



El agave es verdaderamente admirable: su violencia es quietud, simetría su quietud. Su sed fabrica el licor que lo sacia: es un alambique que se destila a sí mismo. Al cabo de veinticinco años alza una flor, roja y única. Una vara sexual la levanta, llama petrificada. Entonces muere.

Octavio Paz

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# El tiempo del maguey baroque spaces disappearing

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# Introduction

In Mexico, people say that mezcal heals all wounds. It is given to babies when their teeth hurt, it helps digest a too festive meal, cures the symptoms of pena de amor. Taken at small dose, daily, it can help you live for a hundred years. Mezcal is the liquid form of the agave, an over fifty-percent alcoholic beverage, the result of the distillation of burning the plant's heart. Its flavor is typically characterized by an earthy note and a limpid smoke, something deeply rooted and highly volatile. Something in between the ground and the air. Entre la piedra y la flor, as Octavio Paz wrote, the agave stands still, immobile for years, in all the splendor of its spiny leaves. Mezcal is inextricably linked to agave, which life is characterized by 5 to 35 years of stable growth before its maturity. When an agave finally begins to erect its only colossal flower, the « quiote », it is also in the process of slowly dying. This spectacle is an uncommon natural manifestation of the fragile frontier between existence and disappearing.

Mexico is home to the world's richest agave biodiversity, shaped by more than ten thousand years of human-agave interactions. In recent decades, the rising global demand for mezcal—an agave-based spirit—has exerted increasing pressure on Mexican territories and their human and more-than-human inhabitants, moving at a pace that disrupts both rural dynamics and the agave's intrinsic temporalities. Yet the dominant narrative surrounding mezcal continues to rely on its mythification, promoting an idealized vision of ancestral purity that constructs its own version of an architecture of the mezcal in the already established entity of the pueblo, a small rural community-based village characterized. This emerging architecture culminates in the creation of the figure of the so-called *pueblo mezcalero* ("mezcal-producing village"), a reductive terminology that compresses the complex spatial and social realities of the pueblo into monofunctional sites of production.

The work critiques the commercial narrative of mezcal as shaped by economic and foreign interests that reproduce colonial dynamics embedded in the mechanisms of capitalist modernity. Drawing from Bolívar Echeverría's theory of the Baroque ethos and Cien años de soledad by Gabriel García Márquez, it contextualizes how power continues to operate coloniality through the reproduction of schemes of domination and inequality across Latin America, threatening life by suppressing its diversity. As these critiques unfold through their own narration structures-respectively, a societal ethos and a prophecy—they open pathways to other possibilities of being in and with the world, grounded in collective resistance. Mezcal, entangled within both national and international complex relationships, embodies within its narrative a series of tensions: artisanal-industrial, past-present, ancestral-modern. Following Alejo Carpentier's assertion that *mestizaje* inherently generates baroquism, the thesis proposes a distinction between two baroques of the mezcal: a lived one, expressed through everyday spatial practices in the pueblo as acts of resistance to the modern project; and one appropriated by the dominant narrative, operating as "baroque capitalism." Both produce their own imaginaries, shaping the aesthetic, representations and constructed spaces of mezcal.

Through a methodology based on grounded, long-term fieldwork and the production of situated visual material, this research suggests a variety of imaginaries to recognize alternative futures for mezcal and for the communities where it is produced, particularly in Oaxaca's Central Valleys. Both the research and the project mobilize multiple forms of narration—including counter-mapping, drawing, photography, and video—to expose the distinction between these two baroques and to question their implications for the permanence of the pueblo. These materials are strongly inspired in both their design and form by theoretical and practical approaches that move in the direction of anticolonialism, positioning visual narration as a space of resistance and reimagination in response to extractive

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representational regimes. In this attempt, the image functions simultaneously as a design tool and a political device, emerging from the sensibility of architectural thinking toward space, territory, and culture. Particular attention is given to photography and video, as these mediums become the principal methodological tools throughout the research—serving both as instruments for fieldwork engagement and as outcomes of a spatial project.

Extending this narration strategy, the four parts of the thesis each explore its meaning in distinct ways, both through theoretical navigation and design practice. The first part, corresponding to an in-depth literature review, analyzes the works of Echeverría and García Márquez to define a shared ground for reflecting on Latin America. It focuses particularly on space and time as fundamental dimensions of the narrative structure, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's concept of the baroque fold to articulate a spatiality of mezcal, and on theories of alternative temporalities to suggest its non-linearity. The aim is to resist a reductionist and binary framing of a subject already constrained by a dominant narrative. The second part proposes the plantation as an architecture, tracing the history of agave cultivation in Mexico through fictionalized dialogues presented as screenplays. Presenting the dynamics of pulque, tequila, and mezcal-three alcoholic agave-based drinks-the screenplays ought to let their respective territories speak for themselves through the interactions occurring within their human-shaped landscapes. They suggest that these three plantation moments are interconnected in both time and space, folding into one another, and that mezcal's present is a layered composition of the agro-extractivist dynamics that came before. This notion of reproduction as intrinsic to mezcal is further explored in the third part, which examines how its mythification allows the emergence of specific consumption and production spaces shaped by dominant narratives. By drawing the spaces in which mezcal is now consumed, the research highlights its ritualistic dimension—both staged by baroque capitalism and embodied in the baroque character of the pueblo. This latter finds material expression in the productive space of the palenque—the artisanal distillery—whose fragmentation into discrete elements reveals a broader constellation of mezcal's entanglements with the territory. These spatial manipulations seek to move beyond a restrictive narrative that positions the pueblo ambivalently, as both a guardian of tradition and an engine of the market, in order to emphasize the deeper, baroque dimension of its rural life. Finally, the narration process culminates in the fourth and ultimate part of the thesis, with the speculation on the potential disappearance of the pueblo of Candelaría Yegolé, facing mass emigration and agro-extractive pressures linked to agave cultivation. Established as a spatial project, a photobook and a short film compose a visual archive that traces the pueblo's resistance, inspired by the prophetic destiny of Macondo, Cien años de soledad's pueblo. Just like in the novel, rather than documenting loss, this final act of the thesis

shifts the focus from the market-driven architecture of mezcal to one rooted in the pueblo's imaginary, revealing a visual testimony of baroque resistance—of multiplicity, adaptation, and expansion.

This thesis positions agave not merely as a resource, nor mezcal simply as a cultural artifact, but both as sensitive subjects and spatial agents that mediate relationships among inhabitants, territories, memories, dreams, and time. By tracing their entanglements through lived practices and visual narrations, the work challenges dominant modes of representation and proposes ways of thinking and making that resist extractive logics. It unfolds as a spatial inquiry into the imaginaries that mezcal and agave generate, shaped by baroque modalities and grounded in the everyday spaces of the pueblo. As such, it defends a practice of architecture attentive to its own implication in the creation of narratives, places, memories, and profound meaning.

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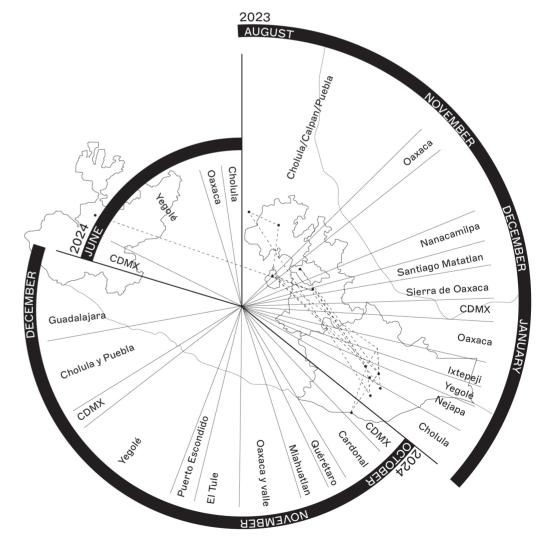
# Methodology

