

Intersecting 'Border' Narratives of Resistance: Codex Espangliensis

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Abstract

Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000) enacts a particular aesthetic of contestation. This aesthetic is performed through a calling together of references potentially damaging to dominant schemes from both the sides of the USA-Mexico border, material and discursive homeland, as it were, of the text. This calling together extends and is addressed well beyond the border to the geo-historic terrain of what is known as Latin America or even the Americas. Far from being accidental or merely meant to add some retro or ethnic style this symbolic extension corresponds to some underlying realities of this terrain. "Border thinking" as envisioned and proposed by Walter D. Mignolo, discussed in detail in chapter one, then becomes a whole alternative perspective to appreciate the multi-referential and territory-crossing play of this contestory aesthetic (Mignolo 2005 10).

INTRODUCTION

A critical survey of cultural expressions negotiating depravity and marginality 'reserved' for Mexican communities crossing or inhabiting the border significantly informs this paper. It has revealed thematic-formal concerns, recurring features and novelties of these expressions up until today many of which we will see getting carried over on polyphonic and moving sheets of the Codex. In what follows, we will travel some of these sheets highlighting this inter-textual unfolding of the text focussing on how the narratives emerging from these sheets relate to some of the instances of "border thinking". These instances are: cartographic and with that a cosmological "an-other" (Mignolo 2005 preface xx) vision, alternative versions of past and present 'official truths' and an irreverent intermingling of verbal, visual references and oral tales flowing through and contributing to the first two.

Neither the West nor the North: Cosmology of An-Other World

It is very interesting to observe how Nuevo Mundo or Indias occidentales came to be eventually 'included' in the colonial cartography as America. While this inclusion was made and justified deploying the then dominant Christian construct of the world which, of course, did not correspond to or consult indigenous lived experiences (who until the colonial conquest did exist and had clear ideas of where they were living, see Mignolo 2005 2), its mark in terms of cartographic features or limits it set are still pervasive. This, largely due to the colonial hegemonic power with which they were massively circulated to the

extent of ending up as the ‘normally’ accepted version, a situation creole ruling elites after the end of colonial rule in what later became Latin America did not, or could not, think as something to be contested given their ideological training into this colonial design, part of what been discussed above as “colonial matrix of power” (Mignolo, Walter D and Escobar, Arturo, ed., 2013). A revealing example of all this is the map presented below. Drawn as part of López de Velazco’s *Descripción y demarcación de las Indias Occidentales* (Description and Demarcation of the Indias Occidentales, 1574) who was official cosmographer of the Spanish crown, it spatially ‘fixed’ physical contours of what territorially lingers on as the Americas.

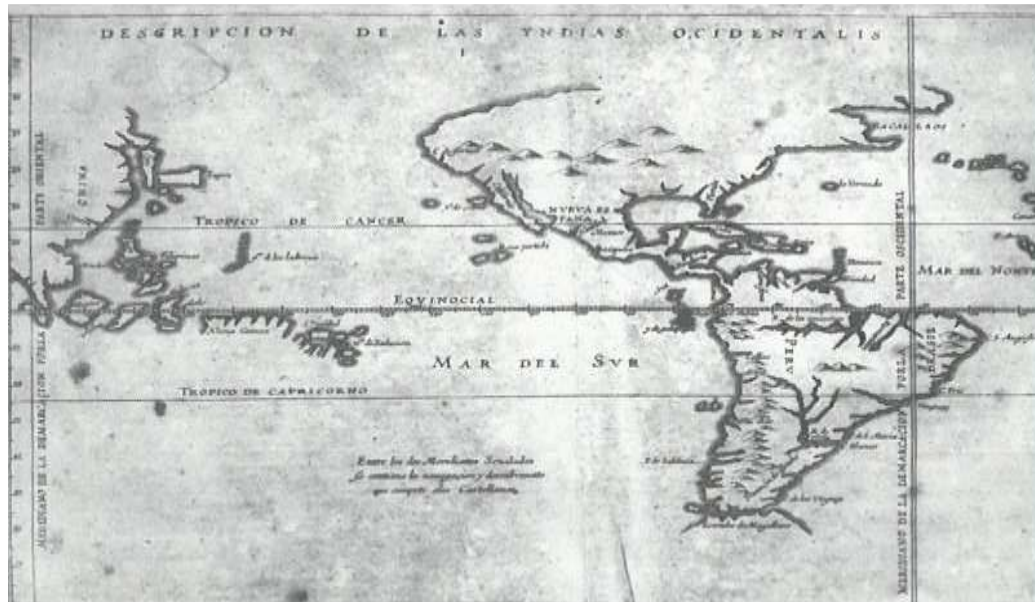


Figure 1. Indias occidentales y del poniente (Indias occidentales and Westerly Wind) by López de Velazco. Mignolo 2004. 278.

