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Through the Spaceship's Window: A Bio-political Reading of 20th Century Latin American and Anglo-Saxon Science Fiction

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Julio César Cruz and Claudia Patricia Duarte. And to Ruth, who has supported me at every step of this long process. I love you all.

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Acknowldegements

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I would also like to thank my friends in Columbia, South Carolina, for all their support, encouragement, and affection, in the long and emotionally challenging process of getting a Doctorate degree. Thank you, Julia Luján (and her mother, Zulma Zamudio de Luján, who sent me sveral important novels and comics from Argentina, that will enable me to further pursue my studies on Latin American science fiction), Cristián Monaco, David Beek, Marc Démont, Irina V. Meier, Andrés Arroyave, Hugo Pascual Bordón, Ben Rodríguez, Gloria Losada, Edgar Larrea, Whitney Waites, Alejandro García Lemos, Dr. Mercedes López, Dr. María Mabrey, Dr. Lucile Charlebois, Dr. Isis Sadek, Beatriz Rincón Kellogg, her husband Dr. Jim Kellog, their son Matt Kellog, Peter

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I will like to thank Drip, my favorite coffee shop in South Carolina, for providing me with a peaceful place to write, and considerable amounts of caffeine, which allowed me to write this extensive project. Thank you, Shane, Crawford, Marcy, Jessica, Liz, Scott, Bratt, Stacy, Sean, and everyone else who works—and has worked—in this great establishment. I will also like to thank Kaye, in Starbuscks, who teaches me Japanese words in between coffee cups, and Alison Smetana, who used to work at Cool Beans, and introduced me to some great bands. It would be unfair not to mention here The Whig (North America's greatest dive bar) and Speak Easy. We all need to relax once in a a while, so thank you for making this town a better place.

To the literary and art community of Columbia, South Carolina, thank you. It has been a true privilege to participate in several art events, poetry readings, movie screenings, etc. I must thank great organizations like Palmetto Luna and the Nickelodeon Theater, as well as individual artists and art professionals such as Dr. Ed Madden,

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Alejandro García Lemos, Iván Segura, Darien Cavanaugh, Amada Torruella, Loli Molina Muñoz, and Thomas Crouch.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Julio César Cruz and Claudia Patricia Duarte, for always being there for me. Thank you, Felipe and Juliana, for making this world a better place. Thank you, Victoria and Antonia, for bringing joy and tenderness into my life. Thank you, Cipriano Cruz, Cecilia Suárez, Claudio Duarte, and Lola Cediel, for keeping me in your minds and prayers (even though I'm not one for praying). Thank you, Ruth Guillén, for your love, constant support, and incredible patience. I love you.

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Abstract

This dissertation consists of a bio-political reading of a wide variety of Latin American, American, and British works of science fiction, written from 1919 to 1989. In this project I have analyzed how works of science fiction in different historical and geographical contexts deal with issues such as eugenics, racism, fear of the alien, the threat of nuclear global conflict, etc. I have made a conscious effort to demonstrate that Latin America has been part of global phenomena such as the Cold War, and has produced a wide and rich corpus of science fiction works that deal with these global issues, as well as with local political or social circumstances particular to the nations where these works were written and read. My project demonstrates that Latin America is no stranger to Modernity, and has articulated its own understanding of what Modernity is; this can be seen in several of the works of that I have analyzed.

In this project I have also confronted prejudices and misconceptions about science fiction: I argue that science fiction is not an escapist genre, unworthy of critical attention; far from it, this genre is ideal for engaging in conversations about the way in which technology shapes our world, our personal relationships, and our understanding of ourselves and others. In a similar way, I confront prejudices against the graphic novel and the comic book, demonstrating that the medium of graphic narrative is well-suited for dealing with issues of great importance, in a rich and complex way. Finally, this project

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contributes to the study of Latin American science fiction, which (especially in the context of Colombian literary criticism) has been neglected in academia for way too long.

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Preface

When most people think of science fiction they think of spaceships, aliens, ray guns, and other images that we have inherited, mostly, from Western pulp magazines of the 20th century. And yes, this is, in fact, all part of science fiction. But science fiction is also a literary genre that deals with subjects of great importance four our times, namely, the way in which technology has shaped, is shaping, and could shape our understanding of ourselves, of our world and reality. Science fiction is also the literary genre that allows us to express how technology has changed the way in which we relate to one another, and how it could continue to do so, for better and for worse, in the future. Finally, science fiction has absorbed utopia, and created and shaped its natural opposite: dystopia. Science fictional dystopias and utopias allow authors to explore and hypothesize about political and cultural changes in possible futures, articulating the fears and anxieties of their own eras, while warning us of the evils, the pain and suffering, that we as a species could create and bring upon us. However, in the form of technological utopias, science fiction also articulates ideal models of the future to strive for.

Several literary scholars and assiduous readers, including some of my Latin American colleagues, seemed puzzled when learning that I was writing a doctoral dissertation on Latin American science fiction. Many did not know that there was such a

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thing as Latin American science fiction.[1] I have come to the realization that it is is not unusual for fiction readers outside Latin America to read works of Latin American science fiction as magical realism, a literary label that has been arbitrarily used to describe works of Latin American literature that could not be contained under the label of realism. In this way, the fiction of authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and many others, is often mis-labelled as magical realism.

There are four different literary genres that are usually mis-labelled as magical realism: the first one is fantastic literature (which has great exponents in the region, such as Leopoldo Lugones, Horacio Quiroga, Borges, Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, etc.); the second one is surrealism (which, in Latin America, took the form of the "marvelous real," a term coined by Cuban author Alejo Carpentier);[2] the third one is fantasy literature (which has had prominent exponents like Angélica Gorodischer); and finally, science fiction. There are several reasons for this constant mislabeling of Latin American non-realist fiction. Many authors of fantastic fiction (such as Lugones, Quiroga, and Borges) also wrote works that could be catalogued as science fiction. On the other hand, science fiction authors like Angélica Gorodischer have also written works that could be accurately described as fantasy literature (a good example of this would be her ambitious *Kalpa Imperial*, published in 1983). Finally, some of the works of authors such as García Márquez, Borges, Cortázar, and Juan Rulfo, would be hard to label as being any of these things. For instance, is Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955) magical realism? Is it gothic

[1] I was, thus, far from surprised when, while reading the prologue to *Los viajeros: 25 años de ciencia ficción Mexicana* (2010), I learned that Bernardo Fernández (a.k.a. "Bef"), editor and contributor of this anthology, mentioned hearing this question numerous times throughout his literary career.
[2] The "marvelous real" greatly influenced what would later be identified as magical realism.

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literature? (a convoluted and strange Mexican ghost story?) Is it surrealism? On the other hand, many of García Márquez's stories in *Ojos de perro azul* (*Eyes of a Blue Dog*) (1947) could be read as surrealist texts, while some of the stories in *Doce cuentos peregrinos* (*Strange Pilgrims*) (1992) could be read as fantastic stories. Naturally, surrealism and magical realism are both historically connected, through the often-neglected link of the "marvelous real." It is also important to consider that Borges wrote stories that, like "There Are More Things" (1975), "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" ("Utopia of a Tired Man") (1975), and "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" ("The Garden of Forking Paths") (1941), oscillate between the science fictional and the fantastic, engaging with subjects such as time-travel in "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado," the possible existence of parallel universes in "El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan," and the existence of alien life in "There are more things." To make things even more complicated, it is not unusual for Latin American publishing houses and bookstores to label works of Latin American science fiction as magical realism, often for marketing purposes. Rachel Haywood Ferreira describes this phenomenon in the first pages of her influential book *The Emergence of Latin American Science Fiction* (2011).

But the mis-labelling of Latin American science fiction as magical realism is also a symptom of a pervasive assumption about Latin American history and culture that often times goes unchallenged, even within academia. I am talking about the assumption that Latin America (a region that has been a vital part of the Western world in terms of culture, economics, science, and art) is not yet entirely modern or "civilized." This pervasive assumption makes it difficult for some North American or European readers to think of Latin America as a region where technology is not only avidly consumed, but

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also constantly produced. Inventions such as the modern ballpoint pen, color tv, captcha codes, the artificial heart, and the artificial retina either originated in Latin America, or were created or co-created by Latin American scientists, programmers, or inventors. Assuming that Latin America is not a producer of technology denotes either ignorance, or a narrow understanding of technology. Even though—fortunately—no Latin American country has ever produced a nuclear weapon or sent a rocket to the moon, technology is not only constituted by flamboyant or breathtaking inventions. From amateur inventors tinkering with electric devices to programmers working at their own workshops and bedrooms, from technology enthusiasts that enjoy fixing their family's appliances to scientist and inventors working at the most prestigious universities of Latin America, the United States, and Europe, Latin American technology is everywhere.

It is misleading to understand Latin America as a pre-modern region. It is also misleading to assume that there is no such a thins as Latin American science fiction. These are not two different assumption; rather, thinking that science fiction cannot be a Latin American genre is a consequence of thinking of Latin America as barbaric, exotic, uncivilized, or pre-modern. Science fiction is a modern genre; it is, perhaps, the modern genre par excellence. Latin America has not only produced its own science fiction, it has also produced great works of this genre that contribute to a better understanding of the way in which technology has shaped (and will continue to shape) our understanding of ourselves, of each other, and of reality as such.

Many works of Latin American science fiction also deal with social or political issues in direct or indirect ways. For instance, in his novel *Eugenia: esbozo novelesco de costumbres futuras* (*Eugenia: A Novelized Sketch of Future Customs)* (1919) Eduardo

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Urzaiz imagined a peaceful future in which the generalized practice of eugenics has saved a rapidly-decreasing human race from extinction, while almost completely eradicating disease, vice, and madness. Urzaiz lived during the violent years of the Mexican Revolution and saw the population of Mexico decrease dramatically during this prolonged conflict. Urzaiz, a medical doctor, also worked in mental institutions in Mérida, Mexico, developing a strong interest in subjects such as mental health, hygiene, addiction, vice, criminality, and hereditary diseases. H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López's *El Eternauta* (1957-59) deals with Argentinean anxieties about American political interventionism during the Cold War. Their work on *El Eternauta II* (1976-77), on the other hand, could be read as a criticism of the totalitarian military junta that ruled over the nation during the second half of the 1970s and the first years of the 1980s. During the tense years of the Cold War, Borges published his short story "Utopia de un hombre que está cansado," a text where the author imagines a post national world in which human beings are an endangered species, and the few humans that still inhabit the planet live in a state of isolation and anarchy. Borges describes this isolation and this lack of nations and governmental institutions in utopian and even idyllic terms. Finally, in the short story "Rocky Lunario" (1964), René Rebetez imagines a temperamental American astronaut and military man with control of his nation's nuclear weapons. Lunario destroys the world in a moment of anger and ennui, articulating in this manner both Rebetez's mistrust of the world powers (engaged in the self-destructive nuclear arms race) and what he understood as the absurd and terrifying nature of the Cold War.

In short, this extensive study of Latin American science fiction is intended to bring awareness to the relevance of this literary genre in the region. With this project, I

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not only try to confront and subvert misleading assumptions about the genre of science fiction, but also about Latin America, and its relationship to science and technology. I hope that my efforts are worthy of the work of the authors that I have studied and written about in this project.

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Introduction

In this study of Latin-American and Anglo-Saxon science fiction I intend to grasp a critical understanding of the most essential aspects of two different moments in Western history, that marked the incredibly complex—and terribly violent—panorama of the 20th century. These moments are: the period between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II, and the Cold War—understood as the historical period of international unrest that went from 1947 to 1991. For my study, I will focus in the national literatures of Mexico, Colombia and Argentina, as well as England and the United States. I have chosen these three Latin American countries in an effort to grasp a general understanding of the Latin-American experience, that encompasses the Caribbean, the Andean region (Colombia), the Southern Cone (Argentina), and Central and North America (Mexico). I have decided to work with the literatures from England and the United States, in an effort to achieve a critical understanding of the science fiction produced in the Anglo-Saxon world during the historical periods mentioned above. Since most of the works of American and British science fiction that I intend to study in this project have received wide critical and general attention, I will focus my efforts on the analysis of Latin American works of science fiction, that in some cases have been virtually ignored by critics, and excluded from their countries' national literary canons.

I have also chosen Mexico and Argentina as the subject of my analysis, because of the fact that these were the nations in which science fiction first appeared in Latin

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America. The promising economic panorama of the late 19th century, as well as the advances in technology and the fast urbanization that took place in cities such as Buenos Aires and Mexico City, constituted an ideal stage for science fiction to be written, published, and distributed in these urban centers. My decision of working with Colombian science fiction, however, is a response to the lack of attention that the genre has received in the context of Colombia literary circles, and I hope that my work will provide some awareness of the relevance of this genre within the context of Colombia's national literary tradition. Even though Brazil has a very prominent place within the context of the Latin American tradition of the genre, I will limit my analysis of Latin American science fiction to the study of texts written in Spanish.

It is important to clarify that this comparative study is not an exhaustive compendium of the works of science fiction produced in Latin America during the past century; I intend to draw a general map of some sociopolitical aspects of 20th century Latin American history—such as the interest on eugenics and its relationship to different national projects of modernization, anxieties about alien figures and international tensions typical of the Cold War era, and anxieties about global nuclear confrontation—through a general reading of the works of science fiction produced from 1919 to 1989. I will focus particularly in the power relations of the nations at hand, analyzing their science fiction through the critical lenses of bio-politics and bio-power, as developed by critics such as Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. My definitions of bio-power and bio-politics will be based on Foucault's ideas presented in the last chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1984), and in Chapter 11 of Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976* (1997). I will also rely on

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Giorgio Agamben's take on the subject, as presented in his influential *Homo Sacer* (1995). In a few words, I intend to make a reading of 20th century Latin American history through the literary genre of science fiction, focusing, mainly, in the dynamics of power that shaped the history of Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina. I consider my project to be relevant within the contemporary scholarship about science fiction because of its engagement to the less-explored realm of Latin American works of this genre, and because it proposes a political reading of science fiction, that opposes the common misconception of science fiction as a lesser literature, or as an immature form of escapism.

Even though the critical reception of science fiction has changed dramatically since the late 1970s, according to Darrel B. Lockhart, science fiction has traditionally been seen as a minor or unimportant genre by both scholars and highbrow writers. In his "Preface" to *Latin America Science Fiction Writers: An A-to-Z Guide* (2004) Lockhart argues that within the context of Latin American literature these prejudices are even more obvious. In Lockhart's words, "[i]n Latin America, perhaps more than elsewhere, science fiction has long been considered to be a lesser form of literature. This, in spite of the fact that Latin American writers have long been practicing the genre (since at least the eighteen century) as a means of cultural expression" (viii). In their introduction to *Latin American Science Fiction: Theory and Practice* (2012), Andrew B. Brown and M. Elizabeth Ginway state that science fiction in Latin America "was dismissed because of its lack of an obvious contemporary social or political referent, as well as its alleged inferiority to magical realism, which occupied center stage in the connection of fantastic literature and Latin America by critics in both hemispheres. For these reasons, SF became

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viewed as foreign or inauthentic" (1). In spite of the prejudices that exist about the genre of science fiction in Latin America, Lockhart argues that science fiction in the region should be regarded as "an authentic and unique cultural discourse worthy of greater scholarly attention and analytical inquiry" (idem). Brown and Ginway also argue that

> In the brief history of Latin American SF as an academic field, the primary focus of scholarship has been the "archeological" phase, that of finding representative works of and writing the history of the genre. This was undertaken in earnest by US-based scholars beginning in the 1990s, and can be characterized as a period of recovery of neglected texts. For this reason, most of the extant scholarly work in Latin American SF tends to belong to the recovery phase, as academics, writers, and fans have been intensely engaged in identifying texts, compiling bibliographies and, and translating seminal works in order to establish a literary history. (2)

Brown and Ginway describe their project as a most critical and theoretical approach to the corpus of Latin American science fiction. They intend to "initiate a more theoretical phase, applying a range of literary and cultural theories to the Latin American SF corpus" (Idem). My project intends to contribute on this analytical inquiry of science fiction. Even though my study of Latin American science fiction will follow what Brown and Ginway understand as a more theoretical approach, this introduction will include a brief history of the genre in Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina. This will allow the reader to grasp an idea of the literary context in which to place the literary works that I will analyze in the following chapters.

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Latin American science fiction may have been disregarded by both readers and literary critics of the region until the last decade of the 20th century, however, it must be noted that the critical and analytical work of critics such as Lockhart, Rachel Haywood Ferreira,[3] J. Andrew Brown,[4] M. Elizabeth Ginway, and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán[5] demonstrates that science fiction has, indeed, been—to use Lockhart's words— a vehicle for "cultural expression" (viii) in Latin America. This project will be developed under the premise that science fiction in Latin America, far from being the means for escapism that its detractors believe it to be, has been a form of fiction that consistently engages in conversation with the sociopolitical, national and transnational contexts in which it has been written and distributed. Ingrid Kreksch argues that "Latin American science fiction does not fail to reflect the continent's reality" (182). Brown believes that "literature, and especially narrative, is a particularly important place to think through the dynamics of culture" (2). Lockhart compares science fiction and mystery—or detective—fiction, arguing that

> the parameters of both genres allow for the creation of ingenious parodies and allegories of all the social, political and economic components of contemporary life. In Latin American countries, where life is often affected by political unrest, social upheaval, and economic crisis, these two genres have found fertile narrative ground. (x)

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[3] Rachel Haywood Ferreira has published several articles on Latin American science fiction. She is also the author of *The Emergence of Latin American Science Fiction* (2011), a work that has been of enormous importance for the development of the first chapter of this dissertation.

[4] J. Andrew Brown has published several articles about science and technology in Latin America, as well as articles on Latin American literature and film. Brown is also the author of *Test Tube Envy: Science and Power in Argentine Power* (2005) and *Cyborgs in Latin America* (2010).

[5] Yolanda Molina-Gavilán is the author of *Ciencia ficción en español: una mitología moderna ate el cambio* (2002). In this critical study of contemporary Latin American science fiction Molina-Gavilán analyzes recent works produced in Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, and Spain.

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I share and stand for these ideas, and so, it is a purpose of this project to demonstrate that Latin American science fiction, far from being a form of literary escapism, has consistently engaged in a criticism of the political and social reality of the countries in which it is produced. I also intend to demonstrate that a reflection on power has been very much in the center of the Latin American manifestations of the genre from its early stages, and that applying the concepts of bio-power and bio-politics to the analysis of the corpus of Latin American science fiction can lead us to a better understanding of both the literary texts analyzed in this project, and the social and political reality of the nations in which these works were produced and read.

Defining Science Fiction

The man who coined the term that would eventually become "science fiction" was Hugo Gernsback. Gernsback understood "scientifiction" as "the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story—a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (Gernsback in Haywood Ferreira 1). According to Rachel Haywood Ferreira, Gernsback not only used the term "scientificition" to label the type of fiction that was going to be published in his magazine[6], he also used that term "retroactively, to label—or retrolabel—a body of existing texts that he felt belonged to the same tradition" (1). Even though science fiction gained a very wide readership throughout the 20th century, the academic study of science fiction is a fairly recent phenomenon. In fact, science fiction was generally ignored by scholars until the mid-

[6] The classic science fiction magazine *Amazing Stories.*

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1960s and early 1970s. One of the first literary critics to ever write about science fiction from a scholarly perspective was Darko Survin.[7] Survin was a Croatian scholar who mainly worked in the United States. Even though studying science fiction in academia could be understood as a recent trend, a wide amount of definitions of the term "science fiction" have circulated during the last four decades. Some definitions of science fiction, such as Survin's and Roger Luckhurst's, among many others, tend to distance science fiction from other literary genres such as fantasy or the fantastic. On the other hand, science fiction authors like the Colombian writer René Rebetez and the iconic American writer Ray Bradbury seem to have a broader understanding of the genre, making its characteristics relative and, at times, blurry.[8] Survin made a point by separating what he understood as serious science fiction from what he understood as trivial forms of the genre. Also, he developed a particular idea of science fiction that distanced it from other genres such as fantasy.

It seems clear that science fiction as we know it can be linked to the tradition of the gothic. Actually, Lester Del Rey, Fred Botting, Brooks Landon and Roger Luckhurst seem to agree in linking the tradition of the gothic to science fiction—it is important to acknowledge, however, that this tradition is supernatural and unscientific. It is relevant to point out that those authors that tend to pair science fiction with fantasy, as well as those who prefer to differentiate science fiction from other forms of popular fiction, agree on seeing the gothic as an important influence on the emergence and consolidation of

[7] Darko Survin published *Od Lukijana do Lunjika—From Lucian to Lunik—an anthology and theory of science fiction* in 1965. He also edited the anthology *Other Worlds, Other Seas: Science-Fiction Stories from Socialist Countries in 1970*, and *Russian Science Fiction, 1956–1970: A Bibliography* in 1971.

[8] The fact that science fiction is often times grouped with fantasy in American bookstores is something that both the readers of these genres, as well as several notorious authors (Ray Bradbury and René Rebetez among them), have somehow encouraged.

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science fiction as a distinctive genre. For instance, Landon defines science fiction as the "[t]he genre that starts with Frankenstein" (31)—a gothic novel if there ever was one—Luckhurst states that "SF emerged as a hybrid form in the nineteenth century and has remained one, interweaving with strands of Gothic, Realist, fantasy and utopian writing" (11). In his book *Gothic* (1996), Botting states that

> Science fiction, connected with the Gothic since *Frankenstein*, presents new objects of terror and horror in strangely mutated life-forms and alien invaders from other and future worlds. With science fiction, however, there is a significant divergence from Gothic strategies: cultural anxieties in the present are no longer projected on to the past but are relocated in the future. (156)

Botting adds that "[i]n popular fictional genres, romantic, horror and science fiction especially, echoes of Gothic features abound" (161). For Del Rey, what separates science fiction from the gothic is not that it places cultural anxieties in the future and not in the past, but that science fiction stories have to appear logical to the reader, and so they must depend on reason. According to the critic, "[s]cience fiction must deal with what the reader can understand as possibilities. While it probably evolved from fantasy to some extent, science fiction is not considered straight fantasy by its readers, and hence should not involve ideas that are known to be impossible" (6). For Del Rey, real science fiction might strike us as weird or unlikely, but never as illogical, irrational, or absurd. Science fiction must be built on principles that we consider true, or must be presented in such a way that it does not provoke an intellectual rejection from the reader.

In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970) Tzvetan Todorov makes the distinction between the fantastic, the uncanny and the marvelous in

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literature. These three forms of literature are all products of the supernatural in literature. According to Todorov, science fiction would be related to the marvelous, and more precisely to the "material marvelous." For Todorov, "[t]he 'instrumental marvelous' brings us very close to what in nineteenth century France was called the scientific marvelous, which today we call science fiction. Here the supernatural is explained in a natural manner, but according to laws which contemporary science does not acknowledge" (65). In short, as Todorov states, the difference between science fiction and fantasy is that works of fantasy can be explained in magical or supernatural terms, while works of science fiction can be explained in rational or "natural" terms—even if contemporary science cannot explain the objects or situations described in works of this genre.

Luckhurst also renders his own definition of science fiction. The author, however, emphasizes that this is his own subjective definition, as if trying to avoid being utterly dogmatic, or excluding a big corpus of works from this heterogeneous literary genre. For Luckhurst,

> SF is a literature of technologically saturated societies. A genre that can therefore emerge only relatively late in modernity, it is a popular literature that concerns the impact of Mechanism (to use the older term for technology) on cultural life and human subjectivity. Mechanized modernity begins to accelerate the speed of change and visibly transforms the rhythms of everyday life. The different experience of time associated with modernity orients perception towards the future rather than the past or the cyclical sense of time ascribed to traditional societies. SF texts imagine futures or parallel worlds premised on the perpetual

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> change associated with modernity, often by extending or extrapolating aspects of Mechanism from the contemporary world. In doing so, SF texts capture the fleeting fantasies thrown up in the swirl of modernity (Luckhurst 3).

I will ascribe to this definition, and use it throughout this study. This definition is particularly compelling and useful, because it places science fiction within the context of modernity. I also embrace Luckhurt's definition because its focus on mechanism (or technology) makes science fiction a distinct genre, separating it from fantasy and the fantastic.

For the development of this project, I intend to use a flexible definition of science fiction. Trying to define a genre as wide and broad as science fiction is quite problematic. For this reason, I will follow Saussure's example, and define science fiction by saying what science fiction is not. I argue that pre-Industrial Revolution[9] utopias (such as Thomas Moore's 1516 *Utopia*) are not science fiction, and that science fiction cannot predate the appearance of scientific discourse in the West. On the other hand, science fiction is different from fantasy literature (like the one produced by Tolkien or S.C. Lewis) and fantastic literature (like most of Borges's short stories), in the sense that it can be explained, as Todorov would put it, in "natural terms." Also, science fiction is concerned with science, and often times it uses scientific discourse to legitimate its plot devices. I will develop this work under the assumption that "[s]cience fiction is the literature that considers the impact of science and technology on humanity" (Landon 31).

[9] When speaking about the Industrial Revolution, I will be referring to the first Industrial Revolution, which began around the early 1760s and lasted until sometime between the 1820s and the 1840s. The period of accelerated technological and industrial development that began sometime during the 1860s and lasted until the beginning of World War I will be referred to as the Second Industrial Revolution.

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In science fiction, technology does not only shape the new or alternate worlds that its characters inhabit; science fiction also makes us aware of the fact that technology shapes the way in which we live, the ways in which we relate to each other, the way in which we inhabit our world, and even the way in which we think.

My definition of science fiction will consider four main characteristics of the genre: 1) works of science fiction can be explained logically, or in natural terms, even if contemporary science does not have a way of proving the hypothetical realities depicted in these texts as possible. 2) Works of science fiction cannot precede Modernity, because the consolidation of this genre is not possible before the Industrial Revolution—when the accelerated technological development made it possible for societies and individuals to imagine that the future can be dramatically different from the present—in this sense, science fiction is a genre that rises during Modernity. 3) Science fiction works are concerned with change, and more precisely, with the changes that advances in technology can produce within a particular society. In this sense, science fiction is concerned with the impact that science and technology can have in the world and in the context of people's lives. In other words, science fiction exists on the premise that reality can change in a wide variety of ways. 4) Finally, I argue that science fiction can transform our perception of reality and our understanding of the world, and that it has been doing so for the last two centuries or so.

Chapter Structure

This project is going to be divided in five chapters, covering eighty years of Latin American and Anglo-Saxon science fiction. Chapters one and two will deal with works

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from Mexico and Colombia, produced between 1919 and 1932. Chapter three will deal with science fiction from the United States and Colombia, written between 1950 and 1967. Chapter four will deal with two science fiction graphic novels from Argentina and the United States, written between 1957 and 1987. Finally, chapter five will consist of an analysis of science fiction works from Argentina and England, written between and 1975 and 1989.

Here, the reader will find a brief synopsis of every Chapter.

Chapter One: Eugenics and Bio-Power in Eduardo Urzaiz's Eugenia: esbozo novelesco de costumbres futuras (1919)

In this chapter, I will discuss the topic of eugenics and its relationship to scientific discourse, and to the construction of different imaginary national projects in Mexico. I will also delve into the relationship of eugenics and early 20th century notions of racial superiority or inferiority. I will demonstrate that Latin American science fiction authors of the early 20th century, such as Eduardo Urzaiz, used eugenics as a way of imagining a healthy—and racially homogeneous—nation. In his depictions of a eugenicist utopia, the author fantasized with a technologically advanced Mexico (embodied in the fictional town of Villautopia, a futuristic vision of Mérida), where the state exercises great social and biological control over the population, and even uses "scientific" principles to justify sterilization.

In Chapters I and II, I will explore the way in which eugenics were perceived in Latin America during the first decades of the past century. I will argue that this scientific discipline, at least in some of its forms and manifestations, was well-regarded in the region, and often seen as a valid and promising way of "improving" the population.

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These improvements included the possibility of eradicating different forms of physical and mental illness, banishing vice and criminal behaviors, and, naturally, "perfecting" the nation's race. I intend to demonstrate that eugenics is the ultimate form of bio-politics, in the sense that it would allow the entities in power to determine not only who is born and who is not, but even the kind of men and women that could, eventually, conform a given society. I will engage in a critical reading of Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia* (1919), where eugenics are depicted in a positive light. *Eugenia* was written during a period in which of Mexico experiences a brief moment of relative peace, soon after the devastation of the Mexican Revolution. Urzaiz's optimistic view of eugenics is the product of a nation that has suffered great violence, and that finally begins to look into the future with hope, dreaming of political stability and the repopulation of the savaged nation.

Chapter Two: Eugenics and Bio-Power in Early Colombian Science Fiction: The Case of José Félix Fuermayor's *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* (1928) and José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132* (1932)

In this chapter, I will work with José Felix Fuernmayor's science fiction novel *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* (1928). This novel engages in an irreverent and playful subversion of scientific discourse, while also using heterogeneous fantastic elements to disrupt the story, and toying with the text's structure using literary resources generally associated to the modern tradition, such as frame narratives. I will argue that Fuemnayor's irreverent take on eugenics is only possible in a moment where this science is neither revered as an ideal tool for fixing social problems associated to underdevelopment, nor feared for its devastating genocidal potential (a potential that was fully realized in the Nazi concentration camps during the disastrous years of World War

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II). I will argue that Fuenmayor took an irreverent stand on the subject of eugenics, using it as a means for mocking the scientific community, and scientific discourse in general.

I will also conduct a careful analysis of José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132* (1932), a work of Colombian science fiction that has received very little critical interest in the context of Colombian science fiction, and in the field of Latin American science fiction studies in general. This novel also deals with the science of eugenics, but takes a much more ambiguous approach to the subject. By depicting—or rather hinting at—a future in which "unfit" or "inferior" boys and girls go through a process that can lead either to artificial "improvement" or death. In Osorio Lizarazo's novel, the narrator will ambiguously acknowledge the advantages of eugenics—such as, perhaps, greater gender equality—while also acknowledging some the devastating potential of a state that enforces eugenicist practices and policies. At the end, Osorio Lizarazo's utopic depiction of a futuristic Barranquilla will soon degenerate into a dystopic future where humans are incapable of building significant social bonds, or truly caring about each other.

Even though this chapter will deal mostly with the subject of eugenics, I will also explore the ideological and political characteristics of the future society imagined in Osorio Lizarazo's novel. For this analysis, I will consider the socialist policies and ideas portrayed in both works, as well as the authors' relationship to figures of authority in their own countries and—in the case of Osorio Lizarazo—abroad. Finally, I will pay particular attention to the portrayal of women, and the depiction of gender relationships in *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* and *Barranquilla 2132*. I will analyze the significance of the total lack of relevant female characters in Osorio Lizarazo's novel. I

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will also argue that while the practice of eugenics seems to create a relative gender equality in the imaginary futures of *Eugenia* and *Barranquilla 2132*, Fuernmayor's delirious science fiction fantasy is characterized by its brutal treatment of female characters.

Chapter Three: The End of the World. Escaping Bio-power and the End of Humanity in Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) and *The Illustrated Man* (1951), and René Rebetez's *La nueva prehistoria* (1967)

In this chapter, I will study works of science fiction produced by two influential science fiction authors from the United States and Colombia, to explore topics such as Cold War tension and nuclear paranoia, segregation during the Jim Crowe era, and visions of the end of the world. For these purposes, I will work with Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles (1950*) and *The Illustrated man* (1951), and René Rebetez's *La nueva prehistoria y otros cuentos* (1967).

Both Bradbury and Rebetez wrote science fiction short stories that deal with the possibility of the destruction of humanity (and, sometimes, with the possibility of the complete destruction of our planet), in ways that are strikingly universal, and yet rather rooted in their own historical and social contexts. I will work with several short stories dealing with the topic of end of the world: mainly Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains (August 4, 2026/2057)" and "The Million-Year Picnic (October 2026/2057)," and René Rebetez's "La nueva prehistoria" and "Rocky Lunario." I will demonstrate that these stories by Bradbury and Rebetez's "Rocky Lunario" engage in open criticism of the nuclear armed race, while "La nueva prehistoria" renders a strange and imaginative end of human civilization. I will also work with Rebetez's short story "El desertor (Johnny,

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wake up!...)" as a way of exploring the author's take on the moral complexities of the Cold War era from a Latin American perspective.

In my analysis of Ray Bradbury's short stories "Way in the Middle of the Air (June 2003/2034)" and "The Other Foot," I will focus my attention on Bradbury's critical take on segregation in the US South. Ascribing to Isaiah Lavender's interpretation of "The Other Foot" as a sequel of "Way in the Middle of the Air," I will explore the imaginary solutions to segregation, and racism at large, that Bradbury develops in these stories. I will also analyze how, in these stories, anxieties about the Cold War era—for instance, the fear of nuclear annihilation—intersect with subjects such as the social and racial unrest that existed in 1950s America, such as the criminal activities of the third Ku Klux Klan, and white people's anxieties regarding imaginary retributions from the segregated and exploited African American Southerners.

I will explore the way in which "Rocky Lunario" articulates common anxieties form the Cold War era, such as nuclear annihilation, from a Latin American perspective. I will argue that Rocky is a metaphor for the United States, and the threat that its nuclear arsenal poses to the entire world.

Chapter Four: Cold War Dystopias, Nuclear Paranoia, and Fear of the Alien in H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López's *El Eternauta* (1957-1959), and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's *Watchmen* (1986-1987)

In chapter four of this project I will conduct a comparative analysis of two widely influential science fiction graphic novels: H.G. Oesterheld's and Francisco Solano Lopez's *El Eternauta* (1957-1959), and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen* (1986). This chapter will also include an analysis of Jorge Luis Borges's short story

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“There Are More Things” (1975). I have decided to work with several graphic narratives in the development of this project, in order to demonstrate that, as Landon points out, during the course of the 20th century science fiction became ubiquitous, as it consistently appeared in several media, including film, comics, television, videogames, etcetera (5). Part of my work on this chapter consists on drawing some parallels between these three works of Cold War era science fiction; particularly, the creation, depiction, and development of dangerous or threatening alien creatures is a topic common to all of these texts. On the other hand, the constant fear of nuclear warfare is a subject common to *El Eternauta* and *Watchmen*. I will argue that the enormous relevance that this topic has in these narratives is a direct consequence of the very real threat of nuclear warfare experienced by those living during the years of the Cold War.

For the purposes of analyzing the role that nuclear warfare and the development of increasingly devastating weapons play in these graphic novels, I will use Peter Sloterdijk’s book *Terror from the Air* (2009). In this book, Sloterdijk traces the development of the weapons industry throughout the 20th century, demonstrating that military technology has changed its target from working towards the destruction of individuals, to making the life conditions of entire communities impossible. Sloterdijk’s work, as well as the works of fiction mentioned before, will help me understand the ways in which the concepts of bio-power and sovereign power become obsolete when facing the possibility of nuclear Armageddon. I will argue that both *El Eternauta* and *Watchmen* contain important characters or plot elements that could be interpreted as embodying the authors’ anxieties regarding nuclear weapons. In the case of *El Eternauta,* these anxieties will take the form of the murderous snow the invading aliens release over Buenos Aires.

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In *Watchmen*, anxieties about nuclear energy and the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union will be embodied in the character of Dr. Manhattan, whose name is a reference to the Manhattan Project.

Dealing with works from Argentina and the United States will allow me to explore the ways in which the circumstances of the Cold War were experienced by people in different areas of the American continent. I will argue that the work of Oesterheld and Solano López demonstrates an implicit distrust of Western powers, highlighting the role of unwilling casuality that Latin America could play in the context of a hypothetical nuclear confrontation of global proportions. I will also argue that the alien invasion depicted in *El Eternauta* could be interpreted as a product of the authors' distrust of international—mostly American—interventionism in Argentina. In this chapter I will also demonstrate that *El Eternauta* distances itself from American science fiction comics of the time, by championing a communal sense of heroism (known as the *héroe grupo*), as opposed to the more individualistic take on heroism characteristic of the American pulp—and comic book—hero of the time (characters such as Superman, the Shadow, Dick Tracy, Doc Savage, Flash Gordon, or Adam Strange). Finally, I will argue that Oesterheld and Solano López defy traditional Cold War narratives of the Cold War era, by keeping the focus of their story in Argentina—the entire narrative takes place in Buenos Aires—and by showing particular appreciation of the technology produced by the middle and working classes, in opposition to that produced by the government or by a scientific elite.

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In my analysis of *Watchmen*, I will focus on the social and political circumstances that inspired Moore's and Dave Gibbon's groundbreaking uchronia.[10] I will argue that this comic book series deals with anxieties of the time such as the looming threat of nuclear warfare between the United States and the Soviet Union. I will demonstrate that *Watchmen* works with important issues of the Cold War Era, such as the nuclear arms race, and the principle of mutually assured destruction (MAD).[11] I will also demonstrate that Moore's work explores his critical stand on American politics during the period—including criticism of American intervention in Vietnam—and imagines a solution to the conflict that is an extrapolation of the conflict's nature: displacing the fear of an alien threat from the Soviet Union to a synthetically created "extraterrestrial" creature.

Chapter Five: Resisting and Escaping Bio-Power in the Cold War Era. Bio-Politics in Jorge Luis Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975), H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano Lopez's *El Eternauta II* (1976-1977), and Alan Moore and David Lloyd's V for Vendetta (1988-1989)

In my last chapter, I will use works of science fiction produced in Argentina and England to explore topics such as different forms of resistance against totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, Cold War tension and nuclear paranoia, and visions of the end of the world. For these purposes I will work with Jorge Luis Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975), H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López's *El Eternauta II* (1976-1077), and Allan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* (1982-1989).

[10] An uchronia is a work of fiction that takes place in an imaginary timeline or parallel universe; it can be either dystopic or utopic. Famous examples of this genre are Phillip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), and most of steampunk. Moore himself has worked within the subgenre of steampunk, along with artist Kevin O'Neill, in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*—an ongoing project in which they have been working together since 1999.

[11] Mutually assured destruction is a national security policy and a doctrine of military strategy, according to which the threat of total annihilation presented by a full-scale nuclear attack deters both the attacker and the defender from engaging in nuclear warfare.

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In my analysis of Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" I will study the author's take on the social and political conditions that would be necessary for bringing upon not only the end of the Cold War, but the end of warfare as such. I will argue that, for Borges, a total and lasting world peace would only be possible through the dismantling of human societies—such as the ones embodied in the institution of the nation-state and the physical space of the city—and the rise of anarchy across the world.

In this chapter, I will also conduct a comparative analysis of *V for Vendetta* and *El Eternauta II*, focusing on the depiction of totalitarian or authoritarian bio-politcal regimes in these works. For this purpose, I will take into consideration Alan Moore's open stand against Margaret Thatcher's conservative policies during her time as Prime Minister (1979-1990), and the author's self-identification as an anarchist; as well as Oesterheld's participation in the revolutionary urban guerrilla known as *Los Montoneros*—an association that would lead the author to his death at the hands of the military regime. I will also study the different forms of resistance depicted by the authors; mainly militia warfare in the case of Oesterheld and infiltration and terrorism in the case of Moore.

Theoretical Frame

I will build my analysis of Latin American and Anglo-Saxon science fiction from the 20th century based on the theoretical concepts of bio-power and bio-politics. My understanding of bio-power will be mainly based on the works of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. In the last chapter of the third volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1984), Foucault argues that bio-power is the kind of power that "gave itself the function of administering life, its reason for being and the logic of its exercise" (138). In the

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eleventh lecture of *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*, he argues that "[b]iopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem" (245). Foucault points out that bio-politics introduced "mechanisms with a certain number of functions that are very different from the functions of disciplinary mechanisms" (246). These mechanisms included "forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures" (idem). The purpose of these mechanisms is ultimately "taking control of life and the biological process of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized" (246-247). He places the consolidation of bio-politics in the 19th century when arguing that "one of the basic phenomena of the nineteenth century was what might be called power's hold over life. What I mean is the acquisition of power over man insofar as man is a living being, that the biological came under State control, that there was at least a certain tendency that leads to what might be termed State control of the biological" (239-40). Foucault's understanding of bio-power as a political model in which "the biological" is "under state control" proves to be widely influential in Agamben's work.

In order to comprehend Agamben's take on bio-politics, it is necessary to know the concepts of *zoē* and *bios*. These words are Greek, and they could both be translated as "life;" however, they have distinctly different connotations. For Agamben, while *zoē* "expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), *bios* … indicated the form of way of living proper to an individual or a group" (1). It can be argued that, in general terms, bio-politics for Agamben is based on the process of politicizing *zoē*, or "bare life." A relevant aspect of Agamben's understanding of bio-

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politics that does not directly originate from Foucault's take on the subject is the function that the state of exception has in the process of undermining *bios* and politicizing bare life. In his introduction to Roberto Esposito's *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (2004), Timothy Campbell argues that "Giorgio Agamben declines biopolitics negatively, anchoring to the sovereign state of exception that separates bare life (*zōē*) from political forms of life (*bíos*)" (viii). In this project, I will delve into the paradox posed by the state of exception, while analyzing its relationship to the space of the concentration camp,[12] and the function that it assumes within different bio-political regimes.

Violence (both factual and fictional) will be a relevant topic in this project. I will focus my attention on works of fiction—such as *El Eternauta* (1957-59), "Rocky Lunario" (1964) and *Watchmen* (1986)—that dealt with the constant threat of violence that characterized the Cold War era. I will also work with literary works that—like *El Eternauta II* (1976-77) and *The Martian Chronicles* (1951)—reflected the violent political repression and exclusion experienced by those living in the nations in which they were written. For this reason, it is of great importance to have a general understanding of the way in which violence operates under different type of bio-political regimes. Bio-power, as Foucault understands it, is different from the power of the sovereign—who had the right of deciding between the life and death of its subjects—in the sense that bipower is concerned with the administration and management of all aspects of individual and social life. In Foucault's words, "[i]t is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the

[12] I will explore the relationships between bio-politics, the state of exception, and the space f the concentration camp in my analysis of José Antonio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132* (1932) and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *V for Vendetta* (1988-1989).

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domain of value and utility. Such power has to qualify, measure, appraise and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor" (144). This does not mean, however, that violence and bio-power are unconnected. In Foucault's view of bio-power, violence in the bio-political state can manifest itself as a result of what he calls "State racism."

Foucault argued that "the first function of racism" is "to fragment, to create caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower" (255). State racism can manifest itself in a wide variety of ways, but it is often used to justify violence against *an*-other. As Foucault explains, "racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type relationship" (idem). Following the logic of this biological-type relationship between "my life and the death of the other," Foucault concludes that, in the context of a bio-political state, the death of the other "does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer" (idem). This idea is, of course, intimately related to concepts such as heredity and genetics. Agamben also explores the subject of heredity in his study of eugenics in Nazi Germany, delving into the Nazis' take on the idea of a "life that does not deserve to be lived." The relationship between heredity and bio-politics, as articulated in the science of eugenics, will be the main subject of the first two chapters of this dissertation.

The bio-political state, like the sovereign, is capable of killing, but it kills under a logic that is different from that of the sovereign. The ways of killing of the bio-political

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state also differ from those used by the sovereign. While the sovereign can order an execution or declare war against other communities perceived as (external or internal) threats, in a bio-political state killing can be performed by omission: the state can turn its back on a community or group, making its living conditions harder. But the bio-political state can also actively expose certain communities or groups to danger or poverty, or even consciously shape their living conditions until life is impossible for them. Finally, the bio-political state, using the principles of eugenics and its rationalization of heredity, can eliminate "undesirable" life—through systematic genocide or selective euthanasia, for instance—sometimes——through practices such as sterilization or selective breeding—even before it starts.

Bio-politics and bio-power are elusive concepts that can be approached, used, theorized, shaped and reshaped in an infinite variety of ways. Even though I agree with Roberto Esposito that a positive take on bio-politics is possible, this project deals with bleak subjects such as imaginary societies in which "unfit" individuals are sterilized and even murdered in obscure concentration camps, the segregationist policies and practices of the Jim Crow South, the very-real threat of mutually assured destruction between the major world powers during the Cold War era, and the violent repression of the Argentina military dictatorship, among many others. My take on bio-politics, therefore, will be closer to Foucault's and Agamben's more pessimistic approach to the concept. In short, the concepts bio-power and bio-politics will be of great help in the process of analyzing the wide variety of dystopic—and often times overtly politically engaged—texts that I have decided to work with in this project.

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Chapter One: Eugenics and Bio-Power in Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia: esbozo novelesco de costumbres futuras* (1919)

At a historical moment in which far-right groups voice concerns about "purity of race" in the West, and when advances in the field of genetics make it possible for humans to "improve" their offspring before they are born,[13] having conversations about eugenics is not only pertinent, but almost inevitable. This conversation, however, has been taking place for over a hundred years, in the world of science fiction literature. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931) is famous for dealing with this subject in an imaginative and critical way, but before Huxley published his influential novel, the Cuban-Mexican author Eduardo Urzaiz had already written a science fiction novel about eugenics in the future, the properly-titled *Eugenia: esbozo novelesco de costumbres futuras* (*Eugenia: A Literary Sketch of Future Customs*, 1919). Other Latin American works of science fiction from the first decades of the 20th century also engaged in this particular dialogue.

In "Part Three" of his influential *Homo Sacer* (1995), Giorgio Agamben states that Nazi Germany was a state in which the forces of biology and economy were regarded as interdependent. To support his argument, Agamben quotes Hans Reiter, one of the men "responsible for the medical politics of the Reich" (Agamben 144). According to Reiter, National Socialism was different from other ideologies and forms of

[13] *CRISPR*-Cas9, for instance, is a genome-editing tool that allows users to create so-called "designer babies" faster, cheaper, and more accurately than previous DNA-editing techniques. *CRISPR* stands for "Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats."

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government—in the sense that it had an interest on the "living wealth" of the nation—and was intended to care for the "biological body of the nation" (Reiter in Agamben 145). Reiter believed that the world of his time was "approaching the logical synthesis of biology and economy" (idem). This implied that the role of the physician in society had to undergo a radical transformation. Agamben understands that this drastic change in the role of the physician, and the role of medicine as such, made it "increasingly integrated into the functions and the organs of the state" (145). According to Agamben, "[t]he principles of this new biopolitics are dictated by eugenics, which is understood as the science of people's genetic heredity" (idem). Some Latin American and Anglo Saxon works of science fiction that preceded the rise of National Socialism to power in Germany already imagined and explored worlds in which "the principles of biopolitcs are dictated by eugenics" (idem). In this first chapter, I will analyze the connections and interactions between eugenics and bio-power in *Eugenia.*

The manipulation of the human body, its synthetic "improvement," its reanimation and its modification through genetic or mechanical means, has been a common trope of Western science fiction since the very origins of the genre, two hundred years ago. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), a scientist called Frankenstein uses the body parts of corpses that he digs out from their graves, to create a new living organism that, just like Rousseau's "noble savage," is born good, but is corrupted by society. Mary Shelley's understanding of the reanimation of dead bodies is, naturally, influenced by the science of her time. During her lifetime, Shelley learned about the scientific experiments of Italian physicist Giovani Aldini, who, on variety of occasions, attempted to reanimate dead creatures in public demonstrations in London. Some of Aldini's demonstrations

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consisted on the galvanization of dead limbs, or mutilated animal parts, such as the head of a decapitated ox. In 1803, the Italian scientist galvanized in public the dead body of the executed criminal George Forster, causing the body to move in several ways. Shelley knew about these experiments, and they certainly influenced her groundbreaking novel. In this first chapter, I will focus my attention on one of the latest forms that this "manipulation" of the biological has assumed in the genre of science fiction: eugenics. Through this study of the literary depiction of eugenics in early Mexican science fiction, I intend to gain a better understanding of the bio-political utopia that Urzaiz imagined in his novel. I will study how the treatment of eugenics in this work of fiction illuminates both the ideology of its author, and the sociopolitical characteristics of the historical periods in which he lived and wrote. In order to conduct an effective analysis of the bio-political dynamics of eugenics in *Eugenia*, I will use Giorgo Agamben's take on the topic of eugenics, as presented in his influential and illuminating *Homo Sacer* (1925).

Famous novels that used the trope of modified human bodies—through evolution, surgery, or eugenics—are H.G. Well's *The Time* Machine (1895) and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. In the context of Latin American science fiction, Horacio Quiroga hypothesized about the possibility of creating a human body from scratch in his long short story "El hombre artificial" ("The Artificial Man" 1910). Even though this fantastic project could not be considered as a work of eugenics as such—the experiment has nothing to do with the science of genetics—it is relevant to conduct a brief analysis of this work of fiction to gain a better understanding of the early forms that the subject of the creation of biological life took in the region in the early 20th century.

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In the first part of this chapter, I will analyze the portrayal of eugenics in Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia*. I will argue that Urzaiz portrays eugenics as a valid path to the improvement of Mexican society, and of humanity as such. My reading of *Eugenia* will oppose that of critics such as Dziubinskyj and Fernández Delgado, who argue that this novel should be read as a utopia that turns dystopian throughout the narrative. I will argue that Urzaiz's novel was always intended to be utopian, and that its original negative reception was due to the author's negative portrayals of religion and nationalism, as well as his irreverent play with biological gender-roles in the novel. I will also argue that the seemingly tragic ending is, far from undoing Urzaiz's utopian view of the future, reinforces the scientific principles at the base of his imagined society.

Before Eugenics: The Case of "El hombre artificial" and "Zooespermos"

Before engaging in a careful analysis of the ways in which eugenics is portrayed in *Eugenia*—and before exploring the ideologies and historical circumstances that render this particular depiction of eugenics possible—it is necessary to briefly present two works of Latin American literature that, although not directly concerned with the subject of eugenics, deal with topics such as the artificial creation of new life, and the role of genetic heredity in the development of individual personality. These texts are José Asunción Silva's poem "Zooespermos,"[14] ("Sperms" 1918) and Horacio Quiroga's short story "El hombre artificial" (1910).[15] I will not engage in an in-depth analysis of these literary works; however, not mentioning them in this chapter would be a serious omission

[14] This poem was part of *Gotas amargas* (*Bitter Drops*), a collection of Silva's poems posthumously published in 1918.
[15] Quiroga published this story under a pseudonym

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regarding the early works that preceded—and perhaps prefigured—the apparition of the subject of eugenics in Latin American science fiction.[16]

The Case of "El hombre artificial"

Even though Horacio Quiroga was Uruguayan—he was born in in Salto in 1878 and died in Buenos Aires in 1937—he has been traditionally regarded as a relevant author within the corpus of Argentinian literature. Several critics have understood Quiroga's work as the work of a late *modernista*. His personal relationship with Leopoldo Lugones—arguably Argentina's most famous *modernista* writer—as well as the obvious influence that Lugones' fiction had on Quiroga's work, places the author in the Argentinian science fiction tradition started by Eduardo Ladislao Holmberg in the second half of the 19th century. For all these reasons, I consider Quiroga's work to be representative of the science fiction produced in turn-of-the-century Argentina.

"El hombre artificial" clearly references Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in a variety of ways. In this sense, Quiroga's science fiction could be linked to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the gothic, and to the first science fiction novel ever written. Quiroga's short

[16] Silva's science fictional poem "Futura" was also published in *Gotas amargas*. In this poem, set in 24th century Germany, the poetic voice describes a terrorist attack, during the unveiling of a Sancho Panza statue. In this future, Silva playfully uses the image of Sancho Panza as a symbol of the triumph of pragmatism over romantic thought. The unveling of the monument is interrupted by a gang of nihilists that blow up the statue, while chanting "¡Abajo los fanáticos! ¡Abajo el culto! ¡Abajo Dios!" (Down with the fanatics! Down with the cult! Down with God!) There are some important similarities between "Futura" and "Zoospermos": both of them are narrative poems, they are set in Germany, and they deal, in one way or the other, with different technologies that had a considerable development throughout the 19th century. The explosion at the end of "Futura" could be related to the discovery and development of chemical compounds such as nitroglycerin (discovered in 1847), trinitrotoluene (TNT) (discovered in 1863), and dynamite (1867). The locomotive, mentioned in "Futura's" first stanza, is probably the most important technological invention of the 19th century (the first working locomotive was manufactured by Richard Trevithick in 1804). On the other hand, the microscope, which made the discovery of spermatozoids possible, plays a fundamental role in "Zooespermos."

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story "is a modernization of *Frankenstein*, the paradigmatic double tale published ninety-two years earlier. The most cursory reading of the texts indicates that Shelly's novel must have been a direct model" (Haywood Ferreira 204). In "El hombre artificial," Quiroga tells the story of three scientists of different origins, who are engaged in the project of creating a human being from scratch. Nicolás Ivanovich Donissoff is from Russia, Stefano Marco Sivel is from Italy, and Ricardo Ortiz is from Argentina. They all end up living in Buenos Aires, where they start their fantastic project in Ortiz's workshop. In the first part of his short story, Quiroga establishes the characters' backgrounds, emphasizing the tragic nature of their lives, and the power of their genius. The second half of the short story focuses on the creation of an artificial man; the creation process, as described in the text, requires several steps, such as the trial stage—which consists of the creation of a living rat—and the creation of the soul, which requires the kidnapping and torturing of an innocent bystander. "El hombre artificial" concludes with the simultaneous deaths of Donnissoff—the Russian romantic hero and, arguably, the main character of the story—and the artificially created human being. The short story communicates both Quiroga's idea of an Argentina that seems to be a center for technological and social development,[17] as well as the author's—characteristically *modernista*—anxieties about scientific development and technological progress.

The case of "Zooespermos"

The poem "Zoospermos" is concerned with the science of heredity, and in this sense, it is closer to the topic of eugenics than Quiroga's short story. This poem engages

[17] By 1905, Argentina was one of the main economic powers in the world.

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in an active conversation with the scientific discoveries and technological development of Silva's own time. In "Zoospermos," the poetic voice tells the story of Cornelius Von Ken-Rinegen, a successful doctor from Hamburg who wrote a long volume about the liver and the kidneys, and presumably gained some recognition for it. Ken-Rinegen eventually dies in poverty ("manic, discredited and poor") in the city of Leipzig, due to his late "scientific" obsession with spermatozoids. In Silva's poem, Dr. Cornelius Von Ken-Rinegen uses a microscope to study zoosperms. The microscope as such was invented in the 16th century; nevertheless, zoosperms (also called spermatozoids) were not discovered until 1677 (by the Dutch lens-crafter Antony Von Leeuwenhoek) and their role in human reproduction was unclear until 1780 (after the insemination experiments of the Italian scientist Lazzaro Spalanzani). Of course, the work of the scientist and Augustan friar Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) was quite relevant in the birth and development of the scientific field of genetics.

In Silva's poem, the madness of the discredited scientist becomes obvious when he tries to guess the kind of life that these zoosperms would have had if they had become human beings.

> ¡Mira! si no estuviera perdido para siempre;
> si huyendo por caminos que todos no conocen
> hubiera al fin logrado tras múltiples esfuerzos
> el convertirse en hombre,
> corriéndole los años hubiera sido un Werther
> y tras de mil angustias y gestas y pasiones
> se hubiera suicidado con un Smith & Wesson

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ese espermatozoide!

"Aquel de más arriba que vibra a dos milímetros

del Werther suprimido, del vidrio junto al borde,

hubiera sido un héroe de nuestras grandes guerras.

¡Alguna estatua en bronce

hubiera recordado, cual vencedor intrépido

y conductor insigne de tropas y cañones,

y general en jefe de todos los ejércitos,

a ese espermatozoide!

"¡Aquél hubiera sido la Gretchen de algún Fausto;

ese de más arriba un heredero noble,

dueño a los veintiún años de algún millón de thallers

y un título de conde;

aquel, un usurero; el otro, el pequeñísimo,

algún poeta lírico; y el otro, aquel enorme,

un profesor científico que hubiera escrito un libro

sobre espermatozoides!

Silva's description of these men-who-never-were is a reflection of the social and literary panorama of the 19th century. The spermatozoid that could have been a great warrior is not unlike the Colombian military heroes from the independence wars (1810-1819).[18] Silva lived in violent times; he witnessed several civil wars erupt and die off throughout the nation, resulting in the rise and fall of several caudillos: powerful men such as

[18] Silva himself was a descendant of Francisco de Paula Santander, famous general and, arguably, Colombia's most important statesman during the independence wars and the first decades of the republic.

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political leaders Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, Ezequiel Hurtado, Manuel María de los Santos Acosta, and José Santos Gutiérrez.

The presence of several characters of Goethe's fiction (Faust's Gretchen and the suicidal Werther) in the poem is proof of Silva's knowledge and admiration of German literary tradition, as well as a hint to his own admiration for German Romanticism (Silva has been described both as an early *modernista* and a late romantic). The figure of the usurer could be Silva's bitter allusion to all the moneylenders that he had to deal with after the death of his father. But does Silva identify himself with the unfortunate Werther, or does he see his reflection on the fragile spermatozoid that would had become a "lyrical poet?" The author probably projects different aspects of his understanding of himself in some of these microscopic creatures.

It is important to include "Zoospermos" in this study of Latin American science fiction and bio-politics, not only because the poem prefigures the apparition of the subject of eugenics in Latin American science fiction, but also because it is evidence of the fact that, by the end of the 19th century, the scientific discourse had already made its way into Latin American—and Colombian—literary circles.[19]

In sum, what makes "Zoospermos" relevant in my analysis of bio-power in Latin American science fiction is that this poem prefigures the introduction of the topic of eugenics in the region. This poem predates José Felix Fuenmayor's *Una triste aventura*

[19] Silva's use of the "mad scientist" archetype—a classic figure of the science fiction genre since Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* and H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*—establishes a dialogue between early Colombian science fiction and the science fiction that was being written in other Western countries by the end of the 19th century. In 1906, twenty years after Silva's death, Lugones would publish *Las fuerzas extrañas* (The Strange Forces) in Buenos Aires. The stories of this book are filled with mystic investors, sadistic scientists, and other variations of the science-fictional archetype of the mad scientist. Later Cololmbian works of science fiction, including *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* and *Barranquilla 2132* also contain variations on the modern archetype of the mad scientist.

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de 14 sabios, Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia,* and Juan Antonio Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132*. In "Zoospermos," the mad scientist imagines the life these spermatozoids could have had if they had become humans; even though a precise understanding of genetics was limited at the time, Silva's poem certainly evidences some basic understanding of this science: for instance, the notion that different spermatozoids would become different human beings. Silva's mad scientist knows this, and this knowledge leads him to embrace certain existential ideas. On the other hand, in *Eugenia* and *Barranquilla 2132*, Urzaiz and Osorio Lizarazo seem to be less interested in the philosophical aspects of human reproduction, and use their knowledge of eugenics to imagine and depict utopian or dystopian future societies—a futuristic Mérida and a futuristic Barranquilla, respectively—warning us of the potential social evils of the future or articulating an optimistic and hopeful understanding of times to come.

Eugenics in Early Mexican Science Fiction: The Case of *Eugenia*

Eduardo Urzaiz (1876-1955) was a Cuban-Mexican scholar, educator, medical doctor, and author. His parents emigrated from Cuba to the Yucatán Peninsula when he was 14 years old. Urzaiz worked as an educator for most of his life. He also attained the title of Doctor of Medicine, and attended graduate school in New York in the early years of the 20th century. Urzaiz served as dean of the Universidad Nacional del Sureste—now the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán—for 13 years; first, from March 1922 to January 1924; later on, from April 1924 to February 1926; and finally, from September 1946 until his death in February 1955.

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Urzaiz published his science fiction novel *Eugenia: esbozo novelesco de costumbres futuras* in 1919. It was later published in 1947, 1976, and 2002. This novel takes place in the year 2218, in the fictional city of Villautopia, in the Sub-Confederation of Central America. It is widely believed that Villautopia is a fictionalized Mérida (the narrator describes the city's architecture as "Neo-Mayan"). Unlike Fuenmayor's *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* and Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132*, Urzaiz's *Eugenia* does not merely touch on the subject of eugenics; *Eugenia* is very much a novel *about* eugenics. The world portrayed by Urzaiz is a peaceful one; wars have been abolished and replaced by a system of economic penalties among nations. Weapons are non-existent, and religions have become obsolete; those that still uphold some religious beliefs practice something called *Neoteosofismo*, which is described in the novel as "la Antigua Teosofía,[20] despojada de los mitos orientales y los restos de Budismo de otros tiempos, y reducida a una doctrina filosófica que admitía la existencia de un Ser Supremo, la inmortalidad del alma y su evolución hacia mundos o planos superiores, mediante reencarnaciones sucesivas" (139). It is relevant to mention that the partial disappearance of religion would be regarded as something positive by Urzaiz. In *Eugenia* he states that different religions usually shared a "tendencia a la explotación y a la esclavitud de las conciencias" (138). During his lifetime he was also known for his satirical articles on the Catholic church. At the time, these articles made him particularly unpopular among some of the conservative members of Mérida's society. Another relevant characteristic of

[20] Theosophy was a philosophical school made popular by Helena Blavatsky in the late 19th century. Theosophy intended to reconcile religion, philosophy, and science, through a comparative study of the first two. According to this doctrine, all religions come from a common source; understanding that source allowed its believers to reach a complete understanding of reality and the physical world. This doctrine mixed elements of Buddhism, Christianism, and Hinduism. Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William Quan Judge, founded the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875.

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Urzaiz's utopian future is that social inequality is minimal. In the novel, a strong state with total control of all resources distributes the wealth justly among the population. This social element certainly calls the reader's attention to the socialist nature of this imaginary future.

Regarding the existence of eugenicist practices in this imaginary society, it is relevant to point out that in Urzaiz's fictional future there are no concentration camps for "genetically inferior" individuals, like the ones we find in *Barranquilla 2132*. In *Eugenia*, "unfit" or "inferior" individuals are simply sterilized, while the "ideal" male subjects are recruited by the state, and used to inseminate a group of selected women. However, Urzaiz's eugenics have a rather unusual twist: it is not the selected women who carry in their wombs the perfect fruit of these masculine studs, but a group of synthetically "feminized" men, also selected by the state. The offspring of these "ideal" couples—and their surrogate fathers—are not part of a family; they all belong to the state. This is also the case in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where all humans are synthetically produced by the state, and engineered from the start to perform a specific set of social / industrial functions. In *Brave New World*, working-class children are conditioned to dislike nature and books. All children in Huxley's novel go through a process of Hypnosis called *Hypnodpaedia*. This practice consists of "teaching" the children in their sleep. Through this form of hypnosis, people are conditioned to embrace promiscuity, consumerism, the drug known as Soma, and other aspects characteristic of Huxley's imaginary London. Similarly, in *Eugenia*, "[c]hildren are raised by the Bureau, and educated—or conditioned—through a combination of traditional classes during the day and hypnotic lessons as they sleep" (Dziubinskyj 466). There are many similarities

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regarding the subject of the education / indoctrination of children in these novels. Naturally, it would be unlikely that Huxley had any access to Urzaiz's work—which has not been translated to any language. These similarities manifest itself, rather, because of the role of social indoctrination that schools have assumed after the French Revolution.[21] On the other hand, it is relevant to point out that in both *Brave New World* and *Eugenia*, the way in which human beings are produced brings forth the disappearance of the social institution of family. In the case of the world depicted in Urzaiz's novel, the family has been replaced by the group (*el grupo*), small ensembles of individuals that stay together not because they share a common bloodline, but because of the spiritual or ideological affinity that exists between them. Even though this fact seems to be depicted by the narrator as a positive change in the history of humanity's social evolution, I will argue that the end of the novel—and the ultimate decisions by Ernesto—subverts, or at least problematizes, this particular notion.

It could seem unusual that novels such as *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios*, *Barranquilla 2132*, *Eugenia,* and *Brave New World* all deal, to a greater or lesser degree, with the topic of eugenics. However, eugenics were a very common and popular subject during the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century. In "Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia*: Eugenics, Gender, and Dystopian Society in Twenty-Third-Century Mexico" (2007), Aaron Dziubinskyj explains that

> While Urzaiz's story blends real medical knowledge with speculation, Eugenia was not the first literary piece to explore the science of eugenics in the context of a futuristic society. It is, however, the first work of its

[21] This topic is also considered by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975).

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> kind written in Spanish. A study of sf written between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries reveals that eugenics was a popular and recurring theme in the genre. In his catalogue of sf literature from the earliest years until 1930, Everett F. Bleiler describes no fewer than forty-two works in which the authors emphasize aspects of eugenics with varying degrees of relevance in the telling of their stories. Of these, thirty-one develop concepts such as regulated marriages, selective breeding, and state rearing of children and therefore appear to offer more deliberate examples of eugenics as a theme around which Utopian and futuristic sf revolve. Twenty-one of these thirty-one pieces were published before 1919—the year in which Urzaiz published *Eugenia*. Campanella's *The City of the Sun: A Poetical Dialogue* (1623) and Plato's *The Republic* (c. 360 BC) are listed as the earliest works dealing with eugenic themes; the remaining nineteen were published between 1871 and 1914. (464)

Taking this into consideration, we should conclude that, even though *Eugenia* is an imaginative and original novel, and Urzaiz's is a true pioneer in the world of Latin American science fiction, this novel is part of a specific tradition of science fictional works. Our reading of *Eugenia* would undoubtedly be enriched if we were to compare it with some of the works of science fiction written on the subject of eugenics—in other countries and other languages—during the last decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. For the time being, it is important to keep in mind that, as Dziubinskyj points out, "*Eugenia* is a product not just of its author's intimate knowledge of the potential medical and social applications of the science behind eugenics as outlined

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in the prologue, but also of a specific literary tradition" (idem).[22] With this in mind, I will dedicate the first part of this chapter to conduct my analysis of this seminal work of Latin-American science fiction

Eugenia tells the story of a couple that eventually falls apart due to the recruitment of one of its members to serve as a human stud for the state. The members of this couple are Ernesto, a young and handsome man, and Celiana, a middle-aged, brilliant scholar of strange beauty. While Celiana spends her time writing and giving talks on history, Ernesto lives a life of leisure, thanks to his partner. They share a close friendship with several other characters, such as Consuelo, Federico, and the wise and cynical Miguel—who used to be Celiana's lover before Ernesto. In the first chapter of the novel Ernesto is recruited by the *Bureau de Eugenética* to become a "reproductor oficial de la especie" (a human stud for the reproduction of the species). He is recruited because of his physical perfection. Urzaiz describes the idle young man as being "un modelo digno de la estatuaria griega y una buena muestra de lo que los adelantos de la higiene habían logrado hacer de aquella humanidad que, varios siglos antes, nosotros conocimos raquítica, intoxicada y enclenque" (34). When Ernesto is recruited by the *Bureau* to fulfill his social duties, he ends up meeting the young and beautiful Eugenia. He eventually leaves Villautopia with the young woman, who is pregnant with his child. Leaving Villautopia to raise a family with Eugenia is, arguably, Erneto's one and only rebellious act against the social system portrayed in the novel. Dziubinskyj sees Ernesto's decision

[22] To prove the popularity of eugenics throughout the continent in the early 20th century, it is relevant to know that the American Eugenics Society was founded in 1922 (just three years after the publication of *Eugenia*), the *Sociedad Eugénica Mexicana para el Mejoramiento de la Raza* was founded in 1931, and the *Asociación Argentina de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social* is founded in Buenos Aires in 1932. On the other hand, the Eugenics Education Society (now known as the Galton Institute) was founded in England in 1907, more than a decade before the publication of *Eugenia.*

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to leave Villautopia as the key for understanding the novel's shift from utopia to dystopia. He argues that

> Ernesto personifies the transformation of the individual whose antisocial behavior is motivated by enlightened self-interest. In this sense, the utopian ideology that Urzaiz portrays throughout *Eugenia* devolves into a dystopian world-view, since Ernesto discovers that the principles upon which Villautopia were founded are corrupt and contrary to those that he has discovered in the arms of Eugenia. (465)

This would allow us to add Ernesto to a list of science fiction heroes that develop "antisocial behaviors motivated by enlightened self-interest." These are heroes such as Bradbury's Guy Montag, Zamyatin's D-503, Huxley's Bernard Marx, and Orwell's Winston Smith (to name a few).[23] *Eugenia*, however, doesn't conclude with a celebration of fre ewill, individuality, and romantic love, materialized in the coupling of the young and perfect Ernesto and Eugenia; the novel ends with the depiction of the intellectual and emotional fall of the once-brilliant Celiana, whose mental and physical decline is materialized in her addiction to marijuana. Even though critics such as Dziubinskyj interpret this ending as part of the novel's turn from utopia to dystopia, I agree with Javier Ordiz on the fact that *Eugenia* is indeed utopian. Considering authorial intent only, it would be safe to argue that even though the novel was read as a dystopia by most of Urzaiz's contemporaries, there is no reason to believe that the author himself thought of his work as anything but utopic. Celiana's tragic end, far from undoing the internal logic of Urzaiz's utopia, reinforces the coherence of the social system depicted in the novel. If Celiana is prone to falling in a deep depressive state, and if she is also prone to

[23] These are the main characters of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931), and George Orwell's *1984* (1949).

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developing addiction to psychoactive substances, the Bureau's decision of sterilizing her—which takes place long before the events presented in the novel—seems to be ultimately justified.

In the last paragraph of the novel, the narrator described Celiana as "uno de aquellos despojos que, en su marcha triunfal, el amor y la vida van arrojando a los lados del camino" (165). The matter-of-fact tone of this assertion shows us a dark side of Urzaiz's utopia, but this is not sufficient to understand the text as dystopian. On the contrary, Celiana's final state of mental and physical deterioration reminds us that for utopia to be possible, some sacrifices must be made. And so, some people must be left behind. Leaving them behind in genetic terms becomes possible through sterilization and other eugenicist practices.