The thesis is anchored in a methodological approach shaped by complexity and responsibility. Confronted with a reality far from my own, methodology became not just a framework but an ethic grounded in care, attention, and affectivity. The methodology unfolds through two primary gestures, each closely tied to its own forms of expression but in constant interaction: relations and narrations. Salud presents the fieldwork as an implicated method that led to encounters without which this work would not have been possible. During the fieldwork, relationships of trust, vulnerability, and sincere friendship naturally arose from sustained engagement and mutual sharing of time and presence. Telling fire through fires refers to the multiplicity of narrations at play within the mezcal world, as a counter-proposition to the singular dominant narrative. Written, oral, and especially visual forms of narration converge to articulate alternative imaginaries that challenge and reimagine the architecture of mezcal. The final project an archive composed of a photobook and short film-embodies this approach. It translates research and theory into a vast narration of resistance: one that moves beyond a sculpted commercial image to assert the pueblo's enduring presence.

more specifically situated in the states of Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, Jalisco and Puebla. During these visits, my practice of photography evolved alongside writing, making the visual content inseparable from the text, and vice versa. The first three months allowed me to familiarize myself with the dominant mezcal narrative conveyed by the market—already very rich in content—while the second stay intuitively led me into its more intimate sphere, granting me access to the deeper relational system that governs life in the pueblo, a small rural village based on community organization. The dominant narrative that I had first learned by heart quickly became trivial compared to the sheer number of stories shared with me, and the personal experiences that helped shape my own narrativa mezcalera. In navigating the stories that were shared with me during fieldwork, I realized that what is said and communicated about mezcal in

This thesis emerges from three extended stays in Mexico—lasting respectively three months, two months, and two weeks—and

Calendar and map of fieldwork



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the public sphere over recent years represents only the tip of its relational-rational and imaginary-iceberg, and that this narrative is extremely redundant and superficial. By focusing on the plurality of both individual and collective stories, I was able to perceive the vulnerable spaces of mezcal and their sensitive, essential belonging to a broader agave culture in Mexico. Telling fire through fires - that is, confronting a (singular) narrative through (plural) narratives appeared to me as a way of honoring this multiplicity of voices via a deep immersion into the mezcal universe that requires the dissolution of its fictional and concrete boundaries. This approach led to adopting a methodology based on narration, which opens up the possibility of considering a diverse range of actors, places, and events as they move fluidly across space and time. Anchoring this methodological choice is a theoretical framework that advances alternative ways of perceiving and conceiving the world, situating the thesis within broader discourses on transition narratives.

El tiempo del maguey engages with a diverse range of authors who have critically examined themes such as post-extractivism, anticolonial thought, and alternative models of life. It gives particular emphasis to Latin American thinkers, whose works are deeply rooted in the contexts and lived experiences of the subjects central to this research. The incisive critiques by Eduardo Galeano and Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla open a common ground of contextual understanding in exposing the enduring colonial legacies in Latin America and Mexico.<sup>1</sup> Complementing and actualizing their analyses, Marisol de Ia Cadena and Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado provide important perspectives on contemporary forms of indigeneity, community, and identity as dynamic processes shaped by colonial histories, political struggles, and epistemic pluralism. Specific to the mezcal, Domingo García Garza's La Revolución Mezcalera contributes to a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic factors shaping its dominant narrative within a broader national, historical, and cultural context. The thesis also acknowledges earlier intellectual pioneers such as Frantz Fanon, whose groundbreaking critiques of Western hegemony and colonial power continue to influence ongoing discourses of transition across both the global North and South. Building on these foundations, particular attention is given to the works of Max Liboiron and Arturo Escobar, who offer critical anticolonial perspectives on science, knowledge production, and epistemologies that challenge dominant Western paradigms. Finally, Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of visual narration and aesthetics further enriches this framework by providing valuable insights into the transformative potential of images and the dynamics of storytelling beyond linear representation.

Without necessarily aligning specifically with one of the existing proposal, and instead considering them as a diversity of inspiration in reimagining a mezcal narrative, the thesis supports the



Palenques (mezcal fabric) on the road to Santiago Matatlán.

\*Photographs without attribution are by the author.

Galeano, E. (2023). Las venas abiertas de América Latina. Siglo XXI Editores -México.; Bonfil Batalla, G. (1994). México profundo: una civilización negada. Grijalbo.

school of thought that sees the global social and environmental crisis as stemming from the hegemony of Western capitalist modernity, based on a patriarchal Judeo-Christian model in which humanity is conceived as separate from nature.<sup>2</sup> In this context, narration is not merely a representational tool but a mode of architectural thinking. This approach is a driving force to conceive and communicate design in the context of the actual collapse of a dominant global narrative.<sup>3</sup> This methodological orientation is reflected both in the theoretical grounding and in the thesis's visual form: the photography book and the film are not illustrative supplements but narration devices engaging in dialogue with the text and contributing to the construction of meaning. It is precisely to honor their symbiotic relationship that I chose to give the same title to both the thesis and the photography project. Together, these interwoven forms of storytelling compose a relational architecture—one that seeks not to explain mezcal, but to be with it, tracing the folds of its complexity while honoring the enduring presence of the pueblo and its ways of knowing. Rather than closing meaning, narration opens a space for collective reflection, where other testimonies, imaginaries, and stories-whether rooted in mezcal or resonating from elsewhere-may converge.

## ¡Salud!

#### fieldwork as relational practice

Relationships form an important part of this thesis, as they carry the weight of interconnected ties that are characteristic of the rural ways of life explored here. It is a long-standing, affective relationship with Mexico - one that began in childhood - that drew me to question the deeper dimensions beyond the economy of the growing international demand for mezcal. I introduce here my relational connection to this country and to the agave, keeping the human relationships as intermezzi emerging between the different sections of the thesis, offering an insight of fieldwork. The intermezzi offer a way to weave fieldwork more deeply into the text, since this work could not have been possible without the people whose knowledge and inspiration have been far more relevant than any reading on agave or mezcal. These encounters shape my own story of agave and mezcal, and affirm storytelling itself as the guiding thread of this work.

I have developed a deep attachment to the way Max Liboiron<sup>4</sup> approaches relationships in their book *Pollution is Colonialism.*<sup>5</sup> It was while listening to a song I often played in Mexico and becoming emotional over memories of certain people that I realized my interest in reading about relationships stemmed from the need to write about them in this work. I believe they hold a particular place not only in the methodology I adopted during fieldwork and the modalities of researching and writing about mezcal, but also within the subject of the thesis itself.

By engaging with the reading modalities described by Joe Dumit in his short essay *How I Read*, I came to recognize that I primarily adopted a methodological lens when reading Liboiron's book.<sup>6</sup> Although its central theme—plastic pollution—does not directly apply to my research, the method underlying both the text and the objectives of the CLEAR laboratory has been a major source of inspiration. As a reader, I made a conscious effort to become aware of my own relationships with the book's content, attentive to both my spontaneous and reflective reactions. I believe I have learned immensely from this process, even though I am far from immune to the mistakes that await me in my attempt to follow an anti-colonial mode of reading and writing—an approach that is complex, delicate, and entirely new to me. I find it deeply meaningful to consider the role of

<sup>2</sup> Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse.* Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds. Duke University Press.

<sup>3</sup> The global collapse of the Western project is a theme that has been extensively explored across disciplines. While we do not delve into its full complexity here, we employ a specific vocabulary informed by scholars, artists, and thinkers who have developed these ideas in depth. Among the concepts that frame this planetary condition are: Agro-extractivism: understood as the largescale, industrial appropriation of land and resources for export-oriented agriculture and bio-economies, often at the expense of local ecologies and communities (see Eduardo Galeano, Las venas abiertas de América latina; Verónica Gago, La razón neoliberal, Josh Tickell, Kiss the ground). Neo-colonialism: the ongoing economic, political, and cultural domination of formerly colonized regions under the international or national guise of globalization and development (see Aníbal Quijano, Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina; Achille Mbembe, The Politics of Time; Luis Tapia, Dialéctica del colonialismo interno). Crisis of capitalism: critiques of the structural instabilities, ecological consequences and systematic violence of capitalism (see Mark Fisher, Capitalist Realism; Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism; Slavoj Žižek, Living in the End Times). Alternative futures: visions of post-capitalist or pluriversal societies that center care, community, and epistemic plurality (see Arturo Escobar, Designs for the Pluriverse; María Puig de la Bellacasa, Matters of Care; Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble).

<sup>4</sup> Max Liboiron is a Canadian Michif-settler scholar and professor of Geography at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Their research centers on plastic pollution and environmental justice, grounded in a feminist and anticolonial framework. As the director of the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR), Liboiron leads community-engaged scientific work that emphasizes equity, decolonial practices, and respectful relationships with the land.

