



## Necropolitics, biopower, biopolitics and dystopian resistances.

Necropolítica, biopoder, biopolítica y resistencias distópicas.

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### ABSTRACT

This article is a critical and historical reflection of the relationship between State, society and citizenship, through the notion of necropolitics starting from the colonial era; we recover the foucaultian analytics based on biopower concept to expose new forms of postcolonial domination and submission, focused on Mexico. In particular, we will refer to the Mexican society sector, which lives in precarious state and in an environment, where different forms of violence are practiced, to resist death and to survive in "worlds of death." The context, in which we bring our reflections are exacerbated by global capitalism, the growing complexity and the struggle for power in the global, local and national orders.

**Keywords:** Necropolitics. Necropower. Dystopia. Resistance. Biopolitics.

### RESUMEN

El artículo plantea una reflexión crítica e histórica, de la relación entre el Estado, la sociedad y la ciudadanía, a través de la noción de necropolítica partiendo de la época colonial; retomando



la analítica foucaultiana basada en el biopoder, para exponer nuevas formas de dominación y sumisión postcoloniales, aterrizando al México contemporáneo. En concreto, nos referiremos al sector de la sociedad mexicana que vive en estado precario y en un entorno en donde diversas formas de violencia son practicadas, para resistir a la muerte y para sobrevivir en “mundos de muerte”. El contexto sobre el que se aterrizarán las reflexiones, se ven agudizadas por el capitalismo global, la creciente complejidad y la disputa por el poder en los órdenes global, local y nacional.

**Palabras Clave:** Necropolítica. Necropoder. Distopia. Resistencia. Biopolítica.

## Introduction

More than ten years ago the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe based in South Africa, proposed, following Foucault, the notion of necropolitics to account for sovereignties that lie no longer in the simple ability to decide who dies and who lives, but in the organization of homicide and the recreation of death. Unlike thinkers like Arendt (1987)<sup>1</sup> or thinkers like Agamben, who have elaborated rigorous genealogies of totalitarianism with a view to understanding the European holocaust, Mbembe concentrates on the contemporary colonial and neocolonial experience, as well as its positive and negative relationships with conventional warfare (between nation states). He asks: are notions of disciplinary power and biopower<sup>2</sup> sufficient to speak of the thanatological practices and devices of the modern era? Are they enough to make visible that set of ominous and paradoxical powers, which seem to pervert the very sense of governing (the self, gender, populations, etc.) and that dislodge the times and spaces of what we call violence, their respective rituals of affection and mourning? And if this is not the case and it is necessary to speak, then, of a certain necropolitical

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<sup>1</sup> See, Hannah Arendt, *Los orígenes del totalitarismo*, Madrid, Alianza, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> By biopower we will understand "the set of mechanisms by which that which, in the human species, constitute fundamental biological traits can be part of a policy, a political strategy, a general strategy of power; in other words, how from the eighteenth century, society, modern Western societies, took into account the fundamental biological fact that man constitutes a human species" (See, Michel Foucault, *Seguridad, territorio, población*, Buenos Aires, FCE, 2004, p. 15).



reality, is it a nihilistic reality, of pure emptying? Foucault asks: "How is it possible for a political power to kill, claim death, demand death, make kill, give orders to kill, expose to death not only its enemies but its citizens?" (Foucault, 2000, p.230).

Torture, depression instead of productive regulation, the "valorization" of the corpse, spectacular self-immolation, the universe of femicide, the gods and goddesses of hitmen and terrorists, "forced labor", *snuff* as an abusive aesthetic, illegal euthanasia, the hunt for undocumented immigrants, shock as a mass game, precarious drug addiction, funerals of "false positives", etc., they are about state racism, the paradoxical way in which it exercises power by multiplying the death of its own citizens.

Undoubtedly, it was the emergence of biopower that inscribed racism in the mechanisms of the State. At this time, racism was inscribed as a fundamental mechanism of power, as it is exercised in modern States and to the extent that it means that there is practically no functioning of the State that, at a certain time, at a certain limit and under certain conditions, does not pass through it (Foucault, 2000, p. 230).

Mbembe suggests that, as abominable as it may be, necropolitical exercise is not absolutely destructive or absurd, it occurs in what he calls "worlds of death", as "dystopian resistances"<sup>3</sup>: minimal spheres of culture where the line between suicide and rebellion, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom is blurred. This essay seeks to recognize and update Mbembe's philosophy from Latin America, from contemporary theoretical and journalistic sources, as well as examples of cinema and literature. In the same way, from a critical perspective, he will take up the concept used by Foucault of biopolitics and will try through Mbembe, to make it dialogue with other theories in the light of postcolonial and decolonial theory, to reflect on the violent phenomena that occur today in Latin America and in particular in Mexico, which occur from and very close to the sphere of the State, capitalist accumulation, the globalizing process and neoliberalism. When due to the nudity inflicted, pain or misery, the personality is reduced to a body that groans, screams, what is the meaning of this

