistic microcosm, while Carvajal has developed a telluric, transcendentalist set of scenes oriented by the imagination and the thinking. In comparison to the role of Uruguay for the Uruguayan poets, here Ecuador is not a point of departure, but a dead load. The

possibility of an organised Ecuadorian national literature is confronted by the absence of a cultural and historical perspective that explains the aesthetic gaps and discontinuities among the writings that configure the boundaries of Ecuadorian literature's archive.

A literary ethnography: a broader perspective

Most critical orientations—particularly in relation to Ecuadorian literature—tend to read the text by isolating its internal structures while losing its richness. This study has sought to combine two methodological tools: 1) the concept of landscape allows for a transversal reading, since the interaction of what is analysed in the poem and what surrounds it can be discussed without prejudice; 2) the concept of landscape allows for the interpretation of poetry through contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism, globalisation, and transatlanticism (including the meticulousness of textual analysis). Here, the notion of landscape has permitted hermeneutical twists among several planes (imagination, reality, representation, geography, national cultures, subjective spaces etc.).

Throughout this study, I have tried to establish to what extent the linguistic and ideological expression of Eduardo Milán, Iván Carvajal, Eduardo Espina and Fernando Nieto Cadena are in dialogue with the symbolic framework that communities (national or not) have constructed to define themselves. In prior interpretations of the circulation and reception of these authors' works, these writings have been read as awkward mechanisms seeking aristocratic positions in deeply inequitable societies where the only thing that matters is money management. However, these poets are uncomfortable because they seek to question national identities, and, paradoxically, they do not endorse any of these nation-state configurations that seem only supported by money management and advertising. In the case of these Uruguayan and Ecuadorian minor-literature constellations, the circulation of these 'awkward devices' is marginal, but it also illustrates the meaningless cooperation between the multimedia story that institutions tell to support the symbolic coherence of these countries, and the vintage, steam-punk, retro technology that a book of poems represents. In this sense, it cannot be said that these authors are national poets like César Vallejo or Octavio Paz, but all four express complementary or supplementary views on the human being, his country, the spirituality of his countrymen, their customs, their individual and collective fights, etc. In several cases, their writings even contradict essential aspects of their country's official histories. However, although they are not national poets, they can be seen as semi-official poets,

recognised and accepted by the literate culture of each of their countries (and also of some areas of Latin America).

A poet becomes official when his work is deciphered, accepted and, above all, assimilated, by the institutions of a country. In this context, the reading of these poets reveals how problematic it is to ascribe these works to a single cultural or intellectual tradition, even to a single authorial identity. Likewise, their poems reveal the frequent mismatch among three different aspects of identity: 1) individual identity and the poet's artistic style; 2) collective identity (mainly affective); and 3) official identity (the one indicated on the passport, especially in the context of the global world). There, the notion of landscape allows readers to observe how these poets interpret the interaction among these layers or labyrinths.

Although it is evident that the concepts and methods of cultural geography have rarely been employed in interpreting poetry, concepts such as neighbourhood, nation-state, place and, especially, landscape allow for a contextualisation of the poem, which does not appear as something external or opposed to the writing itself. Thus, any sense of belonging to a national community is observed through a perusal of very specific references. The theoretical contributions of Appadurai and Aberbach have allowed me to observe the various manners in which poetry and geography complement each other. Through metaethnography, I have observed the linguistic materiality that these poets recreate and construct, but I have also used this methodology to dialogue with verifiable aspects of Ecuadorian and Uruguayan baggage. Thus, this thesis has not only revealed inextricable aspects of some poetic excerpts through a geographic lens (and its wide focus), but has also set forth a methodological approach where the historical, political and economic variables of the Global South have been seriously considered.

This argument brings us face-to-face with the relations between literary criticism and scientific accuracy that, quite often, tend to be solved through circular reasoning: something seems a certain way because I believe it, and I believe it because it seems that way. On this subject, Iván Carvajal suggests the following: '*El lector crítico analiza, describe, utiliza su "caja de herramientas" semióticas, lingüísticas, retóricas, filosóficas, históricas y hasta sociológicas, pero solo la interpretación destinada a la apertura del acontecimiento poético hace que su texto sea necesario*' (2018, 65). Carvajal's argument is only useful if we think that 'the opening of the poetic event' is a kind of revelation that is neither rational nor reducible. It is impossible to determine whether this actually occurs for the reader of this thesis or of any academic essay that seeks to orient itself through

logic. The interpretive path followed throughout this thesis has attempted not to explain a metaphor with another metaphor, but sometimes this has been impossible. In fact, the aims have been to clarify the poems, explain their details and develop a self-sufficient conceptual scaffolding that can serve as a starting point for new essays and interpretations in the future.

Appendix: Selected Poems¹²⁶

1. By Eduardo Milán

*Manes, el aire,
la subida, e ir sintiendo el tiempo
físico, los límites del cuerpo, los bordes
límites, los brazos, la punta de los dedos
imantados como sin poder mover
como el aire, mi padre sobre la colina
con una firmeza antropocéntrica de "soy".
Y era el mismo padre del caminar
a grandes zancadas pero meditando,
arrancando juncos al pasar, juntos
que mastica y me convida.
Santana do Livramento, a los ocho años de edad:
ahí hay una primera imantación en el patio
debajo del aguacatero que dejó el piso
llenos de aguacates que se recogerán.
Aracy, la criada, los recoge en una cesta,
una cesta de mimbre marrón. Lo que se imanta
allí son unas ganas de estar en otra parte, ganas
de un mundo con olor a menta por donde corra el aire.
Es el mismo padre el que señala: "el campo". Y luego,
efectivamente, hay que ir al campo, quemar
campo y quedarse un tiempo en soledad
antes de entrar en la mujer que ocurre
cuando el mundo cambia para siempre. Se produce
la menta mencionada, la imantación apenas sugerida.*

Milán 1999, p.184

*AL SILENCIO de los grandes no le importa
el silencio de los pequeños, estos últimos
peces. El espíritu no cae sobre el tiempo:
es el tiempo mismo que no encuentra lugar,
piso donde pisar, planta del pie, arena. Haré
unas palabras como mareas, unos cambios de luna
sobre el lomo de las vacas de leche. Ahora ya no hay campo
para el poema, hay una nostalgia de nosotros, tal
para cual. Haré una pareja de pájaros para tener,
pico por pico, pluma por pluma, no para ser: para
casamiento. Un brindis del discurso con el curso
¿surco? de los acontecimientos, copa contra copa,*

¹²⁶ While this selection does not include all of the quoted poems throughout the thesis, it does seek to highlight the most representative aspects of each autor. In every selected poem, the quoted passage has been underlined.

árbol contra el cielo, arados nuevos haré.

*DISTANCIA es cuando se puede decir,
el ansia cesa. Mira: no hay culpa en las colinas,
hay niño en las montañas , hay nubes conformes con mujer
hay tierra para arar, para tararear incluso, hay
lugar para los tarahumara. Desde aquí se puede ver
la forma de firmar lo que se dice, la forma horizontal
de estar de pie. Hay lugar para los Tarahumara y para mí.*

Milán 1999, p.77

*ESTAMOS en el muriendo
estamos en el renaciendo, juntos y a la vez,
distintos casi opuestos, tal vez un poco antes,
tal vez un poco después. Es posible rimar aquí,
es posible volver a las Galias, es posible
que no me reflejen en este espejo que eres tú,
no por mí, por mi imagen. Nazca es eterno,
no tuvo el tiempo de ser viejo. Sobrevivirá
quien lleve el ganado de contradicciones, el rebaño
de sueños que vino con la galación, el arreo
de sí mismo en paz. Quizás te enamores
justo al cruzar el Milenio, aunque el amor no es justo.*

Milán 1999, p.193

*ROSA del lugar, cuerpo, cosa del lugar
Que nadie sabe lo que puede ni nadie sabe lo que duele.
Totalidad de las violeta, vacío de las violetas: el vigía vio.
Posiciones, en qué lugar estás , cambio de posiciones, en qué
lugar no estás. Cama poblada de posiciones sobre las sábanas
del desierto. Tiendas. Gente que se tiede. Otro lugar, el mar.
El vigía que dice desde la torre: Monte-vide-eu,
El sueño revela una carabela , la carabela en la que venía
toda la eucaristía, cara de Europa que en el agua se mecía:
Monte-vide-eu. Vela que bajaba, velamen que subía, eran la
misma
cópula del mar. Monte-vide-eu, Monte deve-nus, Monte divi-no:
tu vagina es tu capital. El vigía dijo lo que pudo:
tocó fondo, fundó por el origen, en el monte puso el pez.*

Milán 1999, p.113

SE NECESITA una mujer llorando su origen

perdido en el mundo de los Giorgio Armani.