<sup>5</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). *Polluer, c'est coloniser* (V. Leÿs, Trans.). Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.

<sup>6</sup> Dumit, J. (2012, September 27). How I Read. In Dumit (blog).

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the reader when choosing how to express oneself in writing, and I am grateful for the opportunities for interaction and reflection that this attitude has offered me. This thesis, in addition to an academic and artistic audience, is also intended for various people-mezcalero.as from different sectors of the production chain, Mexican collaborators who contributed to its content, and perhaps even mezcal enthusiasts, friends, and family. I think of those who have often asked me about the connection between architecture and mezcal, and who have had to hear me evade this complicated question with answers like: «It's about paying attention to the spatial dimensions of the world of mezcal,» or «One must see architecture as an extremely interdisciplinary field.» I feel it is my responsibility to finally provide a clear answer and to consider the different cultural and intellectual contexts from which these people come. Max Liboiron acknowledges that their text is not addressed to everyone, and this is generally true for master's theses as well. However, I believe it is important to embrace the nuances that shape my audience by establishing a platform for communication that is accessible to all-whether through form, additional insights, or a more intimate style of writing. This is also why I refer to all the texts in the citations in their original language first, displacing the translations to a second plan to respect the diversity of the literature and to include more fluently the Spanish context of this research, my French mother-tongue, and my Italian University. For me, this has to do with caring. Caring for and about those who contributed to this work and for and about those, including more-than-human subjects, who might eventually benefit from it. Within the interdependent relationship between agave and mezcal exists a multitude of others that deserve to be acknowledged and recognized, and it is on these brilliant connections that this work focuses. In this sense, I can consider my approach as feminist: "Feminist ethics of care argue that to value care is to recognize the inevitable interdependency essential to the existence of reliant and vulnerable beings".7 María Puig de la Bellacasa highlights this important practice of feminist writing, where thinkingwith implies including a collective in academic work, allowing it to break out of its isolation and connect with other ways of envisioning the world—to build relationships. For this reason, I cannot help but be inspired by the unique way Liboiron embraces this opportunity with remarkable skill and humor. This is why I will likely refer to their work regularly throughout this thesis.

The relationships with the text that Max Liboiron describes are numerous and varied, encompassing both those that connect a text to the place where it is written and those that shape its content, influencing the way it is written and how each person will read it. All these aspects seem relevant to me in researching a mezcal relational density. First, I am writing this text in Italy, a country that has welcomed me for almost six years now. These lines are

7 Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. University of Minnesota Press. p.70

therefore composed outside both my place of origin and belonging-Ouébec-and the territory to which the main subject of this text. agave, belongs. The agave in question here is native and endemic to the Mesoamerican region, corresponding to present-day Mexico and the southern United States-Texas, Arizona, California, and New Mexico. It is a plural subject, as the Agave genus includes more than 200 species, 150 of which are found within this territory.8 For one reason or another, I do not believe that my physical distance from Mexico particularly influences the way I write about agave. In fact, my decision to consciously involve myself in this text feels much more aligned with the warmth and spontaneity of Latin America than with the more structured formality of the Italian academic sphere. Of course, the latter influences me in the rigor I bring to my work, as well as in the pursuit of precision and creativity that meet the standards of my faculty. I consider myself fortunate to be able to navigate between these different ways of positioning myself in relation to this theme. Since living in Italy, I have learned to recognize the informality of my Québécois identity and to appreciate how we have an ability for not taking ourselves too seriously while being sincere—yet extremely courteous—in our critique. Watching how Xavier Dolan, a Québécois film-maker, both unsettled and amused the Italian public during his appearance at the Turin Film Festival in 2022 gave me an external perspective on our familiar nature. It is a quality that allows me, in Dumit's words, to adopt a positive and generous attitude toward the bibliography that underpins this thesis. 9 At this point, I also wish to acknowledge my particular connection to the present-day territory of the Laurentians, the unceded traditional land of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) people. I grew up unaware of the past relationships between the Indigenous and settler populations of this land, and I hope to contribute to an improvement in these relationships, motivated by a collective desire for healing and reconciliation.

Throughout the footnotes of their text, Max Liboiron takes careful time to thank the authors, researchers, and thinkers who influenced their work. Through this section, I seek to reproduce that same space of recognition for the relationships that have guided my research on mezcal and to honor them by including them as an integral part of the final written work to which they have all contributed in their own way. Throughout the thesis, *cartas* (letters) addressed to various individuals who supported me during my research will appear as interludes, offering fieldwork anecdotes. I would still like to express my sincere gratitude to all others—both people and organizations—who have contributed to this work but, due to space and time constraints, are not mentioned personally in these letters.

<sup>8</sup> Gobierno de México. (2016, September 9). *Agave, planta de las maravillas*. Gobierno de México. Retrieved 03 25, 2025, from https://www.gob.mx/agricultura/articulos/agave-planta-de-las-maravillas

<sup>9</sup> Dumit, J. (2012, September 27). How I Read. In Dumit (blog).

<sup>10</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.

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#### **Mexico**

My connection with Mexico arises from a colonial relationship. I use the word *colonial* here in reference to the nature of relationships that lead individuals from colonial backgrounds to physically settle, for relatively short or sometimes long periods of time, in a territory that is not their own and that carries a deep colonial past. This settlement does not concern only their bodies and souls but also the creation of a physical system designed to accommodate them, which we might call here the *touristic space*. I happily came to know a Mexico beyond the superficial borders of luxury hotels thanks to my mother's adventurous spirit. During our travels, she never hesitated to push my father to drive us to villages that were still spared from mass tourism from the North. I doubt most of them still are today, as the Yucatán Peninsula has undergone a staggering tourist boom over the past decades.

I traveled this way with my family to Mexico at least ten

times, always staying in the same hotel chain, which now makes me uncomfortable due to the inequities and consumption it represents, but especially because of the tension between these issues and the familiar, nostalgic feeling these places still mean for me. It is impossible to deny the attachment I feel to this hotel, tied to happy childhood memories, and the wellness those memories evoke in me. I would recognize its smells among thousands, as well as the sensation of the red and



My family and I in a hotel in Riviera Maya, 2005.

green sofas' fabric beneath my fingers, and the taste of the pool water that, as a child, I mixed with the chill of ice cubes from my alcoholfree piña coladas in my mouth. I can recognize, through these affects, the small-scale complexity of colonial relationships between the economic possibilities of the North and the South's predisposition to respond to them. In this sense, the colonial relationship is not devoid of emotions and sensitivity. The problem is that these emotions are hypocritical and self-serving. These places are oases for tourists, where everything seems perfect, ethical, and environmentally conscious. But they conceal a *Real*, a darker and more embarrassing flipside. During our summer holidays, I spent my teenage years hoping that the staff working there were well-treated. I made sure to be extremely respectful and attentive toward the employees who shared our daily lives and to engage with them in the early days of

my Spanish learning. I sought to understand the exposed or hidden repercussions of implanting such massive infrastructures on the land, attending turtle nesting events organized by the hotel itself, trying to not be blinded by an ever-strengthening sustainability discourse—one that became paradoxically ever more *green* as the built surface expanded.

I do not intend here to demonize tourism or this strange obsession with *development*, as I understand that the issue is far more complex than what I aim to address in these few lines. Instead, I seek to acknowledge my status as someone from a colonial background in relation to the bond I have developed with Mexican Iand over time. Although this first contact was undeniably based on an unequal economic relationship between North and South and on the colonial pretensions it enables, it was also marked by the innocence of childhood and by an early curiosity to understand the contradictions of the Western model in which I was born.

A second type of relationship I experienced was during a "humanitarian internship" organized as part of the Option des Amériques program, in which I participated for four years during my secondary education. Given the current political conditions, I find it particularly ironic that this Option des Amériques was centered on the relationship between Canada-or rather, I should say Quebec, since education in Quebec's villages is generally built around Quebecois identity rather than Canadian identity-and Latin America. The America of the United States occupied almost no space within this program, as if it had been erased from the idea of an American cultural collaboration. There are, of course, specific reasons that link Quebec-a people that is both colonial and colonized-to Latin America. The internship involved being hosted in pairs by a family in the city of Mérida. It was my first experience in a non-hotel Mexico, and it was wonderful. The ants on the countertop when we woke up in the morning, drawn by the sugar left on the ceramic tiles from the fresh melons Mama Milli would cut for us, the toilet in our pink bedroom that we had to constantly pump with our long plastic gloves, and the jarana evenings in the neighborhood park were all fragments of what the real Mexico was, hidden behind the high security walls of the hotels of my childhood. And I loved it.