If the map above sought to determine the overall outlook of the Americas as Spanish colonial possession, the logic of spatial classification and containment practiced there survived even after the end of Spanish colonial rule in what today is South America and in the specific territory of the Codex, i.e. the USA-Mexico border, also the connecting territory of both the Americas. Perla Zusman (2013) helps understand a particularly perverse, so to say, implementation of this logic in the former which is also seen repeated in the latter.

In South America, following and quite contrary to the unitary ideals of the independence in the first quarter of nineteenth century territorial claims and counter claims for and by many new nations were made. Now, as Zusman points out, within these nations, territories inhabited by indigenous, Afro-American not to mention unprivileged inter-racial communities were not conceived as part of the imagery of the ‘national’ culture nor were they considered legitimate stakeholders of the emerging state structures and services (political system, education etc.) even while their territories were very much claimed as part of these nations (just like Spain possessing America but not quite including its diverse majority in any real sense of the term).

Argentina under the presidency of Domingo F. Sarmiento (1868-74) presents a classic case of this cruel irony of including the land and at the same time excluding the very people living on it (Eduardo Galeano traces this exclusion to the extent where apart from killing numerous of them the government also had many from indigenous communities replace

their names with “Chevrolet”, “Ford” etc!, a perfect instance of their combined territorial and symbolic dis-location Galeano 1998 31)

While in Argentina the colonial logic of territoriality was reproduced by the ‘national’ forces, the same was also played out at what became the current USA-Mexico border territories revealing inter-continental normalised spread of this logic in the Americas. Here, one may recall how the neo-colonial emergence and expansion of the USA from the north led to sudden and arbitrary imposition of this border in 1848 repeating the inclusion-exclusion irony discussed above. From then onwards, while the newly annexed lands after this expansion were claimed as south or Southwest by the dominating narratives from the north and sought back (if only in rhetoric) by the ‘national’ yet colluding narratives from the south (in the larger context of the colonially implanted modernity whose new master was now sitting in the north), the inhabitants as well those who would cross the border for various reasons became permanent ‘others’ then and now for both the sides.

More than one sheets of Codex unravel and indict sudden and violent creation of the border as per the neo-colonial diktats of the USA.



Figure 2. “My land cut in half...”Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000)



Figure 3. “...with a gigantic blade”. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000)

The syntactical placing together of “My land cut in half” (figure 2) and “with a gigantic blade” (figure 3) collects the whole lived reality of the USA-Mexico border: it is disproportionate violence of power which has inflicted this border. That two of the most circulated symbols of the US mass culture, i.e. Goofy and Mickey Mouse, are caught here in their attempt to subdue pre-colonial Aztec deity and the contemporary Mexican popular symbol of calaveras symbolically reveals the source of this power. The gleeful and in any case remorseless pretence of these symbols (though both seem to be happily ignorant about their action they are enjoying it all the way) unmarks attempts at attractive packaging of this power. Stemming from the more diffused form of market capitalism flowing through these symbols one of whose instance we have seen getting deconstructed as “migra mouse” in the previous chapter, this packaging, however, cannot deny the violence of power alluded to above. Revealed symbolically as such in the use of “gigantic blade” everyday uneven working of this violence with which the border territories are kept in place, patrolled, and cleansed (the official term is ‘cleared’ though!) of any ‘illegal’ entry underlies Gloria Anzaldúa’s take on the border:

“The U.S.-Mexican border es una herida abierta (an open wound, translation mine), where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (Anzaldúa 1987 25).