In his prologue to the first edition of *Eugenia*, Uzaiz talks about his novel as a work of fiction in which he expresses his dreams of "una humanidad casi feliz; libre, por lo menos, de las trabas y prejuicios con que la actual se complica y amarga voluntariamente la vida" (31). He also states that the simple love story of the novel serves as a pretext "para evocar una visión—si quiera sea pálida e imprecisa—de esa humanidad futura de mis sueños y esperanzas" (idem). If we take Urzaiz at his word, *Eugenia* is a science fiction novel belonging to the tradition of the utopia, a work of fiction that reflects its author's "dreams and hopes" for humanity. And yet, as Haywood Ferreira points out, "*Eugenia* appears to have been perceived as a completely dystopian work by Urzaiz's contemporaries" (67). The depiction of inverted gender roles in the process of human reproduction, as well as the disappearance of the institution of the family, were probably the main reasons why this novel was met with scandalized rejection by Urzaiz's

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first readers. Another reason for the general negative reception that the novel had when first published, could be the depiction of eugenicist methods that could be described as Mendelian, in opposition to methods that could be described as Lamarckian. Haywood Ferreira argues that this was, indeed, "a major cause of negative reaction to the novel in Mexico" (76). While Lamarckian eugenics championed the improvement of the environment as a means for achieving the improvement of the species, Mendelian eugenics opened the possibility for the sterilization and even the euthanasia of "unfit" individuals. Due to the influence of French culture in Latin America during the 18th and 19th centuries, Lamarckian methods of eugenics were much more popular in the region than Mendelian ones—which had a wider popularity in Anglo-Saxon cultures.[24]

Eugenia, however, contains both Lamarkian and Mendelian eugenicist practices. While the sterilization of individuals, as well as the breeding of those superior specimens, are both Mendelian practices inspired in the works of Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), the improvement of the environment—understood in a general way that encompasses both physical and social spaces—through the achievement of greater social equality, the disappearance of internal and international armed conflict, and the improvement of general hygiene has allowed humanity to reach a higher level of genetic perfection. This is why Urzaiz presents Ernesto as a result of those "adelantos de la higiene" (34). Through these combination of Lamarkian and Mendelian eugenicist practices, humans are finally able to move away from what Urzaiz's depicts as a humanity that is "raquítica, intoxicada y enclenque" (idem). In fact, as Ordiz points out, educated Western people from the early 20th century often thought of eugenics as a valid means to solve problems

[24] As Ordiz points out, in the first part of the 20th century some states of the United States prohibited interracial marriages, restricted immigration, and even allowed for the sterilization of "social rejects."

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such as disease, madness, and vice. It was not until the revelation of the existence of concentration camps in Nazi Germany that eugenics attains a bad reputation among the general population.

But many of Urzaiz's readers are not convinced by the author's prologue, and still believe that there is something intrinsically dystopian about the novel. Dziubinskyj and Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado both agree that Urzaiz's "seemingly utopic vision of the future disintegrates into a dystopian nightmare by the end of the novel'" (Fernández Delgado 205). If—as Haywood Ferreira points out—most of Urzaiz's contemporaries read *Eugenia* as a dystopia, and if even contemporary critics such as Dziubinskyj and Fernández Delgado read the novel as a utopia that turns dystopic as the plot develops and unfolds, it is of great importance to understand some of the aspects of Urzaiz's imaginary future that would allow the author—if not the majority of his readers—to understand the novel as ideal or utopian.

In first place, in the imaginary future of the novel, global peace has been achieved; partly through the abolition of the nation-state—which has been replaced by the federation system—and partly because of the disappearance of military forces. Secondly, social inequality, and thus poverty, has been significantly reduced through the implementation of socialist policies and practices throughout the world. Thirdly, madness, disease, and crime, have almost disappeared from several regions of Earth, through the systematic implementation of eugenics. Finally, the use of eugenics had led to the abolition of the human institution of the family, which created the necessary conditions for the rise of the group as the basic unit of human society. The positive

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consequences of the abolition of the nation-state and the subsequent disappearance of the military are described in the following way at the end of Chapter VIII:

> Libres del gasto enorme que imponía el sostenimiento de los ejércitos, sin ambiciones de dominio ni temores de despojo, los pueblos se agruparon siguiendo las divisiones geográficas naturales de la tierra; socializadas las riquezas, las industrias y la agricultura, nacionalizado el comercio, los gobiernos pudieron limitarse a la función administrativa, única que lógica y necesariamente les corresponde. (114)

It is important to notice that for Urzaiz there is a clear connection between the unnecessary use of public funds for war and the military, and social inequality. It is only through the abolition of armies—which is a natural product of the disappearance of the expansionist intentions of failed nation-states—that the world governments can focus on the only relevant function the author believes they truly have: the administration of public wealth and resources. It is important to highlight that Urzaiz's utopia is only possible by the implementation of socialist policies and practices such as the "socialization"—and perhaps even the "expropriation"—of "riches," "the industries," and "agriculture," as well as through the "nationalization of commerce." In other words, Urzaiz's utopian vision of the future is only possible through the partial disappearance of private property, and the generalized switch towards governmental control of commerce. Liberal and neoliberal governments advocate for exercising little control on the market; social democracies are openly capitalist, and operate within democratic and liberal boundries, while embracing government intervention in the economy, in an effort to achieve greater social justice; and communist governments are characterized for exercising considerable

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or total control over the nation's economy, often times drastically limiting the rights and civil liberties of its citizens. Villautopia seems to be closer to a social democracy than it is to a full capitalist or communist state. For these reasons, Ordiz defines Urzaiz's novel as an "utopía de orientación socialista." It would be impossible not to notice some of the ideological similitudes between *Eugenia* and *Barranquilla 2132*. Both novels seem to champion the abolition of the institution of the nation-state, while they advocate for the need of socialist policies and practices in the future. Jorge Luis Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975), a story that I will analyze in the last chapter of this project, also emphasizes the advantages of living in a world where the institution of the nation-state has disappeared. However, Borges's well-known distrust of socialism would make it impossible for him to embrace the socialist solutions that Urzaiz and Osorio Lizarazo propose in their novels; instead, Borges champions anarchy as the ideal system for human social organization.

It seems natural that Urzaiz imagines a utopian world in which the nation-state—and therefore nationalism and armies—does not exist. Eugenia was first published less than a year after the Great War, during the last years of the Mexican Revolution.[25] According to Ordiz,

> [e]l momento histórico en el que Urzaiz escribe su novela localizado pocos años después de la Revolución Mexicana y de la Primera Guerra Mundial, se encuentra claramente como trasfondo de las ideas de regeneración que el novelista propone indirectamente en el relato. Urzaiz

[25] It is sometimes argued that the Revolution lasted until 1920, some scholars consider that 1917 could be regarded as the end of the armed conflict of the Revolution. In this year, the Mexican Constitution of 1917 was written and promulgated. This document had integrated some of the major principles of the Revolution.

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dibuja a estructura de un mundo que, hastiado de la violencia dominante de siglos precedentes, ha apostado decididamente por la paz y la concordia.

Osorio Lizarazo, during the years between World War I and World War II, imagines a peaceful world where there are no nations. Borges, during the tense years of the Cold War, also imagines a humanity where nations have disappeared, and warfare is a thing of the past. Urzaiz, who lived in Mexico in the particularly violent years of the Mexican Revolution and was aware of Europe's tragic fate during the years of World War I, also imagines a utopian future where the nation-state has been replaced by a federalist system, global disarmament has been achieved, and both internal and international armed conflicts have disappeared from the face of Earth. In the case of Osorio Lizarazo's and Urzaiz's novels—both of socialist tendencies—social inequality has either been completely eradicated or considerably reduced. This also tell us a lot about the social and economic context in which the authors of these novels lived. The Mexican Revolution started in 1910, when Porfirio Diaz—who had been in power for 35 years—ran for reelection against Francisco I. Madero; the elections were rigged and Díaz stayed in power. There was an outbreak of violence caused by the election and Díaz was overthrown. Elections were conducted again in 1911 and Madero was elected president. But two years later, Madero and his vice-president were forced to resign and, eventually, they were both assassinated. An important element of this complex and devastating conflict was the extended confrontation between revolutionary forces, which included organized labor, the dispossessed, and a fraction of the middle classes, and the US-backed conservative forces, which included business-owners and other defenders of the

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status quo. However, some fractions of the nation's social elite—including more liberal landowners like Madero and Pancho Villa—also opposed Díaz's regime and other conservative forces, significantly strengthening the revolutionary movement. And yet, Madero, who was seen as dangerously liberal by the conservatives, was also opposed by a considerable faction of the revolutionary forces, who thought of him as a moderate conservative. Even though the conflict was coming to an end when Urzaiz wrote and published the novel, it is clear that the author was rather aware of the relation between social inequality and violence. Therefore, for Urzaiz's utopian future to be peaceful, it also had to be socially fair. In a similar way, social inequality and political hatred have been some of Colombia's most pervasive social downfalls since the late 19th century. Osorio Lizarazo published *Barranquilla 2132* thirty years after the end of the devastating *Guerra de los mil días*, fourteen years after the end of World War I, seven years before the beginning of World War II, and sixteen years before the beginning of *La Violencia* in Colombia (1948-1958), which erupted after political leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán's assassination. It is not hard to see the pattern that these texts follow: they were all written under the looming threat of international armed conflict; thus, the nation-state, nationalism, and national armies are all absent from these utopian or idealist visions of the future.

Haywood Ferreira states that "[t]he strong negative reaction to the book in 1919 was undoubtedly related to the drastic alterations Urzaiz portrayed in the traditional family structure, social customs, and religious values, and to the more Mendelian-driven aspects of his approach to eugenics" (67). I believe that Haywood Ferreira is right linking the negative reaction to the novel by Urzaiz's contemporaries to the novel's "alterations"

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in the "traditional family structure, social customs, and religious values" of early 20th century Mexico. However, we must not forget that eugenics were seen in a generally positive light in Urzaiz's times. According to Ordiz, interpreting *Eugenia* as dystopian because of its depiction of eugenics is misleading. In his own words, "[e]sta interpretación no se ajusta al contexto ideológico de la época en la que el texto se escribió, en que como se ha visto, la eugenesia contaba con un notable prestigio como disciplina que podría aportar la curación o erradicación de varias enfermedades." And yet, it is true that, due to the prominent influence of French culture in Latin America during the 19th and early 20th centuries, Latin American audiences would feel more at ease with Lamarckian eugenics, involving ideas such as such improving the environment—through hygiene and other methods—as a way of "improving" the race, than with more Mendelian practices, such as sterilization and selective breeding. In *Eugenia,* the social and biological advantages of practicing eugenics on a grand-scale are stated by Dr. Remigio Pérez Serrato, president of Villautopia's *Bureau de Eugenética*, when he is welcoming Ernesto to his new job. When visiting the *sección de estadística*, Ernesto learns that "año a año disminuye el número de niños esterilizados; día ha de llegar en que sólo se practique la operación cuando el exceso de habitantes obligue a restringir el número de nacimientos" (72). As seen in these statements, the eugenicist policies of Villautopia are showing positive results, since each year there are less "unfit" children to be sterilized. These lines also remind us that it is not uncommon in Villautopia to conduct the sterilization of physically inferior individuals. As I have mentioned before, among these individuals are Celiana and Miguel. Even though it might seem strange that that two of the smartest characters in the novel are not able to

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procreate, this fact is explained within the narrative: as the reader finds out, the scientist of Villautopia have arrived at the conclusion that "[e]n las sociedades de antaño, triunfaban los individuos más inteligentes, los más astutos o los más ricos, que por lo general eran los peor dotados físicamente, por lo que la especie degeneraba a pasos agigantados" (70). In other words, the scientists of the future have come to the conclusion that those with greater intellects (as well as those with more wealth) tend to be physically inferior. In the case of Celiana, some of these highly intelligent people might also be more prone to depression, and different forms of vice and addiction.

These "findings" can be interpreted in three different ways: either the scientists of Villautopia believe that physical fitness is hereditary and intellectual capacity is not, or they are interested in creating a society of physically superior but mentally inferior individuals (which would undermine Urzaiz's depiction of *Eugenia* as an utopia), or Urzaiz's is playfully mocking the economic and intellectual elite of his own society (the Mérida of the early 20th century). Ths elite would have, of course, included Urzaiz himself. I believe that it is the first option that is true (even though there might be some humor in these "findings"). In the novel, a clear example of a physically and mentally superior man (probably the result of Villautopia's eugenics programs himself) is Dr. Pérez Serrato. In Chapter VI, it is revealed that this brilliant scientist (he is, after all, the president of Villautopia's *Bureau de Eugenética*) also served as a *reproductor* in his youth (86). In short, it is possible that within the world of *Eugenia* superior intellectual capacity is either a random, non-hereditary phenomenon, or something that can be acquired with work. And yet, even though the most brilliant people have a certain

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tendency to be physically weaker, genetically-engendered and physically fit individuals (such as Dr. Pérez Serrato) can also be considerably smart.

Dr. Pérez Serrato continues his presentation of the benefits of eugenics by adding: "Con estas medidas han puesto un dique a la degeneración de la humanidad. La población de las cárceles, los manicomios y los hospitales de incurables se ha reducido casi a cero" (ídem). The doctor also tells his new employee that the improvement in the conditions of the proletariat, as well as the generalized use of euthanasia, have allowed these institutions (jails, mental institutions, and hospitals for the "incurable"), that were once "a very heavy burden for the state," to stop being so, allowing for the great funds that were once invested in their constant operation and maintenance to be "more advantageously used" for "more urgent needs" (idem). The fact that the diminishment of patients in psychiatric hospitals and jails are regarded as unquestionable signs of social progress tells us a lot about Urzaiz—who not only conducted extensive research on the field of psychiatry but worked closely with patients suffering from mental illness—and about the ideas of progress and modernity common in early 20th century Mexico.

It is estimated that, during the Mexican Revolution, between 1.5 and 2 million people lost their lives. Taking into consideration that the population of Mexico was close to 15 million at the time, the percentage of the population that died during this 10-year armed conflict (10%) is shocking. Haywood Ferreira points out that the Revolution had an important effect on the development of eugenics in Mexico. Among the obvious problems that the nation faced were "death, dislocation, poverty, and sickness;" all this "combined with the growing nationalism of the revolutionary state," created the "setting for the appeal of eugenics" in Mexico (Hour in Haywood Ferreira 69). On the other hand,

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at an ideological level "the revolution's socialism, anticlericism, and Materialism made Mexico receptive to new developments in science and social thought" (Idem). As Haywood Ferreira points out, "Urzaiz was less motivated by nationalism than by an opposition to religious fanaticism and a concern for replacing and regenerating a diminished Mexican population" (69). As I have demonstrated, Urzaiz's utopian world was not unconcerned with nationalism; in fact, his utopia was strictly anti-nationalistic. The author's exposition of nationalism's negative social consequences, and the inconvenient characteristics of the nation-state, is mostly developed by Dr. Matías Urrea—regarded by several critics as Urzaiz's alter-ego within the novel—in his conversation with Celiana and his former professor, Luis Gil (Chapter VIII). On the other hand, Urzaiz's strong opinions against religion are articulated by Celiana in a text that she destroys before its completion (138-39).

In Chapter V, Dr. Pérez Serrato highlights the decreasing number of children in need of sterilization as proof of the success of the practice of eugenics in the country (72). This means that every year less "physically or mentally inferior individuals" (71) are born in the city. Dr. Pérez Serrato also argues that "a day will come in which the operation [sterilization] will only be conducted when the number of inhabitants makes restricting the number of births necessary" (idem). These statements demonstrate that eugenics have been efficient in "improving" the human race—at least within the Sub-Confederation of Central America—and in resolving the region's under-population problem—a problem that, due to the devastating effects of the Mexican Revolution—seemed very real for Urzaiz and his contemporaries.

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And yet, as it happens in *Barranquilla 2132*, not everything regarding eugenics is depicted as good or positive in *Eugenia*. When Dr. Pérez Serrato takes Ernesto to the *departamento de infancia*, that is, the nursery of Villautopia's *Bureau de Eugenética,* the narrator expresses a problematic conviction. It is not apparent for the reader, however, whether this conviction arises in Ernesto as the result of seeing the beautiful children in the room, whether it is something that Dr. Pérez Serrato believes to be true, or if it is simply what the narrator—Urzaiz's authorial voice—thinks about eugenics. After describing the idyllic state in which these beautiful children live, the narrator states:

> ¡Qué alegría tan sana en las adorables caras infantiles! ¡Cuánta solicitud maternal en las niñeras! Aquel espléndido florecimiento de vida y salud bastaba por sí solo para justificar cuanto de violento o inmoral pudiese haber en las medidas a las que la Humanidad se había visto obligada a recurrir para detener su degeneración y acabamiento y seguir con paso firme su marcha evolutiva hacia un ideal de perfección. (81)

Even though it is not clear exactly what the narrator might be referring to when mentioning these "immoral or violent" measures that humanity may have applied in its pursue of self-perfection, it is evident that he considers these unnamed acts to be justified by their results. Haywood Ferreira describes the narrator's statement as "Machiavellian" (79), after stating that "Urzaiz appears to believe that the end justifies the means" (idem). The sterilization of the genetically "inferior" could be one of the practices that the narrator is referring to; the way in which these operations are conducted remains a mystery throughout the novel. This problematic statement could be linked to the concentration camps mentioned—but never described—in *Barranquilla 2132*. But why

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are these atrocities mentioned, but never explained or described? Are they too horrible to be brought to light in these narratives? Or perhaps the narrators of these novels are so fascinated by the benefits of eugenics, that they are willing to look the other way when considering the horrors that its systematic practice entails. The fact that both Urzaiz and Osorio Lizarazo seem to be aware of the potential of violence, horror and immorality inherent to the systematic practice of eugenics in a social context, is quite revealing. Let us not forget that *Barranquilla 2132* was written eight years before the establishment of the concentration camp of Auschwitz by the Nazis.[26] *Eugenia*, on the other hand, was written more than 20 years before the establishment of such camps. These authors did not imagine the possible negative consequences of eugenics based on their knowledge of actual (modern) systematic genocide; they were simply aware of the fact that the practice of eugenics, if pursued to its logical extremes, could lead to undetermined horrors and violence. It becomes necessary to quote Agamben's words again: "Nazism, contrary to a common prejudice, did not limit itself to using and twisting scientific concepts for its own ends. The relationship between National Socialist ideology and the social and biological sciences of the time—in particular, genetics—is more intimate and complex and, at the same time, more disturbing" (145-46). A society that systematically—and

[26] It is relevant to take into consideration that the first reference to "modern" concentration camps comes from the camps that the US government built for Native Americans (which were established as early as 1838), those that the Spaniards built for Cubans in the last years of the 19th century as part of their "Re-concentration Policy", or those the British built for the Boers (1899-1902). In fact, when the British criticized the Nazis, the German chancellor reminded the British envoy of these concentration camps. Since Lenin's rise to power, and most notably during Stalin's regime, Russia also had concentration camps known as Gulag. However, what makes Nazi concentration camps so uniquely horrifying is the Nazi's obsession with heredity, with eugenics. For instance, Dr. Josef Mengele's infamous experiments with twins would be unthinkable in the context of a Soviet Gulag, where many of the captives were dissidents and political prisoners. Naturally, American, Spaniard, and British concentration camps were not unrelated to the idea of race; but only in Nazi concentration camps was the conception of race as heredity so pervasive. Also, by its constant and ubiquitous presence in popular culture, the Nazi concentration camp has become the default—the archetypical—concentration camp in Western collective imagination.

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thoroughly—pursued genetic perfection through eugenics, would always fall in different forms of violence and discrimination; the omnipresent shadow of the concentration camp will always linger above such utopian projects.

And yet, it would be hard to imagine the writing of a utopic work of fiction based on a eugenicist fantasy after the world became aware of the horrors committed by the Nazi regime during World War II. Of course, this is clearly related to the fact that "[l]a práctica eugenésica cayó en un total descrédito y mereció el repudio de la comunidad científica internacional cuando los experimentos del Tercer Reich revelaron al mundo el peligro de unas teorías de claro sesgo racista" (Ordiz). This would explain why, after World War II, most works of science fiction dealing with eugenics are dystopian rather than utopian. In fact, it would be safe to assume that any contemporary work of science fiction depicting eugenics in a positive way would be suspected of spreading racist—and mostly white supremacist—propaganda. Naturally, the general knowledge of the horrors and cruel monstrosity of the Nazi regime not only had an effect on science fiction, but also on the way in which eugenics was perceived and even implemented by people and governments all around the world. As Ordiz points out, after World War II "se abandonaron muchos programas de este tipo, o al menos se ocultaron o se disfrazaron con otra apariencia, y en los tiempos actuales se han retomado en cierto modo desde una óptica y unos fines diferentes en investigaciones como el genoma humano o las células madre." As I pointed out before, at the moment when Urzaiz wrote and published his novel, eugenics were seen by scientists, politicians, intellectuals, and relevant sectors of the general public as a valid way of curing hereditary disease and "improving" the species. Some of the negative reactions that Urzaiz received from his contemporary

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readers were caused by the author's critical take on the subjects of nationalism, the institution of family, and religion. On the other hand, many of the novel's first readers also felt strongly against the eugenicist methods depicted in *Eugenia*. However, if Urzaiz had depicted a future in which the state enforces Lamarckian eugenicist practices, and not the combination of Lamarckian and Mendelian methods described in the novel, general reception of the text—perhaps—would had been more positive. As I mentioned before, Latin America's penchant for the consumption of French ideas during the 18th and 19th centuries made it easier for people in the region to accept Lamarckian principles of eugenics, while rejecting the forms of Mendelian eugenics that were far more popular in the Anglo-Saxon world. Of course, Urzaiz's years studying in New York probably left a strong impression on the Latin American doctor.

One could imagine that a state like the one described in Eugenia, one that exercises so much power over its citizens, is indeed dystopian. Haywood Ferreira suggests as much when stating that "it remains difficult to call the novel utopian when considering the extreme degree of state control over private life—and indeed over a citizen's right to live" (78). And yet, I agree with Ordiz on the fact that there is no reason to doubt Urzaiz's expressed intention of depicting in his novel an ideal future. Thinking solely of authorial intent, there is no reason whatsoever to think of Urzaiz's work as dystopian. Even though the state controls sterilization in the region, this procedure is described by Dr. Pérez Serrato as "savior of the species" (71). The Dr. also tells Ernesto how sterilization was first practiced only on "criminals natos o reincidentes … locos y desequilibrados mentales" and "ciertos enfermos incurables, como los epilépticos y los tuberculosos" (idem). Haywood Ferreira links Urzaiz's embrace of human sterilization,

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and eugenics in general, to his work experience with the mentally ill, his research on reproductive hormones, and his education in the United States (79). Taking into consideration Dr. Pérez Serrato's account of the positive effects of eugenics in the process of eradicating illness and madness, Haywood Ferreira's statement seems quite appropriate.

Talking to Dr. Pérez Serrato, Ernesto learns more about the history of eugenics in Villautopia. According to the scientist's account of the evolution of eugenics in the city, men and women eventually began to volunteer for the surgery of sterilization, in order to escape the "economic burdens of fatherhood" and the "physiological burdens of motherhood" (71). Soon after, the doctor adds that "paternity has stopped being a burden for men, rich and poor, and motherhood does not take place in women after conception" (idem). Haywood Ferreira points out the feminist or proto-feminist ideas implicit in the author's portrayal of the 23rd century. According to her, Urzaiz seems to imagine that, in the future, women "freed from the burdens of childbearing and child raising, would attain equal status with men" (74). All of these ideas highlight the ironic nature of eugenics in Urzaiz's novel: even though the implementations of these practices and policies might make the government of Villautopia seem repressive, one of the purposes of implementing such policies and practices is to make people free: free from the economic burden of parenthood, free from the physical suffering associated with pregnancy, free from the unfairness implicit in gender inequality, and free from family as such.

And yet, one should not forget that the main purpose of eugenics is to improve the human species. Although Dr. Pérez Serrato emphasizes the fact that it allows the citizens of Villautopia to live with more freedom, the main purpose of these practices and policies

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is to contribute to the creation of a perfect human species. As the doctor states, in Villautopia "el Gobierno tiene bajo su inmediato cuidado y vigilancia la reproducción de la especie; hace esterilizar a cualquier individuo física o mentalmente inferior o deficiente, y sólo deja en la plenitud de sus facultades genéticas a los ejemplares perfectos y aptos para dar productos ideales" (idem). The duty of serving as a human stud at the *Bureau de Eugenética* is also taken seriously by the State. This becomes evident when the doctor argues that being selected for the process of reproduction and improvement of the species "implica … dar a la comunidad cierto número de hijos, deber que ha venido a ser tan ineludible como lo fueran en otros tiempos el servicio militar, el desempeño de los cargos de elección popular o el ejercicio del sufragio" (idem). Passages like this one could stimulate a dystopic reading of Urzaiz's novel—like the one conducted by Dziubinskyj—and support Haywood Ferreira's idea that a society that exercises so much control over its citizens cannot be regarded as utopian. However, it is important to take into consideration that Ernesto exercises his freedom in a wide variety of ways.

Ernesto does not experience any negative consequences when he decides to leave Villautopia to live with Eugenia in a cabin outside the technologically advanced city. It would be safe to assume that in this futuristic (post-national) world, men and women are free to live wherever they want. On the other hand, leaving Celiana brings no negative repercussions for Ernesto. In other words, the state seems to have no control—and probably no interest—whatsoever in the way in which people relate to one another in this future society. Finally, even though the institution of family is looked upon with disdain by an important sector of Villautopia's society—as it becomes evident by the attitudes

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and ideas of several characters in the novel, such as Miguel, Celiana, and Dr. Urrea—it is evident that establishing a family is, however, not illegal or punishable by law. In fact, by the end of the novel, Ernesto and Eugenia seem to be quite excited about the idea of raising their child together—even though they will not go as far as letting Eugenia carry on with the pregnancy in the old-fashioned way—establishing what could be regarded as a traditional family (156-57). In short, even though Haywood Ferreira's belief that "it remains difficult to call the novel utopian when considering the extreme degree of state control over private life—and indeed over a citizen's right to live" (78) is certainly valid and justifiable, it is clear that the government of Villautopia is not depicted as totalitarian or authoritarian. And even though Villautopia's citizens have to comply with the city's rules regarding the sterilization of the "unfit" and the forced procreation of its most "perfect" citizens (in a practice that is compared to today's military service), it remains evident that Urzaiz believed that these minor sacrifices of freedom were justified, as they (ironically) contributed to the construction of a freer society—where the burdens of parenthood would be no more—and to the physical and moral improvement of the species.

It could be argued that the character of Eugenia—whose name is also the title of the novel and a direct reference to the science of eugenics—seems to contain in herself the germ of Villautopia's own undoing. She, as a product of eugenics, is so perfect, that a *reproductor* falls in love with her, and takes her with him to live a "primitive" live outside the technologically advanced city. This, however, does not undermine the utopian character of the novel, on the contrary, this situation serves to illustrate the characters' freedom within the society of Villautopia. On the other hand, it is never clear if Ernesto

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had already produced the required quota of twenty children for the state when he met Eugenia. If this was the case, he was clearly free to either leave or stay, as he met Eugenia in an event of the *Bureau*, and when he left with her he was not faced with resistance from any of his superiors of colleagues. Quite the contrary: the narrator states that when Eugenia and Ernesto met "[t]odo el mundo respetó aquella unión espontánea y la sancionó como un hecho consumado y fatal" (150). It is never stated if women in Eugenia's position had a quota of children to produce, if so, it is clear that she was not forced to fulfill it after meeting Ernesto. And even though it could seem as if this union undoes the championing of eugenics in Urzaiz's novel (after all, the Bureau might have lost two great human studs), it is important to point out to the fact that Ernesto's union with Eugenia means that he will not go back to Celiana, who is sterile, and as such cannot produce any children. Eugenia, on the other hand, soon proves to be perfectly fertile. Nobody knows how many children these two perfect models of the positive results of eugenics will have. Even if they do not have as many children as they would have had serving as human studs for the *Bureau*, it is evident that their children will be physically perfect in every way. Far from being the undoing of Villautipia, the coupling of Ernesto and Eugenia is its apotheosis, the fulfillment of its promise: the pairing of two superior—even perfect—human beings, who will soon produce more flawless children, surely as perfect as themselves.

Even though Urzaiz intention is to depict a future in which eugenics has allowed humanity to become both physically and morally better, the subject of race in *Eugenia* is, to say the least, extremely problematic. First of all, considering the fact that a considerable portion of Mexico's population is indigenous, Mexican indigenous peoples

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are entirely absent from the narrative. Ordiz points to this fact in his article, when stating that, even though the "conflict between criollos and indigenous peoples" was relevant in Mexico at the time of the novel's publication, the indigenous peoples in *Eugenia* "brillan por su ausencia." Ordiz suggests that a possible explanation for this is that, perhaps, in the "extraordinario siglo XXIII la propia selección genética habrá ya convertido su presencia en la sociedad en algo irrelevante." Haywood Ferreira argues that *Eugenia* "does not directly address Mexico's heterogeneity. In fact, the indigenous population is conspicuous by its absence … The word *mestizo* is never used, as the 'cosmic race' has not yet become the predominant paradigm. Ideas of superior/inferior races and of crossbreeding between races to combat degeneration do appear, however" (77-78). To support this claim, Haywood Ferreira refers to a scene in the novel in which Ernesto, who is visiting the *Bureau de Eugenética* for the first time, runs into Dr. Pérez Serrato and a commission of African doctors intending to adopt some of the eugenicist policies of Villautopia to "evitar el estancamiento evolutivo de su raza" (66). Ernesto is shocked at the sight of these men; the characters are described in animalistic and monstrous terms. It is stated that the doctors have "formidables dentaduras de caníbales" (67), and both of them are described as "feos y bembones" (idem). The oldest doctor is described as having a white beard that makes him look "like a tamed chimpanzee" (idem). Dziubinskyj argues that this scene "could be read as a satire of the Bureau of Eugenics and of its segregated aesthetics of appearances" (467). He also uses this scene to further justify his dystopian reading of Urzaiz's novel, arguing that "[t]he blatant racism expressed through the thoughts of Ernesto reveals the underlying dystopian forces that contribute to feed his disillusionment and eventual departure from Villautopia" (idem). Unlike Dziubinskyj, I

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find nothing in this passage—or in the entire novel—that could call for a "satirical" read of the Bureau of Eugenics, or of eugenics as a science. On the contrary, throughout the novel, the virtues of eugenics are expressed openly. Physically improving the population, decreasing the number of people with mental illness, and reducing vice in the city are among the many advantages of following eugenicist policies. Also, I do not see how racism is linked to Ernesto's "disillusionment and eventual departure from Villautopia" (idem). All I see in these scene is the blatant racism intrinsic to 19th and 20th century eugenics. Ernesto leaves the city out of love for Eugenia, not because he is disillusioned with the racism of any of the Bureau's employees. The African men in Dr. Pérez Serrato's office are not described in animalistic terms as part of a poignant commentary on the racism implicit in eugenics; they are described in such a way because they are regarded as racially (that is, genetically) inferior.

Dziubinskyj suggests that, in this particular moment of the novel, "[t]he deliberate juxtaposition of distinct racial physiologies is in part a critique of the inherently racist ideologies associated with eugenics" (idem). However, I agree with Ordiz that, at the time in which Urzaiz was writing *Eugenia*, the science of eugenics was regarded as a valid and promising means for the improvement of humankind. I also agree with Haywood Ferreira's statement that "1919 is historically too early in the trajectory of eugenics in Latin America (or anywhere else in the world) for either satire or dystopia based on fear of eugenics to be likely" (79). Therefore, I must conclude that Dziubinskyj's apologist take on the depiction of racism in Urzaiz's novel is misleading and inaccurate. Because 19th and 20th century Mendelian eugenics championed practices such as crossbreeding in order to improve the species, and thus implicitly accepted the

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idea of there being inferior and superior races, racism seems to be intrinsic to eugenics; ontologically speaking, racism and—at least this version of—eugenics cannot be separated.

Family in *Eugenia*

Finally, I will refer to the subject of family in *Eugenia*. The novel initially champions the institution of the group (*grupo*) as superior to the traditional institution of family. Celiana, a famous historian, knows very well how the *grupo* replaced the traditional family. First, as "religious prejudices" disappeared, social norms gradually became more liberal, and "legal procedures became simpler," human couples were able to come together or break up more freely (45). Celiana is also aware of the fact that the state, by taking as its responsibility the raising and economic support of all children, allowed parents to lead freer lives. In this new technologically attained state of freedom, women began to avoid the "hard physiological role that was assigned to them by nature" (idem), bringing humanity close to its extinction. Women's fear and rejection of giving birth is referred in the novel as *tocofobia*. According to Dr. Castillo, *tocofobia* comes from "*tocos,* parto, y *fobé,* miedo" (128) (the Greek words for the action of giving birth and the concept of fear). It is relevant to emphasize that *tocofobia* is simply portrayed as a consequence of the difficulties and pains of the process of giving birth. However, the author does not suggest that women abstain themselves from sex because they do not experience sexual pleasure. This would be, naturally, plainly misogynistic, as depriving women of their right to experience sexual pleasure would be extremely conservative, and

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even dehumanizing. Such a conservative stance on female sexual pleasure would be at odds with Urzaiz's progressive worldview.

But women's phobia of pregnancy and giving birth is eventually eradicated too, thanks to the discovery of different ways of manipulating recently-fecundated human eggs; more prominently, the insertion of these eggs in modified (or "feminized") male bodies, physically able to carry out a successful pregnancy. Considering all this, Celiana believes that she is living in "una época feliz" (idem), in which "en vez de la familia antigua, unida por los imaginarios lazos de la sangre, había aparecido el *grupo*, basado en las afinidades de carácter y en la comunidad de gustos y aspiraciones" (idem). The fact that the members of the group do not come together by "arbitrary bonds of blood," but by a deeper affinity of "character, tastes, and aspirations" makes it a stronger and more stable institution than the traditional family. Celiana goes as far as to characterize this new human institution it as unbreakable, or "realmente indisoluble" (idem). This understanding of the *grupo* as unbreakable turns out to be wrong, as, by the end of the novel, Ernesto leaves Celiana and his friends, to pursue a new life with his lover and unborn child. In other words, Ernesto abandons the *grupo* to form a family outside of the city's eugenicist technological utopia.

After writing the letter that will officially put an end to his long relationship with Celiana, Ernesto tells Eugenia that, to him, the past is dead, and now "only the present and the future exist," and both are "incarnated" in her (160). In other words, for Ernesto, Eugenia encompasses both his present and future. The commitment implicit in this statement indicates the young man's desire to establish a long-term, stable relationship with his new partner. Since, by the time Ernesto and Eugenia have this conversation he is

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already aware of the fact that she is pregnant, Ernesto's commitment to stay with her—and to stay with her outside of Villautopia, where children are raised by the State—is the commitment of a man willing to start a family.

Soon before Ernesto writes the letter that marks the end of his past and the beginning of his new life, Eugenia told him about her pregnancy. It is precisely at this moment when Celiana's—and perhaps Urzaiz's—championing of the *grupo* as the basic unity of society is put into question. Even though the narrator states that Ernesto always considered himself to be happy and "satisfied with an absolutely sterile love" (157)—it is important to keep in mind that Celiana, like Miguel, is sterile—and even though he never gave his many biological children a second thought—he was, after all, an "official" human stud for the reproduction of the species—Ernesto has a deeply emotional response when learning about his future child. This can be explained by the young man's feelings towards his lover. In the narrator's words, Ernesto, "al saber ahora que la carne de Eugenia se conjugaba con la suya para hacerse carne y alma de otra vida que habría de ser alma y carne de los dos, sintió lo que jamás sintiera ni creyera sentir" (idem). The love for the unborn child is not based, as the bond between the members of the *grupo*, "en las afinidades de carácter y en la comunidad de gustos y aspiraciones" (40); and still, the love that Ernesto feels for his unborn child is far stronger that the love that he feels for any of the members of his group. Dr. Pérez Serrato had warned Ernesto about these feelings before: when Ernesto meets the doctor's daughter, Rosaura (also known as Atanasia), the old man tells him that "la parte instintiva del amor paterno no ha desaparecido por completo. Ni desaparecer puede, siendo como es una ley de la nauraleza" (87). As is the case of the Eugenia's unborn child, Atanasia is the product of a

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former human stud, and a woman that he "loved madly" (86). The narrator also states that, when Ernesto and Eugenia finally meet their newborn, they will think of him/her as "different, and more beautiful than any other," even though he/she will be "just like any other" (157). This scene is most certainly a celebration of familial love, one that seems to undo the author's initial disdain for the institution of the traditional family.

Eugenia's announcement not only feels her lover with love and affection, it also allows him to gain a new understanding of his purpose in life. According to the narrator, Ernesto, "[a]l enterarse de que tendría un hijo adorable, por serlo también de la mujer adorada, adquirió la noción exacta de la utilidad de su existencia, vio claro el móvil de su vida en la prolongación de su ser a través de la vida y de la muerte" (156). It is important to consider here the fact that Eugenia's child will not be Ernesto's first baby; on the contrary, he has conceived many children with many women. But he never reached this sense of purpose before with those unnamed children—boys and girls that he probably never met. This fact seems to suggest that there is indeed something relevant, something beautiful and significant about parenthood, and the traditional family in general. Even though Ernesto's genetic information will survive him, in the form of the many children that he has produced, it is only the child of the beloved woman that allows the young man to acquire a new understanding of his purpose in life. He is no longer a mere perpetuator of the species; now he is also a father.

Naturally, Ernesto's love for Eugenia—who seems to be far less brilliant and interesting than Celiana—is not arbitrary, or unrelated to the novel's subject. His love of Eugenia has, indeed, a lot to do with eugenics. Not only is she physically beautiful and perfect, a worthy specimen of the species that has been selected by the *Bureau de*

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Eugenética for the perpetuaton of the human race; Eugenia is also, as opposed to Celiana, young and fertile. According to the narrator, "al amor para merecer el calificativo de integral, no le basta con llenar por completo las aspiraciones fisiológicas, estéticas y sentimentales de la pareja humana. Tiene además que cumplir con su fin primero y natural, que es la perpetuidad de la especie" (idem). This statement could strike the reader as deeply conservative; in a way it is. Of course, a relationship between people who cannot—or choose not to—have children is as valid and valuable as a relationship that produces offspring. However, this statement is coherent with the narrative. And even though the pairing of Ernesto and Eugenia, and the imminent birth of their beloved child, seems to undo the novel's initial defense of the *grupo* as the basic unit of society, this relationship reinforces the eugenicist principles in which Villautopia are based: the need for the perpetuation and gradual improvement of the human species.

Relationships in which reproduction is impossible—such as the one that Ernesto used to have with Celiana—are condemned by the narrator, who argues that when a relationship does not lead to the perpetuation of the species, "degenera en ardor de semental inconsciente y bruto, o se torna en esteril sentimentalismo, casi en los límites de lo patológico" (idem). Even though Urzaiz was rather liberal in some aspects of his work—his rejection of members of clergy as moral guides for society, and his disdain for nationalism are some examples of this—*Eugenia's* championing of relationships that produce children, and its ultimate condemnation of sterile relationships, could strike the reader as deeply conservative. However, I do not believe that Urzaiz condemns the enjoyment of sex when it does not conduce to procreation; the author's rejection of sterile romantic relationships might be more related to the perceived need of repopulating

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Mexico after the devastating effects of the Mexican Revolution, than it is with any specific moral principles regarding sex.

The pairing of Ernesto and Eugenia—Urzaiz's ultimate celebration of free will, the preservation and improvement of the human species, and the institution of family—could have been the end of the novel. Instead, Urzaiz concludes the narrative in Celiana's apartment, as she smokes compulsively to cope with her emotional pain. *Eugenia* is the story of a failed relationship, in which one of the lovers leaves the utopian eugenicist state of Villautopia and looks forward to raising a child with his new partner, while his abandoned ex falls into a state of deep emotional pain and deteriorating addiction. At the end, Celiana is no longer the brilliant and respected scholar she once was. In the narrator's words, "[c]onsumada estaba la ruina de aquel cerebro poderoso; ya de todo—ideas, recuerdos, afectos y voliciones—sólo quedaba un deseo insaciable de fumar" (163). In this way, Urzaiz seems to undo the idea that the group is the minimal social unit of society. But one should not assume, as does Dziubinskyj, that the depiction of Celiana's ultimately deplorable state, and Ernesto's departure from Villautopia, makes *Eugenia* a dystopian narrative. The ending of the novel might seem at odds with the prologue, in which Urzaiz tells the reader of his intentions to describe the world of his dreams, an ideal future. However, this is not the case at all: in fact, Celiana's state at the end of the last chapter seems to justify the *Bureau de Eugenética's* decision to sterilize her, since she might have always been prone to mental instability, depression, and addiction. It is important to take into consideration that some of the main advantages of eugenics, as presented in the novel, are the eradications of "diseases, madness, crime" (Urzaiz 71), and vice. However sad Celiana's ending might seem to the reader, it is only

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the logical conclusion, and even the reaffirmation, of Urzaiz's utopian vision of the future. Because Celiana does not fit the utopian future of *Eugenia*, she is simply left behind by life, by evolution, and perhaps by society as a whole (even though Miguel is by her side at the end of the novel). She is ultimately described as a simple byproduct of the evolutionary process, a discarded object, or simply, "uno de aquellos despojos que, en su marcha triunfal, el amor y la vida van arrojando a los lados del camino" (165). Considering a depiction of an imaginary future as dystopian or utopian is, of course, an act that is rooted on the values of the person imparting these judgments of value. The values of this hypothetical person are also influenced and shaped by the historical, social, and personal circumstances of his/her own existence. Thus, to use the common metaphor, dystopia and utopia often prove to be "two sides of the same coin." And what might seem utopian for a person or for an era might seem dystopian for a different person or for those reading the same text at a different historical moment.

However, we have no reason to doubt that Urzaiz intended *Eugenia* to be a utopia. Even though Celiana's fate, and the nature of the eugenicist society portrayed in the novel might lead some contemporary readers to interpret *Eugenia* in dystopian terms, the government of the technologically-advanced society depicted in the novel is far from a repressive authoritarian regime—even though it certainly exercises considerable power over its citizens. On the other hand, it is important to remember that at the time of the novel's publication, eugenics was free from the negative connotations that it acquired after Nazism. Also, it is necessary to keep in mind that some of the initial negative reactions to Urzaiz's novel were likely caused by elements such as the novel's initial attack on the institution of family, its negative understanding of religion and nationalism,

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and the positive portrayal of Mendelian eugenicist practices, which were more widely accepted in the Anglo-Saxon world that they were in Latin America, where people were more familiar with Lamarckian eugenics.

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Chapter Two: Eugenics and Bio-Power in Early Colombian Science Fiction: The Case of José Félix Fuermayor's *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* (1928) and José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132* (1932)

In this second chapter I will analyze two Colombian science fiction novels: José Felix Fuenmayor's *Una trista aventura de 14 sabios* (The Sad Adventure of 14 Wisemen, 1928), and José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132* (1932). I will argue that while Fuenmayor mocks eugenics, scientific discourse, and the principles of Positivist thought itself in his brief novel, Osorio Lizarazo takes a much more ambiguous stand on the subject of eugenics, pointing out to what he understands as the positive and negative aspects of genetic manipulation in humans. I will also talk about the issue of gender in these novels. In my study of Osorio Lizrazo's novel, I will pay particular attention to the barely-mentioned concentration camps that rise as a byproduct of eugenicist policies in the future world of *Barranquilla 2132*. I will finally delve into Osorio Lizarazo's evident anxieties regarding the possible blurring of the line separating traditional gender roles in society that genetic manipulation and unforeseen social developments could bring upon the world. I will argue that Osorio Lizarazo's position reflects that of the conservative Colombian society of the first half of the 20th century, where the integration of women to the workforce was regarded with suspicion, as they gained general influence in the public sphere. Even though the author laments and denounces this possible transformation of gender relationships—and gender as such—in Colombian urban society, he also considers the possibility that these changes could be regarded as a sign of true social,

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cultural, and technological progress in the nation. In this chapter, I will try to understand these seemingly contradictory views of gender roles in Osorio Lizarazo's novel.

The Case of Una triste aventura de 14 sabios

José Felix Fuenmayor (1885-1966) was an influential Colombian writer and journalist. He was part of the *Grupo de Barranquilla*,[27] where he met regularly with local artists like Alejandro Obregón and Orlando Rivera, and writers such as Álvaro Cepeda Zamudio and a young Gabriel García Márquez (whose fiction he influenced). José Felix Fuenmayor was one of the first Colombian authors to write and publish works of science fiction; his short novel *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios* was published in 1928. Before him, Silva had written "Zooespermos" and "Futura," and Soledad Acosta had published her short story "Bogotá en el año 2000: un pesadilla" (1872) in more than one occasion.[28] Even though Fuenmayor's novel established the author as a pioneer of science fiction in Colombia, it is, to this day, one of his more obscure works. It is necessary to clarify that even though *Una triste aventura* is not only exclusively about eugenics, it does engage in a playful discussion of the moral and biological implications of this science, and the ways in which it could be practiced or implemented.

[27] A literary *tertulia* that existed in the 1940s and 1950s.

[28] This story was published for the first time in May, 3, 1872, in the journal El bien público, under the title "Una pesadilla." Acosta published the original text using the male pseudonym Aldebarán (Aldebaran is the brightest star in the constellation of Taurus). Months later the story was published again in the magazine La Caridad. In 1879 the story was published in La Mujer, and finally, in 1905, Acosta published her final version of the story under the title "Bogotá en el año 2000: una pesadilla" in the magazine *Lecturas para el hogar* (which Acosta herself directed). The version of the text that I will use in this project was published in the *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, Volume 5. (2000); it contains the segments that Acosta deleted from the earlier versions as well as the additions done to the story in its final publication of 1905. It is worth noting that Acosta does not use her masculine pseudonym in these last two versions of the text (1878 and 1905), which she signs with her initials S.A. de S.

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I will argue that *Una triste aventura* engages in a playful critique of modernity, that encompasses a critique of the figures of the scientist and the scholar—encompassed in the term *sabio*. I will also demonstrate that Fuenmayor's take on the topic of eugenics is instrumental on his critique of scientific discourse, Positivism, and modernity. Finally, I intend to demonstrate that, in an ironic tone, Fuenmayor's parodic novel deals with serious matters, such as the nature of gender relationships in 1920s Colombia.

Una triste aventura is a frame narrative, in which a man called Currés reads a manuscript that he has written to some of his friends in a social club. The title of this text is also *Una triste aventura de catorce sabios.* In this story, a group of fourteen *sabios*—scientists and humanist scholars from different fields—and three women,[29] find themselves immersed in what Aldebarán,[30] the leader of the group, describes as "¡[e]l más grande fenómeno de todas las edades!" (18) While the *sabios*, and the three women mentioned above, are traveling in an airplane, searching for an isolated location to conduct some experiments, a mysterious intergalactic "ray of light" hits a comet, which breaks through a cloud of cosmic dust, somehow creating a whole in it, and ultimately causing the sudden expansion of Earth and everything in it. Since everything and everyone grows simultaneously, nobody in the planet notices any changes. However, Aldebarán and the sixteen other individuals traveling with him are not affected by this mysterious phenomenon. Therefore, these seventeen characters become minuscule creatures in a gigantic world filled with gigantic animals and humans. Of course, the

[29] The fact that the women in the novel are not considered as being part of the *sabios* reflects the gender inequality of Colombian society in the 1920s. Women were not allowed to study in the country's universities until 1935.

[30] The fact that Adebarán is both the pseudonym that Soledad Acosta used in when publishing "Bogotá en el año 2000" for the first time, and the name that Fuenmayor gives to the leader of the *sabios* in his novel could either be an homage to Soledad Acosta's short story, or a mere coincidence.

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scientific explanation of the phenomenon is completely absurd, but the fictional author of the text, Currés, never claims that his description of the strange phenomenon is scientifically accurate.

Considering that they can all be accidentally squished by any gigantic human, or killed by the sting of a monstrous insect, the *sabios* and their female companions take shelter in a cave. Aldebarán, knowing that they are the only ones on Earth aware of "the greatest phenomenon of all ages," tries to contact other—now gigantic—humans, in an effort to communicate and spread this knowledge. But his efforts are ultimately futile. Considering the fact that he and his peers have become completely isolated from the rest of humanity, Aldebarán finally asks his colleagues to find a way of securing the "continuation of their race" (40). This triggers a series of debates, that range from the most practical implications of the endeavor, to the moral dilemmas that this task poses for the *sabios* and their female companions. The female members of the crew are Zitita, the young grandchild of geologist Geophon; Leila, daughter of the physicist Polipasto's; and Doña Dalila, Aldebarán's wife.[31] Since Zitita is quite young, she seems to be left out of the discussion; Leila, on the other hand, is soon seduced by Cabrillitas, the crew's pilot, and the only one of the *sabios* that has not yet reached old age. Doña Dalila is the oldest one of the three women, and even though her exact age is never stated in the book, it is clear that most of the male characters find her repulsive, due to her old age. Fuemayor's treatment of women in the book is problematic, to say the least, but the way in which the character of Doña Dalila is treated by most of the male characters is particularly cruel:

[31] The fact that Aldebaran's wife is named Dalila, as the famous biblical woman who betrayed Samson, both reflects the use of this archetypical figure in *Fin-de-Siècle* art and literature, and the treacherous, libidinous nature of Fuenmayor's character.

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she is portrayed as a needy old lady, trying to take advantage of this unusual chance of having sex—and engaging in a romantic relationship—with one of the fourteen *sabios.* Doña Dalila is not only violently rejected in more than one occasion, she is also mocked and humiliated, and often serves as the comedic relief of the novel. The numerous discussions that these men have about sex and procreation provide us with the most direct references to the topic of eugenics in the novel.

Mr. Currés's story takes an unexpected turn when one of the *sabios,* named Hamat, reveals his true identity. He tells his colleague Torado that he is a black wizard (*Mago Negro*), and hypnotizes him through unclear means. Hamat's plan is to capture all of his colleagues and bath in their blood; he believes that this will revitalize him, making him immortal. Hamat talks to invisible demons, and at times it is unclear if the *sabio* is indeed an undercover wizard, or a man that has lost his mind due to desperation and helplessness. The self-proclaimed black wizard and his helper capture all of the other members of the crew, tying them up. Doña Dalila and Cabrillitas put up a fight; the old lady is finally subdued, and the pilot is quickly murdered by Hamat. Meanwhile, Aldebarán, who is still locked up in his chamber, has a dream about entering the gigantic body of a gigantic man, and cutting, inside of his brain, the string that—he believes—links spirit and matter. Aldebarán wakes up from his dream, and decides to leave his chamber in order to communicate his newly imagined project to his wife and colleagues. Before the astronomer leaves his room, Torado and his master have an argument. The servant feels tricked by the wizard, because he believes that the dark forces invoked by Hamat should also give him the gift of immortality. Finally, Torado strangles Hamat, and

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dies when an unknown supernatural force attacks him. Torado's unusual death is the only proof of the authenticity of the supernatural elements in the story.

Aldebarán finally enters the main chamber, and finds the bodies of his wife and colleagues on the ground; he first assumes that they are sleeping. When he understands that they are actually dead, he decides to write a report about this unusual fact. The scientist eventually returns to his room, grabs his telescope, and decides to leave the cavern. He is eager to conduct an experiment that, as he sees it, would be "la más grande empresa de todos los tiempos" (72); arguably, entering a human brain and cutting the string that ties matter and spirit. However, the old man never gets to conduct this ambitious experiment, since he falls down the cave when trying to reach the surface, and dies instantly. But in death, Aldebarán's spirit is cut loose from his body, and he reaches a state of being characterized by "el conocimiento sin limitaciones, la Felicidad inmanente y el reposo de las circulaciones absolutas" (72). After he finishes reading his manuscript, Mr. Currés looks at his watch, and before any of the members of his audience says anything, he excuses himself arguing that he doesn't want to be late. He argues that, for the first time, he is violating "domestic discipline" (73)—perhaps an obscure reference to his wife's strong character—and he leaves the club swiftly.

The novel's engagement with the subject of eugenics begins when Aldebár trusts his colleagues with the preservation of their race (the race of comparatively smaller men that has been produced by the strange intergalactic ray of light). After listening to their leader's order, the scientists engage in several debates about what is the best way of achieving this goal. Infús, the bacteriologist, condems "el genio de la especie" (40)—a term that he atributes to Darwin—for "tantos vicios que relajan la dignidad humana"

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(41).[32] "El genio de la especie" is, of course, nothing other than human sexual desire. Infús also condems "el genio de la especie" for misleading humans into believing that they will have a good time, while in reality its real purpose is the making of a child (idem). This personification of sexual desire is quite interesting, especially since it portrays it as a villainous entity, that tricks humans and damages "human dignity." According to the bacteriologist, sexual desire is also an obstacle for the true freedom of human kind. He argues that "[l]ibres no seremos mientras vivamos cogidos por esa trampa; mientras el genio de la especie darwiniano haga el payaso y circule en la sociedad humana con sus múltiples mascarones y mascarillas" (idem). It is relevant to mention here that the gradual assimilation of the ideas of Charles Darwin and other European evolutionist scientists during the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century played an important role in the evolution of science fiction throughout the entire Western world. Latin American science fiction authors were not exempt from Darwin's influence.[33] In fact, the Argentinian scientist, educator, and science fiction author, Eduardo Ladislao Holmberg, was a fierce defender of the theory of evolution in his country. According to Haywood Ferreira, throughout the last years of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century, "Latin American writers regularly included evolutionary themes in their science fictional texts, though they often espoused

[32] This term was actually coined by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, not Charles Darwin. In spite of this misunderstanding on the part of Infús, his understanding of Schopenhauer's concept is fairly accurate.

[33] The Mexican *modernista*, and science fiction pioneer in the region Amado Nervo, published "La última guerra" in serialized form, from 1896 to 1899. In this story, an evolved race of animals goes to war with humans, after being enslaved by them. The animals in the story end up triumphant, and humanity is reduced to a small number of survivors. Nervo might have been influenced by H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), in which a deranged scientist modifies the bodies of wild animals in order to make them more like humans. Also, Wells' *The Time* Machine (1895) presents a future world in which human kind has evolved into two different species: the monstrous Morlocks and the fragile Eloi. All of these works of science fiction deal with the topic of natural—or forced—evolution.

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theories of evolution alternative to that of Darwin" (80). In *Una triste aventura*, Infús's finds in eugenics a way of fighting what he sees as the pervasive "genio de la especie." His hope is that, "llegará un día en que todo huevo se hará por el sabio viejo, y no en una postura humillada, sino de pie, en el austero laboratorio" (41). For Infús, eugenics could be a way of freeing human kind of the pervasive moral and social effects of sexual desire ("el genio de la especie"). This "positive" and "optimistic" view of eugenics will seem impossible after the embrace of eugenics by Nazi Germany, and its monstrous implementation in concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

Infús not only believes that eugenics could free humanity from the negative effects of sexual desire, he also believes that it could be the path for improving the human species as such. In his own words, in a world were human reproduction is conducted in a synthetic manner, "vedado quedará a la gente aturdida, producir a la diabla, como hoy, las nefandas cosechas que infestan a la humanidad. Entonces, el sabio de los años proveerá el *stock* humano a la medida conveniente y con unidades equilibradamente constituidas" (idem). In these lines, Infús goes from the idea of liberating humanity from what he sees as the negative effects of sexual desire, to imagining a future in which a potentially totalitarian bio-political regime (ruled, perhaps, by scientists) would regulate human reproduction, banning "unfit" people ("gente aturdida") from reproducing freely, regulating the number of humans ("el *stock* humano") in the planet, and producing "unities constituted with balance." These "unities" mentiond by Infús are the improved humans of years to come: an individual that has been genetically engineered to be superior, far better than the "gente aturdida" that preceeded him/her.

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Infús does not describe the kind of society that he believes could be achieved by these bio-political practices. Nevertheless, it is not hard to see that the scientist's utopia—as most utopias—could soon become a horrible totalitarian dystopia. How would authorities—scientists or politicians—enforce their restrictive policies regarding procreation? How would they prevent the reproduction of people that they consider unfit? Would they resource to physical or chemical castration? Would they place these individuals in concentration camps and police their every movement, administering and controlling their bodily functions and physical needs in a clear display of oppressive bio-power? On the other hand, how would they create those "ideal humans" of the future? Artificial insemination? Humans developed in-vitro? Finally, and more importantly, how would the scientists, or those in power, determine who is fit and who is unfit for reproduction? How would they determine what lives are not only "unworthy of being lived"—to use Agamben's terms—but even "unworthy of being born?" Although Infús's "utopic" society of eugenically produced ideal humans exists only in his mind, the potentially monstrous moral and political implications of his fantasy are clear to the contemporary, post-World War II reader.

Dormón criticizes his colleague's hypocritical discourse, arguing that Infús is, in fact, sad, because he cannot produce "animálculos que muy pronto medran pero que poco a poco se pudren en la tierra" (42). This reference to spermatozoids is reminiscent of Silva's poem "Zooespermos." It is quite possible that Fuenmayor read Silva's poem in the first edition of *Gotas amargas*. Dormón argues that he is not interested in children, and states that he is more interested in the creation of philosophical works, which he

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regards as “entes mentales que se incorporan con el espíritu universal y nunca mueren” (idem). The topic of fatherhood will be a relevant trope throughout Fuenmayor’s novel.

Some of the *sabios*, including Infús, Frontispo, Entomot, Arbarcando, and Brantino, are soon affected by “el genio de la especie.” They lust for Zitita, the young granddaughter of geologist Geophon. However, she is always under her grandfather’s protection. They also lust for Leila, but she is soon seduced by Cabrillitas, and the scientists decide to avoid a confrontation with the young pilot. Ironically, Doña Dalila, who is eager to have sex with any of her husband’s colleagues, is constantly being rejected by them, due to her old age. When analyzing the effects that this unsatisfied sexual desire—paired with the isolation in which they now live—causes in the scientists’ collective psyche, Arbarcando says: “El sentirnos en este aislamiento absoluto de nuestros congéneres; el sabernos condenados a desaparecer sin dejar rastro alguno; el considerar que el hijo es como una supervivencia y que este recurso de prolongarnos lo anula nuestra vejez: todo esto constituye una violencia indirecta que desvía nuestro cerebro” (52-53). It is relevant that the topic of the son as a continuation of one’s own existence—the child as a means for survival—is also present in Arbarcando’s thought. In fact, this trope is a constant element of Fuenmayor’s novel. From a genetic and an evolutionist point of view, Arbarcando’s argument is true: we see our offspring as our survival, because our children are both the embodied continuation of the human species, and the survival in time of our genetic material. They are, not metaphorically, but quite literally, part of our selves; our actual future. For this reason, it seems natural that Aldebarán asks his colleagues to find a way for the continuation of their new sub-species of humans; this is why Infús tries to find “un medio para asegurar la continuación de la

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curiosa especie humana de que hoy somos ejemplares únicos" (42). It is relevant to point out that this trope of the need for the continuation of the species in spite of unfavorable conditions is also present in later works of science fiction, such as Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains (August 4, 2026/2057)," the last chapter in Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicels* (1950).

The fact that Zitita and Leila are unavailable for sex forces the scientists to turn their attention to Doña Dalila. And she is rather pleased by the attention that she is suddenly receiving. But when Arbarcando proposes the practice of artificial insemination, Doña Dalila loses her temper. Periton tries to copulate with her, but fails to inseminate her for unknown reasons (perhaps because of erectile dysfunction, although he might be simply sterile). Doña Dalila argues that they could just take Cabrillitas's genitals, and transplant them to Periton's body; she also suggests that they remove Leila's reproductive system, in order to transplant it into her own body (50). Periton, who seems somehow tired and apathetic after his initial failure in impregnating Doña Dalila, reluctantly agrees to this outrageous proposition. The old lady justifies all this mutilation and experimentation on the human body, arguing that Periton is "el sabio de más genio entre todos; en tanto a mí, tú dirás si Leila puede superarme, salvo en no ser yo una mocosa" (49). At this moment, Doña Dalila, not unlike the Nazi scientists of the 1930s and 1940s, seems to justify violence against others, with the implicit promises embodied by eugenics: the rise of a better human kind—through the reproduction of those seen as more fit among humans—and, with that, the possibility of a better future world. But here, the question of who exercises the power of deciding what human subjects are fit or unfit for reproduction rises again. Like it was the case with Infús's utopian vision of the future

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of humanity, Doña Dalila's words open a space for the justification of violence: in her opinion, violent acts such as amputation and mutilation can be justified by the science of eugenics. Doña Dalila's words, without a doubt, show the links that exists between bio-power—in this case exercised through eugenics—and violence.

In *Una triste aventura*, Periton's ideas for the preservation of his race of microscopic humans reaches the true apotheosis of its own absurdity when the biologist suggests some of the strangest eugenicist practices, such as inserting a septum or partition (the Spanish *tabique* could be translated either way) inside Doña Dalila's body, in order to facilitate a double pregnancy (50). Even though the possibility of having twins seems quite exciting for Doña Dalila at first, she is soon shocked by the strange and disturbing projects of Periton. The biologit tells her: "buscaré cómo hipertrofiarte las partes blandas de la pelvis; y en aquella adecuada estableceré diversos compartimientos aislados. Luego, utilizando conductos múltiples preparados por medio de delgadísimos tubos, bombearé…" (50-51). The constant play with the absurd, and the use of the literary resource of the hyperbole, are important tools in Fuenmayor's critique of the figure of the *sabio*. In this particular scene, Periton is suddenly interrupted by Doña Dalila, who asks about how many children does he want her to bear; she also asks him who will be helping her breastfeed the children—the common sense nature of these questions generate a strong contrast with the outrageous absurdity of Periton's eugenicist project. While analyzing Eduardo Urzaiz's *Eugenia*, Haywood Ferreira argues that "1919 is historically too early in the trajectory of eugenics in Latin America (or anywhere else in the world) for either satire or dystopia based on fear of eugenics to be likely" (79). Fuenmayor's clearly satirical take on eugenics, thus, demonstrates that the nine years separating the

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publication of his novel and Urzaiz's *Eugenia* have been sufficient for popular knowledge of eugenics in Latin America to be subverted, mocked, and satirized.

Eventually, Doña Dalila concludes her complaint stating: "Tú no me has entendido. Lo que yo quiero es aprovechar todo tu cariño" (51). Periton avoids his new "duties" claiming that he is tired. When Doña Dalila tries to hold him tight, an exasperated Periton rejects her violently, yelling the words "¡Déjame, te he dicho, vieja!" (idem). As I mentioned above, the treatment of women in Fuenmayor's novel is far from ideal. Doña Dalila is portrayed as a needy, ridiculous, and lustful old lady. Her old age is constantly used by the main characters of the novel to justify their rejection of her in the cruelest of ways.

Fuenmayor's treatment of Zitita and Leila is not much better than his treatment of Aldebarán's elderly wife: Zitita is portrayed as a character with no agency what so ever. She doesn't speak, not even once, in the entire novel. Leila, on the other hand, exercises her sexuality freely, and seems to be in control of her own destiny and body; nevertheless, she has very little dialogue in the novel, and her fate is always being discussed by the male character around her. She is often seen as a vehicle for the perpetuation of their kind, and treated not like an individual, but like a thing that could be used for the common good. The male characters often talk about her in a way that suggests that they see her as Cabrillita's property now. The *sabios*' intention of shaping and controlling Leila's life and body becomes evident when Periton tells Polipasto, the young woman's father, to prohibit her relationship with Cabrillitas, (43). Polipasto's answer is rather relevant to the story, because it highlights the particularity of the context that makes possible the invalidation of traditional moral values and customs, and the

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apparition of eugenics as a valid means for the improvement and perpetuation of the species. Polipasto's answer is formulated in the form of a question: "¿Cuál es ahora nuestra inmoralidad? … ¿Cuál es nuestra moral ahora?" (44). As Entomon soon answers, their new situation demands for a new understanding of morality. This new morality allows for both sexual relationships between an unmarried couple,[34] and the use of eugenics, in the form of all sorts of experiments in the human body, for the perpetuation of a new kind—or rather, the original "unchanged" kind—of humans.

It is of great importance to highlight the fact that, even though Doña Dalila is mocked, rejected and humiliated throughout the entire novel, she is the most important female character—and one of the most important characters—of Fuenmayor's story. She is never afraid of speaking her mind—even though her words are met with mockery or disgust—and she exercises total control over her sexuality. Even the title of the novel itself evidences the unfair treatment of women in the story: the three women in *Una triste aventura* are not counted within the group of *sabios*. And yet, Doña Dalila is not ignorant when it comes to science. She proves to be familiar with the work of French Scientist Louis Pasteur (47), and questions Infús's competence as a scientist, accusing him of opposing "the experimental methods" (46). But even though Doña Dalila proves to be an independent, articulate woman, she is still portrayed as a flat, predictable character, who acts driven by either lust, or a pathetic lack of attention and affection. Even her defense of "experimental methods" comes from her desire of having sex with the male characters in the novel.

[34] It is important to add that even though Leila seems to exercise her sexuality freely, she still complains to her partner, Cabrillitas, expressing her shame of the fact that they are engaging in sexual relationships even though they are not yet married (60).

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The fact that Fuenmayor's story is full of irony and has, for the most part, a comedic tone, does not mean that the author did not deal in his work with real problems and situations that characterized the Colombia of the late 1920s. The Great Depression—which greatly affected the globalized economy—caused social unrest in Colombia. Conservative president Miguel Abadía Méndez had to borrow considerable amounts of money from the United States, to invest in the country's infrastructure—railroads, seaports, waterways, and roadways—alleviating the unemployment in a small degree. The tension between traditional parties, Liberal and Conservative, was still present in the nation, although it did not reach the levels of violence and intolerance that it reached in the late 19th century—bringing upon the *Guerra de los mil días*, which lasted from 1899 to 1902—and in the mid-20th century.[35] Fuenmayor subtly touches on the political tensions between Liberals and Conservatives at the beginning of his novel. While Currés and other gentlemen are enjoying an evening at the Club, a fat man reading *La Nación* is operating an electric fan, to the discomfort of a thin and fragile-looking gentleman reading *El Liberal* (9). *El Liberal* is probably a reference to the liberal newspaper of the same name, which ran from 1911 to 1917, from 1934 to 1935, and from 1938 to 1951. *La Nación* is a more obscure reference, and it could be a nod to some Conservative local or national newspaper of Fuenmayor's time.

Social inequality, and unemployment, are also subtly referenced by the author in the brief initial sequence, where a wealthy industrialist and a presumably unemployed man who describes himself as both poor and honest discuss the inefficiency of scientists and inventors (also called *sabios*) in the world of industry. The topic of the foolishness of

[35] After the assassination of influential Liberal politician Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, killed in April 9, 1948, the country enter a decade of extreme political violence and social unrest known as La Violencia.

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sabios is, as I will demonstrate, at the heart of Fuenmayor's novel. I claim that this attitude towards *sabios* is part of a greater criticism of the values of modernity. On the other hand, Fuenmayor's mockery of the science of eugenics, which includes both its methods and its purpose—the synthetic creation of a superior human race—is articulated in the relationship and interactions between Periton and Doña Dalila. This irreverent take on eugenics is part of Fuenmayor's irreverent posture towards science, and its critique of modernity.

As mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, *Una triste aventura* is a frame narrative. The story of the fourteen *sabios* and their three female companions is a brief manuscript written by Mr. Currés, who reads the text out loud to his friends at a social club for men. But before Currés starts reading his book, two men at the club are passionately discussing a news that they had recently read in the newspaper called *La Prensa.* The article that the two men are discussing tells the story of a German engineer—also called a *sabio*—who was victim of a scam. One of the two men argues that the story is irrelevant, since the man who falls for such a mediocre scam is probably "silly" (*tonto*). When the other man angrily contradicts this, emphasizing the fact that the victims was a *sabio*, his conversation partner dismissively answers, "da lo mismo. Para tontos, los sabios" (10). When challenged to explain his seemingly outrageous claim, the man simply states that a *sabio* "sabe pocas grandes cosas que muchos no conocen y no sabe muchas pequeñas cosas que pocos ignoran. El sabio nos pone a merced suya en sus dominios ideales; mas cuando 'pone el pie en tierra' queda prácticamente en nuestras manos y, créanme, lo último es muy peligroso" (idem). This claim seems to reflect common representations of intellectuals, scientists, and scholar in popular culture. The

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archetype of the aloof professor or the relatively dysfunctional genius is a product of these common stereotypes. To better illustrate his point, this man claims that he would rather be beaten in an intellectual argument, rather than being taken advantage of, in the context of a commercial transaction (11). These ideas ignite a passionate discussion that ultimately leads Currés to read his story out loud.

As it turns out, Currés—and arguably Fuenmayor himself—agrees with the claim that a *sabio* is some sort of wise fool; a man who possesses precious knowledge about impractical matters, and ignores basic things that allow regular people to have functional lives. *Una triste aventura* is, nonetheless, the story of fourteen scientists and scholars that find themselves in a situation of extreme isolation and vulnerability, which leads them to expose their total inadequacy for practical life, their ineptitude for social interaction, and, ultimately, their latent madness. It is not clear if Hamat, the black wizard, is truly the possessor of supernatural powers, or simply a deranged scientist, who goes on a killing spree after suffering from bizarre hallucinations caused by the stress of his new condition as micro-human. As I mentioned above, the only evidence of actual supernatural demonic intervention in the story is Torado's death, and one could still try to find a rational explanation to his sudden demise (a heart attack?).