<sup>3</sup> See, Sayek Valencia, *Capitalismo gore*, Spain, Melusina, 2010, pp.89-93.



act? Is it possible to formulate messages so that they are decoded by others? What if they are in the same circumstances as me? What is this communication like? It seems that the possible communicative act approaches instinct, a reaction not far from animality, an immediate movement of survival, prior to any libertarian, just, rational or emancipatory codification. However, says Mbembe:

Despite this terror and the symbolic confinement of the slave, he can adopt different views on time, work and himself. It is a second paradoxical element of the plantation world as a manifestation of the state of exception. Treated as if it existed only as a simple tool and instrument of production, the slave is, in spite of everything, capable of making an object, instrument, language or gesture a representation, stylizing them. Breaking with uprooting and the pure world of things, of which he is but a fragment, the slave is able to demonstrate the protean capabilities of the human relationship through music and the body that another supposedly possessed (2011, p.34).

In the essay, we will try to answer the following fundamental questions: What do we understand by necropolitics and how is the political conceived from there? What are the relations between colonial power, neoliberalism and new types of violence? How do the ideology of security, democracy and the prevailing rule of law interrelate from this critical perspective of political production of death, government, death and violence, yet? How does culture occur in the "worlds of death"?

### **Necropolitics. Concepts, themes and problems**

In Mbembe's text *Necropolítica*, as Foucault did, we observe a demarcation with respect to any notion of sovereignty linked to legitimacy, to the so-called "political representatives" and to the national state as a reflection of an alleged collective will. About Foucault's methodology it has been said, taking up a scholastic polemic, that it is a kind of nominalism. Foucault does not believe that there is a universal called "Mexico" or "State" or "People" or "Capitalism" or "Nation", but multiple and particular configurations of power that, only from certain conventions and to the detriment of diversity, we name like this. The advantage that this methodological tradition brings with it is that it



allows specific and positive analyses of power: instead of starting from large and pompous definitions about its essence, its ends or its foundations (for example, "power resides in the people"), it would be about making frameworks of description and observation, comparisons, combinations. There would thus be an analysis of power and, when it comes to tracing it chronologically, a Genealogy of power. Sovereignty is a form of power that Foucault detects at the beginning of modernity,<sup>4</sup> approximately fifteenth century. Sovereignty consists, says Mbembe, in the ability to decide who can live and who should die. As we can see, the proposition put forward as a question also escapes moralistic perspectives, avoiding the question of whether it is just, legitimate or based on truth. Emphasis is placed on how, when, where; that is, in the space-time conditions of power.

The State, capitalism and sovereignty have mutated, they are no longer what Foucault analyzed and exposed in his texts, however, racism and discrimination, in terms of diversity, continue to exist and in constant resilience. Life is very much like death and at times, death seems to claim more life than life itself. The exploited workers of the Marxist<sup>5</sup> proletariat became superfluous in terms of productivity and capitalist accumulation, becoming spoils at the mercy of the necessities of profitability, on the one hand; or, serving the interests of narco-power. A policy to kill, the political as well as the death. It is still around the State that these occur, largely with its complicity. Modern

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<sup>4</sup> For Agamben, politics in modernity is characterized by the incorporation of the *bare life* to Western political calculation (biopolitical paradigm) and the constitution of the *state of emergency* (sovereign paradigm) as a rule. The archaeology of the *naked life* the *homo sacer*, a figure of archaic Roman law under whose discretion a life can be suppressed without the need to offer sacrifices and without committing murder (See, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign power and the bare life*, Valencia, Pre-texts, 2003a).

<sup>5</sup> According to Marx (2018), These subjects are installed in the dual and contradictory character of all merchandise: value / use value. The use value is the valuable or significant thing that as a concrete thing it has, its usefulness for the world of life or social reproduction. And value, which coexists in perpetual conflict with use value, is how valuable it is as a produced object, the amount of labor that was invested in it. The first is qualitative and the second is quantitative. The problem, marxism says, is that the commodity in the capitalist epoch – in which technology and raw materials become private property – value tends to subdue use value, to form it according to its quantitative end; in other words, value begins to emancipate itself or to "self-value" in such a way that social reproduction (whose foundation is the values of use) becomes a means to an abstract and suicidal end: the accumulation of value, the concentration of money. This does not mean that life disappears: it is always the foundation of capital, because it needs to be produced and consumed in life cycles. In each commodity and productive branch, then, we will find a logic of life and social semiosis, confronted with an alienating and classist logic of accumulation. Hence, we characterize capitalism as a schizoid relationship, since it does not cease to intensify and enhance the progress of violence in society as a spectacle and as pornography, exposing it to it and to death linked to violence as a commodity.



racism is therefore biological and revolves around the state and its authority. The forms of domination, for example, the media, modify the way in which we apprehend space and time.