When I think back of our community work at the *Trinitarias* convent—a shelter for young girls with complex or absent families—it is not the physical labor of restoring the building's façade that stands out as central, but rather the relationships that we built with the girls there. In these situations where the West seeks to help the *Other*, it is probably the innocent human connections formed alongside the material aid activities that contribute most to the potential success of such initiatives, by bringing people closer together and dissolving boundaries. I remember the moment when the sisters of the institution gave a harsh speech to the girls about the cruel way in which their families had abandoned them, justifying their need to become

mothers so they could give their future children the love they had not received themselves. I remember the distress behind the tears of these young adolescents and the bewildered looks we exchanged as Quebecois students. As Lucia – a back then twelve years old girl with whom I particularly bounded – laid collapsed between my legs, sobbing violently, I cried with her too. For years now, Lucia has been sending me photos of her children through Facebook. I hope one day I will get to meet them.

Finally, the third level of relationship I have developed with Mexico is through agave, and thus through its rural and territorial dimension. I have come to know new regions beyond coastal destinations—specifically, the states of Oaxaca, Hidalgo, Puebla, Tlaxcala, México and Jalisco. But agave has drawn me closer to a sensory vision of Mexico, where political borders become abstract, allowing me to explore it as a *territory* rather than a *nation*, to understand it not only through its history but also through its myths, and to approach it through the web of relationships that compose it. This is the Mexico at the heart of this thesis. A complex Mexico, shaped and reshaped in a thousand and one ways; a Mexico that has imposed itself on the global collective imagination; a Mexico often perceived through a dualistic lens, though I align myself with the school of thought that seeks to dissolve this binary vision of the Mexican nation (and, for that matter, of the world at large).

#### The Maguey<sup>11</sup>

The first time I saw a field of agaves was on the way back to Cholula, after climbing La Malinche. When I spotted them, I let out a childlike cry. I remember the excitement, the sight of the hills behind the pencas<sup>12</sup>. I asked Sam—a very good friend—to stop the car, and I ran toward the field, which was quite small and located next to what seemed to be a private estate or an inn. There must have been about ten rows of eight agaves each.

I hesitated to go further, but since no one was around, I ventured into the field, into its labyrinth of thorns.<sup>13</sup> I examined the soil, mounded into small hills that outlined each row of agaves, and

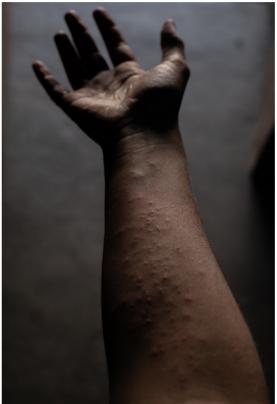
I recognized the technique I had read about—where trenching helps retain water near the plant. It was so moving for me to be close to the agaves that I found myself both smiling widely and on the verge of tears. I felt the emotion one experiences when they feel deeply part of the world, or of something genuinely beautiful and meaningful. I reached out to touch the agave, carefully running my fingers along its waxy, smooth leaves. Then, in a burst of euphoria, I leapt over the small ridge of earth separating two rows. In that movement, the side of my index finger brushed against a leaf and grazed a thorn. The

pain was so intense it took my breath away. I was afraid to look at my finger, afraid to see it broken, mutilated. It was bleeding, but more than an open wound, it felt as if I had slammed into a concrete wall at full speed. The resilience of the plant was incomparable to that of my own body. Its leathery skin, its thorns—sharp as claws—had overpowered the delicate flesh of my hands.

It is strange because, at that moment, I did not think of this encounter with the agave as the beginning of a relationship, yet I distinctly remember perceiving the wound as a message from the plant. As if it were reminding me to be careful-with my actions, my words, the telling of this story, and with everything surrounding it. The pain of the impact on my hand brought the same distress I feel when I realize I have disappointed another human being or entered into some kind of conflict. I felt the humiliating shame of being wrong, the unsettling stir of the ego-but above all, the desire to make amends. I felt that, from that moment on, I would have to prove my good intentions to the agave, and that thought reassured me. As I walked back to the car, sucking on my finger and the taste of my

own blood, I told myself that from then on, I would approach this being I was just beginning to know with more respect, humility, and gentleness.

Unconsciously or not, I believe that I have since then always approached *magueys* with caution—like Mowgli, who must show deference to the elephants, or Harry Potter in front of Buckbeak the hippogriff. I feel a deep empathy for the life of this plant, which blooms only once before it dies. There is something profoundly moving about this imminent relationship between life and death. A tangible yet delicate boundary of a sentence—a grand and resigned sentence. When the agave in the park of Cholula began *to be capón*—to grow its *quiote*—during the months of my stay, and this transformation unfolded before my eyes, I could not remain indifferent. I find it



Reactions on my skin after being in contact with maguey fiber and juice.

<sup>11</sup> Maguey is the most common word used to speak about agaves in the rural context of this thesis' fieldwork, coming from the Nahuatl metl. Agave is the scientific name for the plant, and both names are used without particular distinction.

<sup>12</sup> The agave leaves.

<sup>13</sup> This could have been the beginning of a bad relationship with the landowner, but over time, I learned that in Mexico, there's really no issue with walking on farmland, especially in the countryside. The only time someone told me not to walk in a field was in the cempasúchil field in Cholula, where the owner told me that so many people did it, without caring for the flowers, just to take photos. He said that people trampled on and killed them. I suggested that I take off my shoes and be very careful, but he refused. Since I often ran near the field in the mornings, the man got to know me, and one day, he himself suggested that I approach the field to photograph him with his flowers. This is an example of how relationships evolve.

incredibly powerful that this sign of vitality is also a sign of old age—two things that are typically seen as opposites in Western society. Every time I passed by the plant, if I did not stop to touch it, I would greet it—whether in my mind, in the air, or through some unknown dimension or platform of communication. I had never felt as close to a plant as I did to the agave in the park of Cholula.

In a mail exchange with Ana Guadalupe Valenzuela Zapata<sup>14</sup>, the researcher told me that one of the most common issues in recent studies on agave and its spirits is that authors fail to distinguish between different species, attributing to them non-specific characteristics. After that exchange, I did my best to learn how to recognize the different types of *maguey*. I do believe it is important to know how to engage with plants, and being able to name them is a good start. It is something my mother taught me from childhood, though at the time, I laughed more than I listened. Distinguishing the different types of agave can be incredibly difficult because some look so much alike. I approach this task with humility, aware of the effort required to observe, compare, learn, and understand—and of the responsibility that comes with it.

## Telling fire through fires

#### narration as a method

Another major methodologic instrument is narration, particularly visual narration, with the aim of responding to the hegemonic and limited narrative of mezcal by offering diverse and amplified possibilities through story-telling. In this approach, narration is not understood strictly in literary forms, but as any sequence unfolding a story embedded within a spatio-temporal dimension. The importance of time and space relates narration to a history - not in a strictly historical sense, but rather in an imaginative one. Compared to a narrative. which would be a definitive outcome - though still subject to change and evolution - narration is the process through which the narrative is constructed. It is thought of as a project, both spatial and immaterial. Throughout the thesis, various media will be employed with the objective of creating a plurality of narrations that provide alternative perspectives to the dominant narrative, pressuring and threatening the subject of the pueblo. The photographic and cinematographic work stimulates a distinct and sensitive way of conceiving the pueblo beyond an overly constructed, sculpted and eroded commercial discourse.

#### **Narration and nation**

« Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye.» Homi K. Bhabha<sup>15</sup>

Writing about Mexico means having to grasp the complex mechanisms that, from the trauma of the colonial era to the current political issues, have shaped this étrange idée (strange idea) of the nation. Mexico, cradle of magical realism, is renowned for its vivid imaginaries, to the point that Dalí himself supposedly admitted – during a trip in 1940 – that he disliked the country for it was even more surreal than his paintings. The creation of the Mexican nation and its eccentricity—blending Greek and (pre-)Hispanic symbols, the French Revolution, and the «allegoría del progreso»—is, on the surface, the result of an exemplary métissage between the Old World and the New World. Here

The symbols of society confront, meet, and fuse with one another, uniquely uniting pre-Hispanic spirituality and Catholic religion, the conquered and the conquerors, millennia-old tradition

<sup>14</sup> Ana Guadalupe Valenzula Zapata is a leading agronomist in the tequila and mezcal industries. Her publications bridge scientific agronomy with socio-cultural analysis, addressing topics such as agave cultivation practices, the implications of denomination of origin, expressions of nationalism, and the often-overlooked role of women within the tequila industry.