The seemingly innocent mockery of *sabios* in *Una triste aventura* has serious implications. Most of these men are scientist and scholars (there is a bacteriologist, an astrologist, a biologist, a geologist, a physicist, a philosopher, an architect, and a philologist). The only individuals that don't fit these categories are the three women, the pilot Cabrillitas, and the undercover black wizard, Hamat. The field of studies of a few *sabios* is never stated in the text. It is rather revealing that the *sabios* in the novel fail in

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all projects they embark on. To begin with—because of the sudden expansion of the world—they are never able to conduct the experiments they originally intended to do; Aldebarán fails in establishing contact with those that he describes as "hombres ultramétrics;" the rest of the *sabios*—and Periton in particular—fail in the project of perpetuating the race of microscopic humans that they now constitute; both Hamat and Torado fail when trying to acquire immortality through ritualistic human sacrifice; and Aldebarán fails—again—on his project of "cutting the string" that he believes connects spirit and matter. *Una triste aventura* is, in a way, a story about supposedly brilliant men failing in all of their practical projects. I believe that this is not only a mockery of the unpractical nature of the scientist and the scholar; Fuenmayor's text goes far beyond that. I argue that the author's mockery of the *sabios* is a critique of the ideals of modernity. The principles of Positivism,[36] and its championing of the scientific method and the processes of rational though as the only valid paths to knowledge, were instrumental in the fall of religious discourse as the highest source of truth in society—and particularly within the most educated social circles. Positivism played a very important role, in the development as what we understand today as modernity. If there is a figure of authority in Positivism, it is that of the scientist. And yet, that is the archetype that Fuenmayor subverts and mocks in *Una triste aventura.* The author's mockery of the scientist and the scholar is not, however, accompanied by a defense of any alternative figure of authority or source of truth. In his irreverent posture towards the figures of authority of his own time, and his decision not to replace them with other figures of authority that could be

[36] Positivism began in France, in the early 19th century. Some of its most important exponents were Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and John Stuart Mill.

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regarded as the champions of truth, Fuenmayor is utterly anti-modern, and, one could even say, surprisingly postmodern.

The reception of Fuenmayor's text was not particularly positive. Most of the negative criticism was targeted to the seemingly absurd nature of the novel, and to the fact that the story's premise, which seems promising at first, ends up going to waste throughout the narrative. Ramón Vinyes, Ramón Illán Bacca, and Campos Ricardo Burgos all wrote negative reviews of the novel. Luis Cermeño transcribes some of the earlier responses to the text, in his review "Una triste historia de 'Una triste aventura de 14 sabios,' de José Félix Fuenmayor." Vinyes expressed his opinion of the text in the following manner: "Wells y Anatole France. Confuso. Imaginación pero no clara, porque no tiene una finalidad ni se sabe bien, precisamente lo que se quiere decir. El comienzo es interesante" (Vinyes in Cermeño). Illán Bacca, on the other hand, argues that the novel stops being interesting after Aldebarán realizes that the whole world, and everyone on it, has grown in a disproportionate manner, leaving him and his partners as microscopic creatures. In his opinion "Hasta allí hay acción, porque el resto de la novela transcurre en una especie de disquisición metafísica por boca de Aldebrán, que dice pensamientos—sublimes, en su mayoría—pero que matan la novela" (Illán Bacca in Cermeño). Finally, Burgos argues that Fuenmayor's novel "es apenas ciencia ficción toscamente manejada que abandona al lector con la sensación de un buen tema desperdiciado" (Burgos in Cermeño). Cermeño, who defends Fuenmayor from all this negative criticism, argues that these critics were caused by the critics' general lack of knowledge of science fiction, or their narrow understanding of the genre. He also points out to the fact that most of these authors bring up the names of international science fiction—or proto-science fiction—

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authors (Vinyes mentions the names of Wells and Anatole France, while Burgos mentions the names of Swift and Voltaire), and argues that this fact evidences the "feeling of national inferiority" that shapes and determines their reading of Fuenmayor's work. Cermeño also argues that the words of these critics demonstrate the existing prejudices of some scholars, who hold the "subliminal idea" that "en Colombia, no se pudo haber hecho buena Ciencia Ficción." Carmño's point is certainly a valid one, but his most important contribution to the reception of the novel is the identification and acceptance of its parodic nature, and the championing of its experimental nature.

Cermeño knows that the "cynical and parodic" character of the text will always affect its "recognition." However, the critic defends Fuenmayor's novel, framing it in what he understands as the science fictional tradition of a "literature of ideas" (a tradition in which he includes J.G. Ballard and Phillip K. Dick). He compares this novel to Isaac Asimov's "Super-Neutron" (1941), and praises the experimental character of Fuenmayor's text. Cermeño places *Una triste aventura* within the margins of what critic Albio Martínez defines as "la disgresión." For Martínez, this was a relevant characteristic of the counter-cultural literature produced in Colomia during the 1920s. Martínez's explanation of this literacy resource is also included in Cermeño's review of Fuernmayor's novel. According to Martinez

> la digresión o desviación del hilo conductor de un relato, o la inclusión dentro de él de cosas que en apariencia no tienen conexión o íntimo enlace con el tema principal que se está tratando; se considera como un elemento literario recurrente y válido y que para la época propiciaba la búsqueda de

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nuevos rumbos en la narrativa de los años veinte en nuestro país"

(Martinez in Cermeño).

Cermeño also argues that the negative reception of the text by early readers could also have been influenced by personal reasons. For example, Vinyes, who was a friend of Fenmayor, probably disliked the character of Dormón, the talkative, passive and generally vexing philosopher, who seems to distance himself from every action present in the novel. Vinyes might have interpreted this character as a caricature of himself. Naturally, this cannot be proved, but it is indeed possible. On the other hand, Cermeño argues that Burgos, like Vinyes, could have also disliked the novel, because of the "parodic and grotesque" way in which Fuenmayor depicted literary men in his novel.

The parodic, ironic, and baldly playful tone of Fuenmayor's story, is promptly announced by Mr. Currés, the fictional author of *Una triste aventura*. According to him, he wrote this text with the sole intention of "ofrecer algunos motivos de cavilación filosófica, teñidos apenas con los aéreos colores de las ideas y las sonrisas" (14 and 45). However, as I argued before, the fact that Fuernmayor's text is parodic in nature does not mean that it does not deal with serious issues, such as the political and economic circumstances of his historical moment, and his frontal attack on Positivism and the intellectual values of modernity.

In short, Fuenmayor's use of irony and hyperbole, a playful tone, and formal experimentation, do not undermine the text's relevance or invalidate its critiques to Colombian society of the late 1920s. The constant mistreatment of Doña Dalila—who is usually the target of mockery and criticism due to her old age—and the male character's disgust when confronted by the free expression of her sexual desire show the prudish

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hypocrisy that defined gender relationships in Fuernmayor's Colombia. The fact that none of the female characters in the story are considered to be members of the group of *sabios* is a reminder of the fact that women in Colombia had no access to higher education at the time when the novel was written. The lack of agency of Zitita—who does not speak in the entire novel—and the occasional discussions of the male characters about Leila and her relationship with Cabrillitas also reflect the constant effort of men of shaping and determining the fate of the women in their social circles. Finally, Fuenmayor's mockery of the figure of the *sabio*—characterized as an aloof and impractical scientist or scholar—is a central aspect of the author's critique of scientific discourse—a central characteristic of Positivist thinking—and of modernity in general. The novel's irreverent tone, its playful structure (a frame narrative with several plot lines that are never resolved), and its comical depiction of scientists and scholars—whose discourse had the weight of absolute truth—as unfit figures of authority, are all aspects that highlight the surprisingly postmodern nature of this work of fiction.

The Case of Barranquilla 2132

Barranquilla 2132 was first published in 1932; it is one of the first, and more relevant works of Colombian science fiction of the first half of the 20th century. José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo (1900-1964) wrote for several Colombian journals and newspapers; serving as director for *La Prensa, Diario Nacional*, and *El Heraldo*. He was a prolific author of chronicles and novels, and he is regarded as an outstanding author of 20th century urban Colombian literature. Among his novels are *El criminal* (1935), *La cosecha* (1935), *Hombres sin presente: Novela de empleados públicos* (1938), *Garabato*

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(1939), *El día del odio* (1952), and *Pantano* (1952). His last novel, *El camino en la sombra*, was published in 1965, one year after his death, and was awarded the Esso literary prize. Osorio Lizarazo was an influential political journalist, and he published several books about politics, including *El día del odio* (1952), a novel about *El Bogotazo,* the period of political and social unrest that followed the assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in April 9, 1948*; Gaitán: vida, muerte y permanente prsencia* (1952), also about the Colombian Liberal martyr; *Así es Trujillo* (1958), about the infamous Dominican tyrant; and *El bacilo de Marx* (1959). Not only was Osorio Lizarazo deeply concerned with politics, he was also a friend—and sincere admirer—of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán and Fidel Castro. He also collaborated with Juan Domingo Perón during his first two terms as president and with the dictator Rafael Trujillo, who ruled the Dominican Republic with an iron fist from 1930 until his assassination in 1961. Osorio Lizarazo's leftist political views were also articulated in *Barranquilla 2132.* The author curious fascination with prominent political figures—including his problematic "soft spot" for dictators, caudillos, and other forms of authoritative political figures—also finds its way into the novel, and is materialized in the relationship between the protagonist, Juan Francisco Rogers, and the figure of the mad scientist / potential dictator that he encounters in Chapter XI.

I will argue that Osorio Lizarazo's take on the subject of eugenics as articulated in *Barranquilla 2132* highlights the intrinsic moral problems of a eugenicist utopia. I will also delve into the author's deconstruction of the ideological pillars of modernity, such as the championing of scientific discourse and technological development, the defense of the institution of the democratic republic, and the pursuit of social and gender equality. I

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will pay special attention to Osorio Lizarazo's ideology, as articulated through the character of Juan Francisco Rogers. I will argue that Roger's ambiguous take on modernity, as well as his fascination with the figure of the megalomaniac villain, reflect not only the author's world-view, but also some of the more important ideological and social conflicts that were an integral part of Latin American social reality during the first half of the 20th century.

In *Barranquilla 2132* a man called Juan Fancisco Rogers is awakened from a 200-year sleep by a mysterious explosion in a historical building in 22nd century Barranquilla. Rogers identifies himself as a 20th century scientist—as Fuenmayor, Osorio uses the word *sabio* when referring to a scientist—who conducted a cryogenic experiment using his own body, with the hope of being awakened by a "new civilization," in order to enjoy the "marvels" that a "new system of life" could offer to "a man of his time" (14). The scientist himself leaves some documents describing the medical procedures that should be followed for achieving his artificial revival.[37] When awakened, Rogers finds himself in a world where technological progress has produced marvelous machines, and he is amazed by these 22nd century technological advances. Nevertheless, Rogers's opinions on the social reality that he encounters is far more ambiguous, as it ranges from total disappointment and moral disapproval, to a discrete but significant appreciation of some of the changes experienced by society in the 200-year period during which he was

[37] The topic of cryogenics had already been explored by H.G. Wells, who published his novel *The Sleeper Awakes* in 1910. A first version of this novel appeared in a serialized way from 1898 to 1899. This topic is also at the center of Woody Allen's comedy *Sleeper* (1973), and the animated American tv series *Furutama* (1999-2013), created by Matt Groening, and developed by Groening and David X. Cohen. In the context of Latin American science fiction, cryogenics is at the center of Gabriel González Melendez's novel *Los mismos grados más cerca del centro* (1991). It is important to mention that the Mexican author rewrote most of his novel for its 2013 publication. Washington Irving's short story, "Rip Van Winkle" (1819), also deals with the subject of a man who sleeps for an extended period of time. Irving's take on the subject, however, is closer to the traditions of fantasy and folklore that it is to science fiction.

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unconscious. Rogers's body is studied by a physician known as Dr. Var. The doctor soon delegates Rogers's protection to two investigative journalists, J. Gu, and M. Ba. Through his conversations with these two men, Rogers comes to a partial understanding of the many ways in which the world has changed during the last 200 hundred years.

Most of Osorio Lizarazo's novel focuses on Rogers's conversations with the two—somehow distant—journalists, and on the articulation of the many thoughts and opinions that the main character has about the new world that he has come to inhabit. Rogers's emotions evolve from an initial state of amazement with the world of the future to a feeling of perplexity and moral disgust, caused by the social practices that he encounters. Finally, Rogers's disappointment with the 22nd century, and his state of loneliness and relative isolation, lead him to a state of serious depression in the last chapters of the novel. The rhythm of the narrative changes dramatically in Chapter X, when J. Gu invites his guest to accompany him in "an interesting journey" (80). In his small private plane, J. Gu tells Rogers that he is not only a journalist, but also an undercover officer of the global police force. J. Gu tells Rogers that the real purpose of their journey is to investigate the strange explosions that had been terrorizing the citizens of several prominent cities around the world (including Barranquilla and New York). Of course, the fact that the sleeping body of Rogers was found because of one of these mysterious explosions is an important aspect of Roger's journey in the 22nd century. J Gu and other officers on the force suspect that these explosions are terrorist attacks, and J. Gu is set on the purpose of exposing the person responsible of these acts of terror. The plane in which Rogers and his partner are traveling is suddenly overtaken by what seems to be a terrible storm. Soon, J. Gu and Rogers are approached by an enormous shadow

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with the shape of a zeppelin. At this moment, J. Gu explains that, following his intuition, he transformed his small airplane into a magnet of sorts, in order to be attracted towards—and ultimately find—the source of the explosions that have terrorized the inhabitants of several of the world's major cities. The theories of J. Gu are confirmed when his plane is approached by this gigantic shadow, that turns out to be a gigantic ship, capable of flying at tremendous speeds. The pilot of this strange ship is also able to make it invisible to its potential pursuers, who unsuccessfully look for the ship using reflectors and armored aircrafts.

The pilot of this ship is a mysterious and ominous man, with an anachronistic aesthetic taste that resonates with Rogers. This evil genius confesses to be the perpetrator of several acts of terrorism, including the explosion that allowed Roger's eventual reanimation. Rogers himself highlights this fact when debating with J. Gu about the possibility of killing their captor. Even though the scientist-terrorist holds J. Gu and Rogers as prisoners, the 20th century man cannot help agreeing with his captor's worldview, according to which human civilization has "murdered the spirit, subordinating it to matter" (95). Rogers identifies with this dangerous man, even though he openly admits to being engaged in a scheme to achieve world-domination through violent (terrorist) means. The scientist goes as far as to state that he would like to become a god-like figure to humanity, since the human race suffers "the lack of a cult" (101). Convinced of the need to save humankind from such a terrible potential monarch, and also motivated by his own desire of fame and glory, J. Gu decides to kill the scientist, and this triggers a debate between him and Rogers. Rogers clearly sympathizes with the scientist's ideology, and regrets that he cannot be "rehabilitated" for the benefit of

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humanity. Rogers is finally convinced by the police/journalist and they both approach the potential dictator as he pilots the ship. J. Gu shoots the man in the back, using some kind of ray gun or laser; Rogers tries to alert the victim of this attack, but J. Gu acts quickly and murders his captor. After this, the two surviving men are triggered into space in the strange ship; neither of them knows how to operate it, and they assume that they will perish, lost in the cosmos forever. J. Gu takes a more active role in trying to escape the ship, while a depressed and regretful Rogers awaits his fate stoically. They finally board J. Gu's small plane, and propel it towards the ship's walls. But the wall has no effect on them or their aircraft, and the two men find themselves falling at a tremendous speed. J. Gu finally regains control of the aircraft, and they both land safely on the ground. Rogers, who barely utters a word after the death of the homicidal scientist, proposes the theory that, while trying to stop the ship's ascent towards outer space, J. Gu actually pressed a switch that made the walls of the ship immaterial, allowing them to escape unharmed in the journalist's aircraft.

J. Gu writes an article about this adventure. His article, it seems, is widely read. Some of the readers are skeptic of the events described by the journalist. Science academies from Paris and New York demand more details from the author. The strange news is, however, quickly forgotten—just like Rogers's unlikely "rebirth" in Chapter I—by the indifferent and oblivious society of the 22nd century. After their adventure, the insipient friendship that linked Rogers and J. Gu vanishes completely. Rogers is haunted by guilt after having participated in the assassination of a man that he regarded as a genius, and whose values he shared. He is also obsessed with the idea that he has failed, and eventually suggests that his failure is only comparable to the failure of modernity,

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materialized in what he understands as the social and ideological demise of human civilization. The reader learns that Rogers's sense of personal and social failure torments him deeply, when the narrator states: "este fracaso de sus esperanzas, de su concepto sobre el desarrollo progresivo de la humanidad, todo, le producía un sufrimiento casi físico" (125). The end of the generalized understanding of the history of human civilization as a narrative of progress is one of the central characteristics of postmodern thought. The fall of this dogmatically optimistic way of interpreting history began with the catastrophic Great War and continued during, and after, World War II. However, as I mentioned before, Rogers's deep sense of failure is not only linked to what he sees as the failure of human civilization, but also to what he understands as his own personal failure.

Part of Rogers's failure is his lack of capacity to create meaningful bonds with the people of the future. Rogers's feeling of isolation, which is constant throughout the novel, finds its dramatic conclusion in Chapter XV. This feeling of solitude is accentuated by his incapacity to interact, and build significant relationships with women of the 22nd century. In fact, there is not one single important female character in the whole novel. Since the moment he regains consciousness, Rogers seems quite shocked by the way in which gender relationships have evolved in the world. Nonetheless, he is critical enough to contemplate the possibility that his worldview might be misguided and that the society of the 22nd century could be culturally and even morally superior to that of his own time. Finally, Rogers arrives at the conclusion that his solitude and despair are the logical consequences of his violation of the laws of nature—he has, after all, extended his life through artificial means. The 20th century man promises not to commit these "crimes" again. After strolling through Barranquilla's port for some time, Rogers throws himself

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into the ocean. The novel ends with a brief description of "the magnificent serenity of the twilight" that "remains unhurt" (130) by Roger's suicide.

Eugenics in the Year 2132

In the imaginary future of *Barranquilla 2132,* humankind has been through a crisis caused by both overpopulation and an accelerated development of technology that left a considerable amount of the world's population unemployed. This led, as Roger soon learns, to the crisis of the year 2000—I will conduct a careful analysis of this crisis later in the chapter. To solve the problem of overpopulation, and seduced by the idea of developing a superior kind of future humans, the people of the future turn to the practice of eugenics. J. Gu describes the eugenicists policies of the 22nd century in the following manner:

> La natalidad está limitada … Cada ciudad debe tener una clínica para prevenir el exceso de natalidad. Además, solo pueden tener hijos los individuos perfectamente conformados, previos exámenes de extraordinaria minuciosidad por parte de los médicos. Cada mujer ha de revelar oportunamente quién es el padre del ser que palpita en sus entrañas: y si ni ella ni él reúnen las condiciones exigidas por esta disposición, el germen será anulado oficialmente. Hay penas severas para los que infringen estas leyes y los productos de este delito ingresarán a asilos especiales donde son sometidos a procesos de perfección o de muerte. Así se ha tratado de formar una raza única y perfecta para habitar en el planeta, cuyo equilibrio fisiológico sea tan exacto como el espiritual.

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> Así se trata de extinguir los odios y las rivalidades, de mantener una serenidad máxima sobre la tierra, de estabilizar entre los hombres el amor y la buena voluntad. (70)

J. Gu's description of life in the 22nd century illuminates the fact that, as it often happens, utopian thinking contains the seed of dystopia. This fictionalized use of eugenics is meant to "create a perfect and unique race—a *single* perfect race—to inhabit this planet." The existence of this perfect race—the only race—should "extinguish the hates and rivalries, maintain a level of maximum serenity on Earth, and stabilize the love and goodwill between men." Of course, the utopia depicted by J. Gu is possible because of the dystopian lives that it creates for all of those that do not fit the eugenicist civilizing project of the 22nd century. Not only are those considered unfit to reproduce prohibited from having children; the children of those regarded as unworthy of propagating the human species are either forcefully aborted or placed into something that might resemble a Nazi concentration camp. The use of the word *germen*—germ—creates a distance between the perpetrator of the forced abortion and its victim. While the word "fetus" implies the inherent potential of this organism for someday becoming a full-grown human being, "germ" seems to negate the potential humanity of this living organism. This mechanism that allows humans to kill for a variety of reasons and purposes is briefly described in Margaret Atwood's classic science fiction novel, *The Handmaiden's Tale* (1986). When the character of Luke—the partner of the main character, known as Offglen—fears that their abandoned pet might unintentionally alert authorities about their escape, he sets to kill their cat before escaping the totalitarian Christian fundamentalist regime that they live in. Before executing the cat, Luke says, "I'll take care of it" (192).

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In Offglen's words, "because he said *it* instead of *her*, I knew he meant *kill*. This is what you have to do before you kill, I thought. You have to create an it, where none was before. You do that first, in your head, and then you make it real" (192-93). In Chapter II, I will expand on the topic of the objectification or othering of potential human victims as a way of enabling acts of violence against specific individuals or groups of people. For this purpose, I will rely on the critical work of Elena Gomel, primarily, her essay "Aliens Among Us: Fascism and Narrativity" (2000).

The fact that J. Gu states that these unfit fetuses are "officially annulled" is also quite revealing. The verb "to annul" connotes an action that is prosaic and even bureaucratic. The use of euphemisms for acts such as murder and torture are common in the official discourse of several nations. Let us think, for instance, in the generalized use—in countries and states that practice the death penalty—of the verb "to execute," as opposed to verbs like "to kill" or "to murder;" or the euphemistic use of nouns such as "enhanced interrogation" instead of "torture."[38] On the other hand, J. Gu's use of the adverb "officially" reveals that, in Osorio Lizarazo's imaginary future, the bio-political state—and the officers that act in its name—has taken upon itself the task of deciding between the life and death of its citizens, and the administration of every aspects of their life, including even the circumstances and nuances of people's birth and death. This, of course, resonates with Foucault's understanding of bio-power, as defined in the third volume of *History of Sexuality.* For Foucault, bio-power is the kind of power that "gave itself the function of administering life, its reason for being and the logic of its exercise" (138). As I mentioned before, the eugenicist "utopia" drawn by J. Gu's words carries in

[38] This term is used by several United States agencies, such as the CIA and the DEA, to refer to the systematic torture of prisoners.

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itself the seeds of a horrible dystopia: a world in which the "products" of genetically unfit couples are secluded in "special asylums" in which they must undergo an unnamed series of processes that will either make them "perfect" or kill them. A contemporary reader might find the similarities between these imaginary asylums and the actual Nazi concentration camps that existed in German occupied territory during World War II utterly shocking; especially considering the fact that Osorio Lizarazo's novel was published some eight years before the establishment of Auschwitz. These similarities, however, are not purely coincidental.

Agamben argues that "Nazism, contrary to a common prejudice, did not limit itself to using and twisting scientific concepts for its own ends. The relationship between National Socialist ideology and the social and biological sciences of the time—in particular, genetics—is more intimate and complex and, at the same time, more disturbing" (145-46). The science of eugenics, in other words, was already potentially deadly when Osorio Lizarazo published his novel. The use of eugenicist principles to justify racism, and even genocide, was surely characteristic of the political strategies of the Nazi Party. And yet, the science of eugenics, for its very nature, was always—from its very origin—potentially deadly and even genocidal. When eugenicist principles are used to justify the reduction—or suppression—of sexual reproduction of people with "undesired traits," it can lead to forced sterilization; in the case of the 22nd century world imagined by Osorio Lizarazo, the end of avoiding the offspring of unfit individuals lead to systematic forced abortions and killings in places described as "special asylums." On the other hand, when the principles of eugenics are applied for stimulating higher rates of sexual reproduction among people with "desired traits," this can lead to practices as

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monstrous as Josef Mengele's human experimentation on twins. This infamous Nazi scientist committed monstrous atrocities trying to increase the reproductive potential of a "superior" Aryan race.

But in the world of the 22nd century described in *Barranquilla 2132* there is no one race that is regarded as superior to others. Even scientists from the Third Reich were aware of the fact that "[r]ace is genetic heredity and nothing but heredity" (Fischer in Agamben 146). Whatever the standards for human adequacy are in Osorio Lizarazo's novel, they are a mystery to the reader and, probably, even to Rogers himself. Even though the eugenicist system portrayed in the novel is clearly evil in nature, it would be inaccurate to call it "racist." As I have proven earlier, in *Eugenia* the reader encounters a social system where the sexual reproduction of unfit individuals is made impossible through systematic sterilization, while the sexual reproduction among individuals with "desirable traits" is stimulated, and even enforced as a state policy. However, sterilized subjects in Urzaiz's novel will often have normal and happy lives, and institutions such as the obscure asylums mentioned in Osorio Lizarazo's novel will be significantly absent from the narrative.

Naturally, a social project based on eugenics is concerned with the distinction between "life worthy of being lived" and "life unworthy of being lived." The origin of the concept of a "life unworthy of being lived" is presented by Agamben in Part Three of *Homo Sacer*. He explains that this concept was first used in German scientific circles, as some physicians developed a moral defense of euthanasia. This concept, however, was appropriated by the Nazi Party, which then used it to justify the systematic elimination of Jewish and Roma people, as well as homosexuals, and individuals suffering from mental

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illness and genetic malformation. The role of concentration camps in this project is, of course, of the greatest importance. For Agamben, "the camp—as the pure, absolute, and impassable bio-political state (insofar as it is founded solely on the state of exception)—will appear as the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity, whose metamorphoses and disguises we will have to learn to recognize" (123). If the camp is "the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity," that is, if the camp is somehow implicit in the project of modernity, the fact that this space appears in fiction preceding the Holocaust should not come as a surprise.

In short, the future imagined by Osorio Lizarazo a year before Hitler's naming as Chancellor of Germany includes the existence of concentration camps—called "asylums" in the novel—built on a eugenicist discourse, for biological and political purposes. Calling these places "asylums" and not "concentration camps" would fail to acknowledge an important aspect about them: that their function is the systematic extermination of a "kind" of people; not members of a racial or ethnic group, but people branded as "unfit," or genetically inferior. This cruel purpose is pursued through the means of forced abortions and sterilization. But the apparition of these camps—or asylums—is only one of the many downfalls of modernity that Rogers discovers in the 22nd century. And yet, it is strikingly strange that Rogers seems to care so very little—or not at all—about the apparition of these camps. It would seem as if such a thing seemed totally natural to the character. This raises the question of up to what extent were the science of eugenics and the project of modernity interconnected. In other words, it would be relevant to ask ourselves up to what extent were eugenics central to the utopian project of modernity, as understood by the people living in the West during the first half of the 20th century.

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The imaginary camps of *Barranquilla 2132* also tell us a lot about sovereign power in general, and about the role of the state of exception in bio-political regimes in particular. According to Agamben, “[t]he paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact that the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order” (15). Agamben refers to Carl Schmidt’s definition of the sovereign, as “that who decides on the state of exception” (11). He also builds on Schmidt’s understanding of the nature of sovereign power, and its relation with the state of exception, when arguing that “[i]f the sovereign is truly the one to whom the juridical order grants the power of proclaiming a state of exception, and, therefore, of suspending the order’s own validity, then ‘the sovereign stands outside the juridical order and, nevertheless, belongs to it, since it is up to him to decide if the constitution is suspended’” (Schmidt in Agamben 15). In the world of *Barranquilla 213*, where the institution of the nation-state has disappeared, and cities govern themselves as independent entities, it is not easy to point out to a singular sovereign figure, responsible for declaring the state of exception. And yet, these concentration camps—which are not described at depth by Osorio Lizarazo’s narrator—are the clear consequence of the existence of a—*de facto?*—state of exception. It is never clear whether these “asylums” exist in every major city of this world, whether they were created by the assembly of sheriffs that govern the cities, or by the Universal Assemblies that regulate the relationships between cities. Almost everything about these ominous spaces remains a secret to the reader. The space of the camp is, therefore, a social taboo.

The existence of these horrible camps also implies the existence of a set of rules and laws, policies and practices, that operate both inside and outside of them. Those who disobey the rules of “proper reproduction” have to face “severe punishments” (*penas*

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severas) (70). What these punishments might be is up for the reader to imagine. The offspring of "unfit" individuals, in other words, the children produced through the "crime" of improper reproduction, are confined to these asylums, where they must undergo a process of "perfección o de muerte" (idem). Again, the way in which the workers of these asylums undertake the process of "perfecting" these genetically flawed individuals is never explained in the novel. Probably, it would be safe to assume that these practices and methods are not necessarily gentle. But mentioning that some of the individuals regarded as genetically inferior—or physically unfit, and so on—suffer the fate of death is what really makes clear the hypocrisy at the core of the state of exception. In fact, this hypocrisy is almost an ontological necessity of the state of exception. By the end of Osorio Lizarazo's novel, the reader learns that J. Gu is working with the global police to capture the terrorist responsible for the attacks on Barranquilla and other major cities around the world. If the decision of chasing this criminal is based on a law against murder, and if those in command of the corps of the global police are also in charge of the concentration camps for the "improvement" of the species, then, those who punish criminals for committing murder are also responsible for systematic murder on a large scale. In other words, in the world of *Barranquilla 2132*, those responsible for prosecuting murderers are also responsible of genocide.

This is a clear example of what Agamben understands as "the sovereign exception." According to him:

> Inscribed as a presupposed exception in every rule that orders or forbids something (for example, in the rule that forbids homicide) is the pure and unsanctionable figure of the offense that, in the normal case, brings about

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> the rule's own transgression (in the same example, the killing of a man not by natural violence but as sovereign violence in the state of exception). (21)

In the case of those in power in the world of *Barranquilla 2132*, the systematic annihilation of "genetically inferior" people constitutes a clear case of sovereign exception. J. Gu is not charged for murdering the terrorist scientist; on the contrary, he openly shares the story of the killing of this man with both the media and the authorities. He is not put on trial; he faces no legal consequences for this specific action. This does not mean that the act of killing has no legal consequences in the future world portrayed by Osorio Lizarazo; it means that J. Gu—as part of the global police—is invested with the authority of killing a criminal. J. Gu is therefore an agent of sovereign power, not unlike the people killing "genetically inferior" children—justifying their actions in eugenicist terms—in the infamous asylums. The sovereign exception at play here is evident: the actions of the terrorist scientist—that is, killing a considerable number of people and damaging public and private infrastructure—are seen as crimes, and therefore punishable by law. On the other hand, the deaths caused by those working in the asylums, as well as J. Gu's killing of the world-conquering scientist, are permitted, and indirectly caused, by the sovereign power—wherever that power might rest in the context of the society portrayed in Osorio Lizarazo's novel. Those exercising sovereign power are allowed to kill, even though killing is not allowed; this means that they are, somehow, outside the law. That is the paradox of sovereign power: "the law is outside itself," or "the sovereign, who is outside the law, declares that there is nothing outside the law"

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(Agamben 15). What is punished by the sovereign, is also permitted to the sovereign, who claims that "there is nothing outside the law."

The Failure of Modernity: The Politics of *Barranquilla 2132*

When Juan Francisco Rogers wakes up in the year 2132, he finds out that the project of modernity failed and collapsed in the year 2000. J. Gu describes this phenomenon as "the crisis of the year 2000." This crisis was made possible by the enormous unemployment that characterized the world at the end of the 20h century. This unemployment was caused, curiously, by the mechanization of most human industries. While Fritz Lang's early science fiction film *Metropolis* (1927) shows a future in which the mechanization of industry has led to a new form of human slavery, increasing the social gap between the working class and the aristocracy,[39] Osorio Lizarazo imagines a future in which humans are not enslaved by their obligations concerning the operation of industrial machinery, but one in which working class people are altogether replaced by machines, causing high rates of unemployment, global poverty, and enormous social unrest.[40] In Osorio Lizarazo's words, "[l]as máquinas habían terminado por desalojar a los obreros. Las máquinas lo hacían todo. Pero no era posible obtener lo que hacían las máquinas" (44). This situation is only aggravated by the fact that the world is

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[39] H.G. Wells reviewed Lang's movie; according to the British author, Lang's film completely missed the point of the mechanization of industry. For Wells, machines would eventually do all the work for humans, which would lead to a better quality of life for everyone in the industrialized world. In Charles Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), a movie released in the context of the Great Depression, the lives and bodies of the workers of a plant also become more and more mechanized, as they become necessary parts of the machinery that they operate.

[40] Interestingly, the fear that the developments on both robotics and artificial intelligence will cause higher rates of unemployment throughout the world in the decades to come is gaining popularity among contemporary scientists, industrialists, and scholars form different disciplines.

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overpopulated. Osoro Lizarzo describes the failure of the relationship between technology and capitalism in the following way:

> Las antiguas teorías habían establecido que los hombres podrían encontrar la felicidad definitiva cuando no les fuera preciso trabajar, cuando todo pudiera lograrse mecánicamente, cuando por tal causa los objetos se pusieran al alcance de los más miserables. Pero no pudieron evitar que un día las máquinas constituyeran la desventura definitiva. Por ínfimo que fuera, todos los objetos tenían un precio y no era posible obtener ninguna suma de dinero. (idem)

When people stop paying taxes and governments fall, revolutions erupt. Workers burn factories and plants, and kill their owners. Violence quickly spreads through the entire world. The planet falls in a state of anarchy.[41] J. Gu describes this moment of global social unrest as “la revuelta del hambre” (idem) and “la rebellion del hombre contra la máquina” (idem). J. Gu concludes his explanation of the crisis of the year 2000 by stating that this historical moment was “la bancarrota de una civilización” (45), and that through it “pereció toda la civilización Antigua” (idem). As I will soon demonstrate, this crisis was necessary for the existence of the future world imagined by Osorio Lizarazo.

J. Gu characterizes this crisis as a “baptism of blood,” after which the world emerged “rejuvenated” (idem). The many violent revolutions, alongside with the extreme unemployment and subsequent poverty, “solve” the world’s overpopulation problem. But

[41] As I will demonstrate in Chapter III, Osorio Lizarazo’s use of the term “anarquía” as a negative state of chaos and social unrest can be contrasted to Jorge Luis Borges’s and Allan Moore’s understanding of anarchy as the desirable or ideal state of human civilization. It is relevant that both Borges and Moore demonstrate a positive understanding of anarchy in the period known as the Cold War, while Osorio Lizarazo emphasizes the negative connotations of the term in his pre-World War II novel.

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the crisis does not only decrease the world's population by "several billions," it also opens the path for "new theories" to arise, giving technology "a more humane sense," and when new physical principles are discovered, they are applied in a more "sensible, perfect, and simplified" way (idem). When institutions start forming again, they come back in radically different forms. J. Gu explains that the institution of the nation-state has disappeared. Frontiers, thus, lose their meaning, and the world enters a moment of total globalization. The world's tendency towards a more complete globalization is also emphasized by the Spanish spoken by the men of the future: a variation of Spanish that has more "guttural sounds," a phenomenon that is described as a direct cause of the "tendency towards the universalization of language, imposed by the approximation of all peoples" (23). This tendency towards globalization is also linked to the development of the industry of commercial aviation in Osorio Lizarazo's story. Quite early in the novel, the reader learns about the development of "transatlantic airplanes," capable of crossing the Atlantic Ocean in 12 hours.

In Osorio Lizarazo's novel, fossil fuels and propellers are abandoned in the future; instead, both commercial and private aircrafts are fueled by "atomic energy" (25).[42] The replacement of fossil fuels by nuclear sources of power is accompanied by the replacement of cars by airplanes (35). In this way, Osorio Lizarazo follows on the footsteps of Yevgeny Zamyatin' *We* (1921) and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, both science fiction novels in which different forms of aircrafts become the main means for transportation for the people of the future. While the totalitarian state known as OneState

[42] Osorio Lizarazo was certainly informed of the latest discoveries of his own time. The same year in which *Barranquilla 2132* was published, Ernest Rutherford's experiments bombarding lithium atoms with protons hinted to the potential controlled use of nuclear energy (something that Rutherford himself, as well as Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr, regarded as unlikely).

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in Zamyatin's novel is isolated and self-centered in nature, the popularity of commercial flights and private airships seems to make the world of Osorio Lizarazo a very integrated and globalized one. Barranquilla was indeed the place in which Colombian commercial aviation began. The first time a plane was flown in Colombia, it was in Barranquilla in 1911. The next year, the Canadian pilot Joh Smith conducted the first successful flight in the country. 1919 was the year in which the first airmail flight took place in Colombia. The pilot of this plane was William Knox Martin, and he was accompanied by the Colombian industrialist Julio Mario Santo Domingo—a personal friend of Fuenmayor, and one of the former owners of Avianca, Colombia's most important airline. In 1921, the *Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aéreos* (SCADTA) was founded in Barranquilla, giving birth to the second commercial airline in the word. Osorio Lizarazo's vision of a globalized world seems to be strongly influenced by the rise and development of the industry of commercial flight in the city.

The globalized nature of Osorio Lizarazo's future is also possible because of the abolition of the nation-state. In this future world—similarly to what happens in the world of Urzaiz's *Eugenia*—cities "organize their inner functions as independent entities" (60). Relationships between cities are only regulated by the "Asambleas Universales," a series of independent entities created in order to replace the League of Nations—an actual institution founded in Geneva after the end of World War I, with the purpose of providing nations with the space of an international forum for resolving international conflicts in non-violent ways. The League of Nations disappeared during World War II, and was eventually replaced by the UN. J. Gu believes that the peace of the world is caused by the abolition of "las antiguas fronteras que dividían a los hombres y eran fuente continua de

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odios y de represalias" (idem). In Chapter III, I will analyze the way in which Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" also embraces the idea of the potential for violence implied in the institution of the nation-state and, like Osorio Lizarazo, also imagines a future world in which global peace is attained through the disappearance of nations, and the subsequent vanishing of nationalism. According to J. Gu, the disapearance of the nation-state gave rise to "un espíritu de mutua ayuda, de auxilio recíproco que no había logrado estabilizarse dentro de las antiguas nacionalidades" (idem). In this world, cities are ruled by an assembly of sheriffs that represent "all the activities and social situations" (idem). Perhaps, these assemblies of sheriffs allow the reader to imagine and hope for, as Osorio Lizarazo did, a society that is not managed and administered by politicians and bureaucrats—a class that the author mistrusted—but by inclusive groups of individuals coming from different careers and social classes.

Rogers later asks J. Gu if cities are self-sufficient. The journalist answers that they are not; and yet, the "feeling of human solidarity" (61) that arose from the formation of the first Universal Assembly allows for the exchange of products between urban centers from all around the world. Barranquilla, for instance, produces tons of industrial products that are later exchanged for food and other manufactured products that cannot be made in the city. In a world without treaties or nations, a world integrated by the development of the aviation industry, there are no limits to commercial exchange between cities.

In Chapter VII of the novel, Rogers expresses his curiosity about the fate of communism in this future society. J. Gu answers to this question by praising communism as a system that opened the way for a lot of the social progress attained in the 22nd century. J. Gu states that, in Rogers's time, communism was "la más estupenda novedad

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… Posiblemente, esta nueva organización de los pueblos, la independencia de las ciudades, la abolición absoluta de las fronteras, el intercambio comercial y spiritual a base exclusive de buena voluntad, sean residuos de aquel comunismo espléndido que apareció … en el primer cuarto del siglo xx" (60). But even when J. Gu seems to think of the Bolshevik revolution as the starting point for many of the positive aspects of his own time and civilization, he also tells Rogers that Soviet Russia was also the "colossal laboratory where communism went up in smoke" (idem). As it turned out, what doomed the communist model in Russia was the nation's emphasis on technological development. J. Gu acknowledges that communism presented good and bad "perspectives" in this nation, before the crisis of the year 2000. He also praises the "formidable propaganda" against the "systems of government" of other nations (idem). But eventually, their emphasis on technological development ultimately ends up condemning them.

It is in this moment when the reader learns that the crisis of the year 2000 began in Russia. It all started because, apparently, the national communist project was "reemplazar al obrero por la máquina, para que el obrero tuviera el máximo de comodidades con el mínimo de esfuerzo. Pero este mismo empeño fue el origen de la catástrofe. Cuando la máquina desalojó al obrero, este no pudo aprovechar los productos de la máquina" (61). Again, replacing workers with machines leads to enormous levels of unemployment around the world, which causes social unrest in the planet, ending in several revolts, revolutions, and other forms of social uprisings, which precipitated the end of modernity and, with it, the end of the institution of the nation-state, the end of capitalism as we know it, and the end of overpopulation. Surprisingly enough,

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communism, as a system that is both regarded as good by Rogers and J. Gu, is the political system that leads to the cataclysm of modern civilization.

But communism is not the only system treated with enormous ambiguity by the author of *Barranquilla 2132*; In Chapter VII, democracy is praised for its intellectual and ideological principles, primarily, for being a system in which "people are sovereign" (62).[43] However, in the first pages of Chapter VIII, Rogers describes the decay and corruption of democracy. He explains how the bourgeoisie ends up taking the place of the royalty that it so strongly opposed during the French Revolution; he mentions Marx before talking about the exploitation of the working class by a minority of the bourgeoisie. He goes as far as to characterize the capitalist model of the 20th century as a form of modern feudalism, based on the "economic servitude" of farmers, who could be borrowed and lent by landowners to work each other's lands (65). Rogers also mentions the existence of a ruling class wealthy families and "small dynasties" (66) that ruled their nations behind the appearance of democracy provided by the electoral process. Finally, Rogers also talks about a pervasive problem in Colombia's spheres of power, that nowadays seems to be more present than ever in the context of Latin American politics: the problem of corruption.[44] The 20th century scientist described how politician in his century "efectuaban negociaciones ocultas, traficaban con las influencias" (67) with the sole purpose of increasing their "personal wealth" (idem). Among the forms of political

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[43] "El pueblo es soberano" is a verse from a rarely-sang stanza of the Colombian national anthem.
[44] In 2017, the Oderbrecht scandal shook Latin America to its core. Oderbrecht is a Brazilian multinational construction company that has been proven to use bribery and corruption to attain around 100 construction projects in 12 countries of the region. Politicians from Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Perú, Guatemala, Ecuador, etc. have been accused of profiting from the illegal actions of this company. Brazil's president, Dilma Rouseff, was impeached because of this scandal; Peruvian ex-president, Alejandro Toledo, has been imprisoned; dozens of politicians were arrested in the Dominican Republic; and an ongoing investigation is being conducted in order to determine if Colombian president, Juan Manuel Santos, received illegal donations from the company, for his 2014 presidential campaign.

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corruption mentioned by Rogers are the selling of votes, the political favors for campaign contributors, and the assignation of political positions as response to other immoral forms of political favors.

Rogers also criticizes the practice of endless and pointless debate in democratic governments. He finally concludes that this flawed system was ultimately supported by the working classes, who were seduced by the "deslumbrante teoría, gobierno del pueblo y para el pueblo" (68). At the end, Rogers saw democracy as a system that was doomed; in his own words, "la democracia tenía que ir cediendo a la putrefacción que la carcomía y era necesario, fatal, que el opulento Sistema teórico acabara por arruinarse. En mi tiempo existían perspectivas de este derrumbamiento. No me ha sorprendido la transformación efectuada en lo político" (idem). So, not only does Rogers see democracy as a system that is doomed to fail, but he also mentions seeing signs of its ultimate failure in his own time. Rogers's distrust of democracy will be a major point to consider, once he starts developing a deep admiration for the mad terrorist scientist that wants to conquer the world.

Rogers's ambiguous stance towards democracy and communism are important aspects of his worldview, and quite representative of the character's attitude towards the future world that he has come to know. Rogers is also rather ambivalent towards the technological advances of the 22nd century, and even of the evolution of gender relationships in the future. Unlike D-503, Bernard Marx, Guy Montag, or Winston Smith, the heroes of Zamyatin's *We*, Huxley's Brave New World, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and Orwell's *1984*, who come to resent and even oppose the values and practices of the

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world and time that they inhabit,[45] Osorio Lizarazo's Rogers is at times fascinated by the technological advancements and political evolution the 22nd century, and at times disgusted by what he understands as the spiritual bankruptcy of the impersonal, pragmatic, and individualistic nature of future humans. And yet, Rogers seems to be less bothered by the fact that concentration camps for "unfit" individuals exist, than by the changes in gender roles, or the impersonal nature of future human relationships, such as friendship. At the end, what drives Rogers to suicide is not the horror of an ongoing eugenicist genocide, but his sense of isolation and solitude.

Rogers's take on communism and democracy could lead us to a better understanding of Osorio Lizarazo's political views. The character's praise of communism seems to fit with the author's support of Latin American politicians with leftist or populist discourses. Osorio Lizarazo knew and admired Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, and even published a book about the Colombian politician four years after his assesination: *Gaitán: vida, muerte y permanente presencia* (1952). Osorio Lizarazo also published a book

[45] Several of these heroes, such as D-503 and Bernard Marx, come to see their societies as shallow or materialistic; others, such as Guy Montag and Winston Smith, as oppressive and cruel, and a few as cold and dehumanizing. This is, of course, a broad simplification; Guy Montag is not only aware of the shallowness of his society, but also of the oppressive and manipulative nature of his nation's government. D-503, a character that clearly influenced Huxley's Bernard Marx, becomes gradually aware of the oppressive nature of OneState, while also suffering from the dehumanizing social practices of his historical moment. Bernard Marx lives in a world where the ones in power engineer the nation's population through the use of genetic manipulation and cloning (eugenics), while also subjecting citizens to hypnotic indoctrination and drug-infused orgies to keep people uncritically happy and submissive, but he experiences the severity of those in power when exiled from his country at the end of the novel. While Zamyatin's novel was certainly an influence for Huxley's *Brave New World*, and *1984* clearly influenced *Fahrenheit 451*, it is unlikely that Osorio Lizarazo read Huxley's novel before or during the writing of *Barranquilla 2132*, since both novels were published in 1932. There is also no evidence of Osorio Lizarazo reading *We*, which was first published in English in 1924. Nevertheless, there are several parallels that could be drawn between Zamyatin's hero and Rogers, who grow tired of the impersonal nature of people's relationships, and the generalized lack of emotion that characterizes the societies that they inhabit—or have come to inhabit, in Rogers's case. This is also true for Bernard Marx—who resents Lenina Crowe for having sex with other men, even though this is a common practice on their world—and, in a lesser degree, for Guy Montag—whose relationship with his wife doesn't survive the character's process of moral, political, and intellectual development.

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about Marxism in 1959, *El bacilo de Marx.* He also lived in Argentina from 1946 to 1955. During these years, the author collaborated with the first two presidencies of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1952, and 1952-1955), a divisive political figure remembered for his populist discourse and leftist ideology.[46] His supporters—who identify as *peronistas*—remember him as a champion of the working class, while his detractors—among them, Jorge Luis Borges—see him as a populist dictator (some even went as far as accusing Perón of being aligned with the fascists movements in Europe). While Rogers's—partially—favorable understanding of communism does not seem to be at odds with Osorio Lizarazo's own support for left-wing politicians such as Gaitán and Perón, his actual support for the ruthless Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo is far more problematic. But let us not forget that, for Rogers, democracy was a system doomed to failure, a system that rose from a beautiful set of ideas and theories, but was eventually corrupted by a dishonest political class, that found a way of manipulating the uncritical and uneducated people that they were meant to serve. Rogers's admiration of the mad scientist in the novel could be read as a sign of the character's disenchantment with the democratic process and democracy as such. I will now draw some parallels between Rogers's relationship to the mad scientist, and Osorio Lizarazo's relationship with Trujillo (whose biography he wrote and published in 1958).

In Chapter X, Rogers and J. Gu are traveling on the journalist's personal plane, searching—although Rogers ignores this fact at first—for the perpetrator of the

[46] Perón defined the international position of his government as a Third Position, one not aligned with either Capitalism or Communism. Perón's government embraced several social-oriented policies and programs—such as raising wages, increasing the coverage of health insurance in the country, and the nationalization of the Central Bank—while also defending private property, and avoiding any ties to either the United States or the Soviet Union.

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mysterious terrorist attacks that had taken place in several major cities around the world, including Barranquilla. Rogers, whose opinion of the future society is at best ambiguous—since he seems to admire its political and technological advancements while resenting its social practices and human impersonal relationships—criticizes the "social system" of the 22nd century, describing it as "absurdo, primitivo" (82). He soon acknowledges that he lacks the capacity to adapt to this new society. At the end of Chapter IX, Rogers already mentions that his expectations for the future are unfulfilled. He argues that he cares little about the scientific advances that he has witnessed—which go from the use of solar and kinetic energy to groundbreaking discoveries in medicine and optics—and argues that what he wants to encounter is, in a way, a better, more loving, understanding, and charitable society. What Rogers really hopes to find in the future is "la depuración de los sentimientos nobles del hombre, el perfeccionamiento de las sociedades, los grandes progresos espirituales, la evolución ascendente del arte, la purificación de los más elevados conceptos metafísicos, la existencia de una comprensión recíproca entre los hombres y los más exaltados sentimientos de amor y caridad" (79-80). Failing to find these things is, according to Rogers, his "great failure" (*gran fracaso*) (80). And yet, even though Rogers is at times fascinated and excited about the technological developments of the 22nd century, even though he seems to admire the humans of the future for having created a world without wars and poverty, the 20th century man cannot help but feel that this new world is somehow socially, spiritually, and morally inferior to the world of the past. It is precisely this conviction what preconditions him to idealize the terrorist that imprisons him in Chapter XI.

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It is precisely on Chapter XI when we get a glimpse of Rogers's take on hypothetical authoritarian regimes. There are no authoritarian regimes in the 22nd century depicted by the author, but Rogers is able to imagine one, stimulated by the dreams of the mad scientist. Kreksch considers caudillismo to be a political phenomenon "common to all of Latin America" (174). She also points out that caudillismo often manifests itself in the region's science fiction. In the case of Osorio Lizarazo's novel, the terrorist scientist is depicted as a potential caudillo, whose plans are frustrated by Rogers's and J. Gu's unexpected visit. What might come as shocking to the reader is that Rogers, in a way, sympathizes with this violent character, and even shares his opinions on the social and moral flaws of 22nd century society. It could be argued that Rogers ultimately likes the idea of the hypothetical—subjugated—world, imagined by the ruthless scientist.

Rogers's admiration of the terrorist becomes evident almost immediately after the two characters meet. After seeing him for the first time, Rogers soon describes the scientist as "un hombre extraordinario" (91). The decoration of his captor's strange aircraft is described in detail by Rogers. He seems to interpret the objects he encounters as marks or signs, almost like pieces of a puzzle that, if completed, could allow him to understand the character of this greater-than-life man who wants to conquer the world. For Rogers, every detail of the decoration was "una revelación de sentimiento estético, de riqueza, de comprensión de los ideales que la humanidad había dejado extinguir" (91-92). Rogers associates the decoration of the scientist's ship to the man's own character and psyche, which he regards as aesthetically and—perhaps—morally superior to the spirit of the 22nd century; also, it is through the decoration itself that he first experiences a certain degree of affinity and sympathy for this ruthless man. The narrator states that as Rogers

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moved through the scientist's ship, he discovered "un medio más en harmonía con su espíritu y, dominado por estos sentimientos, le parecía que este era su mundo, que no habían transcurridos los años desaparecidos, que visitaba uno de los grandes palacios europeos, recorridos muchas veces en la adolescencia" (92). So not only does Rogers create an imaginary personality for his captor, but he also identifies the ship's inner decoration and, by extension, the ship's pilot, with his original historical moment, and the aesthetic and moral values that—at least in Rogers's opinion—defined it.

When the scientist tells Rogers and J. Gu what his opinion of human civilization is, and outlines his concrete plans for it, it is impossible to miss the points in which his ideology coincides with that of Rogers. When flying above Barranquilla, the scientist describes the urban landscape in the following way: "Dentro de sus edificios, los hombres desarrollan complicadas actividades, profundamente inútiles, persuadidos de cimentar sobre bases firmes la dicha de la humanidad. Pero tal civilización es falsa, carece de fundamentos. Habéis matado el espíritu, lo habéis subordinado a la materia" (95). Like Rogers, the terrorist scientist believes that human civilization has lost something relevant during its evolution: its spirituality. Rogers and his captor seem to agree on the fact that, while pursuing happiness through technological advances, peace through the abolition of the institution of the nation state, and perfection through eugenics, human kind neglected its own spirituality, turning its back in morality and beauty. Even though the scientist's intentions might seem altruistic at first, his means for achieving his dream of a less-materialistic, more spiritual society can only be described as criminal. He believes that he is humanity's only hope, to achieve a better, more spiritual way of life. He states that "[s]ólo yo podré reivindicar los conceptos genuinos de la justicia, sometiendo a mi

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voluntad a todos los pueblos del orbe" (ídem). In this moment, perhaps, Rogers understands that not only is he beginning to admire a terrorist criminal, but also a potential dictator.

However, Rogers is not completely uncritical about the violent methods and totalitarian plans of his captor; when he finds himself alone with J. Gu, Rogers calls the scientist a "crazy man" (99). Soon after, J. Gu fantasizes about the possibility of "rehabilitating" this rogue genius for humanity's benefit (idem). At times, the terrorist scientist behaves as a cartoonish mad scientist from a pulp magazine. For instance, after causing yet another explosion in Barranquilla, the man laughs with a "diabolic laugh" (*risa diabólica*) (100). While "diabolically laughing," the man "rubs his hands," and his teeth "seem to grow in a ferocious way" (idem). At this moment, J. Gu calls him a "monster" (idem). There are, however, some moments in the novel when this larger-than-life character is slightly humanized. For instance, he opens up to Rogers and J. Gu, acknowledging that sometimes he feels "fatigued" because of his solitude (105). Nevertheless, he soon dehumanizes his own feeling of solitude, arguing that "[e]sta fatiga debe constituir el supremo castigo para las divinidades" (idem). And yet, even though the scientist interprets his sense of solitude as part of the destiny of being godlike, it is precisely this solitude what makes him relatable as a human being, especially for individuals that, like Rogers himself, also feel isolated.

It is almost inevitable to feel the urge of equating Rogers's admiration for the terrorist scientist—a potential dictator—to Osorio Lizarazo's real support of Trujillo. While the scientist of *Barranquilla 2132* thinks of himself as godlike, the personality cult in Trujillo's Dominican Republic was an important part of the regime. From changing the

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name of San Cristobal province to "Trujillo," to erecting statues of the dictator, naming bridges and public buildings after him, building an electric sign in Ciudad Trujillo that read "Dios y Trujillo," and forcing churches to display the slogan "Dios en el cielo, Trujillo en la tierra," political propaganda in Trujillo's regime created a public image of the dictator that was greater-than-life. That is also the case in Osorio Lizarazo's novel, where the plan of the terrorist scientist is to sow "la planta benéfica del terror" (101). This, to achieve "[q]ue la humanidad comprenda la existencia de una fuerza omnipotente, superior a todas sus posibilidades de defensa, sujeta a la voluntad de un solo individuo, que hará su aparición oportuna, como un deus ex machina de la antigua comedia, ¡para tomar posesión de un mundo tembloroso y dócil!" (idem). Of course, the scientist wants humanity to recognize him as that "fuerza omnipotente." Both Rogers and the scientist believe that the humanity of the 22nd century has lost its spiritual depth; the potential dictator intends to fix this problem, by turning himself into a divine figure that people can adore and praise. After seizing power through his terrorist actions, the scientist intends to "impose his laws" (idem). But he also intends to create a cult around himself. He summarizes this second stage of his plan for world domination in the following way: "¡pondré al mundo a mi servicio y haré que me adoren como a un dios y me erijan templos! La humanidad desfallece por la ausencia de un culto" (idem). When facing a world lacking in spirituality, Osorio Lizarazo's imaginary terrorist scientist decides to turn himself into a divine figure, to fulfill this perceived deficiency in 22nd century civilization.

Transitioning from supporting Perón to supporting Trujillo might seem strange to us, people living in the first decades of the 21st century. Nevertheless, Trujillo always had

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a good relationship with Perón—as he did with Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Samoza García and Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. Trujillo also supported the allies and Russia during World War II, and coexisted peacefully with the United States government for most of his time in power. Trujillo's good relationship with Franco, who presented himself as a paternal figure to the nation during his 36-year rule in Spain, could give us another clue as to how to interpret the relationship between Rogers and his captor in Osorio Lizarazo's novel, and the existing relationship between the Colombian author and the Dominican dictator. Since the terrorist scientist in *Barranquilla 2132* is at least partially responsible for Rogers's rebirth (let us not forget that the scientist blows up the building where the hero's cryogenic capsule is hidden), it is only natural that the 20th century man unconsciously thinks of the scientist as a father figure.

After J. Gu has killed their captor, Rogers starts to experience great grief and guilt; this will eventually lead to his final state of depression and, ultimately, to his suicide. When J. Gu tries to convince his partner of the need to kill the scientist—to escape, but also to save the many lives that could have been lost in the mad man's future terrorist attacks—a troubled Rogers protests: "Por él he revivido" (112). Rogers's emotional response to the death of the scientist is not only the natural guilt experienced by a human being who has been an accomplice to the killing of a man; Rogers's guilt is also that of a patricide. Before his suicide, Rogers reflects on the killing of the terrorist scientist. The reader learns that Rogers's feeling of displacement (*desadaptación*), as well as his feeling of fatigue, have increased after the character's dangerous adventure. The narrator also refers to the terrorist's fate in grandiose terms, when describing the ship in which his dead body is traveling in space as "el más suntuoso sepulcro concebido jamás

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por humana imaginación" (125). Rogers's idolization of the dead scientist goes far beyond simple admiration, and his regret and sadness are more than mere guilt; he clearly identifies with the character that he has helped to kill. In the narrator's own words, Rogers's pain "no era la simple valorización de una existencia, sino la conexión de otros sentimientos: piedad, gratitud, admiración, quizás una más completa compenetración entre su propio temperamento y el de aquel desconocido" (idem). The reader also learns that this event has brought Rogers into a state of uneasiness and anguish (*inquietud* and *angustia*) (idem) that contributed greatly to the character's ultimate decision to kill himself. The terrorist scientist, and his outrageous plan to force the people of Earth into changing their pragmatic and unemotional ways was, after all, Rogers's last hope to live in a world that he could understand and appreciate; with this gone, Rogers contemplates suicide as the only option left.

We should ask ourselves if Osorio Lizarazo's travels through Latin America, and his support of father-like, powerful men like Perón and Trujillo, could be interpreted as the actions of a man who has been, in a way, "politically orphaned," and is now looking for a new paternal figure to follow and support. The assassination of Gaitán, who Osorio Lizarazo admired and knew, could have left the author politically orphaned. Perhaps, the Colombian author saw in these strong—military—rulers, paternal figures to fulfill the loss of his assassinated friend and role model, Gaitán. Once again, these are not assertions or statements, but questions that could enrich our understanding of *Barranquilla 2132*, and its author's public life; particularly in regard to his understanding of power, and his relationship with powerful men in Latin America.

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Finally, if there is something that seems to be common to both Osorio Lizarazo's and Rogers's understanding of power, it is the old adage that "might makes right." This could explain Rogers's quiet acceptance of the eugenics concentration camps of the 22nd century, and his admiration of the terrorist scientist, as well as Osorio Lizarazo's admiration and active support of Trujillo. In the novel, the terrorist had to kill his collaborators and colleagues to gain control of his incredible ship. He justifies his success as following the principle of "la supremacía del más fuerte," and arguing that, at the end, "yo he sido el más fuerte" (105). "La supremacía del más fuerte" is a common phrase used to describe the principles of social Darwinism. Just as Rogers admired his captor, Osorio Lizarazo admired the Dominican dictator; at the end, though, Rogers was ultimately an accomplice to J. Gu in the killing of the terrorist scientist, while Osorio Lizarazo not only supported Trujillo, but even wrote a biography of the dictator, praising him and his totalitarian regime.

Gender Relationships in *Barranquilla 2132*

I had mentioned that there are very few female characters in *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios*, I had also mentioned that the only major female character in this novel, Doña Dalila, is continuously mocked and humiliated by her male counterparts. In *Barranquilla 2132*, there are no female characters whatsoever. This does not mean that there are no women in Osorio Lizarazo's imagined future; they simply do not interact with any of the novel's major characters in any way whatsoever. Rogers thinks about women, talks about women, but never even talks to one. Needless to say, all the relevant actions that drive the novel's plot are performed by men. And yet, the absence of women

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in the novel, and Rogers's lack of interaction with the women of the future, affect the character both consciously and unconsciously.

Rogers is first shocked upon finding the different ways in which gender equality—or what to him looks like gender equality—has been achieved in the future. Rogers first notes that women and men are dressed in similar attires that differ very little from each other. When the 20th century man stares at a young woman on the street, he is swiftly reprimanded by J. Gu, who criticizes his "animalistic" behavior (36). Rogers defends his actions, arguing that women in his time were "the reason for existence" (idem). This leads to a conversation about love, in which the journalist states that this emotion has been relegated to a secondary plane in 22nd century society. Rogers laments this transformation in human culture, and asks: "¿es, acaso, que las mujeres han descendido de su pedestal? ¿Es que ahora son unas pobres bestias, unos pobres seres anulados?" (37). It is interesting that Rogers's expression of lust is, at least to him, intrinsically associated with the act of loving. It is also interesting that Rogers associates the "fall" of love in human civilization as something that would also unavoidably bring upon the demise of women. Rogers seems to hold the unconscious belief that it is the affection of men what confers women a greater spiritual value in society. This idea is certainly influenced by the Victorian paradigm of the "angel in the house,[47]" a woman who is submissive to her husband, dedicated to her family, and content while relegated to the domestic sphere.

J. Gu challenges Rogers's prejudices when arguing that these social changes, primarily the removal of love as the most important feeling of all, and arguably the

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[47] A term coined by the British poet Coventry Patmore in his influential narrative poem of the same title (originally published in 1854 and expanded by the author until 1862).

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achievement of relegating to a second plane this emotion that—as both characters see it—once articulated and defined gender relationships, have not led to the "fall" of women; far from it, for the journalist, "la mujer se ha dignificado, sustrayéndose a las groseras codicias de los hombres. Dejando de ser el amor el sentimiento esencial, descendiendo a su justo lugar rudimentario, ahora la mujer comparte las inquietudes, las aspiraciones, los trabajos mismos del hombre" (idem). While J. Gu sees the inherent social benefits of gender equality, Rogers's internalized values of Victorian gender relationships make it difficult—in fact impossible—for him to develop significant relationships with women in the 22nd century. Rogers's reply to J Gu's arguments echoes the Victorian belief that staying away from the public sphere made women more "spiritual." For the 20th-century scientist, "era más sagrada la mujer cuando permanecía en lo más recóndito del hogar" (idem). It is necessary to explain that women, in the Victorian imaginary, were regarded as somehow responsible for the spiritual salvation of their household. In *Idols of Perversity* (1986)—a comprehensive and invaluable study of the representation of women in 19th century art and literature—Bram Dijkstra argues that in the world of early capitalism

> in which it was a virtual everyday necessity for the ambitious middle-class male to risk his soul, the notion of the family was, as it were, "a soul unit," that man and wife shared one soul, rapidly gained appeal. A man's wife, it was thought, could, by staying at home—a place unblemished by sin and unsullied by labor—protect her husband's soul from permanent damage; the very intensity of her purity and devotion would keep … his personal virtue protected from moral pitfalls inherent in the world of commerce. (8)

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Once again, J. Gu steps in to deconstruct Roger's idealized understanding of the gender relationships of the old era. He argues that keeping women in the domestic setting was not an act of love, but one of oppression. According to him: "En efecto, la mujer permanecía encerrada en el hogar. Pero no era el tributo del hombre lo que recibía. Era su dominación lo que soportaba" (37). Echoing the thoughts of feminist critics like Luce Irigaray, J. Gu condemns the way in which men used to think of women as commodities and treat them as property. He argues that women were treated like "uno de los muebles de la casa, esperando la hora de prestar un servicio" (idem). After describing the nature of the past relationship of men and women in terms of "object" and "owner," J. Gu describes the way in which man, using the idea of love as an excuse or alibi, made himself into master of his wife, sustaining her and providing her with material objects, in exchange for her "services"—arguably sex and domestic labor—and obedience. J. Gu argues that men used to pay for the women's "services" "con la alimentación, con el vestido, con las joyas" (idem). In this way, man was "the master" (*el amo*), "porque nutría su cuerpo y era el más fuerte y lucía su estúpida musculatura de caballo" (38). As I mentioned before, J. Gu's ideas about the relationships between men and women in terms of "object" and "owner" resonate with the ideas of feminist critics like Luce Irigaray. In "Women in the Market" (1978) Irigaray argues that women's situation within their social and cultural context is constructed over the basis of female commodification. According to her, "[s]ocially, they [women] are 'objects' for and among men … For them, the transformation of the natural into the social does not take place, except to the extent that they function as components of private property, or as commodities" (809). J. Gu concludes his reply to Rogers stating that "No era amor, sino egoísmo lo que impulsaba a

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los hombres" (idem). When the journalist asks his guest from the past to corroborate his understanding of the nature of gender relationships in the past centuries, Rogers just answers with an ambiguous "No puedo asegurarlo. Pero confieso que usted se encuentra documentado" (idem). This answer demonstrates that Rogers considers that J. Gu's words might be true, at least to a certain extent.

J. Gu's criticism of the gender relationships of old does not only encompass the commodification of women, but also the—imaginary—physical disparity that existed before. That is why he thinks with contempt or disgust of man's former "estúpida musculatura de caballo" (idem). Gender equality in Osorio Lizarazo's future does not only refer to social equality, but also equality in a physical sense. As I mentioned before, Rogers is shocked from the start by how similarly men and women dress in the future. Also, he will later express his disgust at how similar the bodies of men and women have become, as they—apparently—have lost, at least up to a certain extent, some of the physical attributes that characterized them as women, and have gained other physical characteristics that were traditionally associated with masculinity. In the last chapter of the novel, soon before his suicide, Rogers finds himself watching women on the coast, practicing aquatic sports or simply bathing on the sea. He is disgusted by these women, whose muscular and "flat-chested" bodies he finds unattractive and even repulsive. This becomes evident when Rogers refers to these women as "repugnantes vestigios sin gracia ni harmonía" (124). In Osorio Lizarazo's imagined future gender equality exists in more than one way: first, both men and women have equal roles in the public sphere, and women are not confined to the domestic space; second, men and women dress in almost identical manner; and third, men and women have become more similar in physical terms

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(judging by J. Gu's words, men are less muscular that in the past centuries, while Rogers's describes the women of the future as muscular and flat-chested). Of course, the 20th century stereotypes of the ideal man as muscular and the ideal woman as curvy are clearly at play in Osorio's Lizarazo's novel. It is never explained in the narrative whether the eugenicists practices of the 22nd century have something to do with the way in which men and women have physically evolved. Are women with big breasts and muscular men deterred from procreation? Are they some of the victims of the barely-mentioned concentration camps of the future? These questions are never answered in the novel. What is clear, though, is that living in a future in which men and women diverge greatly from these ideals of beauty shocks the character of Rogers, and intensifies his sense of solitude and isolation.

And yet, the reader learns that Rogers has at least tried to connect with the women of the 22nd century. After his adventure with the terrorist scientist, Rogers recovers "la integridad de su espíritu siglo xx" (idem). This means, among other things, that Rogers has recovered the lost feeling of love. In the narrator's words, "[e]n él florecía el sentimiento del amor con la ruda impetuosidad de la raza cuyos caracteres se habían perdido en menos de dos siglos" (idem). And yet, Rogers's romantic intentions are frustrated, when he realizes that "ahora no podía practicarse ni aquella trivialidad gozosa del flirt y las mujeres hablaban a los hombres de una filosofía absurda, de ciencias, de viajes, pero no de amor" (ídem). It is relevant to mention that Rogers is not only shocked by the fact that women are not interested in love; he also resents that they are more invested on philosophy, science, and traveling, that they are in matters of feelings or emotion. Rogers's anxieties somehow voice those anxieties of early 20th century Latin

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American men, who witness with suspicion the integration of women into the workforce, and feared at the idea of them taking their place in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as science and philosophy.

But Rogers is not only incapable of developing significant emotional ties with the women of the future. Men prove to be similarly unemotional, and friendship seems to either be radically different—or simply inexistent—in the 22nd century. Rogers mentions that he once believed that he and J. Gu had shared something similar to friendship. But the characters seem to be driven apart—for no apparent reason—after their shared adventure. On the other hand, both M. Ba ad Dr. Var lose interest in Rogers almost immediately after he is brought back to life. This clearly hurts Rogers's feelings. According tothe narrator, this "total indiference" "lastimaba su alma efusiva e impregnada de la vieja ternura del siglo xx" (126). Like a foreigner in his own city, like a castaway from a different time, Rogers experiences isolation in a very profound way. In an effort of fighting his solitude, Rogers tries to establish a significant connection with unnamed women of the 22nd century. The reader learns that Rogers tried to "contraer algunas relaciones femeninas. Una vaga posibilidad de despertar el amor, un amor adaptado a su concepción del sentimiento, creado a base de producir una situación similar en un espíritu de mujer" (idem). But all that Rogers finds in these women is "el vacío, el mismo vacío para todo lo espiritual que había analizado ya, con desconsoladores resultados, en los hombres" (idem). It is clear that even though there are no important female characters in the novel, the subject of women is of great importance for the main character. We, as readers, might find the absence of women in the novel unsettling and even frustrating; but this absence can be explained by the fact that we experience the

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entire narrative through Rogers's eyes. His incapacity to relate to women in the future ultimately explains the absence of women in the text. And no one suffers more from this situation than Rogers himself, whose solitude and isolation ultimately drive him suicidal.

It would be tempting to simply interpret Osorio Lizarazo's treatment of women in his novel as a reflection of men's anxieties about greater gender equality in the first decades of the 20th century. And yet, before his death, Rogers thinks: "Supuse encontrar sufrimientos físicos en mi nueva existencia … Pero no sospeché la posibilidad de esta serie de torturas morales. Para haber logrado buen resultado en todos los órdenes, hubiera sido conveniente la lenta evolución espiritual durante el prolongado sueño" (127). But since Rogers's values and moral views do not evolve or change during his long period of unconsciousness, all he can do is to regret his unfortunate fate. "¡Que no se despertara el espíritu con dos siglos de retraso! ¡Que no tuviera que encontrar grotesco todo, sin poder evitar pensar que lo grotesco no fue lo que vivió, lo que aprendió, lo que interpretó en su primera existencia!" (idem). This moment of regret and reflection comes shortly before the end of the novel. It is one of the very few instances in the narrative in which Rogers wonders whether these future values are true and valid, and whether it is he who is wrong and prejudiced. Rogers expresses this uncertainty again when he asks himself: "¿Dónde estaba el error? ¿En nosotros los antiguos, o en ellos, los nuevos?" (129). Rogers does not necessarily answer this question, but something close to an answer is articulated by the narrator soon after. Interestingly, this answer is determined by the subject of love, and its relation to human reproduction in the 22nd century.