What contains biopower and biopolitics, does not cease to mutate in their forms of domination, so that citizenship as a conceptual horizon of meaning, acquires coloraturas and meanings as varied as the concept of sovereignty could be. In Mbembe's necropower, life is subjected to the power of death. Violence went from a means to achieve an end, to an end in itself, through the more sophisticated use of science and technology, mathematics and computer science, statistics and demography, the media and the management and control of symbols and their contents, aimed at ensuring normalization, homogeneity and population fundamentalism around a single identity that is otherwise false. In addition to the above, the ideology of national security equated to a false consensus in general, marinated with the great television-media powers that turn everything they touch into truth (Virilio, 2011).<sup>6</sup> In this way, "biopolitics becomes thanatopolitics, understood as the administration and regulation of life that requires death" (Fuentes, 2012, p. 8). The politicization of violence impacts all areas of human life, such as the psyche. Shattered bodies become the scenes of violence and terror; the disappeared, the mutilations, the pieces or pieces of human found, the messages embedded in complete and incomplete bodies, in addition to producing multiple legal loopholes, permanently adhere to the mnemonic traces and the diurnal remains, of those who develop and try to make their lives in a context like this. A decadence occurs, a symbolic and real collapse in the structure on which the subjectivity of these individuals is sustained.

If biopolitics controls vital processes, capitalist demands have transformed life and all associated processes, such as death, into commodities. In hyper-consumerist societies, bodies become a commodity, and their care, preservation, freedom and integrity are related products. As a commodity increasingly valued, life is more valuable if it is threatened, kidnapped and tortured (Estévez, 2010, pp.231-232).

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<sup>6</sup> See, Paul Virilio, *Panic City. The outside starts here*, Buenos Aires, Intellectual Capital, 2011.



Sovereignty goes from being a legal-political category to being a political-biological one, through discriminatory and banal economic interests, with respect to human life and its value. War is made to end the war. War is declared on those who wage war on others. War becomes the state of non-exception. In general terms, we will understand necropolitics as "a kind of technology of power whose objective is the regulation of populations through the production of available and disposable subjects" (Mbembe, 2011, pp.11-40).<sup>7</sup> Death is of the people, it is the one who must be killed. We must eradicate every face and trace of civility in the other, subtract all nuance of citizenship and humanity from the other, leaving perhaps its most biological, most animal part, as a mechanism of domination and objectification. It assumes that every intersubjective relationship is woven into the use of force and authoritarianism, into the excessive use of the law at best, and in general, in the absolute absence of it, embedding itself in a logic of practices that sooner rather than later, the population begins to practice and make valid daily to achieve ends and objectives, either to survive or to achieve greater satisfiers, thus producing the cultural intersijo. Life becomes a contradiction for capitalism. Sovereignty is no longer defended by life, but by exposing and exhibiting death as deterministic telos.

Things bring together more vitality than individuals seem to carry with them. Biopower as the metaphysics of death testifies to the immeasurable inequality between power and life. Power, not for life but against it. From the State of Siege to the State of Emergency. Death and genocide, the disappearance of the living as the daily political common, as what we have been evidencing in Mexico every day, there are the iconic examples of Ayotzinapa and Tlatlaya, become a rationality of death, that is, a necropolitical logic whose operations invariably occur outside the law and under the slogan of criminalizing the other a priori, to be able to execute "cleanly" the need for order that the State requires. Necropolitics is a technology according to Foucault and a kind of power according to Mbembe. The territory is the geopolitics of the state, not of the people, not of society, not of

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<sup>7</sup> "Thanatopolitics: conduct and reorganization of social relations, in which those subjectivities that find in tension with the dominant power are censored" (See, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. El poder soberano y la nuda vida*, Valencia, Pre-texts, 2003a).



citizenship. The state makes war on its own population in the shared territory: imaginary of death, necropolitical. Necropower coexists with race and control government in the sense of Foucault. Occupy the space not to conquer it, nor to defeat its population to make it slave, occupy it to empty it of the presence of bodies in movement, of communities at dawn, occupy it so that this transnational city made up of slaves and excluded, sustain and produce in its temporality space-territorial the global-transnational city, exclusive, racist, ecocidal, lover of luxury and privileged closed space.

Fragment to asylate and separate, attract to differentiate, monitor and control to punish and secure. Systematization of the death of what is not profitable and can be absolutely dispensed with. Mental state of siege. War Machines (2004)<sup>8</sup> in Deleuzian terms made up of unemployed, migrants, rejected, unemployed, orphans, poor and miserable, excluded from progress and condemned to a mineral, vegetable, criminal life, outside the canons of a properly human life. Living entities who are persecuted and hunted in predatory warfare for natural resources. To resist, they are sometimes forced to practice the same logic to survive and confront their potential captors. Militias facing militias in very disadvantageous conditions and circumstances. Terror and death, as the only safe destinations of those at the bottom of the global, regional, national social pyramid, etc.