Origen de mujer del mundo, origen de oro del mundo,
origen de nada de oro que genera cuanto era,
orillo cosido en el costado interno del bolsillo
de los Giorgio Armani. Hachas

de piedra hechas para una guerra noble, no ésta.

Ahora cuando no hay origen ni ella llora su perdido

origen se descubre que la guerra es noble:

no aquellos grandes encuentros relámpago. Ésta,

la de los Giorgio Armani.

¿Qué se hicieron aquellas fundadoras?

Dureza de los líquidos en que no hay fluir ni huida

de la luna hacia mejores soles, congelamiento

del corazón fijado en rojo sin posible

contagio de un azul fijado en el cielo, descubrimiento

debajo de una piedra: yo no soy un Giorgio Armani.

Hachas de piedra para otra lucha había. Y otras

muchas aves en su haber. Hay que querer todavía

aparecer en otro tiempo cantando un canto ciego,

una canción fuera del mundo y dentro de los ojos, rojos,

un nuevo enigma para proteger la intimidad del mundo,

aina, siné, einaudos. Una canción en femenino,

¿una elegía? Una elegía: canto de ciega. La seguiría.

Milán, 1999, p.100

MIENTRAS es la palabra

que debería ser borrada del mapa. Una expresión

común como un cesto de manzanas, rojas, lustradas

como el recién barrido Paraíso, lo que demuestra

que no todo es tan común. Si en el mapa hay un lugar

para la palabra mientras esto es un escándalo, esto

es amar a quien te mata, la deuda del difunto, los deudos

como quien dice los herméticos, los que quisieron, los claves.

¿Por qué un mapa? ¿Por qué no se puede escapar de las montañas,

espíritus que detiene a los dones con el pecho? Topografía,

maldita palabra. Vienen a medir, traen los cálculos,

cierran un ojo, lo cubren con pestañas. Suben a los camiones,

bajan por el camino de la montaña. Llevan todas las de ganar.

Y ganan. Y todo, absolutamente todo esto, visto desde la infancia.

Milán 1999, p.152

BUENAS noticias, sujétate: el objeto

es la suma de todos los sujetos. Y también:

buenas noticias, objétame: el sujeto

*es la suma de todos los objetos, luz
clara o viceversa: clara luz de hoy no mía,
esclavo de tu lengua bordeante voy, a veces
áspid, a veces áspera vi la víbora de luz
que nos rodea totalmente boa, beata boa, Beatriz
que nos envolvía viéndonos. ¡Hola!, dije, una diaria
contribución a la feliz holografía, geografía
toda –árboles, bosques, Amazonía, huertos,
abismos, mares, quintas, desiertos, Tajo-
que hay en la hoja de parra que descubre
tu rosada uva. Por aquí anda la cobra.*

Milán 1999, p.94

*EL LUGAR que querías está muerto para ti. No
hay lugar. Extranjero como un jeroglífico
en un muro de mil años, egipcio. La gesta
está cerrada, Mío Cid salió de la ciudad. Por
el tiempo el poema avanza como un pájaro:
siglo XVI, san Juan. La frase aún fresca
en el aire, el aire de la noche oscura en la cara.
el escarabajo, sobre la piedra pulida, tiempo atrás
y en vaivén. Más despacio. Abril abrió con
ventarrón, los tejados gotean, el pájaro solitario
se queja. Dos de sus virtudes: que pone el pico al aire;
que no tiene determinado color. La historia se reitera
en cualquier lugar, como un brillo de luciérnagas
en un campo nocturno. La historia ínfima, la de la fe. Y
acecha y escucha y el búho dichoso dice “búho,
búho”. No hay tiempo: hay heridas, un tajo
bajo el sol, al ritmo del trote del tejón.*

Milán 1999, p.66

*EL ALETEO de una mariposa en Nueva York,
para siempre. Dicho así, como de pasada, dicho
así, como verdadero. El aleteo de una mariposa
en Nueva York, como de pasada.
Si quisiéramos podríamos concluir que sólo
Lo provisorio es duradero. Pero no queremos.*

Milán 1999, p.86

*ME REFIERO a ti como dos fieras porque
una herida son dos fieras. Hay que estar
muy herido para referirse, muy herido de lenguaje.
Me refiero al Cañón del Colorado, Me refiero*

*un abismo desnudo que Cristo viste, en la
aurora lo veo en su cresta. Me refiero a la nada,
al punto opuesto donde está Cristo. Escribir es
desnudarse, escribir es vestirse. Pero el vértigo
no viste, viste el rojo, el pájaro de sangre, el
gorjeo del pájaro de sangre en Inglaterra, pío, pío.
La que te cubre no cobra por vestirse. Ella, la
doncella leve que sobre ti se deposita, esposa del
esposo, gemela del gemido. Por último,
sin miedo, me refiero a mí.*

Milán 1999, p.69

*FALTA todavía, falta
para una nueva forma de hablar.
Hay prisa en los continentes
derramados, en las áfricas, en las Américas,
en los canguros de Australia, continentes.
Líricos es decir “ tienen prisa los pelícanos ”
pero el lírico no es mundial como laurel.
Para mí presidiario es el poema de su propio deber ser:
ser poema. Pero un pelícano es un pelícano, representa
lo que representa, jura lo que jura – tres
pájaros en uno-,
sin necesidad de rima, salvo un golpe cercano de remo.
La orilla es de oro por los navegantes de antiguamente.*

Milán 1999, p.199

*Andrés juega con Alejandro,
Alejandro juega con Andrés.
A veces hay pelea, otras abrazo.
Hay canicas, carros, lego,
dibujos, fútbol, pesca,
lluvia sobre los dinosaurios
cuando se bañan –no siempre.
Son instrumentos de sentir
que son instrumentos de tocar
el mismo aliento que los une:
afectos, como una cuerda, un lazo,
un tiento fraterno.
Yo solo escribo por afuera
lo que pasa por adentro.*

Milán 2005, p.54

pero el poema ahora piensa

*no es posible decir pero el poema ahora piensa
ataca desde el olvido aunque no fue olvidado
mira que se le facilitaron las cosas al deseo
lo que quieras –dijo
puedes conseguir lo que quieras si de veras lo quieres
-grave sol, grave luna
cuando ninguno de los dos era grave
antes de México era grave el ave
después de México grave es el agave-*

*uno viene caminando
uno siempre viene caminando, aunque esté quieto
sentado en la vereda, contra la pared
un ala de sombrero sobre los ojos da la sombra querida
el amor le salta encima
el ejemplo es válido para las miradas a distancia*

*pocos preparados para fundir amor con pensamiento
mientras no se encienda el foco de la alerta roja
hay quien habla de la familiaridad del desastre*

Milán 2014a, p.30

Es la que todo lector que viene de vuelta , no necesariamente después de haber ido. Un lector busca consuelo, algo que, íntimamente verdadero, aunque también “objetivamente válido”. Es la quem entonces: sirve para vivir. La que “me toca de cerca” -¿con su mano visible o con su mano invisible? – así se forjan los actos consumados, los pactos del que va con herrajes de otra época, ya que “tenemos que vivir”. Claro que tenemos que vivir. Me cae el silencio bruto. Sí, yo también vi esa escena de la caída del caballo en Rublev. Pero antes de la escena del caballo cayendo con su épica sobre el suelo yo vi al caballo cayendo en realidad en el patio de mi infancia, caballo en el campo, horizonte que se adelanta, demolido, cabeza de mármol suspendida – verano de 1958, otoño de 1959- Estado fallido en camilla de enfermera, el pathos de el patio, un modo de decir. ¿Cuál es el poema que más amenaza en su exterioridad? Como si avanzara sobre un campo por el que vas a pasar, te lo encuentras. Ese poema se parece a un caballo que se cruza. Se parece peligrosamente a un caballo que va a caer. Nacerá -o no- así una de las siete películas más endiosadas de la historia del cine. El poema interior no constituye ninguna amenaza. En tiempos de amenaza latente –policía en todas partes, antimotines, pasamontañas fuera de montañas, ni , abajo murmullo de río que corre con un plátano sobre la cresta , la cáscara de un plátano una desmembrada canoa, pálido reflejo circulando de los miembros celestiales de un Túpac- un libro en el bolsillo , antes, mucho antes de esas ediciones para todos que en la mayoría de los casos son cautivos de lectura – desde las novelas rusas del XIX hasta las superestrellas del boom latinoamericano pasando por Faulkner- un libro de la clase poética no a muchas cuerdas de la clase política y, adentro, un poema puede por un momento, officiar de salvador ante la inminencia a la vista, ser detenido en el momento de vivir, justo al doblar la esquina. Puede ser un haiku: no solo tiene la propiedad de hablar de algo que vive en esa nube – en la tierra pero en la nube, en la nube de la tierra, un toque de cristal conseguido en