> Sus pensamientos lo condujeron una vez más a establecer la comparación entre el sentimiento de ternura que vinculaba antes a los hombres con las

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> mujeres y que ennoblecía el instinto de reproducción. En cambio, ahora, el instinto se mostraba en su monstruosa intemperancia, controlado solamente por la indiferencia suprema hacia todas las emociones, entristecedora característica de la humanidad degenerada que se le presentaba al cabo de doscientos años. (ídem)

The fact that Rogers finds this lack of emotion and tenderness in sex shocking is not at all surprising. What is surprising is how little he seems to care about the existence of the briefly-mentioned concentration camps for “unfit” individuals in this strange future. One would expect that, when discussing the moral monstrosities of the 22nd century, these camps would appear somewhere near the top of Rogers’s list. And yet, he seems to be quite unconcerned about them, perhaps because he never visits them, or experiences its presumable horrors first hand.

Finally, unwilling to stand the isolation and solitude of his current condition, Rogers blames himself for violating the laws of nature, and rationalizes his suffering, interpreting it as punishment for his transgression of nature’s laws (idem). He jumps into the Atlantic Ocean, putting an end to his adventures in the 22nd century, and to his own life.

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Chapter Three: The End of the World. Escaping Bio-power and the End of Humanity in Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) and *The Illustrated Man* (1951), and René Rebetez's *La nueva prehistoria* (1967)

Several celebrated science fiction dystopian novels of the early Cold War, such as George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), depict the struggle of the individual in his efforts to escape the overwhelming control of totalitarian bio-political regimes. The main character of *1894,* Winston Smith, is unable to escape the all-seeing control of the Party—the English Socialism or "Insoc" party, personified in the figure of the Big Brother—and ends up being re-indoctrinated by it. On the other hand, Guy Montag, the main character of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* is able to develop a richer intellectual life, rejecting the government's indoctrination of his own society; this escape, however comes at a great cost, since the character ends up living as a lonely fugitive in a world that faces imminent nuclear confrontation. Both novels tell us a lot about their author's own preoccupations and historical circumstances. Orwell's novel deals with the threats inherent to fanatic nationalism; as an Englishman living through both world wars, the author saw the kind of violence and cruelty that could be justified with nationalistic discourse. But Orwell's novel is also a cautionary tale about the rise of totalitarian regimes in general, and a bleak picture of Soviet Stalinism in his own time. Although Orwell held leftist political views himself, he felt very strongly against Stalin; and his distrust of the Soviet government becomes evident in his celebrated novel. In the case of *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury's criticism of the political repression that the United States suffered during the second Red Scare—the era known as McCarthyism—becomes

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evident in his depiction of the country as an anti-intellectual police state, in which citizens are fed light dramas through their television screens, while firefighters have been assigned the job of burning books.

In this chapter, I will analyze Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) and *The Illustrated Man* (1951), and René Rebetez's *La nueva prehistoria* (1967), studying stories in these collections that also depict different ways of escaping bio-power, with greater or lower degrees of success. On the other hand, I will also study stories from these collections in which the authors depict the end of the world or the end of humanity, as the annihilation of the human species would imply the end of bio-power. In particular, I will discuss different takes on the act of escaping bio-power in Bradbury's "Way in the Middle of the Air (June 2003/2034)" and Rebetez's "La nueva prehistoria." After this, I will engage in a study of different versions of the end of the world depicted in Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains (August 4, 2026/2057)" and "The Million-Year Picnic (October 2026/2057)," and Rebetez's "Rocky Lunario."

Escaping Bio-politics: "Way in the Middle of the Air (June 2003/2034)" and "The Other Foot"

In his book *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011) Isaiah Lavender argues that "Bradbury is one of the very few writers in sf who dared to consider the effects and consequences of race in America at a time when racism was largely sanctioned by the culture" (98). Lavender's statement mainly refers to two specific stories by Bradbury: "Way in the Middle of the Air (June 2003/2034)" and "The Other Foot." "Way in the Middle of the Air" was first published in the magazine *Other Worlds* in 1950. It was

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published later the same year in *The Martian Chronicles*.[48] "The Other Foot" was published one year later in *The Illustrated Man*. Both stories depict racial prejudice in the early 1950s United States. In "Way in the Middle of the Air," Bradbury renders a critique of segregation and Jim Crow laws. One might be tempted to believe that the author falls in the logic of both black and white American separationists, by suggesting that the end of racial conflict in America can only be achieved through a complete separation of the races. But reading this story in dialogue with "The Other foot," the reader eventually comes to understand that Bradbury's fiction does offer a long-lasting solution to the problem of segregation and racism.

Before embarking in a closer study of these two stories, it is necessary to mention that these stories where unusual in the context of American science fiction from this period. Most American science fiction that dealt with race in the 1950s did so in an indirect or metaphorical manner. A clear example of this is the comic *Judgment Day* (1953), by writer Al Feldstein and artist Joe Orlando. This story was published by EC Comics, a company whose founder, Max Gaines, continually fought the censorship of the now widely-resented Comics Code Authority.[49]

In *Judgment Day* Tarlton, a human astronaut representing the Galactic Republic, visits a planet called Cybrinia. The purpose of his trip is to decide whether Cybrinia should be admitted or not into the Galactic Republic. This planet is populated by two

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[48] This short story has been eliminated from several editions of *The Martian Chronicles*, such as the 2006 William Morrow/Harper Collins, the 2001 DoubleDay Science Fiction, and the 2010 Barnes & Noble compendium of *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Illustrated Man*, and *The Golden Apples of the Sun.*
[49] In 1954, the Comics Magazine Association of America formed the Comic Code Authority. Comic publishers followed this code, which was used until the first years of the 21st century, as a way of self-regulation; this allowed the publishers to avoid regulation and censorship from the government. It is commonly accepted that the publication of Dr. Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954 was an important factor for the creation of the Comic Coda Authority. Wertham's book, which was somehow popular at the time, famously alerted parents of the moral dangers of comics.

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“races” of robots, one is blue and the other one is orange. Even though all robots are equally designed and operate in the exact same way, the astronaut soon learns that this society is a segregated one, with orange robots enjoying more rights and privileges than their blue counterparts. Based on this fact, Tarlton ultimately decides to deny Cybrinia a place in the Galactic Republic. When asked by his guide—an orange robot—if there is hope for Cybrinia to become part of the Galactic Republic in the future, the astronaut answers: “Of course there’s hope for you, my friend. For a while, on Earth, it looked like there was no hope! But when mankind on Earth learned to live together, real progress then began. The Universe was suddenly ours” (7). Tarlton tells his guide that when the robots in Cybrinia learn to live together, the universe will be theirs too. Back in his ship, the astronaut takes off his helmet, and the reader finally sees that Tarlton is a black man. This story is, of course, a clear metaphor for segregation in the Jim Crow era. Like Feldstein and Orlando, Isaac Asimov also used robots to talk about race relationships in America. This was a common practice in 1950s science fiction. This is why Lavender believes that “Way in the Middle of the Air” “is unique in ‘mainstream’ sf in its scathing criticism of American racism. It’s a critique of American racism which does not displace race through alien beings or replace American culture with a pretend culture. In other words, it is a direct extrapolation of the existing relation between the races in the 1950s” (98). This does not mean that science fiction authors that engaged with the issue of race in an indirect or allegorical way do not deserve the same praise or attention as Bradbury.[50] However, Bradbury’s unusual courage in his way of approaching the subject certainly is worth mentioning.

[50] Max Gaines, for instance, had a hard time republishing this story in 1956. Judge Charles Murphy, who was the Comics Code Administrator at the time, wanted EC to change the astronaut from a black man to a

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I will now demonstrate that "Way in the Middle of the Air" and "The Other Foot" depict, in different ways, an escape from bio-power, understood as a form of power that controls and shapes the lives of the African American characters in these stories. In both texts, African American citizens are fleeing, or have fled Earth, to escape a sociopolitical system that relies on racial prejudice and exploitation of racial minorities. I will also demonstrate that these stories are deeply rooted in the historical and social context in which they were written and published.

As Bradbury published *The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man* in 1950 and 1951, the citizens of the United States were witnessing the rise of the third Ku Klux Klan[51], while Jim Crow[52] still perpetuated and strengthened racial segregation—and racial prejudice—in several states of the US South. Finally, I will argue that even though both stories depict African Americans escaping from the Jim Crow South, as a way of fleeing the oppression of a bio-political state that segregates and exploits them, "Way in the Middle of the Air" limits its scope to the moment of the escape itself—perhaps portraying this separationist escape as the only definitive solution to racism in the nation—while "The Other Foot" tries to answer the question of how the racial tensions of the nation could be solved and renegotiated, if humanity just had a second chance—a "fresh start" of sorts—at breaking with its tradition of racism, discrimination and exploitation. "Way in the Middle of the Air" approaches racial conflict through the separationist approach of that inspired the founders of the Back-to-Africa or Black

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white man. Gaines had to threaten Murphy with suing him in order to publish an unmodified version of the story. This proves that even those authors that talked about race in an indirect or metaphorical way had a hard time publishing and distributing their works on during this historical period.

[51] Or rather, the apparition of several groups adopting this name after the decline and disappearance of the second Ku Klux Klan in the mid-1940s.

[52] Jim Crow was a racial caste system, enforced through segregationist laws and social practices, that operated in several of the Southern States of the US, from 1877 to the mid-1960s.

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Zionism movement in the 19th century.[53] "The Other Foot" imagines the beginning of a utopic state: not a particularly advanced state in terms of technology, but utopic in its post-racial nature. In that sense, "The Other Foot" is, by far, the most optimistic of these two stories.

Foucault believes that "the Modern State can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, with certain limits and subject to certain conditions" (254). He also believes that "the first function of racism" is "to create caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower" (255). Foucault believes that, in the bio-political state, racism "is the precondition for exercising the right to kill" (256). It must be stated that when using the verb "to kill" Foucault does "not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on" (idem). Of course, the African American population of the US South that lived under the rule of Jim Crow laws and social practices were "rejected" and subjected to "political death." In fact, some states of the US South would not allow their African American citizens to vote if their grandfathers had not voted before the Civil War. This is, of course, an extreme form of "political death," carried out by the outright exclusion from the nation's democratic process.[54] For all these reasons, the Jim Crow South is a good example of Foucault's understanding of the bio-political state. The African American citizens of these stories, being the exploited subjects of a bio-political

[53] The Back-to-Africa-movement, also known as Black Zionism, emerged in the United States during the 19th century, influencing social movements such as the Nation of Islam. Throughout the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, the idea of African Americans returning to Africa struggled to gain popularity among the country's black community. Some attempts of "returning" to Arica, however, were made, with grater or lower degrees of success.

[54] Efforts to limit the voting rights of African Americans still prevail in certain regions of the United States.

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regime that discriminates them, condemns them to political death, and segregates their towns, decide to leave Earth and establish themselves in Mars. Mars becomes a place of hope, a place where these men and women can free themselves from the unfair treatment that they have been subjected to in the bio-political society that they inhabit. Going to Mars becomes, for them, the only way of escaping bio-power.

The Case of "Way in the Middle of the Air"

In "Way in the Middle of the Air," a group of African American men and women living in a Southern town in the USA are preparing to board a rocket that will take them to Mars, where they intend to begin a new life, free from the exploitation and prejudice of the town's white population. Lavender argues that this story "relates to otherhood, because it raises awareness of the intolerance of racism" (100). This intolerance will be mostly exemplified in the character of Samuel Teece, a white supremacist. While the soon-to-be rocket-men walk in front of a hardware store, Teece, who owns the place, yells at them and insults them. Teece ultimately shows, through his words and actions, that he does not want to let these people go. First, he tries to stop a man called Belter, arguing that the man owes him money, and so he should not be allowed to leave. The African Americans marching along Belter quickly collect the necessary money to pay his debt and give it to an angry Teece. Soon after, Teece tries to stop a young man called Silly; Silly is his employee, and Teece reminds him of the contract that he has signed, hoping that this will force the young man to stay working in the store. But Teece's grandfather feels bad for Silly, and steps in for the young man, arguing that he will take his place in Teece's business. When Teece seems reluctant to accept this new deal, Silly's

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friends intervene, making Teece rather nervous. These events lead Teece to let Silly go. When Silly is leaving, he asks his former boss what will he do at night. Silly's words refer to Teece's nighttime activities; it is suggested that some of these activities include terrorizing and even lynching black people with his gang of Southern white supremacists.[55] An enraged Teece and his grandfather take their vehicle and chase the soon-to-be astronauts, but the road is blocked with the discarded belongings that these men and women do not intend to take to Mars. Teece and his grandfather return to the town and the rocket takes off. The proud Teece finds a strange sense of comfort in the fact that Silly called him "sir" until the end.

According to Lavender, "Way in the Middle of the Air" intends to provide a solution to the color line, which proves the author's desire and political commitment to eliminate racism. In his own words:

> "Providing an escape from the problem of the color line, Bradbury seems to indicate that whites and blacks cannot coexist with a cultural hierarchy established through physical differences and the complete domination of others. The story is meant to be an ironic solution to the color line. I think this shows Bradbury's desire and political commitment to eliminate racism by promoting effective social justice, even if it is only imaginary. (100)

In this story, Teece is a white Southern segregationist that not only discriminates against, but even terrorizes the black men and women of his town, while economically profiting

[55] This story was published in 1951, a year in which several organizations that had adopted the name and rituals of the second Ku Klux Klan spread terror in the African American community living in the South of the United States.

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from their labor. The reader knows that he lent Belter some money. Since it is hard to imagine that Teece, a racist bully, has done this out of generosity and selflessness, it is impossible to avoid the question: is Teece a usurer? Does he lend money to African Americans so that he can exploit them? Does he lend them money that the banks are not willing to lend them, so that he can profit from the interest or from their labor? On the other hand, Teece's interaction with the young man called Silly makes it clear that the white man does indeed employ black citizens, and, once again, profits from their work. The hypocrisy of the social and economic system of the segregated South becomes clear in this interaction. Teece would not sit in the same restaurant with Belter or Silly, he would even enjoy terrorizing them at night, with his gang of white supremacists, but he is willing to interact with these black men when he can gain some profit from them: the interest from a loan or the cheap labor that they might be forced to perform for his personal benefit.

In this short story, the moment in which the crowd of African Americans walking towards the rocket gather money to pay Belter's debt depicts the power of empathy and solidarity in the face of injustice. Teece tries to prevent Belter and Silly from leaving using something other than physical force; Teece hides his prejudice and his need for black people's labor behind socially accepted norms: a person who owes money should honor and pay that debt, a man that has signed a contract cannot break it without legal justification, etc. Teece benefits from the bio-political system that he inhabits, and exercises bio-power in order to achieve his personal goals, while perpetuating and enforcing that system. When Teece's grandfather offers to take Silly's place, empathy becomes, once again, a powerful force against hatred and bio-power. The kind gesture of

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Teece's grandfather seems to suggest that a more human treatment towards the black man is possible in this society; but even though this action allows the reader to see that not all white men in this society are equal, this is clearly not enough. Just as individual acts of kindness cannot dismantle a system that reinforces and thrives on racism, the efforts of Teece's grandfather to help Silly are not enough when it comes to dissuading his grandson from exercising his power over the young African American man. This is why the people in the crowd still have to intervene, intimidating Teece, to help Silly. Bradbury seems to be aware of the fact that the oppression of African Americans will not be banished by white men in positions of power, but by the African American community, when they organize and begin actively fighting for equality. In short, in this pre-Civil Rights Movement story, Bradbury seems to recognize that a pacifist approach to the racial conflict in the US South might be insufficient; while addressing the fact that, in the context of the fight for racial equality, the timid help of sympathetic white supporters is always insufficient, and that relevant social change can only be achieved by the efforts of the African American community.

In conclusion, Ray Bradbury's "Way in the Middle of the Air" emphasizes the need of black citizens to take organized action against Jim Crow, and other forms of racism, while it seems to champion a separationist solution to the racial tensions of the nation. But then again, this story gains greater significance when read in conjunction with "The Other Foot."

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The Case of "The Other Foot"

Compared to "Way in the Middle of the Air," "The Other Foot" embraces a more pacifist approach to the racial tensions between black and white subjects, suggesting the possibility of a post-racial society, in which black and white citizens can live in harmony and, more importantly, as equals. In "The Other Foot"—which could be read as an unofficial sequel to "Way in the Middle of the Air"—a community of African Americans living in a small Martian town prepare to receive a rocket that is coming from Earth. The people from this community have not had any contact with Earth in 20 years. There are no white men or women living in this town. Willie Johnson, a man whose parents had been killed by white supremacists in the segregated fictional town of Greenwater, Alabama, goes around town preparing for the landing of the rocket. As he assumes that the crew inside this rocket will be white, Johnson convinces many of his friends to prepare the town for receiving white people; preparations for the arrival include drawing lines in buses and dividing theaters by using ropes, segregating urban spaces that had not been segregated before. Johnson even carries a weapon and a piece of rope, suggesting that the man is considering the idea of lynching the rocket's white crew after the landing. Hattie Johnson, Willie's wife, opposes these extreme measures and plays an important role in the story by calming her husband down, and serving as a subtle negotiator in the interchange between the crowd of citizens that are waiting for the rocket and the spaceship's pilot. According to Lavender, by "[s]peaking through Hattie, Bradbury reveals his compassion for all of humanity" (102). When the rocket finally lands on Mars's surface and an old white man comes out of the ship, he is received by the puzzled and hostile crowd that Johnson leads. But the white man is—or pretends to be—oblivious

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to the fact that his life is in danger and engages in a brief speech in which he informs the citizens of this small Martian town of the fact that after they left Earth, World War III started in the planet; this war led to the destruction of all of the planet's cities. This refugee from Earth also asks his audience to accept him and his fellow survivors, and offers to serve them, as they once served white people back on planet Earth (309). He concludes his brief speech with a recognition of historical guilt and a plead for mercy. When several men and women from the town start asking the rocket-man about the cities and small towns that they had left long time ago, he provides them with desolate pictures of Earth. All of the places that they can remember are now gone forever. Hattie ventures to ask the newcomer about Knockwood Hill, in Greenwater. This is the place where her father in law was shot and hung. The old man says that the hill was blown up. He shows them a photograph, that Willie examines. Hattie keeps asking questions about Greenwater, about the men that killed her father in law—a man called Dr. Philips—about Dr. Philips' son, and about the place where Johnson's mother was murdered. All these places had been destroyed in the war.

When Johnson realizes that all this is gone, he tells the space-traveler that he and his people will not have to work for the town's black inhabitants. After saying this, he finally drops the rope that he held in his hands for most of the story. Men and women from the town go to the buses and theaters, erasing and removing all the segregationist signs that they had erected in preparation for the arrival of the white man. Hattie expresses her joy, as she sees this moment as "a new start for everyone" (312). Her husband states that "[t]he time for being fools is over," and adds that the white man "has no home, just like we didn't have one for so long. Now everything's even. We can start

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all over again, on the same level" (idem). When asked by his children if he had seen the white man, Johnson answers: "Yes sir … Seems like for the first time today I really seen the white man—I really seen him clear" (313). While "Way in the Middle of the Air" is a story of freedom and emancipation, perhaps reminiscent of the Biblical Exodus—in which the Jewish people, led by Moses, leave the land of Egypt, where they had been enslaved by the Pharaoh—"The Other Foot" is a story of reconciliation. This story articulates Bradbury's hope that someday, men and women from all races (and, more specifically, white and black Americans), will be able to live together in peace and, perhaps more importantly, "on the same level."

I have argued that "The Other Foot" can be read as Bradbury's effort of imagining a world where the racial tensions of the Jim Crow era can finally come to an end. For this to happen, African Americans must forgive the historical—and individual—wrongdoings of the white man. But even though the story ends in a touching moment of reconciliation, and embraces the hope of a new world free of racial violence, racial segregation, and racism in general, the first pages of the story depict a conflicted town of African American citizen, that seem to debate whether they should all welcome the white man into their community or simply lynch him. Hattie Johnson and Mr. Brown have a brief conversation at the beginning of the story, he is on his way to "see" the white man. When Hattie asks what are they going to do with "that white man," Mr. Brown answers that he only wants to "look at him." Eventually, Hattie finally asks Mr. Brown what she really wants to know: "You ain't going to lynch him?" (300). When Mr. Brown answers that all they want to do is to shake the pilot's hand, the people around him answer with a not-so-convincing "[S]ure" (idem). Soon, Willie Johnson shows up and suggests to Mr. Brown

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and his friends to take their weapons with them. Willie adds that he is bringing his own weapon as well.

Hattie's fear that the white man will be lynched is not unjustified. Bradbury's story is called "The Other Foot," precisely because it is a story that inquires what would ever happen if the "shoe" of racial inequality in the 1950s USA was suddenly on "the other foot." In other words, what would happen if the ones with power to lynch, segregate, and exploit were the African Americans, instead of the white Americans. If this were the case, Bradbury seems to ask, would African Americans—who at the time where actually chased by the ghost of past and present lynching, performed by members of the Ku Klux Klan—exploit the white minority? Would they lynch those whites that tried to stir social unrest while fighting for their rights? Would they segregate their towns to limit and control the access of white subjects to different public urban spaces? In short, if the shoe was on the other foot—to follow Bradbury's metaphor—would the African American community treat whites in the same unjust way in which they treated them?

While characters such as Hattie Johnson, Mr. Brown, and the mayor of the Martian town seem to be willing to welcome the white man, Willie cannot forget or forgive the men that lynched his father and shot his mother, just as he cannot forget or forgive the exploitation of his people, and the segregation that he experienced firsthand. Willie would prefer not to have to interact with white people any more, he asks his wife, "What right they got coming up here so late? Why don't they leave us in peace? Why they didn't blow themselves up on that old world and let us be?" (301). But since a white man is coming to town whether he likes it or not, Johnson does not miss the chance to highlight the fact that "the shoe is on the other foot now" (idem). And since that is indeed

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the case, he tells Hattie, “We’ll see who gets laws passed against him, who gets lynched, who rides the back of streetcars, who gets segregated in shows. We’ll just wait and see” (idem). When asked by his wife if he wouldn’t allow white people to settle in the town, he answers: “Sure … They can come up and live and work here … All they got to do to deserve it is live in their own small part of town, the slums, and shine our shoes for us, and mop our trash, and sit in the last row in the balcony … And once a week we hang one or two of them. Simple” (idem). Johnson seems this as a chance for historical, social, and individual revenge. Also, perhaps, as a kind of punishment that the white man deserves for breaking the peace of the tranquil Martian town. Johnson tells Hattie that he left Earth when he was sixteen. He adds: “I’ve never been sorry I left. We’ve had peace here, the first time we ever drew a solid breath” (303). The white man, Johnson thinks, will only disrupt the peaceful and dignified life that his community has finally acquired in Mars.

When Johnson approaches the site of the landing, he shares his plans of turning their town into a segregated space, as well as receiving white refugees to exploit them for the benefit of the entire black population. His ideas are well received by a considerable part of Johnson’s audience and soon a committee is organized to mark and segregate public spaces, such as streetcars and theaters. Johnson takes his segregationist project a step further when he claims that the town “has to pass a law this afternoon; no intermarriages!” (305). Of course, this law is a direct response to the actual laws opposing interracial marriage that existed in several states of the United States until 1967, when the Supreme Court invalidated state laws prohibiting interracial marriage across the nation in the famous case of Loving vs Virginia.

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When the mayor accuses Johnson of "making a mob" Johnson answers that "[t]hat's the idea" (305). Again, the threat of lynching—as a response to actual white on black lynching in the US South—becomes present in Bradbury's story. In short, the way in which Johnson intends the people in his town to receive the hypothetical white refugees from Earth is to subject them to the same abuse, the same exploitation, and the same segregation to which the African American population of the US South were subjected to at the time when Bradbury published the story. Johnson also suggests that white men should replace the "shoeshine boys" in town (305). This idea is intended to humiliate the former oppressor. In other words, Johnson wants to attain historical retribution for the wrongs suffered by his people—and his family in particular—through vengeance.

But Johnson has a change of heart when he realizes that all the places where segregation, violence and exploitation took place have disappeared from the face of Earth. He is also taken by surprise when the white refugee admits historical guilt in the name of his people, and offers to work for the black population in exchange for a place in their organized society. The astronaut says:

> We've been stupid before. Before God we admit our stupidity and our evilness. All the Chinese and the Indians and the and the Russians and the British and the Americans. We're asking to be taken in. Your Martian soil has lain fallow for numberless centuries; there's room for everyone; it's good soil—I've seen your fields from above. We'll come and work it for you. Yes, we'll even do that. We deserve anything you want to do to us, but don't shut us out. We can't force you to act now. If you want I'll get

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> back into my ship, and go back and that will be all there is to it. We won't bother you again. But we'll come here and we'll work for you for you and do the things you did for us—clean your houses, cook your meals, shine your shoes, and humble ourselves in the sight of God for the things we have done over the centuries to ourselves, to others, to you. (309)

Again, the brief speech of the white refugee, alongside with Johnson's realization that all the places and people that he associated to his people's—and in particular to his family's—history of discrimination and victimization have disappeared in the war dissuade him of carrying out his initially hostile intentions and change his attitude towards the old white man and the other white refugees that will eventually follow him to Mars.

After all, all those places where Jim Crow laws were exercised, all those places where lynching and exploitation took place are gone forever. Suddenly, Johnson's hatred loses its target; the earthly things and institutions that he hated have disappeared for ever. And so, he can finally begin a personal process of forgiveness and healing. He finally comes to the understanding that there was "nothing of it left to hate—not an empty brass gun shell, or a twisted hemp, or a tree, or even a hill of it to hate. Nothing but some alien people in a rocket, people who might shine his shoes and ride in the back of trolleys or sit far up in midnight theaters" (312). And so, Johnson's answer to the refugee's offer of working the land, cleaning their houses, and shinning their shoes, is simply: "You won't have to do that" (idem). Johnson can only forgive the white race when this white man, in the name of all his fellowmen, recognizes the role of his people in the historical atrocities

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performed against the black population and shows a sincere will to serve the black men and women living in Mars.

At the end of the story, Johnson tells his children that he has seen the white man for the first time. What Johnson means is that he has been able to "see" the white man, and to perceive him as an equal, because he has finally been able to see him as human, and not only as a brutal and violent oppressor. When Hattie argues that this moment marks "[a] new start for everyone" (312), Johnson promptly agrees with her. Seeing the white man in this position of complete vulnerability allows Johnson to perceive him as a fellow human, as an equal. In his own words, the white man has "no home, just like we didn't have one for so long" (idem). It is precisely this state of total vulnerability that allows Johnson to forgive the historical faults of the white people. According to him, "[n]ow everything's even." And since everything is even, Johnson argues that "[w]e can start all over again, on the same level" (idem). These words suggest that a new age of racial equality, social justice and true harmony is in the horizon.

Conclusions

While "Way in the Middle of the Air" is a story about black men and women escaping the segregation, exploitation and violence of the early 1950s Jim Crow South—in other words, a story about black men and women escaping the bio-political society of the Jim Crow Era US South—"The Other Foot" displays Bradbury's white fantasy of social harmony between the races and forgiveness for the historical wrongdoings that the white population performed against the black people in the country for centuries. Of course, as a white man living in the 1950s, Bradbury—however directly or indirectly—

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benefited from the racial and social system of the US. The sense of guilt present in the story becomes particularly evident in the short speech of the rocket pilot.[56] Even though the dystopic trope of global nuclear war serves as the background for Bradbury's story, this time the author, instead of focusing his attention on the war that brought humanity to the brink of total extinction, uses the science fictional tropes of nuclear annihilation and interplanetary travel to build the foundations for a social and racial (or post-racial) utopia, of which the reader catches only a glimpse at the end of the text.

As Lavender argues, in this story "Bradbury suggests that time apart from each other interrupts the cycle of racism and establishes an opportunity to build a united humanity based on respect, understanding and trust" (102). This means that "[s]eparation, not segregation, has allowed the psychic wounds of racism to heal. Humanity has quite simply evolved beyond one of its greatest flaws—racism—through the passage of time in Bradbury's posthuman universe" (idem). Lavender's analysis of "The Other Foot" enriches our reading of the story, by including the concepts of "separation" (as opposed to simple "segregation") and "time apart" as important factors for the creation of a peaceful and fair relationship between blacks and whites in the imaginary universe created by Bradbury. However, he does not consider the element of white guilt, and the role that it plays in these stories.

"The Other Foot" is not a utopian story, but its plot certainly suggests the beginning of a utopia: an ideal world were the racial tensions and injustices that Bradbury witnessed throughout his life will come to an end, black people will forgive their white counterparts, and in this way a new era of harmony and equality will begin for the entire

[56] The concept of "white guilt" has been discussed by scholars, political commentators, politicians, etc. since the 1970s

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human race. Bradbury's historical and personal guilt results in the creation of a possible society, in which the bio-power exercised against black men and women in the Jim Crow South is neither exercised nor redirected towards the whites; the end of "The Other Foot" suggests that a new social contract will come into being. In this utopian world to come, the black man will be free from the white man's oppression and the white man will be free from his historical, individual, and social guilt.

The End of the World: The Case of "There Will Come Soft Rains (August 4, 2026/2057)" and "The Million-Year Picnic (October 2026/2057)"

Ray Bradbury visits and revisit the science fictional trope of "the end of the world" in many of his short stories. Some notable examples are "The Last Night of the World" and "The Highway." Both stories were published in *The Illustrated Man*.[57] Nevertheless, Bradbury—celebrated for his often-times lyrical take on the science fiction

[57] "The Last Night of the World" is structured as a dialogue between a couple. The husband tells his wife about a prophetic dream that he and his coworkers have been having. In this dream, they all hear a voice that declares that the world will come to an end. He is sure that the world will end in the night of October 19, 1969. He doesn't know why the world will end, or how; but he is certain that it will. The wife also mentions hearing of this mysterious shared dream, and accepts the husband's words as true. Curiously enough, everyone in the world seems to know that the world is coming to an end, but people seem to take it with a certain sense of decorum and inevitability, and just carry on their normal lives like if nothing was happening. At the end of the story, husband and wife hold hands, while they lay in bed. In "The Highway," a Mexican man called Hernando, who lives near the American border, witnesses an exodus of people driving from Mexico to the US. One of the cars stops for a brief period of time, and the upper-class American passengers ask him for water. They seem to be in a state of distress. When Hernando asks them what is wrong, the young man driving the car informs him that "the atom war" has begun (317), adding that this will bring forth "the end of the world." In the ambiguous ending of this story, a perplexed Hernando asks himself: "What do they mean, 'the world'?" (218). This final question seems to suggest that the destruction of urban spaces across the continent might not affect the inhabitants of remote or isolated areas, such as Hernando and his wife, who live near the highway, in an almost deserted area of Northern Mexico. In a way, this ending seems to encourage its readers to imagine a post-nuclear-war world. Will that mean the end of urban life? The end of capitalism and socialism? The end of a globalized economy? The end of the institution of the nation state? The end of all forms of government? In this way, the idea that a nuclear war would bring forth the end of the world, encourages us to further inquire what we mean when we talk about "the world."

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genre—renders a much more poetic depiction of the trope of the end of the world in the two final stories of *The Martian Chronicles:* "There Will Come Soft Rains (August 4, 2026/2057)" and "The Million-Year Picnic (October 2026/2057)."

I will argue that "There Will Come Soft Rains" depicts the end of humankind and the subsequent end of bio-power in a way not unlike what we will find in René Rebetez's "La nueva prehistoria." Some parallels could also be drawn between Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975)—a story that I will analyze in the last chapter of this project—and Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains." For instance, both stories seem to have a stoic tone; they both treat the topic of the (actual or hypothetical) extinction of the human species in terms that, if not necessarily positive, could not be described as negative. Both Bradbury's and Borges's stories share the common understanding that humanity is not indispensable for the survival of life on Earth. In this way, an underlying understanding of the futility of the existence of the human species is common to both stories. On the other hand, I will argue that "The Million-Year Picnic" depicts the beginning of a new era for humanity, in which new forms of organized society other than the bio-political nation-state might, or might not, arise. Therefore, this story, like "The Other Foot," is not strictly utopian, but makes utopia possible, by presenting the conditions that could serve for the construction of a new era of humankind: an era of racial harmony and justice, in the case of "The Other Foot," and one of freedom, justice, and peace, in the case of "The Million-Year Picnic." I will demonstrate that in "The Million-Year Picnic," the end of traditional forms of social organization and modern bio-power are suggested—and even celebrated—in the burning of the documents that

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William Thomas brings from his home planet with the purpose of performing this ritualistic act.

The Case of "There Will Come Soft Rains"

"There Will Come Soft Rains" is also the title of a poem by Sara Teasdale, published in *Flame and Shadow* (1920). Bradbury transcribes this poem in his own short story; Teasdale's poem is a central part of the story's plot. In Teasdale's poem, the poetic voice describes a world in which humanity has disappeared. The poem makes a reference to warfare, and depicts the way in which nature—and life on Earth in many of its forms—proliferates and perpetuates itself in the context of a world with no human beings. In Bradbury's story, the reader witnesses the way in which the automated robots in a suburban house keep enacting their daily chores, even though humans have disappeared from the planet. By the end of *The Martian Chronicles*, all the human inhabitants of Mars have gone back to Earth, when a nuclear war begins in their home planet. They cannot leave their loved ones to perish alone, and so they all go back, only to be annihilated in the midst of global nuclear warfare. At the end of "There Will Come Soft Rains," a fire breaks out, and the empty "intelligent" house is burnt to the ground.

As I have mentioned before, Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" takes its title from a poem by Sara Teasdale. In Bradbury's story, Sara Teasdale's poem is transcribed in its entirety. This suggests that a clear understanding of Teasdale's poem is necessary for achieving a true understanding of Bradbury's story. In Teasdale's text, the poetic voice describes the proliferation of several forms of life in a world where human

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beings have disappeared, leading the reader to the realization that life on Earth will go on with or without humans. Bradbury's short story playfully mirrors Teasdale's poem. In this short story, a group of automatic robots keep fulfilling their function in a house with no humans. While in the case of Teasdale's poem different life forms, such as frogs, robins, and plum trees, keep populating the Earth after humans have disappeared, in Bradbury's story, it is the technology created by human beings—in the form of an artificial intelligence-ran house with robotic mice, automatic stoves, automatic doors, garden sprinklers, self-filling bathtubs, etcetera—that survives the extinction of our species after a devastating nuclear war.

At the end, just one piece of technology survives the fire that burns the house at the story's conclusion: an automatic calendar that keeps announcing the date to no one in particular. The absurdity of this accidental memorial to human civilization is almost overwhelming: no one can benefit from this information anymore; not the animals, not the growing vegetation, not anyone. In a world without humans, dates mean nothing. At the end of the story, the recording repeats the same sentence over and over again: "Today is August 5, 2057, today is August 5, 2057, today is…" (242). Not only is there no one around that can understand this message, but time, and history itself, lose all meaning and significance in a world were humans do not exist anymore. It is of course useless to measure the passing of time in a planet where no one holds any understanding of time and the conventions that it implies. But the voice of the automatic calendar also conveys a sense of absurdity and futility, because the useless message seems to suggest that all these years of human civilization have passed in vain. We have been on this planet for hundreds of thousands of years, and when we are gone, it is almost as if we had never

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been here at all. What is, then, the future of Earth in Bradbury's story? Will intelligent life evolve in the planet eventually? And if it does, will it destroy itself, as Bradbury's humans did? Or will they learn from our mistakes? Will they even know that we once inhabited their planet? And if they do, will they care about our legacy? In "There Will Come Soft Rains," the entirety of human history is reduced to a few ruins and the pointless voice of a machine that marks the passing of time for no body.

Bradbury's story is thus a reflection of the futility of our species, and a praise of the endurance of Earth. In this sense, Teasdale and Bradbury seem to hold similar ideas about these topics. Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" makes it clear that the author does not ascribe to the belief, held by many members of the environmentalist movement of the 1960s—and their contemporary successor—that we must change our ways if we want to save Earth. Bradbury, like Teasdale, knows that Earth is not at risk by our actions; what we jeopardize is the well-being and existence of our own species. The planet, and the life it holds, will go on without us.

In Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft rains" human beings are virtually absent from the story, but the technological devices that they created to fulfil their needs serve as a reminder of the people that once used them. However, the story contains another—ominous—reminder of the existence of humans on Earth: the silhouettes of the family that used to live in this house have been "engraved" forever on one of the building's walls, after what the reader could assume to be the result of the detonation of a nuclear weapon.[58] The father's silhouette is immortalized in the task of mowing the garden, the

[58] In reality, Bradbury's ominous silhouettes would not be patches of intact paint over a wall where the paint around them has been burnt by radiation; a nuclear explosion would actually have a bleaching effect over the exposed surfaces. If these silhouettes existed, they would be formed by dirty patches of paint, surrounded by the bleached surface of the rest of the wall.

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mother's final act was to pick up a flower, and the children—a boy and a girl—are surprised by the explosion while playing a game of catch. The ball that the children were playing with also leaves an imprint on the wall, somehow preserving this beautiful moment of play and innocence. But the background in which these silhouettes have been preserved is as important as the images themselves. In Bradbury's words, "[t]he five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer" (236). This dark memorial of suburban middle-class life can be interpreted in two ways: as a celebration of the institution of family—and the often-times unappreciated beauty of daily life—and as a bleak warning of the constant threat of nuclear confrontation, which was so prominent in the collective consciousness of Cold War era America. By juxtaposing the beauty of the images of this idyllic family to the dark expression of war and nuclear power, conveyed in the dark layer of charcoal on the wall, Bradbury seems to warn us about the dangers of war; but, perhaps, this image is also there to shake us up, to make us more aware of the fact that the threat of a nuclear conflict is real, and that, in the context of nuclear global conflict, death can find us anywhere, at any time, even in our own home—even in the one place where we are supposed to feel safe.

But robotic mice and automatic calendars are not the only creatures that appear in Bradbury's story. A few animals are trying to sneak into the house. Foxes and cats approach the building, and as they fail to identify themselves, the house closes itself shut in what the narrator describes as a form of "mechanical paranoia" (237).[59] Whenever one

[59] The personification of the mechanical house is reminiscent of other classic works of science fiction from the period. The intelligent building in Bradbury's story precedes Arthur C. Clarke's computer *HAL 9000* in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

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of the house's windows is touched by a sparrow's wing, the shade snaps up, isolating the building from the natural world around it. It almost seems as if the house was trying to isolate itself from nature in an effort to avoid decay, or to perpetuate the division between the natural and the technological world created by humans. On the other hand, in Teasdale's poem, where animals are also present, nature seems to have an easier time taking over the ruins of human civilization. In the poem's third stanza, the poetic voice depicts robins sitting on a low-fence wire. Naturally, they are utterly indifferent to each other's presence.

Teasdale's idyllic image of a world in which nature—in the form of animals and plants—flourishes and takes over formerly human-occupied spaces is problematized by Bradbury in the moment of the story when the family's dog dies of starvation (237). He is quickly incinerated by the house's robot-mice when his body starts to decompose (238). In this way, Bradbury suggests that even though humans may be a destructive force in the planet, they can also protect and care for animals—in other words, they—who are also part of the natural world—can also protect nature. The image of the helpless domesticated animal is thus evidence of the fact that humans and other living creatures can have a positive relationship—even one of love—and ultimately benefit from each other's presence. In a less benign interpretation of this scene, the moment of the dog's death could be a sign of the inadequacy of domesticated animals in a world without humans. The feral foxes and cats that approach the house, as well as the sparrows flying above it, never depended on humans. This is what ensures their survival in a planet where our species has disappeared forever. On the other hand, domesticated animals will have to go feral—their offspring sure will—or perish. In a way, this moment of Bradbury's

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story is both a touching portrayal of the love between humans and their pets—the dog desperately wanders through the house looking for their masters (237)—and a demonstration of the principles of evolution through natural selection in action (only the fit, and their offspring, can survive).

The reason why I stated before that to attain a real understanding of Bradbury's story the reader has to consider its relationship with Teasdale's poem, from which it takes its title, is because the main subjects of the story are also the main subjects of the poem: the futility and fragility of the human species—confronted to the resiliency of life on Earth—and the threat that war represents for humanity's existence. Bradbury's depiction of a world in which the natural world takes over deserted urban spaces after a post-nuclear war may seem somehow commonplace for the 21st century reader, but it is relevant to mention that Bradbury's story precedes novels such as Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954),[60] Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968),[61] and films such as Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962).[62] On the other hand, Teasdale's poem was truly innovative, since the depiction of a planet devoid of humans, due to the results of global warfare, was still a very uncommon subject.

Teasdale suggests that war can be the disaster that brings humanity to extinction on the fourth stanza of her poem, when stating:

> "And not one will know of the war, not one
>
> Will care at last when it is done" (239).

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[60] This novel has been adapted for film in 1964, 1971, and 2007.
[61] This novel was adapted by Ridley Scott into the cult-film *Blade Runner* in 1982.
[62] This film was later adapted by Terry Gilliam in his critically acclaimed film *12 Monkeys* (1995).

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Teasdale published her famous poem on 1920, only two years after the end of World War I. Probably, the idea of a war so devastating that it would bring humankind to an end would have been unthinkable before a conflict of the magnitude of World War I. On the other hand, the general sense of pessimism and disenchantment brought up by this terrible armed conflict would also make Teasdale's stoic, unemotional attitude towards the hypothetical extinction of our species possible. This attitude becomes evident in the two last stanzas of the poem:

> "Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,
> If mankind perished utterly.
>
> And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
> Would scarcely know that we were gone" (idem).

There is no sign of lamentation in the poetic voice, as it describes in a matter-of-fact manner the extinction of the human race through warfare. Teasdale's post-World War I fatalism, her attitude towards the prospect of the end of human life on Earth, resonates with Borges's and Bradbury's Cold War era stories "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" and "There Will Come Soft Rains." This should not surprise us, since both World War I—with its new implementation of chemical weapons and the use of the deadly machine gun—and World War II—with the detonation of the two nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 when the war was practically over—marked the beginning of a general disenchantment with both the values and dreams of Modernity, and with humankind as such, that spread throughout the West and gave rise to new ways of understanding ourselves and the world.

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It is relevant to keep in mind that Bradbury's short story was published only five years after the detonation of the nuclear bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The collapse of modernity's understanding of human history as a story of progress, upheld by 18th an 19th century thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx[63]; the popularization of Existentialism and Nihilism throughout the West, exemplified by the commercial and critical success of authors such as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre (who were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1957 and 1964 respectively, even though Sartre never accepted the prize); and the subsequent rejection of the religious ideas of divine purpose or godly intervention in the world utterly marked and defined the character and social imagination of the West throughout the 20th century, at least until the appearance of the "Self-help Movement" in the last two decades of the century.

In conclusion, Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" reflects on the human species, on its relationship with nature, and on the future of the planet in the hypothetical case of the extinction of our species. This story from *The Martian Chronicles*, like Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado"—a story in which humanity stands at the brink of extinction—deals with the idea of the extinction of humankind in a relatively unsentimental way. In Borges's story war is named among the possible causes of the scarcity of humans in the planet; in Bradbury's story, nuclear war is, quite unequivocally, the cause of the extinction of human civilization in the planet. Both stories were written

[63] Even though Kant thought of himself as a pacifist, he wrote about the role of war in leading communities towards progress. On the other hand, Hegel wrote about the role that war played in strengthening the character of young men. This kind of ideas about war would be unacceptable for an author such as Teasdale, who had experienced the horror of World War I, and Bradbury, who experienced the horrors of World War II, and the long uncertainty of the Cold War.

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in the context of the Cold War, a historical moment in which humankind often felt—and at least in a few occasions was—at the brink of a global nuclear confrontation. These stories, like Teasdale's poem and René Rebetez's "Rocky Lunario," depict the end of humankind as we know it in a particularly unsentimental way. They warn us about the dangers of war, but they do not preach against it. They seem to understand the extinction of our species as something natural, something that we might bring upon us, and thus, they do not engage in any form of lamentation. While living in a historical moment in which global nuclear conflict was rather possible, authors of the Cold War era such as Bradbury and Borges imagine an Earth without humanity; instead of falling in the desperate frenzy of the apocalyptic prophet, they approach this possibility with the stoic attitude of those who know that there are situations that escape our individual will and control. At the end, these authors depict the end of humanity not as a tragedy, but as the culmination of a natural historical process, initiated and carried along by the human species.

The Case of "The Million-Year Picnic"

In "The Million-Year Picnic (October 2026/2057)" an American Midwestern family leaves Earth and settles in Mars, escaping from the nuclear global conflict that has taken humanity to the verge of extinction. In this story, William Thomas, his wife Alice, and their three young boys, Timothy, Robert, and Mike, decide to have a picnic, after landing on Mars in their privately-owned rocket—a vehicle that the Williams had been hiding from the authorities so that it would not be appropriated by the government and used in global warfare. Most of the story is told from the point of view of the oldest son,

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Timothy, who knows that there is something extremely suspicious about his family's so-called vacation in Mars, and who finally finds out that his parents' real plan is to establish themselves in the red planet and spend the rest of their lives there. In Bradbury's story, the father promises his sons that they will meet the Martians later that day. While the Thomas family travels in their boat across the Martian canals, they see several deserted cities, and the father asks his children to choose the town that they like the most. These cities are deserted, because the native Martians died from chickenpox after establishing contact with some of the first space-travelers from Earth and because all humans abandoned Mars during what could be interpreted as humanity's final war. Later in the story, the children realize that while choosing their favorite town in the deserted planet, they were actually choosing the town in which they would establish themselves for good. While "There Will Come Soft Rains" depicts a world without humans, *The Martian Chronicles* does not end with the total extinction of the human species; it ends with a story in which the survival of humankind is uncertain, but not impossible. In "The Million-Year Picnic" there is a small hope for humanity's survival; not in our home planet, but in Mars.

In "The Million-Year Picnic" William Thomas talks to his family about a friend of his, Bert Edwards, who also owns a rocket, and who is also planning to escape to Mars with his wife and their four daughters. These girls are also referred to as the future wives of the Thomas brothers. Unlike the tranquil and almost stoic attitude of the married couple that faces the end of the world in "The Last Night of the World," in "The Million-Year Picnic" William Thomas and his wife Alice refuse—paraphrasing Dylan Thomas' famous poem—to "go gently into the night." While the character of the tall man in

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Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" believes that human beings should advance towards extinction—either gradually or simultaneously—the parents in Bradbury's short story want their family to be a central part of the foundation of a new era; they want humanity to survive, they want their sons to live, reproduce, and prosper on a foreign planet. They see the act of moving to Mars as a way of giving humankind the chance of a new beginning, a second chance at coexistence and tolerance (not unlike the utopian and peaceful society that seems possible at the end of "The Other Foot"). When the children finally choose a city, the father starts a fire with a few documents that he has brought from Earth. While they are all sitting on the floor, the father explains to his children why he and his wife decided to move to Mars. In this small fire, the father burns documents that represent "all the laws and beliefs of Earth" (253). The story comes to an end when the father finally fulfills his promise of showing the Martians to his three sons: after the burning of the documents, they all walk together to a nearby canal, and they see their reflections on the water. The truth is finally revealed: *they* are the Martians; humankind's only hope is to live and grow in this planet. Since all native Martians have died and the war on Earth is likely to have ended with all—or nearly all—human life on the planet, this family of humans are, too, the only Martians left. The Thomas family, and the four girls coming in a rocket from Earth, are the only hope for the preservation of the human species.

The nature of the documents that Mr. Thomas burns in the fire is symbolical of the kind of society that the family wants to leave behind, and, therefore, of the kind of society that this family would like to create in the red planet. Among these documents, the reader finds the following titles: "Governments Bonds; Business Graph, 2030;

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Religious Prejudice: An Essay; The Science of Logistics; Problems of the Pan-American Unity; Stock Report for July 3, 2029; The War Digest" (252). The father himself draws a parallel between the burning of these documents and the disappearance of a way of life in his home planet. In his own words: he is "burning a way of life, just like that way of life is being burned clean of Earth right now" (idem). Even though the family will now inhabit a virtually deserted planet, the father believes that they—and the second family that will soon be landing on the planet—will be "[e]nough to start over. Enough to turn away from all that back on Earth and strike out on a new line" (253). Of course, starting again on Mars means "turning away" from several aspects of what human life on Earth has been like in the years preceding the family's escape from the planet. The father characterizes humanity's way of life as "wrong;" and he argues that humanity "strangled itself with its own hands" (252). But what exactly is that way of life that the father loathes and fears so much? Among the texts that he brings to Mars, in order to ritualistically burn them in a small fire, are a number of *The War Digest*, a text with the title "Religious Prejudice: An Essay," and the "Stock Report for July 3, 2029." Obviously, Mr. Thomson intends that the new society that he and his family will live in will be a peaceful one; war is something that they are all eager to leave behind (and they do it quite literally). The symbolic significance of burning "Religious Prejudice: An Essay" and the "Stock Report for July 3, 2029" is less obvious. Does the father intend to leave behind religious prejudice, or does he want to start a society in which religion itself does not exist? On the other hand, is the burning of the "Stock Report" a rejection of capitalism? Is it an obscure reference to the father's rejection of social inequality? However obscure the meaning of the burning of the documents might be, this moment of

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Bradbury's story is of great importance, and it holds the key to the kind of utopic society that the Thomson family would like to create in their new home.

Even though Mr. Thomson's attitude toward religion and economics is somehow obscure, his ideas about the role that science has played in the last years of humankind are made quite clear in the brief speech that he gives his children. According to him, "[s]cience ran too far ahead of us too quickly, and the people got lost in a mechanical wilderness, like children making over pretty things, gadgets, helicopters, rockets…" (252). But Bradbury does not embrace the anti-science posture of some old War protestors and members of the hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s; the author believes that science itself is not the problem: what eventually hurts humankind is the emphasis that scientists, politicians, and other people have given to the "wrong items" (idem). Items like rockets and helicopters, of course, have been weaponized throughout recent history. Another problem that Bradbury finds in the development of new technologies is that humans are constantly "emphasizing machines instead of how to run the machines" (idem). For the father, this technological development allowed wars to become "bigger and bigger and finally killed Earth" (idem). In other words, for Mr. Thomson, and arguably for Bradbury himself, technological development itself is not a negative phenomenon. But scientific and technological development for its own sake is extremely dangerous; these developments must be guided by a certain sense of morality. In a way, this is the warning that Bradbury leaves us with; and this warning is not only articulated in "The Million Dollar Picnic," but throughout the stories that form *The Martian Chronicles*. Bradbury seems to be telling us that science, without morality and with no regards for our fellow human beings, can lead our species to its own destruction.

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It is also important to note that in “The Million-Year Picnic” there is one human institution that is not challenged in the symbolical burning of the documents, and that constitutes the last image depicted in the story (the reflection of a group of humans staring at a canal in Mars); this institution is, of course, the family. This story works as a new interplanetary genesis of sorts, a new beginning for our species based on the institution of the family. But Bradbury’s idyllic portrayal of this human institution conveniently overlooks some of the more complex implications of the story; in particular, the logical necessity that, for the survival of our species to be possible, the offspring of Timothy and his brothers—who will probably mate with the girls that might or might not be on their way to the red planet—will have to engage in incestuous relationships with each other.

The end of the story depicts Timothy and his family, staring at their own reflection on the canal, coming at last to the realization that they are the new Martians. This is a moment of great solemnity and introspection for the entire family. Bradbury says: “The Martians stared back at them for a long, long silent time from the rippling water” (254). But understanding that they are now Martians does not only mean that they are the new inhabitants of the red planet, it also means that they will have to learn how to live like Martians, which implies that they will have to unlearn the ways of the earthlings. Their old way of life has been symbolically burnt out in the fire, and now they have to find a new way of living that fits their new planet. This is of great importance, since this new way of living will determine the future of humanity. The fact that the family comes to understand their new nature while staring at their reflections in the canal is rather relevant: in this new world, in this new way of life that they must pursue, a direct and

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harmonious relationship with the natural world will permit them to avoid the destruction of their new planet, as well as their own extinction. In "The Million-Year Picnic," Bradbury does not only warn us about the dangers of engaging in the development of new technologies without the guidance of reason and morality, he also tells us—in this science fiction parable of sorts—that if humanity is to survive on Earth we, as a species, must change our way of living, our way of relating to nature and technology, and, more importantly, our way of relating to each other.

The End of Bio-politics: "La nueva prehistoria"

Dystopic novels such as *Fahrenheit 451*, *1984*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaiden's Tale* (1985),[64] and short stories such as "Way in the Middle of the Air" and "The Other Foot," deal directly with individual or social efforts to escape totalitarian regimes, bio-political governments, police states, and discriminating governments where racial minorities are segregated and exploited as cheap labor. All of these are forms of societies in which bio-power is exercised in one way or another. Rebetez's "La nueva prehistoria" also renders a world in which bio-power has become impossible, but he does

[64] *The Handmaiden's Tale* is Atwood's most famous novel. In this acclaimed work of fiction, a sect of fundamentalists Christians takes over the United States of America after murdering the president and most members of congress; they soon institute a religious military dictatorship in the nation. Citizens in this society lose several of their rights; women in particular are subjected to all sorts of abuse, losing the right to read, the right to exercise their own sexuality according to their own free will, their right to own property, etcetera. The novel was adapted into film by director Volker Schlöndorff in 1990, turned into an opera by composer Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley in 2000, and adapted for television by producer Bruce Miller in 2017. Even though Atwood's novel is great material for a bio-political reading, I will not include *The Handmade 's Tale* in my dissertation for several reasons: first, Canadian literature is outside the scope of this project. Second, Atwood's novel has gained considerable critical attention in the last decades, and scholarly works about this novel are often being published in academic journals; on the contrary, the study of Latin American authors such as Rebetez, Osorio Lizarazo and Eduardo Urzáiz are less common, and this dissertation intends to fill this gap in the scholarship on 20th century science fiction.

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it in a bizarre and playful way that makes it radically different from the texts that I have mentioned, or studied throughout this dissertation.

In “La nueva prehistoria,” the unnamed main character is outside a movie theater, watching people come and go while his friend Metropoulos is standing in line, waiting to buy tickets for a movie. Eventually, a woman tries to leave the line, and is pulled back into it by an invisible force. The narrator then realizes that people who have been standing in groups are all being pulled together by a strange force. This force rapidly changes from “algo viscoso pero tangible” to “una gelatina transparente,” before finally becoming “un cartílago elástico como el de los hermanos siameses” (11). Metropoulos eventually becomes “una vértebra más del monstruoso reptil” (idem). It is relevant to point out that Rebetez uses the term “reptile” on multiple occasions to refer to the creatures into which groups of humans are transforming. The author draws a clear line between these new creatures and the dinosaurs, and suggests that this new era in humanity is a new prehistory, “una nueva prehostoria que comienza” (12).

The narrator of the story remains an individual, by constantly avoiding these plural creatures that he finds repugnant. On several occasions he expresses his desire of preserving his individuality: “No quiero verme transformado en algo informe como una amiba o un esputo, ni tampoco quiero pasar a ser el último anillo de un gusano gigantesco. Me aferro a mi calidad humana, a mi propia personalidad individual y definida. Soy un hombre, no una entelequia” (14). Curiously enough, later in the story, the narrator comes to think that, perhaps, this new state of humanity might actually be a good thing, that this strange “mutation” could bring a “radical advance in humanity” (idem). However, he still finds these new creatures “repugnant.”

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At some point in the story, the creatures—described by the narrator as gigantic amoeba or enormous reptiles—stop adding individual humans to their organisms and they move out to the countryside. The narrator preserves his individuality and humanity by hiding in the ruins of the city; but he leaves the relative safety of abandoned urban spaces to spy on the strange monsters. He also notices that these creatures also evolve at a tremendous speed. By the end of the story, the narrator mentions that they have started to develop a common mind—"una mente única y poderosa" (15). This mind allows them to live a kind of life in which "lo primitivo está mezclado a ciertos avances técnicos y a sus recuerdos humanos" (idem). These characteristics allow the new creatures to construct rustic buildings that shelter them from the weather and to create new forms of clothing that allows them to better stand the cold. They even begin to engage in the act of singing "extrañas canciones guturales con sus coros de mil voces" (16). The act of singing, as a means for expressing emotions or ideas, allows the reader to assume that the end of humanity depicted in this story is not necessarily total. Several aspects of the human species have been preserved in these new creatures, including the capacity of fulfilling their basic needs through technical ingenuity and the natural need for cultural expression (through the act of singing).

The narrator articulates his predictions for the future of these creatures—of what used to be humankind—when stating: "no está lejano el día en que construyan sus propios aviones y sus coches, largos como ferrocarriles, o redondos y aplanados como platillos voladores" (16). He even adds in a playful tone: "Llegará el momento en que jugarán al golf, no cabe duda" (idem). But even though the narrator of the story is able to find some humor in his terrible fate, he is still opposed to joining these gigantic creatures

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that have taken the place of humankind. In the end of the story, he repeats a previous statement that he had made about his dislike of mindless human grouping and his championing of individuality. Once again, he argues—using virtually the same words—that he is an "enemigo de los grupos y las filas de gente. No es que haya sido un antisocial. Nada de eso … Pero el hombre adocenado, el hombre-montón, me asquea" (16). He closes his narration with a reflection on his own condition, as the privileged witness of the dawn of a new era.

The work of Giorgio Agamben on bio-politics becomes particularly useful when engaging in a critical reading of Rebetez's short story. In a certain way, "La nueva prehistoria" is a story in which the political life of individuals—and the institutions of modern democracies—devolves into "bare life," or *zoē*. Distinguishing between *zoē* and *bios*—both of them Greek terms—is essential for understanding Agamben's take on bio-politics. According to Agamben, *zoē* "expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios* … indicated the form of way of living proper to an individual or a group" (1). For Agamben, the bio-political state becomes possible by politicizing "bare life," or *zoē*. The fact that the distinction between *zoē* and *bios* is so central to Agamben's take on bio-politics is partially based on the fact that he believes that "[t]he fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/ enemy, but that of bare life/ political existence, zoē/ bios, exclusion inclusion" (8). Bio-power is concerned with politicizing "bare life," or *zoē*. But what would happen if we lost those characteristics that make us human? Would politics—and therefore bio-politics—cease to exist? Rebetez's story seems to partially answer this question. And the answer seems to be a clear "yes." Agamben states that "[t]here is politics because man is the

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living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive inclusion" (idem). The humans in Rebetez's short story, when becoming strange creatures made of groups of individuals, lose their capacity for speech. Without language, humans cannot "separate and oppose themselves" to their own bare life. Since this is a precondition for politics to exist, the end of organized human life in Rebetez's story—that is, the end of *bios* and the return of humanity to a state of bare life or *zoē* —is not only the end of politics, but also the end of bio-power.

There are also other aspects of the story that should be analyzed, for instance, the personality and nature of the main character. The fact that the narrator is not waiting in line with his friend Metropoulos at the beginning of the story is a reference to his individualistic personality. This will be one of the character's main characteristic, and one that he will mention time and time again throughout his narration of the events in the story. Metropoulos' name—a Greek last name—of course, refers to the urban space (*metropolis* is used in both English and Spanish); the city, as a place in which masses come together and individuality is threatened by the danger of the homogenization of public opinion. In this sense, some important parallels can be drawn between Rebetez's story and classic works of dystopic science fiction such as Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984,* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451.* In these texts, mindless homogenization is a threat, tightly related to the possible loss of individuality and the capacity of critical thought. The narrator of "La nueva prehistoria" argues that he was always "enemigo de los grupos y las filas de gente. No es que haya sido un antisocial. Nada de eso. Pero el hombre adocenado, el hombre-

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montón, me asquea" (10). This feverous defense of individualism in the face of a culture that groups and homogenizes us, is reminiscent of the character of Clarisse McClellan, Guy Montag's young friend in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. Clarisse McClellan, just like the narrator of Rebetez's story, is a free-thinker, an individual that rejects cultural homogenization and intellectual indoctrination, with the same passion that Rebetez's nameless character fights the risk of being physically integrated to the strange creatures that are being born from humanity's perplexed masses. But while the world of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* can be easily associated to the political and intellectual persecution that scholars and authors experienced during the early 1950s due to the pervasive influence of McCarthyism in the United States, Rebetez's story takes place in a city—and a country—that is never named. The only specific geographical landmark named in the story is the Meyer movie theater, which could be an actual movie theater or a generic name, perhaps a reference to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios in Hollywood. Rebetez was born in Colombia, but he also lived in Sweden, France, Cuba, and Mexico. In Mexico, he began his career as a science fiction writer, publishing books such as *Los ojos de la clepsydra* (1964) and *La nueva prehistoria*, as well as more critical or theoretical texts like *Ciencia ficción: cuarta dimension de la literatura* (1966). Rebetez's wanderings around the globe, as well as his experimental style, make it difficult at times to pinpoint the cultural and historical references that he makes in his works. Usually, Rebetez's style suggests and implies, rather than stating, warning or preaching.

In "La nueva prehistoria," the author does not directly engage with the disappearances of civilians occurred in Mexico during the so-called *Guerra Sucia* of the 1960s and 1970s, where Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo—Mexico's presidents

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from 1970 to 1982, both of them part of the PRI[65]—were involved in the torture and extra-judiciary execution of Mexican social activists—most of them students. Even though Rebetez's collection of short stories was published in 1967, a year before the Tlatelolco massacre of October 1968, where a number of student protesters ranging from 30 to 300 were murdered by the Mexican police and military, the student movements against the PRI had been active since the late 1960s, and Rebetez must have been aware of the political tensions of the country at the time. However, Rebetez seems reluctant, or uninterested, in engaging on social commentary about the political tensions in Mexico; at least, it is not something that he straightforwardly addresses in his book of short stories. Actually, the narrator of "La nueva prehistoria" narrates the end of humanity in a very tongue-in-cheek way. His nonchalant attitude towards the end of the human species, and the campy plot of the story—that could have served as the plot of a science fiction B movie directed by Edward D. Wood Jr.—make it hard for the reader to really care about the fate of the character, and to really grieve for what the main character considers to be the end of an era or the beginning of "a new prehistory." And yet, the story can certainly be read in political terms. By comparing the creatures that are now occupying the planet with amoeba and reptiles, the narrator is linking them to the idea of devolution. Thus, the idea of this new era of the world being a new prehistory should seem natural to the

[65] The PRI, which stands for *Patido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party), is a Mexican political party founded in 1929. Throughout the last century, the PRI has gone through a few name changes, such as the PNR or *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (National Revolutionary Party) and the PRM or *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (Party of the Mexican Revolution). The PRI was in power from 1929 to 2000. For this reason, Nobel Laurate Mario Vargas Llosa famously called Mexico "the perfect dictatorship," in a 1990 political and intellectual encounter called "La experiencia de la libertad" (the experience of freedom). The encounter, organized by *Vuelta* magazine, was held in Mexico. Octavio Paz expressed his disagreement with Vargas Llosa, arguing that even though the PRI is an "hegemonic party," it would be inaccurate to define it as "dictatorial." The PRI is member of Socialist International, however, since the decade of 1980 the party has embraced free market and capitalism. The PRI is commonly located in the center to right in the political spectrum.

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reader. For the narrator, the repugnance that he feels towards these creatures doesn't dissuade him from believing that this new shift in history might be a positive one (14). Even though he just vaguely argues that this change will bring a "radical advance to humanity," the possibility that this change in our species might ultimately be for the better is still presented in the story.

A political reading of "La nueva prehistoria" becomes possible when one understands the story as the depiction of the end of humanity's reign of violence in the world. This story narrates, however indirectly, the end of the Cold War, the end of dictatorial states, the end of bio-power and bio-politics—and perhaps even the end of individuality and loneliness—in the only way possible: by narrating the last days of the human species. Rebetez's story seems to suggest that humanity cannot escape war or violence, as long as it is "human." Even though the new creatures that roam the world kill individual human fugitives and individual animals, they do not engage in fights or battles among themselves. More importantly, they do not organize themselves in any sort of state, and they do not seem to comply by the rule of any sort of sovereign. Again, in a strange way, by narrating the end of humanity, "La nueva prehistoria" also tells us a story about the end of bio-power and bio-politics. However, some questions remain unanswered: if the narrator predicts that one day these creatures will be able to create their own vehicles—such as planes and cars—and their own buildings. If he even believes that they will someday engage in strictly human activities, such as playing golf (16), will they ever organize themselves in states? Will they ever go to war against each other? When their "prehistory" ends, will bio-power emerge again? Will these creatures

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bring life on Earth to the brink of destruction, like we have done? All this, of course, is for the reader to decide.

The End of the World and the End of Bio-power: "El desertor (Johnny, wake up!...)" and "Rocky Lunario"

While "La nueva prehistoria" tells the story of the end of humanity without actually engaging in the particular political tensions that existed inside Mexico or Colombia at the time, René Rebetez's *La nueva prehitoria* contains two short stories that directly engage with the nuclear paranoia that dominated the Western imagination during the decades of the Cold War era: "El desertor (Johnny, wake up!...)" and "Rocky Lunario." In these stories, the threat of nuclear Armageddon is always present, and affects the main characters' psyche in a variety of ways. While "El desertor" deals with the psychological effects of war—and the implied possibility of the complete annihilation of life in the planet through nuclear war—"Rocky Lunario" clearly engages in the subject of Cold War politics and makes evident the generalized feeling of nuclear paranoia that dominated Western culture in the 1960s. It is relevant to mention that "Rocky Lunario" also deals with the psychological effects of the Cold War paranoia in an individual psyche. Even though these two stories have some topics in common, such as the effects of war on the human mind, and the threat of nuclear warfare, they certainly have very different outcomes. While Johnny, the main character of "El desertor," eventually escapes the military, rejecting the role that he has played in the Cold War, Rocky (the main character of "Rocky Lunario") embraces the end of the world, and brings upon

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Earth the downfall of human civilization, as a way of avoiding the colossal boredom, the overwhelming ennui of solitary life in outer space.

In the case of Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains (August 4, 2026/2057)" the almost poetical depiction of a world without humans allows the reader to find some uncanny sense of peace in the face of nuclear conflict. However violent, however horrible nuclear war might be, planet Earth will go on without us. And the reader of Bradbury's stories might find some strange comfort in the idea that the planet, and the entire universe, will keep existing without us; that time will keep advancing, even though someday there might no human left to take notice of it. In "The Million-Year Picnic (October 2026/2057)," Bradbury presents the last human family, who have taken refuge in Mars after the destruction of life on Earth following a global-scale nuclear conflict. Bradbury suggests that there might be hope for humanity after all, but not in our home planet. By the end of the story, the father of the last surviving human family introduces his children to the local Martians, these Martians turn out to be a reflection in the water of the human family. In this way, the man lets his children know that humanity will survive in Mars, and that Mars, and not Earth, is now their true and only home. Of course, in both of Bradbury's stories the reader encounters the end of bio-power, and the end of bio-politics, through the disappearance of all forms of human government. At the end, the only human institution that survives global nuclear confrontation is the family. As we have seen in stories such as Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" and Rebetez's "La nueva prehistoria" and "Rocky Lunario," these authors seem to suggest that the end of bio-power can only be achieved either through the end of humanity as we know it, the end of all forms off government, or the end of the world.

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The Case of "El desertor (Johnny, wake up!...)"

In "El desertor (Johnny, wake up!...)," an American military pilot called Johnny MacGuire is assigned missions that consist on flying over a predetermined area of the world—he is usually ignorant about the specific countries that he is flying over—and pushing a button in his aircraft. The pilot does not know if this button will activate a camera that will take pictures for military intelligence purposes, or f it will release a nuclear bomb like the ones that were released upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1949—events that the narrator does mention in the story (170). In "El desertor," the American pilot cannot bear the uncertainty of not knowing in what moment he will become a mass-murder who only obeys orders, and he eventually escapes his country to become a fugitive (177).

The plot of "El desertor" is rather simple. A woman called Cora leads a man through the back alleys of an unidentified city. They stop at a gate in the "Calle de Bolivia" (*Bolivia Street*).[66] The narrator explains that Cora has brought him to meet her friend Juanito (a.k.a. Johnny MacGuire). McGuire is sleeping on a bed that is too small for him. He is described as tall, but also as childlike. Cora wakes him up, gently. The pilot shows signs of psychological distress as he is waking up. The narrator concludes that Cora is in love with Johnny. When the pilot finally wakes up, Coral tells him that she has brought a friend who wants to meet him (the narrator). Johnny identifies himself as a deserter. He starts narrating his life to the people in the room. He talks about his parents'

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[66] This is the name of several streets in different Spaniard cities, including Barcelona, Valladolid, Madrid, Vigo, etcetera.

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divorce, about assaulting a gas station when he was a young man, about joining the army as a way of finding redemption, about the detonation of the nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and about how he had accepted a position in the US military after finding himself unemployed after the end of World War II. According to MacGuire's contract, he is meant to serve in secrets missions for a period of five years, with no right to any time off. MacGuire also recalls a meeting with a high-ranking officer who warned him about the possible negative psychological effects of being a pilot for undercover operations. The officer hints at the complex and absurd nature of the Cold War, and later suggests that one day McGuire might, knowingly or unknowingly, drop an atomic bomb someday.

MacGuire remembers his first mission. He remembers not knowing if pressing a button would release an atomic bomb over an anonymous city, or simply take a picture of the terrain for military intelligence purposes. The pilot has a brief nervous breakdown. Meanwhile, Cora and the narrator assist him in his recovery. While her friend recovers, Cora mentions that MacGuire was transferred from base to base in numerous occasions. The pilot briefly recovers, and talks about the disorienting experience of constantly changing basis, of not being entirely sure of where he was staying at or flying by. One day, McGuire is feeling completely sure that he is carrying a nuclear bomb in his airship. He is unable to press the button, and escapes in his plane. Th pilot faints once again. Cora explains that he ended up "fell in the gulf's waters, a few miles from the coast" (177). She might be referring to the Bay of Biscay, English for the *Golfo de Viscaya*. She states that MacGuire, the deserter, has been living in hiding for months. At the end of the story, the narrator leaves the building while Cora assists the weak and helpless deserter.