Apart from the abrupt and violent make-up of the border, everyday dark tales of this make-up is symbolically exposed through an ensemble of contrasting visual references and languages. As evident in Mexican pre-colonial and popular culture symbols trampled upon by Goofy and Mickey Mouse in the figure above, this gets further visible where a border-crosser (presumably an ‘illegal’ one) is recounting his/her experience: “like you llegué todo mordido y mojado a (I arrived all wet and bruised to) California wet back, wet feet, wet dreams...they call me ‘supermojado’ (superwet) or when s/he says “pollito (kid!), we are alone in this gringo world” following the complaint: “where is the Mexican consulate when we need them?” (all citations taken from the sheet in figure 2 with the last questioning the supposedly ‘own’ Mexican side where the state has surrendered to or, worse, colluded with the north dictated dominant designs of the border). The critique of unilateral, colonially induced creation and aftereffects of the border extends to challenge the whole cosmological limits set by the same:



Figure 4. “West of what? North of what? Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000)

Force-fed imposition of the USA-Mexico border worked to introduced a cosmological division of North versus South where the former was discursively endowed with all positive values of 'progress', 'civilisation' 'culture' etc. while the latter only had 'underdevelopment' 'barbarism' and 'nature'. Needless to add, this privileging of the North (or the USA) corresponded to the USA inheriting politico-economic and symbolic control of the "colonial matrix of power" in the Americas since the latter half of twentieth century. So, the privileging of the North, then, becomes part or extension of the same logic with which the Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries started positioning itself simultaneously as the West and the privileged centre of the world (or the rise of Occidentalism in other words as discussed earlier) thanks to its initiation and control for many centuries of this matrix.

Not surprisingly, the phrase "west of what?" north of what?" on the sheet above questions precisely this cosmological agency and classificatory power claimed and exercised by the colonial West and the neo-colonial North. It is not only a matter of questioning; rather this contestory gesture extends to a disbelief or rejection of all epistemic norms (part themselves of the colonial matrix) informing and validating this agency and power and, hence, the phrase "no lo entendemos" (we do not understand it, translation mine. Notable here is the intermingling use of English and Spanish to weave yet another instance of counter 'border' thinking).

As is evidenced by the colonial map of the Americas in figure 1, more often than not maps become one of the most circulated sites of these epistemic norms and Codex spreads its critical gaze towards the same. Notes Jenifer González in her introduction to the text:

"Standard maps-those which position national identity, cultural allegiance and the laws of wealth and poverty in the America- are among the several authoritative discourses that come under scrutiny in the Codex Espangliensis" (González in Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol 2000)

The fragment below from the Codex appears to be belying all sorts of cosmological divisions granted and perpetuated through these "standard maps" in the Americas:

"I travel across a different America. My America is a continent (not a country) which is not described by the outlines on any of the standard maps. In my America, "West" and "North" are mere nostalgic abstractions the South and the East have slipped into their mythical space. Quebec seems closer to Latin America than its Anglophone twin. My America includes different, peoples, cities, borders & nations. The Indian nations of Canada and the U.S. and also the multiracial neighbourhoods in the larger cities all seem more like Third World micro-republics than like communities which are part of some "western democracy" (Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol 2000).

The passage runs all through the Americas to creatively undo many ontologically fixed spatial entities filled in with positive or negative 'values' as per the dominant cosmology (West and North versus East and South). It also sees together multilingual landscapes such as Quebec with Latin America whose polyphony of Spanish 'contaminated' and sharing space with myriad indigenous languages gets only heightened at the USA-Mexico border sutured with all sorts of language admixtures (Spanglish, Tex-Mex and Indigenous languages of the region. The border-crosser quoted above, in fact, also says "I speak in tongues"). This works to counter mono-lingual territorial entities sanctioned by dominant cosmologies over the years, Spanish speaking colonial one and the English dominated neo-colonial one. The phrase "my America is a continent (not a country)" strategically alludes to the country, or better still, politico-economic system (the USA) which due to its abovementioned inheritance of the "colonial matrix of power" is also writing terms for this neo-colonial cosmology (symbolized also by the everyday fact of confusing the USA with America or the Americas or vice versa).

The challenge to dominant cosmologies operating with their territorial and other whims (linguistic monologue, for instance) in the Americas extends to wider interrogation and criticism of the same on the sheet below (figure 5). As can be discerned, these cosmologies which also thrive in the classification of the world in seemingly 'normal' yet value-loaded spatial categories for their advantage are identified and debunked here. This gets evident in identification of the "First World" as: "a tiny and ever shrinking conceptual archipelago from which 80% of the resources of our planet are administered and controlled". That this designation of "First World" is a self-category of these cosmologies which also self-identify themselves as the North or the West to justify their hegemony in the Americas as seen above and in the world as decoded here, is hardly a statement.