movimiento- de fachada impávida fuera del tiempo, a salvo de la vejez –vejez: ministro japonés de 72 años que mandó a morir a sus compañeros tocados de vejez- de la historia, un capitalismo en fase depredadora de los países emergentes, hombrecitos en pequeño, enfetados, hechos bola de huesos para caber dentro de un plato de arroz -24 horas de vida por un plato de arroz- la Europa cómplice, los Estados Unidos decaídos en su economía y su armamento peligrosamente intacto, el dolor y la muerte. Es mejor para la mente un poema constituido por onomatopeyas que no te saque de allí sino que te ahonde más allí en un juego no tan conceptual, tan real como tu vida en manos del troglodita.

Milán 2014a, p.85

*La separación de las palabras
palabras oficiales, palabras que ofician de verdad
palabras vivas, palabras que ofician de palabras*

*concentradas en los edificios ciegos
en los vidrios que te reflejan
no solo ves adentro, te ves a ti*

*qué hace un alce
qué hace un conejo gris, blanco, frente al vidrio ciego*

*ni un solo caballo en Santa fe
una sola mandrágora en Lecumberri, ahora archivo*

*la imagen las reúne afuera
un centro de olla al centro del frío da calor
sopa de Buenos Aires, sopa de Atenas, sopa de Dublín caen
las economías al centro
se frotan las manos con guante, sin guante*

*viven apartadas las palabras sin institución
ni un quinto por un asilo
como nada
sin temblor de leche que estríe la nata
crean sentido en su estar desamparadas*

Milán 2014a, p.26

Los poetas llaman a la acción. La acción descansa sobre un reguero. Se levanta, se para enfrente como una pregunta. ¿Qué hace el poeta? ¿Le cierra la palabra en la cara? La palabra está ocupada en sí misma. La palabra no paga peaje en las casetas de las nuevas autopistas, autopistas de la historia nueva, la historia con marca, no la historia marcada (“nuestra cita es la hora de la caída”, “un paso atrás, un paso menos”, “no te alejes demasiado”). La palabra se está mirando en un oasis. Ahora se está mirando. Se estira en su osamenta, tiene la parte sombra pelada por los pájaros que la esperan de cerca. Se diría: qué extrañas las palabras de hoy en día. No parecen las de poco tiempo atrás.

Las de hace poco actuaban en silencio, un poco hablaban, otro no. El Potosí hace eso. Hasta hace poco hacían como el desierto. Ahora no sé. La acción está en la calle. Brasil juega bien. No es el de hace diez años. Pero Brasil juega bien al margen de la selección de fútbol. Si no, ¿qué son un millón de tipos en la calle pidiendo educación, salud, seguridad social? Pidiendo no, exigiendo. No es caridad: es un comienzo de justicia. No hay nada ganado para siempre. La palabra se está mirando en un oasis. Pero Snowden nos dijo que nos miran a todos. O pueden estarnos mirando. Ahora nos están mirando. ¿Le cierra la puerta en la cara? Una epistemología del sur, no dominante. Claro que sí. Los discursos progresistas pragmáticos que no abandonan el capital quieren crecer con él. Como si el capital fuera un niño de pecho que necesita amamantarse en los antiguos patriarcados de los Andes o en los más recientes patriarcados del Cono Sur. No bastan dos presidentas para dar vuelta la cara de la injusticia. Mucho discurso, mucha promesa. No es suficiente para cerrarle el paso al autoritarismo, una ya vieja necesidad de estas sociedades que no terminan de cuajar sin caudillo. Esto marca un repunte en la felicidad de los liberales, los verdaderos demócratas. Sin duda: son los verdaderos demócratas de estas democracias que no son democracias. La corrupción es la apuesta macabra que trabaja 24 horas sin parar. Creer que la corrupción es un acto mudo es la verdadera ingenuidad de los poetas de hoy. Creer que la corrupción no contaminó la palabra. Esas aguas están escamadas de azufre. Sobre la superficie de la palabra flotan peces muertos, sin más gravedad que lo que aguanta un balanceo que va de cresta a cresta, cuenco o palma en el medio. Lo cierto es que los poetas no llaman a la acción. La acción descansa sobre un reguero. Puede que la pólvora no esté lo suficientemente seca como para prender entera, prende por trechos. Es todavía el tiempo de la brasa en Brasil. Pero un millón de brasas puede dar un gran incendio. La acción no se levanta y viene porque la palabra poética llama. Viene la acción porque la palabra poética no llama.

Milán 2014a, p.119

El silencio bruto pero neto, sin impuestos ni automóviles ni cohetes –callado– ellos vigilan, no duermen. Los perros, ellos duermen. La policía. La retirada. No duermen. Esos dioses, policía y dioses. Una gota que me levante a averiguar por qué suena si todo está cerrado, llaves, pase. Una gota liberada. El refrigerador que empieza. La hora atrasada a medianoche señala el fin del horario de verano. Amaga ahora un invierno distinto. A fines de octubre –allá es primavera– el frío debería ser una realidad. Las hojas que caen ya cayeron en Montevideo. Pero la temperatura traiciona la conducta del cuerpo. El amor que debería sentar las bases de una diferencia, el deseo, en realidad, el deseo que promete un cambio –el cambio permitido, el cambio de estación que aún bajo una dictadura militar, la de Uruguay que viví, por ejemplo– renueva en la gente una conducta de piel, la piel que se conduce sola si no hay otra piel que se ofrece al olfato, a la vista, en sus cuerpos que se cruzan con la calle. Mujer del Uruguay que pasa liberando instinto. Algo así, en plena dictadura, se decía. Liberando instinto del mismo modo que un animal libera algo, sólo que allí en primavera, algo así se decía, copio el algo. La dictadura hizo lo que pudo pero no mató el deseo. El deseo le resultó imposible. Darnauchans, Medina Vidal, Macedo, Puig, no sé si son exteriores o interiores. Vivían en la ciudad. No en ese campo donde hay un aire que te complica de tal forma con el cuerpo de ella que ella dirige desde el aire lo que puedas o no puedas. Polen directamente de las flores. Polen liberado de ataduras. Polen discreto de la ciudad. Esas mujeres de cincuenta años que se juegan por una forma suelta de la discreción. Forma contagiosa

de ninguna verdad que pasa como vértigo en esta época donde todo sucede, poco pasa, esta verdad queda.