Capital, natural resources and physical space become more important than life. The body bed a sign, a sign of death, terror and murder symbiotized with the weapon, with the explosive, with the device. There is no sacrifice that can help to liberate or emancipate, a permanently open and bleeding wound that does not end up bleeding or closing. For Foucault, Modernity, largely achieved by the State, from terror, cruelty and desecration, find in instrumental rationality, effective and optimal practices to improve the inventions it brought and functioned as a correlate of the French Revolution, to industrialize death administratively and extirpate the cancer of plurality, dissent and identity another. For Mbembe, however, Modernity is earlier, since plantations as laboratories of colonialism through plantation systems and the transport of the labor in question, from one continent to another, appear before the emergence of the nation-state (1648) and the modern European state system, the

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<sup>8</sup> See, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus*, Valencia, Pre-texts, 2004.





Europe of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (1789). that is, outside the existence of a state-type order.

The Foucaultian corpus has been criticized from the decolonial theory, taking up Fanon and Sartre, the bypass of the colonial root of the unequal economies that today persist, with severe modifications, as a globalization. It is that there is a game that involves different types of power, as well as geographies and economies: classical sovereignty, disciplinary society and biopower. Mbembe argues that necropower is one more and that it prevails in certain situations. This effort by Mbembe is in some way about correcting Foucault's genealogy according to non-European contexts. Deleuze and Guattari are clear about the ambivalence of war machines. These can be both creative and cruel, armies or "vanishing point". This pair of French thinkers influenced the author Sayak Valencia, who rightly named those lives that lead an oscillating life in physical space, "dystopian resistances", largely because of the material conditions in which they survive, rather than because of an ideological inclination.

The new technologies of destruction are less interested in inscribing the bodies in the new disciplinary apparatuses than in inscribing them, when the time comes, in the order of the radical economy that is now represented by the massacre [...] human figures who are alive, no doubt, but whose bodily integrity has been replaced by pieces, fragments, wrinkles and even immense wounds that are difficult to close. Its function is to maintain before the eyes of the victim, and the people around him, the morbid spectacle of mutilation (Mbembe, 2011, p.48).

The Foucaultian analytical methodology is still useful and precise to study the phenomenon of power and contemporary state violence, but it is not enough to apprehend and reflect specifically on the current Mexican reality. Our reflection revolves in the middle of two positions, the so-called decolonial and postcolonial thought. The first, illuminates the fall of the Berlin Wall seeking a critical and differentiated understanding of modernity and global expansion from and for Latin America. The second arises practically at the end of the Second World War, after the experiences that occurred in Africa and Asia to achieve some their independence and others, to resist the colonialist oppression



often exacerbated by the Cold War. In that distance he tries to take from the Foucaultian theory, Mbembe states that

His interest is focused on those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy, but the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations. These figures of sovereignty have nothing to do with an episode of exacerbated madness or with the expression of a rupture between the impulses and interests of the body and those of the mind. On the contrary, they are, like the extermination camps, what constitutes the nomos of the political space in which we still live (Mbembe, 2011, p.18).

According to Mbembe, what interests him is to analyze the systematic and daily exercise of violence and terror exercised by the State, on communities and people's bodies causing their death. However, it is fair to acknowledge that Foucault also dealt with the subject of colonialism in some of his works, which does not mean that he affirms at any time, that racism was born in the colonies or that colonialism has generated it, but he does consider that colonialism contributed in a singular way to the development of discourses related to racism, as a biopolitical device of war (Castro-Gómez, 2007, pp. 153-172).

Racism will develop, first of all, with colonization, that is, with colonizing genocide; when it is to kill people, kill populations, kill civilizations [...]. Destroy not only the political adversary, but the rival population, that species of biological danger that they represent for the race that we are, who are in front of us [...]. In general, I believe that racism attends to the function of death in the economy of biopower, according to the principle that the death of others means the biological strengthening of oneself as a member of a race or population (Foucault, 2000, pp.232-233).

### **Neoliberal sovereignty, which population must die?**

Foucault, defines population as "the global mass affected by overall processes that are proper to life, such as reproduction, birth, death" (Foucault, 2000, p.220). Later, analyzing the concept of biopolitics,



he will tell us that the population is "a set of elements that on the one hand are inscribed in the general regime of living beings, and on the other, offer a surface of grip to meditated and calculated transformations" (Foucault, 2004, p.101). This gives rise to say that the population is certainly human species, but it is also public. The public is defined as "the population considered from the point of view of their opinions, their ways of doing, their behaviors, their fears, their prejudices, their demands. The group susceptible to suffer the influence of education and its campaigns" (Foucault, 2004, p.102). From here Mbembe will depart, to situate the idea of genealogy of racism introduced by Foucault in a temporality different from that of the French thinker, which has as a peculiar characteristic, the fact that this idea will no longer remain in the conception that biopower originates and remains in Western European modernity, let alone be in keeping with the Fordist workings of capitalism or the welfare state. On the contrary, capital and labor enter into frank contradiction, the accumulation of capital and the financialization of the economy with neoliberalism, make the labor market more flexible but not the free mobility of people, unlike capital. Therefore, the superfluous is administered, to the *bare life* as disposable and without possibilities of legally persecuting when there is no homicide.