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This story explores both the political and the moral complexity of the Cold War. The fact of not knowing when the button that he pressed would release a nuclear bomb over a city full of innocent people led Johnny MacGuire to see himself not as a killer, but as "un asesino en potencia" (176). In this short story, the man who recruits MacGuire renders a description of the Cold War that gives us a general idea of how complex this conflict was. He argues that the Cold War is a

> guerra extraña en la que al fin y al cabo no se sabe cuál es el frente. ¿Vietnam, Cuba, Berlín, Wall Street? ¿La OEA, tal vez? y, ¿las armas? Económicas. Los arsenales están repletos de cohetes atómicos, patrullas incesantes hacen ronda en el cielo enemigo y, ¿quién sabe? A lo mejor cada patrullero lleva consigo una bomba atómica, lista para ser depositada en el sitio preciso, a una orden precisa, en el momento preciso. (172)

Of course, the feeling of political uncertainty, and the presence of a constant nuclear threat, are central to the character's description of the Cold War. MacGuire also points out the seemingly absurd nature of the war when he mentions his "misiones guerreras en la paz" (175) and describes the Cold War as a "guerra no declarada" (idem). The Cold War was, indeed, full of undercover military missions, espionage, etc. Rebetez's oxymoronic description of this conflict is, although broad, rather adequate.

Although not a science fiction story as such, "El desertor" certainly has several important science fictional elements. For instance, the deserter mentions rumors of "megatones; rayos laser; napalm; bacterias; guerra microbiana" (idem). This, again, reminds us of the point made by Brooks Landon in the introduction of *Science Fiction after 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*; according to Landon, throughout the 20th

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century, the technical evolution that occurs in a wide variety of human fields, leads the world itself to become “science fictional” (xiii). More importantly, Landon argues that science fiction has become a mode of military thinking (xv). In fact, some of the science-fictional military devices mentioned in Rebetez’s story were either developed or at least considered by the military agencies of world’s super powers during the Cold War. As strange as it may seem to us today, even the possibility of gaining military control of the moon was considered a priority for the United States government. This fact, as I intend to demonstrate shortly, allows us to conduct a political reading of Rebetez’s “Rocky Lunario.”

Other important elements in “El desertor” are the references that the narrator, Johnny MacGuire, and his recruiter make to different developing countries that were not considered as relevant actors of the Cold War. The narrator mentions how Johnny used to fly over “ciudades incógnitas” (174), carrying in his plane what could perhaps be a nuclear bomb. They are “incógnitas,” because the pilot himself is not sure about what cities these are. These cities, the inhabitants of these unnamed cities, are only potential collateral damage in the global conflict that has confronted the world greatest military super powers. While the traumatized pilot is speaking of the military bases in which he lived and the missions that he completed he mentions a heterogeneous list of names: “Argelia, Vietnam, Cuba, Berlín, Santo Domingo. Nombres extraños, el tercer mundo, un aguerra no declarada, misiones guerreras en la paz” (175). The effect created by these references is one of absurdity, confusion, and impotence. Argelia, Santo Domingo, Vietnam, the “third world,” these places do not have nuclear weapons. Does the narrator mention them because he lived in military bases in these places? Or are these some of the

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countries and cities that could be exterminated by a nuclear attack carried out by one of the world's super powers? The "third world" awaits, terrified and impotent, for the bomb to drop. With no weapons to fight back, with a limited understanding of the obscure interests that determine the development of this global conflict, these places experience like no other the sense of absurdity inherent to the threat of global nuclear conflict. This sense of absurdity and impotence—an impotence challenged crushed by the heroic resistance of *El Eternauta*—will also be a major element of "Rocky Lunario."

As it will become clear in the next section of this chapter, Johny MacGuire serves as an interesting counterpart to Rocky Lunario. They are both military men at the service of the American government, and they also hold the power to kill millions of human beings. In spite of their similarities, there is a remarkable difference between these characters: while MacGuire experiences empathy for his possible victims, and ultimately rejects the power to hurt others, Rocky Lunario chooses violence instead, coldly triggering a series of events that can potentially annihilate humankind.

In short, in "El desertor," René Rebetez engages in a representation of the psychological toll that the tensions of the Cold War can take in an individual who—by the nature of his occupation—plays an active role in this complex and morally ambiguous conflict that was the Cold War. This story also shows that Latin American authors of science fiction, just like their North American colleagues, engaged in the discussion and portrayal of the Cold War, expressing their anxieties in ways that were particular to their own sociopolitical origins and political views. Their take on the topic of the Cold War was, of course, also determined by the role that their nations played in this long and complex global conflict.

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The Case of "Rocky Lunario"

"Rocky Lunario" was first published in 1964, in *Los ojos de la clepsidra*, under the title "Fiction Science." Rebetez published the story again three years later, under the title "Rocky Lunario," in *La nueva prehistoria*. The story was published for the last time in *Contemporáneos del porvenir* (2000), a compendium of Colombian science fiction that Rebetez edited himself. "Rocky Lunario" is Rebetez's most famous story; and one that most certainly engages in the politics of the Cold War Era. The Cuban missile crisis took place in 1962, only two years before the publication of "Fiction Science" (that is, "Rocky Lunario"). The Cuban missile crisis arguably was the moment of the Cold War in which the United States and the Soviet Union were closer to a nuclear confrontation.[67] Even though the Cuban missile crisis was seen as a victory for the USA in the Cold War, the truth is that this moment marked a breaking point in the Soviet Union's production of nuclear weapons: after October 1962, a humiliated Soviet Union dramatically accelerated its production of this kind of weapons, building intercontinental missiles capable of

[67] The Cuban missile crisis started in October 15, 1962, when US spy airplanes took pictures of Soviet missile bases in Cuba. The Soviets had agreed to Cuba's request to place nuclear missiles in the country, after the failed CIA-sponcored Bay of Pigs Invasion of 1961. The Soviet government was also motivated to place nuclear missiles in Cuba after the American government placed Jupiter ballistic missiles in Italy and Turkey, threatening Soviet territory. In October 22, President Kennedy announced on television the plan that he and his advisors had outlined: Cuba would be put in "naval quarantine," the missile bases were to be dismantled, and the missiles were to be removed. For the next six days, the USSR and the USA placed several ships in strategic points of the Atlantic, bringing the world to the verge of global nuclear war. Eventually, Khrushchev announced the decision of the USSR to dismantle the missile bases in Cuba, under the condition that the USA would dismantle its military bases in Turkey. The US eventually agreed to this request, but stated that they would not dismantle their military bases in Turkey immediately. Eventually, the Soviet government accepted these conditions, and the Cuban Missile Crisis reached its end in October 28.

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hitting American soil on any given moment.[68] This is the historical context in which "Rocky Lunario" was written and published.[69]

In this section, I will demonstrate that the character of Rocky Lunario can be interpreted either as Rebetez's reflection on the effects of the Cold War on the mind of its participants, or as a metaphor for the role that the United States played—or could have played—in this long and complex conflict. I will also study the way in which developing countries are presented or rather not presented in the story, to gain a better understanding of how Rebetez understood the role of these nations in the context of the Cold War. I will argue that the absurdity of Rocky Lunario's actions is, ultimately, a statement on the part of the author, regarding the absurdity of the Cold War itself.

In "Rocky Lunario," an American astronaut is sent to the moon, on a somewhat boring and monotonous mission: his job is to supervise the military installations that the US government has built on the satellite's surface. The purpose of this military base on the moon is to "descubrir satélites extraños" and "explosiones atómicas en el ámbito terrestre" (56). Rocky Lunario is also in charge of the "interceptores de cohetes piratas y el gigantesco lanzabombas que debía estar siempre listo para entrar en acción, y que

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[68] This accelerated escalation in the Soviet's nuclear buildup—during the 1970s, the USSR finally amassed a nuclear arsenal comparable to the one that the USA possessed—is also portrayed in the world of *Watchmen*, and it is even mentioned in Professor's Glass book about Dr. Manhattan and his effects over the dynamics of the Cold War. Dr. Manhattan appears in the public sphere in 1965, and, just like the Cuban Missile Crisis, seems to discourage any Soviet attack on American soil. And yet, his sole presence is enough reason for the Soviets to build up their nuclear arsenal and aggravate the potential of destruction that the Cold War embodied.

[69] In April 6, 2017, the American government launched an attack on a major Syrian military base, as a response to a chemical attack launched on Aleppo by the Syrian air force. The Syrian regime—which continues to indiscriminately murder Syrian civilians—has the support of the Russian government. For a few days, the United States and Russia seemed to be at the brink of a military confrontation. Even though it is unlikely that these world powers would go to war in the near future, the tense situation in Syria could result in a worldwide armed conflict, if it were to continue. North Korea has also performed nuclear tests in the last few years, showing the rapid (and potentially disastrous) advancement of their military technology. For these reasons, "Rocky Lunario" is as relevant today as it was in the 1960s, when it first appeared.

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había garantizado la primacía total" (idem). This "primacía total" or "total supremacy" refers, of course, to the military advantage that United States has reached, by placing a military base on the moon. But Rocky Lunario's functions as supervisor of the operations of the American military on the surface of the moon do not stop there. The US military are also using mining robots to extract radioactive material from the moon.[70] This radioactive material is sent to Earth and it eventually returns to the moon in the form of nuclear weapons. Some of Rocky Lunario's functions are to monitor these robots and to keep an eye on the "126 silos atómicos" (idem) built in the moon to store American nuclear missiles.

Rocky Lunario is depicted as a very irascible individual. This condition becomes more obvious when he notices that he is running out of bubble gum in space (55). Rebetez's makes it clear that the infinite boredom and loneliness of the moon has taken its toll on the young astronaut, who finds himself constantly thinking of his days in Earth. The reader learns that Lunario is Italian-American—his name might even be a gameplay on Rocky Marciano, the famous Italian-American boxer—that he grew up in Brooklyn, and that he spent part of his youth at "old Buck's" drugstore, eating ice-cream (idem). This depiction of Rocky Lunario as the all-American boy is a relevant aspect of my interpretation of the story. The narrator mentions that Rocky Lunario lived for some time

[70] The use of robots in the mining industry can also be found in science fiction works such as Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* (1950); more specifically in the story titled "Catch the Rabbit," in which Gregory Powell and Mike Donovan— employees of U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men—monitor the behavior of a malfunctioning robot in an asteroid. This robot is used in the mining industry. Also, in Duncan Jones' film *Moon* (2009), Sam Bell, an employee of the fictional company Lunar Industries, also monitors the mining of Helium-3, an alternative fuel, in the moon. The mining facilities in the movie, just like in "Rocky Lunario," are completely automatic, and only require the supervision of one human agent. Finally, Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* also explores the topic of android servants working for human beings in other planets, such as Mars. This novel was eventually adapted to film by director Ridley Scott. The result of this adaptation is the cult, neo-noir, science fiction film *Blade Runner*.

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in a military base at Ft. Lauderdale, where he often times visited the "Private Club," where he enjoyed the company of beautiful women (56). He also visited this place in order to "find peace" after his explosive attacks of fury and boredom (57). Regarding these moments of extreme anger, produced by extreme boredom or ennui, the narrator says that: "[L]a lucha entre Rocky Lunario y el hastío no era nueva … Había comenzado al mismo tiempo que él y desde niño la angustia se le había aparecido muchas veces, siempre inopinadamente, al cruzar una esquina, o al terminar un partido de bésibol" (idem). In these moments, Lunario's reactions were always reckless, and extremely dangerous. In these moments, "[u]na ira desazonada se apoderaba de él, y tenía … que dar un puntapié a una lata de conservas, romper una vidriera o un espejo, morder el labio inferior de la muchacha más cercana, o irse a ochenta millas por hora, en sentido contrario, por la autopista de Key West" (idem). Lunario's irascible temper will eventually have fatal consequences for everyone on Earth. At the end of the story, and probably out of pure boredom and ennui, the young American astronaut launches a nuclear attack that will certainly destroy all life in the planet.

Before engaging in a critical analysis of "Rocky Lunario's" themes, and before presenting my personal interpretation of Rebetez's story, it is important to understand certain aspects about the historical moment in which the story was written and published. During the 1950s, the United States and Russia engaged in a competition to develop technology that would allow man to travel in space, to reach the moon, and to place space-stations and artificial satellites in the planet's orbit. This period in Cold War history is known as the Space Race.[71] During the 1950s and 1960s, conducting a manned

[71] The Space Race was a non-armed conflict in which the USSR and the United States faced each other in the field of space flight. In 1957, the Soviet Union succeeded in putting the first artificial satellite in orbit:

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mission to the moon was one of the world's super powers' main technological goals. What many people do not know, however, is that the United States' reasons for reaching the moon were not only scientific in nature, but also—as in the case of the fictional case of Rocky Lunario—military.

In "The U.S. Army's Gun-Toting Space Soldiers: Cold War Scheme Demanded New Kinds of Weaponry," an article published in *War Is Boring*, Danny Lewis argues that "[a]s the United States had started to conquer space in the 1950s, the Pentagon envisioned troops in orbit and military bases on the moon. To defend themselves on these new battlefields, the U.S. Army believed soldiers would need a whole new class of weapon." Throughout the last decades, some official files of the Cold War have been declassified. Among these documents, Lewis claims, is the 1965 declassified study titled "The Meanderings of a Weapon Oriented Mind When Applied in a Vacuum Such as on the Moon." In this study, physicists and engineers at the service of the United States government study the particularities of hypothetical warfare in space. Of course, traditional weapons, such as rifles and pistols would be useless in space. This study intended for the US military to be ready in the case of a confrontation with Soviet forces in space. A notable anxiety that partially justified these extravagant projects was the tacit idea that the USA and the USSR would probably have to fight for the military control of the moon. Lewis also argues that: "[t]he Army had already been preparing for a less-than-welcoming environment beyond the earth's atmosphere. In 1959, the ground combat branch outlined their plans for a moon base as part of Project Horizon." The Future

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the famous Sputnik 1. The USSR also put the first man in space: the astronaut Yuri Gagarin completed an orbit around the Earth on April 12, 1961. The United State eventually made up for this "late start" in the Cold War, successfully conducting the first manned mission to the moon in July 20, 1969.

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Weapon Office was the state agency that the United States created for administering these projects. In one of their reports, the ideas of these agents become extremely science-fictional: according to these scientists, "[i]f the moon and other planets are explored and possibly colonized, the world could eventually see a second evolution of weaponry and protection therefrom … This proceeds through the mortar, howitzer, gun and tank stages until eventually you have missiles, antimissiles and nuclear weapons much as the earth had prior to World War III." Of course, as Lewis notes, these words blurred "the existing state of affairs with an apparent future of war in space above a ruined planet." Perhaps, this is what Landon is referring to when he argues that, in the 20th century, reality itself becomes "science fictional" (xiii).

As Lewis states, at the end, "Americans did land on the moon four years later, Washington never followed through with its idea for military space bases. Thankfully, World War III never razed the planet and forced the survivors to the lunar surface." And yet, these fantasies, and many more, were materialized in the world of science fiction. Of course, Rebetez had no access to this very valuable information, but he hardly needed it. These anxieties, these eccentric ideas were all in the air.[72] Other projects concerning a militaristic use of the moon were also considered by both the Soviet Union and the United States during the Space Race.[73] Certainly, "Rocky Lunario," the story of an

[72] In the independent 1950 film *Destination Moon,* directed by Irving Pichel, American private industry is depicted as a force for progress at the rise of the Space Race. Actually, in *Destination Moon* it is not the American government who finances the first manned mission to the moon*;* instead, it is a group of brave industrialists and businessmen who ultimately make this enterprise possible. One of the main reasons that the industrialists have for financing this ambitious enterprise, is their patriotism. General Thayer, one of the men trying to find funding for the project, appeals to the patriotic feelings of these wealthy industrialists, by stating that in this new era of humanity, the nation that conquers the moon will have a considerable military advantage over its rival super power. Such premise is also implied in Rebetez's "Rocky Lunario."
[73] In the late 1950s, the United States Air Force developed a top-secret plan called "Project A119." This plan consisted on the detonation of a nuclear missile on the surface of the moon. This detonation would serve the double purpose of answering some scientific questions about the detonation of nuclear bombs in

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American astronaut stationed in a military space base in the moon, could have been much less fictional if the Space Race had taken a different—but still possible—path.

Rebetez gives Rocky Lunario a life that the Latin American reader would interpret as almost stereotypically American. From his name, reminiscent of Rocky Marciano, to his chewing-gum habits, to his days eating ice cream at Buck's drugstore, to breaking the speed limit in the Ft. Lauderdale highway, to reading comic-books after waiting for the end of the world, Lunario's character would be perceived as strictly American by the Latin American reader. I will argue that not only is this young astronaut depicted as strictly American, but that he could be understood as a metaphor for the United States in the Cold War.

As a metaphor for the Cold War United States, Rocky Lunario embodies a super-effective, dangerous entity, capable of destroying the world. The narrator of the story presents the events described in it in a very matter-of-fact way. He doesn't render any direct judgements of Lunario's character, or further explains the rationale that the young man followed when he decided to destroy the world. The closest thing that the reader gets to a reason to justify the character's actions is his extreme desire to avoid boredom, his incapacity for introspection, his disregard for other people's life, and his lack of empathy. When the reader first encounters Rocky Lunario, he is throwing some moon dust into the vacuum of space. Rebetez describes him as being "impaciente," since he has run out of bubble-gum (55). Bubble-gum, the reader will soon learn, has a therapeutic effect on

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the vacuum of space, and to boost the morale of American citizens through this act of immense military power since, in theory, such explosion could have been seen by people on Earth. The Soviets had a similar project, that consisted on trying nuclear weapons on the dark side of the moon. Both of these projects were abandoned. But "Project A119" was exposed to the public eye by Leonard Reiffel, a former NASA executive, in the year 2000.

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Lunario, helping him control his anger. As the narrator mentions, Lunario—perhaps due to his lack of a more profound inner-life—does not react well to boredom: when he finds himself in a state of ennui, he cannot not help but engage in random acts of destruction, that keep escalating in the potential seriousness of their effects: from “dar un puntapié a una lata de conservas” he could move up in his destruction scale to “romper una vidriera o un espejo,” or even to “morder el labio inferior de la muchacha más cercana” (57), which—if unwanted by the young woman—also makes evident Lunario’s lack of empathy, and his disregard for other people’s well-being.

The sexual connotation of biting the lips of a young woman resonates with another of Lunario’s main characteristics: his sexism. Lunario clearly embraces certain sexist ideas: for him women—and non-white women in particular—are objects of entertainment. He uses them to avoid boredom, and to calm his anger. In his lunar loneliness, the astronaut longs for the “meses en la zona del canal” (the Panama Canal, perhaps), and for his “escapadas a los bares de la zona roja, rebosantes de mujercitas morenas de a dos dólares” (56). He also seem to “angrily miss” “los largos muslos de las bañistas en el *Private Club de Fort Lauderdale*” (idem). The action of “angrily missing” the thighs of the women that visited the *Private Club*, like the action of biting the lips of women, highlights the fact that Lunario’s libido manifests itself in violent ways. For him, desiring women is a violent impulse. Also, the fact that the prostitutes that he mentions are described as “mujercitas morenas” hints at Lunario’s xenophobic ideas: “brown” women are not “mujeres” but “mujercitas.” The use of the diminutive here is not a sign of tenderness, but one of contempt. The women mentioned in “Rocky Lunario” are completely deprived of any sort of agency. They are bitten, desired, bought, and

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portrayed as passive receivers of Lunario's desire and aggressiveness (which cannot be easily separated).

While Lunario's first action in the story, throwing a handful of lunar dust into space, is a small act of anger, not unlike kicking a can or breaking a window, other of his habits are much more dangerous. The narrator mentions that at times, to avoid boredom and ennui, he will drive "a ochenta millas por hora, en sentido contrario, por la autopista de Key West" (57). This action somehow prefigures his decision of destroying the planet at the end of the story. Driving in the wrong way in a highway, at 80 miles per hour is, of course, not only reckless, but also potentially murderous and suicidal. As Rebetez, Moore, and Bradbury clearly knew, the Cold War United States were also potentially murderous and potentially suicidal, since the possibility of global nuclear confrontation would not only mean the destruction of the Soviet Union, but also its own—either partial or total—destruction.

After Rocky Lunario launches the "silencioso cohete" (58) that is going to blow up his home planet, he sits down and starts reading comic books. Is the depiction of this act meant to shock the reader, highlighting the amoral nature of the astronaut? It becomes clear that Lunario is a man without guilt, a man without a conscience. But is Rebetez implying that the bellicose United States are also amoral? That the world super-power is incapable of guilt? I believe that this is a possible interpretation of the story's end. On the other hand, comic books are usually associated with young or immature readers; it is up to the reader to decide whether the depiction of Lunario as a very immature individual, is Rebetez's way of denouncing the reckless, immature attitude of the 1960s United States, that put the world at the brink of destruction in its confrontation with the Soviet Union.

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Perhaps, never was this threat more imminent than during the terrible Cuban missile crisis, a key moment in Cold War history that, as I mentioned before, preceded by two years the publication of the first version of Rocky Lunario.

I had already mentioned that Rebetez depicts Lunario as both murderous and suicidal. I have also claimed that the Cold War United States were both potentially murderous and suicidal. At the end of the story it is not clear if the destruction of Earth will also mean Rocky Lunario's eventual death. How big are his food reserves in the moon? How long will he be able to stand the boredom and loneliness of his situation? These questions are left unanswered, and contribute to the feeling of absurdity and perplexity that are so central to the short story.

Writing and publishing a short story about a young American astronaut that, out of boredom, destroys the world is a strong political statement in itself. In this story, the world is impotent in the face of America's enormous (nuclear) military power. Economically emerging countries could not dramatically affect the outcome of the war, they could not fight any of the super powers, and expect to win. In a similar way, they would probably be completely unable to stop the war. And yet, these super powers had the potential of destroying all life on Earth, including the lives of those living in developing countries. While the United States, represented by Rocky Lunario, push the button of the doomsday device, us—emerging countries—just wait patiently for our lives to end, while providing the "mujercitas morenas" for our executioner's entertainment.

There is no mention of any Latin American country in the story. In fact, the only country ever mentioned in "Rocky Lunario" is the United States—although there might be an allusion to Panama where he remembers his days in the "canal," where he found

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these “mujercitas morenas de a dos dólares.” Curiously enough, Lunario is not even concerned with the Soviet Union. He can only think about himself. Perhaps, Rebetez saw the United States as a self-centered nation; a country incapable of thinking of the well-being of the nations of the world. Perhaps this is the political message of “Rocky Lunario:” the United States, and their nuclear weapons, are a serious threat to humanity; and we, citizens of the developing nations of the world, are only potential causalities in the dangerous game that America and Russia (and other countries such as North Korea) have been playing since the end of World War II. Rocky Lunario, with all his repressed anger, with all his first-world privilege, all his lack of introspection, and all his self-centered egoism, is not a man; he is a symbol, a metaphor of Cold war America. While the USSR and the USA decided when to launch the nukes that could eradicate life on Earth, all we—people from the emerging countries of the word—could do, was wait, stay still, and brace for the impact. All the absurdity of this global conflict, and the unavoidable sense of impotence that those living in emerging countries experienced, are masterfully depicted in Rebetez’s “Rocky Lunario.”

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Chapter Four: Cold War Dystopias, Nuclear Paranoia, and Fear of the Alien in H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López's *El Eternauta* (1957-1959), and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's *Watchmen* (1986-1987)

Aquí también, ¿o creías que estabas lejos?
Soda Stereo, "Un misil en mi placard"

In this chapter, I will analyze and discuss different manifestations of bio-power, Cold War tensions, and nuclear paranoia,[74] focusing on the way in which they were depicted, discussed, and denounced in two works of science fiction written after World War II and before the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. For this purpose, I will work with H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López's *El Eternauta* (1957-59) and Allan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen* (1986-1987). I will argue that works of science fiction of the Cold War era, far from serving as escapist fantasies for the politically detached—or the politically anxious—reader, engaged in different ways with the political and psychological tensions of the Cold War era, which was naturally associated with a constant fear of global nuclear conflict. However, it also seems clear that the authors of these works experienced the threat of nuclear conflict differently, depending on the particularities of their own nations. Finally, I will analyze the way in which the development and production of nuclear weapons creates a paradox within

[74] I will use the terms "nuclear paranoia" and "Cold War paranoia" to describe the general feeling of uncertainty—and the subsequent social mindset—caused by the constant threat of nuclear warfare experienced by people living in the Cold War era. I will use the term "paranoia" in a non-pejorative way. During the long and complex conflict known as the Cold War, the actual threat of nuclear warfare grew and decreased several times. This fear was more justified at some points in time; but the threat of nuclear confrontation was always present. As the old joke goes: "The fact that you are paranoid does not mean that someone is not following you."

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Foucault's understanding of bio-power, in which this kind of power—the power of administering and regulating all the aspects of life—suppresses itself.

In *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault argues that

> The workings of contemporary political power are such that atomic power represents a paradox that is difficult, if not impossible, to get around. The power to manufacture and use the atom bomb represents the deployment of a sovereign right that kills, but it is also the power to kill life itself. So, the power that is being exercised in this atomic power is exercised in such a way that it is capable of suppressing life itself. And, therefore, to suppress itself insofar as it is the power that guarantees life. Either it is sovereign and uses the atom bomb, and therefore cannot be power, bio-power, or the power to guarantee life, as it has been ever since the nineteenth century. Or, at the opposite extreme, you no longer have a sovereign right that is in excess of bio-power, but a bio-power that is in excess of sovereign right. (255)

I believe that the depiction of weapons of mass-destruction in both *El Eternauta* and *Watchmen*—especially Oesterheld's killing snow and Moore's Dr. Manhattan and the synthetic alien that appears in the staged attack in New York City—helps us to better understand the paradox of nuclear power in the context of bio-power. I will also delve into the bio-political implications of using nuclear weapons, as a form of power that allows the rulers of a nation to decide between the life and death of entire communities—what Foucault would understand as "a bio-power that is in excess of sovereign right"

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(255)—instead of targeting individual enemies.[75] For this purpose, I will use Peter Sloterdijk's *Terror from the Air* (2009).[76] Sloterdijk's work, as well as the works of fiction mentioned before, will help me illustrate the ways in which the concepts of bio-power and sovereign power become obsolete when facing the possibility of nuclear Armageddon. Both *Watchmen* and *El Eternauta* deal with the possibility of the destruction of humanity, in ways that are strikingly universal, and yet strongly rooted in their own historical and social contexts.

With my decision to use two graphic novels in this chapter, I intend to demonstrate that throughout the 20th century the genre of science fiction manifested itself in multiple media, such as literature, film, and graphic novels. In fact, Brooks Landon states that, "[i]n the twentieth century SF has become a multimedia genre with SF narratives prominent in movies, TV, comics, graphic novels, music, videos, and video and computer games" (5). In the introduction to this project, I mentioned the fact that science fiction was segregated from academic circles until Darko Survin began publishing about the genre in the 1960s. Graphic novels, on the other hand—also known as comics or sequential art—were also relegated from academia until the mid-1980s, when Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980-1991) achieved general critical praise, and led to Spiegelman being awarded with the Pulitzer Prize. The work of Alan Moore was also quite important in the process of calling serious critical attention on the graphic novel, establishing it as an important and serious form of artistic expression, as well as a valid

[75] It is also relevant to consider that the use of nuclear weapons affects the way in which the survivors of a nuclear attack would have to live—and die—for generations to come.

[76] In his book, Sloterdijk traces the development of the weapons industry throughout the 20th century, demonstrating that military technology has changed its target from working towards the destruction of individuals, to making the life conditions of a whole community impossible.

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media for addressing serious political, social, philosophical, and psychological issues.[77] I consider that Hojman Conde makes a valid point when stating that the Spanish word "*historieta* (comic strip) … though it is a diminutive of *historia* (*story*, but also *history*), also implies that comic strips are both fiction and history" (145). My study of works by comic book authors and artists in this project will also stem from the belief that this form of fiction deserves our critical attention, as it engages directly with local and global history, and with the human condition at large. *V for Vendetta* (1988-89)*, Watchmen* and both parts of *El Eternauta* (science fiction graphic novels that I will analyze in this and the next chapter) all defy traditional misconceptions of both the graphic novel medium and the science fiction genre by, engaging in serious political and social issues, relevant to their own historical moment.

I will conduct a comparative analysis of H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López's *El Eternauta*, and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *Watchmen.* I intend to demonstrate that both graphic novels deal with topics that could be understood as typical of the Cold War era. Relevant elements, such as a paranoid approach to the figure of the alien, regarded as a form of extreme otherness, and a latent fear of mass-destruction devices, are common to both graphic novels. The archetype of the alien is one of the most important elements of the science fiction genre. According to Patricia Monk, "[c]onsidered as a class, the aliens of science fiction constitute an exemplum of the other at its most extreme" (xiii). This understanding of the alien as a form of extreme otherness is explored in Elana Gomel's essay "Aliens Among Us: Fascism and Narrativity." Gomel

[77] Spiegelman's journalistic *Maus* and Moore's fictional *From Hell* (1989-1996) both used historical facts—such as the holocaust and the murders of Jack the ripper—as a basis for their graphic novels. Moore's *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) both conferred the superhero genre with a depth and seriousness that changed the industry of comic books forever.

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argues that "[w]ithin the fascist master narrative the enemy is denied not merely the human rights but the very appellation of 'human.' The racial Other is literally a monster. The only genre that develops an extensive grammar of monstrosity is science fiction" (130). Following Gomel's train of thought, it could be argued that science fiction is the ideal genre for the depiction and development of extreme otherness, in terms of race, species, and so on. In this chapter, I will argue that the archetype of the alien is an important element of the science fiction produced in Argentina and the United States during the Cold War era. By exploring the works of Oesterheld and Moore, I will show how the anxieties about a foreign—extreme—other, which marked this particular time in modern history, found their way into the science fiction written in the Americas, and were explored, re-imagined and negotiated within the margins of the genre.

It is of great importance, when considering the Cold War era works of Moore and Oesterheld, to take into account the particular forms that the Cold War and nuclear paranoia took in their own social contexts. For instance, Oesterheld's work acquires greater political significance when the reader is aware of the author's opposition to American intervention in Latin American politics. Moore's work, on the other hand, is better understood when considering the history of Cold War America, including aspects of it such as the nuclear arms race,[78] and armed conflicts like the Vietnam War.

In short, I will engage in a comparative reading of Oesterheld's *El Eternauta* and Moore's *Watchmen*, focusing my analysis on the archetype of the alien, and the various meanings and connotations that this figure might contain in these science fiction graphic

[78] The nuclear arms race was a competition between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War, in which both world powers—and some of their allies—tried to develop a greater nuclear stockpile than their counterpart.

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novels. I will engage in a careful analysis of the diverse alien figures that can be found in *El Eternauta*—such as the *Ellos* and the *Manos*—while trying to find connections between the events depicted in the graphic novel and the anti-imperialistic political views that characterized Oesterheld's works during the late 1950s. Also, I will study the "alien" figures present in Moore's *Watchmen*. I will pay particular attention to the figure of Dr. Manhattan as the embodiment of the threat of nuclear Armageddon and, of course, the figure of Adrian Veidt's synthetic "alien" creature, created to cause panic among the world's population in order to bring the Cold War to an abrupt end.[79] I will also focus my attention on the depiction of weapons of mass-destruction in both *El Eternauta* and *Watchmen*, as a reflection of the accelerated fabrication of nuclear weapons by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. I will use Foucault's and Agamben's take on bio-power, to analyze the figures of the *Ellos*, Dr. Manhattan, and Adrian Veidt, and the way in which these characters exercise their power in a manner that shapes and transforms the worlds of *El Eternauta* and *Watchmen*. I believe that a bio-political reading of these texts could enhance the reader's understanding of both the *Ellos*' extermination of most part of Buenos Aires' citizens, and Adrian Veidt's annihilation of several million New Yorkers by the end of Chapter XI in *Watchmen*. In fact, I will conduct a careful analysis of Adrian Veidt's figure, and the role that he plays as a hidden bio-political sovereign in the story. Through my study of these alien figures, the technologies of mass-destruction that they utilize throughout these works of science fiction, and the bio-political roles played by characters such as the *Ellos*, Dr. Manhattan,

[79] My analysis will not extend to less obvious "alien" characters, such as Hooded Justice, who is othered by the system because of his crime fighting vocation, his homosexuality, and his presumed East-German origin; nor Ursula Zandt, who is a lesbian, Jewish, Austrian, as well as a vigilante.

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and Adrian Veidt, I intend to gain a better understanding of the different ways in which Cold War science fiction writers from different countries articulated the anxieties and that defined global politics during the Cold War era.

The Case of *El Eternauta*

El Eternauta (first published as a limited series in in *Hora Cero Semanal* from 1957 to 1959) is an Argentinean science fiction graphic novel written by H.G. Oesterheld and penciled and inked by Francisco Solano López. Claudia S. Hojman Conde argues that not only is *El Eternauta* "easily the most important science fiction comic" in Argentina (143); she also believes that "it may well be the most important and influential text in all of Argentinean science fiction literature" (142-143). *El Eternauta* clearly reflects the global tensions that characterized the Cold War era, while also engaging with more local problems, such as the threats of unsolicited interventionism by the major powers of the Western world, and the need for a new social organization of the nation, championed by what Paula Di Dio understands as a "new generation of committed Peronistas (134)." In her essay "Aventuras éticas y epistemológicas en un viaje sin retorno: *El Eternauta* de H.G. Oesterheld y F. Solano López," Di Dio states that "la historieta de Héctor Oesterheld y Francisco Solano López representa una lectura ética sobre el alcance social de la escalada armamentista por parte de las grandes potencias durante la Guerra Fría" (131). In the first section of this chapter, I intend to demonstrate that, in *El Eternauta*, Cold War paranoia and the fear of foreign unknown forces will be embodied by the figure of the alien as an archetype that conveys extreme otherness, while the anxiety caused by the imminent possibility of atomic warfare will be expressed in the

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form of the *Ellos'* fantastic meteorological weapons—in particular the killing snow that decimates the population of Buenos Aires in the first pages of the text—and the actual depiction of the destructive power of atomic weapons in the narrative.

El Eternauta tells the story of Juan Salvo and his friends, family, neighbors, and several other citizens of Buenos Aires, while they struggle to survive a violent alien invasion. The story of *El Eternauta* is a framed-narrative. In the first panels of the comic, Juan Salvo (El Eternaura) materializes form thin air in Oesterheld's studio. The metafictional literary resource of inserting himself as a character in the narrative is something that the author of *El Etenrauta* would do again in *El Eternauta II*. The plot of *El Eternauta* is, for the most part, Salvo's explanation of how he came to be El Eternauta, and how he ended up appearing at Oesterheld's studio in Buenos Aires; in other words, *El Eternauta* is, for the most part, Salvo's retelling of the alien invasion that turned him into the tragic hero known as El Eternauta.

At the beginning of the story told by Salvo to Oesterheld, Salvo, Favalli, Polski and Lucas are playing cards at Salvo's house when a deadly snow starts falling from the skies. After witnessing the deadly effects of this phenomenon—including the death of Polski, who leaves the house to be with his wife and children—Salvo and his friends insulate the house from the lethal substance. Salvo's wife, Elena, also designs and creates insulated suits for her husband, Lucas, and Favalli. The suits are actually Favalli's idea. He is a physics professor, whose ingenuity, resourcefulness, and character prove to be a great asset to the group. Salvo, Favalli and Lucas leave the house in order to look for provisions and tools in the city. They stop at a hardware store, where they find a 12-year-old boy named Pablo, whose life was accidentally saved by the store's owner, who had

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locked him in the basement as punishment. When they are out in the city, Salvo and his partners discover that Buenos Aires has fallen into a state of violence and anarchy reminiscent of Thomas Hobbes' "state of nature."[80] This becomes particularly evident when a survivor of the deadly snow murders Lucas to steal his insulated suit. While trying to find a vehicle to escape the city Salvo and Favalli witness a strange phenomenon: several balls of fire resembling spaceships land in the city. Favalli and Salvo begin to understand that the deadly snow is more than a meteorological incident, and they begin to speculate that it is indeed part of an alien invasion of Buenos Aires. They are proven right when they run into a group of military men who have survived the attack and are recruiting survivors to organize a counter-attack against the alien invaders. Salvo's wife Elena and their daughter Martita stay home, while her husband Juan, young Pablo and Professor Favalli join the resistance.

Salvo and his friends soon bond with other members of the resistance, such as the historian Mosca—who often serves as the comedic relief of the story—and Franco, a brave and ingenious working-class man, whose technical experience as a lathe operator and his interest in technology allow him to survive the murderous snow. Franco's amateur mastery of technology and his brave character make him one of the most important members of the resistance. The fist battle of the resistance is fought at the General Paz avenue against a race of dog-sized insects known as *Cascarudos* (from the Spanish word *cascara* or *"shell"*). The members of the resistance soon discover some ominous-looking devices attached to the creatures' necks. They conclude that these

[80] I will delve into the relationship between Hobbesian thought and *El Eternauta* later in this chapter.

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devices, known as *teledirecotores*, allow a race of superior aliens—the true invaders of planet Earth—to control these creatures for their own military purposes.

The resistance regroups in River Plate's stadium—known in the story as *La cancha de River,* and usually referred to as *El Monumental* by contemporary Buenos Aires citizens. They are soon attacked by the invaders, who use a mind-control machine against the human fighters. These mysterious machines create mass hallucinations, such as making fellow fighters look like *Cascarudos*. Salvo discovers the trick and destroys the machine, saving the lives of many of his fellow fighters. After this, the snow finally stops, and the members of the resistance are finally able to give up the insulated suits. At night, Franco, Salvo and Favalli leave the stadium to do some scouting on their own. They are walking on the Barrancas de Belgrano when they run into a *Mano* (Spanish word for "hand"), a highly intelligent humanoid alien with pointy ears, a prominent forehead, bushy eyebrows, spiky hair, and numerous fingers in his hands (which explains the nickname humans give the members of his species). Salvo and his friends discover that the *Mano* controls the *Cascarudos* and as well as numerous human prisoners—known as *hombres-robot* (robot men)—through the use of *teledirectores*. This device is inserted into the back of the victim's neck, transforming it in a helpless automaton. The *Manos* are also controlled by a more powerful race through the presence of a "terror gland" in their bodies. This gland, inserted in the *Manos*' bodies by their cruel masters, would trigger itself if a *Mano* even considers the idea of rebellion, causing sudden death. After fighting some *hombres-robot* and defeating the *Mano*, the frightened alien dies at the hands of his enemies. In his last moments, the *Mano* tells Salvo and his friends that the true enemies of humankind are not the *Manos* but the *Ellos*, a cruel and mysterious

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alien race set on achieving universal domination, the total control of all living species in the universe. It is not by chance that, at a moment in history when world powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for ideological expansion and nuclear superiority—putting the rest of the world at risk—Oesterheld imagines a race of cruel aliens who would stop at nothing in order to conquer all the living species in the known universe.

Salvo and his friends go back to the stadium. By then, the invading aliens seem to have give up their hostile activities. Believing that they have triumphed in their efforts to repel the invasion, the resistance marches downtown. They are forced to march through Pampa Street and Cabildo Avenue, since most other streets and intersections are blocked by debris. When the men reach the Plaza Italia, a building falls behind them, trapping Favalli. Soon after, a fire starts, and the desperate men are forced to scape through Las Heras Street, the only street that is neither blocked by debris or being consumed by the fire. However, Salvo soon realizes that the flames are an illusion, and stays back, along with the brave Franco, to rescue Favalli. Later, several soldiers return to the Plaza Italia, and inform Salvo and his friends that most of the members of the resistance have been killed by a mysterious beam. The remaining members of the resistance are soon attacked by a pack of *Gurbos*, a race of humongous aliens that resemble elephants. The *Gurbos*, who are also being mind-controlled by the *Ellos*, are a particularly violent and destructive species, and their attack is utterly devastating. The resistance is no more. Favalli, Salvo and Franco escape the attack, hiding at a metro station. They soon discover the *Mano* orchestrating the complex attack and defeat him.

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Franco, Favalli and Salvo decide to advance towards the headquarters of the invaders, in order to collect any valuable information about the invaders that they can find. By this time, Salvo and his partners have come to the conclusion that they have a moral obligation of collecting information about the *Ellos*, in order to help other countries around the world (including the major global powers) resist the invasion in a more effective way. After a confrontation with numerous *hombres-robot*, the members of the resistance reach the center of operation of the *Ellos* at the *Plaza del Congreso*. Salvo and his friends discover that the *Ellos* have been using advanced alien technology to resist the attacks of the world's military powers. The aliens have destroyed several enemy airplanes, and they have avoided airstrikes by activating a forcefield capable of standing nuclear attacks. Salvo and his brave partners deactivate the forcefield and launch an attack against the *Ellos*, who escape in a spaceship. After a few minutes of exploring the destroyed headquarters of the invaders, Favalli realizes that, with the forcefield gone, they are all vulnerable to the world powers' nuclear attacks. They flee site, heading towards Salvo's house. On their way there, they reunite with Mosca and Pablo, who had survived the *Ellos'* surprise attack by hiding behind the bodies of dead *Gurbos*. The heroes spot an intercontinental missile headed for the Plaza del Congreso, and moments later Buenos Aires is destroyed by the detonation of a nuclear bomb.

On their way back to Salvo's house, the heroes are attacked by a rampage *Gurbo.* A mysterious ally, however, helps the group return home safely. Back in Salvo's house, the group sees a *Mano* through the window. They realize that he was the one protecting them from the *Gurbos*, and notice that he is trying to establish contact with them. Before they can do anything, however, the deadly snow starts falling again, instantly killing the

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friendly *Mano*. Soon after, the group of survivors turns on the radio again, trying to learn more about what is going on around the world. They learn that an organization called the *Comité Unido de Emergencia del Hemisferio Norte* (United Emergency Committee of the Northern Hemisphere) has found a way of neutralizing the deadly snow in some areas around the world. Salvo and his fellow survivors head to the region of *Pergamino*, at the north of the Buenos Aires Province, where the toxic snow has supposedly been neutralized. Too late they realize that the radio transmission was only an elaborate trap set by the *Ellos* in order to capture and neutralize the few surviving members of the human resistance. Favalli, Franco, Mosca and Pablo are captured and turned into *hombres-robot*. Salvo, Elena and Martita manage to escape. They find an unattended spaceship where they hide until they are spotted by the enemy. Salvo tries to operate the ship in order to escape, but he accidentally triggers a device that sends him to a parallel dimension called *Continum 4*.

At this point, the story goes full circle: The reader finds Salvo and Oesterheld in the artist's studio in Buenos Aires. Salvo explains that he has been traveling through time and space (through different *contium*), looking for his wife and daughter. By doing this, he has earned the nickname of El Eternauta. After Salvo asks Oesterheld where and when they are, he learns that it is 1959 (the year in which the comic was actually published), and that Oesterheld's house is actually quite close to Salvo's house in Buenos Aires. Since the alien invasion of *El Eternauta* take place in 1963, Salvo concludes that Elena and Martita are probably still in his house. Salvo runs out of Osterheld's place and finds Elena and Martita. At this point, he becomes one with his past self, growing years younger in an instant. He immediately forgets everything about the alien invasion of

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Buenos Aires and his fantastic adventures as *El Eternauta.* Moments later, Lucas, Polski and Favalli meet at Salvo's place to play cards. Oesterheld understands that everything Salvo told him was true, and decides to go back to his studio and write a comic about the alien invasion of 1963, with the hope of alerting people about it, and preventing it somehow.

Cold War Politics in *El Eternauta*

Nuclear paranoia proves to be a constant—and unavoidable—topic in *El Eternauta*. The anxiety produced by the possibility of a nuclear Armageddon is articulated throughout the narrative in the form of mass-destruction weapons operated by alien and human pawns of the cruel and invisible invaders, the *Ellos*. The narrative is also full of radio transmissions that serve to keep the main characters informed of the progress of the conflict between human armed forces and the alien *Ellos.* That is, until the characters discover that the *Ellos* themselves are broadcasting misleading information in order to exterminate what is left of the human resistance. In the first two pages of the original graphic novel, Juan Salvo materializes from thin air, suddenly appearing in the office of a comic book writer. When the writer hears the Eternauta's story, he experiences an enormous pity for the adventurous man (13). Di Dio goes as far as to argue that the writer's pity is not restricted to Salvo's character; for her, "[l]a 'enorme piedad' que el personaje del guionista siente por el Eternauta aparece como metonimia de un sentimiento de compasión por el hombre en medio de una irrefrenable carrera armamentista" (140). Even though the social and individual anxieties produced by the exponential growth in the production of nuclear weapons in the world is the main

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characteristic of the global context of Oesterheld's story; there are also more particular local concerns that become evident in the Argentinean graphic novel.

The first number of *El Eternauta* was published only two years after the 1955 coup that brought the presidency of Juan Perón to an end. This coup was known as the *Revolución Libertadora* (the "Liberating Revolution") and was led by lieutenant general Eduardo Lonardi, who also had the support of the Catholic Church. Perón's international policies were mostly isolationist. He called his foreign policy "The Third Way," as a way of distancing himself from the binary geopolitical organization of the Cold War. He reestablished commercial relationships between Argentina and the Soviet Union, supplying them with much needed grain. During his time in office, unionized workers and government programs increased. The increase of government spending, however, caused inflation to increase considerably in the late 1950s. Perón's time in office was also marked by the censorship that the government exercised over the Argentinean press. More than 100 newspapers and publications were closed in the mid-1040s. Even though Perón was in good terms with the Soviet Union, and avoided confrontations with the United States, he also stayed friends with right-wing dictators such as Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and Francisco Franco in Spain (where he went into exile after the coup). Other disturbing facts of Perón government included the imprisonment and torture of opposition members, the promotion of officials based on their loyalty to him, the dismissal of capable advisors, and his support to the immigration of Nazi war criminals (among them the infamous Josef Mengele a.k.a. the Angel of Death) after World War II.[81]

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[81] In his article "Why Did Argentina Accept Nazi War Criminals After World War Two?" (updated in 2017), Christopher Misnter offers some illuminating insight on this particular phenomenon.

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The United States;' international policies also played an important role in Perón's Argentina. Fearing that his government could bring forth the rise of socialism in South America, the US placed several embargoes in Argentina, restricting the nation's economic growth. Argentina suffered an economic crisis in the late 1940s, and the 1950s were marked by a slow economic growth, this led to many Argentinean citizens living in poverty, which also caused social unrest and the constant demands of social and labor organizations. Pedro Aramburo was president when the first issue of *El Eternauta* was published in 1957. A year before that, in June 1956, Raúl Tanco and Juan José Valle, two generals loyal to Perón, attempted a coup against Aramburo. The uprising, which called for a purge in the army, a stop on the persecution of union leaders, and the abrogation of social reforms; was swiftly crushed by the government. General Valle and several of his military allies were executed. Twenty civilians were arrested in their houses, and their dead bodies were dumped in the León Suárez Dumping ground. In 1970, Fernando Abal Medina, Emilio Angel Maza, Mario Firmenich and others, kidnapped and murdered Aramburo. Medina, Maza, and Firmenich would soon become some of the funding members of the organization known as *Montoneros*. Oesterheld's involvement with this organization will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The *Montoneros* were a leftist Peronist urban guerrilla and revolutionary group that operated in Argentina during the 1960s and 1970s. The organization—including Oesterheld, his daughters and his sons in law—was completely destroyed during the so-called Dirty War during from the mid-1970s and early 1980s. The *Montoneros* believed that democracies were a complex scheme, designed to hide the fascist nature of modern governments. They used violence in hopes of forcing the government to give up its

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“democratic pretensions” and openly operate as the fascist organization that it truly was. The *Montoneros* expected that this would make people sympathize with their political ideas and support them in their struggles against the government. However, even though most people were opposed to the military Junta, they believed that the *Montoneros'* violent actions during the 1970s contributed to the ruthlessness of the government's repression. The class struggle that the *Montoneros* hoped for never took place, and their members were either murdered (among this group were the writer and journalist Rodolfo Walsh, Oesterheld himself, and his daughters Beatriz Marta, Diana Irene, and Estela Inés) or forced into exile (like the poet Juan Gelman).

It is natural that the abrupt end of Perón's presidency would bring upon the end of Argentina's isolationist international policies (that is, the so called “Third Way”). This would make the country more susceptible to the intervention of the major world powers in its politics. The United States had already placed several embargoes in Argentina, showing its will to interfere with the nation's internal affairs whenever it deemed it necessary. Oesterheld's anxieties and distrust about international interventionism in Argentina are, as I will demonstrate, quite evident in *El Eternauta.*

According to Di Dio, *El Eternauta* “es contemporáneo de la reorganización de una nueva generación de peronistas militantes que se hacen llamar ‘la Resistencia’ y de la presencia latente de las fuerzas armadas como el principal grupo de presión que, en palabras de David Rock, moldea y limita las políticas oficiales” (134). Oesterheld's use of the term “the resistance” for referring to the military organization that enlist Salvo and his friends could be a hint to this *militant peronistas* of the late 1950s. On the other hand, Oesterheld's subtle critique of the military will become evident when one of the military

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leaders of the combative survivors of the resistance admits to the limitations of the army's methods in opposing the *Ellos'* invasion; eventually, this character grants Favalli, Salvo, and Franco control of what is left of the resistance. He addresses Favalli first: "Usted, profesor, puede tomar el mando" (205). Then he addresses Salvo and Franco "O usted, teniente Slavo, o Franco, si quiere. Ustedes han demostrado mejores condiciones que yo para la emergencia" (idem). In the context of an unexpected alien invasion involving the implementation of complex weapons of mass extermination, the strategies displayed by the Argentinean military men allows them to survive and fight back, but their efforts prove to be somehow ineffective in repelling the *Ellos'* advance. On the other hand, the inventive and resourceful nature of civilians such as the Salvo and Favalli—representatives of the Argentinean bourgeoisie—and the young Franco—representative of the working class—allows them to survive the invasion and even repel it (283-286), using what could be understood as guerilla tactics. However, it is relevant to point out that in *El Eternauta* the military, although sometimes portrayed as inefficient, is still depicted in a positive manner. In this graphic novel, the military, the bourgeoisie and the working class work together in order to oppose a common foreign enemy: the evil *Ellos.* Although there is no mention of any military force in *El Eternauta II* (1976-1977)—of course, most of the human beings in the planet have died in a nuclear apocalypse—it would be unlikely that the militant Oesterheld of the mid-1970s—that is, the *Montonero* who opposed the military dictatorship of Argentina (1976-1983)—would portray a world in which civil society could cooperate with members of the military for a common goal.

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By placing Oesterheld's novel in the context of what she understands as a "nueva generación de peronistas militantes" (134), Di Dio gives us a hint of the political project that is an integral part of Oesterheld's graphic novel: a restructuring of Argentina's social order, in order for the nation to be better prepared to repel the foreign threats that became more and more serious as the tensions of the Cold War escalated. Also, by placing Argentina in the center of this alien invasion, Oesterheld is highlighting the relevance of the nation in the context of the current world order. In her article, Di Dio quotes Arturo Jauretche's *Los poetas del odio.* In this text, Jauretche claimed "que para pensar como argentinos necesitábamos ubicarnos en el centro del mundo y ver el planisferio desarrollado alrededor de ese centro. Que nunca seríamos nosotros mismos si continuábamos colocándonos en el borde del mapa, como un lejano suburbio del verdadero mundo" (134). Placing this science fiction adventure in Argentina is, therefore, a statement about the organization of the world's regions during the 1950s. Oesterheld is claiming a central place for Argentina within the context of this world order. We could find an antecedent of this political move in Horacio Quiroga's *El hombre artificial*, a short science fiction novel in which a group of scientists from different origins (Russia, Italy, and Argentina) leave everything they have and meet in Buenos Aires to undertake the greatest experiment in the history of science: the creation of a living human being.

Oesterheld's championing of Argentina and, by metonymical extension, South America as a key element of the world order of the 1950s is accompanied by a championing of amateur forms of scientific knowledge, and the implementation of amateur techniques in the field of technology. Kreksch argues that

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> Latin American science fiction is mostly 'soft,' meaning that it deals mostly with the social sciences and politics rather than physics. This 'soft' condition is due to the fact, first, that a majority of the writers are not scientists but generally have a background in humanities or social sciences. Second, the cultures do not have as extensive a scientific framework as in North America or Western Europe. Latin America is not a producer of technology, but a consumer, and thus the attitude toward technology varies in comparison to the technology-producing countries. (177)

Oesterheld would most certainly not fit Kreksch's idea of the "typical" Latin American science fiction writer. As Hojman Conde points out, the Oesterheld "was a trained geologist" and "an expert in natural sciences and in matters of science in general" (140). On the other hand, Kreksch's belief that Latin America is a region where technology is not "produced," but rather "consumed," is most certainly a common misconception. Kreksch's statement also shows how limited her understanding of technology is. Even though no Latin American country has launched a rocket ship into space or produced nuclear weapons, several important inventions could be credited as Latin American; among them are: color TV, the neonatal artificial bubble, the contraceptive pill, the electric brake, photography, the Mondragón rifle, the ballpoint pen, the artificial heart, the stent, captcha codes, and—most recently—the synthetic retina. But the point that Kreksch is really missing here is that technology is part of our contemporary human experience; you do not have to work at NASA to produce technology. From coding to fixing a radio, or coming up with improvised ways of stealing electricity, Latin

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Americans produce technology in a regular basis. The kind of technology that Oesterheld and Solano López champion in their graphic novel is precisely that of the middle and lower classes. Improvising insulating suits to survive a biological attack, finding ingenious ways of keeping hazardous materials outside the house; all these are technological feats achieved by the characters in the comic, and contribute to the work's championing of a do-it-yourself approach to technology. I believe that this approach to technology in *El Eternauta*—an appreciation of the technical an empirical knowledge of the middle and working classes—points out to the resourcefulness and self-sufficiency of the ordinary citizen of Buenos Aires.

Hojman Conde argues that "Oesterheld's adventures are based on a formula in which ordinary people are confronted with extraordinary circumstances and are thus thrust into a process that will turn them into heroic figures. Faced with the destruction of the past, they must overcome the present and forge the future" (141). I would argue that Oesterheld's approach to technology in *El Eternauta* is part of this greater purpose described by Hojman Conde: raising the Argentinean everyman man to the status of a hero. This process ultimately places Argentina—and perhaps Latin America in general—at the center of its own historical epic narrative, making it into the protagonist of its own story.

Di Dio points out that "ni Salvo ni el resto de los personajes combaten al enemigo con tecnología de avanzada, propias del norte, sino que lo hacen con materiales caseros. Así, el lector de la tira semanal es testigo de la resolución de problemas ajenos con materiales que … le son propios" (140). In this way, the South America of *El Eternauta* is no longer a passive bystander in the dark panorama of the Cold War; on the contrary,

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the region gains agency in the context of a global crisis and becomes an important source of military information for the nations of the North. After Salvo and his peers destroy the base of the *Ellos*, Favalli argues that they should inspect what is left of the *Ellos'* base to attain more information about the enemy (285). Soon after this, Favalli realizes that, without the forcefield that protected the *Ellos'* base of operations, the nuclear weapons sent from the Northern nations are now the most serious threat to their lives. Realizing the danger, Favalli tells his friends that they should all leave, assuring them that: "Los datos que ya tenemos son preciosos" (186). At this moment, the reader realizes that Salvo and his partners could be a key element in the global battle for Earth; in other words, the survival of the human species could depend on the findings of a group of Argentinean civilians who have faced the terrible invaders in a fierce battle of wits for their city's survival. After the nuclear bomb falls upon Buenos Aires, Salvo and his peers return home with the help of a friendly *Mano* who kills several *Gurbos* in order to defend the group of humans that have temporarily rejected the *Ellos'* invasion (302-307). Back in Salvo's house, the group listens to a radio transmission in which it is stated that a nuclear weapon has destroyed the "núcleo invasor que dominaba la ciudad de Buenos Aires" (318). Somehow offended, Franco says: "¡No fue la bomba atómica lo que aniquiló el núcleo invasor! ¡Fuimos nosotros!" (319). Franco's passionate words highlight Oesterheld's intention of placing Argentina—and an amateur/civilian approach to technology—in the center of this global conflict, conferring the nation with an agency that it had been deprived of by the combative rhetoric of the world super powers, whose spokesmen dominated the airwaves during the 1950s.

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In radio transmission, the characters learn that scientists have found a way of neutralizing the murderous snow in certain places of the world. According to the radio transmission, all survivors should regroup in these places that have been freed from the ominous snow, and get ready to join the army that "no tardará en llevar a cabo la más gloriosa de las empresas que jamás afrontó ejército alguno: aniquilar al invasor y restituir a la especie humana el dominio de nuestro maravilloso planeta" (Idem). At this point, Salvo proves to be quite skeptic about the optimism of the other nations: "¡Parecen seguros de vencer! No han visto lo que vimos nosotros" (Idem). In this one way-dialogue between the radio transmission and Salvo, the reader understands that the invasion of the *Ellos* is forming a worldwide solidarity not unlike the one that Adrian Veidt's fake alien invasion produces in *Watchmen,* bringing the Cold War to an abrupt end. On the other hand, Salvo's reaction reasserts the importance of the vital information gathered by the Argentinean resistance in the imminent battle for planet Earth.

Di Dio links this championing o amateur forms of scientific knowledge with the need for a new "revolutionary social distribution and politics of power" (131). According to her,

> los protagonistas de la historieta argentina [*El Eternauta*] ponen en evidencia el valor de su conocimiento científico *amateur* como una práctica de supervivencia. De esta manera, se apuesta por investir al ciudadano común con las cualidades de un verdadero agente del conocimiento científico y responsable de una nueva y revolucionaria distribución social y política del poder. (idem)

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In this way, Oesterheld does not only state the need for valuing other forms of technological development different from the one pursued in academia and in the state-funded laboratories of the world powers; the author also advocates for the need of a restructuring of the social order, probably with the hope of creating a more equalitarian society. In a few words, Oesterheld's political agenda becomes evident in *El Eternauta* in both global and local terms.

In 1969, a second version of *El Eternauta*—this time drawn by the artist Alberto Breccia—was published in the magazine *Gente*. In this new version of the comic book the writer included himself as a character within the story, and modified the plot itself in order to express and articulate Argentina's (and his own) political anxieties. As Di Dio explains in her essay, the author's belief in the possibility of a universal solidarity (or *hermandad universal*), somehow present in the first version of *El Eternauta* is completely revised—not to say destroyed—in the second version of the comic book published in 1962. Oesterheld's deep skepticism of trans-national solidarity becomes obvious when the reader of *El Eternauta* (in its 1969 version) discovers that the world's super powers have been negotiating with the alien invaders, coming to the final agreement of surrounding several territories of South America in order to protect their own national interests (Di Dio 144). This second version of the successful graphic novel came to an abrupt conclusion; this might have been caused by the discomfort that the comic book produced in both the magazine's editors (who were probably shocked by Oesterheld's strong anti-imperialistic discourse and by Breccia's dark aesthetics), and in the de facto president of the nation, Juan Carlos Onganía.[82] For the purposes of this dissertation, I will

[82]Numerous plays and movies were censored in Argentina under the de facto presidency of Onganía.

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focus my attention exclusively in the first version of *El Eternauta*, published between 1957 and 1959.

As a committed intellectual, Oestrerheld actively opposed the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983). The author joined the militant opposition organization known as *Los Montoneros*. Oesterheld's work from the *junta militar* era is particularly combative, and engages more directly in a criticism of totalitarianism. Oesterheld and Solano López also published a sequel to *El Eternauta*, under the title *El Eternauta: segunda parte* (1976-1977)—also referred here as *El Eternauta II*. In this story, the personality and body of Juan Salvo have changed dramatically. Physically, he has acquired mutant powers, caused by nuclear warfare; his biggest changes, however, are ideological. According to Fernando Ariel García, the Salvo of the first comic book, whose bourgeois habits and lifestyle are described by Di Dio (136), is now driven by a "fanatismo ciego hacia su deber militante" (4). This will become obvious when Salvo decides to sacrifice the lives of his wife Elena and his daughter Martita, for the sake of defending the community of post-apocalyptic humans that had been enslaved by the cruel and ungraspable *Ellos*. The sacrifice of Martita and Elena is portrayed as a sacrifice of individual happiness for the sake of the common good. Even though we might sympathize with Oesterheld's political views and with his brave intellectual activism, the gender implications of Elena's and Martita's passive sacrifice make clear that, as Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste states in his article "Del nacionalismo como treta de la imaginación identitaria en *450 años de Guerra contra el imperialismo*, de Héctor Germán Oesterheld and Leopoldo Durañona," "La obra de Oesterheld no se destaca por una representación fehaciente de una temática de género. De hecho, *El Eternauta* … ejemplifica el carácter

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masculinista de su quehacer guionístico (45).” This criticism to Oesteerheld’s work is also made by David William Foster in “Masculinity as Priviledged Human Agency in H.G. Oesterheld’s *El Eternauta*” the first chapter of *El Eternauta, Day Tripper and Beyond* (2016). In this first part of the chapter I will focus my attention in *El Eternauta.* I will discuss *El Eternauta II* in Chapter III.

Aliens in El Eternauta

In the first volume of *El Eternauta* there are many characters that could be described as “alien.” The leaders of all these terrible alien creatures are the *Ellos*; no one ever actually sees one of these creatures, but we know that they are ambitious, cruel and extremely powerful. In the words of an alien *Mano,* the *Ellos* “quieren para sí el universo todo” (172). They are, therefore, the leaders of the archetypical totalitarian empire. According to Haywood Ferreira, “it is not difficult to make associations between los Ellos and real-world oppressors, still, in *Et-57,* Oesterheld leaves such identification to the reader, at the same time envisioning many shades of gray amid the white-black of the Us-Them dichotomy, more typical, perhaps, of the Cold War” (“Oesterheld’s Iconic and Ironic Eternautas” 157). If the human traits of some of the aliens in the graphic novel indeed problematize the Manichean dichotomy of good versus evil—characteristic of Cold War political rhetoric—the interest of the author in mass-destruction weapons could be regarded as a reflection of the general unease produced by the escalation on the production of nuclear weapons in the world; in other words, this concern could be read as a symptom of Cold War nuclear paranoia.

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In *El Eternauta,* the *Ellos* have a wide variety of subordinates under their command. For instance, the *Manos*, a highly intelligent species. Their military role is very relevant in the *Ellos'* war against humanity. They are not necessarily evil creatures; however, their job consists in enslaving human beings through a process of mind control, which involves the use of the rather wicked-looking *teledirector*. Perhaps, alongside with the *Manos*, the *hombres-robot* are the most interesting kind of "aliens" in Oestreheld's work. They are both human and inhuman, victims and victimizers, dead and alive, men and machines—androids—traitors and slaves. Also, they are the best example of complete mind control in *El Eternauta's* series (let us note that Di Dio sees the fear of mind control as one of the characteristics that links Juan Salvo to the classic American pulp hero of science fiction magazines). The *hombres-robot* are cyborgs in the sense that they are a combination of technological prosthetics—the ominous *teledirector*—and a living organism. In his book, *Cyborgs in Latin America* (2010), J. Andrew Brown argues that "[s]ince the late 19th century, robots and artificial humans have gathered at the periphery of Latin American cultural production" (1). Even though the author of this book mentions important examples of cyborgs in science fiction works from the region—such as Eduardo Holmberg's novella *Horacio Kalibang o los autómatas* (1979) and Horacio Quiroga's novella *El hombre artificial* (1910)—he doesn't include any reference to Oesterheld's cyborgs in his book. This opens up the question of whether Brown purposefully decided to leave Oesterheld's work out of his analysis, in account of it being a comic book, or if he simply was not aware of Oesterheld's contributions to the field of Argentinean science fiction. Still, I intend to demonstrate that the figure of the *hombre-robot* is extremely important in the context of Argentinean science fiction, because it

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opens the way for a dialogue about the moral implications of the figure of the cyborg. Relevant questions that might arise from a careful reading of Oesterheld's work are: Are these cyborgs human? And if they are only partially human, is it morally acceptable to destroy them? The otherness of Oesterheld's cyborgs seems to justify their destruction at the hands of the resistance. But how is this otherness developed and negotiated by the main characters of the story? In the following paragraphs, I will focus my attention in exploring the implications of the presence of the *hombres-robot* in *El Eternauta*.

It is important to mention that Oesterheld's negative depiction of alien technology (mind-control devices, synthetic killing glands, and toxic meteorological weapons) does not imply that the author had a negative understanding of technology at large. While Cold War protesters (among them Vietnam War protesters) usually expressed strong distrust of technology and science, and members of the hippie movement went as far as to advocate for a pre-industrial lifestyle, which included habits such as living in tepees,[83] and so forth,[84] Oesterheld's position on matters of technology seems to be far less extreme. In fact, Oesterheld seems to cherish technology, and appreciate its importance within society. However, the type of technology that Oesterheld champions is not that created in governmental or university laboratories in the so-caled developed countries. In *El Eternauta* there is a certain disdain of the destructive weapons of the Northern world powers (such as the atomic bomb, incapable of penetrating the *Ellos*' forcefield). But the graphic novel praises the do-it-yourself approach to technology of the radio-aficionados, the technological resourcefulness of the working classes (embodied in the brave Franco),

[83] Self-identifying hippies, such as Rik Mayes, live in tepees to this day. Several people live with Mayes at the Tipi Valley community in Wales.
[84] Interestingly, several of the main figures in the computer revolution, such as Steve Jobs, ascribed to the hippie movement, and, as Jobs, experimented with substances such as LSD and other hallucinogens.

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and the technical dexterity of the bourgeoisie (Favalli comes up with a practical way of insulating Salvo's house from the toxic snow, and Martita makes the special suits that allow her husband and his friends to go out to find supplies and, eventually, to effectively face the invaders). This marks an important difference between Oesterheld's understanding of technology, and that of the Cold War protesters of industrialized Northern nations such as England and the United States.

The process of calling the men and women whose bodies have been modified by the *Manos* "robots," of course, deprives them of their original human nature. In this way, through this process of othering, Juan Salvo and his peers feel free of killing any *hombre-robot* that approaches them. Perhaps, one of the moments in which the reader is more shockingly confronted with the merciless destruction of the *hombres-robot* by members of the resistance comes when Franco, the working class hero—"en quien la crítica ha visto al nuevo modelo de ciudadano propuesto por Oesterheld" (Di Dio 141)—shoots an unarmed robot-woman without considering the complex moral implications of his actions (255). Foster believes that this moment in the narrative is relevant, in the sense that it is representative of the way in which female characters are treated in the graphic novel. According to Foster

> aside from the wife and daughter, who are both bystanders of and the motivating force of the narrative (in the sense that they symbolize why and for what the world must be saved: the promise of the heterosexual matrimonial unit and its legitimate and life-renewing offspring), there is only one other woman in *El Eternauta*, and she turns out to be a survivor who has been transformed into a robot … appropriately seductive in a

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> catsuit and the unblemished visage of a starlet, she distracts Franco, who seems to have become needy for opposite-sex company no matter how strong his homosocial bonds to Salvo and Favalli are. But the latter prevail, and Franco suddenly shoots the siren dead, realizing that she has been sent to dupe them and lure them into a trap. (14)

Foster's reading of this episode both highlights the importance of the homosocial bonds between male characters in *El Eternauta,* and the use of female characters as plot devices. In this episode of the graphic novel, Franco demonstrates his commitment to the group of suburban heroes and his integrity as a man by shooting this female cyborg dead. Foster's comparison of this female cyborg to a siren also highlights both the "heroic" nature of Franco's decision in the context of the narrative, and the epic tone of Oesterheld's narrative. But even though Franco's interest in this mind-controlled woman might be understood as a consequence of the young man's sexual attraction towards the female character, it is true that this is perhaps the only moment in which a member of the group of rebels seems to show some sympathy towards the victims of the *Ellos* mind-control tactics. Nevertheless, Franco's lack of guilt after killing the young female cyborg is, again, characteristic of the dehumanization of the enemies of the human rebels in *El Eternauta*.

Shortly after this episode, Salvo, who is posing as an *hombre-robot* in order to infiltrate the enemy's center of operations, is discovered by one of the *hombres-robot* guarding the location. Salvo does not react immediately to this situation. Actually, for eight entire panels, the character seems to consider his options, as he thinks about the actions that the *Mano* in charge of this battalion of *hombres-robot* will take regarding

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Salvo's unmasking. Although the character says nothing about what he is planning to do, Solano López's use of the close-up (there are three close ups of Juan Salvo in page 278) tells us a lot about the inner moral conflict that is likely taking place in the character's mind. When the *hombres-robot* finally start walking away from Salvo—assumedly seeking to find the ideal distance for a clear shot at both Salvo and Favalli—these two brave members of the resistance open fire against their potential aggressors, killing them all in a question of seconds. Nevertheless, unlike what happened after Franco's killing of the young female "robot," Salvo does provide the reader with a justification for his actions. It is relevant to note that this justification goes beyond a simple "it was us or them." Instead of this, Salvo feels the need of emphasizing the unhuman nature of the *hombres-robot*. In his own words, the violent incident "[n]o fue un combate. Ni tiempo les dimos de apuntar. Pero no pensábamos en lo que habíamos hecho. Total, ellos ya no eran hombres, eran simples cuerpos sin inteligencia, esclavizados a los 'Manos.' A demás, no era momento de compasiones" (279). Even though Salvo says that the incident was not a combat, he does not use the word "massacre;" this reluctance could be regarded as a sign of repressed guilt. On the other hand, Salvo argues that these men have been deprived of their intelligence—in other words, they lack what could be understood as a human conscience—and so, they cannot be seen as human anymore. Franco also seems to share this understanding of *hombres-robot* as entities that are not only un-human, but also as entities that lack life. In an earlier confrontation between the resistance and the *hombres-robot*, Salvo acknowledges the moral conflicts posed by their actions when stating: "Es espantoso tener que barrerlos así" (206). Franco's response effectively deprives the *hombres-robot* from humanity and, even life in a broader sense, when

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comparing them to toys. "Mejor no pensar, señor Salvo. Total, ya no son hombres, son muñecos" (206). It would seem that the lack of consciousness and free will is what makes the *hombres*-robot unworthy of the word of "human." In his essay on "Free Will," Edward O. Wilson quotes the neurobiologist Gerald Edelman, for whom "consciousness is the guarantor of all we hold to be human and precious. Its permanent loss is considered to be the equivalent of death, even if the body persists in its vital signs" (Edelman on Wilson 159). Wilson believes that "[e]veryone, scientists, philosophers, and religious leaders alike can agree with … Edelman" (159). These episodes of the graphic novel make it clear that Salvo and Franco do indeed agree with Edelman. For Salvo, he and his partners did not shoot a group of men. Like the heroes in a zombie movie, Oesterheld's heroes just killed what was already dead[85].