Milán 2014a, p.83

Grados de imprevisibilidad, he ahí. Lo previsible se despliega liso, pista, autopista o cielo –este último con esa característica abismal, sin pudor posible, desmesurado. Lo imprevisible se pliega, una y otra vez, sobre sí mismo. Aparece a la vista como irrupción en un contexto de pradera, campo liso o cielo –este último con esa característica nublada, llueve sobre el bañado, un recogimiento de patos. Esas marchas no eran previsibles. Una crisis muestra su cresta hasta que aparece su gran cabeza que toca a todo cristo, la cabeza general de una gorgona. Cristo, el de la cruz, la esconde. Figura del retraimiento, parecería que eligió socavar, ir por debajo. El enrojecimiento de la ira –Pasolini con su Mateo podría haber enrojecido la pantalla como Coppola los peces– tomó a las gallos del mundo en buena hora. Enhorabuena: boa. Este mundo estaba durmiendo su bienestar, su digestión, este mundo que se levanta, no el que se somete. Sería extraordinario que los márgenes de boa se cerraran sobre el centro. Aunque el descentramiento es condición de este ahora, hay centros. La ciudad ladea a todo perro lengua de afuera. Los lengua de afuera a la periferia, herida perfecta. La ciudad encerra, incrusta, empotra en las laderas. México, Río de Janeiro, Quito, muestran el cobre –el oro banca adentro, menciones de ciudades como a través de una cámara fantasma. Nicheamientos. Los fuera de bienestar en el tiempo del bienestar, ¿dormían o soñaban con la gran mejora prometida siempre? Esta realidad deja algo claro: no mejora. Muere –aunque siga su estiramiento elástico de adaptación a cómo dé lugar, su desperezamiento desesperado– o cambia. Los walking dead son la gran metáfora del seguimiento por adaptación, el devenir sin límite, serie sin corte. Lo único que cambia es el entramado mínimo, la miserable porción de aire que se rehace como un respiro. Mientras, lo imprevisible, dejado a un lado ya su sanbenito de “nuevo”, sigue irrumpiendo en lugares en que menos se lo espera. ¿Hay esos lugares en que menos se lo espera, ahí donde lo imprevisible irrumpe? Habíamos dejado lo imprevisible en manos del arte. Pero el arte se volvió previsible. Los rompedores se parecen entre sí, los pica piedras entre sí, todos los pájaros carpinteros. Los que desenterraron un hacha de plata del lodo del fondo de un río como mar y avanzan tiempo arriba deslumbrando, cegando, desbrozando, talamontes del gerundio. Lo clásico no es una garantía solitaria de regreso. Hacheros que avanzan unidos por un mismo resplandor –el dar la nota, la noticia de último momento, millonario deja tesoro con una condición, el cuerpazo de la diva de 75 años, el fragmento de realidad convertido en misterio de realidad, la realidad enigmática, el cuerpazo de 75 años de la realidad enigmática, esa diva– parecen clásicos de sí mismos. Un poco más de autocrítica y menos automóvil. La aparición de Michelle Obama fue un alivio entre los óscars: abolió las fronteras entre ilusión y realidad mientras Lincoln, aboliéndola, uno de los grandes actores del momento, dejaba caer el último velo de sentido de un modelo de sociedad de gran ímpetu, sin escrúpulo y breve historia, todo en términos de una equivalencia entre presente y grano de arena en polvo.

Milán 2014a p. 93

2. By Iván Carvajal

Del sitio¹²⁷

II

Llegué.

Desde el instante en que el navío echó sus anclas en la costa, incesantemente miro hacia la Ciudad. Estupor, más que fatiga, en el constato mirar. Altos tejados descuelgan ventanales. La piedra se esfuerza en devenir perdurable. Memoria. Muralla. Catedral.

III

Llegué con la multitud esperanzada.

Y, como los demás, aguardo el debilitamiento de las defensas de la Ciudad. También yo, desde mi tienda de campaña provisional, contemplo las moradas menos transitorias de la Ciudad.

IV

Aguardamos. Nuestras costumbres son sobrias. Restringidas las reglas, como conviene a tiempos de campaña. En cualquier momento la orden sonará. Apenas habrá tiempo para echarse los pertrechos a la espalda y actuar. Las contraseñas, como convienen a tiempos de campaña, se renuevan. Van y vienen, incesantemente, entre las tiendas.

IX

El oficio vuelve huraño al sitiador. A la noche, luego de las prácticas de culto, nos acogemos al silencio de las tiendas. Permanecemos, ya pasada la medianoche, sobresaltados por la furia de los vientos. Los perros guardianes ladran cerca de la línea de los centinelas. Todavía más lejos, por el lado del desierto, aúllan los chacales.

X

Me he dicho: escribiré los míos... Busco el viejo lápiz, pido a algún camarada un trozo de papel. Un pedacito de papel amarillento. Pero me detengo sin saber cómo empezar. Los míos esperan con ansiedad las buenas nuevas. Abandono mi temprano impulso. Me digo: ya les llegará, a su hora, el veloz mensajero que anticipe el glorioso retorno de las naves.

XIII

Envejecemos. Mientras dura el cerco, envejecemos. Algunos han muerto en el tiempo que lleva la empresa. De vez en cuando, la certera flecha del enemigo. En ocasiones, la muerte común de los ancianos. Alguna peste. Los despedimos con los rituales de nuestro culto. Los enterramos, conforme a las creencias. Me digo: ¿cuántos de los que amas y permanecen lejos, en tu antigua patria, continúan vivos?

XV

Hasta aquí, a veces, llegan mujeres. Transeúntes de toda condición. Jóvenes, viejas. Las traen distintos negocios. Las contemplamos. Las amamos. Las dejamos. Parten. Al cabo de algún tiempo, se las olvida... Y sin embargo se espera demoler los muros de la Ciudad y volver hacia los cálidos lechos de las bien amadas...

¹²⁷ Extracts.

XX

¿Volveré con los míos? ¿Vivirán para entonces? ¿Encontraré mi hogar? ¿Habré permanecido siquiera semejante a aquél que fuera a la hora de partir? ¿Tendré los mismos sentimientos? ¿Seré reconocido por los míos?... Olvida, me digo, tus preocupaciones. Y olvido que aquí envejezco, entre tiendas de campaña, al pie de los muros de una vieja ciudad.

XXI

Esta tienda, mi morada, es provisional. A veces he pensado en dejarla por logares menos transitorios. Pero hasta donde mi vista alcanza, toda morada es provisional.

Carvajal 2001, pp. 45-47

Los juegos de la tribu

La tribu asiste al espectáculo. Algunos permanecen cómodos, hundidos en poltronas. Otros atisban desde atrás, estiran los cuellos, buscan espacio entre los cráneos delanteros. Todos fijan ahora su mirada en las pantallas. Alardean, se regocijan.

Se agrupan en torno a las pequeñas máquinas electrónicas, pulsan botones y palancas. Apuestan, salvan escollos, trepan, sortean abismos, bajan, aplastan al enemigo con sus tanques, lo bombardean con las escuadras de aviones invisibles a los radares, lo aniquilan.

Con la victoria, cada uno arroja afuera una pequeña parte del Mal. ¡Un espectáculo del fuego eterno que el Dios descarga sobre las tribus de abajo!

Y tras los jefes de las tribus de negro y blanco, que ya se aprestan al exterminio, la masa de espectros acicateados va a las brasas.

Reses de matadero pasan las cribas entre las sobrias líneas de una arquitectura amasada con tierra y agua, con cal y cantos, generación tras generación, hay mortaja de escombros.

Arriba, en la tribu que contempla, se instruye a cada cual sobre las tácticas de ubicación del blanco, el ritmo con que se activan las palancas, la fuerza del golpe.

Los periodistas describe la precisión del disparo y el entusiasmo. Los sacerdotes santifican. Los expertos evalúan, corrigen, programan, y el filósofo tribal atraviesa el espacio con sus ojos regocijados.

El crupier lanza los dados. La risa de Lennon vibra en el chasquido de las aristas cuando chocan. El crupier se inclina cubriendo el paño con la sombra de su melena. Tampoco esta vez se abolirá el duelo.

Arriba: fanáticos, alucinados. Como tal ve acontezca con los de abajo, la tribu vencida, que ahora va a la hoguera.

*Y los ojos del saurio mutante, vuelto hacia la desmesurada estatura de sus ancestros...
Una tribu que camina hacia el desierto . Banderitas que elevan sus muchachas púberes,
en sus saltos frenéticos. Souvenirs, botones, paraguas, bastones, cascos , maquinillas de
uso personal.*

*Ahora se construyen cálidos albergues con la chatarra. Dejan en la estantería, junto a
la pantalla, el cofre con huesos y más restos.*

*Al sur hieden los cadáveres, hiede el humo que levanta el viento huracanado junto a la
chamusquina. Exterminada la tribu de abajo, arriba asisten al jolgorio. Danzan las viejas
actrices entre los muslos de los soldados: los mejores, escogidos entre todas las razas.
La especie asegura así quizás otro milenio. Pero la garra del siglo, impía, abre la panza
del saurio. ¡Chatarra! Sumos Pontífices levantan sus báculos sobre las muchedumbres.
Saumerios, salmos. Morcillas. Boquea el saurio.*

*Boquea con su obnubilada memoria fija en los grandes bosques del Jurásico. ¡Ah, la
especia glotona! El cerebritito febril solo conserva una imagen difusa de la catástrofe y la
enervante sucesión de la metamorfosis entre las rocas áridas.*

*Un pie descomunal aplasta la cabeza del pequeño saurio. En la explanada: salmos,
saumerios. Morcillas.*

Carvajal 2015, p. 333

La ofrenda del cerezo

Para Arga y Juan González Soto

I
Simulacro de la escarcha
en el día soleado,
mapa de un cielo de estrellas
albas y enanas, o un firmamento
que apenas se sostiene
de las cuerdas mecidas
por un rumor de niños que se alejan.