<sup>15</sup> Bhabha, H. K. (1990). Nation and Narration. Routledge.

<sup>16</sup> In reference to « Cette étrange idée du beau » by François Jullien, who conceives of the construction of beauty as the result of Western beliefs that deserve to be questioned and challenged.

<sup>17</sup> Lostak, M. (2023, June 30). Why did Salvador Dalí say that Mexico is more surreal than his paintings? Medium.

<sup>18</sup> Trueba Lara, J. L. (2024). Mitos mexicanos. Ocho historias que no te contaron en la escuela y nos inventaron como nación. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial.

and European modernity. Apparently united through national symbols, this series of dualisms has been criticized by several authors, notably Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla, who conceives a marked opposition between a México profundo and a México imaginario. <sup>19</sup> While the México profundo corresponds to a Mesoamerican permanence concentrated in the marginal spaces of rural life, the México imaginario follows the footsteps of its creators—the colonizers—striving to elevate the nation to a modern European standard ever since the Conquest. The choice of the term *imaginario* to define this pole of the Mexican dualism tells a lot about the construction of its nature through the propaganda of a fabricated national narrative. According to sociology and political science scholar José Luis Trueba Lara, this nationalism is indeed based on symbols drawn from a pre-Hispanic mythology, mixed with figures from the colonial period, creating an ideal collective imaginary. <sup>20</sup> Yet these myths, which define a shared sense of mexicanidad, are mostly misunderstood by society and heavily manipulated by nationalism, which maintains an apparent common sense across the country while deep divisions actually persist. In Lara's words, Mexican nationalism is nothing other than «una historia que a fuerza de repeticiones se convirtió en una verdad absoluta, en una fe incontrovertible, en la seguridad de que existe una línea que marca la diferencia entre nosotros y los otros. entre los patriotas y los enemigos del país, entre los que están dispuestos a mantener las tradiciones y quienes se afanan por entregar a México a los malvados que siguen los pasos de la Malinche».<sup>21</sup> This evident dualism echoes the idea of Bonfil-Batalla of two opposite Mexicos, each separated by the line suggested by Lara. Moreover, the deep entanglement between the country and its narrative highlights the importance of the latter in the creation of an idea that endures over time, embedding itself into the social fabric. In this sense, it becomes impossible to conceive of Mexico without submitting to its narrative, even when the goal is to deconstruct or transcend it. Understanding narration becomes essential to understanding the nation. Within this framework, the narrative of mezcal appears as a small-scale manifestation of this larger phenomenon. Mezcal and its myths are among the symbols encompassed by this national character, which in turn refers to sub-symbolic categories constituting its own narrative. For example, just as tequila symbolizes the sanitization of the *México imaginario* through its modern and industrial production methods, mezcal stands as a symbol of the rural authenticity of the *México profundo*. More precisely, Domingo García Garza asserts that «[I]os destilados de agave son poderosos marcadores culturales y su reinvención participa en una redefinición de la identidad mexicana que oscila, según las épocas, entre nacionalismo, indigenismo y cosmopolitismo».<sup>22</sup>

One of the goals of this thesis is therefore to bring forth the specific symbols of mezcal through their spatial component; these will surface throughout the text. Relying on the readings of the country offered by these authors, it becomes clear that narrative plays a tremendous role in the creation of a concept as strong as that of nation, and thus also in that of mezcal. The adoption of a methodology based on narration therefore serves as a way to maintain a critical awareness of pre-existing narratives, supporting the necessity to understand the nation through its narration—and to confront narration through narrations.

#### Narration and architecture

« [...] architecture does not only express meaning. It also participates in the construction of meaning through the ordering of spaces and social relationships.»

Sophia Psarra<sup>23</sup>

It is common to conceive of an architectural project through the concepts that nourish the construction of its narrative, on which will subsequently be based the choices concerning its form, morphology, and structure. The conceptual framework behind a project often appears first in the form of a diagram, visually explaining the story of the object to be built and illustrating, at the same time, the social and cultural questions that motivate it. Thus, the narration generally tends to precede the architecture—not only to justify it but also to enable it to communicate with the spatial and temporal context into which it will be integrated. In this dynamic, the constructed object stands as the physical expression of a conceptual and imaginary narrative previously elaborated during its design phase.

Because of this intimate link to narration, architecture

<sup>19</sup> Bonfil Batalla, G. (1994). *México profundo: una civilización negada*. Grijalbo. The existence of a Mexican dualism dates back to the colonial era and has never been totally resolved. The unnuanced category of mestizos has been complicating the functional order of the colonial project: "La organización de la sociedad colonial, pensada como una dualidad nítida en la que unos, los indios, tenían como función principal servir y enriquecer a los otros, los españoles, tuvo que admitir desde su mismo origen la presencia de grupos no previstos." ["The organization of colonial society, conceived as a clear-cut duality in which some—the Indigenous people—had the primary function of serving and enriching others—the Spanish, had to accept from its very beginning the presence of unanticipated groups."] [Bonfil-Batalla, p.91) Today, the consideration of mestizaje as a unique identity contributes to enclosing the diversity of Mexico's cultural groups into a single, intrinsically conflictual category.

<sup>20</sup> Trueba Lara, J. L. (2024). *Mitos mexicanos. Ocho historias que no te contaron en la escuela y nos inventaron como nación.* Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial.

<sup>21</sup> ibid. p.23

<sup>&</sup>quot;a story that, through sheer repetition, became an absolute truth, an incontrovertible faith, a certainty that there is a line separating us from them — the patriots from the enemies of the country, those willing to uphold traditions from those who strive to hand Mexico over to the evildoers who follow in Malinche's footsteps."

<sup>22</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera : los destilados de agave y la invención del mezcal tradicional. El Colegio de Michoacán. p.245 «[a]gave spirits are powerful cultural markers, and their reinvention plays a

role in the redefinition of Mexican identity, which has shifted over time between nationalism, indigenism, and cosmopolitanism.»

<sup>23</sup> Psarra, S. (2009). Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning. Taylor & Francis. p.2

maintains a profound kinship with literature, for it allows a story-telling to materialize through the precise description of fictitious spaces that not only add value to their settings but also help orient the broader narrative universe itself. Architect and professor Sophia Psarra examines how architecture nourishes the stories of authors such as Borges and Eco, appearing as a means of organizing their ideas through the structuring of space.<sup>24</sup> In much the same way, the *palace of memory* or *method of loci*, originating from Antiquity, utilized the spatial organization of architecture as a mnemonic technique, envisioning the rooms of a building as thematic capsules succeeding one another through its distribution.<sup>25</sup> This physical

support of architecture acts as an incubator where immaterial ideas are able to transform into material spaces, within a performance that is profoundly political and social. Through the manipulation of space, architecture actively stimulates, diverts, and interacts with a variety of narratives—dominant or otherwise.

Through *Diagram A*, the relationship between narrative and architecture is structured in order to synthesize and facilitate a better understanding of how they will be conceptualized throughout the thesis. Two different layers intertwine in the interaction between them. The first,

represented by two opposing linear arrows, suggests the immediate reciprocity between a narrative and its architecture through their shared structure, uniting spatiality and temporality. The second, circular, illustrates the way in which they mutually stimulate and reinforce one another: from the conception of immaterial ideas to their physical concretization that allows for lived experience, culminating in the cultural and social meaning that results and shapes a proper ideology.