For Mbembe, "the colonial state bases its fundamental claim to sovereignty and legitimacy of authority on its own account of history and identity [...] That the State has a divine right to existence" (2011, p.46). Now, only those who contribute to the generation of wealth will be biopolitically important to the state and those who run it, while those who are not, will be cornered to a kind of tacit and explicit eugenic septicemia, slowly or quickly, depending on the needs of capital. That relationship of making die and letting live is reversed to become to make live and let die:

Once the concept of equality of human beings has been broken, the concept of degeneration constructed by biology a posteriori of inferiority, will enable and give legitimacy to the exercise of the policy of death of the State: biopolitics will transmute into thanatopolitics" (Agamben, 2003a, pp.17-41).



Examples in which we can establish strong relationships between thanatopolitics, biopolitics and necropolitics are not few. We have that of medicine and in particular that of psychiatry, which was used by the Nazis against their own population to eliminate the "unfit" according to a biological racism, which sought to avoid the degeneration of the race itself, in which a biopolitics of instrumental production of death prevailed. Another example, the one practiced by the Nazis against Jews and Gypsies, but also homosexuals and the sick or feeble-minded. The wars of extermination in the Balkans or against the "Kurds", a couple of decades ago. What happened in the detention, torture and forced disappearance centers of the military juntas in South America and the Central American dictatorships with the support of Washington. What is happening in the West Bank Strip. It is important to consider that when the Jews were persecuted, they were also persecuting Germans, Dutch, Norwegians, Eastern Europeans, among other nationalities. When Kurds were being persecuted or exterminated, Turks, Syrians and Iraqis were being annihilated. The idea of equality has been exchanged for that of autonomy and self-determination, but these have been corrupted biopolitically in ones of annihilation and confinement, of slow extermination and persecution, of displacement and forced disappearance or imprisonment, as part of a necropolitical imaginary.

In all cases, the *state of emergency* marks a threshold at which logic and praxis blur each other and a pure violence, devoid of logos, demands the realization of an enunciation without any real reference (Agamben, 2003b, p.40).

Necropower affects the people, normalizing and disappearing simultaneously, operating instrumentally from the public that necropolitics controls, manipulates and disciplines, according to its interests of domination and control. Giorgio Agamben, dares to affirm that "the proper thing of Auschwitz is not the extermination but the production of the Muslim" (Agamben, 2002, pp.53-54).

This Muslim, bringing up Hannah Arendt, would become the subject who lost his identity because of:

[...] of the death of their legal person, their legal entity and their individuality. Given the death of the juridical person and the moral person, the only thing that prevents men from becoming living corpses is the differentiation of their individuality. (Agamben, 2002, p.60).



The years of the Cold War in Mexico and Central America left trails of orphanhood, pain, hunger, violence and death. The legacy of this scenario, especially in Central America, together with the neoliberal policies applied to the region, including Mexico, contributed to exacerbating collective violence in the area. On the one hand, mass unemployment, mass migration to the United States as the main point of attraction; and Mexico in its wake, in the case of Central Americans, helped the body, the people themselves and their mobility in their own and foreign territories, to become the focus of attention and trafficking.

The Central American maras and the hitmen of the Mexican cartels are just some examples of what this historical conjuncture, which spans more than two generations and has already left several decades. Drug trafficking, trafficking in people, organs, drugs, weapons, among others, became the *modus vivendi* of many and the global business of the region par excellence, which does not happen, without co-participation, if not with the leadership of governments at their different levels. However, the exclusion generated by the new version of capitalism, the superfluous and human spoils of the model, are accompanied by a series of measures produced by a necropower, willing to criminalize the manifestation of disagreement, dissent in the name of the rule of law, social mobilization and the defense of public space, as well as constitutional rights in the name of security and democracy. It is no coincidence that public security in Mexico has been militarized in general and is investing year after year more budget in weapons and professionalization of the armed forces:

The necropolitics of the neoliberal state and its regime of accumulation leaves waste in the residual margins; the figure is not the return to the labor market that mediates life, its figure is expulsion, and its place, the landfill. (Bauman, 2005, p.9).

This leads to radical desubjection and despondency processes. A series of symbolic voids are generated that end up being occupied by perverse figures who carry power, since the symbolic order disintegrates leaving the self suspended in favor of the new self of the imaginary, which takes the form of an authoritarian power.