Las flores del cerezo
copan el cuadro de la ventana.

II
Esta ventana se abre al jardín.

Detrás de sus cristales,
la luz y el cerezo.

En este instante
la ventana existe

*para que la luz
ilumine el despliegue
de las flores blancas,
su suave balanceo.*

III

*El mundo podría seguir rotando sobre su eje
aun si no estuviese este cerezo en marzo
sobre la acera de una calle en Washington.
Tal vez ninguna necesidad tenga la Tierra
de su color, de su perfume o de su peso.
Ninguna necesidad de él tienen los imperios.
Seguirían su curso los negocios.
El asesino no detendría el disparo
ni la víctima se volvería a mirarlo
antes de caer. Que aquí florezca
se debe a la intriga diplomática:
un obsequio del imperio japonés
a Norteamérica.*

IV

*Ninguna necesidad tiene el cerezo
que venga de tan lejos y me detenga
a contemplarlo en su milagro.
Nada es necesario para el árbol
salvo la luz, la noche, el agua,
los fermentos, la brisa del Potomac
y el vuelo de las moscas.*

La rotación incesante de la Tierra.

V

*Para ser, el árbol no necesita que
me detenga a contemplarlo.
No mora el cerezo real en mi palabra.
Mi palabra es tarda, sólo evoca
un cerezo que florecía en Washington
y aquél otro en el jardín de Arga
junto al Mediterráneo. Existen
una avenida que va al Potomac
y una ventana que da al jardín
para guardarlos, y en mi memoria
avenidas de diáfanos cristales
por donde llego al árbol que contemplo.*

VI

*El poema es movimiento interno.
Memoria, imagen. Luego, vacío.
Imaginación y palabra inventan otro cerezo,
la sombra del cerezo contemplado
en otro lugar una mañana.
¿La sombra?... ¡La luz! La luz
espléndida en la flor del cerezo.*

VII

*Contemplo al cerezo en su milagro.
Florece. Y aunque me embriaga su aroma,
no estaré aquí para probar sus frutos.
Mi vida depende del cerezo apenas
mientras dure este instante. Un blanco manto
que cae y se mece, un fresco olor,
mi júbilo. Me iré en unos minutos.
Mi vida no depende del cerezo.
Y sin embargo irá el fantasma
del árbol conmigo para siempre.*

VIII

*Siembro un cerezo en Chigchirián.
Tal vez un día alguno de estos petirrojos
parezca un sol del tamaño de un puño,
la mancha de un corazón sobre el manto
blanco del cerezo. Tal vez estaré
sentado en una silla del jardín
esperando el milagro. Otro cerezo
distinto de aquellos que contemplé
plantados en una avenida que va al Potomac
y en un jardín que da al Mediterráneo.
Otro cerezo: hoy mi mano abre
su nido en el suelo. Y espero la lluvia
con unción.*

X

*¡Una ventana para este cerezo
y una avenida para llegarse a él!
Tampoco se detendría la vida
si no plantase hoy este cerezo,
si un día no llegase a florecer.
Mi política en este pequeño reino
—el huerto en Chigchirián—
apenas consiste en abrir un hoyo
para sembrar el árbol.
Mi diplomacia: la paciente espera.
Que la Tierra gire y con ella el Sol*

*en torno a su tallo. Que las ramas
sean sacudidas por la lluvia y el viento.
Que florezca y revoloteen las moscas
polinizándolo. Por lo demás,
la historia y las catástrofes
seguirán su curso sin el poeta,
sin el jardín, sin el cerezo.*

Carvajal 2001, pp. 175-179

3. By Eduardo Espina

Naturaleza, lección del contemplante (Por una vez el Río de la Plata tiene razón)

I

*La rana recorre la recta anual, tan de repente.
Sobre el astro lacustre la luz hecha de ébanos
veía al abeto hasta que la velocidad lo decida.
Hoy se habla del sentido trágico del ejemplo,
ese otro minuto de res respirando a propósito.
Cómo decir, la carne y el costo atravesado, se
encuentra cuchillo, hayan un chillido especial.
Y ahora: ¿cuándo las palabras dejarán de ser?*

II

*En la respiración, la respuesta del aire.
Herido sirve al bien cuando viene solo.
Aire, país de Aries, hará que esto dure.
Con el habla vence al laberinto debido,
con la música al eco que nunca canta.
Toca con la tarde el tenebro al tiempo
que es tan poco, resplandor en apogeo,
morada de la aridez a llamarla mirada.
El mundo dura quieto en cuanto cabe y
aquí, ibiscus y cuis, ecos como quería.*

III

*Piensa el paisaje por las apariencias
pero las deja ojear: al adjetivo bajan,
a la torcaza en el caserío estremecen,
semillas, yaras y rayos a una yarda.
Con quienes un témpano entregan a
la redoma renace la visión invisible,
bien hilvana el rebaño a las bestias,
la estepa que atina trina en lo social
asomando a la manera de nacer más.
Lumínica cavidad que ideas da a la
indecisión de los cedros o del nardo*

*ordenando con un río las orografías.
Entonces es sano cesar de saber, ¿o
quién escribiría de la vida al oírlo?*

IV

*Justifica el final la efímera efigie,
casi un ansia de sentidos a la sien.
Siente el ámbito al venir al viento
una bala y una oveja bala en abril.
Pasan cosas, aunque sin causas sea
nacida la idea en uno de los cielos.
Por capaz se aparta del atardecer y
tiembla de blanda la valva nupcial.
Valva como de lábaros y baqueano,
playa para el ave de los aniversarios
aunque encante en quién la capuera.
De lobos hablaba el rebuzno, el iris
del desterrado de la idea que le dan:
esta naturaleza no ha sido porque sí.
(Nada, ni después puede ser sabido,
todo lo demás alguna vez lo valdrá)*

V

*Pero ahora es lo que diría el deseo,
y dirá que está bien vivir tan abajo.
Pone nombres a cambio del verdor,
una moneda pone para unir al pony
con el colibrí abrumado por el brío.
Juntos: abeja y atajo de enjambres.
Juntos, metáfora y tafetán, anfibio
de los abisinios dividiendo al rubí.
Tan felices que nada de todo dirán,
tan ínfimos confiados al hado fácil.
Sueña en ellos la callampa llanera,
holgura para la era de los sureños.
Va la voz al encuentro del indicio,
piensa la sauria en el uso resuelto.
El ojo gorjea: la contemplación
es un diálogo con el silencio.*

Espina 2015, pp. 123-125

***Lo mejor de Magallanes
(Un poema estrecho)***

*Parecidas a lo que sabría ser
la salida del sol a destiempo,
las crónicas daban cuenta al
encontrar otra trama dentro*

*de sirenas sin ser parecidas,
a qué, ¿al cielo, a la luz del
mundo en el día, pero cuál?
Un universo venía ahí a oír,
tenía su habitante el destino
de un tiempo extraordinario.
Con halo de haberlo sabido,
en vano veía bien al viento
bailando La Bamba a viva
voz como vals o bálsamo
a seguir a las horas bellas.
Dejadas a su suerte serían
bellezas para hacer mayor
a la mirada de tal manera
entre la marea y el aroma,
entre la pleamar y el afán
de los perfumes, cada mes.
Aquel hombre dado a vivir
al alba por la brisa en babia
vino a nombrar con tal brio
la manera de mirar en más
de una forma al rey Momo.
Bellezas, zas, ¡qué zángano
a darse en celos por vencido
con la flor aunque no fuera!
Así le iba abatado en bote.
Encima de la mar respiraba
al abalanzarse por dar en el
clavo del desconocimiento:
para la cifra con mascarilla
otra orilla querría descifrar.
Paisajes de cielos ausentes,
paisajes apenas empezando
con los zancos del carabón.
Una altura para los tesoros,
mientras un austro extraño
añoraba la bañera invitada
en bien de la inmovilidad
a medias cada vez menos
y amanecida por la mitad.
Bajo tales leyes del brillo
el ayer haciéndose llamar,
la era manchada de arena.
El aura parecida al dinero.
A su plan el sol se agrega.
El azul no falta, el celeste
del Sur cambia para sí de
cetro que a través vio otro,
y así, hasta inventar el aire.
Tras los días de tranquera*