This scheme implies that architecture enables a narrative to transcend its imaginary domain in order to build a true ideological topography. To test these mechanisms of narration, let us pause for a moment on architect Uriel Fogué's interpretation of the architectures within Sade's works. Extending Deleuze's vision of Sade and Sacher-Masoch—whom he sees as great anthropologists and artists—Fogué perceives them, in turn, as great architects. The spaces emphasized by these two authors correspond to opposing manifestations of how power integrates itself within modern architecture. Fogué analyzes how sadistic architectures suggest a binary between a visible zone of

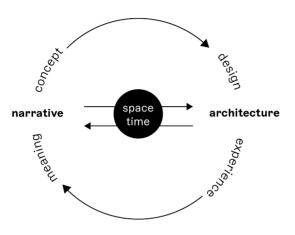


Diagram A: relation between narrative and architecture.

Diagram B: relation between Sade's litterature and sadic architectures.

#### Diagram B: translation

Narrative: Sade's Universe

Concept: Imposition of a unidirectional form of violence; natural law Design: Programmatic diagrams, dichotomous schemes, descriptive style

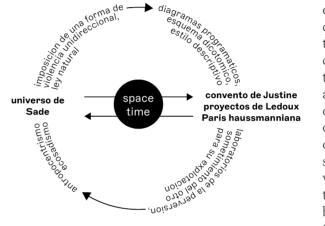
Architecture: Convent of Justine, Projects of Ledoux, Haussmann's

Experience: Laboratories of perversion; submission and exploitation of the Other Meaning:

Anthropocentrism, ecosadism daily life and an invisible sub-political world reserved for «experts,» for the holders of power. By comparing the functional structure of the convent in *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* and Haussmann's Paris, he examines how narration is both bearer and translator of ideologies that implant themselves concretely within the societal fabric through their materialization in architectural projects. *Diagram B* materializes this reflection by specifically integrating the content Fogué attributes to Sade's architecture. This same strategy will later be employed to locate the narration process embedded within the narrative of mezcal and to analyze their corresponding spaces and meanings.

Conceiving the reciprocal and mutually reinforcing relationship

between narrative and architecture emerges as a methodology with a dual effect. On one hand, it enables the identification of dominant spaces created by the mezcal market through the strategies of its own narrative and the analysis of how these spaces operate within its propaganda. On the other hand, the awareness of the power of narration offers the possibility of seeking for the spaces it occludes. The valorization of alternative narratives through different narration schemes, becomes an opportunity to strengthen them.



#### Narration, space and time

"The history of a specific event can be restored appropriately, not only through the official history, but also through the informal one, which remains in the memory and interpretation of witnesses and writers, and finally the process of literary transformation."

Guho Cho<sup>27</sup>

At the center of *Diagram A*, the interplay of space and time is a constitutive force in the process of narration—whether literary, oral, photographic, or architectural. In this thesis, which adopts visual narration as a methodological approach, the spatial-temporal dimension underpins both the theoretical framework and the representational modes through which narratives are constructed and communicated. Narration is thus not only content but also a structural act—a mode of composing and inhabiting time and space in response to historical complexity and cultural vulnerability. Two key works ground the thesis's reflection on the pueblo as a subject and mezcal as a relational force: the theory of the *Baroque ethos* by

<sup>24</sup> ibid

<sup>25</sup> Yates, F. (1966). The Art of Memory. Routledge.

<sup>26</sup> Fogué, U. (2022). Las arquitecturas del fin del mundo: cosmotécnicas y cosmopolíticas para un futuro en suspenso. Puente Editores.

<sup>27</sup> Cho, G. (2023). La transformación poética de la violencia estatal. En torno a Cien años de soledad y Actos humanos. Palabra Clave, 26(3), e2636. p.3

Ecuadorian, nationalized Mexican, philosopher Bolívar Echeverría, and the fictional world of Macondo in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*. Though not conceived through architectural thinking, both texts embody strong spatial and temporal imaginaries that help articulate the specific conditions surrounding mezcal. Together, they frame a spatio-temporality lens to better understand mezcal's reality.

Through his theory of ethos, Echeverría highlights how Latin America, since the Conquest, adopted a Baroque attitude in order to necessarily absorb and resist the European capitalist model. Baroque thus appears as a societal narration—an internal logic of life—that allows for the coexistence with an otherwise unbearable mode of existence, shaping radical spatial and symbolic meaning. The second one offers a prophetic approach to the destiny of the pueblo, following the impacts of modernity on the fictive pueblo of Macondo, in *Cien años de soledad*, by Gabriel García Márquez. To consider Macondo—a fictional village—and García Márquez's surreal atmosphere as a theoretical framework is, in a way, the ultimate confirmation of a methodology of the narration. In the first part of the thesis, both works are extendly presented as spatio-temporal lenses through which alternative mezcal narrations may be formed.

In both cases, narration offers a way to hold and process historical trauma—through the creation of imaginaries based on ethos or fiction, memory or myth. As Guho Cho suggests, history can be restored not only through official discourse, but through the informal traces left in memory, interpretation, and literary transformation. In this sense, narration becomes a method to navigate the fragile present of mezcal—a present shaped by the long durations of colonization, extractivism, and cultural erasure. These layered traumas, though not marked by a single event, persist through the dominant mezcal narrative, which remains opaque and repetitive.In this optic, narration—in all its expressive forms—becomes a method for engaging with these silences, much like literature offers an empathetic alternative to official history. Visual narration, especially, allows for a softening of rigid discourses, opening a space to question, to reimagine, and to collectively reconstruct meaning.

#### **Visual narration**

"What are we asking concepts to do? What function do concepts have in helping us to think something differently or think something more expansively?"

Tina Campt<sup>28</sup>

When put in tension, Baroque theory and the universe of Macondo constantly exchange on the relationship between space and time, reinforcing their inseparable nature. This union is particularly represented through the visual content of the thesis. On one hand, this is manifested through the graphic material that evokes a literary development of certain sections, or through representations of territory in the form of drawings and maps, in accordance with architecture's ability to narrate space. Given that Western thought has sought to quantify and colonize space by expressing it in terms of distance and coordinates, architecture, with its sensitivity to spatiality, can become a powerful tool to reconnect space to time. This reconciliation allows for a representation of territory more sensible to its affective experience, proposing an alternative mapping that values different conceptions of the world and the relationships between humans and their more-than-human environment. The creation of calendars by Walkers in Amazonia, which insert space into time, the participatory mapping of Penelope Anthias and Ana Laura Zavala Guillen, as well as various indigenous mapping models, become points of reference in the search for a more fitting way to represent the territory of mezcal and agave.<sup>29</sup> The methodology of the narration is therefore strongly reinforced by the adoption of a visual practice with still and moving images, primarily through photography and cinema, as the main instruments of communication. These methods of representation are known for navigating between the real and the imaginary, transcending the limits of a singular existence narrative and thus allowing the dream, as described by Berry, to serve as a source of collective inspiration. In 1929, in The Centenary of Photography, Paul Valéry expressed concerns about the repercussions of photography on literature, noting that the immediate, real appearance of photography could discourage authors from the act of description, since "[1]e degré de précision auquel le langage peut prétendre, quand on veut l'employer à donner l'idée de quelque objet de la vue, est presque illusoire. Comment dépeindre un site ou un visage, si habiles que nous soyons dans notre

<sup>28</sup> Campt, T., & Clayton, J. (2023, May). Listening and Writing to Images: Tina M. Campt and Jace Clayton in conversation. e-flux Journal, (136).

<sup>29</sup> On counter-mapping and other ways of conceiving space and time: Neihardt, J. G. (1990). Alce Nero parla. Vita di uno stregone dei sioux Oglala. Adelphi.; University of Oregon. (2000-2018). Mapas. The Mapas Project. https://mapas. wired-humanities.org/; Anthias, P. (2024). Countertopographies and the futures of geographical thought. Dialogues in Human Geography, 14(2), 221-225. / Zavala Guillen, A. L. (2023). Feeling/thinking the archive: Participatory mapping Marronage. Area, 55(3), 416-425.; Peru Pavilion. (2023). Walkers in Amazonia: The Calendar Project [Exhibition]. Biennale Architettura Venezia, Arsenale, Venice, Italy.

métier d'écrivain, de manière que ce que nous aurons écrit ne suggère autant de visions différentes que nous aurons de lecteurs?".<sup>30</sup> Seen by Sontag as being applicable to photography too, this concern is to be considered as a strength, as it makes photography a powerful channel for the diffusion of ideas through suggestion.<sup>31</sup> This ability to "suggest visions" is also applicable to cinema, to which the addition of an obvious temporal component further enriches its narrative potential.