The summary of the "Third World" as: "the ex-underdeveloped countries and the communities of colour within the ex-First World" works to reveal colonial and neo-colonial working and continuing imprint of these cosmologies (As per Mignolo "coloniality is constitutive of modernity and cannot exist without it, Mignolo 2005 preface xiii. And it is not a secret that 'modernity' also summed up as 'civilisation' and/or 'development' remains much-touted discursive mask of these cosmologies). However, alternative territorialities capable of weaving potentially alternative cosmologies are also proposed here. The "Fourth World or "the conceptual place where the indigenous and de-territorialized people meet" is this alternative territoriality. Just as the sheet extends this territory so that "it occupies portions of all the previous worlds" echoing what we saw on earlier cited sheet as coming together of "Indian nations of Canada and the US and also the multiracial neighbourhoods in the larger cities" it could very well include ephemeral, multiracial, and multilingual territories of the USA-Mexico border.

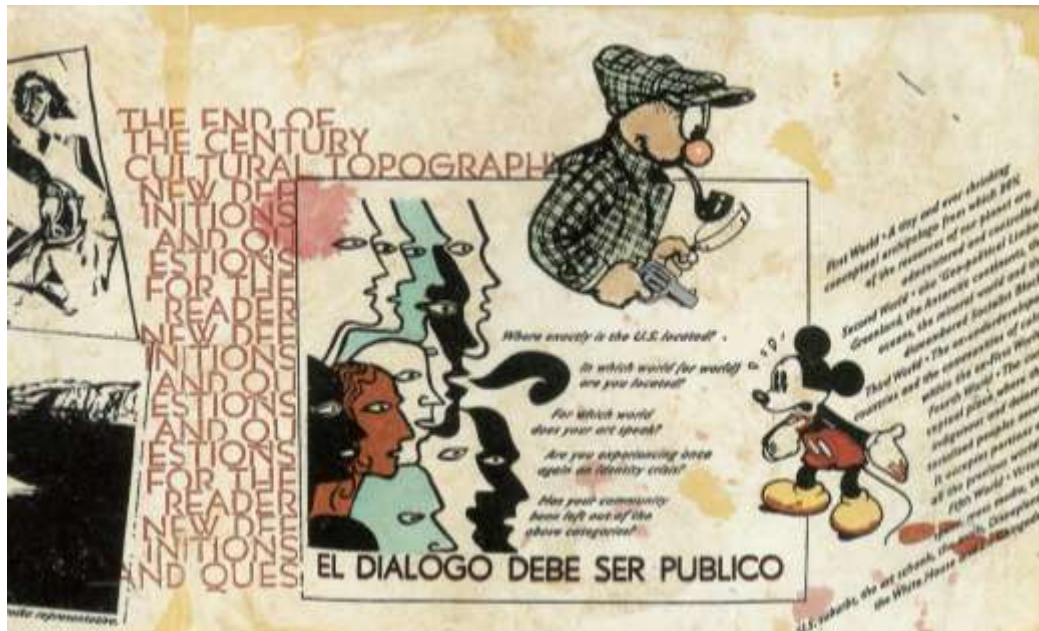


Figure 5. "Where exactly is the U.S. located". Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000)

Hernán Cortés, a Mascot of Positive War? Clearing Multimedia Haze Over History

The critique of dominant cosmologies and proposal of incipient alternative ones is carried out through counter-restaging, as it were, of history. This seems to be the case as the first question a confronting array of Mexican popular culture symbol Don Catrino and multiracial voices ask a nervous Mickey Mouse is "where exactly is the U.S. located?" This restaging which un-privileges both the past and current forms of the U.S. hegemony (its

territorial location which, as we have seen, has also resulted in the violent imposition of the border and its mass products such as Mickey Mouse which is unmasked of its crude cultural implications and is shown with blood on its hands) is used finally to propose what the text in red reads as “the end of the century cultural topography...new definitions and questions for the reader”.

Critical recounting of history with simultaneous debunking of its old and new dominant narratives is done not only to propose “an-other” world-vision or cosmology. Seen on multiple sheets of the Codex (sheet in figure 4 has a blood stained Mickey Mouse atop a military tank confronted with questions by multi-coloured faces while military torture of a Mexican family by the US soldiers during the 1848 war is suggestively re-enacted below) this counter-narrative of history travels all through the text. And as we will see here, is set against many other forms, faces and value-systems of the colonality or above mentioned “colonial matrix of power” still reigning in Latin America. Our discussion in chapter one has deconstructed for us certain instances of all these such as attractive packaging of colonial discourses through ‘development’-chanting ‘world’ financial organisations, all-catering and all-subsuming webs of media and culture industries etc.