en su quimera por la guita
guiaba al alba la vaguedad
del ojo habitado por debajo,
llegaba la lluvia, el báyamo
hallaba maneras de tararear
para poder decir yo vi, y fui.
El mundo entraba al verano
mientras ocurría la realidad.
Escenas del ser a estar cerca,
días para quedarse cada uno:
salvaban al bien las briznas,
la luz al pelo perpendicular.
Tal la idea dividida, la vida:
corría a ras sin arrepentirse,
era pensamiento de repente,
y aquel grito, ay, ¡qué grito!
Algo había sido descubierto,
algo o lugar da ya lo mismo.
¿Y? Claro, luego nada debió
decirle a la lluvia del viernes.
Las horas se iban no venían,
también el viento, la vision
del silencio en algo reciente.
Y al tiempo, ¿qué, pregunta,
hacerle para que deje de ser?
La luna no lo explica, el clan
del cormorán haría añadir al
ñandú adulto jugando al ludo.
Sobre sus alas, la ola escribe
abriendo la duración al cielo.
Sería el árido mar la sintaxis,
el oro para que ninguno ore
natural encima del más allá
pero acá -donde estaban- la
verdad tuvo ganas de venir
en bicicleta al cálido clima,
uno así pero a menos precio.
Era para el orbe visto esa vez,
laberinto de tiempo detenido
en vocablos como charque,
chinchulín, chancleta chica
por aquí y allí cuanto tiritita,
bicho, carpincho, piripicho,
digo más, chifle, cachimba,
palabras que han encausado
hasta ser en secreto criadas.
Va cansado a conseguirlas.
Oh lo inusual del universo
a babor del contemplante:
había llegado tan lejos,

*que al mirar para atrás
vio el horizonte
un día después.*

Espina 2015, 141

***Lo que la página encuentra¹²⁸
(las frases nunca tienen frío)***

*Signos que suelen ser del silencio
aunque lo sean, turban costumbres,
cuerpo para pasar al conocimiento,
y uno entre pocos, a saberse capaz.
Mira, manca imperfecta por lo que
han sido, borrones, glifos fortuitos.
(Pausa y semanas de prueba pedía
el impío a la linotipia para limpiar
de a poco su pelo al final de la fila
sabiendo del haber que le vendría.)
Y el significado hecho de pulcros
tamaños, letricas que encarnan el
encaramo de algunas cosas, pecas
de conspiración entre el pescuezo
y un haz de sol a salvar el albedrío.
En la vastedad que los alabara van
por esa voz, les toca parecerse a lo
que serían: líquidas cuando causan
con la usanza sobre las semejanzas
hasta ver en la velocidad lo visible
vibrando y ¡cuánto de veras verán!
Recuerdo que antes tanto fueron,
Escritura, trato, caras de monstruo:
son tras lo que serían, maneras por
escapar ahora de las eras sin herida.
Maneras para agrandar las agrestes
regiones que harían de la gramática
con sus gramos camino al mensaje,
atosigan a la ingrata higuera donde
nada de repente crece tan despacio.
Un higo; la frase dice hay, un higo.
Hay esto, hay campos para un país.
Según la lengua venga, sus criollos
cincharían del poncho por escuchar
chasquidos en aquello atiborrado de
buen verdugo para la oruga derecha,
y en la mano a no ser que sea igual:
con ella empuña, cubre ubres y cría.*

¹²⁸ (extract)

*Un país que en la página es palabra.
Debió su abismo de sábana abotonar
el tono, la burla viril en la carabina
cada vez que una res las haría sonar
por hacer del semental su sinónimo.
Gauderios sin dar ni explicaciones
Raspan en pos del pasado distraído
(res non verba, plus ultra tan útil)
y entre estruendos dentro de atrás
secan la paciencia de los paraísos,
la comba dada al limbo voluntario.
Tiemblan como albas en el balcón
y al viento, vienen. Quien lo diría:
salientes se sienten en la realidad.
En el infierno tendrán tanto frío,
en la nieve, un habeas de verano.
Resultan fotografías sin historia,
La recta que toca cualquier recato
o candor adorado por encaramar.*

Espina 2015, 121

***Del país de donde soy
(Tiempo compartido en geografía)***

*A tiempo de iniciar la vida a corto plazo, la
continuidad de unas cuantas vacas seguidas
guiaba al alba alabando al fácil autorretrato,
similar al del sol mientras pasan delante del
río para ser el mismo, marrón, irreal a ratos,
arrepentido de haber dejado olvidar al árbol
de la voz donde el viento dobla, en fin, es el
ibirapitá pintado en el pájaro principal, es el
Ser de la nación similar a la de siempre, una
Cuyas cifras hubieran merecido mejor suerte
Entrando por atrás al cielo iluminado de más,
¡qué situación! el país nace de cuanto ha sido
pero qué sería de su gente, de sus hazañas, al
añadir años al asunto, empezando, para decir
de aquella jauría rejega puesta como ejemplo,
pues también habían lobos, alba con lobisiones,
vulvas naturales de las llamadas “uruguayas” y
las Llamadas dadas ¡a la! Lágrima ante la cual
el cuerpo acosa, atraviesa, va como quisieran
las cuatro cosas que están en el escudo patrio,
un toro a toda hora, un cerro de cuyos errores,
ese caballo y la balanza que pocos saben para
qué está, igual, en el país, todo pesa lo mismo.*

Un pasado en construcción
(Fue más fácil abrir las ventanas que decirlo)

“Lord of happenings, & little things”

J.B

*Por algo aprendí a olvidar la visibilidad donde estaba.
Siempre hay algún ruido cuando las respuestas fallan.
En el mundo, esa vez, nada pudo quedar para después.
La firma figuraba debajo del parte médico, manera de
dar credibilidad en veremos a la última vida de alguien.
Hay una fuerza, que así funciona, sin oponerse al deseo.
No eran los tiempos recíprocos cuando el pasado cedía
su voz, y a la salida del teatro Stella había un taxi libre.
Ocho y media de la mañana, diciembre 3, a esa hora yo
dormía por diferencia horaria, eran cuatro horas menos
en la planicie texana, el alma al maldecir lo que vino no
prestó atención a las noticias traídas de arrastro, dormía
como si fuera lo más seguro para mantener la respiración
sin que se detenga ni el reloj por el cual supimos cuándo.
La cronología fue interrumpida por el teléfono al sonar,
hizo el mismo sonido mientras el mío debería haber sido
un número equivocado, wrong number, ya tan repetido
apenas el habla escuchada resultaba irreal al otro lado.
Hubiera preferido un final menos lógico, esconderme
entre las cobijas, decir no soy aquel al que se le ha
muerto el origen, que la vida siga siendo lo menos
parecido a una historia personal como uno incluido.
A lo largo de los días el tiempo va dejando tardes
y mañanas por el camino, se acostumbra a ser en
cualquier momento la condición que todavía falta
para llegar temprano al primer brío que descubra.
De aquella aspiración al permanecer para saberlo
vagamente vienen llegando de atrás hacia delante
las manchas hechas a manos de un cuadro en otra
época, a la fe nada le falta, la figuración es la del
rostro desapareciendo en la lluvia iluminada por
error, una actriz escapando de su fáfara inefable,
en el boulevard de la memoria varios agregan una
fisonomía a la mirada traída de los pelos, no es lo
que habíamos pensado a la hora del almuerzo, un
rato antes, cuando el médico dijo, de esta se salva.
Oímos que lo llamaban por los altoparlantes, era
su apellido uno similar a tantos, aunque no fuese
él, quien viene y dispone como le da la gana es el
“Señor de los acontecimientos, y pequeñas cosas”,
En el verso de John Berryman está escrito en inglés.*