The above, affects a psychic restructuring, based on self-destruction. It seeks to arrive at the real avoiding going through the symbolic before the loss (s). It is no longer a question of exploiting the worker and subtracting the value of his work, through the forms of surplus value, but of getting rid of it completely, of emptying life until it is completely naked, of reducing to the optimum that potential interchangeable reserve army to perform the work. But what then does all this humanity left over from global "optimal capitalism" do? Felipe Calderón waged a war against drug trafficking, the result until the last day of his government according to official figures, reached 50,000 dead (Attorney General's Office, n.d.) , not counting missing, wounded, etc. Also, during the presence of the military throughout the territory at the beginning of this war, the homicide rate increased by almost 100%, showing a direct correlation between the rate alluded to and the beginning of it after two years (Escalante, 2011). This war, added to the impunity and corruption already existing, has been causing a climate of escalation in violence in general terms in society, and simultaneously, a generalized increase in tolerance towards it on the part of citizens. It is a common fact that, among drug traffickers, municipal and federal police, sailors and the army, among others, they have criminal records and usually pass from one group to another easily, already on the side of "justice", or on the side of "executions".<sup>9</sup>

In Mexico, from the 80s of the twentieth century to 2011, there have been about 785 lynchings; in Guatemala between 1996 and 2011 there were 1,117 lynchings. In both countries, lynchings have become a naturalized and recurrent procedure to punish actions considered crimes or serious violations of community values (Fuentes, 2012, p.37).

The increases in lynchings and homicides in Mexico, accompanied by an increase in suicides, forced disappearances, uprisings, kidnappings, extortion and threats, undoubtedly suggest the strong correlation that this has had during the War on Drugs undertaken by Calderón and the continuity that this has had during the mandate of Peña Nieto. It is not difficult to imagine what the psychological state in which these populations find themselves may be. Distrust, thirst for belonging, exclusion, the

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<sup>9</sup> See, Fernando Escalante, "Death has permission" in *Nexos Magazine*, 2011, no. 397, Mexico, pp. 36-49.



body martyred with tattoos and other markings as a biography of death, offer a new form of subjectivity crossed by transgenerational violence. The executions that are observed, from the uprisings in broad daylight in public places and the fact of torturing them in private, only to then go to throw the bodies or the rest of them in public places, speaks to us in turn of the difficulty to differentiate between public and private space in these cases of extreme violence.

### Capitalism and *the gore* proletariat

Could we talk about a narco revolution? (Rompeviento TV, 2014; Jóvenesemergencia.or, s.f.)<sup>10</sup> One can think of a modern biopolitical trinity as the axis of analysis: State, Capital and Nation. There are large capitals that compete or provisionally agree with each other and subdue smaller (low-productivity) capitals, inside and outside their country of origin. Then we find different state constitutions, as well as international horizontal organizations. Finally, the nation as the material base of cultures and traditions, within the framework of a circumscribed territory. These are configurations of this trinity as power blocs, class and interclass alliances, cultural hegemonies, mafias and illegal capitals (some say "lumpen bourgeoisies"). It is important to track the versions of such a trinity. Hence the importance of addressing the colonial fact. The geographical, the technological and the ideological are juxtaposed in history. From this perspective, national sovereignty does not cease to exist, but adapts or resists the thrust of new capital. Some national institutions are fragile and cannot even guarantee compliance with the law (their discipline and biopower are deficient). The biopolitical trinity fails. This leads to the emergence of local sovereignties, improvised, more or less violent, in conflict or in affinity with other companies that, in turn, may have a nationalist spirit or not. The cartels' business dealings with Canadian mining companies are another example. But self-defense groups and community police are also local sovereignties, sometimes as a result of pacts with

<sup>10</sup> See, "The underlying reasons for the tragedy in Guerrero", in *Journalists on foot. Windbreaker TV*. Filed on 10/23/14.

<https://youtu.be/wsXo9MspJA8> Available on youtube on July 22, 2015. See

<http://jovenesemergencia.org/mapas/geopolitica-ayotzinapa-tlatlaya/index.php>

It is a geopolitical and economic map of Guerrero made by activists and academics to understand, specifically, the cases of Tlatlaya and Ayotzinapa. Available July 22, 2015.





landowners, small business owners and local politicians. Thus, the more deficient the power in the sense of Foucault, the more disorganized life is, the struggle for territory and the definition of populations does not make it a unified intelligence.

In this context, El Chapo is a kind of dystopian figure, between the religious and the spectacular. Are we returning to pre-modern powers, of warrior and bloodthirsty leaders, stimulated by television, drugs, the absence of a future and community life? Or what kind of modernity do we Third Worldists live? Knowing that you are going to die soon for your hectic lifestyle, anticipating your death and demanding in life a last wish that, perhaps, prepares the conditions for a life after death. To experience death one must be alive, but death cannot be experienced by an individual as such, but by a community that sees its members die, unless the suicidal individual stages or depicts his death before himself and publicly. The suicide is a man of radical theater, who is confused with his staging, with his act because in effect, he dies.

Faced with this world order, deriagas<sup>11</sup> subjectivities are created that seek to install themselves, as valid subjects, with possibilities of belonging and social ascension. Subjects who contradict the logics of the acceptable and the normative, as a consequence of the awareness of being redundant in the economic order, so they face their situation and context through necroempowerment and the necro-practices transfuge and dystopian, *gore*practices, turning this process into the only possible reality and trying to legitimize through the empire of violence, the processes of subsumed economies (black market, trafficking in drugs, weapons, bodies, etc.) (Osorio, 2012).<sup>12</sup> Actions that reinterpret and create fields different from the valid ones, and that influence political, public, official, social and cultural processes.