The *Manos*, on the other hand—no pun intended—do not necessarily enjoy participating in the violent colonization of Earth; nevertheless, the *Ellos* have limited their freedom by installing a "terror gland" in their bodies; this gland would trigger itself if a *Mano* even considers the idea of rebellion. A dying *Mano* describes his species as the worst kind of slave. In his own words, "Los *Manos* somos la peor especie de esclavos… esclavos del terror" (240). It is relevant to take into consideration that the feeling that triggers the killing gland is fear. In *El Eternauta*, and particularly in the figure of the *Manos*, the idea of rebellion is connected to the idea of fear. Therefore, the act of rebelling implies the capacity of overcoming great fear (which makes Salvo and his peers even more heroic). The never depicted surgical procedure by which the *Ellos* insert the

[85] Philip K. Dick's science fiction classic, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), engages in a more direct manner in the complex moral issues that arise from the act of killing a non-human individual. In the case of Dick's novel, the main character is a bounty hunter, whose work is to "retire" (or kill) androids. Androids, unlike cyborgs such as Oesterheld's *hombres-robot*, are entirely synthetic.

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terror gland into the Mano's bodies, reminds us of Agamben's understanding of the relationship between the figure of the physician and the state in the context of a bio-political state. According to Agamben, "in the bio-political horizon that characterizes modernity, the physician and the scientist move in the no-man's-land into which at one point the sovereign alone could penetrate" (159). The *Manos* are probably the race of aliens that have a more direct contact with human beings in the graphic novel; still, performing violent actions against them seems to be justified by the mind control techniques that they exercise over the human population of Buenos Aires, as well as by their alien nature. Nevertheless, when the terror gland has already triggered itself, the *Manos* sometimes show their true feelings towards humanity, and they are presented as an oppressed race of intelligent individuals that are not naturally inclined to violence; in a certain way, the *Manos* seem to be rather spiritual. All of the *Manos* that die in *El Eternauta* are rather nostalgic when it comes to discussing their home planet (173). In other words, the *Manos* can be all-too-human, especially at the moment of facing certain death. When the reader witnesses the death of the second *Mano* at the hands of Salvo and Favalli, it becomes clear that the *Manos* do not hate or resent humanity. In this episode the agonizing alien advices his captors—Salvo and Favalli—to escape before the *Ellos* send another *Mano* slave to replace him. Before dying due to the effects of the terror gland, the *Mano* asks Salvo ad his partner for forgiveness. "Siento haberlos atacado en la plaza, siento haber destruido a todos sus amigos… pero… ¿Qué otra cosa podía hacer yo? Desobedecer una orden era empezar a sentir miedo, miedo a la represalia. Y empezar a sentir miedo era empezar a morir. Váyanse amigos" (241). The fact that the *Manos* regain their freedom at the verge of death—once the fear gland has been triggered and

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there is no going back—resonates with Foucault's understanding of death within the context of a bio-political state. According to Foucault,

> Now that power is decreasingly the power to of the right to take life, and Increasingly the right to intervene to make life, or once power begins to intervene mainly at this level in order to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies, death becomes, in so far as it is the end of life, the term, the limit, or the end of power too. Death is outside the power relationship. Death is beyond the reach of power, and power has a grip on it only in general, overall or statistical terms. Power has no control over death, but it can control mortality … In the right of sovereignty, death was the moment of the most obvious and most spectacular manifestation of the absolute power of the sovereign; death now becomes, in contrast, the moment in which the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his ow privacy. (248)

The regime of the *Ellos* is bio-political in nature. And, since death is "ignored" by bio-power (Foucault, Idem), it becomes the most effective way of escaping it. This is why the *Manos* feel free to talk about their feelings and motives only when they are facing certain death. I will come back to the topic of death as the ultimate way of escaping bio-power in the Chapter four, where I will study Jorge Luis Borges's post-apocalyptic utopian story, "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975).

The episode in which Oesterheld and Solano López depict the emotional death of the *Mano* is also relevant because it makes evident the way in which the author of *El*

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Eternauta uses the "icon of the alien[86]" in a complex and original manner. Haywood Ferreira argues that

> Oesterheld plays with reader assumptions about the icon of the alien. He first allows the reader to prejudge the series of other aliens as other, as enemy, as unknown, by using them to threaten his characters with physical and mental domination. Then, almost halfway through *Et-57*[87], we find out that the cascarudos, gurbos, and manos are not so much enemies as fellow victims, forced to fight for a never-seen race called *los Ellos*. ("Oesterheld's Iconic and Ironic Eternautas" 156)

This "play with the reader's assumptions about the icon of the alien" that characterizes Oesterheld's graphic novel confers the text with a depth and complexity unusual in the science fiction comic books of its time. Depicting the initially threatening aliens as "fellow victims" could be read in two different ways: as a metaphor of the unfairness of high social classes setting the subjugated classes against each other in order to gain some profit from their struggle, and as a way of denouncing the internal mechanisms of fascism and totalitarianism. In "Tiempo y lugar," a text that serves as a prologue to the 2011 edition of *El Eternauta*, Fernando Ariel García seems to favor the interpretation of Oesterheld's graphic novel as a metaphor of class struggle. García sums up the political conflict of *El Eternauta* in the following manner:

> La explotación de unos seres vivos para el exclusivo beneficio de otros, como impuesto sustento de un determinado orden político y social es, a

[86] Gary K. Wolfe studies the icon of the alien in his book *The Known and the Unknown: An Iconography of Science Fiction* (1979).
[87] That is, the first volume of *El Eternauta*, published in 1957.

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priori, el gran tema que *El Eternauta* debate, denunciando claramente una herramienta de sometimiento: El enfrentamiento de oprimidos contra oprimidos (¿pobres contra pobres?).” (5)

The intergalactic empire of the *Ellos* is not an oppressive and totalitarian one; but the *Ellos'* empire is also deeply fascist and, as such, exercises its bipopower in a wide variety of ways. The eradication of entire populations—such as the massacre of Buenos Aires—and the appropriation of the bodies of the species that have been subjugated for military and industrial purposes—the humans are meant to be enslaved in order to labor as miners in the “inframinas” (172)—is proof of the *Ellos'* disregard of other species in the universe.

The *Ellos* see themselves as a superior species, and for this reason they give themselves the right of colonizing, enslaving and annihilating other species. According to Foucault, “In the bio-power system … killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not on a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race. There is a direct connection between the two” (256). It is relevant to point out the fact that Foucault finds a direct connection between “the species” and “race,” since I consider both concepts as ideal fields for articulating otherness and justifying violence against those that are perceived as different. In other words, “[o]nce the State functions in bio-power mode, racism alone can justify the murdering function of the state” (Foucault, Idem). In *El Eternauta*, the *Ellos* exercise a cosmic racism, in which they base the legitimacy of violence against other species in their intergalactic bio-political state.

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In “Part Three” of his influential *Homo Sacer,* Giorgio Agamben explains the way in which National Socialist eugenics consists on the extermination of “life that is unworthy of being lived” (123). Even though the concept of a “life that is unworthy of being lived” arose in Germany in the context of the moral and medical defense of euthanasia, the National Socialist party transported this concept to the field of eugenics. Naturally, this concept served to justify the extermination of people with mental illness, homosexuals, Romani and Jewish people, etcetera; as well as the establishments of concentration camps in different areas of Nazi-occupied territory. Of course, when the state confers upon itself the right to decide on what life is “unworthy of being lived,” optimum conditions for fascism are created.

To illustrate this point, the reader has only to analyze the way in which the *Ellos* treat all other species in *El Eternauta.* The *Gurbos* and *Cascarudos* seem to be incapable of articulate language, and so, their existence is limited to that of “bare life” or zoē. According to Agamben, zoē refers to “the simple fact of living common to all living beings” (1). The *Ellos* treat the individuals of these species as tools, as weapons against the human resistance; their only function is to facilitate the colonization of other plants for the benefit of their mysterious masters. In this sense, at least from the point of view of the *Ellos*, the lives of these creatures are “unworthy of being lived.” They are only tools, and as such, they are meant to be broken sometimes; they are meant to be replaced. On the other hand, we have the *Manos* and the *hombres-robot*. The *Manos* are highly intelligent beings, capable of articulating language, and therefore capable of living a political life. In Agamben’s words, their lives could be placed in the realm of *bios*. According to Agamben, the word *bios* “indicated the form of way of living proper to an

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individual or a group" (idem). The case of the *hombres-robot* is a complicated one, since they are creatures that were once capable of *bios*, but have lost their conscience and individuality. They become like machines, like tools that the *Manos* can control remotely for the benefit of the *Ellos*.[88] In this sense, both the *Manos* and the *hombres-robot* were once capable of living a political life, that is, of living in a state of *bios*, but have been conferred by the cruel *Ellos* to the realm of "bare life." In this sense, the *Ellos* also see the lives of the *Manos* and humans as lives "unworthy of being lived." But the fact that the *Ellos* find the lives of the members of all other species in the graphic novel "unworthy of being lived" does not mean that they consider them "unworthy of being exploited." In fact, the military exploitation of the *Manos*, the *Gurbos*, the *Cascarudos*, and the *hombres-robot,* as well as the possible exploitation of humans in the infamous *inframinas* is reminiscent of the regime's exploitation of the Romani and Jewish people who were forced to labor in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Racist discourses, after all, can both champion the right of the "superior" race to master and control the "inferior" race,[89] or—when they assume the form of fascism—advocate for the extermination of the "impure" race in order to secure or guarantee the purity and health of the "pure" race.[90]

[88] The fact that killing *hombres-robot* is justified within the narrative by the de-humanization process undergone by these characters through the insertion of the *teledirector* in their bodies, and by the fact that they pose a threat to the survival of the resistance, points out the incredibly precarious position of the *hombres-robot* in the world of *El Eternauta.* They are used as tools by the *Ellos*, who regards their lives as "unworthy of being lived", but they are also regarded as "unworthy of life" by other humans, who, like Franco, describes them as lifeless "toys" (206). The killing of the *hombres-robot* by members of the resistance can also be read in Darwinian terms: according to Darwinian thought, those individuals who fail to adapt to the environment, and the changes that take place in it, die off, as a part of the process of "natural selection." The resistance's killing of *hombres-robot* is just the culmination of this process. Those who cannot adapt to the new circumstances posed by the alien invasion of Earth are captured and turned into living tools for the planet's domination, killing those who fail to adapt and escape the invaders could be, therefore, read as a natural process that follows the principles presented by Darwin in *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

[89] Such was the discourse of defenders of slavery in colonial societies.

[90] Such was the case of the Nazi's "Final Solution," which led to the systematic killing of six million Jews during World War II.

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Since Agamben considers that bio-power is concerned with the politicizing bare life or zoē, it is reasonable to conclude that the intergalactic empire of the *Ellos* is clearly a bipolitical regime, that has reached the place where bio-politics become thanatopolitics; the first act of the alien invaders on Earth is, after all, killing most of Buenos Aires' population with a meteorological chemical weapon. In other words, it could be argued that the empire of the *Ellos* is not only a bio-political one, but also deeply fascist in its murdering nature.

Reaching a broader understanding the act of killing is necessary when considering Foucault's ideas on the relationship between racism and killing within the context of bio-power. Foucault himself clarifies that "[w]hen I say 'killing,' I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on" (Idem). The fact that the *Ellos* do not oppose the human resistance directly is possible because of the fact that they expose the lives of the species that they already control in order to avoid endangering themselves. The *Cascarudos*, the *Gurbos,* the *Manos,* and the *hombres-robot* are all exposed to great danger, playing the role of soldiers of the conquering species, while he *Ellos* hide in relative safety under their safe forcefield. The reader might also assume that the conditions of the workers in the *Ellos' inframinas* are also equivalent to "murder" by the conquering species exercising bio-power over the creatures and peoples of other planets.

It is important to note that the bodies of the *Manos* and the *hombres-robot* have been modified in order to be controlled not only in an individual scale, but also as a mass or, in other words, as a species. This situation echoes Foucault's understanding of bio-

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power, as articulated in his famous talks collected in *Society Must be defended*. According to him, bio-power "is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species" (242). The *Manos* are aliens from a distant galaxy, in this sense they represent an extreme form of otherness (even though their feelings can strike us as quite human). The so called "terror-gland" allows the *Ellos* to control how the *Manos* live, and even how they die. The robot men are turned into *an other* through the biological intervention performed in their bodies. This otherness makes it possible for humans to justify the killing of both *Manos* and *hombres-robot*. But what is utterly shocking is that these subjects have been modified biologically by the *Ellos*, so that they can be effectively controlled. In *Society Must be defended*, Foucault argues that the 19th century is the historical moment in which "the biological came under State control. (204)." In *El Eternauta,* the bodies of the *Manos* and the *hombres-robot* are modified, and eventually controlled, by the state. Foucault argues that the Nazi ideal state was the paroxysm of the bio-political state (259); the same could be said of the *Ellos*. They think of species as a mass, as groups to be controlled. By controlling the biology of these beings, that is, by controlling the individual bodies of the numerous individuals that constitute a species, the *Ellos* take control over whole planets—and over all the life forms in those planets—in the perfect inter-galactic bio-political state.

Weapons of Mass-Destruction in *El Eternauta*

To conclude my analysis of *El Eternauta* I will study the way in which weapons of mass-destruction are depicted in the graphic novel. I will talk about the obliquus

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presence of nuclear weapons, produced and deployed by the main world powers, and about the fantastic weapons deployed by the *Ellos*, mainly the implementation of the murderous snow that disseminates the population of Buenos Aires in the first pages of the graphic novel.

The first reference to the threat of nuclear conflict appears early in the graphic novel, when Salvo, Favalli, Polsky and Lucas are playing *truco*. As they play, they are all listening to the radio. Suddenly, they receive a transmission that informs that there has been a

> Formidable explosión atómica en el Pacífico… Contra lo que se había anunciado… los Estados Unidos han continuado haciendo ensayos atómicos… Un accidente acaba de revelarlo: el estallido de una bomba atómica de nuevo tipo ha producido incalculable cantidad de polvo radioactivo… Desplazada por el viento, la nube radioactiva avanza a gran velocidad hacia el Sud Oeste. (15)

After listening to this report, Poslky tells his Friends, “El ‘hobby’ de ellos es más peligroso que el de nosotros” (Idem). This is a very revealing moment in the graphic novel, as it exemplifies the dynamics of power and fear during the Cold War Era. It also shows the way in which countries that were not directly involved in the production of nuclear weapons, such as Argentina and other Latin American nations, experienced the conflict between the USA and the USSR. For Poslki, this potentially-lethal escalation on the production of nuclear weapons can be understood as a dangerous “hobby;” a reckless game between two super powerful—and yet childish—nations, that might eventually lead to the destruction of the entire human species. In René Rebetez’s “Rocky Lunario”—

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originally published as "Fiction Science" in *Los ojos de la clepsidra* (1964)—the main character of the story, an American astronaut, destroys the planet out of pure boredom. I will study Rebetez's short story in chapter four. These of responses to the escalating tensions of the Cold War emphasize the feelings of absurdity and impotence that some Latin American—and American[91]—authors expressed in their works during the Cold War era. This scene in *El Eternauta* also informs the reader of the practices of the world's super powers during some of the tensest moments of the Cold War. The USA, one of the greatest world powers, and so, one of the world's most dangerous countries, keeps performing nuclear tests in the Pacific. The expression "contra lo que se había anunciado" emphacizes the lack of a competent international entity with the authority to limit the destructive potential of the technology produced by this foreign power. On the other hand, this scene also positions South America, and particularly Argentina, in the role of a passive nation of the "South West," that is vulnerable to the arbitrary actions of these world powers. If the wind is transporting this "radioactive cloud" towards Argentina, what can Argentineans do about it? How are they to prepare themselves against this nuclear threat? The impotence—and even the lack of interest—of the South American nation becomes evident when the characters decide to turn down the volume of the radio, in order to keep playing their game of *truco*. Curiously enough, it is Professor Favalli, who will soon become an important leader of the human resistance, who seems to be less interested in the whole situation. He says, "Al cuerno con la radio. A ti te toca dar, Juan" (Idem). And so, the group of friends, and the whole nation of Argentina, keeps

[91] Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Starngelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) certainly explores the absurd elements of Cold War dynamics.

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minding their own business, until a murderous alien snow kills most of the population of Buenos Aires, and surviving becomes the group's—only—concern.

The fact the toxic snow finds the heroes of the story playing *truco* might be a significant one. This card game—which is a regional variation of a game that originated in Valencia, Spain—rewards individualism, and a player's capacity to conceal or hide important information, tricking the rest of the players. The game of *truco* has also been used by other Argentinean authors to explain or introduce certain dynamics between characters or questions regarding culture. It is possible that Oesterheld's use of the game at the beginning of the graphic novel could be a way of introducing the important subject of the evolution of the heroes from individualistic members of the Argentinean bourgeoisie to the important "group hero" capable of saving their loved ones and their city. In this chapter I will demonstrate that the concept of the "group hero" is a relevant aspect of *El Eternauta*, and could be considered as one of Oesterheld's most important contributions to Latin American (and Western) science fiction and popular culture in general. Another possible reading of the panels in which the characters of *El Eternauta* are seen playing *truco* is that the game itself could serve as a metaphor for the Cold War. In this game a player can call *truco* even if it is not his/her turn. This might be an obscure reference to the volatile nature of a conflict such as the Cold War. An unexpected nuclear attack could be launched at any particular time, by any of the world super powers, affecting the political balance of the world in an instant. The Cold War, a conflict in which espionage and counter-espionage were commonplace is also reminiscent of the strategies of *truco*, a game in which secrecy and bluffing can lead to a player's victory.

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It is quite relevant that the invasion of the *Ellos* starts with the fall of a poisonous snow that kills most of the people in Buenos Aires. Is this poisonous snow what the authorities first assume is a nuclear cloud produced by the detonation of an American nuclear bomb in the Pacific? Although Oesterheld never addresses the origin of this "snow," this is probably the case. And it is extremely relevant to consider the meaning of the initially blurred distinctions between the lethal weapons of mass-destruction produced by the US, and the ones produced by the *Ellos*. This one, of course, could be interpreted as a metaphor for the former.

But real human-made nuclear weapons also become a real threat to all the survivors of the *Ellos'* invasion. When Salvo, Franco and Favalli destroy the base of the *Ellos* in downtown Buenos Aires, Favalli convinces his friends to flee the place. Salvo understands his reasons perfectly: "Desaparecidos los Ellos, ya no existía más la barrera que neutralizaba los cohetes que venían del norte. En cualquier momento podía estallar una cabeza atómica" (287). The origin of this attack is simply called "el Norte;" not the Americans or the Russians, just "el Norte." This fact is extremely significant, as it emphasizes the absurdity of a world conflict in which Latin America is only a passive spectator, that seemingly lacks a role in this global struggle, and that still is directly threatened by the terrible artifacts produced by a distant and fearless other, not unlike the *Ellos*. When the atomic missile finally appears and explodes (293-295), and Favalli confirms that the explosion was indeed produced by a nuclear bomb, Franco answers "Buenos Aires… Atomizado…" (294). In this particular panel, Solano López's constant use of the close-up becomes relevant again, depicting a traumatized Franco, whose features reveal an anguish and a helplessness that his words fail to convey. Even in the

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context of an extraterrestrial invasion, nuclear weapons are still depicted as a terrible threat for the entire human species. Salvo's description of the explosion is particularly dark: "El hongo atómico se extendía… se extendía… Pensé en las alas abiertas de un infinito ángel negro. Ángel de muerte" (295). This is one of the few real interactions that the survivors of the alien attack in Argentina have with the super powers of the North. It is, however, depicted in a dark and threatening way. According to Foster, "[t]he propositions that Buenos Aires or anywhere else in the so called third world is expendable in the defense of northern civilizations is particularly troubling" (12). I would add that this moment in the graphic novel illustrates Oesterheld's distrust of Northern intervention in Argentina. On the other hand, the detonation of an atomic bomb in Buenos Aires shows that even in the context of an alien invasion, even after facing the horrors of a fantastic mass-destruction weapon such as the murderous snow, the characters of *El Eternauta* still show their—completely justified—fear and mistrust of nuclear technology, and are affected by the—also justified—general nuclear anxiety that characterized the 1950s, and the next three decades of the Cold War era.

I believe that the element of the poisonous snow is extremely important, as it reemphasizes the bio-political nature of the *Ellos*' empire. I also believe that this seemingly unlikely military exploitation of the weather gains enormous importance when considering the development of certain products of contemporary military technology. I will also demonstrate that Oesterheld's murderous snow is the product of a way of thinking about war that originated in the early 20th century, during World War I, and that has shaped the way in which contemporary wars are fought. The murderous snow that covers Buenos Aires in the first pages of *El Eternauta* is a strange tool of mass

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annihilation. Peter Sloterdijk argues that mass annihilation weapons are the product of 20th century military technology. For Sloterdijk, the militaristic uses of gas at the beginning of the 20th century—within the context of World War I—marked the beginning of an era in which weapons are not triggered towards the individual, but towards the individual's environment.[92] In Sloterdijk words, "[e]l Siglo XX pasará a la memoria histórica como la época cuya idea decisiva de la guerra ya no es apuntar al cuerpo del enemigo sino a su medio ambiente" (45). Gas makes it impossible to breath, making the conditions for life impossible; the nuclear bomb, on the other hand, produces enormous amounts of radiation, also affecting the lives of entire communities for many generations. Neither toxic gas nor nuclear explosions—and the subsequent effects of virtually eternal radiation—are targeted towards the destruction of the individual; instead, they are meant to kill in massive proportions. For Sloterdijk, targeting the environment in order to kill, makes the human dependency on the environment even more evident. He states that the penitentiary practices that were implemented in the state of Nevada—the gas chamber as a killing mechanism for criminals in Dead Row was in use from 1912 to 1979—was regarded by the state as the less painful and most effective killing mechanism at hand (71). At the time the gas chamber was being used in Nevada's prisons, other states were using the electric chair in order to dispose of those individuals convicted to Capital Punishment. The snow produced by the *Ellos* in Oesterheld's graphic novel is not different from nuclear bombs and gas chambers, in the sense that it makes the conditions

[92] Sloterdijk's treatment of the use of chemical weapons at the beginning of the 20th century seems to gain an enormous importance now. In 203, in an area near Damascus, the Syrian regime launched a particularly deadly chemical attack on civilian population. Later, in April 4, 2017, the Russian-supported Syrian government launched another chemical attack on the civilian population; this time, the victims were the citizens of Khan Sheikhoun, a city located in rebel-controlled territory. This attack led the United States military to attack a Syrian military base on May 6. The consequences of this military intervention are still unpredictable.

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of life impossible for individuals, and for entire communities; in other words, the *Ellos* could make life on earth impossible using their toxic snow. It is relevant to highlight that making the conditions for collective life impossible—that is, targeting the environment instead of the individual—as well as seeing the enemy as a mass, as a shapeless conglomerate of—inferior—creatures, exposes the bio-political tactics of the *Ellos*. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault states that bio-power "gave itself the function of administering life" (138). The use that the *Ellos* give to their toxic snow illustrates the way in which these aliens position themselves as the administrators of (human) life in the planet. By targeting specific countries or cities, such as Buenos Aires, and leaving others out of the conflict, cities such as Paris and Washington, from where the radio station are constantly transmitting news of the attack on South America (25)—the *Ellos* exercise a power that goes beyond the right of the sovereign, who could choose between the life and death of his subjects; in fact, the *Ellos* decide over the life and death of entire communities and even of entire species. And their power goes beyond this, since they can also determine the kind of life that subjects of their intergalactic state will be forced to live. All of these elements emphasize the bio-political nature of the *Ellos'* totalitarian state.

The ominous snow allows the *Ellos* to determine what communities live and what communities die, what communities are rendered powerless and what communities are enslaved. The initial attack with the toxic snow is not an effort to destroy the human race, but a first step for subjugating it, controlling it, administering it and, in this way, determining its function, its purpose, and its usefulness. Let us not forget that Foucault defines bio-power as the power that gave itself the function of "administering life" but

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also its "reason for being and the logic of its exercise" (Idem). In this sense, the *Ellos*' campaign is not one of annihilation; mass-killings is just the *Ellos'* first step in the pursuit of a complete enslavement of the human species. In other words, the deployment of this terrifying weapon of mass-destruction is the first step in the Ellos' military campaign for gaining total control of the human species.

But why is the poisonous snow imagined by Oesterheld so relevant in today's world? Why is it such an effective and powerful metaphor for the way in which contemporary wars are fought? In his introduction to *Science Fiction after 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars,* Brooks Landon argues that the 20th century is the moment in history in which "[a]s modes of science fiction have more and more become the new realism of technological society, the world itself has become science fictional" (xiii). Landon also states that, due to its evolution throughout the 20th century, "science fiction is no longer 'just' fiction, but has become a universally recognized category of film, television, music, music videos, electronic games, theme parks, military thinking and advertising" (xv). The inclusion of "military thinking" in this heterogeneous list is both fascinating and unsettling. Later in his book, Landon argues that "SF ideas have been appropriated (or misappropriated) by government and the military who insisted on seeing in 'Star Wars' more than just a movie" (5). By the end of *El Eternauta,* Salvo and his friends listen to a radio transmission from the so called *Comité Unido de Emergencia del Hemisferio Norte* announcing a terrific technical and scientific achievement: gaining control of the ominous "nevada mortal" (319). The radio transmission turns out to be a trap set by the *Ellos,* who are still recovering from the destruction of their base in Buenos Aires (283-84); nevertheless, the transmission, which is nothing more than an elaborate

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lie, does contain a relevant true: those who control the toxic snow, that is, those who control the environment, will have the upper hand in the war for planet Earth. Using the weather as a weapon might seem as a science fictional idea; nevertheless, Landon states that "military thinking" itself has become science fictional. So, what if technologies such as the *Ellos*' toxic snow were possible? What if someone could control the weather as a weapon, affecting the life of entire communities? According to Peter Sloterdijk, this technology, as fantastic—or "science fictional," to be more precise—as it might seem, is already under development. The name of the project that could, eventually, transform the weather into a weapon is HAARP, and it has existed since 1993.[93]

The acronym HAARP stands for "High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program." It is constituted by an enormous number of antennas located in a region of Alaska, at 300 km northeast of Anchorage. According to Sloterdijk, these antennas can generate electromagnetic fields, and emit rays into the ionosphere. Through the effects of reflection and resonance, these energy fields can be located at will in specific points of the planet.[94] It could be argued that Sloterdijk sees HAARP as a potential bio-political weapon; not in the sense that the nuclear bomb or the H-bomb are bio-political weapons capable of affecting the lives of a population throughout a prolonged period of time, but in the sense that it affects humans in a biological way, more specifically, through a direct

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[93] This project temporarily closed its doors in 2013, and then operated again until Summer, 2014. In August 2015, The University of Alaska Fairbanks took control of the project's facilities and its equipment.

[94] Sloterdijk argues that the defenders of HAARP emphasize its civil character, stating that HAARP could be used for fixing the ozone layer and preventing cyclones, but critics of the project see these alleged uses of it as the typical lies that high agents of the government create when trying to cover a military project that constitutes a State Secret (99). Sloterdijk seems to be a part of this group of critics, as he develops a strong argument warning his readers about the possible military uses of this mega-project. Sloterdijk describes those practices that depend on the military use of the weather as "atmorerroristas" (98). According to Sloterdijk, from HAARP "podrían derivarse las condiciones científicas y tecnológicas para un potencial armamentístico de las súper-ondas" (99). Sloterdijk goes as far as to suggest that HAARP could be used by Western world powers as a tool for destabilizing the brain functions of entire populations (100).

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intrusion in people's brains and subsequent effect on the bodily functions of entire populations. Sloterdijk clarifies that even though HAARP does not constitute a weapon of mass-destruction—in the sense that the nuclear bomb does—it is capable of affecting people not in an individual, but in a massive scale. Also, the critic highlights the fact that using this type of weapon implies a way of thinking about one's opponent/victim: the other is either "lo extraño sin más" (the extreme otherness, the abstract stranger) or "el mal absoluto" (absolute evil), "amén de sus posibles encarnaciones humanas" (Ibid).

In *El Eternauta*, the *Ellos* find a way of weaponizing the plant's weather. Their ominous weapon descends upon our planet in the form of a toxic snow capable of killing human begins in a question of seconds. In *Watchmen*, Adrian Veidt kills half of New York population using what Sloterdijk would understand as a neuro-telepathic weapon: a massive synthetic alien with an amplified psychic's brain—the brain of "poor young Robert Deschaines"—that, after blowing up in downtown New York kills millions of citizens, and leaves negative psychological consequences for "sensitives worldwide" (Moore XII, 10).

Some would argue, as Thomas Bey William Bailey does in his article "Peter Sloterdijk's 'Terror from the Air': an introduction (part 1 of 2)" (2014), that Sloterdijk's fear about the potential military uses of HAARP are exaggerated. William Bailey sees the apocalyptic talk about the project as typical of the conspiracy theory meta-dialogue that has populated the social media since 9/11. Bailey concludes that

> Even the more modest powers associated with the HAARP facility (which was, incidentally, closed as of May 2013) are highly implausible—given that the frequency it emits can only be absorbed by the ionosphere, which

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> is well outside the range of atmospheric weather systems—though this speculation does prove that there is still a popular fear of atmospheric alteration; it remains in the 'vanguard', as it were, of the public anxieties regarding coercive violence.

In June, 2008, *Popular Science* published an article by Abe Streep titled "The Military's Mystery Machine: The High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program, or HAARP, has been called a missile-defense tool and a mind-control device. The truth is a bit less ominous." In this article, Streep quotes Umran Inan, a Stanford University Professor, who joins Bailey in opposing the "conspiracy theories" associated with HAARP, defining them as "completely uninformed." According to Inan "there's absolutely nothing we can do to disturb the Earth's [weather] systems. Even though the power HAARP radiates is very large, it's minuscule compared with the power of a lightning flash—and there are 50 to 100 lightning flashes every second. HAARP's intensity is very small."

But even if HAARP doesn't have the military potential that Sloterdijk sees in it, it is relevant to think about the project in the way that Sloterdijk does. In other words, it is important to think of HAARP as the potential bio-political weapon conceived by Sloterdijk, because this way of conceiving this contemporary project could be understood as a symptom of the Cold War anxieties that shaped Western imagination during the Cold War era. These anxieties are effectively reflected and developed in both *El Eternauta* and *Watchemen*. In fact, I believe that thinking of HAARP as a weapon is similar to both the climatic weapon of the *Ellos* and to the psychic weapon designed by Adrian Veidt, tells us more about our collective way of thinking about science than it tells us about the nature of HAARP itself. This paranoid vision of scientific development is both an effect

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of the success of the Manhattan Project, and the decades of constant nuclear paranoia that characterized the Cold War.

In the world of *El Eternauta,* the *Ellos* can annihilate us not only because their technology allows them to, but because, they exercise some sort of racism against us. The *Ellos* are described by a dying *Mano* as "el odio cósmico" (the cosmic hate) (172). That hatred is not merely an idea or a feeling. it manifests itself in concrete actions and concrete technologies (such as the toxic snow and the mind-control machines). Oesterheld's heroes are able to other a wide variety of—alien and non-alien—creatures such as the *Gurbos*, the *Manos,* the *Cascarudos,* and even the *hombres-robot* (Oesterheld and Solano López's take on the science fiction archetype of the cyborg); in this way, the human characters in the graphic novel are morally able to destroy these creatures. Nevertheless, as I mentioned before, Oesterheld problematizes this simplistic process of othering those who are non-human, by humanizing them—like in the case of the *Manos*—or by depicting them as fellow oppressed races in the *Ellos'* intergalactic campaign for controlling the universe. For the *Ellos*, we are not only *an*-other, but an *inferior* other. Their crimes against humanity are hate crimes. The *Ellos* are, after all, "el odio cósmico," and they hate us in the same way that we hate those creatures that we regard as inferior or inconvenient; in other words, for the *Ellos,* human beings are vermin.[95] That is what Foucault means when he states that "[o]nce the State functions in the bio-power mode, racism alone can justify the murderous function of the state" (256). The *Ellos* feel entitled to release the toxic snow upon humanity because they perceive us as Sloterdijk's "lo extraño sin más;" that is, as an extreme other. This process of othering

[95] And yet, the *Ellos* would not annihilate the entire human species, since humans can be used as slaves in the "inframinas."

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was what allowed those in power in Nazi Germany to treat human beings like cattle or vermin, and what allows us to treat cattle—and other animals that we use for our daily consumption—in the cruel and inhumane way that we do. The *Ellos* cannot see us as evil, in the same way that it would be absurd to see evil in a cow or—to remember *Moby Dick*—a whale. We have *othered* animals—and other human beings, in situations such as slavery and human traffic—like the *Ellos othered* humans in Oesterheld's graphic novel. In the context of armed conflict, perceiving and representing our enemy as an extreme other is a way of justifying violent actions against the human group to which he or she belongs. In the case of Adiran Veidt's attack on New York, the process of othering is more complex than the othering of the entire human species by the terrible *Ellos.* In a way, Adrian Veidt seems quite aware of the way in which depicting the enemy as an extreme other justifies our hate for an entire people. Actually, Veidt does not limit his intellect to depicting the enemy as an extreme other—that is, after all, what decades of political propaganda did to citizens in both the US and the USSR—he *creates* this extreme other from scratch. Veidt's synthetic alien is an *alien* in all the possible connotations of the word. It doesn't belong in this planet, it is not like us, and it poses a threat to our entire species. After Veidt's attack on New York, Soviets and Americans decide to come together in spite of their differences, because they both have found a threat that is more radically alien, more *other* than their former enemies could have ever been. I will further analyze and study the figure Adrian Veidt's alien in the next section of this chapter.

It is relevant to consider that in Oesterheld's graphic novel the gigantic *Gurbos*, the aggressive *Cascarudos,* the cunning *Manos*, Juan Salvo, and his family and

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fellowmen do not perish under the effects of the toxic snow. They survive. And that is, in its own way, an enormous political statement. As di Dio points out, the resistance is constituted by people from the middle and lower classes of Buenos Aires' population; they are all imaginative, inventive and utterly recursive. They all managed to survive the murderous snow that covered the city at the very beginning of the invasion, by coming up with improvised suits that protect them from a painful death. Di Dio emphasizes the importance of amateur scientific and technical knowledge in *El Eternauta.* According to her

> los protagonistas de la historieta argentina ponen en evidencia el valor de su conocimiento científico *amateur* como arma práctica de supervivencia. De esta manera, se apuesta por inventor al ciudadano común con las cualidades de un verdadero agente del conocimiento científico y responsable de una nueva y revolucionaria distribución social y de poder. (131)

It is true that, in the comic book, an empirical understanding of technology leads to positive, and even heroic, results that cannot be achieved in the fancy laboratories of the developed nations. Of course, this places Argentina at the center of this science fiction narrative, reinstating and defending the importance of the South American nation within the context of the global order. This scientific knowledge also transforms the regular citizen into a hero, but the hero, for Oesterheld, is not a real one unless he is part of a group. In his own words: "El único héroe valido es el héroe grupo." García understands Oesterheld's "héroe grupal" as the metaphor that gives Oesterheld's graphic novel its Argentinean character. The "héroe grupal" is therefore the metaphore "que prioritiza el

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valor de las relaciones horizontales y complementarias por sobre el verticalismo del héroe verticalista e independiente" (5). This independent and individualistic hero that serves as Juan Salvo's literary counterpart is the classic American pulp—science fiction—hero. Thus, it could be argued that the collective hero ("el héroe grupal") is one of Oesterheld's most important contributions to Western science fiction, as well as the element that makes *El Eternauta* in the world of Western science fiction. In García's words, this ideological peculiatity in the graphic novel "es la que convierte a *El Eternauta* (y a las otras creaciones de Oesterheld) en una historieta preminentemente argentina" (idem). Hojman Conde also explores Oesterheld's group-hero in other of the author's works, such as *Bull Rocket* and *Rolo, el Marciano adoptive* (142). When the snow is falling in Buenos Aires, the city seems to devolve into a Hobbessian state of nature. Salvo states: "Pronto reinará en torno nuestro la ley de la jungla: matar o morir… sólo sobrevivirán los duros, los fuertes" (54). And this exactly what happens at first. Nevertheless, Salvo, Franco and Favalli are able to reverse this process, eventually joining the group of armed men that will constitute the resistance. Actually, Favalli, Salvo and Franco end up leading a block of rebels against the oppressive/invasive forces of the *Ellos*. The fact that the Argentinean middle and lower classes, together with the military forces, are able to repel the alien invasion in the first volume of *El Eternauta* could be interpreted as a way of encouraging social unity against the interference of unwelcomed foreign powers such as the United States. This unity might also be read as Oesterheld's ideal vision of Argentinean society: that is, an egalitarian society based in the principle of social equity.[96]

[96] The role of the military as a force for good, however, can only be possible in this first volume of *El Eternauta*. The beginning of Argentina's military dictatorship in 1976, and Oesterheld's affiliation with the

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It could be argued that, in *El Eternauta,* the Argentinean resistance portrayed by Oesterheld is intended to remind the world's super powers that Argentina is very much part of the world. In other words, Oesterheld applies Arturo Jauretche's principle, according to which, in the context of Argentinean literature, in order to think like Argentineans, Argentineans should locate themselves "en el centro del mundo y ver el planisferio desarrollado alrededor de ese centro" instead of placing themselves "en el borde del mapa, como un lejano suburbia del verdadero mundo (Jauretche in Di Dio 134)." *El Eternauta* demands a privileged space for Latin America within a world that is divided, a world that values technological development (and particularly the development that allows a nation to produce a relevant number of nuclear weapons) over anything else. When Salvo and his friends are at the verge of despair, just waiting for some external military help from outside, Favalli asks: "¿Por qué esperarlo todo de afuera? ¿Acaso no podemos socorrernos a nosotros mismos?" (26). At the end, it is not the nuclear power of the world's most powerful nations—utterly useless against the weapons of the alien invaders—but the ingenious and resourceful Argentinean people, united, what repels—however briefly—the invasion of the powerful *Ellos*.

The Case of *Watchmen*

During 1986 and 1987, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons published their groundbreaking graphic novel *Watchmen*. If it can be argued that *El Eternauta* masterfully articulates Oesterheld's bleak understanding of Cold War politics in the late

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Montoneros, would make this positive depiction of the Argentinean military men impossible in *El Eternauta II*.

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1950s, it is also relevant to state that *Watchmen* renders an intelligent depiction of Cold War tensions in the mid-1980s, by denouncing the pervasive threat of nuclear warfare at the time and articulating a strong ideological rejection of Ronald Reagan's bellicose discourse during this decade. In a way, it is this paranoia that keeps the story going and motivates the actions of many of its characters, particularly Ozymandias' (a.k.a. Adrian Veidt), who is both a villain and a hero in the story, depending on how the reader chooses to interpret it. As in *El Eternauta*, the fear of the alien in *Watchmen* generates enormous social uncertainty and leads to extreme acts of violence. The role of fantastic weapons of mass-destruction is also central to *Watchmen*. Moore, naturally, was not oblivious to the developments of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race during the mid-1980s, and successfully reflected these social and individual anxieties in his graphic novel.

In "Considering Watchmen", Andrew Hoberek states that "Watchmen self-evidently engages with the politics of the Cold War, which the Reagan administration's bellicose rhetoric and policy of military buildup had restored to the center of US public consciousness, and the increased fear of nuclear war that this rhetorical and practical escalation brought about" (119). This fear of nuclear war is materialized in the figure of Dr. Manhattan. In "Super-Vigilantes and the Keene Act," Tony Spanakos argues that "Dr. Manhattan is analogous to the original Manhattan project and the explosions of the two atomic bombs in Japan" (40). In the paranoid alternative reality of *Watchmen*, Dr. Manhattan is the figure that keeps the Soviet Union in check, dissuading them from launching a nuclear attack in American soil. According to Rorschach, "America has Dr. Manhattan. Reds have been running scared since '65. They'd never dare antagonize us" (I, 17). Ironically, the sole presence of Dr. Manhattan—the military element that causes a

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deeper distrust in the Soviet Union—creates an everlasting escalating tension between the world's super powers, based on an unstoppable production of weapons of mass-destruction. In the next pages, I will analyze the role of Dr. Manhattan as a metaphor of the constant threat of nuclear conflict that marked the Cold War Era. While I will argue that Dr. Manhattan performs the role of Foucault's sovereign's sword, I will demonstrate that Adrian Veidt performs the role of a sovereign who also exercises several forms of bio-power among the world's population. But Veidt is a sovereign that works from the shadows, and as such, his position has not been validated by any social contract. Finally, I will also analyze the figure of Adrian Veidt's monster as a living weapon of mass-destruction, that allows us to better understand the bio-political nature of his problematic utopia.

Watchmen begins with the violent death of a retired superhero: Edward Blake a.k.a. The Comedian. Rorschach (Walter Joseph Kovacs), a Manichean superhero known for his extreme methods, begins to investigate the case, and soon concludes that someone in New York is killing retired vigilantes. Following his personal but strict code of honor, Rorschach contacts the retired superheroes Daniel Dreiberg (a.k.a. the second Nite Owl), Adrian Veidt (a.k.a. Ozymandias), Laurie Juspeczyk (a.k.a. the second Silk Spectre), and her lover Dr. Manhattan (ne Jon Osterman). Of them all, only Dr. Manhattan is still active, working as an agent of the US government.

These superheroes, retired or otherwise, all attend The Comedian's funeral. Most of them had met for the first time at a meeting organized by veteran superhero Captain Metropolis (a.k.a. Nelson Gardner), who tried to create a new crimefighting team similar to the Minutemen (formed by himself, his secret lover Hooded Justice, The Comedian,

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the first Silk Specter, the first Nite Owl, Mothman, Silhouette, and Dollar Bill). Gardner's purpose of establishing the Crimebusters was frustrated when The Comedian mocked the idea, and burnt his display on America's social issues (II, 11), hinting at the fact that times have changed too much after the days of the Minutemen, and suggesting that it is pointless to try to save the world through crimefighting, while humankind is under the constant threat of absolute annihilation by the competing world powers. It is relevant that only Adrian Veidt stays in the room with Gardner after all his colleagues leave the building. By the use of a close-up, Gibbons suggests that Captain Metropolis's words resonated deep within Veidt: "Someone has to save the world" (idem). Soon after, Blake's funeral, Dr. Manhattan is accused on national television of giving his former lover, Janey Slater, and his dead friend Wally Weaver cancer. Dr. Manhattan, who had been growing increasingly detached from humanity, is overwhelmed by this possibility, and voluntarily exiles himself in Mars. Since Dr. Manhattan is the United States' most important nuclear deterrent against its enemies, his absence creates great global unrest. The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan soon after Dr. Manhattan leaves the planet. This worsens the tensions between the world super powers.

Someone attempts to murder Adrian Veidt, now a successful businessman, and Rorschach is framed for the murdering of former supervillain Edgar Jacobi (a.k.a. Moloch the Mystic, a former enemy of the Minutemen, Dr. Manhattan, Ozymandias, and the Comedian). All this seems to confirm Rorschach's theory that someone is trying to kill or neutralize active and retired superheroes. Meanwhile, Julie, whose relationship with Dr. Manhattan has been deteriorating due to the superhuman's detachment of humankind, meets with Daniel Dreiberg. She stays at his place for the night. They soon

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begin a romance and engage once again in vigilante activity (their first act of heroism is saving the lives of the trapped residents of a burning building). These activities seem to bring some joy and sense of purpose into Dreiberg's life, curing him of his impotence. The second Nite Owl decides that, as a superhero, it is his responsibility to rescue Rorschach, who is still in jail for the murder of Jacobi and several other criminals. Using their old costumes and superhero personas, Dreiberg and Juspeczyk rescue Rorschach, whose life was threatened by a riot inside the prison.

Dr. Manhattan, who has been in Mars meditating about his life, decides to go back to Earth, in order to ask Julie to assist him as he decides what should be his involvement in human affairs. He teleports her to Mars, where they have a long conversation in which Julie is forced to acknowledge that she is The Comedian's daughter. This process is particularly difficult for the character, since Blake tried to rape her mother when they were young members of a team of superheroes known as the Minutemen. Julie has to come to terms with the fact that her mother eventually engaged in a consensual relationship with a man who had tried to rape her. This discovery allows Dr. Manhattan to see the complexity of human relationships, and the fact that the existence of each and every particular human is so unlikely that it could be described as a "thermodynamic miracle" (IX, 27).

Meanwhile, Daniel Dreiberg and Rorschach advance in their investigation, and discover that Adrian Veidt was behind the deaths of Blake and Jacobi. They also discover that Veidt was responsible for Janey Slater's desease, and for Dr. Manhattan's self-exile on Mars. The reunited superheroes head Antarctica to face Veidt. Before leaving New York, Rorschach leaves his diary, where he has been documenting his ongoing

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investigation, in the mailbox of a local right-wing newspaper known as the *New Frontiersman.* After this, the heroes board Dreinberg's shi, and head for Veidt's luxurious house in Antarctica. When they finally face the retired superhero, he explains that all his crimes were part of an elaborate plan to blackmail the world powers into global peace. Veidt tells his former colleagues that, by staging a fake alien attack (that would kill half of New York City's population), the Soviet Union and the United States would join forces against this new "interplanetary" enemy, bringing the Cold War and the nuclear arms race to an abrupt end. Rorschach and Dreiberg are shocked by Veidt's plan, but they are unable to stop him, since the attack on New York had already taken place when Veidt reveled his plans to them.

Julie and Dr. Manhattan go back to Earth, just to discover the horrific destruction of New York City. Julie is shocked by the dead gigantic squid-like alien in downtown Manhattan and the numerous human corpses around it. Dr. Manhattan, who seems relatively unaffected by the horrific spectacle, realizes that his super-powers are being limited by tachyons[97] coming from Antarctica. They teleport to Veidt's mansion, where they meet with Rorschach and the second Nite Owl. Dr. Manhattan attacks Veidt, who counterattacks by disintegrating the superhuman hero with a machine. Julie shoots Veidt, but he manages to catch the bullet, moving at superhuman speed. Dr. Manhattan regroups his dispersed particles again, and attacks Veidt once again. Veidt manages to turn on a multiple-television set, broadcasting news from all around the world. It becomes clear that Veidt's plan was successful, and that the world is entering a new age of peace. Dr. Manhattan, Julie and Dreiberg reluctantly agree that exposing Veidt would be detrimental

[97] Hypothetical particles that always move faster than light.

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to world peace. Rorschach, whose Manichean world-view is clear throughout the graphic novel, refuses to compromise, and starts walking towards the ship that he and Dreiberg used to reach Antarctica. Dr. Manhattan follows him out and, understanding that Rorschach will not be dissuaded, kills him.

Dr. Manhattan wanders through Veidt's mansion, and finds his former girlfriend sleeping naked with Dreiberg. He smiles at them and keeps walking. Eventually he finds Veidt, who asks him if he did the right thing, after all, "it all worked out in the end" (XII, 27). A puzzled Dr. mnhattan answers that "nothing ever ends" (Idem), after expressing his desire of leaving Earth and maybe creating life somewhere else Dr. Manhattan disappears.

Daniel Dreiberg and Julie Juspeczyk continue their romance under different identities. They show interest in continuing their crime fighting activities. In the office of the *New Frontiersman* the editor of the newspaper tells his assistant to look in the "crank file" for some filler material. This file is made of unsolicited mail and submissions of all kinds. In this pile of documents, the reader can see Rorschach's journal. The editor assistant reaches for the pile, as the graphic novel comes to an end.

It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of *Watchmen* in the world of science fiction, superhero comics, and graphic novels in general. *Watchmen* was adapted into film by director Zach Snyder in 2009. While artist Dave Gibbons worked as an adviser for the film, Moore has decided not to have his name attached to the film adaptations of any of his works.[98] Even though Moore stated that David Hayter's

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[98] Alan Moore's *From Hell* (1989-1996) was also adapted into film in 2001, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999-present) was adapted into film in 2003. Moore criticized both films, arguing that *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* had little to do with the source-material, and criticizing—in a 2007 interview for MTV—Jonny Depp's portrayal of Detective Frederick Abberline in

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screenplay was “as close as I could imagine anyone getting to *Watchmen,*” he also said in a 2008 interview for Entertainment Weekly that "[t]here are things that we did with Watchmen that could only work in a comic, and were indeed designed to show off things that other media can't.” Moore has said that he has no interest on watching Sydner’s adaptation of his graphic novel. On the other hand, in 2012, DC Comics published a series of prequels under the general title Before Watchmen. *Before Watchmen.*[99] Moore was very vocal on opposing the project, calling it “completely shameless.” In an interview for *Seraphermera Books and Music*, Moore said:

> What the comics industry has effectively said is, 'Yes, this was the only book that made us briefly special and that was because it wasn't like all the other books.' Watchmen was something that stood on its own and it had the integrity of a literary work. What they've decided now is, 'So, let's change it to a regular comic that can run indefinitely and have spin-offs.' and 'Let's make it as unexceptional as possible.' Like I say, they're doing this because they haven't got any other choices left, evidently.

While Moore has been quite critical of the adaptations of his work to film, and at times expressed his discomfort of the uses of his influential graphic novel on popular culture, it is undeniable that *Watchmen* marked a generation of readers, changing the graphic novel industry and the superhero genre, and introducing a younger generation of consumers of popular culture to the complex and fascinating history of the Cold War.

From Hell as an "absinthe-swilling, opium-den-frequenting dandy with a haircut that, in the Metropolitan Police force in 1888, would have gotten him beaten up by the other officers."

[99] *Before Watchmen* was written by Darwyn Cooke (who also penciled his work for the series), Brian Azzarello, J. Michael Straczynski, and Len Wein. Artists Steve Rude, Eduardo Risso, Adam Hughes, Lee Bermejo, Jay Lee, Andy and Joe Kubert, J.G. Jones, and Amanda Conner, illustrated the series. Artist Jim Lee also collaborated with a series of variant covers.

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Dr. Manhattan: The Living Sword of Bio-political Control

Dr. Manhattan is the only character with super-powers in *Watchmen*. He can modify and transform matter in infinite ways, manipulating its elements and its nuclear structure, he can see past, present and future from a simultaneous perspective; nevertheless, Dr. Manhattan struggles to connect with humans at an emotional level or to see—until very late in the story—the intrinsic value of human life. He even speaks of his former human self (Dr. Jonathan Osterman) in the third person (XII, 18), emphasizing his detachment from the human race and his subsequent dehumanization. In this sense, Dr. Manhattan is the quintessential other. But he is not a total outsider. He has pledged loyalty to the United States of America, and this has deeply changed the dynamics of the Cold War. Dr. Manhattan is portrayed as a threat to humanity, but—for some of the characters in *Watchmen*—he is also a guarantee of the world's geopolitical balance. Just as the nuclear weapons developed during the last years of World War II and throughout the Cold War, Dr. Manhattan is presented as both a threat to human life, and the looming threat of total annihilation that helps maintain the fragile balance of world peace. It could be argued that Dr. Manhattan holds in his hands the unstable scale of global peace in an era of complete uncertainty, while his existence makes the tensions between the USA and the USSR escalate exponentially.

In this section of the chapter, I intend to demonstrate that Dr. Manhattan is a manifestation of the nuclear paranoia of the Cold War era; and even though his lack of interest in the human species ultimately makes him reluctant to facilitate the exercise of

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bio-power by the United States government, he agrees to perform the role of the sovereign's sword under the rule of the Western super power.

For Foucault, the monitoring and regulating of human sexuality is an ideal example of the way in which bio-power is exercised. According him, "sexuality, being an eminently corporeal mode of behavior, is a matter for individualizing disciplinary controls that take the form of permanent surveillance" (251). Sexuality is an ideal element for understanding the nature of bio-power, because it is "eminently corporeal" (and, thus, individual and biological), but also allows for "disciplinary controls that take the form of permanent surveillance" and can be exercised over entire sections of the population. It is relevant to consider that Dr. Manhattan's super-powers would make him capable of exercising a kind of power not unlike what Foucault defines as bio-power. Dr. Manhattan can monitor, intervene, affect and modify individual human bodies, as well as destroying—or even creating—life in a massive scale. Since Dr. Manhattan's super-powers have the potential of being exercised on individual bodies, as well as in the social body in a bio-political manner, it could be argued that they have the potential of being bio-political. Nevertheless, Dr. Manhattan does not seem particularly interested in exercising his super-powers in a bio-political scale; and, for the most part, limits his actions to the orders that he receives from the United States government. Usually, Dr. Manhattan performs the role of the sovereign's sword, by killing those that his superiors consider as worthy of punishment, or simply too dangerous or inconvenient for their political purposes.

In *Watchmen*, Alan Moore engages in the metafictional game of inserting in his graphic novel texts such as excerpts from fictitious books, a whole comic book,

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newspaper articles, magazine ads, personal letters, and even classified documents from the New York Police Department and the New York State Psychiatric Hospital. Some of these metafictional texts are Hollis Mason's—the original Night Owl—autobiography, *Under the Hood*; articles of the far-right newspaper *New Frontiersman*, Rorschach's preferred newspaper*;* the comic book *Tales of the Black Freighter*, a comic book about pirates that in some ways serves as a reflection to *Watchmen's* main plot; Dr. Malcom Long's notes on Rorschach's psychiatric case; and the introduction to Professor Milton Glass' book *Dr. Manhattan: Super-powers and the Superpowers*. In the introduction to his book about the role that Dr. Manhattan plays in the dynamics of Cold War politics, Glass renders a very comprehensive summary of the international politics of the Cold War era itself, as well as a dim look at the history of the 20th century. According to Glass,

> It is one of the oldest ironies that are still the most satisfying: man, when preparing for bloody war, will orate loudly and more eloquently in the name of peace. This dichotomy is not an invention of the twentieth century, yet it is in this century that the most striking examples of the phenomenon have appeared. Never before has man pursued global harmony more vocally while amassing stockpiles of weapons so devastating in their effect. The Second World War—we were told—was The War To End Wars. The development of the atomic bomb is The Weapon To End Wars. And yet wars continue. (I)

In Watchmen's uchronia, this pursuit of building "The Weapon To End Wars," and the prolonged intensity of the Cold War—the war that was a direct result of "The War To End Wars"— only leads the world into a state of constant unrest and urban violence. In

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Moore's graphic novel, the obsession of the world's main super powers—the USA and the USSR—to create more powerful and devastating weapons has very serious social and economic consequences for the people of the world. Glass describes the social unrest of the world of *Watchmen* in a concise and enlightening manner. In his own words,

> Currently, no nation on this planet is not involved in some form of armed struggle, if not against its neighbors then against internal forces. Furthermore, as ever-escalating amounts of money are poured into the pursuit of the specific weapon or conflict that will bring lasting peace, the drain on our economies creates a run-down urban landscape where crime flourishes and people are concerned less with national security than with the simple personal security needed to stop at the store late at night for a quart of milk without being mugged. The places we struggled so viciously to keep safe are becoming increasingly dangerous. The wars to end wars, the weapons to end wars, these things have failed us. (Idem)

This is the world of *Watchmen*: a word full of crime and violence, that lives under the constant threat of complete nuclear annihilation.

Glass was one of the scientists who were present at the moment of the "unplanned" and "unrepeatable" (Idem) accident that turned Jonathan Osterman into Dr. Manhattan. Initially, he believed that even though the Manhattan Project showed how destructive nuclear energy could be, it could also be used as a force for progress. We, as readers of *Watchmen*, only have access to a presumably short fragment of this book on Dr. Manhattan and his effects over Cold War era politics. Nevertheless, judging by his grim understanding of international politics, it would be hard to believe that Glass's

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optimistic view of the potential of nuclear technology has remained unchanged. Glass suggests that Dr. Manhattan has been presented by the American media as "a man to end wars." After an interview with a journalist, it was reported that Glass had stated that "The superman exists, and he's American" (II). Nevertheless, Glass argued that he never uttered these words. In fact, what he actually said was: "God exists and he's American" (Idem). Glass adds that "If that statement starts to chill you after a couple of moment's consideration, then don't be alarmed. A feeling of intense and crushing religious terror at the concept indicates only that you are sane" (Idem). This "religious terror" seems to be justified by the seemingly unlimited powers of Dr. Manhattan. In fact, Glass is quite aware of the fact that these powers could be fatal for the existence of life on earth, and he eventually concludes: "I do not believe that we have a man to end wars. I believe we have made a man to end worlds" (II). For Glass, the problem with Dr. Manhattan's existence, and his pledged alliance to the US government, is not only that his power could annihilate our entire species, but that it provides the American government with a fake sense of security. According to Glass, placing Dr. Manhattan in the public eye has changed the dynamics and balance of world politics. He argues that

> Since the mid-1960s, when the dazed and numbered mass consciousness first began to comprehend the significance of this new life form in humanity's midst, the political balance has changed drastically. Many people in this country feel that this is for the best. America's unquestioned military supremacy has also provided us with a certain economic leverage where we can direct the economic policies of the western world and direct them to our advantage. There is little wonder, then that the idea of a world

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run by an omnipotent God-King owing alliance to the United States seems eminently desirable. By placing our superhuman benefactor in the position of a walking nuclear deterrent, it is assumed we have finally guaranteed lasting peace on earth. (II)

But as Glass himself argues, Dr. Manhattan is not "a man to end wars;" he is "a man to end worlds." Glass calls Dr. Manhattan a "walking nuclear deterrent." In fact, the first Silk Specter, Sally Jupiter (born Sally Juspeczyk), accuses his daughter Laurie—the second Silk Specter—of "sleeping with an H-bomb" (II, 8). These claims seem to reinforce Spanakos' argument that "Dr. Manhattan is analogous to the original Manhattan project and the explosions of the two atomic bombs in Japan." When Laurie argues that her boyfriend is "not an H-bomb" (Idem), her mother answers that the only difference "is that they didn't have to get the H-bomb laid every once in a while" (Idem). Sally Jupiter's words seem to suggest the dangers of having almost unlimited power contained in a human body, her words seem to warn us all of the volatile nature of the human spirit. Her distrust towards Dr. Manhattan mirrors that of Adrian Veidt. But unlike the original Silk Specter, Veidt is decided to take action against this looming danger that threatens all of humanity. This does not mean that Veidt believes that Dr, Manhattan will eventually lose his mind and destroy the world; Veidt sees Dr. Manhattan as a complication, an obstacle that he has to avoid in order to attain his true goal: achieving world peace through deception and fear. I will further consider the motivations and actions of Adrian Veidt later in this chapter.

Let us consider the claims made in Glass's introduction to his fictional book. By depicting Dr. Manhattan as a "God-King owing alliance to the United States," Glass

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gives us a deeper insight of the nature of Dr. Manhattan. In a certain way, during his years as a crime-fighter, and as an agent of the government during the Vietnam War, Dr. Manhattan does exercise the power of the sovereign as Foucault understands it. In other words, he decides if his subjects should live or die. But Dr. Manhattan is not himself a sovereign. He has not claimed any land or any people as his own. He lacks interest in this kind of power. On the contrary, Dr. Manhattan proves to be easily manipulated throughout *Watchmen*. And thus, for several decades, he serves as a tool for the American government. Therefore, even though he might not be the sovereign, deciding between the life and death of its subjects, he certainly serves as the sovereign's weapon, its sword. And as such, he is feared and even revered by his allies and potential victims.

In his most famous work, *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes argues that the sovereign has the right to exercise sovereign power because his role has been invested on him by the community that he rules, which constitutes what Hobbes understands as a "social contract." In a similar way, even Dr. Manhattan—who is a being of incalculable power—chooses to exercise the power of the sovereign, deciding between the life and death of others, only when this right is invested on him by the American government. Dr. Manhattan has, indeed, the power to decide over the life and death of the subjects of his nation (and other nations), but this right is something that he cannot—or will not—invest upon himself. This takes us to the next question: who are the subjects of the American government, always under the constant threat of being annihilated by the government's sword (or in this case, a nuclear-powered superhuman)? The subjects of the United States are both the citizens of the nation, as well as the men and women from territories that have been occupied by the US military. In Chapter IV, we see Dr. Manhattan blowing the

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head of one of Moloch's henchmen. Dr. Manhattan declares that he was following orders from the Pentagon. He says: "The newspapers call me a crimefighter, so the Pentagon says I have to fight crime. In Moloch's underground vice-den, the sighs turn to screams of terror" (IV, 14). Later in the same chapter, we can see Dr. Manhattan annihilating an entire Vietcong squad. Dr. Manhattan utters a chilling remark when mentioning (or re-experiencing) the incident at "Moloch's underground vice-den:" "The morality of my activities escapes me" (Idem). It is, of course, frightening to consider that a man of such power does not have a clear rationale for his actions. But does a sword consider the morality of its actions? As an agent of the American government—and, more importantly, as a man that can see and experience his future, his present and his past simultaneously—could it be argued that Dr. Manhattan has free will?

Dr. Manhattan is not Foucault's archetypical sovereign; in fact, he is not a sovereign at all. Even though he is capable of exercising bio-power in almost unlimited ways, Dr. Manhattan is only a tool; and still, he is the most powerful entity in the universe. Dr. Manhattan could annihilate enormous portions of the population of the planet if he wanted to. He could disintegrate millions of human beings; he could play with the genes in a man's DNA or make a whole city go up in flames. But he would only do these things if they were ordered by the US government. In other words, Dr. Manhattan is a bio-political tool, because he allows his superiors to exercise bio-political control over their nation and other military occupied territories; he can alter the biological structure of an individual or destroy entire populations. But, like a sword, he only kills when his master wants him to; he could easily escape from this position—and he eventually does—but the strange fact is that he does not seem to mind it all that much.

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Dave Gibbons's artwork also contribute to the depiction of the super-powerful otherworldly nature of Dr. Manhattan. In page 20 of the same chapter, Dr. Manhattan is depicted as a gigantic 20-meter-tall blue man destroying a whole Vietcong squad, with a detached and cold expression on his face. The iconic panel in which Dr. Manhattan is depicted as a giant is a vertical rectangle that occupies more than half of the page, and depicts the superhero as some sort of godlike figure, pointing to the ground with his left hand, making the grass catch fire while Vietcong fighters run in horror, desperately shoot their weapons at the gigantic creature, or die incinerated within the flames of Dr. Manhattan's sacred fire. This image is also reminiscent of the use of napalm by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.[100] This could be regarded as Moore's and Gibbon's criticism of the horrors perpetrated by US military during the war. The way in which some of the soldiers of the Vietcong react to Dr. Manhattan's presence tells us a lot about the way in which the character is perceived by the inhabitants of the world of *Watchmen.* According to Dr. Manhattan, some of the Vietcong fighters often asked "to surrender to me personally, the terror for me only balanced by an almost religious awe" (IV, 20). Immediately after uttering these words, Dr. Manhattan draws a quite revealing parallel between himself and the nuclear bombs that were detonated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Again, this claim reinforces Spanakos' theory that Dr. Manhattan is "analogous to the Manhattan project" and the detonation of the mentioned weapons of mass-destruction. In Dr. Manhattan's words, while watching the fighters of the Vietcong surrendering to him in "terror" and with an "almost religious awe," he is "reminded of how the Japanese were reported to have viewed the atomic bomb, after Hiroshima" (Idem). But Dr. Manhattan is

[100] Napalm was first developed in 1942, at a secret laboratory in Harvard University. It was first used in World War II. The use of napalm against civilian population was banned by the United Nations in 1980.

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not a bomb; he is, at least partially, a human being. Of course, he is also an alien figure; a creature that is, and at the same time is not, human. He might not understand time, space, and human relationships like everyone else does. And still, he has some moral principles that eventually play an important role in the story. Adrian Veidt knows that Dr. Manhattan is the only one that can stop his perfectly orchestrated plan, and so he finds a way of making him believe that he has been giving cancer to the people closest to him, "forcing" him to a self-imposed exile in Mars. The unstable nature of the human soul is what makes Dr. Manhattan so dangerous. Veidt knows this, and he exploits it to create a generalized fear around the figure of Dr. Manhattan. But Dr. Manhattan's human side is also humanity's only hope. Unlike a nuclear bomb, Manhattan can choose to destroy or not to destroy; he can choose to kill or not to kill.

For most of the graphic novel, Dr. Manhattan seems to move further and further away from his own human nature. Eventually, he reaches the conclusion that human life is meaningless. But in chapter IX, page 1, Dr. Manhattan teleports Laurie to Mars. There, she tries to convince him of saving the world, which seems to be at the verge of complete atomic conflict by the always conflictive forces of the USA and the USSR. Eventually, and almost accidentally, Laurie comes to the realization that his real biological father is the Comedian, who tried to rape his mother in a meeting of the team of superheroes known as The Minutemen. This realization leads Dr. Manhattan to "change his mind" about the value of human existence. Manhattan argues:

> in each human coupling, a thousand million sperm vie for a single egg. Multiply **those** odds by countless **generations**, against the odds of your ancestors being **alive**, **meeting**; spring **this** precise son; **that** exact

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> daughter… until your mother loves a man she has every reason to **hate**, and of that **union**, of the thousand million children competing for fertilization, it is **you**, only **you** that emerged. To distill so **specific** form from that chaos of improbability, like turning **air** to **gold**… **that** is the crowning **unlikelihood**. The thermodynamic **miracle**. (IX, 26-27)

Of course, Laurie claims that if this can be said about her life, it could be said about "anybody in the world" (IX, 27). Dr. Manhattan simply answers: "Yes. Anybody in the world. But the world is so full of people, so **crowded** with these miracles that they become **commonplace** and we **forget**… I forget" (Idem). Ironically, it is precisely his newly recovered understanding of the intrinsic value for human existence what compels Dr. Manhattan to do nothing in order to "punish" the genocide conducted by Veidt to ensure world peace. When Veidt mentions that they all should compromise, Dr. Manhattan responds: "Logically, I'm afraid he's **right**. Exposing this plot, we destroy any chance of peace, dooming earth to **worse** destruction. On **Mars**, you demonstrated life's true **value**. If we would preserve life **here,** we must remain silent" (XII, 20). And so, Dr. Manhattan, the most powerful being in the *Watchmen* universe, is put in checkmate by Veidt. If he informed the media of Veidt's horrendous crimes, the Cold War would not come to an end; and this conflict would, of course, jeopardize the future of life on Earth. Now that Laurie has proven the value of human life to Dr. Manhattan, remaining silent is the most logical choice for Dr. Manhattan and his crime-fighting colleagues.

But even though Dr. Manhattan might seem cold and distant, that does not mean that he is not, up to a certain extent, human. This ambiguity is what makes him such an

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interesting “alien” character. And even though his morality seems somehow ambiguous and hard to comprehend, he still follows some sort of abstract moral code, perhaps only known to himself. In 1975, while Dr. Manhattan and his girlfriend Laurie are visiting Adrian Veidt, the charming billionaire mentions that all scientific disciplines, and therefore most industries, “from quantum physics to transport” have “leapt forward in the last 15 years” (IV, 21). According to Veidt, this leap in technology was only made possible by Dr. Manhattan. “We owe it all to you,” he says, “with your help, our scientists are limited only by their imaginations” (Idem). To this claim, Dr. Manhattan answers “And by their consciousness, surely?” (Idem). Veidt only looks through the window—as if staring to the world through that relatively small frame—and, with a sad expression on his face, answers: “Let’s hope so” (Idem). Of course, as the reader eventually finds out in the last chapters of the graphic novel, it is not Dr. Manhattan’s morality that should worry the human species, but the morality of his government, as well as Adrian Veidt’s, who uses all the technological tools that Dr. Manhattan has made possible to kill millions of citizens in New York City, on his one-man crusade for blackmailing humanity into global peace.

Dr. Manhattan is seen as a danger to humanity by characters such as Sally Jupiter and Professor Glass. Nevertheless, in the first chapters of the graphic novel, characters such as Rorschach seem to believe that Dr. Manhattan has given America an advantage in the scenario of international conflict. He seems to believe that Manhattan’s presence in the public eye is a good thing. For Rorschach, after Dr. Manhattan’s appearance in the public eye, the Soviets have, and will, cower from any direct confrontation with the US military. “They’d never dare antagonize us” (I, 17). For Glass, it is this way of thinking

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that has put the world at the verge of destruction. Clearly, Rorschach's way of thinking of Dr. Manhattan and his relationship to the balance of world politics is equivalent to that of the Pentagon: Dr. Manhattan has raised the stakes of a nuclear war; the Soviets will not face the US under these unfavorable conditions. But for Glass, "The assumption that America's opponents are powerless before Dr. Manhattan, while comforting, begins to fail before closer examination" (II). In fact, Glass argues that the humiliating defeats that the Soviet Union has suffered throughout the decades following World War II, have led people to believe that the USSR "will suffer these indignities endlessly" (II). Nevertheless, for Glass, "[t]his is a misconception, for there are indeed other options available. That option is Mutually Assured Destruction" (Idem). The fact is that Dr. Manhattan cannot avoid this destruction; Professor Glass knows it, and Adrian Veidt knows it. As Glass points out, "Dr. Manhattan cannot stop all the Soviet warheads from reaching American soil, even a greatly reduced percentage would still be more than enough to effectively end the organic life in the Northern hemisphere … Infinite destruction divided by two or ten or twenty is still infinite destruction" (Idem). Glass believes that it is misleading to assume that "American psychology and its Soviet counterpart are interchangeable" (II). While Americans think that the possibility of what Glass understands as "Mutually Assured Destruction" would stop the Soviets from launching a nuclear attack on American soil, Glass believes that the Soviet Union would eventually choose a complete nuclear confrontation with the United States, rather than keep suffering from continuous humiliations by the American government.