**El anónimo orden del lenguaje
(La vida como suma de interjecciones)**

Uf, una fragancia a causa del cielo, un aroma a miedo por haber sido visto entrando a la cama de la hermana. Pero detrás del rostro merecido una voz anciana decía: “no crean nada de lo que el miedo les diga, ni siquiera si lo dice para sacarse de encima el miedo a sí mismo” Es siempre el miedo, la culpa, el peligro, la ingratitud. La culpa fue inventada mientras el mundo dormía, no cuando la voz olvidó venir cada vez menos al lenguaje, voz, como de perfume, por fuera importante, claro que, objetivamente, sería mejor tirar la toalla, quedarse en el frasco, volcar el líquido sin causa sobre la chaqueta de cuyos testigos dan fe gratuita los talles en cuclillas y la suspensión del espécimen pues si no el sol saldría. Esa voz invoca ecos acostados con tal de arrepentirse de haber pasado la tarde entera erguida en una lengua donde hay animales, ruidos de ti a mí antes de tu y yo. Ah del idioma en manos del primero en hablarlo, ah y uf, porque soñando fuma ¡y! al hacerlo siente una sed, el deseo de decir lo primero que le venga a la cabeza. ¿Cómo sería tal país, si prohibiera el gobierno desde hoy ¡las! Interjecciones, uf, ¡guau! ay, oh, ah, eh, ea? ¡Y si las hiciera obligatorias, de qué manera detener a la multitud diciendo ¡uf!, ¡guau!, ay, oh, ah, eh y ¡ea! a cualquier hora del día, incluso en un azul sofá y en la facilidad de las tarde veraniegas con el alma bajo el sol pero solo esa parte para dejar ver, por si acaso? Cómo o para qué sanar el escepticismo de las siestas. Las deudas del propósito hacen que cualquier secuz salga al sol como si en todas partes se cocieran habas y la vida llevara bajo el brazo un par de signos así ¡!. No es por nada que la gente los usa al vil servicio de un testimonio que no se sabe bien porque uf, ¡guau!, ay, oh, ah, eh, ¡ea!, ¿de qué o de nada son evidencia? ¿Y si hay más en Uruguay se justificará decir guau en lugar de ay, días como estos que siempre son hoy? ¿Y si fuera Uruguay, un Paraguay posterior? Entonces sí, qué problema, ay por lo que hay, ay, porque no hay ni ¡ay! para ayudar los del Ayuí y a muchos por aquí? ¿Por qué, o contra quienes y en reemplazo de cuántos, usar los ayes que hasta ayer habían estado en la calle? Se les ocurre abrigarse a quien grita con dos letras tras las cuales exiguo será el precio de lo similar, siempre y cuando los labios representen a una nación en celo

o en silencio, sinónimo de o sin h como está en boca de todo el mundo al menos el más inmediato, el más. Quienes las usan restringen el gerundio, lengua oída. Seres superiores en sus frases, hasta en las olvidadas por la voluntad, cuando tanto cuesta entenderlo todo. Gritar, acercar la nariz ideal a la entretenida ventana y ante la belleza de un parque herido decir así: ¡Mm! O tomar un trago gratis de Levitra a riesgo de que la cantidad disminuya, de que el miembro muera inviril. Eso provocaría risa ¡ja, ja, ja! Y su doble hermafrodita, ¡je, je, je! Indicio de que la situación ha sido resuelta. La gente hablaría, bla, bla, otra reiría igual que luego, ¡ja, ja, ja!, ¡je, je, je! y cada eco con voces por la casa. Una interjección, como quienes están bajo el ¡sol! lo saben, nunca es para todos, tampoco para casi nadie. Por ejemplo, habrá momentos para vivir entre varios llamados al canon de una emoción en la cual ocurre que ambos ámbitos pierden el pelo al mismo tiempo. Por ejemplo, y sea otro más, ¿cómo ante una cámara poder expresar la lentitud de la mirada mientras ve? ¿O qué vocabulario darle a la levedad de los demás amantes de las familias “en” las cuales nacen los niños? A decir verdad, la hija y el hijo de una interjección recién podrán saberlo cuando se cumpla su plan y sea el mismo que fue por no correr riesgo alguno, o bien: para visitar más a menudo el párrafo final. A ver, ¿cómo sería... La Tierra Baldía escrita solo con interjecciones, el diccionario que dice ser de la Real Academia Española, un Himno Nacional callado únicamente con ellas, moriría callado el Quijote, exclamaría algo mayo Caperucita Roja, cautiva de tales sonidos, sentada en el asiento de atrás, Heathcliff, la heroína de los pies descalzos prestados por Dulcinea, diría que nunca lo supo? ¿Y las otras tristes a punto de entrar por delante? La interjección, haiku del deseo a decir lo menos posible, aunque tampoco esto esté probado, vale, la brevedad de los nombres también en el ombú. Vaya país de seres para oír: del pirú y del chajá, faunas y floras, con ruidos para que el río suene. Son ellas las bien llamadas exclamaciones, cada una con voz propia imagina el misterio que hoy parece mejor que ayer, hace de cuenta, hace frío cuando alguien dice uy, incluso mejor si es ¡uy! y pone cada una en práctica algún clima menor, porque más allá de donde no termina, nada hay, ni cero, ni literatura, ánade ni anorexia, apenas una debilidad vibrando en las cláusulas a solas, una vocal que nadie quiere, a, e, i, o, u, una así.

4. Fernando Nieto Cadena

Los ensalmos de Susanboy¹²⁹

8

*Sospecho que algún día
impostergablemente como invariablemente acontecerá lo que Petronio dijo
satiricones a mí vaise a la mierda
Esas vueltas y vueltas colgadas de la tarde el sudor en la frente
los libros escondidos la máquina despierta
qué será de ratón
de notarías de Mariscal de toropadre Sigo pensando que en un rato cualquiera
se desploman se caen se humedecen dos terceras partes de nuestra mala historia
simplificando así todo andarivel todo factorio
todo hunde al fin en tus hondas negras bestiales entrañas de ramera que la patria
resucita y copula al día tercero con sus dueños
Por eso mismo compadre por eso mismo niña
ya te dijo tu papá si vas a estudiar te apoyaremos caso contrario a camellar carajo
peor fue
ni por eso cambias muchachita linda cabecita loca todos te tocan todos te quieren todos
te andan
el cuerpo tuyo es una miel que se deja probar en los recreos No sé de dónde sacas tanta
desventura a cuestras
tanto rosario falso
tanto milagro portentoso de a un sucre la estampita Cómo lo hacen locos ñeros del
alma
cómo le haces compita rascahuevas*

9

*Coincidimos en confundir la historia
para buscar tres carabelas
un babeiaca
y un manco del espanto
Sólo hallamos la fosforera de Atahualpa
el condón de Moctezuma
un carnet profiláctico de Manuela Cañizares Pare la mano
camastrón pare la mano
se está poniendo eruditivo y pendenciero entienda bien
comprenda burro
asimile la lección que sus mayores le dejaron si se quiere escribir no se requiere otro
patín
otro arranque
que ser consecuentes con la vida nada menos*

¹²⁹ Extracts.

21

*Uno se deja coger las manos de la niña Wila
y es como ir al puesto de revistas a leer barrabases chanoc o los
[supersabios como escoger al chato para arquero o pocho en la defensa y yo en la
[media
como templar cabuya para coser zapatos
como si nada más recuerdos tuviera uno en la cabeza Cuando regresaba la niña Wila
lalo subía a la terraza nosotros íbamos al altillo ellos lanzaban dados
nos reuníamos después para cantar corridos mexicanos mentir un poco
ilusionar al sexo con la foto de Isabel Sarli en bikini la niña Wila iba al centro
camay iba a los mandados de su madrastra nosotros íbamos a la escuela con algo de
retraso ellos jugaban a la raya
nos reuníamos después para jugar al pepo a los trompos la niña Wila regresaba antes
de las siete
regresábamos a la esquina
a los cachos de don quevedo
a cogerle la nalga a la prima de tocho cuando venía sin calzones la niña Wila iba a
misa
compraba una velita y la prendía frente a san Antonio para que le traiga novio
la niña Wila regresaba del cine acompañada de un teniente nosotros contábamos ilusas
aventuras para cuando seamos grandes cuando sea grande seré ingeniero y haré
puentes colgantes
seré gerente de empresa porque ellos ganan plata en bomba tendré muchas mujeres
voy a tener una villita para mí y otra para mi familia
con un poco de entrenamiento seré goleador en los mundiales seré comerciante
contador marinero
Un día supimos que la niña Wila era más puta que la putamadre desde entonces ya
nunca más nos vimos en el parque
Ahora el barrio ha cambiado
hay otras gentes en las casas donde antes vivimos
Crecimos más de la cuenta creo
Debe ser que la vida es así
la niña Wila se casó y nadie se acuerda más de ella
la vida es así de reputísima*