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<sup>11</sup> The endriago is a mythical character in *Amadis of Gaula*, Spanish literary work of medieval times, is a monster, a hybrid that combines man, hydra and dragon. It is a beast of great height, strong and agile that inhabits hellish lands and produces great fear among its enemies. Valencia adopts the term endriago to conceptualize men who use violence as a means of survival, a mechanism of self-affirmation, and a tool of work. The endriagos not only kill and torture for money, but also seek dignity and self-affirmation through a 'kamikaze' logic. Valencia says that given the social and cultural conditions prevailing in Mexico it should not be a surprise that the endriagos use practices. *Gore* to satisfy consumerist demands as they thereby subvert the sense of failure caused by material frustration (See, Sayek Valencia, *Gore capitalism*, Spain, Melusina, 2010, 89-93).

<sup>12</sup> See, David Osorio, *The War of the Zetas. Journey along the frontier of necropolitics*, Mexico: Grijalbo, 2012.





We propose a reflection on *gore* capitalism, understanding it as the systematically uncontrolled and contradictory dimension of the neoliberal project. Product of economic polarizations, the information/advertising bombardment that creates and strengthens the hyper-consumerist identity and its counterpart: the increasingly scarce population with purchasing power that satisfies the desire for consumption. In this way, radical capitalist subjectivities are created that we have called core subjects and new discursive figures that make up an episteme of violence and reconfigure the concept of work through a perverse agency, which is now consolidated in the necropolitical commercialization of murder, evidencing the dystopias that bring with them the fulfillment avant la *lettre* of the pacts with neoliberalism (masculinist) and its objectives (Valencia, 2010, pp.19-20).

*Gore capitalism* would be the "B-side" of modernity, which starts with the colonial plantation described by Mbembe, continues with the deficit formation of the welfare state as underdevelopment (violence without discipline or control; precarious, superfluous or disposable life), and ends, in our days, with the neoliberal project: dispossession, neo-extractivism (Fracking) and flexible accumulation. Sayak Valencia adds the role of the media spectacle, the hyper-consumerist lifestyle (Lipovetsky, 2007)<sup>13</sup> and its corresponding schizophrenia (to the extent that subjects cannot perform such a style), monstrous subjectivity or "endriaga" in contexts of symbolic disarticulation, rebellious and suicidal subjects, almost always male, transgressors both of the biopolitical normalization -indispensable for legal capitalism and "well behaved" of the First World- and of religious and community traditions. In this way, global, neoliberal and transnational capitalism has shown that more than a system of production, it is one of iterated cultural constructions and resiliences and not without a certain systemic entelechy.

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<sup>13</sup> See, Gilles Lipovetsky, *Paradoxical happiness. Essay on the hyper-consumerist society*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2007.



## **Terrorism and performance**

In plantations and haciendas, common places of colonialist slavery, subjectivity is reduced to total inhumanity.

Slave status results from a threefold loss: the loss of a home, the loss of rights to one's own body, and the loss of political status. This is identical to absolute domination, mental alienation, and social death (the total expulsion of humanity) (Mbembe, 2011, p.39).

As Judith Butler has pointed out: "It is possible to make, in symbolic terms, vulnerability a resistance, pain a refuge. The expression of this sensuality will never be sophisticated or refined, as can be that of certain artists and audiences in biopolitical conditions 'of well-being'..." (Butler, 2006, p. 157). It is, in any case, a fleeting, brutal, dystopian, often suicidal aesthetic. Violence becomes a new epistemology, with its particular symbology, its discourses and its self-affirming images of identity:

The public is formed on the condition that certain images do not appear in the media, that certain names are not pronounced, that certain losses are not considered losses and that the experience is unreal and diffuse. (Butler, 2006, p. 65).

The same non-state actors, in large part, end up exercising power parallel to the state, through different forms of pressure and violence, for example, the self-defense groups and other groups similar to the rural guards. Reality or social and semiotic reproduction is impoverished, and at the same time, it is saturated with images of abulia, depression, disenchantment, indifference, apathy, shock (this has been called "derealization" or "spectralization"). The marginalized and excluded individual is symbolically and psychically unprotected, his ethics and tradition are thinned, he adopts the hegemonic patriarchal stereotypes, but he does so as a necropolitics and hyperconsumption (an aggressive, anarchic and fast consumption, that is, that does not start from specific life and semiotic cycles).

Faced with the weakening of the symbolic plot, the sense of belonging, as well as the narratives that give meaning to our life and the endriagos acts are impulsive discharges and ephemeral sovereignties. To end life suddenly to give meaning to life, to kill to mean my death,



to inflict more pain than I am suffering, to be more cruel than the other; and in the absence of loving relationships, own all women (discipline and control this population for my pleasure and inheritance) (Fuentes, 2012, pp.71-86).