Chapter two has documented everyday simultaneous working of these instances at the USA-Mexico border (labour exploitative maquiladoras or assembly line sweatshops having company of hilarious Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and evil-bashing Super Man, Wonder Woman etc.). There, we have also briefly surveyed how the Chicano murals starting from the 60s which Damian Baca sees as “building upon the resonance of Mesoamerican pictography” creatively denounce neo-colonial spread of the US hegemony at the border (Baca 2008 75). Now, what Baca highlights as outcome of varied texture of these murals helps to explain what I have argued above as multiple counter currents of a history read back and forth. Baca says: “These mural rhetorics advance a multi-layered script of protest that was spiritual, social, economic, aesthetic, and political” (Baca 2008 75). In yet another observation, Baca captures extending targets of these counter currents, this time, as registered on the sheets of Codex:

“Homi Bhabha warns of “the danger that the mimetic contents of a discourse will conceal the fact that the hegemonic structures of power are maintained in a position of authority through a ‘shift in vocabulary’ (Bhabha 1994 241-42). The work of Gomez-Peña and Chagoya warns of such a shift in vocabulary from geographical imperialism to cultural imperialism, from Cortéz to Free Trade, from Columbus to the Border Patrol, a shift that maintains power structures through a thinly veiled rhetoric of popular culture and advertising” (Baca 2008 90. Italics mine to hint at the continuum of sort from what we discussed above in terms of dominant cosmologies).

What follows on the sheets below effectively captures and bares the very “shift in vocabulary” alluded to here.



Figure 6. “A Brief History”. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000)

Entitled “A Brief History”, the pun and irony filled imaginative narrative mocks many a pretentious and attractive mechanisms of colonial to neo-neo-colonial shift in vocabulary. The very first sentence “In 1991, President Betse Bush appointed a Quincentenary Fiesta Bureau (QFB) to link the alleged “discovery” of the New World with the fiction of the New World Order” belies the USA’s ‘grand’ manoeuvre to discursively inherit and exercise what started with alleged ‘discovery’ of the Nuevo Mundo or New World after 1492. So, while the New World experience meant direct territorial occupation, violent imposition of politico-economic structures and socio-cultural ‘models’ USA-led New World Order replicates all this albeit with pleasing and mystifying claims of cooperation and development (and hence the word “fiction” above which also takes us to the crude fact that whenever the ‘soft’ power hasn’t worked to its expectations, the USA has not shied away from direct occupation since as early as 1903 when it militarily determined Panama’s secession from Colombia, part of a history the Theodore Roosevelt presidency tried to whitewash with its “good neighbour” policy in 1933).

The phrase “superstar Christy Columbus was designated the Bureau’s symbol of a kinder gentler expansionism and Free Trade Art” playfully exposes the always present but attractively disguised colonial designs (that’s why the qualification “neo-colonial” for this new form of the colonial) of this New World Order. It would be worthwhile to add here that it was not a mere coincidence that the USA administration chose to flaunt Columbus’ statue to present and promote its self-image as the world’s new business and trade master at the 1893 World Fair in Chicago (Marling 1992 13-30).

Just like Columbus, references are made to a range of old and contemporary symbols in a parodic exposé of the brutal functioning and wider links of this Order, a suggestion of its location in the cotemporary, diffused form of capitalism. So, the Catholic Queen Isabelle of Castile who after her marital union with Ferdinand of Aragon funded and oversaw Spain’s colonial drive is “Chabelita” La Catolica” now and is “a leading impresario of the European Common Market”. By virtue of this she has also taken over as the head of the QFB. And mentoring her is the UK’s fiercely pro-market and anti-labour Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990 Margaret Thatcher who now is “the deposed British dictator Margaret Thatcher”.

The inter-continental reign of the New World Order extends to include accomplices from the Americas, an indication of the long-present and widespread imprint of this order in the twin continents. So, as the narrative goes, Tomás de Torquemada, father of religious court Inquisition against non-Christians on the Spanish soil which also extended to the country’s colonial possession in the Americas, is new head of the United Nation’s Security Council as “Tor-que mamada”. The battery of his ‘illustrated’ company includes dictators like Antonio Noriega and Augusto Pinochet, war strategists like Oliver North, anti-left art critique Hilton Kramer, mafia John Gotti and, above all, the Pope. This implication of figures/symbols of myriad dominant narratives of this new order vividly confirms double-edged criticism enacted by cultural expressions on the USA-Mexico border including the Codex (on yet another sheet Wonder Woman, a US mass cultural symbol, with her firearm yells at the reader “go to hell” while the Virgin of Guadalupe only consoling, flattering and ultimately telling her “I love you”. This conduct of the Virgin contradicts her popular veneration as saviour in Mexico, a belief which the state also appropriates for its legitimacy and for its claims of ‘national’ distinction or even contrast with the USA).