Photography is present all along the thesis, showcasing images as a support to the imaginaries it evokes, and cinema's imprints are particularly meaningful in the second part, written in the form of screenplays. However, it is in the final part, in the creation of the project of the archive for Yegolé, that they hold their main expression. Composing the archive, a photobook and a short-film rise as the final outcomes of the thesis. Both the photobook and the film are oriented towards an aesthetic of the spectrality and the dream to represent a resistance of Yegolé to disappearing. While their meaning will be explained further in the last part, it is necessary here to anticipate a clarification of the delicate ethical component and the richness of relational engagements they both enabled and stimulated. To do so, photography and cinema will be addressed separately, as both their narrative roles and their implications differ.

#### **Photography**

Throughout history, the photographic practice has been criticized as an exploitative activity, with the most evident example being its involvement in the "capture" of a sometimes tragic reality without providing immediate support to address it. Indeed, historical war photos involve the troubling paradox that "[t]he person who intervenes cannot record; the person who is recording cannot intervene".<sup>32</sup> In response to this criticism, the main defenses offered by photographers revolve around promoting activist photographic practices, or, on the other hand, retreating into an individualistic, personal exploration in search of self.<sup>33</sup> The image's capacity to contribute to social change, or at least to stimulate reflection, is thus challenged by its ethical conflict and by the way it is perceived by its viewers, and consequently, by society.

During a workshop I attended with photographer and director of the Magnum Foundation, Cristina de Middel, she mentioned how fragile the ethics of photography are, stating that they can never be

30 Valéry, P. (2002, Septembre 10). *Discours du centenaire de la photographie*. Études photographiques, 10.

"[t]he degree of precision that language can claim, when one tries to use it to convey the idea of something seen, is almost illusory. How can one describe a landscape or a face, no matter how skilled we may be in our craft as writers, in such a way that what we have written does not evoke as many different visions as there are readers?"

fully resolved, and that it is therefore up to the photographer to be responsible for their own ethical stance, to impose limits on their practice, and to choose which criticisms to accept or reject not only regarding their work, but also regarding how it was created.<sup>34</sup> I do indeed believe in this responsibility of the photographer to create a platform for fair, sensitive, and reciprocal communication with the subject, and to know how to react when this communication seems unbalanced in any way. This responsibility, in my view, also extends to how the photographic project is conveyed, such as the media in which it is published and the institutions where it is exhibited. It is this order of principle that i followed throughout my photographic essay on mezcal, and it seemed to me that it also corresponds to an appropriate way of stimulating a constructive reaction from the viewer. Therefore, i find it important to support this responsibility by sharing, here in an engaged manner, what photography represents within this thesis, both ethically and methodologically. This is why my voice will be very present in this section, in order to define the way in which i personally conceive of the photographic image.

#### The Photographic Event

Photography evolves in parallel with the thesis from its very inception and is, in many ways, its cornerstone, as it has been through this medium that the largest amount of field information has been gathered. In this regard, the distinction made by Ariella Azoulay between the photographic event and the photograph itself is highly relevant, as it allows us to give the proper importance to the context in which the photograph was taken, without merely considering its final result.<sup>35</sup> These are two completely different elements that each deserve to be analyzed separately.

The photographic event encompasses all the events that led to pressing the shutter, as well as those that follow it. This is something that needs to be emphasized in a society that consumes images, where interest in photography is influenced by its spectacular nature and where the public tends to take the content of the photo as definitive. To get to the photograph itself, an immense relational system is born between the photographer and the subject. The photographer then becomes abstracted from the outcome of the photograph, which instead establishes a new relational platform with the viewer. According to Azoulay, this differentiation breaks the passive relationship between photo and public by initiating an intimate dialogue with the viewer. Indeed, the image cannot speak

<sup>31</sup> Sontag, S. (1973). On Photography. Rosetta Books.

<sup>32</sup> Sontag, S. (1973). On Photography. Rosetta Books. p. 9

<sup>33</sup> Sontag, S. (1973). On Photography. Rosetta Books.

<sup>34</sup> Cristina de Middel during a photography workshop in Posilippo, Napoli.

<sup>35</sup> Azoulay, A. (2010). *Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political.* Theory, Culture & Society, 27(7-8), 239-262.

<sup>36</sup> Marzal Felici, J. (2008). La muerte de la fotografía: la revolución digital y la crisis de identidad del medio fotográfico. Revista de Occidente, (328), 67-83.

<sup>37</sup> Azoulay, A. (2010). *Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political.* Theory, Culture & Society, 27(7-8), 239-262.

alone, and anyone who looks at it must inevitably engage in the conversation it seeks to provoke, otherwise, they cannot accuse it of being devoid of meaning.

Often, these dialogues are guided by the photographer, with an aim for performativity governed by a militant attitude based on a cause-and-effect relationship: the photographer proposes an obvious message in their photo, which seeks to generate a precise awareness in the individual and, eventually, a collective and social change. However, this approach proves ineffective in a society where image consumption has become voracious and devoid of true affectivity. In his article Epistemic Violence and the Careful Photograph, Tom Holert seeks alternatives to this approach to photography, considering it to be stuck in the historical relations that connect it to a system of violence. 38 "Photography has served and continues to serve the interests of the state and of capital, of state-bounded knowledge systems, of disciplinary, racialized regimes embodied in the apparatuses of science. education, and police, of the social control of minorities and the racializing orders of colonialism outside and inside the West."39 Holert presents different approaches and attitudes from diverse photographers, in an attempt to encounter practices that could transcend this loop of violence in between image and reality.

#### Displacement and abstraction

Holert finds in the proposal of displacement of the image, by the academic Sara Jane Cervenak, a way to expand photography's possibilities. The way in which she conceives the displacement of the image appears as an opportunity to rethink photography beyond its mere militant vocation. Using as an example the photographic protest performance of Black Lives Matter by Erica Garner after her father's murder by a police officer, Cervenak questions the necessity and effectiveness of this highly mediated performative approach. She suggests that by moving the image onto different channels than its original or media context—by viewing it, in other words, coldly and unexpectedly—its original message can take on an infinite number of new forms, in a constant reinterpretation of its content.

This idea applies to how i conceive my photographic production as a vehicle for ideas. Although the subject of the agave is certainly not as violent as the contexts highlighted by Holert, it conceals historical dynamics of tension, power struggles, and impunity, through which violence manifests in a more insidious and silent way. I have been entrusted with extremely sensitive and brutal testimonies and memories, and these stories implicitly exist within the subjects i have

38 Holert, T. (2019, January). *Epistemic Violence and the Careful Photograph*. e-flux. (96).

photographed, in the surrounding landscape, and in the objects of their everyday life. By intentionally abstracting the reality, i attempt to open new possibilities through the viewer's gaze. The viewer necessarily has a more objective perspective than the subjects who, in one way or another, have participated in the photographic event, but they are always influenced by a varied affective subjectivity stemming from their own experience, which enriches the possibilities for interpretation, and consequently the plurality of thought codes. Moreover, in line with how Cervenak conceptualizes the importance of moving the documentary image out of its standard channels of representation, introducing it into a thesis on architecture aligns with the intention of relocating the image, allowing it to function differently, more sensitively. Combined with the diluted message of abstraction, the images communicate through their seemingly silent details, making them more surprising, more "disconcerting," and thus more likely to generate a constructive reaction from the viewer.<sup>42</sup>

The images i present are not intended as a direct critique of the dominant narrative of mezcal, nor do they claim to offer a conclusive statement on the complex issue of industry pressure on small producers and the pueblo. They do not aim to document plantations, deforestation, air pollution, or the economic disparities within the mezcal production chain as evidence of the destruction inflicted on territory and its socio-cultural fabric by the agave and mezcal trade. Rather, they suggest ideas and reflections through metaphor, overt or concealed symbolism, cultural references, and a range of affective and sensory perceptions—opening spaces for thinking otherwise through emotive and intuitive spaces. Instead of promoting photographic performance, they call for an active and sensible engagement from all actors, from those present in the moment of capture to the broader, heterogeneous audience they later encounter. The images act as a shared and safe space in which to welcome vulnerability and the experience of affects.