These ephemeral sovereignties may find some dystopian social roots. Classes would have disappeared, but in their place sprout niches and spheres, "worlds of death", in which the only sense of belonging is survival, martyrdom and suicide, pierced by a strong religiosity. It is necessary to think thoroughly and in detail about the cultural formations in these contexts, the "destructive creativity" exercised no longer by the great biopowers, capitals or States, but by the marginalized and excluded. From the core or monstrous subjects will not arise any emancipatory political project and spiritual renewal; do not be fooled. As popular as he is, El Chapo is just one more businessman. What we see is a paradoxical, cruel, intense kind of life, always on the verge of disappearing. What if this subjectivity of the "living dead," as Mbembe says, is the civilizational paradigm of this century?

Through Mbembe's thought, the idea that necropolitics is inextricably linked to racism is highlighted; psychic economy linked to a normalized practice within the imaginary, supported by an ideology that makes the idea of race subsist, in which there is also the idea of social classes and some more human than others. In this sense, global modernity only comes to reproduce and reinvent multiplicity of postcolonial forms of persecution, exploitation, violence and death, without clearly abandoning the discourses on sovereignty, democracy, human rights, among others. "Any historical account of the rise of modern terror needs to deal with slavery, which could be regarded as one of the earliest cases of biopolitical experimentation" (Mbembe, 2011, p.39). The contempt that *gore* capitalism has towards the culture of work and workers in particular, directly impacts on the forms of production, contracting, reproduction and distribution of wealth, which is directly related to intersubjective relations and intersubjectivity itself, giving rise to the core subject, in which humanism is clearly replaced by consumerism, material frustration and schizophrenia.

If the staging of the narcos is characterized by projecting the most terrible ghosts (they have the morbid attraction of what Lacan called "imagos of fragmented bodies"), this means another



ominous return of the real? In Lacanian psychoanalysis, at least in its standard meaning, the Real (usually written with a capital letter) refers to what escapes all symbolization (rules and systems) and imaginary (names, sensitive forms). Experiences close to the Real have to do with pain, death, ecstasy, emptiness, radical anguish, madness, loss. By itself, blood, wounds, corpses, are only images, but associated with the Real, with life itself, they are an unlivable, unbearable experience. The culture of violence

It is not only expressed in the absence of state authority, government policy and justice, in which rulers govern through terror, extermination, disappearance, political and labor exclusion, but also the ways in which the population lives objectified in their daily lives (Carreras, 2012, p.71).

## Conclusions

Some of the limitations of Mbembe's proposal have to do with finance capital, geopolitics and globalization, considering these as key concepts of the necropolitical imaginary. Another could be the role of the drug in shaping this reality, but neither can we demand from their concepts yields that they cannot give. The Mexican case is a paradigm of contemporary necropower. We find that the discardability and superfluity of millions of human beings cause severe problems related to violence and self-destruction of the subject that manifests itself in the various areas of life. The conception of the symbolic in the psychic structure of the subject is perverted, in large part by the global capitalist imaginary and social functionings, by the schizophrenic character it produces in people's lives. Likewise, we define *gore* capitalism as a set of dynamics of a political, economic, cultural and social nature grouped in such a way that they are attached around four phenomena described: the narco-State, hyperconsumery, drug trafficking and necropolitics. Mexico, a country that went on to become a Nation-State to a Market-Nation at the end of the twentieth century, and today, without ceasing to be the latter, is undoubtedly emerging as the Narco-Nation par excellence worldwide.

War machines are immediatist and do not claim to govern in the Foucaultian sense (regulating populations and disciplining individuals); they just fulfill orders, win all at once and move, they are



pirates. Calderón treated the war machines as if they were conventional mafias, with capos and powerful symbolic authorities, arresting personalities who only served for his media campaign of fear, which to detract from the strength of the machines. The machines multiplied and became more chaotic and aggressive. Community police and self-defense groups can become war machines to the extent that they are penetrated by the criterion of profit and abandon their "uses and customs". This is not to say that there are no genuine experiences of community, but in the midst of marginalization and exclusion, the danger is latent.

The idea is that biopower as a government integrates disciplinary mechanisms and institutional, anatomical or individual control, as well as massive life. The national gendarmerie, the criminalization of migrants and drugs, are complex exercises of biopower and necropower in the context of a deficient capitalism and state.

Think of the fear that television transmits from the identity, not only of migrants and narcos, but of the teachers of Guerrero, for example. As questions remain: can the worlds of death be worlds of culture? What is the connection between the countryside and the city, the economic centers and peripheries in the context of world biopolitics (utopia of globalization)? How do biopolitics and thanatology coexist in regions and localities? And how does capital accumulation relate to the flows and distribution of wealth (goods for life) in space? What is the architecture, the urbanism of biopower and thanatological pairs?

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