Coming back to the New World Order, the galaxy, as it were, of the accomplices “Tor-que mamada” enjoys recalls the abovementioned varying and inviting mechanisms of “shift in vocabulary”. Getting reflected as such in the combined tasks of these accomplices which include “money laundering to the falsification of Indian treaties, expansion of the

transnational maquiladoras and the black-market sale of pre-Columbian and colonial art”, all this turns more seductive in what is recounted as next venture of the QFB on the sheet above. Here, the last in collaboration with NAFTAART (a play on NAFTA-North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, initiated by the USA with active collaboration of Canadian and Mexican governments, yet another target of double-edged criticism of the Codex) launches a spree of multimedia programmes to sell multiple narratives of this Order. Appearing on television, in films and in advertisements La Malinche, aka “the first bilingual secretary of the Americas hosts REALI-TV shows in seven languages on ‘cultural transvestism’; Saint Frida Kahlo has a very popular aerobics show on EMPTY-V; sweet Indian princess Pocahontas advertises MALBORO and TE-SACO OIL (“te sacco” meaning “I drain you out” is a pun on oil giant Texaco); conquistador Pizarro spearheads ‘say no to drugs and yes to foreign investment’ campaign while Hernán Cortés and his disciple are touring the continent to promote positive images of war”!

The showy and gorgeously confusing, as it were, show of the QFB-NAFTAART joint venture to sell the New World Order gets unambiguously revealed below:



Figure 7. “Free Trade Art”. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).

In what is decked up with music and light as inaugural show of “Free Trade Art” on the sheet above, “El Aztec Salesman” (a telling instance of pre-colonial history getting falsified as commodity) is inviting potential customers to his exotic “NAFTALANDIA”. His catalogue certified by Televisa (Mexican media giant with enormous influence on the country’s politics and economy seems to be controlling the show here too as every time the Salesman pauses he is scolded and reminded his dialogues by a voice over walkie-talkie) flaunts a range of living beings and lived realities flattened as attractive items. So Frida Kahlo is there not with her intensely expressive self-portraits which uncover and challenge many a patriarchal-political ‘norms’ but for her monkey’s to “let them run wild in your dreams”.

The emptying out of potentially dangerous political meanings as seen in the instance of Frida and free-of-all-politics representation of past and present dominant symbols/narratives (destroyer of the pre-colonial Aztec life is vouching for “positive images of war” while the NAFTA is promoting art or “Free Trade Art”) is all intended to dumb down popular sense of history. Clearly, this dumbing down seeks to smoothen and pass off as absolutely normal continuing legacies of colonial designs now being repackaged as the New World Order. All the media glitz of this attempt, however, fails to deny the violence as much as of these legacies as of this very media cover-up. The subtle violence of this media cover-up is traced to its obscene limits on the preceding/following

(depending on your reading order of the Codex's un-paginated foldable sheets) part of the sheet in figure 7:



Figure 8. “Move in closer! We’re broadcasting this live”. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).

That mostly unarmed Mexicans (identifiable with their traditional big round hat called sombrero which, ironically, is also on the exotic list of the NAFTALANDIA shop above) facing slaughter by the USA forces during the 1848 war are further laser-attacked by comic characters only testifies the endurance of colonial legacies, though with some sophistication now. The media crew filming from a helicopter what certainly seems an ‘event’ to be broadcast live from all possible ‘best’ angles dramatizes this perverse symbolic march of history. This dramatization aimed at instant, high-definition or ‘sexy’ projection of this event neutralizes any or all colonial trace of the actual fact thus being made a postmodern hyper-reality. This critique to possible whitewashing or blurring of historical realities through a deliberately confusing montage and mixture of facts is also at play in the earlier reference to “Hernán Cortés and his disciple are touring the continent to promote positive images of war”.

The starkly uneven terms and consequences of the 1848 war (it was the USA which had declared the war and had settled only with the current USA-Mexico decided in its favour) remain a fact, nonetheless, And restaging it side by side with and against the obscuring media play on the sheet above recalls earlier mentioned phenomenon of shift in vocabulary from geographical to cultural imperialism. This restaging suggests that far from being two successive patterns the two forms of imperialism are very much intermingling and mutually informing at the Codex’s specific site: the USA-Mexico border.