If one of the determining characteristics of bio-power is that it attempts to "administer life, its reason for being and the logic of its exercise" (Foucault 138), then,

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Dr. Manhattan is a perfect tool of bio-political control. As Glass points out, the power of Dr. Manhattan has affected the life of every human being in the planet in a very direct way. For instance, it has made it possible for human beings to "drive in electric cars and travel in leisure and comfort in clean, economical airships" (II). But more importantly, the existence of Dr. Manhattan means that "[o]ne single being has been allowed to change the entire world, pushing it closer to its eventual destruction in the process. The gods now walk among us, affecting the lives of every man, woman and child on the planet in a direct way rather than through mythology" (II). Taking into consideration Landon's definition of science fiction, as "the literature that considers the impact of science and technology on humanity" (31), science fiction is, perhaps, the literary genre that helps us to better understand the intersection that exists between technology and bio-political systems of government. According to Foucault, bio-power "is continuous, scientific, and it is the power to make life" (247). Technology determines the way in which we live; bio-political governments are only possible if the technological tools necessary for "administering life, its reason for being and the logic of its exercise" actually exist. Dr. Manhattan—whose powers are scientific in nature and include, quite literally, the power to administer and even "make" life— is the sword of Foucault's archetypical sovereign. But, more importantly, he is the technological (and biological) tool that makes it possible for the USA to constitute a more effective bio-political government, creating the conditions for a more vigilant, all-powerful, all-seeing government.

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Adrian Veidt: The Hidden Sovereign

Arguably one of the most relevant characters in *Watchmen* is the retired superhero Adrian Veidt. Veidt knows that the situation of relative peace that characterizes *Watchmen*'s alternative reality cannot last. And so, he creates a synthetic alien and teleports it to the streets of New York, killing millions of people in the process. According to Veidt's plans, the imaginary threat of an invasion of super-powerful aliens would unite the greatest world military powers against an outside enemy—a more "alien" alien—creating a new era of global peace. Veidt's goal is not the kind of pace that comes from tolerance, nor the one created by mutual fear—as was the relative peace of the Cold War era—but a state of peace produced by the fear of an outside (literally alien) threat, capable—at least in theory—of destroying the entire human species. I intend to demonstrate that Veidt plays the role of Foucault's archetypical sovereign, in the sense that he performs a kind of power in which he invests upon himself the right of deciding upon other people's lives and deaths. It is important to remember that, according to Foucault, "in the classical theory of sovereignty, the right of life and death was one of sovereignty's basic attributes" (240). Power is not something one has, but something someone exercises. Thus, Veidt does not need the title of a sovereign in order to be one; by exercising the power of killing or letting live, Veidt becomes a sovereign, even if he is not regarded as such by the people around him, and therefore not validated by what Hobbes would understand as a social contract. Of course, the fact that Veidt models his superhero persona after Alexander the Great and Ramses the Second—two of the most famous sovereigns of history—is already quite revealing. On the other hand, I will

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demonstrate that Veidt's plan to blackmail humanity into global peace is bio-political in nature, and that he uses bio-political strategies to achieve his goal.

Veidt—unlike Alexander the Great and Ramses the Second, who he idealizes—is a sovereign that works from the shadows, but even though his actions led to a terrible massacre, Veidt thinks of himself as a pacifist. In Chapter V, Veidt actually gives the reader an obscure hint regarding his "pacifist" intentions: after going through the motions of an assassination attempt against him—which he orchestrated himself in order to avoid calling the attention of Rorschach and other active vigilantes—Veidt asks his employees to cancel the "Ozymandias line" of toys which he intended to release; the alleged reason for this unexpected decision is that he "doesn't have any enemies" (16). Veidt has no enemies, precisely because he refuses to take a side in the global conflict of the Cold War. In his way of seeing it, he is on humanity's side, and—at least for him—that justifies any action that he might take in order to save it from its terrible fate. For a character like Rorschach, however, Veidt has done something evil, and, for him, "evil must be punished" (XII, 23). For Rorschach, Veidt's intentions are unimportant; in his Manichean worldview, Veidt—who is neither an enemy of the East nor the West—is humanity's most dangerous foe, its worst enemy; the archetypical comic-book supervillain. Other superheroes—such as the second Silk Specter and Nite Owl—seem shocked and even disgusted by Veidt's decision of blackmailing humanity into universal peace. Still, they come to terms with the fact that his methods worked, acknowledging that even though many innocent people have been killed, innumerable human lives were preserved.

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Veidt's methods of destruction are, like the weapons analyzed by Sloterdijk in *Temblors from the Air*, or like the toxic snow of *El Eternauta,* killing tools that target the mass instead of the individual. The technology used by Veidt is, therefore, not only biological, but also bio-political. And, following Foucault's understanding of bio-politics, it does lead to genocide. This genocide, however, is not caused by what Foucault calls racism; on the contrary, Veidt states that he does it for the love of *all* humanity. In Veidt's simplistic but unique understanding of the reality of the Cold War, the only way of abolishing the paranoid fear of the other is through the creation of another, more extreme, other (the synthetic alien), that triggers human racism in a different direction. Humans develop a racism that is not directed towards other humans, but towards dangerous and mysterious creatures from a distant planet that resemble gigantic squids. The creation of this synthetic living creature is part of what Foucault would call an "excess of bio-power." According to Foucault, "this excess of bio-power appears when it becomes technologically and politically possible for man not only to manage life, but to make it proliferate, to create living matter, to build the monster, and, ultimately, to build viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive" (254). Foucault's mention of the "creation of living matter" and the "building of the monster," is extremely relevant for the case of *Watchmen*. As I mentioned before, Adrian Veidt creates a synthetic squid-like "alien" that he teleports to New York, knowing that living creatures explode when teleported[101]. He also gives the creature the brain of Robert Deschaines, a psychic, so that "sensitives" around the world suffer from horrible nightmares and hallucinations for a prolonged period of time, creating a sense of danger and paranoia in

[101] Teleportation is only one of the many technological advances made possible by the presence of Dr. Manhattan in the world.

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the public conscience. By creating—and teleporting—life, affecting the brain of "sensitives" around the world, and manipulating public opinion through publicity, Veidt goes beyond the role of the sovereign that decides upon the life and the death of his subjects. Foucault argues that these characteristics of bio-power, or in this case, of "excessive bio-power," "puts it beyond any human sovereignty" (Idem). These are the actions and practices that make Veidt's sovereignty bio-political in nature.

The murder of a considerable number of random New Yorkers by Veidt highlights the bio-political nature of his "rule." But it also evidences the fact that Veidt's bio-power is, to quote Foucault, "in excess of sovereign right" (255). Let us not forget that Foucault considers that weapons of mass-destruction, and in particular nuclear weapons, create a paradox within the context of bio-power, in the sense that bio-power is the power that, in theory, guarantees life. By using a weapon capable of destroying life at such an enormous scale, this way of exercising bio-power seems to "supress" bio-power itself. But Veidt's use of the synthetic exploding alien is eminently bio-political, in the sense that Veidt must think of people in terms of species—that is, in biological terms—in order to justify his extreme actions. In other words, for Veidt it is acceptable that a few million people must die, in order to preserve the human species. According to Foucault, "the new non-disciplinary power" that he defines as bio-power

> is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species … I would say that discipline tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and if needed be, punished. And

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> that the new technology that is being established is addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. (242-243)

Not only does Veidt consider the New York massacre as morally acceptable, but even as necessary for the survival and preservation of all of humanity. Of course, it is also evident that Veidt's complex "master plan" would have been impossible without the technological tools that have become available to him, and to the entire global community of world scientists, by the presence of Dr. Manhattan in the world.

It is also relevant to consider that Foucault also believes that "discipline tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and if needed be, punished." (Idem). Veidt certainly keeps individual bodies under surveillance, trains them, and uses them, not to discipline them, but in an effort to force Dr. Manhattan into voluntary exile, guaranteeing the success of his macabre plan to save the world. He indirectly convinces the superhero that he has been giving cancer to those closer to him. For this purpose, Adrian Veidt hires the retired supervillain Edgar William Jacobi, alias Moloch the Mystic, and exposes him to radioactive material for years until he develops cancer. Adrian Veidt also hires Janey Slater, Jon Osterman's (later known as Dr. Manhattan) ex-girlfriend, exposing her to radioactive materials for years, which makes her develop lung cancer. Finally, the last victim of Veidt's calculated plan to undermine Dr. Manhattan's public support, leading him to an unstable emotional state that would

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force him into self-imposed exile in Mars, is Jon Osterman's good friend Wally Weaver, known in the early 1960s as "Dr. Manhattan's buddy." It is mentioned that Weaver dies of cancer in 1971 (III, 13)[102]. Weaver, Slater and Jacoby are all hired by Veidt in his company Dimensional Development, a research organization funded by Pyramid Deliveries. It is implied in the graphic novel that Dimensional Development is responsible for the research concerning teleportation—a technology made possible by the existence and actions of Dr. Manhattan—one of the main technical challenges that Veidt has to face in his development of his incredibly orchestrated "alien" attack in downtown Manhattan. Of course, indirectly or directly employing Slater, Weaver, and Jacobi, provides Veidt with the chance of "keeping them under surveillance," as well as "training" and "using" them, for his own purposes. In short, Veidt's political use of large numbers of individuals (such as the millions of New Yorkers killed in the end of Chapter XI) and his use of the bodies—and skills—of individuals such as Jacobi, Weaver, and Slater demonstrate that Veidt consistently exercises bio-power in a wide variety of ways, in order to achieve his own goals, shaping the world into the utopic place that he intends it to become.

I have argued that Adrian Veidt exercises bio-power to achieve his specific—utopic—vision of humanity. But I have also argued that he is a variation of Foucault's archetypical sovereign; one that rules with bio-political methods. It is evident that Veidt's control over the population is not limited to the power that he exercises over the life and

[102] It seems clear that the Comedian finds the name of Jacobi in this "cancer" list. This fact leads him to believe that Jacobi cannot be aware of Veidt's plan to murder a considerable part of the population of Manhattan, and this is why the vigilante finds some comfort in talking to him—although drunk and in an undecipherable babble—about Veidt's plans. It is reasonable to assume that Jacobi mentioned the incident to his boss, Adrian Veidt, triggering the assassination of the Comedian.

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death of others; on the contrary, he exercises the power of transforming and manipulating living matter, and even public opinion, using unconventional tools such as technology—radiation, in the case of the people that he has given cancer to—and, as I will now demonstrate, advertisement.

Veidt's company, also called "Veidt", owns Nostalgia, a brand of cosmetics for men and women. Nostalgia commercializes products such as cologne, after-shave, and perfume. In a letter from Adrian Veidt to the director of Veidt Cosmetics & Toiletries, Veidt argues that "the most significant element of the Nostalgia campaign" is that "the advertisements conjure an idyllic picture of times past." In his opinion, "the success of the campaign is directly linked to the state of global uncertainty that has endured for the last forty years or more." Veidt explains the relationship between the success of Nostalgia's advertising campaign and the tensions of the Cold War in the following way: "In an era of stress and anxiety, when the present seems unstable and the future unlikely, the natural response is to retreat and withdraw from reality, taking recourse ether in fantasies of the future or in modified visions of a half imagined past." It is revealed in the graphic novel, that both Laurie and Rorschach use Nostalgia; actually, Laurie destroys Dr. Manhattan's glass palace in Mars with a bottle of Nostalgia perfume. The fact that these characters use Nostalgia is proof of both Veidt's commercial genius, and the implied longing that the characters of the graphic novel have for the past—an idyllic past that, as Veidt explains, is only an illusion, a fabrication. For Rorschach, this "idyllic past" (although the vigilante's past has been nothing but idyllic) could be the days in which he and Nite Owl wandered the streets of New York City, stopping crimes and apprehending criminals; for Laurie, these days could be her nights patrolling the city with the man that

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would eventually become her boyfriend, Dr. Manhattan. But the truth is that these characters just fell for Veidt's advertisement techniques; the past was never that great for either Laurie nor Rorschach; she always had a conflictive relationship with her mother, an absent father, a dysfunctional relationship with Dr. Manhattan, and she never enjoyed crime fighting, since this was a profession that she was forced into by her ambitious mother. Rorschach was raised by an abusive prostitute, in a poor neighborhood, where he was bullied by his neighbors, who knew about his mother's profession. He was also traumatized for life after working in a case in which a young girl—Blaire Roche—mistakenly believed to be the daughter of a rich industrialist, was kidnapped and murdered by a local criminal—Gerald Anthony Grice—who then chopped her body and fed it to his dogs. Even at the time in which Captain Metropolis tried to organize a new superhero team called the Crimebusters, the panorama of global conflict was particularly dark, and the Comedian himself pointed out the futility of fighting crime in a world that is at the verge of destruction. The success of the Nostalgia campaign demonstrates two things: Veidt's commercial genius, and the fact that people living in the 1980s of *Watchmen's* universe are so uncertain about the present and anxious of the future that they follow the natural tendency of looking back to the past with a sense of longing and nostalgia, even if in reality the old times were not much better than the present.

The Nostalgia brand is an excellent example of how Moore and Gibbons provide the reader with graphic details that seem to be unimportant—such as scattered newspapers that relate the evolution of the war between the world's super powers—but turn out to be relevant for either the evolution of the story, or for achieving a better understanding of the characters' personalities. The way in which Veidt manages the

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Nostalgia brand is evidence of his genius, but also provides the reader with hints about Veidt's plans for humanity. In his letter to the Director of Veidt's Cosmetics and Toiletries, Veidt states that although the strategy of using nostalgia as a marketing tool

> is certainly relevant and indeed successful in a context of social upheaval … such conditions cannot endure indefinitely. Simply put, the current circumstances our civilization finds itself immersed in will either lead to war, or they won't. If they lead to war, our best plans become irrelevant. If peace endures, I contend that a new surge of social optimism is likely, necessitating a new image for Veidt's cosmetics, geared to a new costumer.

Those new customers are the people who live in the post-Cold War world of *Watchmen*, after Veidt has launched his attack in New York City, giving birth to a new era of global peace. Veidt is portrayed as a brilliant entrepreneur, and part of his genius is associated to his innate talent for reading the ways in which history evolves, and its relationship to changes in the social consciousness. For instance, Veidt's confidence in the effectiveness of his master plan, leads him to believe that humanity will soon enter a new time of peace; this, according to him, will also produce "a new surge of social optimism." For this new era of peace, Veidt decides to

> phase out the Nostalgia line of ladies' and men's cosmetics, successful though they be, and replace them with a new line that better exemplifies the spirit of our anticipated target group. This new line is to be called the 'Millennium' Line. The imagery associated with it will be controversial and modern, projecting a vision of

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technological utopia, a whole new universe of sensations and pleasures that is just within reach.

The question that arises from this decision is whether Veidt's main reason for launching the "Millennium" line is to acquire considerable profit from the new state of peace and optimism that humanity will reach after his attack in New York, or whether this campaign is still part of his master plan, and its function is to subconsciously influence people into experiencing positive feelings about the post-Cold War world that they will come to inhabit. When confronted by Rorschach and Nite Owl, Veidt claims that his intentions are selfless; but the fact that Veidt will profit economically from his actions is at least problematic. On the other hand, the manipulation of public opinion is proof of the bio-political nature of Veidt's hidden "ruling." He goes beyond the right of the sovereign, he does more than deciding who lives and who dies; through tools such as publicity, Veidt decides how people feel about their own historical moment, subtly manipulating public opinion for his own benefit, and, arguably, for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

The significance of *Nostalgia* and *Millennium* is also heightened in the story in non-linguistic ways, through the extremely detailed art of Dave Gibbons. For instance, not only does Laurie destroy Dr. Manhattan's glass palace with a bottle of Nostalgia perfume, but that same bottle of perfume is used as the front page of Chapter 9, emphasizing the importance of nostalgia—both the brand and the concept—in the social imagination of *Watchmen's* United States. Also, at the end of Chapter XII (page 31, panel number 4), a billboard of Millennium is seen on the wall of a New York building, portraying a Caucasian couple[103] wearing white togas, holding each other, with an

[103] It is certainly interesting that all of Veidt's models are blond. His campaign for Nostalgia seems to urge its customers to long for a "white" past that is reminiscent of 1950s Hollywood; while his campaign for

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expression of hope in their faces. They are both looking to the right of the poster; in both film and sequential art moving or staring towards the right is a convention for moving forward—in terms of space, but also in terms of time. On the background of the billboard, the reader sees a picture of space, and a source of light that illuminates the characters from behind. On the left-top corner of the billboard, the slogan "THESE ARE THE TIMES, THESE ARE THE FEELINGS" is written on purple letters over the couple's heads. This is a complete and abrupt break from the images used to publicize Nostalgia. Nostalgia asked its customers to look towards the past: the model portrayed in the last page of chapter X is, quite revealingly, facing the left of the poster, her back turned to the right; or, metaphorically speaking, looking away from the future. The slogan on that picture reads "Oh, how the ghost of you clings…" Clinging into the past, holding tight to the ghost of days gone, is exactly what Nostalgia wants its customers to do. And, in return for their loyalty towards the brand, Nostalgia offers them an escape into the past, a way out of the horrors of the present, and the threats (nuclear and otherwise) of the future.[104] By encouraging people to look back in time, does Veidt distract them from the present? Is this part of his plan? Is it a way of misleading people's attention, giving him freedom to develop his machinations without interference? Or is Nostalgia's publicity

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Millennium seems to ask its customers to imagine a utopic future, on that seems, quite problematically, a very white one. Curiously, this idealization of whiteness seems at odds with Veidt's liberal views (one of the elements that has caused Rorschach's dislike of Veidt).

[104] A different slogan for Nostalgia can be found in the billboard displayed over the Treasure Island comic book store in the second panel of III, 7. In this poster the reader encounters the image of an elegant blond woman reading what one could assume is a love letter. A bottle of Nostalgia perfume can be seen on the left side of the poster, and the slogan "Where is the essence that was so divine?" is displayed in the upper-right corner. This form of advertisement also encourages the consumer to stare into the past. The "divine essence" is no longer with us, it not waiting for us in the future; it has been lost forever. In a historical moment of violence and uncertainty, Veidt provides the costumers of Nostalgia with an escape—not a solution. Veidt provides his costumers with this imaginary scape into past, a past in which concepts such as love and justice were still sacred, a past were these ideas had not yet lost their essence.

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only a tool for providing people with a convenient escape from the horrors of reality? All these are questions that Moore and Gibbons leave unanswered. If the Nostalgia brand encourages people to look for solace in the past, the Millennium brand encourages its customers to embrace the present, "these are the times" is a slogan that conveys hope and joy. Both the slogan of the new brand, and the image of the hopeful and beautiful models on the poster, suggests that human civilization is at the dawn of a new era; this era might be the "technological utopia" that Veidt has dreamt for the human species.

In XII, 31, the reader finds several examples of Dave Gibbon's mastery at conveying meaning through non-linguistic means. In this page, a New York City municipal worker is seen replacing a "Fallout Shelter" sign, with a poster depicting planet Earth with the flags of the United States and the USSR on top of it. The poster reads: "ONE WORLD. ONE ACCORD." In panel number two, a newspaper announces the possible candidacy of a man for the 1988 presidential election—Nixon has been the (war) president of *Watchmen's* United States since 1968, and is still in office in 1985—the image of the man is extremely small to identify him, but he is referred to as R.R. This could be a reference to Ronald Reagan, but judging from the tiny photograph on the newspaper, it is most likely a reference to Hollywood actor Robert Redford. In "Utopia Achieved: The Case of Watchmen," Peter Y. Paik argues that the actor "seeking the presidency in the new and peaceful world that Ozymandias has brought into being" (37) is Robert Redford. Redford's political views are far more pacifist and liberal than Reagan's were. This is all, of course, a sign given to us by the authors, who are already giving us an idea of how the political landscape of the world will be drastically changed by Veidt's morally problematic actions.

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In the first panel of XII, 31, a poster with the words NEW DEAL written on it can be seen on the wall of a construction site managed by Pyramid Construction (one of Adrian Veidt's many companies). A piece of graffiti with the same words is seen in panel number 4, under the *Millennium* poster. In panel one a journalist of *The New Frontiersman* is seen exiting a Russian restaurant, and in panel 5 the reader can find a partially covered a piece of graffiti that seems to read *"WATCH THE SKIES."* While the Russian fast-food restaurant, the graffiti that reads "NEW DEAL," the "ONE WORLD: ONE ACCORD" poster, and the Millennium billboard all seem to convey the success of Adrian Veidt's plan for bringing humanity to a new era of peace and mutual collaboration, the graffiti that reads "WATCH THE SKIES" could be regarded as proof of the state of anxiety that has overcome the population of New York after Veidt's staged alien attack. The Russian restaurant is proof of the new openness of America towards Russian culture; even the far-right editor of *The New Frontiersman* compromises in culinary matters, and states that he will "eat food from the place" if he must. Nevertheless, he will not allow his employee to utter the name of this particular restaurant, since he won't accept anyone speaking Russian in his office (XII, 32). The removal of the "Fallout Shelter" sign is also quite relevant, since it suggests that Veidt's plan has worked, decreasing the likelihood of a global nuclear confrontation, and thus decreasing the general sense of paranoia that has dominated the tone of the graphic novel from the very first chapter. Finally, the poster reading "ONE WORLD: ONE ACCORD," as well as the sign that reads "NEW DEAL" both refer to the normalization of international relationships with the Soviet Union. There has been an accord, and people are now living a new—more peaceful—era, shaped by this "new deal."

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As I have suggested in the last paragraph, the “WATCH THE SKIES” graffiti seems to shed a shadow of doubt upon Veidt’s “utopia.” This piece of graffiti reminds the reader of the cost at which this new age of humanity has been bought. It is also a reminder of the fact that the post-Cold War world of *Watchmen* has been freed from nuclear paranoia; but this paranoia has been replaced with a new one: the constant fear of being attacked by a ruthless race of gigantic alien squids. This new, constant fear—and the lives of millions of New Yorkers killed in Veidt’s attack—is the price that humanity has unknowingly payed for this new age of global peace and international collaboration.

“WATCH THE SKIES” also serves as a reminder of Veidt’s attack on New York. It seems like he has achieved the utopia that he dreamt of, but, one may ask, at what cost? “WATCH THE SKIES” is, in this sense, equivalent to the political slogan “never forget.” “WATCH THE SKIES” is the only piece of street art in XII, 31 that does not seem to fit with the optimistic environment that characterizes it. The whole page serves as a revelation of the effectivity of Veidt’s master plan; but this small piece of graffiti reminds us that the altruist goal of world piece was only achieved through violence and death. Paik makes clear the complexity of Veidt’s character—and the moral complexity of the methods through which he has achieved his (virtuous) goal—when he asks the reader:

> does not the catastrophic upheaval he [Veidt] engineers make actual the left-wing progressivist dream of a peaceful and enlightened sociopolitical order? Doesn’t Ozymandias fulfill the paradigm of the successful revolutionary leader, whose unyielding determination to create a new society and to impose a new historical epoch leads him to contemplate and

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carry out a series of actions from which most human beings would shrink with horror and revulsion? (37-38)

Feeling admiration or hatred towards Veidt—approving or disapproving of his methods—is determined by the response that each of us chooses to give the Machiavellian question: "Does the end justify the means?" Is genocide always unacceptable, even if it is the key to ever-lasting world peace? That is for the reader to decide. Veidt is indeed aware of the seriousness of his actions, but he believes that "someone had to take the blame of that awful, necessary crime" (XII, 27). In this way, "Ozymandias refuses to divorce utopia, as most utopians do, from the terrors of the apocalypse but grants it its proper place within the latter's overarching framework of rejuvenating destruction and shattering deliverance" (Paik 38). For Paik, "it is as if Moore, through his character of Ozymandias, says to the liberal sympathizers of progressive revolutionary change, you long for a peaceful and humane political order but remain too tender-hearted to come to grips with the harsh truth that revolution is warfare and entails violence" (Idem). Even though Veidt did not bring the Cold War to and end through war (although perhaps through the menace of interplanetary war), he certainly achieved this new era of peace and international tolerance through violence, a violence that was believed to come from the skies, and that has frightened the human species so much, that it somehow brought us all together.

"WATCH THE SKIES" is reminiscent of another graffiti that appears in several places of New York City throughout the whole graphic novel: "WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?" "Who watches the watchmen" is a translation of *Quis custodiet ipsos*

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custodies,[105] which Moore takes from Juvenal's *Satires* (VI, 347). The reader encounters this graffiti when Laurie and Daniel are entering a dangerous area of the city, and are attacked by a band of young criminals that they quickly defeat (III, 11). The reader encounters a similar graffiti when Daniel is leaving Hollis Mason's apartment (I, 9); the fact that the graffiti is written over the door of the retired superhero's auto repair shop reveals that people in the neighborhood know about his past as a vigilante and some might even resent him for it. This plays a very important role in the story, as Hollis Mason is eventually murdered by a gang of young delinquents, who mistakenly believe that he is the same Nite Owl that has helped Rorschach escape prison in Chapter VIII. This graffiti also appears in the last panel of Chapter VII, 15. In this panel Rorschach is walking away from a beaten anti-vigilante protestor; the victim's face is covered in blood, and next to him, the reader can see a partially-covered sign that reads "BADGES NOT MASKS." The "WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN" graffiti can be seen behind both Rorschach and his victim, but the last word is cut short; Gibbons's art depicts, again, without portraying an actual act of violence in the panel, the ruthlessness with which the feared vigilante attacks his victims. This panel also provides the reader with a small detail of enormous importance, the image of the front page of an unidentified newspaper reading "KEENE ACT PASSED: VIGILANTES ILLEGAL." The Keene Act is a fictional law imposed in 1977, that prohibits vigilantes to operate without the government's permission. The government allows Dr. Manhattan and The Comedian to keep operating, but only under their command and supervision. The Keene Act is passed after costumed vigilantes loose public support after the end of the Vietnam

[105] According to Moore, he took the Latin quote from the epigraph of the Tower Commission Report, 1987. I am using the exact chapter and page number provided by Moore at the end of his graphic novel.

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War, and following a series of protests against costumed vigilantes organized by the police. Of course, the question "Who watches the Watchmen?" gains a greater significance when the reader thinks of Veidt's plan to save humanity. Who was protecting New York City from Adrian Veidt? Who was watching Veidt? Not the US government; not Dreiberg and Laurie, who were retired; not Rorschach, who was occupied with local crime and is eventually fooled by Veidt's schemes; not even Dr. Manhattan, whose psychic abilities were blocked by Veidt, who used some strange piece of quantum technology to avoid the interference of his super-powered ex-colleague. In other words, one might as well ask: Who watches the corporations[106] that Veidt represents and owns? And who watches the sovereign, when his sovereignty has not been validated by a social contract, and when he exercises his power from the shadows?

In the world of *Watchmen*, the accidental creation of Dr. Manhattan has led to the development of new technologies that affect the lives of people in the US and all around the world. But in the context of the Cold War, the technological contributions made possible by Dr. Manhattan are overshadowed by the military use that the government has given to his powers. In that sense, Dr. Manhattan is the cornerstone of a technological utopia that never was. As it often happens in science fiction narratives, dystopias are utopias gone horribly wrong. Veidt knows that Dr. Manhattan's infinite contributions to technology could change the world in a positive way, solving problems related to transportation, pollution, etcetera; but, due to the Cold War, the mere presence of Dr. Manhattan has contributed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world, bringing

[106] This question about who watches the corporations seem to gain importance as international corporations gain more political and economic power, shaping the way in which the wealth of countries is distributed, and the way in which we all live. It could be argued that nowadays many corporations indeed exercise bio-power in a wide variety of ways.

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humanity closer to the verge of total annihilation. Veidt's true goal is to save the world. Using technology made available by Dr. Manhattan (the still imperfect process of teleportation, for instance), Veidt produces a cataclysmic event that puts a stop to the Cold War, thus giving way to the technological utopia that Dr. Manhattan's presence should have represented from the start. By the end of the graphic novel, the reader gets a sense of the fact that things have indeed changed drastically. In fact, after Veidt's terrorist attack in New York, things do change for the better. On the day in which Veidt launches his attack on New York City, the title on the front page of the *New York Gazette* reads "WAR?" The doomsday clock featured in the front page of every chapter is marking a minute to midnight. Dr. Manhattan's decision of leaving for Mars on October 20, 1985, gives the Soviets the courage to take over Afghanistan[107] the next day, bringing the world closer to nuclear conflict and total annihilation. Most of these details are not mentioned in the story, but only referenced through Dave Gibbon's super-detailed artwork. On the first panel of Chapter XII—which occupies the whole page—Gibbons renders the gruesome scene of a massacred crowd of young people who were present at a concert in the Madison Square Garden. The clock in the wall is stained with blood, and marking midnight (XII, 1), alluding to the end of the world. In the next two pages, the reader is confronted with two consecutive "splash pages," depicting the terrible consequences of Veidt's attack in Manhattan. In both panels, pages of the *New York Gazette* with the word "WAR?" written on it are either being carried by the wind or lying on the floor. On page 3, the reader encounters a picture of the façade of a movie theater that at the time of the terrorist attack was screening *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, a 1951 movie (directed by

[107] The Soviet Union actually invaded Afghanistan in December 1979.

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Robert Wise and produced by Julian Blaustein) in which a humanoid alien comes to Earth, accompanied by a gigantic robot. In this black and white film, the alien tries to convince humans to live peacefully if they do not want to be destroyed by his robotic partner. With this very subtle reference to the American science fiction classic, Dave Gibbons and Alan Moore draw a parallel between this film and the story of Adrian Veidt, whose master plan also consists in blackmailing humanity into global peace, by posing the threat of total human annihilation by the more advanced technology of a hostile alien species.

By the end of *Watchmen*, Veidt has stopped the Cold War, and avoided a nuclear confrontation between the world's super powers that might have ended life on Earth. Even though Veidt's actions are extremely problematic from an ethical point of view,[108] our goal in this chapter is not to explore their philosophical and moral implications, but to demonstrate that this character, who exercises a power that could be characterized as bio-political, also behaves like Foucault's archetypical sovereign. But even if Adrian Veidt behaves like Foucault's archetypical sovereign, it is important to point out that he does it from the shadows; and so, he has not been validated as a sovereign through the means of what Hobbes would understand as a social contract. As Foucault points out, even when a sovereign is validated through a social contract, the right of violence that the sovereign exercises poses an unavoidable question: since the point of having a sovereign is to preserve the individual life of its subjects, "Mustn't life remain outside the contract to the extent that it was the first, initial, and foundational reason for the contract itself?" (241).

[108] From a Utilitarian perspective, Veidt's actions would be regarded as good, and even necessary, since they have achieved more good than bad. From a Kantian perspective, Veidt's actions would have been condemned, because killing violates Kant's categorical imperative.

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And still, it might be Veidt's status as a hidden sovereign what makes him immune to this kind of criticism. Those who exercise bio-power are meant to protect life; in fact, the protection, administration, and preservation of such life is, in theory, the main purpose of bio-politics. But Veidt's exercise of bio-power is a quiet and secret one; and so, he exercises the power of the sovereign, avoiding the criticism and retaliations that sovereigns whose power is validated by a social contract must face.

But even though millions of lives might have been saved through Veidt's actions, there is one dissident that cannot accept Veidt's plans: Rorschach. It is rather important to study the actions of Rorschach, especially on the last chapter of the graphic novel, as he is the only character that seems to oppose Adrian Veidt's plan to "save humanity." When Nite Owl, Silk Specter, Dr. Manhattan, and Rorschach witness the effects of Veidt's attack on Manhattan, Rorschach is the only one that decides to unmask Veidt. He knows that this means that Dr. Manhattan will murder him to preserve the new state of global peace that Veidt has reached through his complex machinations. And still, the vigilante sacrifices himself for his moral convictions. Peter Paik argues that "Rorschach's acceptance of death at the hands of Dr. Manhattan is an act of radical sympathy," an expression of "an extreme form of solidarity with the victims of the synthetic alien attack. (122)" If Rorschach cannot battle Veidt's cruel logic, he can at least be true to his principles (which are not always very easily accepted by the liberal reader), and restate that he will never compromise, "not even in the face of Armageddon" (XII, 20). Rorschach knows that he will be killed by Dr. Manhattan, who, after the massacre has taken place, comes to accept the consequences of Veidt's plan. Rorschach's commitment could be read as blind loyalty to truth, as an act of love towards the people who died in

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New York City, as a heroic act that negates oblivion. It could also be read through the character's sociopathic and Manichean world-view; as he simply states: "evil must be punished" (XII, 23). And the reader is left to wonder if there is anything else behind Rorschach's decision, beyond this principle. Even though Rorschach's actions lead to one of the most emotional and groundbreaking moments in the graphic novel, the question of the moral validity of Rorschach's opposition of Veidt's plan is probably less important that the fact that the New York-based vigilante constitutes the only direct opposition to Veidt's genocide-born utopia[109]. According to Paik,

> The vicious dilemma with which Moore closes the narrative—the choice that opposes truth, war, and the annihilation of the Earth on the one side to lies, peace, and the well-being of the world in the other—evokes those severe and insoluble antinomies … that illuminate by virtue of their uncompromising harshness the inexorable and merciless character of the unwritten laws of the world. In *Watchmen*, as in Melville's *Billy Budd* or Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor," we find no less striking examples of what Hannah Ardent calls 'goodness beyond virtue' in Rorschach's unconditional fidelity to his vocation and 'wickedness without vice' in the salvation achieved by Ozymandia's act of mass slaughter. (36)

The ethical depth and complexity of Moore's work forces us to consider the moral implications of accepting the actions of a hidden—and in that sense illegitimate—genocidal sovereign, who uses bio-power for the benefit of humanity as a whole, in a hideously cruel and yet altruistic masterplan to achieve global peace. In a similar way,

[109] In Chapter V, I will explore the way in which Alan Moore and H.G. Oesterheld present possible ways of opposing totalitarian bio-political regimes in *V for Vendetta* and *El Eternauta II.*

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Moore renders a sympathetic portrayal of a violent right-wing sociopath, whose sacrifice constitutes the only direct opposition to bio-power in the graphic novel. Even though *Watchmen* engages in serious moral conflicts, the tone of the graphic novel is not preachy or moralistic.[110] It is up to the reader, to embrace Rorschach's "goodness beyond virtue," or Veidt's "wickedness without vice."

Conclusions

In short, it is clear that both *El Eternauta* and *Watchemen* canalize the anxieties of the Cold War era, engaging in a dialogue between the local and the global. Also, by presenting the figure of the extreme other in the archetype of the alien, science fiction literature makes evident the ways in which ideas of violence and otherness interact. In *El Eternauta,* otherness justifies violence. The *Ellos*, for instance, have othered all the other species of the universe, and so they feel entitled to enslave or destroy them, depending on the needs and ambitions of their own species. Salvo and his friends justify the killing of *hombres-robot* by characterizing them as inhuman—they are called "toys" by Franco (206)—or other-than-human. In *Watchmen,* the fear caused by extreme otherness, in the form of Adrian Veidt's squid-like alien creature, ultimately brings the Cold War to an abrupt end, creating a new era in which the world's most powerful nations would not only refrain from performing violent actions against each other, but even collaborate to oppose a threat that is regarded as more dangerous, and more "alien." On the other hand, Dr. Manhattan comes to embody both the Cold War's fear of the alien, and the nuclear

[110] Moore's later project, *Promethea* (1999-2005), was criticized by some critics for being too much of a vehicle for Moore's philosophical views.

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paranoia of this era. He is, indeed, presented as a personification of the destructive potential of nuclear power.

In the last chapter of *Watchmen*, Veidt tries to explain himself to Dr. Manhattan: "I've struggled across the backs of murdered innocents to save humanity…. But someone had to take the blame of that awful, necessary crime" (XII, 27). A few vignettes later, a troubled Veidt asks Dr. Manhattan, "I did the right thing, didn't I? It all worked out in the end." To what Dr. Manhattan replies vaguely, "'In the end?' Nothing ends, Adrian, nothing ever ends" (Idem). As it becomes evident, Moore does not render a final unequivocal conclusion about Veidt's exercise of bio-power to put an end to the Cold War. In other words, Moore does not render an unequivocal moral judgment of the character's actions, and leaves this judgment in the hands of the reader. Moore's *Watchmen* does not propose an ideal alternative to bio-power; but it does depict opposition to bio-power, in the figure of New York's most violent vigilante, Rorschach. Rorschach, who is depicted as a rightwing sociopath, presents the clearest opposition to Adrian Veidt's hidden bio-political regime. In fact, Rorschach recognizes neither the authority of the government—that vanished superheroes with the Keene Act of 1977—nor the bio-politic logic of Adrian Veidt's masterplan. His actions are only based in the categorical imperative according to which "evil must be punished." In this way, Moore seems to suggest that for morally ambiguous bio-power to rule, Manichean or absolutist conceptions of good and evil must be disregarded. Also, Rorschach's sacrifice seems to reinstate Foucault's understanding of death, as the ultimate and more effective escape from bio-power. In the case of Rorschach, his death is a statement, the articulation of a

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decision of not being subject to the moral compromises of bio-power. Death, again, is the limit of bio-power; and it exist out of its reach.

In *El Eternauta*, the resistance is finally able to repel the advance of the *Ellos,* saving what is left of the city of Buenos Aires. Even though Franco and Favalli fall into the hands of the *Ellos*, ending up as *hombres-robot,* Salvo and the resistance have partially defeated the bio-political intergalactic empire of the *Ellos* by working as a team, and using their intellect and their amateur technological knowledge as powerful weapons against the genocidal invaders. In fact, the efforts of the ill-prepared Argentinean resistance, and not the nuclear attacks of powerful Northern nations, result in the destruction of the *Ellos'* base in Buenos Aires. In Franco's own words: "¡No fue la bomba atómica lo que aniquiló el núcleo invasor! ¡Fuimos nosotros!" (319). It is necessary to consider the political statement that this (partial) victory represents. By bringing the occupation of Bueno Aires to an end, Salvo and his partners are following Arturo Jauretche's principle for engaging Argentinean literature. This principle consists of symbolically locating Argentina "en el centro del mundo y ver el planisferio desarrollado alrededor de ese centro" (Jauretche in di Dio 134). Claiming a central place for Argentina in the developed world is certainly one of the most evident political projects of *El Eternauta*. This project cannot be separated from Oesterheld's championing of the lower and middle classes, and of his appreciation for an amateur—resourceful and ingenious—approach to technological development.

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Chapter Five: Resisting and Escaping Bio-Power in the Cold War Era. Bio-Politics in Jorge Luis Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975), H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano Lopez's *El Eternauta II* (1976-1977), and Alan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* (1988-1989)

In this chapter, I will study different works of science fiction from Argentina and England, in an effort to delve into the ways in which authors from these countries struggled to find, through their fiction, a possible scape to both bio-political regimes, and the anxieties of the Cold War. I will argue that Alan Moore and H.G. Oesterheld provide us with different takes on political activism and violent opposition, developing different ideas about political resistance and self-sacrifice. On the other hand, I will analyze the way in which Jorge Luis Borges establishes the end of civilization and all political systems as the only way of escaping both war and the formation of totalitarian regimes. I will argue that Borges's use of suicide as the ultimate manifestation of freedom echoes Foucault's idea that death is the ultimate, and the most effective, escape of bio-power. I will also argue that Jorge Luis Borges and Alan Moore find anarchy as a viable way of self-governance, capable of destroying—or at least, in the case of Borges, of outliving—bio-power.

In the first part of this chapter, I will analyze Jorge Luis Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (1975); exploring his take on anarchy as the only political model that makes freedom possible, and death the idea of death—and suicide—as the ultimate act of individual freedom. In the second part of this chapter, I will conduct a comparative analysis of H.G. Oesterheld's *El Eterauta II* (1976-77) and Alan Moore's *V*

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for Vendetta (1988-89),[111] focusing my attention on the ideas of political commitment and social resistance, that play an extremely important role in both works. A basic knowledge of Oesterheld's opposition to Argentina's *junta militar*, and his support of the opposition group of urban guerrillas known as *Los Montoneros,* also enriches our understanding of the second part of *El Eternauta*. Similarly, Alan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* gains significance when the reader is aware of Moore's anarchist background, and his distrust of the rise of Rightwing ideas in 1980s England.

Escaping the Bio-political State: A Political Reading of Jorge Luis Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado"

Jorge Luis Borges's political views have been widely discussed in academia. From his opposition to European Fascism, Soviet communism, and Argentinian Peronism, to his initial support of the infamous military junta in Argentina, Borges's political views have been a topic of constant discussion and passionate disagreement. In several occasions, the Argentinian author described himself as an anarchist, referring to himself as "un inofensivo anarquista" (Borges in Krause[112]), or—in a television interview— as "un modesto anarquista a la manera spencereana" (00:00:27-00:00:33).

[111] A film adaptation of *V for Vendetta*, directed by James McTeigue and written by the Wachoski brothers, was released on 2006. Moore criticized the film in a 2007 MTV interview. In "Between Trauma and Tragedy: From *The Matrix* to *V for Vendetta*," Peter Y. Paik summarizes Moore's criticism of the film in the following way: "Moore's critique of the film accordingly display a double-edged character. On the one hand, the Wachowski brothers, along with director James McTeigue, drastically underplay the virulence of fascist society, the unceasing pressures of violence and cruelty it creates in everyday life. They thus end up with a vacuous and contradictory representation that is meant to topple over and collapse at the flimsiest caprice of the popular will. On the other hand, the film does not portray the leaders of the fascist leadership with any degree of depth or nuance" (158-59).

[112] In his online article "La filosofía política de Jorge Luis Borges" (2006) the economist Martín Krause collects a variety of quotes from the author, rendering a useful summary of Borges's political views. In a 2012 article Krause defines Borges as "anarcocapitalista."

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Borges understood Spencer's take on anarchy as a form of self-government that requires the minimum of state presence, to attain greater individual freedom. Borges also also talked about his distrust of communist regimes, in which "the state is bigger than the individual." In this second section of Chapter 3, I will analyze Borges's short story "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado," published in 1976 in *El libro de arena*. It is relevant to take into consideration that this collection of short stories appeared during the first years of Argentina's military dictatorship and in the context of global unrest that characterized the Cold War Era. I will argue that "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" could be read as a tongue-in-cheek take on the literary genre known as utopia, while it also encourages the reader to view the story as a text of science fiction, due to the author's use of one of the genre's most recurrent and iconic topics: time-traveling. I will also demonstrate that Borges's short story serves as an eclectic narrative anarchist manifesto, that playfully voices the political convictions of the author. I will argue that this short story is essential for grasping an understanding of Borges's political views, and that it is a product of Borges's own relationship to the violent and complex historical moment that he inhabited.

Michel Foucault's understanding of the concept of bio-power could be applied to the government practices of the modern nation-state. Borges's pursuit of complete individual freedom—in other words, his pursuit of anarchy—will be developed in opposition of the modern bio-political nation-state that dominated the political global distribution in the second half of the 20th century, as it does today.

I do not intend to champion or attack the politics of Borges's fiction. I am more interested in understanding the way in which Borges's fiction sheds a light over his

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political views, and, more importantly, in grasping a better understanding of the ways in which his political views shaped his fiction. My main interest, then, is to comprehend the way in which Borges's literary works illustrate the way in which he understood the sociopolitical circumstances of his own historical moment.

In his prologue to *El informe de Brodie* (1970), Borges described his political views with the following words: "Mis convicciones en materia política son harto conocidas; me he afiliado al partido conservador, lo cual es una forma de escepticismo, y nadie me ha tildado de comunista, de nacionalista, de antisemita, de partidario de Hormiga Negra o de Rosas. Creo que con el tiempo merecemos que no haya gobiernos" (*Obras Completas II* 399). It is important to mention that Borges's anti-Peronism was well known; he often referred to the Argentinian president as a dictator.

As the title of the story suggests, "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" could be read as Borges's take on the literary genre of the utopia. This short story takes place in an undetermined place and time. The opening lines of the story depict the figure of the narrator walking among the plains (some plains). He does not know if he is in Oklahoma, Texas or the Argentinian/Brazilian Pampa. All he knows is that he is walking across the plains, and that "en cualquier lugar de la tierra la llanura es la misma" (96). The term utopia—part of the story's title—means "no place." The fact that the narrator of the story states that he does not know where he is (the plains are presented as a "no place") seems to reinforce the fact that this story is Borges's own take on the genre of the utopia. Nevertheless, this should not dissuade the reader of also conducting a science fictional reading of Borges's story. After all, works of fictions such as *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Jonathan Swift's most famous work—which is both a utopia and a proto-dystopia in its

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own right—are filled with innumerable science-fictional elements. On the other hand, most dystopias are utopias gone wrong; and the dystopian novel has been considered to be at the center of the science fiction canon, at least since the mid-20th century. In the case of Borges's short story, the most prominent science-fictional element of the text is, of course, the idea of time traveling.

In the first lines of the story, the lost narrator notices that it is starting to rain and he decides to walk toward a lonely house that he encounters in the middle of the plains. There he meets the house's owner, an uncannily tall man that informs him that he is now in the future. It is never clear how exactly the narrator travels in time.[113] All the explanation that the narrator is given by the mysterious man is that these "visits" happen "de siglo en siglo" (98). To calm him down, the man from the future tells his guest that he will be back home the next day at the latest. The reader soon learns that in this undetermined future, Latin has become the only language in the world. According to the tall man, this has at least one relevant advantage: "La diversidad de las lenguas favorecía la diversidad de los pueblos y aun de las guerras; la tierra ha regresado al latín" (97). In this hypothetical future, the existence of one only language (Latin) seems to lead to the existence of only one people, and to the eventual abolition of human warfare. During his youth, Borges had to witness the horrors of World War I; during his adulthood, the author had to witness the infamy of World War II—up to date, still the armed conflict that has caused more deaths in history. The dream of a world with no nations, that is, a world with no nationalistic feelings, must have seen "utopian" for Borges. The greatest wars of the

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[113] From Well's classic science fiction novel, *The Time Machine* (1895), to H.G. Oesterheld's *El Eternauta* (1957-1959) and Robert Zemeckis' fan-favorite film *Back to the Future* (1985), time machines have been common resource for justifying the phenomenon of time traveling in science fictional narratives. This element is notably absent from Borges's story.

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20th century were, after all, fought by nations and in the name of nations. Thus, it shouldn't surprise us that Borges would associate the hypothetical existence of a world without nations to the possibility of a world without war.

The narrator of this story eventually reveals his name and identity. He states that his name is Eudoro Acevedo, and he claims that he was born in 1897 (two years before Borges actual birth), in Buenos Aires. He also mentions that he is a professor of English and American literature, and that he also occupies his time writing fantastic stories. The common points shared by the real Borges and his character are obvious: they are both from Buenos Aires, they were born in the same decade, they are both professors of English and American literature, and they both write fantastic stories. When learning that his unexpected guest is an author of the fantastic, the man from the future mentions that he once read *"Los viajes del capitán Lemuel Gulliver*[114]*."* By making a reference to Swift's widely famous novel, Borges suggests a possible connection between his text to the one of the Anglo-Irish author. Some of the parallels that could be drawn between these two works of fiction are the satirical tone that characterizes them both. While Swift seems to be mocking several aspects of human nature and Western culture—while also

[114] Swift's famous book is both a satire of the traveler's tale, and a utopia/dystopia in its own right. It is necessary to mention that the novel has several elements that could be understood as science fictional; such as the floating island of Laputa (which floats over the kingdom of Balnibarbi, due to the magnetic elements in the kingdom's soil). The Laputans are a highly-educated people that practice sciences such as astronomy (they discovered two of Mars' moons, before these satellites were actually discovered by real astronomers) and mathematics. They also use scientific instruments such as the compass and the quadrangle. Nevertheless, their buildings and clothes are badly designed, which proves that they do not succeed in applying their scientific knowledge for practical purposes. Laputans obsession with the discipline of science has deformed their bodies; they do not move much, their heads tend to be inclined to one side, and they often suffer from strabismus, with one eye looking inwards and the other one looking upwards—mimicking the lenses of the telescope and the microscope. Swift's depiction of Laputa is a mocking criticism of a society in which men are so obsessed with scientific disciplines that they cannot live in a functional way, or perceive reality as it is. Swift's Gulliver's Travels, like de Rivas' "Sizigias" and de Bergerac's "Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon" all contain science fictional elements, and even though they could be seen as proto-science fiction or pre-science fiction; however, I will not consider them as science fiction as such for the reasons rendered in the "Introduction."

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satirizing the subgenre of the "traveler's tale"—in his novel, Borges seems to engage in a parody of the utopia, imbibing the plot with science-fictional elements, while also praising the virtues of anarchy. In other words, "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" is a brief science-fictional utopia, a playful satire of the genre, and a narrative anarchist manifesto.

Later in the story, the narrator finds a 1518 copy of Thomas More's *Utopia*. This reference to More reinforces the idea that Borges's story is actually engaging in a dialogue with the Western tradition of this particular genre. The satirical element of Borges's story, however, is how "dystopian" some of the elements of his utopia seem to be. In Borges's "utopian" future, the human race is facing the possibility of extinction. However grim this might seem, the extinction of our species is regarded by the tall man as something positive. In fact, this individual from the future stoically states that "ahora se discuten las ventajas y desventajas de un suicidio gradual o simultáneo de todos los hombres del mundo" (102). In this strange future, every man has only one child; the reason for this is that it is considered better to avoid the perpetuation of the human race. In the tall man's own words: "no conviene fomentar el género humano" (idem). The man of the future does not engage in a detailed explanation of why the gradual disappearance of the human species is a good thing; taking into consideration that Borges published *El libro de arena* a few years after the famous Cuban missile crisis had the world at the edge of total nuclear war, might partially explain his grim understanding of the human race.

For reasons unknown—but probably due to a dramatic decrease on the planet's population—cities have also disappeared from the face of Earth. According to the tall man, who had a chance to explore the ruins of Bahía Blanca (an Argentinian city in the

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Buenos Aires Province), "no se ha perdido mucho" (101). In this utopian future, men live hundreds of years—the man from the future is more than 400 years old—their lives, however, seem to be extremely lonely. The strange man tells his guest that after a human being has reached adulthood (at age 100) he has no more need for love and friendship. Thus, it is not uncommon for adults to move away from their family, build a house somewhere, and spend the rest of their lives in complete—or relative—isolation. The tall man, for instance, argues that he has built his own house; he has also manufactured his own furniture and grows his own food. He also mentions that after a man has cut his links with family, friends and acquaintances, he dedicates himself to the exercise of "una de las artes, la filosofía, las matemáticas, o juega un ajedrez solitario" (102). But this extreme form of isolation is not only a separation from all the men and women that exist in his own time, but a rejection of all the human beings that have ever existed, and a rejection of the scientific and artistic legacy of our species. This is why the tall man talks for the entire human race when stating: "queremos olvidar el ayer … No hay conmemoraciones ni cementerios ni efigies de hombres muertos. Cada cual debe producir por su cuenta las ciencias y las artes que necesita" (103). The story comes to an end when someone knocks on the door of the tall man's house, and a woman, accompanied by "three or four men," enter the building. The narrator mentions that they all look like brothers, but he also develops the—obscure—hypothesis of them having been made equal by time itself. The group of men and women empty the house of furniture and other objects (such as manuscripts and paintings). The 20th century narrator mentions that the woman works as hard as her male partners in the process of emptying the house. It is not clear if he sees this as a positive or negative consequence of the evolution of human culture. At the end

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of the story, the narrator, the tall man, and his friends, walk across the plains until they find a building that looks like some sort of tower with a dome on top. The narrator learns what the place actually is when someone in the group suddenly states: "Es el crematorio … Adentro está la cámara letal. Dicen que la inventó un filántropo cuyo nombre, creo, era Adolfo Hitler" (106). In a world in which the extinction of the human race is seen as positive, a genocidal dictator like Hitler would be regarded as some sort of philanthropist.[115] Finally, the group reaches the building, a quiet guard opens the gates, and the narrator's host walks quietly into the crematorium. As a final gesture of sympathy, he waves his hand and keeps walking. The woman in the group utters a mysterious sentence: "La nieve seguirá" (idem). It could be argued that these obscure words reinforce one of the most important elements of Borges's utopia: the futile irrelevance of human life, and the implied unimportance of our species. The abrupt ending of the tall man's life is also announced in the story when, short after meeting the narrator, he tells him that in the times in which he is living, men commit suicide whenever they please; he justifies this practice with the stoic belief that "[d]ueño el hombre de su vida, lo es también de su muerte" (102). It could be concluded that, in Borges's utopian future, the practice of suicide is completely socially acceptable, and even encouraged by the few human beings left in the world.[116]

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[115] Of course, Borges was completely opposed to Nazis; the decontextualized use of this quote has been used by different individuals to attack Borges's legacy (but I had already said enough about Borges and Nazism in the previous chapter of this dissertation).

[116] In his book *Escritores descalzos* (2012) Rodolfo Braceli collects a series of interviews with several writers, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Woody Allen, and Ray Bradbury. In one particular interview, Borges discusses his relationship to the idea of suicide. Accordig to Bracli, Borges did toy with the idea of committing suicide when he was a younger man. Now, the writer argues, it would be too late for that; in a way, it seemed unnecessary to him. In his poetry book *La rosa profunda* (1975) Borges includes the poem "El suicida." In 1983 Borges published his very last book of short stories, *La memoria de Shakespeare*. One of the stories in the collection, "25 de Agosto, 1983," narrates a fantastic event in which Borges finds himself (his double or doppelganger) dying on a hotel bed (or in his mother's

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The role that suicide plays in Borges's utopia takes relevant political connotations if we study the story from a bio-political point of view. In fact, Borges's utopia is a "utopia" because the human race has rid itself of politics; in this way, every man achieves complete control over his own life. The most dramatic and assertive manifestation of this complete power—or control—over the self is the act of suicide. As the tall man puts it, if man is the only master of his own life, he might as well be the master of his own death. Or, as Foucault puts it in one of his lectures collected in *Society Must Be Defended:* death is the ultimate scape of the bio-political state. In Foucault's words:

> Now that power is decreasingly the power of the right to take life, and increasingly the right to intervene to make life, or once power begins to intervene mainly at this level in order to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies, death becomes, in so far as it is the end of life, the term, the limit, or the end of power too. Death is outside the power relationship. Death is beyond the reach of power, and power has a grip on it only in general, overall or statistical terms. Power has no control over death, but it can control mortality. And to that extent, it is only natural that death should now be privatized, and should become the most private thing of all. In the right of sovereignty, death was the moment of the most obvious and most spectacular manifestation of the absolute power of the sovereign; death now becomes, in contrast, the

house; both characters believe to be in different places throughout the story) after having ingested a considerable amount of poison. This "prophecy" of his own death, as we had seen, was never translated into actual actions. Borges died of natural causes in 1986. It has been said that, a few years after the publication of this particular short story, a journalist asked Borges why didn't he commit suicide on this particular date. Borges's answer was simple: "Por cobardía."

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> moment in which the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his ow privacy. Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death. (248)

Borges's utopia, that is, his ideal world, is a planet with very few humans, with no society, and with no concept such as "nation." In other words, Borges's idea world is a post-bio-political one. And in this world, the act that expresses free will in its purest form, is suicide. For Foucault, death is the most effective escape from bio-power. The irony in Borges's story lies, thus, in the fact that the paroxysm of freedom, suicide, takes place in a facility reminiscent of the Nazi concentration camps. These crematories are no longer reminiscent of places where people are taken to die; they are places were people go to die, on their own free will. Perhaps, it is not suicide itself what Borges finds "utopian," but the subsequent liberation that it implies. In Borges's story suicide is free will in its purest form.

But, as I have said before, this chapter is also concerned with the politics that give shape to Borges's story. In the late 1960s, during an interview with Richard Burgin, Borges said that he considered himself a follower of what he understood as classical liberalism. In this interview, the author argued that his distrust of Marxism and communism was something that he acquired very early in his life. In Borges's words, he was "brought up to think that the individual should be strong and the State should be weak." Thus, the author "couldn't be enthusiastic about theories where the State is more important than the individual." Taking into consideration Borges's political views, it is not surprising that his utopian future is one in which not only nations, but also

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governments have completely ceased to exist; in Borges's utopia, a man's life—and therefore a man's death—belongs to no one but himself.

Throughout his life, Borges defined himself as a "conservative", a "classical liberal" and a "humble anarchist." In spite of Borges's seemingly contradictory statements about his own political ideology, one thing remained constant throughout the author's ideological development: he always considered the individual to be more important than the state. In several occasions, he mockingly criticized the development of any kind of social or collective identity based on principles such as nationality. When in an interview Borges said, "creo en el individuo, y no en el estado," he did not only emphasize his idea that the individual should always be more important—or "stronger"—than the state, but also questioned the validity of concepts such as "society," "the people," "the nation," and "the working class"[117] as a coherent homogenous entity. This means that, as Borges himself states in *En Diálogo I*—a collaboration with Osvaldo Ferrari—for him, "la muchedumbre es una entidad ficticia, lo que realmente existe es cada individuo" (Borges in Krause). In another interview, later published in Pilar Bravo's and Mario Paoletti's *Borges Verbal* (1999), the Argentinian author argues that "[l]as masas son una entidad abstracta y posiblemente irreal. Suponer la existencia de la masa es como suponer que todas las personas cuyo nombre empieza con la letra 'b' forman una sociedad" (idem). Borges considered the construction of identities based on plural entities—such as the nation—as something completely arbitrary. But, in the case of the concept of nation, not only did Borges regard it as utterly arbitrary, but also as a source of conflict that could only lead to war. In Borges's own words, "[d]esdichadamente para los

[117] From an interview published in the Argentinian Magazine *Siete Días* in April 1973.

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hombres, el planeta ha sido parcelado en países, cada uno provisto de lealtades, de queridas memorias, de una mitología particular, de derechos, de agravios, de fronteras, de banderas, de escudos y de mapas. Mientras dure este arbitrario estado de cosas, serán inevitables las guerras" (idem). For all these reasons, neither governments nor nations have a place in Borges's utopian future, as it is depicted in "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado."

Borges's championing of the individual—in opposition to the collective or the state—and his deep distrust of politicians and governmental institutions led him to what he understood as an "anarquismo spenceriano." In an interview with Vicente Zito Lima, Borges stated: "Soy anarquista. Siempre ha creído fervorosamente en el anarquismo. Y en esto sigo las ideas de mi padre. Es decir, estoy en contra de los gobiernos, más aún cuando son dictaduras, y de los estados[118]" (Borges in Krause). Thus, it would be understandable that in Borges's "ideal world" (in his utopia), there would be no place for governments of any kind. As I mentioned before, in the prologue of *El informe de Brodie* Borges expresses his wishes of a future in which individuals will have no governments to regulate or oppress them: "Creo que con el tiempo mereceremos que no haya gobiernos" (Borges in Krause). Taking this into consideration, it seems natural that in the strange future of "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" all forms of government have disappeared from the face of Earth. When the narrator asks his host about what happened to the world's governments, he replies:

> Según la tradición fueron cayendo gradualmente en desuso. Llamaban a elecciones, declaraban guerras, imponían tarifas, confiscaban fortunas,

[118] This interview was published in the magazine *Semana Gráfica* in 1971.

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> ordenaban arrestos y pretendían imponer la censura y nadie en el planeta los acataba. La prensa dejó de publicar sus colaboraciones y sus efigies. Los políticos tuvieron que buscar oficios honestos; algunos fueron buenos cómicos o buenos curanderos. La realidad sin duda habrá sido más completa que este resumen. (103-04)

Borges's utopia is a world of free men and women. Free enough to take their own lives whenever they decide to do so, free from the fluctuations of the market because there is no such a thing as money (101), free of social conventions because society as we know it has disappeared (along with nations and even cities), and free because there are no governments to regulate—bio-politically speaking—or oppress the individual.

For Borges, the enemy of the individual (the real danger to the individual's complete freedom) is the state. In *En Diálogo I*, Borges makes this point very clear when he states that

> para mí el Estado es el enemigo común ahora; yo querría—eso lo he dicho muchas veces—un mínimo de Estado y un máximo de individuo. Pero, quizá sea preciso esperar... no sé si algunos decenios o algunos siglos—lo cual históricamente no es nada—aunque yo, ciertamente no llegaré a ese mundo sin Estados. Para eso se necesitaría una humanidad ética, y además, una humanidad intelectualmente más fuerte de lo que es ahora, de lo que somos nosotros; ya que, sin duda, somos muy inmorales y muy poco inteligentes comparados con esos hombres del porvenir. (Borges in Krause)

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This—more ethical and intellectually stronger—humanity is the humanity that we encounter in "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado." And the tall man that serves as the narrator's host is one of these exemplary, ideal men, of times to come.

In Chapter 11 of *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault concludes that the Nazi ideal state was the paroxysm of the bio-political state (259). In this sense, the construction of the perfect bio-political state will always result not only in a vague form of totalitarianism, but—more specifically—in fascism. Borges's fear of totalitarianism seems to coincide—at least partially—with Foucault's understanding of the paroxysm of the perfect bio-political state. This becomes evident when, in "Nuestro pobre individualismo" (1945), the Argentinian author argues that

> El más urgente de los problemas de nuestra época (ya denunciado con profética lucidez por el casi olvidado Spencer) es la gradual intromisión del Estado en los actos del individuo; en la lucha contra ese mal, cuyos nombres son comunismo y nazismo, el individualismo argentino, acaso inútil o perjudicial hasta ahora, encontrará justificación y deberes. (Borges in Krause)

This "meddling" of the state in the actions of the individual is a trait of Foucault's bio-political state. It is not random that both Borges and Foucault see Nazism as an extreme manifestation of this form of government. The Nazi subject had to think, speak, and act in a way that could be regarded as acceptable for the "well-being" of the state. Nazi Germany's embrace of eugenics depicts the state's desire of controlling, perfecting and administering life even before life itself begins to form. In the Nazi state, individualism is sacrificed for the sake of attaining a specific type of "ideal" society, and all aspects of

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life—even the process of systematically administering death—are ultimately regulated and controlled by the state. As we have seen so many times in history, someone's utopia is someone else's utopia.[119] The fact that Borges also understands the communist state as a type of social and political construct that "interferes" with the subject's individuality seems to be coherent with the author's lifelong distrust of both communism and socialism. Again, for Borges, the ideal society was one in which the individual was "bigger" than the state, a society in which the government was so unnecessary that it would eventually stop existing. The socialist utopia is impossible without a government that administers and regulates the wealth and labor of its people. But Borges could not even accept the idea of "the people" as a valid political concept. For Borges, "the people" was just an abstract concept. For him, only the individual mattered, because only the individual existed. In "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" (where men are both physically and intellectually "bigger" than us) Borges's humanity finally reaches its destiny—its perfect utopian state—and the name of this destiny is anarchy.

Resistance and Sacrifice in Bio-political Dystopias of the Cold War Era: *El Eternauta II* and *V for Vendetta*

Bio-power, as Foucault understands it, is constructed in opposition to the power of the sovereign—who had the right of deciding between the life and death of his subjects. Even though the ideal bio-political state has the monopoly of administering violence, bio-politics are defined by the state's engagement in the administration and management of all the aspects of individual and social life. In Foucault's words, "[i]t is

[119] Racism was so imbibed into the Nazi utopia, that it could only have led—as it did—to genocide.

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no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such power has to qualify, measure, appraise and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor" (144). Evidently, Foucault's understanding of bio-politics becomes particularly useful when approaching narratives of political dystopia. Both *El Eternauta II* and *V for Vendetta* could be described as works of dystopian science fiction, in the sense that they both depict dystopian versions of the future; but more importantly, these graphic novels present versions of the future that could be described as dystopian because of the bio-political regimes depicted in them. Even though Foucault's work is of enormous importance in the study of bio-politics, Agamben points out to some gaps on his work on bio-power when arguing that "Foucault … never dwelt on the exemplary places of modern bio-politics: the concentration camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century" (4). Agamben tried to fill this gap in *Homo Sacer*, and his take on the subject of the concentration camp as the ultimate form of bio-power will be particularly useful in my analysis of *V for Vendetta*, where the space of the concentration camp is of enormous importance for both the narrative, and the ideological message of Moore's story.

Even though *El Eternauta II* and *V for Vendetta* are quite different form each other, Oesterheld's and Moore's graphic novels have some important common characteristics: both graphic novels are set in a post-nuclear-war-world, and therefore, they both deal with nuclear anxiety in a very direct way; on the other hand, these graphic novels also deal with the dangers associated with totalitarian (bio-political) regimes, such as the state's control over "bare life," and the exploitation of certain parts of the

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population. In my analysis of *El Eternauta II* and *V for Vendetta*, I will focus my attention on understanding the different forms that bio-power assumes in these narratives; on the other hand, I will analyze the different forms of resistance against bio-power depicted by the authors of these works, in an effort to comprehend the ideological principles that justify this resistance. I will describe the way in which both Oesterheld's intergalactic empire of the *Ellos* and Moore's fictional fascist party, Norsefire, constitute two variations of the ultimate bio-political state. I will also illustrate and compare the ways in which the heroes of these graphic novels, Juan Salvo and the mysterious V, understand their roles as revolutionary rebels. In this sense, the idea of self-sacrifice will be a paramount concept in our pursuit of grasping Salvo's and V's particular understanding and performance of revolutionary heroism. Finally, I will explore the way in which gender roles are depicted in these graphic novels.

David William Foster argues that

> A large measure of the resonance of *El Eternauta* has to do with how external details of the text relate to the dark history of authoritarian and neofascistic tyranny in Argentina throughout much of the twentieth century, especially in the crucial 1966-1983 period in in which the country experienced state-sponsored terror at the hands of recurrent military regimes. (8)

Because of the circumstances of Oesterheld's life, and especially because of his participation in the *Montoneros* urban guerrillas and his death at the hands of the Argentinian military regime, it is difficult to separate *El Eternauta II* from the clandestine political activities and social commitment of the Argentinian author. On the other hand,

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considering Alan Moore's open opposition to Margaret Thatcher's government, and his well-known anarchist political views, it is hard to separate our interpretation of *V for Vendetta* from Moore's beliefs and ideological stances. In other words, our interpretation of these graphic novels can hardly be separated from our knowledge of the authors who wrote them, and the social and historical moments that they inhabited and commented upon on their fiction. Knowing the political views of both Oesterheld and Moore, and the social circumstances in which these authors wrote and published their graphic novels, not only enriches our understanding of the texts, but also our understanding of the Cold War, the different forms that it adopted in different areas of the Western World, and the way in which its real and imagined dangers and threats stimulated the imagination of artists and writers throughout the world.

The Case of *El Eternauta II*

The writing process of *El Eternauta II* was marked by a history of violence and persecution. The pages of this graphic novel are tainted with the blood of its author and his daughters. Artist Solano López fled the nation and avoided a similarly tragic end. H.G. Oesterheld and Francisco Solano López published *El Eternauta II* between 1976 and 1977. Oesterheld was part of the clandestine group *Montoneros*, which actively opposed the military dictatorships in Argentina (1976-83). It is relevant to remember that three of Oesterheld's daughters, Beatriz Marta, Diana Irene, and Estela Inés, were kidnapped and murdered between 1976 and 1977. Solano López went into exile in the late 1970s, and Oesterheld disappeared from the public eye. López and Oesterheld kept collaborating in *El Eternauta II* until its completion in 1977. Oesterheld was finally

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kidnapped by the military in this year, and it is believed that he died at the hands of the military in 1978. At the time of Oesterheld's disappearance, *El Eternauta II* was still being published as a serialized graphic novel in the magazine *Skorpio*.

Throughout the 1970s the *Montoneros* kidnapped several industrialist and businessmen, and murdered several military men, police officers, and even rightwing Peronista labor leaders like Teodoro Ponce (murdered in 1974). They also organized several terrorist attacks, detonating bombs in hotels and other public spaces. They were responsible for the deads of numerous military men, police officers, and civilian bystanders. The *Montoneros* were ultimately dismantled (most of its members murdered or disappeared) in 1977. The *Monotneros* "Special Forces," however, were active until 1981. The ruthlessness of Videla's junta, and the activities of the so called Triple A (*Alianza Anticomunista Argentina*, or Argentine Anti-communist Alliance, founded in 1973) were in great part responsible for the destruction of this urban guerrilla. Oesterheld was attracted to the movement by his daughters' militancy, and believed that his work as a comic book writer could have a positive political influence in the Argentinean youth. His comic book, *Vida del Che* (illustrated by Alberto and Enrique Breccia) was published in Argentina in book format in 1968, three months after Guevara's death. This exemplifies Oesterheld's commitment to the cause. The book was soon banned by the government, but it was finally published again in 2008, thanks to Enrique Breccia, who had saved his father's drawings. Ten years after the first publication of *Vida del Che*, Oesterheld was murdered by Videla's military junta.