Nieto Cadena 1976, pp. 25-49

2

*Más tarde la inesperada ocasión de entrar a una cantina de salir en zig-zag sin alardes
metafóricos
la putita que se cabreó porque le chupeteamos el ombligo
la señora que nos llevó de la mano hacia sus antros vaginales

La película como que se rompió cuando el gozo empezaba
Hubo un tiempo para salir a las calles gritando contra los infernales
[yanquis
entonces eran sólo una palabra que nos caía mal la práctica de tirapiedras era en el
consulado*

por lo que sea
llegábamos hasta ahí para fortalecer nuestra incipiente rabia
[iconoclasta
La seriedad vino más tarde
las horas se pasaban discutiendo si la colonia tuvo ya expresiones
[capitalistas
cosas así de graves y solemnes mientras los otros seguían
[repartiéndose la jama Cada uno se sentía el más marx de los marxmas
cada uno soñaba entrar vencedor en los pueblos con la boina roja cada uno tenía su
estilo para brindar por una muerte heroica
y no hubo nada
y no hicimos nada y no pasó nada
nada más esta frustración de ver que las uvas siguen siendo verdes que no hemos
madurado todavía
que nos seguimos denigrando con emoción con entusiasmo con
[denudedo Nos quedó la catarsis de festejar los triunfos de las patrias hermanas nos
quedó el asunto de llorar por los muertos gloriosos
sinceramente
después de tanto abuso de confianza con la historia no nos quedó nada
nada

Nieto Cadena 1988, p. 62

Texto donde se busca liquidar inamistosas nostalgias humanicidas¹³⁰ (extracts)

blandecidamente blandas pastillaje antidiabético dieta jamás por favor cómo cree usted
no me conoce no sabe que soy ateo gracias a dios
qué hacen los policías en tardes como esta saturadas de aires con un fresco remanso
viento sureste y un calor primaveral de poca me-cha y la madre los pescadores llora su
mala suerte su mala muerte
si alguien camina sobre el agua es porque tiene pacto con los apóstoles con la maldita
vecindad con los hijos del quinto patio
y si no me voy y si me quedo y si
consigna paramédica en cunas de celofán edición quincenal pídale a su voceador
demostrativo consumo de colesterolos triglicéridos insulinas al grito de guerra
configuro estructuras de bajo relieve insumos transversales hasta la etnia pédica
cada mundo es una cabeza al que ayuda dios le madruga en casa de palo cuchillo de
herrero nadie traba para quien sabe
una mujer ronda mis fantasmas
una mujer me desquicia me excita exalta mis hormonas descompone mis riñones altera
mi ritmo sanguíneo
una mujer me obliga a ser feliz
aquí se queda la clara la entrañable transparencia de tu querida presencia
comandanta generala sargenta capitana coronela mayora almiranta dicen las cartas
que sólo tú
sola tú entre todas las mujeres y bendita es la miel de tu coño mi santa excastavirgen de
mi lecho plis por favor

¹³⁰ Extracts.

no me desampares estos días ni estas noches
dice el café que sólo tú eres la real la verdadera la auténtica dueña de mí
dicho lo cual puedo pasar a despedirme de la muerte de sus pompas y festejos
digo yo
tú sólo tú has llenado estas tardes voraces clandestinas fugaces repentinas

Nieto Cadena 2003, p. 53

*hago tiempo despilfarro adioses mensajes de bienvenida a las delegaciones fraternas
dejo recados engrapo ausencias porvenires en desuso chismes para toda ocasión
trepo a internet
me cuelgo de la hamaca al chatear presuntos malabares ruinosas ermitas
Budas complacientes revisan una vez más la intensa circularidad de sus ombligos
el profeta señala con fuego bautismal los calvarios del arca del tabernáculo
nadie se mueva asaltan por la tarde en lo más denso de las abluciones místicas
un atraco los impuestos a cobrar por cada línea equinoccial
de vez en cuando soborno tempestades para dilapidar lápidas de resistol citadino
digo mal escribo mal
no me hago corrijo y sigo con la jugada
letra por letra garante por garante un aval dos avales tres avales
nos veremos más tarde cuando vayas al café me repito porque las piedras dentro de los
zapatos duelen como si se tratara de un colmillo arrancado de raíz sin necesidad de
buscar un dentista bondades de una mala calcificación supongo de unas encías*

Nieto Cadena 2003, p. 54

2

TRAS MUCHO DEAMBULAR RECALO EN DYLAN

*THOMAS viejo maestro a quien tengo un poco olvidado
en carta a Charles Fisher en 1935 escribe*

*La poesía, pesada en mermas aunque dgil, debe ser tan
orgiástica como la cópula, divisora y unificadora,
personal pero no privada... La poesía es un medio,
no un estigma en el papel...*

*ante esto que mas me queda si sus buenas mercedes lo permiten
aullar de gozo frente a la luna llena estacionada en los parkings
nebulosos de esta noche no muy cruel de abril
bailar con la mulata mas dulce de todas mis amigas
aplaudir en los recovecos de una cantina pidiendo otra cerveza
para desentenderme del hosco brindis que los merolicos de la vida
endosan a los muertos
sea pues maestro
he estado escribiendo desde niño y siempre
luchando con las mismas cosas, con la idea de
una poesía completamente distanciada de logros
uno aprende de los sabios poetas que irritan a las buenas conciencias sociales
esas que visitan los hogares católicos para saber cuantas veces fue
ron a misa cuantas veces comulgaron cuantas veces se masturba*

ron cuantas veces usaron condón cuantas veces señor ten piedad
 de tu pueblo pidamos perdón por los pecados de este pueblo hermanas
 gimen en pleno disfrute de su paranoia mística las dulces señoras
 que veían por las buenas costumbres de su prójimo
 loco por la cerveza, temeroso de los curas escribió Dylan Thomas a
 la señora y al señor Nims el 17 de julio de 1950
 yo escribiría
 estoy a punto de perder mi capacidad de asombro
 terminan de pintar la casa de enfrente
 el pintor se paso tres días parodiando de canción de Paulina
 Rubio como himno a
 nuestro señor Jesucristo gritando a cuanto conocido pasaba ya
 tengo teléfono apuntalo güey 044938-21208 de cuatro a ocho estoy en
 mi casa pregunta por Peña el pintor
 curas y beatas se apropian del estacionamiento del sindicato de
 taxistas
 para rezar por la salvación de la isla
 para pedirle a dios que ilumine a nuestros gobernantes
 para rogarle que nos de otra oportunidad de nueva
 mente evangelizarnos
 los minoritarios ateos donde podemos quejarnos por este agravio a
 nuestros
 derechos humanos
 minoritarios del mundo uníos
 a ver si podemos resistir las polillas del opio del mundo
 por eso siempre desconfíe de los juegos democratizadores
por eso quise declararme apátrida y no hubo como
demasiados tramites para un triste pasaporte azul avalado por la puta ONU
 necio que soy maestro
 volvamos a sus palabras escritas tal vez en un sucio cuaderno viajero de bares pubs
 cantinas y congales mas todo lo que se acumule
 And you, my father, there on the sad height,
 Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, Y pray.
 Do not go gentle into that good night.
 Rage, rage against the dying of the light*
 a lo mejor el sombrío Giovanni Papini (esta vez no se retractó)
 tuvo razón usted solo
 era un borracho irresponsable
 su nombre significa etimológicamente algo parecido a hijo del
 oleaje en
 gales
 le envidio no puedo decir como usted No fui a la universidad. No
 soy, sin embargo, un desempleado por la simple razón de que nunca
 fui empleado

Nieto Cadena 2003, p. 95

Me pide un libro aunque sea de un poeta ecuatoriano para vencer al insomnio que
 no la suelta cuando regresa después de visitarme
 la muy cabrona cree que hace chiste burlándose de ese paisito que ya no se sabe si

*es republiquita bananera o petrolera
nos reímos un largo rato
se pone finge ponerse seria para pedirme que le explique por qué el alcalde de
Guayaquil se lanza contra Chávez y va mi cantaleta de que Nebot es otro lameculos del
imperio un chupamedias de Bush un curuchupa dicho en términos nativos algo así
como un mama pinga de curas un muy hijo de su rechingadisima putisísima madre que
lo cagó al parirlo para acabar de una vez
pero no estás enojado me dice y se monta y remonta todo el tiempo perdido por estar
hablando para recuperarnos de la primera caída sin límite de tiempo*

Nieto Cadena 2009, p. 5

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