Not only in its creation itself, repercussions of geographical imperialism are ongoing reality of the border in the form of detention and killing of immigrants, border-crossers deemed ‘illegal’ (trails of blood here and there all over the folding sheets of the Codex work to remind this whole bloody narrative). And while seemingly unrelated to this narrative, multimedia faces of cultural imperialism only perpetuates the inequalities and prejudices sanctioned by the former as everything and everyone coming from Mexico or the erstwhile New World is good only for visual pleasure and exotic experience and, thus, never for an

engagement on equal terms in present, a denial of contemporaneity with subsequent denial of any agency (as seen in the “NAFTALANDIA” exhibition above). See also, for instance, the sheet below:

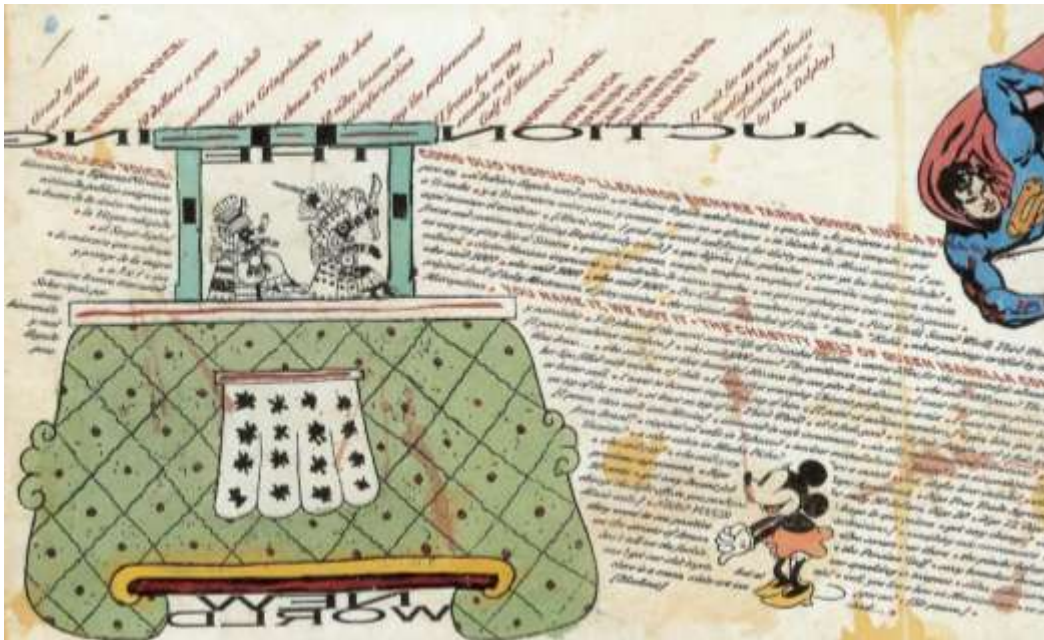


Figure 9. “Auctioning the New World”. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).

In what comes across as a grand extension of the “NAFTALANDIA” exhibition and sale, the auction of the New World here further elaborates intermingling of past and present imprints of geographical and cultural imperialisms I have discussed above. So, with its pretentious boasts of “you name it, we got it” with “who said 500?”; “who said 5000 pesos?” in between, the auction is on its way offering “pre-Columbian condoms in three size”; “original skull of baby Moctezuma”; “original straitjacket of Frida ‘Banda’ Kahlo” from its exotic collection. Exhorting the audience to also demand and buy “gorgeous princess Maya, her lips filled with wisdom & chile”; “beautiful Mixteco boy con pito (with penis)” etc. the auction soon acquires a geographic dimension with a neo-liberal subtext. Calls for “interested in safe investments sin (without) silly environmental restriction?” translate into “land titles from Brazil”; “virginal oil well in Tabasco”; “nuclear maquiladora in Tecate”. Not only this, spectators/onlookers are also promised territorial superiority with assurances that “you are on top of the world, at least on top of the Third World.... & it feels a toda madre (Spanish colloquial roughly meaning “fantastic”) thus replying and perpetuating the USA-led dominant cosmology of today (deconstructed on the sheet in figure 5), a design whose most immediate laboratory are the territories spread across the USA-Mexico border.