El Eternauta II starts right at the end of *El Eternauta*. Oesterheld is in front of Juan Salvo's house, while Favalli, Lucas, and Polsky arrive in Salvo's house for a session

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of *truco*. Oesterheld goes back to his house, and sits down, while trying to make sense of all that has happened to him in the last couple of days. He remembers Salvo materializing from thin air in his studio, he remembers the story about the resistance's battle for survival against the evil Ellos and their involuntary allies. Oesterheld suffers a panic attack, and runs to Salvo's house, to discuss their long conversation. In salvo's house, no one believes his strange story, until Oesterheld begins to name the people in the house, specifying what their jobs and hobbies are. Favalli interrogates the writer and concludes that perhaps he has been trapped in a *continuum*, since the author states that he has published their adventures in 1959, and then, as a complete volume, in 1963. Favalli points out that the events described by Oesterheld (that is, the story of *El Eternauta*) take place in 1963, and they are only in 1959. Oesterheld has a second attack and loses his memory, when he comes to his senses, Salvo and his friends, feeling pity for the disturbed man, invite him to join them in their game of *truco*. At this point, Oesterheld identifies himself as Héctor Germán Oesterheld, and ask the group to call him Germán (Oesterheld's *nom de guerre* in the *Monotneros*). Oesterheld is about to win the hand, but he suddenly realizes that there is absolutely no noise coming from outside the house, he suddenly remembers everything, and tells Salvo about his fears. He believes that the toxic snow is back. However, Salvo replies that he also remembers it all, and he states that there was never toxic snow falling from the skies; he says that what really is about to take place is further worse than that.

Favalli, Polsky, and Lucas suddenly disappear. Salvo, who remembers the events of the alien invasion, ventures a theory of what is going on: they are in some sort of knot of the space-time continuum, and they have move leaped forward in time. Therefore,

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Lucas and Polsky are dead (they were both killed in the early stages of the *Ellos'* invasion in *El Eternauta*), and Favalli (along with Pablo, Franco and Mosca) have been turned into hombres-robot (which takes place near the end of *El Eternauta*). Oesterheld sees, in a flash, the memories of a life that he never lived. Salvo concludes that they are now in a distant future, one in which Buenos Aires has been obliterated by the atomic bomb that falls in the city at the end of *El eternauta.* They are,therefore, living in a post-apocalyptic post-nuclear era. After using Lucas's home-made Geiger counter to measure the radiation inside the house, the men conclude that there is no radiation inside the house. The writer and Salvo decide to explore the area, but they soon change their minds about it, since it is already dark outside, and they do not know what kind of dangers might wait for them in the ruins of Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, Salvo arms himself with a rifle and gives Oesterheld a military-style knife. They also make bows and arrows for themselves. During the night, they hear an ominous laughter coming from outside; they wonder if there are now hyenas in the area. A dark, anthropomorphic figure is seen roaming the area outside the house. Something hits the Livingroom's window, and Salvo locks it for safety. Outside, Oesterheld sees a big rock move. He and Salvo believe it to be a *Gurbo.* To calm everyone down, Salvo states that *Gurbos* are not so dangerous after all, if one keeps its distance. Soon after, the group sees a mysterious spaceship crossing the sky, and hear what seems to be a pack of feral dogs roaming the area.

Before leaving the house the next morning, Oesterheld, Salvo and his family hear a goldfinch, singing more beautifully than a canary. They find this rather unusual, but pleasant. Outside the house, they discover that what hit their window the night before was an owl that had been attacked by a bat while flying. They also find the super elaborate

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nest of a highly evolved ovenbird, and an impressive anthill that resembles a manmade miniature hut. It becomes clear that the fauna of the future has been affected in strange ways by the radiation, and that many animals have evolved in strange and shocking ways. Salvo and his friend soon understand that they will not find food outside, and they decide to hunt a hare that they see in order to take some food back to the house. The hare, however, posseses super speed, and hunting it proves to be utterly impossible. Suddenly, a *chimango* (a kind of hawk that inhabits the Southern Cone South) comes flying, killing the hare. The bird also attacks Oesteheld, but Salvo saves him by repeatedly hitting it with his rifle. Then he attends to the writer's wounds, and they keep walking in search for provisions. As they walk through the fields, they find some scattered ruins of what the once was great city of Buenos Aires. They find a dying puppy and his mother, Salvo wants to help the dog, but Oesterheld dissuades him, emphasizing the risk of interacting with these super-evolved animals. Suddenly, the characters are surrounded by a pack of feral dogs. They soon identify the leader. Salvo walks towards the dying puppy and saves his life, by removing a bone from the animal's throat. The pack of dogs walk away, as their leader turns around and seems to smile at Salvo. They conclude that dogs are much smarter in the future.

When they are heading back to the house, Salvo and Oesterheld spot the enormous footprint of a *Gurbo.* Salvo fears for the life of his family. They run back to the house, only to find it completely destroyed. Salvo is about to lose all hope when he finds some human footprints. He follows them outside, until he finds a spot near a bush where the footprints of his wife and daughter get mixed with those of several other people. They conclude that someone (a group of humans or a pack of animals) lifted them and took

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them somewhere else. Before they can come up with a plan for rescuing the women, they are attacked by a *Gurbo.* They head to the caves, in order to evade the gigantic animal, but Oesterheld falls and hurts his ankle. Salvo comes back to help him, but Oesterheld asks him to leave him there. Salvo tries to help him anyway. When the Gurbo is almost about to crush them, the pack of feral dogs come to their rescue. They attack the Gurbo's weakest spot: its legs. The *Gurbo* tries to escape and falls into an abyss. Juan soon befriends the leader of the dog pack, and names him Amigo (*friend*).

Salvo and his friend keep walking, tracking the footsteps of those who presumably took Elena and Martita. They soon encounter a group of humans, dressed as cavemen. They take Salvo's rifle while he is distracted helping the injured Oesterheld. Salvo approaches the leader of the group, in hopes of finding his wife and daughter. However, she calls the pack of dogs, and orders them to attack the intruders. Nevertheless, the leader of the dogs (called Dago by the cavepeople and Amigo by Slavo) jumps on Salvo, playfully licking his face. This act of trust convinces the cave people that Salvo and Oesterheld are not a threat; they return the rifle to its owner and help Oesterheld with his injured ankle. On their way to the caves, they are attacked by a group of ferocious *Zarpos*, a race of sexless hairy anthropomorphic creatures, with big claws, prominent fangs, and fur. Oesterheld assumes them to be evolved humans, or rather, future humans for whom "evolution worked backwards" (57). These creatures are reminiscent of H.G. Wells's Morlocks from *The Time Machine* (1895). However, Salvo and Oesterheld soon learn that the Zarpos are not an evolved kind of human, but a creature synthetically created by the *Ellos* with unknown methods. Oesterheld, the cavepeople and Salvo fight the Zarpos. Even though the Zarpos are armed with firearms,

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Salvo and his peers prevail. In this struggle, it is shown that Salvo has acquired superhuman abilities, such as superhuman strength. Later on, Salvo will show other abilities, such as enhanced stamina, and the (unusual) capacity of understanding the way I which any machine works just by looking at it.

After the battle with the Zarpos, the cavepeople tell Salvo that they have Elena and Martita. Salvo cries with joy, in one of his very few moments of emotional vulnerability throughout the narrative. In the cave, Salvo and Oesterheld meet Matías, the leader of the cavepeople. He tells them that they are all descendants from the *hombres-robot* who survived the explosion of the atomic bomb in Buenos Aires. Talking to Matías and a fisherman called Biguá the heroes learn that the *Ellos* have established a fort in what used to be downtown Buenos Aires. They are, presumably, the descendants of the *Ellos* that invaded the city in 1963. Biguá tells his Salvo and Oesterheld that the *Ellos* take most of the fish the cavemen fish and leave them only enough food to stay alive. If they try to fight this oppression, the *Ellos* attacks them, killing several of the fishermen. While the *Ellos*, their generals the *Manos*, and their minions the *Zarpos* have canons and firearms, the cavemen live with preindustrial technology. When they tried to use metals in order to create cannons and weapons the *Ellos* send the *Zarpos* to destroy the rudimentary furnace and kill several of the cavepeople. They never experiment with metals again.

Oesterheld and the cavemen see the mysterious spaceship again. This time, it seems to attack the *Ellos'* fort with luminous projectiles. The fort fires back, and the spaceship leaves the area. Soon after this, a *Mano* in a steam-powered tank approaches the caves. The *Mano* informs the cavepeople that he will be back in 22 days, by then,

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they should have three times the usual fish tribute, and 500 men between 20 and 25 years old. Before leaving, the *Mano* sees the time travelers and attacks them with a flamethrower. Salvo saves his friends' lives by reacting before the weapon is activated. Again, Oesterheld does not fail to notice his friend's superhuman abilities.

Salvo decides to lead the cavepeople in a military attack against the *Ellos.* Even though all weapons have been destroyed during the invasion of Buenos Aires, Salvo leads a group of cavemen to what is left of his in order to retrive a book with blueprints of Buenos Aires, and the city's address book. He believes that this information will allow them to find the abandoned storage buildings of old chemical firms, where they hope to collect the materials needed to manufacture gunpowder and build weapons. Suddenly, they are attacked by the *Mano* who threatened them before. He is still inside his steam-powered tank. Salvo tries to defend his team of cavepeople, but the enemy manages to burn one of the youngest members of the adventurous group. They run back to the caves, but the *Mano* follows them in the tank. He threatens to kill the cavepeople if the time travelers don't surrender to him. Salvo and Oesterheld turn themselves to the enemy. In the tank's cabin, the *Mano* punches Salvo, leaving him unconscious. Oesterheld tries to scare the *Mano*, in hopes of triggering its terror gland. This plan fails. The tank runs into a *Gurbo,* the *Mano*, calmly, instructs its *Zarpos* to attack. The *Zarpos*, with the help of the tank's flamethrower, scare the *Gurbo* away, proving the military power of the *Ellos'* regime. Oesterheld smashes the tank's dashboard, sending multiple contradicting order to the *Zarpos'* brains. This burns their brains, killing them in an instant. The *Mano* tries to strangle the writer, but he is suddenly saved by Salvo. In this moment, Salvo tells the *Mano* that he has discovered his true identity: he is not a *Mano*, but an *Ello* in disguise.

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Salvo's theory is proven correct soon after. During this battle, it is finally confirmed that Salvo's adventures as El Eternauta have turned him into a superhuman mutant. The tank falls into a river, and the *Ello* manages to escape from Salvo's superhuman grip. When reunited with Martita and Elena, Salvo shows great emotion, again emphasizing that he still has human feelings.

As planned, the newly formed human resistance collects materials for making gunpowder and building weapons. They also fix the tanked used by the *Ello*, and turn them into a defensive weapon against the regime. After a battle against several tanks, the human resistance captures a *Mano*. He tells his captors that the cavepeople are not descendants of the *hombres-robot*, but the *Ellos* made them believe that in order to assure their obedience. The *Mano* also tells the cavepeople that there is only one *Ello* left, and that the 500 young men that they need will be used as fuel for his, and his master's, final interstellar voyage back to their home planet. Even though the *Mano* tries to convince his captors that this will be beneficial for all, the cavemen do not wish to give away 500 of them even if this means gaining their freedom again. When Salvo confronts the *Mano,* his terror gland is triggered, killing him. As it happened in the first *Eternauta*, when faced with death the Mano is able to express his love of beauty and his gentle nature.

The cavemen are attacked once again, this time by *Zarpos* in boats. The resistance prevails at the end, thanks Salvo's leadership, and the brave actions of Oesterheld and Biguá. After the battle, Salvo talks to Oesteheld, and tells him that he believes that some higher intelligence have brought them to this point in time (somewhere in the 22nd century) for a purpose that he does not yet understand. As the mysterious spaceship flies above them, Salvo sees a vision of its pilot: the shadowy silhouette of an

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anthropomorphic creature, dying. At the end of the story, the reader will understand that this pilot was a friendly *Ello*, who brought El Eternauta, Elena, Martita and Oesterheld to the future, hoping that Salvo would lead the resistance against the cruel *Ello* in the fort.

After days of preparation, Salvo and a group of 20 men—including Biguá, Oesterheld, and a brave fisherman named Artemio—attack the *Ello's* fort. Meanwhile, the rest of the cavepeople take refuge in the caves. As instructed by Salvo, several men and women (including Elena and Martita) stay in a small promontory next to the caves. This promontory is heavily armed with canons and the tank that the resistance took from the *Ello.* Salvo leaves María, a brave young woman who is also Oesterheld's love interest, in charge of this key position. Salvo and his regiment finally head to the fort, Oesterheld notices that most of the men in the group are older. He believes that Salvo might have chosen older men, because he considers this to be a suicide attack, and he does not want to cut short the lives of younger men in the community.

During the attack, in two occasions, Salvo allows a part of his men to die so that the rest can advance towards the fort. In the second of these occasions, a *Mano* brings some *hombres-robot* from the past. This group includes Salvo's friends, Favalli, Pablo, and Mosca (from the first *Eternauta*). When the *Mano*, who has been neutralized by Salvo, instructs the *hombres-robot* to shoot at the resistance, Salvo gives rifles to his men, who start shooting at the *hombres-robot*. Oesterheld is shocked at the fact that he is shooting at Salvo's friends. Salvo finally destroys the machine used by the *Mano* to modify time and space, and from the *Manos's* dead body he takes a device that would allow him to enter the fort with no resistance. At the end, only Salvo, Oesterheld and Biguá reach the fort. Later on, Salvo sacrifices Biguá too, in order to get to the *Ello.*

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Meanwhile, in the caves, the cavemen are fighting an army of *Zarpos* coming in boats by the river. These *Zarpos* are joined by others who have been provided with mechanical wings that allow them to fly. In the fort, Salvo faces the *Ello* for the last time, after killing one last *Mano*. The *Ello* escapes once again, but Salvo points out the fact that the alien will not be able to survive the nuclear reaction that he started shortly after entering the fort. Salvo and Oesterheld grab two sets of mechanic wings and a few machine guns, and fly back to the caves, hoping to save the cavepeople.

When they reach the battlefield, they notice that the *Zarpos* have the upper hand. Oesterheld tells Salvo to fly towards the promontory, where Martita, Elena, and María are. Salvo decides to go to the caves instead, arguing that "the people are in the caves" (194). In the caves, Oesterheld and Germán help the resistance repel the *Zarpos'* attack. They then rush to the promontory, shooting at the remaining *Zarpos* in the area. However, they soon find that their efforts were in vain, and everyone on the promontory, including Elena and Martita, are dead. A stern Salvo tells Oesterheld that they were too late. Small tears can be seen in his eyes (200). Salvo later explains that they had to save the people in the cave first, the sacrifice of the fighters in the promontory was, after all, a necessary sacrifice for the survival of the community.

Salvo and Oesterheld assist the members of the community in recovering from the final battle. The cavemen are seen engaging in activities such as farming, using modern technology such as tractors. After seeing this joyful sight Oesterheld utters the phrase "Paradise is other people" (206), a playful reversal of Sartre's famous phrase "Hell is other people." While he is seeing the children of the community engage in a joyful game, Oesterheld is again transported to the 20th century. He finds himself seated at a bench in a

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plaza. A man seating next to him is reading a newspaper. The date in the front page is December 1976. Salvo walks in front of Oesterheld, but he does not seem to notice him. The writer stands up and runs to his friend. He tells Salvo that he is going with him. Salvo pats him in the back affectionately and tells him: "I knew you'd come, Germán. I need you" (206). In the last panel, a couple of birds are seen playing in a small bird bath fountain, as the two men walk away.

In *El Eternauta II*, Oesterheld and Solano López create a post-apocalyptic world—the result of a nuclear war—in which humans are oppressed by a mysterious race of extraterrestrial beings called the *Ellos*. Taking into consideration Oesterheld's active participation in the *Montoneros* and Solano López's opposition to the totalitarian military government, it becomes hard to think of the *Ellos* as other than a fictionalized version of Argentina's oppressive military regime. According to Kreksch, "abuses of power" is a common theme in Latin American science fiction (178). She argues that the "abuse" depicted in science fiction from the region "can be political, military or of another kind, but it is often shown from the point of view of the victim" (idem). *El Eternauta* II, a work in which the *Ellos* exercise a "political" and "military" abuse over the community of surviving humans, certainly fits Kreksch's description of this kind of work of Latin American science fiction. In this graphic novel Juan Salvo, El Eternauta, travels in time and ends up leading the human resistance against the evil *Ellos* and their loyal *Manos.* At the end of the first part of *El Eternauta*, Salvo and his family are ambushed by *hombres-robot* controlled by the *Ellos*; however, the hero escapes death by entering a time machine that has been left unattended by the enemy forces. In *El Eternauta,* Earth does not become part of the intergalactic bio-politic empire of the *Ellos*; nevertheless, we still

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get a glimpse of the nature of their enormous totalitarian state. The *Ellos'* intergalactic empire is an extreme example of a bio-political state. The *Ellos* think of species as a mass, as groups to be controlled. The lives of their subjects—different types of subjugated creatures—must be regulated, managed and controlled in all possible ways. By controlling the biology of the creatures that they have subjugated—that is, by controlling the individual bodies of the numerous individuals that constitute a species—the *Ellos* exercise control over entire planets, constituting the perfect inter-galactic bio-political state. In both *El Eternauta* and *El Eternauta II* the *Ellos* have the unwilling support of the highly intelligent *Manos.* These creatures are kept under the control of their master through the use of a "terror gland" that has been inserted into their bodies. In the first *Eternauta*, the *Manos* are also in charge of transforming human beings into *hombres-robot.* This is achieved by attaching an ominous machine (the *teledirector*) on the back of the victim's neck. This device transforms humans into remote-controlled automatons at the service of the empire. These are two examples of the ways in which the *Ellos* modify the biology of their subjects in order to destroy their will. The *hombres-robot* in particular are completely deprived of their individuality. Their individual bodies do not matter, they just matter because they can be controlled as a mass, and exploited in a variety of ways. Their bodies and lives become tools, disposable entities meant to be used, controlled, organized and eventually discarded. I have discussed both the *Manos* and the *hombres-robot* in the previous chapter.

In *El Eternauta II* the *hombres-robot* are barely present (they only appear in eight pages); instead of them, the *Ellos* use the primitive and ferocious *Zarpos*, as equally disposable soldiers. The *Zarpos* have been genetically engineered by the *Ellos*, who are

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not only able of modifying bodies (as is the case of the *Manos* and the *hombres-robot*), but also of creating new bodies designed for specific—in this case military—purposes. In this sense, it could be argued that the *Ellos'* state reaches one of the highest forms of bio-power: not only do the *Ellos* give themselves the right of controlling all the aspects of their subjects' lives; they also create and engineer bodies, they mass-produce life, in order to fulfill their political and military needs. In short, from *El Eternauta* to *El Eternauta II*, the technology of the *Ellos* has evolved from mind-control and fancy prosthetics, to plain eugenics.[120] It is the empire what determines the logic and purpose of the individual and collective lives of these creatures.

As the reader soon finds out, humans living in the post-apocalyptic world of *El Eternauta II* have also been conquered by the *Ellos*. Foucault argues that the bio-political state is not characterized by the sovereign's rule over life and death, but by the organization, administration and management of all the aspects of individual and social existence. In Oesterheld's dystopian future, the lives of the surviving humans are, too, carefully administered, monitored, controlled, managed, and regulated. Soon after meeting the small community of surviving humans, Salvo and his new friend, Nestor Oesterheld, learn that the *Ellos*' henchmen visit the cavepeople's village periodically in order to take most of the fish that the villagers have caught. Biguá mentions that the *Ellos* "nos dejan lo necesario para no morirnos de hambre" (71). When the *Ellos* find out that the primitive humans are starting to experiment with new technologies, such as the use of

[120] Their military technology, on the other hand, is clearly inferior to the one used by their ancestors. Some of the reasons for this provided in the narrative include the explosion of all weapons during the detonation of a nuclear missile in Buenos Aires; the fact that the *Ellos* don't need very elaborate weapons to subjugate humans equipped with spears, bows, arrows, and other types of primitive weapons; and the fact that the *Ellos* might be unwilling to develop advance weapons that could later be stolen by the cavemen.

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fire for the creation of metallic tools and weapons, they send their terrifying *Zarpos* to destroy the improvised furnace, and a considerable number of cavepeople are massacred. In this way, the bio-political state of the *Ellos* controls the amount of food that the population consumes, determining the sustainability and nourishment of the village. This intergalactic empire also controls the technological development of this small community of men and women; allowing them to develop tools that could allow for their survival (small boats, fishing nets, etc.), but not any type of tool that could be later used against the *Ellos* themselves (such as cannons, rifles, or even swords). The paroxysm of the disposability and usefulness of human lives and bodies under this regime becomes evident when the reader learns that the ruling *Ello* intends to sacrifice 500 human lives, in order to use the bodies as spaceship fuel, to finally return to his home planet. It is in regard to this idea that I will develop the concept of "pure matter."

In *El Eternauta II,* the personality and body of Juan Salvo have changed dramatically. Physically, Salvo has changed deeply; in fact, the reader learns that the hero has acquired mutant powers, probably because of his contact with radioactive elements during his adventures as El Eternauta. The characters' super-powers, and his newly acquired will of leading, seem to invalidate Oesterheld's concept of the *héroe grupo* developed in the first volume of the graphic novel. As Fernando Ariel García points out in his introduction to *El Eternauta II,* this version of Juan Salvo is "[v]erticalista al punto de deshacer de un manotazo el concepto de héroe grupal" (4). This becomes evident as the story advances, and Slavo "se posiciona como líder absoluto e irreprochable, abandonando la duda para alcanzar un ideal incuestionable" (idem). Hojman Conde clearly shares García's opinion on the ways in which Juan Salvo has changed in *El*

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Eternauta II. According to her, this "Salvo is no longer the everyman of the first installment, the guy in the collective group who fights for salvation against all hope. He is now an indestructible leader, a superhero who virtually has no limitations" (143). Even though Salvo's superhuman physical abilities and his new role as a powerful and brave leader are important changes in the character, Salvo's most important changes are ideological. As García points out, the Salvo of the second part of the graphic novel seems to be possessed by a "fanatismo ciego hacia su deber militante" (4). This political fanaticism clearly manifests itself when Salvo decides to sacrifice the lives of his wife Elena and his daughter Martita for the sake of defending the community of innocent cavepeople. The sacrifice of Martita and Helena is portrayed as a sacrifice of individual happiness for the sake of the common good. This sacrifice of ideal happiness for the sake of the common good is at the center of Salvo's—and Oesterheld's—understanding of true social heroism.

Oesterheld's treatment of women in *El Eternauta* has been criticized before. And there are reasons for this. The fact that Martita and Helena's main role in *El Eternauta II* is that of being sacrificed so that the male hero's selflessness can be celebrated, only emphasizes the enormous passivity of Oesteheld's female characters in his graphic novel. In both parts of *El Eternauta*, the reader will notice that women (with the notable exception of María who dies in the final confrontation with the *Zarpos* and the *Manos*) do not engage in battle, and they are usually characters with no agency; individuals that must be protected—and sometimes sacrificed—by the brave men who love them. As I had mentioned in the last chapter, Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste points out Oesterheld's unfair treatment of his female characters in his article "Del nacionalismo como treta de la

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imaginación identitaria en 450 años de Guerra contra el imperialismo, de Héctor Germán Oesterheld and Leopoldo Durañona." In a similar way, Foster also points out the androcentric nature of *El Eternauta*. In Foster's words, the world of *El Eternauta* "is a world of men battling unknown forces of evil to save the world and the planet (exemplified by the loved ones, which, in this case means Salvo's wife Elena and their little daughter, Martita)" (14). Even though Foster is referring to the first part of *El Eternauta,* his words are still quite adequate for describing the gender relations in the second part of the comic book series. While mourning for María, Martita, Elena, and the rest of the people in the promontory, Oesterheld thinks: "¡Sí, primero están las mujeres, los niños: el mañana!" (201). Arguing, as does Foster, that the female characters in *El Eternauta* function as a metaphor of the world that Salvo and his friends must save from the alien invaders, is equivalent to recognizing that women in *El Eternauta* function more as plot devices than they do as complex or realistic characters.

On the other hand, it seems clear that the surviving humans that live in a primitive state in *El Eternauta II* are treated by the *Ellos* as creatures living in a state of "bare life;" like the *homo sacer* described by Agamben, these individuals can be killed, and their killers would not be accused of homicide. But the fact that some *Ellos* even intend to use the bodies of these humans as fuel for their spaceship, reduces these individuals not only to "mere life" or zoē, but also to what I will understand as "mere matter." I will understand the concept of humans turned into "mere matter" as the process in which human bodies are used not for labor, but as material for manufacturing a variety of decorative or practical objects.[121] In *El Eternauta II,* the *Ellos* don't only regard humans

[121] Some examples of human bodies reduced to "mere matter" could be found in the rumors about Nazis using human skin for manufacturing lampshades, or human fat for manufacturing soap. Also, the case of

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as creatures whose life "is not worthy of being lived," they go as far as to see them as fuel, as "mere matter." Regarding the subject of experimentation on human beings within the context of a totalitarian regime, Agamben states that "in the biopolitical horizon that characterizes modernity, the physician and the scientist move in the no-man's-land into which at one point the sovereign alone could penetrate" (idem). This is particularly relevant when analyzing the role of the mysterious *Ellos,* who insert the "horror gland" in the *Manos* in *El Eternauta*, and find a way of turning human beings into fuel in *El Eternauta II.*

On the other hand, while the Juan Salvo of the first *Eternauta* renounces any claim to individual heroism, championing the rise of the *héroe grupo*, the Salvo of *El Eternauta II* (now a mutant with enhanced senses and superhuman strength) takes it upon himself to liberate humans from the evil *Ellos,* through spectacular acts of individual heroism and selfless sacrifice. When referring to the first part of *El Eternauta*, Foster argues that

> Oesterheld insisted, in a way consonant with his political convictions, on his main character as a collective or group hero, thereby emphatically contrasting him with the recurring Western convention of solitary action superheroes, whether by virtue of extraterrestrial forces (Superman), or intensely personally cultivated commitments (The Lone Ranger). (9)

Of course, as I have mentioned before, the "collective or group hero" of the first *Eternauta* is replaced in *El Eternauta II* by a committed, solitary, individualistic hero with superhuman strength, capable of the greatest sacrifices for the sake of "the cause" (a

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real serial killers such as Edward Gein, who used part of the bodies of his victims to create souvenirs or trophies.

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cause in which the hero has a blind and almost irrational faith). The Salvo of the second *Eternauta* is not as powerful as the average American superhero; also, his strong political commitment to the cause of liberty makes him different from most mainstream Western superheroes. And yet, this later portrayal of Oesterheld's hero is closer to the classic American action hero than the first, more vulnerable, incarnation of the character. In the first *Eternauta*, Salvo's partners (especially Franco and Favalli) play a more relevant role in the heroic acts portrayed in the story; also, his individual heroism was still framed by the concept of the "group hero," which, again, seems to lose relevance in *El Eternauta II*.

The Case of *V for Vendetta*

Alan Moore (writer) and David Lloyd (artist) collaborated in *V for Vendetta*, which was first published as a complete series from 1988 to 1989. In this graphic novel, Moore's distrust of Margaret Thatcher's conservative government—which he regarded as an oppressive police state—becomes quite evident. In the introduction to the 2005 Edition of *V for Vendetta*, David Lloyd gives the readers of the classic graphic novel a clear hint to the political motivations behind the story. He first expresses his dislike and contempt for those citizens that chose to be oblivious of the political and historical circumstances of late 1980s England. In this brief introduction, dated 1990 (the last year of Margaret Thatcher's term as Prime Minister), Lloyd states that *V for Vendetta* is "for people who don't switch off the news." The 2005 Edition of this influential graphic novel also includes a brief introduction by Allan Moore. The date under this text is 1988. In this introduction, Moore says that he and David Lloyd were "naïve" when "supposing that it would take something as dramatic as a near-miss nuclear conflict to nudge England

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towards fascism." It is clear that, when it comes to politics, Moore has never been one for subtlety. He later states that

> It's 1988 now. Margaret Thatcher is entering her third term of office and talking confidently of an unbroken Conservative leadership well into the next century. My youngest daughter is seven and the tabloid press are circulating the idea of concentration camps for persons with AIDS. The new riot police wear black visors, as do their horses, and their vans have rotating video cameras mounted on top. The government has expressed a desire to eradicate homosexuality, even as an abstract concept, and one can only speculate as to which minority will be the next legislation against. I'm thinking of taking my family and getting out of this country soon, sometime over the next couple of years. It's cold and it's mean-spirited and I don't like it here anymore. Goodnight England.

As these lines show, Moore believed that the England of the late 1980s was becoming a rightwing totalitarian state; and he saw his fears materialized in Margaret Thatcher's ultra-conservative government. This anxiety certainly becomes integrated into the graphic novel. In *V for Vendetta,* Moore and Lloyd depict a Dystopian Great Britain that, after surviving a nuclear war, has turned to fascism and is governed by a single political party called Norsefire. This name could refer to the British rightwing party known as the National Front. The party often used the initials N.S. and their newspaper was called *The Flame*.

In *V for Vendetta,* 1997 England is depicted as a fascist totalitarian nation. After a nuclear war destroys a considerable part of the planet (including the whole African

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continent) England's food supplies are soon consumed, and the nation collapses into chaos. The fascist party Norsefire (usually referred as The Party in the graphics novel) unites with England's surviving corporations and brings back social stability to the nation; however, in doing so, the fascist Party persecutes and apprehends people of color, homosexuals, and political dissidents, locking them up in concentration camps. After having experimented on them as the Nazi scientist did with many Jewish and Romani prisoners in their concentration camps during World War II, the members of Norsefire mass-murdered many of these individuals.

"Book One: Europe After the Reign" opens with a scene of Evey Hammond, a 16-yeaorld-girl, roaming the streets of London. It is the Guy Fawkes Night of 1997. The impoverished Evey is trying to prostitute herself in an effort to acquire some money. Unfortunately for her, she approaches a group of men who turn out to be undercover agents of "The Finger," the regime's secret police. The agents are about to rape and murder her when V, a cloaked man in a Guy Fawkes mask intervenes, saving the young woman's life, and killing one of the men in the process. He later takes Evey to a rooftop, where they both see the explosion of the Houses of Parliament. After the buildings' destruction, V tells Evey that he is responsible for the terrorist attack. V brings Evey with him to his "Shadow Gallery," a baroque lair full of rare objects from different times and places. There, Evey tells him about her life; she says that her mother died as a cause of the proliferation of debases during and after the nuclear war. Evey's father, on the other hand, had been taken away from home by the Norsefire regime. Evey mentioned that, in his youth, her father used to be a member of a socialist group.

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Eric Finch (chief of the New Scotland Yard "The Nose" and Minister of Investigations) is a veteran, somehow exhausted, detective. He is put in charge of V's case. Finch is under the command of Adam Susan, a.k.a. "The Leader," who is in control of "The Head." Susan's title of "leader" is relatively misleading, as most of his actions are dictated by a computer known as Fate. Derek Almond, head of "The Finger," will also be engaged in the search for V. V kidnaps and psychologically tortures Lewis Prothero, a radio celebrity that serves at the service of the Party. V confines Prothero to a replica of the concentration camp in which he himself was imprisoned. It is reveled then that Prothero was a commander in the camp, and that V was the man confined in room number 5, that is, in room "V." Prothero has a considerable collection of dolls that which he cherishes and fetishizes. V mentions Prothero's role in the camp as someone who "worked the ovens," and proceeds to burn his doll collection in front of him. Prothero suffers a complete mental breakdown. He is returned to the police, sporting doll-like makeup on his face, and in a catatonic state. Later on, Evey assists V in killing Bishop Anthony Lilliman, a pedophilic priest who also worked at the concentration camp where V was imprisoned. V poisons Lilliman with a communion waffle soaked in cyanide. V had left a flower in the train wagon from which he had kidnapped Prothero, and one in Lilliman' room after he poisoned him. Detective Fisher asks Dr. Delia Surridge to get the plant to a botanist for examination. Later that night, Dr. Surridge wakes up in her room. V is in the room with her. She asks V if he has come to kill her, to which he answers that that is indeed the case. She seems strangely relived. At Finch's office, his assistant, Dominic Stone, ventures the theory that the name V could be a reference to the Roman numbers used on doors at the concentration camps. When Finch tries to find if any of V's

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victims were at these camps before, he realizes that both Lillman and Prothero were at the camp near Larkhill. He thinks about interviewing other former workers of from the camp, but soon realizes that they are all dead. Finch is utterly shocked when he finds that Surridge was also part of the camp's staff. He tries calling her, but her phone is disconnected. They get in contact with Almond, who grabs his gun and leaves his apartment. In Surridge's bedroom, the Dr. talks about the evil and stupidity in people, she states that humans beings have "some hideous flaw" in them (73), and states that "we deserved to be culled" (idem). When V gives Dr. Surridge a rose identical to the one he left at the scene of his last two crimes, she tells understands that V is going to kill her after all. However, V explains that he had killed already, by injecting an unidentified substance in her body while she was asleep. She asks if her death would be painful, V says that it won't. She thanks him and, before dying, asks her executioner to show her his face. V takes his mask off, and Dr. Surridge utters the words "It's beautiful" (75) before dying. The fact that V does not kill Dr. Surridge in a violent way might be related to the fact that she is the only former member of the camp who shows some kind of remorse about her actions.

Outside of Dr. Surridge's apartment, V runs into Almond. By the moment of his dead at the hands of V, the reader knows that Almond is a violent man who verbally and psychologically abuses his wife Rose. Almond mocks V's "fancy knives" and "karate gimmicks" (76), pointing out how useless these things are when faced against a gun. Nevertheless, after pulling the trigger of his weapon several times, Almond understands that his gun is not charged. V stabs him, and the agent dies on the spot.

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Finch's men find a Dr. Surridge's diary. Finch filled with rage, and keeps talking about killing V. It becomes somewhat clear that he had feelings for Dr. Surridge. He hesitates to take the diary with him, as he expresses his fatigue, pointing out to the fact that he is too old for this kind of job. Later on, Susan calls Fich to his office. The detective confesses that they still don't know who V is, but offers to read a part of Dr. Surridge's diary for him, as this might illuminate some aspects of V's origin, and the purpose of his terrorist actions. It is stablished that the man called V is probably the same man living in room number five at the concentration camp near Larkhill. This inmate had been given chemical substances, such as fertilizers, to tend to the garden. The prisoner's actions become more and more bizarre, and Dr. Surridge's becomes obsessed with understanding the man's habits and manias. One night, the camp's staff hears an explosion. As they leave the building, several of them die asphyxiated by mustard gas. Others are burnt in a substance that behaves as napalm. The camp burns down, the prisoner walks away.

Finch believes that either V has been enacting a long and elaborate vendetta against all the staff of the concentration camp where he was imprisoned, or he is using this personal vendetta as a cover-up for a much greater scheme, eliminating anyone that could have been able to identify him. Finch points out the fact that the diary had been left in a place where anyone could have seen it. He also mentions that some pages are missing. There is no hint at V's race, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, etcetera. The detective goes as far as to venture the idea that the whole diary could be a hoax: a document written by V himself to trick them and mislead the investigation. Susan seems to embrace the idea that the diary tells V's true origins is more likely to be the

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right one, because he believes that killing so many people just for a cover-up story would be an act of madness.

In “Book Two: The Vicious Cabaret,” V abandons Evey on the streets of London. Later on, he breaks into a building known as Jordan Tower, where Norsefire’s department of propaganda (“The Mouth”) operates. “The Mouth” is ran by a man called Roger Dascombe. In Jordan Tower, V broadcasts a speech, calling on Britain’s people to resist the government. V escapes by dressing an immobilized Dascombe as himself. Some guards shoot Dascombe, who falls through a window. Finch is called and unmasks the body. He instructs some officers to call Almond’s widow, Rose, who had been seeing Dascombe after her husband’s death at V’s hands. Rose never loved Dascombe, but she stays with him for economic and—perhaps—emotional support. When Finch criticizes Peter Creedy—Almond’s replacement as head of “The Finger”— for not taking V seriously, Creedy suggests that Finch has not been the same after the death of Dr. Surridge. Finch punches Creedy in the face, and is called to Susan’s office, who “sends him on a holiday” to Norfolk. Finch confesses that he was expecting a harsher punishment.

Meanwhile, Evey is caught stealing by a man called Gordon, after transposing in his house. Gordon, a bootlegger, feels sorry for the young woman, and takes her in. Even though he is much older than Evey, they eventually become lovers. A ruthless Scottish gangster called Allistar (Ally) Harper kills Gordon. Evey grabs Gordon’s gun, and finds Harper. When she is about to shoot him, Evey is abducted by an unidentified man. Meanwhile, Rose struggles to make a living as a cabaret dancer; she finds this

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humiliating (as she is continually sexually harassed), and her hatred for the unsupportive government grows.

Evey wakes up in a cell in a concentration camp. She is tortured. Her head is shaved. She is repeatedly asked to collaborate with the government and betray V. She finds a letter in her cell, written on toilet paper. The letter has been written by an actress named Valerie Page. Page was imprisoned and executed because she was a lesbian. Evey is given an ultimatum: she will either collaborate with the regime (possibly getting a job with "The Finger") or be executed in the camps. She chooses her own dead. Her captors state that, then, they have nothing else to threaten her with. She is freed. Soon after. Evey realizes that it was V who captured, tortured, and threaten her. The whole thing was an elaborate hoax to free her mind. Evey is finally able to forgive V, and offers to join him in his battle against the regime. V tells her that she will be needed soon, and that the end is near. It is revealed that Valerie Page really existed, and that the letters that Evey read where the actual letters that she had given V during his time at Larkhill. Meanwhile, it is revealed that Susan's mental state has been rapidly worsening, and his platonic relationship with Fate has been taking more bizarre forms. The reader will eventually understand that V has hacked Fate, using it to capitalize on Susan's already unstable mental state.

Early in "Book Three: The Land of Do-As-You-Please," V conducts several acts of terrorism, crippling the state institutions known as "The Eye," "The Mouth," and "The Ear." In a radio transmission, V calls himself Fate, and tells the people of England that for a period of three days they will not be policed: their actions will not be monitored, and their conversations will not be listened to. This causes some social unrest. Fearing

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uprisings, Creedy offers Harper and his men money in exchange for suppressing riots and other forms of rebellion. Meanwhile, Rose buys a gun for self-protection. Susan's relationship with Fate becomes increasingly strange: he confesses his love for it, and seems to be sexually aroused by the machine. Finch, for his part, has been absent from town for a while. He eventually travels to the ruins of "Larkhill Resettlement Camp," where V was imprisoned. The detective believes that spending some time in this place will allow him to better understand the mind of the terrorist he seeks. Finch takes LSD, which leads him to have a series of hallucinations that range from the pleasing sight of men and women of color, homosexuals, and lesbians (some of the groups that Norsefire tried to annihilate in concentration camps such as the one in Larkhill), for whom he declares his love and affection, to nightmarish visions of Dr. Delia Surridge kissing Liliman's hand. He ends up in room V, where V was probably imprisoned. He finally comes to the realization that he is the one keeping himself captive, and soon reaches a state of mental freedom similar to the one attained by Evey after V freed her from the false concentration camp that he himself had built. This bizarre experience allows Finch to gain a greater understanding of V. Back in London, he deduces that V's underground lair must be in Victoria Metro Station. His hypothesis is soon proven to be true.

V tells Evey that the state of unrest in which the citizens are is not yet transformed the nation in "the-l and-of-do-as-you-please," V's vision of a functional anarchist society. He believes, however, that they have reached the state that precedes this type of society. As V manipulates the system for his political goals, Dominic, Finch's assistant, comes to the conclusion that the terrorist has gained access to Fate. He argues that "he's had acces to Fate since the beginning" (209). This is confirmed immediately, when V's "signature"

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appears on the computer's screen. Susan suffers a total mental breakdown. He is later seen kissing Fate, telling the computer that he has forgiven it. Susan goes out in his limousine, following Creedy' advice, who wants to publicly expose the "Leader's" mental state. Creedy's intentions of taking control of the government are clear to Helen Heyer, the cruel and calculating wife of Conrad Heyer, who serves as head of "The Eye." She is having an affair with Harper, who she manipulates, turning him against Creedy. Heyer wishes to help rise her husband to power, in hopes of running the country herself. But V sends Heyer a recording of his wife having sex with the Scottish gangster. Heyer kills Harper with a wrench, but, in the struggle, the gangster slashes his throat with a straight razor. Helen refuses to help his husband, accusing him of ruining her plans. She lets him bleed to death. Suan, on the other hand, is assassinated by Rose, who shoots him in the head during the parade. Rose is taken prisoner by the police. Creedy had already been killed by Harper and his thugs, who had been payed off by Helen Heyer.

Down at Victoria Station, Finch faces V. He wounds him with a dagger, but Finch shoots him, fatally wounding the terrorist. Before leaving him wounded on the floor, V tells Fincher that he cannot be killed, because "ideas are bulletproof" (236). Seeing the amount of blood spilled by V on the floor, Finch concludes that he has, in fact, killed him. After letting people in the party know that V has been fatally wounded, Finch quits his position. Meanwhile, Evey finds V's corpse at the Shadow Gallery. She thinks about unmasking him, but rejects the idea, understanding that V should not be regarded as an individual, but as a symbol. She the decides to take V's place. She later appears in public, wearing one of V's outfit. From a rooftop, she delivers a speech. In this speech, she announces that 10 Downing Street (the United Kingdom's government headquarters)

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would be destroyed the next day. She tells the crowd that tonight they must choose between "lives of our own, or a return to chains" (258). Evey's call for anarchy ignites a revolt. Dominic Stone is hurt in the riot, and he is abducted by Evey. It is widely believed that Evey's plan is to train Dominic to be her successor.

At the end of the graphic novel, Evey places V's corpse in a metro train, loading one of the wagons with roses, and a considerable amount of explosives. She uses this metro train to blow up 10 Downing Street. At the end of the graphic novel, Helen Heyer is seen offering her body to a gang of drunkards, in exchange for food and protection. She sees Finch wandering the streets, and tries to convince him to join her project of rebuilding the government (starting by turning the gang in a small army). Finch rejects her and walks away. Helen Heyer insults him, calling him a "queer" (265). The graphic novel ends with Finch walking alone into the night.

The importance of *V for Vendetta* within the context of 20th century dystopian science fiction is emphasized by Peter Y. Paik in "Between Trauma and Tragedy: From *The Matrix* to *V for Vendetta*"—the last chapter of his book *From Utopia to Apocalypse: Science Fiction and the Politics of Catastrophe* (2010). For Paik, "[t]he horrors portrayed in *V for Vendetta* evoke the historical realities that have preponderantly shaped the thinking of ethics and politics from the second World War to the present: concentration camps, the threat of nuclear annihilation, and the disintegration of democratic states into totalitarian regimes" (181). *V for Vendetta* really is a study on fascism and the pervasive and lasting effect of concentration camps. On the other hand, it is a political statement against any form of totalitarianism, and an appeal for anarchy.

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Agamben believes that "[i]f there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and bio-politics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears as a stable border dividing two clearly distinct zones" (122). Moore's retelling of the historical process in which England's conservative party unites with the nation's surviving corporations for the instauration of a totalitarian fascist regime echoes with Agamben's ideas about the unstable nature of the "border" separating bio-politics from thanatopolitics. Thanatopolitics, far from being the opposite of bio-politics, is its apotheosis, its more extreme form. Naturally, the quintessential space of thanatopolitics is the concentration camp. In "Part Three" of his influential *Homo Sacer,* Agamben explains the way in which National Socialist eugenics consists on the extermination of "life that is unworthy of being lived" (123). Even though the concept of a "life that is unworthy of being lived" arose in Germany in the context of the moral and medical defense of euthanasia, the National Socialist party transported this concept to the field of eugenics. The Nazi State, and the state depicted in Alan Moore's graphic novel, are states that give themselves the right of deciding what live is "worthy of being lived." The concentration camp (called "resettlement camps" in the novel) becomes the place in which these "cleansing" of life "unworthy of being lived" takes place. For this reason, Agamben believes that the concentration camp can be seen as "the pure, absolute, and impassable bio-political space (insofar as it is founded solely on the state of exception)" (idem). But it is from the space of the concentration camp that the hero of Moore and Gibbon's graphic novel rises. He was once seen as a man whose life was "unworthy of being lived." The reader doesn't know why V ended up in the camp. Was he homosexual, Jewish, or black? Was he an anarchist or a communist? Whoever he was

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when he entered the camp, it is clear that he has been transformed into something else, something stronger. And he escapes the camp with a very specific project in mind, one that goes beyond mere revenge, and that presupposes a real threat to the totalitarian bio-political fascist state depicted in the graphic novel.

V for Vendetta's fascist state is run by Adam Susan, "The Leader." Susan's rule is highly influenced by the gigantic computer named Fate. Susan and Fate constitute what the members of the party call "The Head." The police force of the party is called "The Finger" and the governmental institution in charge of mass espionage is called "The Nose." The comical names of these institutions remind us of the institutions that constitute George Orwell's totalitarian state in his canonical science fiction novel *1984*. Moore himself has recognized more than once the important influence that Orwell's novel played in the creation of *V for Vendetta*. While Orwell's state was—among many other things—a criticism of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and of totalitarianism in general, Moore's graphic novel was a criticism of Margaret Thatcher's right-wing government during the 1980s,[122] that uses Nazi Germany as both a model and a warning. For Moore, fascism could be fought and destroyed only by the purifying force of anarchy.

Contrary to what happens with women in *El Eternauta*, Evey's character in *V for Vendetta* evolves from that of a "damsel in distress," to a brave and determined social leader, that even replaces V in the hero's last appearance in public. But the transformation of Evey from a young woman in a situation of tremendous vulnerability to an empowered champion of freedom and anarchy is not an easy one. For her to become a

[122] Alan Moore had his little literary vengeance on Thatcher when, in *Miracleman: Olympus* (1984), the British politician is forced to give up her power to the more socially-oriented super-humans Miracleman and Miraclewoman, and their alien allies.

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powerful and brave social leader, for her to become V, she has to endure what V himself had to experience in the concentration camp. What Evey does not know is that her imprisonment in the camp is an elaborate scheme by V, who kidnaps her, tortures her, and questions her until she is given the choice of choosing between her integrity or her survival—which theoretically implied a shorter imprisonment and a future job as a government informant. The idea of integrity as something that, although "small" and "fragile," is "the only thing in the world that's worth having" (160), is presented to Evey in the letters that Valerie Page slips into her cell through a small hole in the wall. When Evey chooses her integrity—that "last inch" (idem) of herself—over her own life, V sets her free. She first rejects V's justifications of his actions: that he has imprisoned her and tortured her out of love, in order to make her free. Evey becomes less hostile to her former captor when he reveals that the letters from Valerie Page were not a forgery, and are in fact authentic letters that were given to him when he was a prisoner in the concentration camp of Larkhill. Evey finally forgives V and uses what she has learnt in this traumatic but transformative experience in preparing herself for the task of taking V's mantle in the battle against the totalitarian government of Norsefire.

As Paik points out, the movie adaptation of Moore's graphic novel tries to soften the cruelty of V in the imprisonment of her protégé. Nevertheless, Paik asks what the more ambiguous and less-sympathetic V of the graphic novel would have done to the young woman if she had signed the confession that the fake agents of the party wanted her to sign.

> Would V then have killed her? If Evey were confronted with the truth
> after betraying V, wouldn't she be filled with a sense of shame so

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overpowering as to drive her to suicide? In the harsh world of the comic, it is clear that these extremes are included in the stakes willingly accepted by V in the particular course of education he elects for his protégé (179).

Of course, Moore's depiction of female character such as Evey and Rosemary Almond is far more empowering than that of Oesterheld's female characters. Nevertheless, the question of whether the depiction of violence against women, and particularly against Evey—in the form of her torture and imprisonment at the hands of V—can be justified, remains a valid topic of discussion.[123]

It is relevant that Evey can only take the mantle of V after she has experienced the horror of the concentration camp. Perhaps, only after she has experienced what it is to be reduced to "bare life" can she arrive to a real understanding of the moral monstrosity of the regime, and the subsequent need of dismantling it. V, on his part, was the subject of cruel medical experimentation in the camp.

In that sense, the character had to suffer the fate of so many Jewish and Romani prisoners of the Nazi regime—not to mention as well as the fate of many American

[123] Moore received strong criticism for the depiction of the torture—and possible rape—of Barbara Gordon—aka Batgirl—at the hands of the Joker, in the graphic novel *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988). In this occasion, Moore collaborated with artist Brian Bolland, in what comic book fans consider to be one of the greatest Batman stories ever written. This comic book was also adapted into an animated film, released in 2016. The film gives a Barbara Gordon a more relevant role in the story, arguably trying to soften the brutality that she suffers at the hands of the villain. Moore himself said in an interview that perhaps he went too far in his treatment of Batgirl's character. In a 2016 Q&A for Goodreads Moore confessed: "[a]ctually, with *The Killing Joke*, I have never really liked it much as a work—although I of course remember Brian Bolland's art as being absolutely beautiful—simply because I thought it was far too violent and sexualized a treatment for a simplistic comic book character like Batman and a regrettable misstep on my part." Naturally, this reference of the excess of sexualization and violence in the text is a reference to Barbara Gordon's violent victimization by the Joker, who shots her down, cripples her, takes naked pictures of her in order to torture her father—Detective Jim Gordon—and probably rapes her. In an earlier interview for Mania.com, Moore also criticized his work on *The Killing joke*, characterizing the story as "too nasty" and "too physically violent." Again, this reference to the excessive "physical violence" on the graphic novel, Moore is probably addressing the debate that arose from the aforementioned violence endured by Barbara Gordon in the comic. Nevertheless, in this same interview, Moore said that the story had some redeemable qualities, even though he insisted in his general dislike of his script, when arguing that "In terms of my writing, it's not one of my favorite pieces."

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prisoners put on life sentences or dead row, who were also experimented upon by scientists or state agents (Agamben, 156-57)—to become a human guinea pig, a *Veruchpersonen* (VP) at the hands of a fascist totalitarian regime. According to Agamben, those who entered the concentration camp suffered from "definitive exclusion from the political community" (159). Agamben describes the process in which VPs fall into a state of bare life in the following way: "because they were lacking all the rights and expectations that we customarily attribute to human existence, and yet were still biologically alive, they came to be situated in a limit zone between life and death, inside and outside, in which they were no longer anything but bare life" (idem). In other words, the VP becomes an *homo sacer*, that is, "a life that might be killed without the commission of homicide" (idem).[124] V is forced into this state of "bare life," he becomes an *homo sacer,* and even after he escapes from his captors, V remains excluded from the political existence of his fellow men and women, even though this also seems to be—up to a certain extent—a personal choice. In other words, while being imprisoned in the concentration camp, V is forced into a state of bare life—a state of zoē—but after he escapes, V decides to remain outside political and even social life—or bios—in order to be able to bring down the whole political structure of Noresefire. Only after being confronted by the knowledge of his own bare life does V take upon himself the destruction of the fascist state; only after Evey has been forced to endure similar circumstances, does she become the liberator that championed the principles of anarchy at what seems to be the fall of fascism in her country.

[124] Again, it is important to remember the role of physicians, fictional characters scientists such as Dr. Delia Surridge, and real people such as the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele, in the process of turning human beings into VPs.

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In order to complete my analysis of the way in which Moore depicts resistance to bio-political regimes, I will now focus my attention on the way in which the author seems to understand heroism, and how this determines the way in which he develops the heroes of his graphic novel. V appoints himself as a destabilizing force that both mocks and questions the ruling party, through complex and spectacular acts of terrorism. Eventually, the reader will discover that V has also been boycotting the party from within, exploiting the mental weakness of "The Leader." V, who presents himself as a lone rebel, a brave intellectual anarchist extremist, ends up creating a social movement that eventually destroys the party's rule. V himself is then replaced by his pupil, Evey, who becomes, by impersonating her master for a short period of time (258-62), the "new" V. This fact could be interpreted as a renouncement of individual identity—and a renouncement of the glory that comes with individual heroism—for the sake of the common good.

Without a doubt, Moore's annulment of his hero's individuality is necessary for the victory of anarchy. It is by empowering the general population that V and Evey bring down the end of The Party's fascist bio-political regime. By championing the power of the people, and denouncing the pervading effects that governments have not only in society, but in the psyche and spiritual life of every individual citizen, Moore renders an unapologetic defense of his own anarchistic ideology. At the end, it is not V who kills "The Leader," but Rosemary Almond—a.k.a. Rose—the widow of the abusive high-ranking officer Derek Almond. Rose murders Susan because she blames her for the death of her husband, but also because he represents the indifferent state that forced her into a life of humiliation and shame. Even though Moore's treatment of Rose throughout the graphic novel is rather rough, it is clear that the experiences that she had to endure

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pushed her to take responsibility for herself and her own destiny. The metamorphoses of Rose from a helpless and abused housewife to the assassin of her nation's leader is the apotheosis of the character's transformation, and the fulfillment of V's desire for humanity: that they take their destiny in their own hands, that they stop delegating on others—and in particular on the institution of the government—the responsibility of shaping and determining their lives and their world.

It is also relevant that it is not V who delivers the speech that, by the end of Chapter 10, incites the masses to action, ensuring the definitive fall of the fascist government. This speech is actually delivered by the empowered Evey, who impersonates her mysterious master after his death at the hands of Eric Finch. In this final speech, Moore himself seems to speak through Evey, who ends up embracing the author's ideology and putting forward his own political agenda. Evey voices Moore's political convictions in what could be read as a brief anarchist manifesto. These are her words:

> Good evening, London. I would like to introduce myself, but truth to tell, I do not have a name. You can call me 'V.' Since mankind's dawn, a handful of oppressors have accepted the responsibility over our lives that we should have accepted for ourselves. By doing so, they took our power. By doing nothing, we gave it away. We've seen where their way leads, through camps and wars towards the slaughterhouse. In Anarchy, there is another way. With Anarchy, from rubbles comes new life, hope reinstated … Tomorrow, Downing Street will be destroyed, the head reduced to ruins, an end of what has gone before. Tonight, you must choose what

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comes next. Lies of our own, or a return to chains. Choose carefully. And so, adieu. (158)

At the end of her speech, a riot erupts. It seems as if the citizens of England have chosen to take reasonability over their own lives. They have empowered themselves, leaving the chains of governmental institutions behind. It could be argued that, in the world of Moore's graphic novel, it takes the sacrifice of a great man's life to liberate a nation. But it is not that simple: in fact, V demonstrates that the annulation of a great man's identity (the disintegration of his heroic individuality), is utterly necessary for the awakening of the masses, and their recognition of their inherent power to govern themselves. At the end of Moore's graphic novel, Finch wonders why V allowed him to shoot him. He states "I was so slow … He could have killed me" (204). Perhaps V believed that freeing a man from his own spiritual, political and ideological chains, was worth sacrificing his own life. An anarchist utopia cannot afford to have any individual heroes, because heroes can become authorities, or symbols used by those in power; and anarchy knowns that all political power is dangerous and can lead to abuse and totalitarianism.

Conclusions

Both Moore and Oesterheld propose different forms of active resistance against the repressive regimes that their heroes must face. These authors also used different models for their fictional totalitarian governments (Nazi Germany in the case Moore and the Argentina of the military junta in the case of Oesterheld). Different types of totalitarian governments call for different forms of resistance. While Oesterheld seems to advocate for a more frontal form of opposition to the evil state, such as the formation of

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an anti-totalitarian army that will eventually attack the enemy's centers of power, Moore's hero uses terrorism and sabotage as his main forms of resistance. By the end of Moore's graphic novel, the reader learns that V has successfully infiltrated the highest offices of the party, boycotting the government from the inside, taking advantage of the Leader's mental illness, and leading the nation into a complete social and political collapse. But even though the heroes of Oesterheld and Moore's graphic novels embrace different forms of active resistance, both authors seem to agree in the moral imperative of resisting totalitarianism, no matter what the personal cost of resistance might be. In both graphic novels, the cost of resisting totalitarianism proves to be extremely high.

Moore and Oesterheld used the graphic novel as a medium for criticizing specific power dynamics (and specific institutions) that they both saw as negative and dangerous for their nations. In both *El Eternauta II* and *V for Vedetta*, different versions of bio-political states are depicted, and different version of social rebellion and individual heroism are championed. Both authors position the element of sacrifice at the center of their understanding of heroism. For Oesterheld, a true hero should be willing to sacrifice everything (even his family and his own happiness) for the cause. For V, a true hero is the one capable of empowering others, and freeing them from their political and ideological chains, even at the cost of his own identity and individuality. In fact, V, who presents himself as some kind of anarchist messiah, completely renounces his own individuality in order to allow all the citizens of the nation to be the rulers of their own lives, becoming, in a way, the heroes of their own stories. For both Moore and Oesterheld, heroism is not so much about power and strength, but about commitment and sacrifice.

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Conclusions

In this exploration of twentieth century Latin American and Anglo-Saxon science fiction, I have demonstrated that, contrary to common misconceptions about this literary genre, it is not uncommon for science fiction to explore and delve into serious political concepts and issues. I have shown that works of 20th century science fiction were used in denouncing authoritarianism, like Oesterheld and Solano Lopez did in *El Eternauta II*; and totalitarianism and fascism, like Moore and Lloyd did in *V for Vendetta.* By working with Ray Bradbury's short stories "Way in the Middle of the Air" and "The Other Foot," I have shown how science fiction authors also dealt with concrete political realities, such as segregation and hate crimes in the Jim Crow era. I have also written extensively about the way in which different works of Latin American and Anglo Saxon science fiction articulated narratives that dealt with the anxieties created by the global threats of the Cold War era. I have also demonstrated that works of science fiction often articulate a defense of certain political ideologies or systems; three examples of this are Borges's and Moore's defense of anarchism in "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" and *V for Vendetta,* and Oesterheld's defense of armed opposition to repressive regimes, articulated in the pages of *El Eternauta II*. With my use of science fiction graphic novels in this project, such as *El Eternauta*, *El Eternauta II*, *Watchmen*, and *V for Vendetta*, I have also tried to debunk widespread prejudices and misconceptions about comics and graphic novels in and outside academia. Science fiction and sequential art are spaces in which

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serious political, psychological, social, or philological questions can be articulated, negotiated, and explored in a critical and thoughtful way.

In chapter one, I have shown that science fiction is also an ideal vehicle for articulating utopian or ideal visions of the future, even though our understanding of what consists utopia can change in time, and even changes widely from person to person. In my analysis of Urzaiz's novel *Eugenia,* I tried to demonstrate that science fiction written decades or even centuries ago can give us an idea of what kind of hopes and dreams these authors from days-gone-by had for the future of humankind. Exploring works like *Eugenia* allows us to see the positive light in which the science of eugenics was regarded during the first three decades of the 20th century, before the discovery of the horrors that took place in Nazi concentration camps gave this science a negative reputation. Urzaiz, a medical doctor who was at the head of mental asylums in early 20th century Mérida, thought of eugenics as an ideal means for dealing with "social" diseases such as madness, vice, and crime, as well as physical hereditary diseases that were common in his time. In my analysis of eugenics in *Eugenia* I also tried to show the pervasive relationship that this science had with concepts such as racial purity and racial superiority. I also demonstrated that *Eugenia*, a novel written shortly after the end of both the Mexican Revolution and World War I, is deeply engaged with the topic of world peace; Urzaiz's work inquiries about the mechanisms (social, economic, and perhaps even biological) that can allow global peace to be achieved and maintained over time.

In chapter two, by analyzing Fuenmayor's *Una triste aventura de 14 sabios*, I gained a greater understanding of the experimental nature of Colombian *avant-garde* literature in the late 1920s. Also, I showed the way in which some authors ironically used

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the science fiction genre to mock philosophical Positivism and its championing of science and the scientific method as humankind's highest sources of truth. On the other hand, by studying Osorio Lizarazo's *Barranquilla 2132*, I demonstrated that science fiction authors not necessarily equate technological advancement to true progress. Rogers, the hero of this novel, discovers—after sleeping for two centuries—that humankind has advanced greatly in terms of technology, and yet, has lost the spiritual elements that once made it transcendent and unique. Not even the fact that the future world depicted in the novel is at peace allows the hero to appreciate and adapt to this new century. Perhaps, Osorio Lizarazo's novel shows us that not even a utopian world in which great technological advancements coexist with greater social and gender equality, and a lasting and harmonious state of global peace, can make us individually happy. Perhaps, this is also a novel about the impossibility of achieving true happiness.

As most utopias and dystopias, *Barranquilla 2132* is also a work of fiction that deals with the place and historical moment in which it was produced. Osorio Liarazo's denouncement of corruption in 20th century Colombian politics (voiced by Rogers) is as urgent and accurate today as it was in 1932. His depiction—almost an obsession throughout the novel—of airplanes and other forms of flying vehicles can be related to the rise of commercial aviation in Colombia, which did indeed begin in the city of Barranquilla. On the other hand, Osorio Lizarazo's depiction of a world that has achieved world peace—which is reminiscent of Urzaiz's *Eugenia*—can be seen as a response to the violence and political tension of Urzaiz's historical moment. Six years after the publication of his novel, his friend and admired political leader, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, would be assassinated in the streets of Bogotá, throwing the entire nation into a spiral of

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violence and political unrest that, arguably, still exists today. Also, it is important to take into consideration that Osorio Lizarazo's novel was published some thirteen years after World War I, and only seven years before the beginning of World War II. In fact, World War I would explain why both Osorio Lizarazo's novel and Urziz's *Eugenia* voice a strong case against nationalism, and even against the institution of the nation state. This was also the case in Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado," a short story written during the Cold War.

By studying *Barranquilla 2132* I also gained a grater knowledge of some of the caudillos or strongmen of 20th century Latin America. Not only was Osorio Lizarazo a personal friend of the popular and influential Gaitán, he also served in Juan Perón's first presidency in Argentina, and under the authoritarian rule of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo (even writing a biography of the ruthless ruler). I explored the way in which with Osorio Lizarazo's leftist political views seemed to be at odds with his obsession with this kind of authoritative figures from both the political left and the political right. I payed particular attention to Roger's obsession in the novel with the terrorist scientist who wants to rule the world, in order to revive the spiritual values that humanity has lost in its pursuit for world peace and technological development. I argued that Roger's obsession with this would-be dictator mirrors Osorio Lizarazo's fascination with actual dictators and strongmen in politics.

In this chapter, I also demonstrated the way in which science fiction (and fiction in general) can allow us to explore the gender roles of a certain society in a particular historical moment. The clear misogyny of Fuenmayor's *Una triste aventura* becomes evident to the reader when one considers the terrible treatment of the character of Doña

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Dalila, the exclusion of the female characters from the category of *sabios* (wise men), and the complete passivity and lack of agency of characters such as Leila and Zitita. These are all reminders of the chauvinism of Colombian intellectual circles (and Colombian society in general) at the time. In fact, women in Colombia were not allowed to attend university until the mid-1930s. In this chapter I also explored how Roger's depiction of the women of the future in *Barranquilla 2132* evidences the anxieties of Colombian men at the beginning of the 1930s, who were coming to terms with a greater influx of women into the workforce, and probably felt uneasy about the greater gender equality that was starting to exist in the country.[125]

In chapter three, I demonstrated that the Cold War was experienced by people all over the Western World. By studying the short fiction produced by Ray Bradbury and René Rebetez during the 1950s and 1960s I demonstrated that Western authors, and people in general, experienced this conflict in different ways. While stories such as Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains" and "The Million-Year Picnic" focused on the inhalation of humankind in planet Earth and its possible survival in other planets such as Mars, Rebetez's "El desertor" and "Rocky Lunario" emphasize the absurdity, complexity, and even the madness of this conflict. "There Will Come Soft Rains" asks its readers to consider the fragility and futility of the human species; "The Million-Year Picninc," on the other hand, articulates the possibility of a fragile utopia: one in which humankind has a new chance; a chance to live peacefully, to be done with the evils of organized religion, social inequality, and racial discrimination. This utopia is only suggested in the story: the members of the only human family in Mars see the symbols of

[125] However, women wouldn't be allowed to vote in the country until 25 years after the publication of Osorio Lizarazo's novel.

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humankind's terrible past go up in flames in the fire lighted by the father. The members of this family are destined to be the new Martians; this is a second chance for humanity, not only a chance for survival, but also for radical moral and social improvement.

In "El desertor," Johnny MacGuire, an American pilot, suffers a nervous breakdown because of the moral implications of having to drop a nuclear bomb in a country that he might not perceive as a threat to his nation or to himself. In "Rocky Lunario," Lunario does destroy the planet. In both "El desertor" and "Rocky Lunario" Rebetez delves into the psychological effects of war. Also, in both of these stories, the Colombian author exposes the absurdity of this conflict, and the vulnerability of the developing nations that are not directly involved in the war and have no nuclear weapons of their own, but are still under the constant threat of nuclear warfare, posed by the United States and the Soviet Union. Both Bradbury and Rebetez deal with anxieties of nuclear warfare in their stories, denouncing the dangers of the nuclear arms race between the world's super powers.

In my analysis of "Up in the Middle of the Air" and "The Other Foot" I demonstrated that not only do science fiction authors like Bradbury denounce the social evils of their time—in this case, segregation and hate crimes in the Jim Crow era—they often imagine ways of solving this issues. In my analysis of these texts I also showed that, even in moments when some subjects were seen as taboo or regarded as inaccurate for artistic or literary representation, science fiction authors have come forth time and time again to give these issues a voice, either metaphorically (as in the case of the comic strip "Judgement Day"), or quite openly, as does Ray Bradbury in these stories.

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In chapter four, I continued my analysis of Cold War science fiction from Latin America and Argentina. In my analysis of *El Eternauta* I demonstrated that science fiction from Latin America was not uninterested in global subjects such as the Cold War. In fact, *El Eternauta* clearly articulates anxieties about nuclear warfare. Both the toxic snow that falls in Buenos Aires at the beginning of the narrative and the nuclear missile that destroys the city by the end of the text are evidence of these anxieties. However, I also demonstrated that *El Eternauta* engages in subjects that, even though related to the global conflict of the Cold War, are particular to the case of Argentina (and of Latin America in general). Namely, the anxieties regarding American interventionism in the region. I demonstrated that, while articulating anxieties of external interference in the nation's political life, *El Eternauta* also championed a worldview in which Argentina is not only a possible casualty in a global conflict, but an active agent capable of producing its own technology, of fighting its own battles, and even of helping other (Northern) nations in the case of a hypothetical alien invasion. I concluded that the championing of the role of an amateur approach to technology is also of the greatest importance when thinking of Argentina as a country that is capable not only of political and military independence, but also of helping other nations of the world if needed.

In my analysis of *Watchmen,* I demonstrated that the science fiction of the 1980s was also politically engaged in the discussion of relevant subjects such as the nuclear arms race, and the constant threat of global nuclear war. On the other hand, I used both *El Eternauta* and *Watchmen* to gain a better understanding of the way in which the creation of an "other" makes violence against it possible (as it happens with the *hombres-robot*),

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and how this fear of the other can be politically manipulated, as the character of Adrian Veidt does in *Watchemen.*

Finally, in chapter five, I studied the way in which the "utopian" world of Borges's "Utopía de un hombre que está cansado" allows us to learn not only about the Borges's political views, but also about the very real political reality that the author was trying to escape through the depiction of this possible world in his fiction. In this short story, Borges imagines an anarchist utopia in which the gradual extinction of human beings, the disappearance of all forms of governments (including the institution of the nation-state), the end of cities and towns, and the abolition of all political practices, has led to the existence of a peaceful world. In Borges's utopian future, which men and women live a solitary life, dedicated to art, literature, science, and introspection. This story was published the same year in which Argentina's *military junta* was established. And yet, no direct references to Argentina's political situation are present in the story. However, the author openly criticizes politicians, warfare, nationalism, and violence. But this story is not only Borges's defense of anarchy as the ideal social system, it is also a text that demands of its readers to consider the futility of humankind. Borges seems to see our species as unnecessary, almost ephemeral. This is why, even though the story depicts what are arguably the last centuries of humankind on our planet, Borges titled it "utopia of a man who is tired." It is a utopia because Borges thought that living in a state of anarchy is the ideal state for humanity, something that one day we might deserve; but it is also the text of a man who is tired: tired of war, of politics, of corruption, and, perhaps, even of social interaction and society as such.

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In my analysis of *El Eternauta II* and *V for Vendetta*, I demonstrated that these works of sequential art are deeply engaged with the reality of their author's lives, and the political views that they believed in and defended. I demonstrated that while *El Eternauta II* can be read as a text that actively opposes the totalitarian regime of Argentina's *junta militar*, calling for action against the regime, *V for Vendetta* voiced a strong opposition to Margaret Thatcher's conservative government. I demonstrated that knowing about Oesterheld's involvement in the urban guerrilla known as the *Montoneros* (an involvement that ultimately led to his violent death at the hands of the military) and about Moore's anarchist political ideas, both inform and enrich our reading of these works of science fiction. I also showed that even though these texts both dealt with active resistance to totalitarian (military, in the case of Oesterheld, and fascist, in the case of Moore) regimes, they do so in rather different ways. While *El Eternauta II* calls for organized, military-like actions against the oppressors, *V for Vendetta* calls for calculated infiltration, and strategically planned acts of terrorism. I also demonstrated that while *El Eternauta II* (unlike the first *Eternauta*) champions the figure of the hero who is willing to sacrifice himself, his family and friends for the cause, *V for Vendetta* advocates for a type of hero that necessarily must sacrifice his own identity and individual glory in order to spiritually and politically liberate the people of England. Finally, I analyzed the role of female characters in these works of fiction, arriving at the conclusion that while Oesterheld's female characters are usually devoid of agency and often used as plot devices, Moore's treatment of female characters—although often times ruthless, as is the case of Evey and Rose—gives them the power of changing themselves, and changing the world.

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In conclusion, this extensive study of eighty years of Latin American and Anglo-Saxon science fiction has allowed me to gain a better understanding of modern history, as well as a greater knowledge of the political and social importance that this literary genre had, and still has, in our world. Even though more articles and books are being published every year about the long-neglected field of Latin American science fiction, I hope that this project will contribute to the critical study of this rich and often ignored literary tradition.

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