However, just as the restaging of the 1848 war in the figure 8 demystifies contemporary show of dominant multimedia on the folds of same sheet (figure 8 and 7) the image below runs into and disturbs the auction frenzy recounted and exposed on the sheet in figure 9 (these two sheets, again, are part of the same fold of the Codex).



Figure 10. A not-so Super Man glossing over massacre of indigenous communities.

Image of the massacre is a reproduction from Bartolomé de Las Casas' *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*-A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies 1542. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).

A Super Man emerging potentially complicit from the colonial massacre of indigenous communities traces colonial origin/logic of various overlapping mechanisms (territorial, cultural etc.) of neo-colonial designs some of whose instances we have seen and discussed above. The two following sheets of the Codex seem to be making the same point:



Figure 11. Mickey Mouse, Batman and a US soldier atop a US tank are now spearheading the colonial campaign. Of course, as the colonial history itself unfolded, the colonizers here have Malinche and some indigenous allies as their aides. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).



Figure 12. A smiling Super Man not in the least troubled by the killing going on by his side. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).

The narrative proposed on the sheet below, however, does not quite let the symbols attractively disguising neo-colonial arrangements having a free run. In fact, as it is the narrative does not only give a symbolic fight back to these symbols it also offer a counter or, better still, an-other version to the whole historical narrative these arrangements owe their justification or logic to:



Figure 13. An Aztec figure (Baca informs he is warrior and philosopher king Nezahualcoyotl, Baca 2008 65) facing Superman and Wonder Woman. Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000).

So, as the narrative goes the injured and bloodstained Aztec warrior is suggestively foiling all attempts of the two dominant symbols hard-pressed to subdue him (a frustrated and visibly knocked-down Superman exclaims “whoof! No good!). Intervening in and symbolically echoing this reverse staging of dominant history ever since the colonial occupation, is the following account:

“In 1492, an AZTEC SAILOR NAMED NOCTLI EUROPZIN TEZPOCA DEPARTED FROM THE PORT OF MINATITLAN With a small flotilla of Wooden rafts, 3 months later HE DISCOVERED A NEW CONTINENT AND NAMED IT EUROPZIN AFTER HIMSELF. In November 1512, the OMNI-POTENT AZTECS

BEGAN THE CONQUEST OF EUROPOZIN IN THE NAME OF THY FATHER
TEZCATLIPOCA, LORD OF CROSS-CULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

y entonces el desmadre se comenzó a multiplicar (and then the caos/disorder started to multiply) logo-rhythmically and logo-aritmicamente (logo-arthimatically) Excerpt from “Califas” 1987 Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (2000)

The excerpt above poetically recounts the history of what followed after that fateful year of 1492. A literal look at this account opens for us a point by point reversal or counter-version of the colonial history as it happened in indias occidentales, Nuevo Mundo or what eventually was christened as America. So, instead of Christopher Columbus, this time it is an Aztec sailor who ‘discovers’ a ‘new continent’ and names it Europzin after himself. And then everything follows the reverse way it happened in history. What is most noteworthy here in the light of our discussion in chapter one is that this account uses many a discursive arms of the colonial epistemology (written letter, Spanish language, Christian calendar, colonial tradition of baptizing and renaming places after people and places of the dominant country etc.) to weave its own history mocking the dominant one (most emblematically symbolized by its evocation of “Tezcatlipoca, lord of cross-cultural misunderstandings”). This strategy of appropriating dominant and once violently imposed symbolic and reference systems for counter-hegemonic ends becomes another instance of “border thinking” after Guamán Poma’s map and many sheets of the Codex above.

However, more than just proposing an immediate counter-narrative of the dominant history all that is discussed above conveys a larger critique of this whole logic of naming and representing exclusively as per one particular cosmology. Of course, and as shown here, this cosmology happens to be the one originating in the Western Europe of the fifteen-sixteenth century but which claimed ‘universality’ thanks to its colonial imposition starting with the Americas. But, and particularly from the perspective of a socio-cultural experience as multi-layered as that lived in the Americas, the alternative would not simply be reversal of terms while keeping the logic of this colonial monologue intact. Rather, and as emphasised by Mignolo in his discussion of “border thinking” a de-colonial alternative would argue for coexistence of divergent and contrasting point of views and representations (of course, with symbolic weightage and power for the dominated and colonized ones as shown by Guamán Poma’s map and the Codex), a welcome possibility which also seems to be incipiently suggested in the ironic reference to “Tezcatlipoca, lord of cross-cultural misunderstandings” above.

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