I can affirm that none of the photos presented in this thesis and in my project are devoid of a very specific story that led to the capture of the moment they represent. I use the word *capture* here provocatively, solely to open a parenthesis for reflection on its connotation of appropriation. To capture a moment, to make it captive, implies that its possibility to continue has been taken away, that it is no longer free to spread into the world. This is what Susan Sontag refers to in her critique of the association between photography and reality. "Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still".<sup>43</sup> Considering the photographic event rather than the capture of the image allows us to envision photography beyond its precise, imprisoned, and conquered moment, and to move past its conception as an unquestionable reality.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> ibid

<sup>41</sup> Cervenak, S. J. (2018, May). *The Problem of After.* ASAP/Journal, 3(2), 306-310

<sup>42</sup> Holert, T. (2019, January). *Epistemic Violence and the Careful Photograph*. e-flux. (96).

<sup>43</sup> Sontag, S. (1973). On Photography. Rosetta Books.

Behind the photos are discoveries and realizations, concessions and compromises, big and small.<sup>44</sup> Still, precisely because finding an equilibrium between these contradictions belongs to the responsibility of the photographer, making them explicit is counterproductive of the expansion of its possibilities. Allowing freedom in the variety of reflections stimulated by an affective reaction to the image is just as important as avoiding its capture. It is in this perspective that the visual methodology finds its meaning, as it expands the value of narration to allow it to multiply through the different reactions to the image, stimulating new narrative imaginaries of mezcal.

#### How to Read a Photograph?

In order to foster a more mindful engagement with the photographs in this thesis, I offer a few suggestions to guide the viewer toward an active, conscious interaction with them. This engagement is essential, as the images are not merely decorative or supplementary; they are integral to the research process and critical to its theoretical framing. I therefore invite the reader to reflect on the limitations we have collectively developed—especially in the media age—in our capacity to interpret photographs beyond their surface or instrumental use. These are some helpful tricks to resist the tendency to treat them as sources of proof or evidence.

1. Azoulay reflects on how photos are often perceived today as either overly aestheticized or too politicized. This binary, marked by an intentional focus on the «too,» represents the difficulty the viewer faces when feeling they should elicit an emotion in front of the image at the very moment they encounter it. Faced with the unknown, humans tend to categorize, and these categories allow them to avoid the necessity of accessing their emotional and experiential baggage to interpret what they see. Judging a photograph as too aesthetic allows one to escape its content by criticizing it for being falsely beautiful. Judging it as too political allows one to discredit it by assigning a pretentious intent that goes beyond what they expect from it. These judgments are unproductive and block the creative and transformative potential of the photograph. I thus invite readers to detach themselves from this binary and its offshoots when analyzing the image, breaking

this paradigm once and for all: the image, by definition, is a form of aesthetics — whether or not it is appreciated by the viewer — and the value of its political implication is irrelevant to what it seeks to communicate.

- 2. To reassure those who would have preferred to escape from their responsibility, the complementary support of displacing the image suggested by Cervenak becomes a good ally. Viewing the image in another context, or spontaneously presenting it to people around you to observe their reactions and discuss it, allows for a broader perspective. Thus, it is not necessary to "understand" the image at the first moment, which considerably reduces the pressure on the viewer to perform.
- **3.** This suggestion draws on Tina Campt's concept of *quiet* in *Listening to Images*, where she proposes a methodology for engaging with photographs through sonic and affective registers, rather than through visual analysis alone. Working with Black diaspora archives, Campt shows how images shaped by marginalization or bureaucracy carryresidual frequencies—echoes of lived experience that exceed their immediate content. Her work invites us to shift from looking *at* images to listening *with* them. The suggestion here unfolds on two layers: first, to consider the image as quiet; second, to perceive images as the result of

a narrative project—like the architecture of a pre-existing idea. **3.1.** In *Listening to Images*, Campt recalls her father's humming at her mother's funeral—a "presence in absence" that could "celebrate, irritate," and also "haunt." From this, she builds the idea of quiet: not silence, but a low frequency that resists disappearance. For Campt, such quiet gestures are quotidian forms of resistance against dominant modes of visibility. To attend to quiet in images is to recognize both a real and symbolic space: the hum of everyday life, and the silence of a possible or looming absence. The image becomes the hum that resists it. 3.2. The second layer draws from Campt's reading of Gulu Real Art Studio, a Ugandan photo studio whose discarded ID portraits were reassembled by photographer Martina Bacigalupo into a striking seriality of faceless images. Campt emphasizes that the creative act lies not in Bacigalupo's invention, but in the genre's structure—echoing Sol LeWitt's claim that the serial artist is merely a "clerk cataloging the results of his premise." Here, the premise is the narrative logic underpinning the sequence: a structure applied, not invented. This logic becomes an artistic

gesture—a translation of idea into visual form. Such sequencing suggests that meaning in photography often arises not from creation *ex nihilo*, but from interpretive construction, from the architecture of narration.



Photo from the project Gulu Real Art Studio, by Martina Bacigalupo.

<sup>44</sup> Following this thinking, i could elaborate entire pages just on what preceded and followed each of the images. What surrounds the photograph corresponds to a rich amount of information and knowledge that was passed on to me and experiences i was able to share. For example, the cover photo is the only one taken with a tripod. While taking it, i felt guilty for taking so much time and not being able to focus on Yair, who, amid his questions about why this instrument was necessary, was impatiently asking me to return to the cabin to eat. However, I was able to pause for a moment to observe the stars while focusing on the exposure times. I also got to experience the isolation of the place where I was, not seeing any other lights on the horizon, and witnessing the details of the surrounding peaks disappear into the darkness.

<sup>45</sup> Azoulay, A. (2010). *Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political.* Theory, Culture & Society, 27(7-8), 239-262.

<sup>46</sup> Cervenak, S. J. (2018, May). The Problem of After. ASAP/Journal, 3(2), 306-310.

#### Cinema

My relationship with cinema is deeply influenced by the one my brother has with it. It is an art form that doesn't belong to me particularly but one that i've loved discovering while working on this thesis. I don't consider myself an expert on the subject; becoming one spontaneously would be superficial, and developing the necessary foundation to write about cinema critically would go beyond the scope of this thesis. This is why i will approach cinema - or more precisely, filmmaking as a cinematic event - from the perspective of my experience as a newcomer observer. From my position, i conceived it primarily in its relational aspect, which is coherent, as it is the one i pay particular attention to in my photographic practice. Then, editing has become a way for me to familiarize myself with filmed images, even though it is evident that the way i arrange them in sequence is a direct imitation of how i organize my photographic images: by creating a clear narration flow based on both content and aesthetically suggestive form.

From a relational or ethical standpoint, i recognized similar issues in taking video images as in photographing. However, one distinction i would like to point out is the more intrusive nature of the former, which i found more challenging to manage. When i photograph, my attention sometimes drifts to beautiful lights or scenes that captivate me, pulling me out of the moment i am experiencing within the universe of the photographic event i am part of. But aside from these spontaneous moments, i generally feel completely present with the people and the environment around me. When photographing, my attention shifts momentarily to the viewfinder, but I can still interact with my subject verbally, and i am never completely absent. Filming, on the other hand, requires an absence, in order not to interfere with the sound and the fluidity of the actions from which the director and their team are distanced. By disappearing, the person filming also distances themselves from a relational platform, akin to that of the photographic event. The authenticity of the events is therefore necessarily disrupted, especially in cases like ours, where the relationships established between the subjects and the person behind the camera are friendly and natural. In the first days of shooting, i felt uncomfortable disappearing, so i did not always do so; i could be seen or heard in most of the shots, as i was physically present. As the days passed, this discomfort diminished because i understood that the relational pact i had established had strong enough foundations to allow me these absences. Although this comfort allows for witnessing particularly intimate moments that seem completely authentic, this apparent disappearance is obviously paradoxical since the director is never truly absent, either physically or ideologically.

This distinction between photography and film may seem extremely trivial and insignificant, but it differentiates them immensely in the logistics and familiarity of their respective events.

In a documentary context, this relational aspect has a huge impact on the criteria of reality that positions it as scientific evidence or as an ethnographic or anthropological document. By experiencing firsthand the impossibility of authenticity, the haziness of the boundary between fiction and documentary becomes evident, and Bill Nichols' formulation "documentary film is (not) a fiction like others" makes perfect sense. <sup>47</sup> In her article bearing the same title as Nichols' phrase, Geneviève Jacquinot proves through numerous theoretical and specific examples that the opposition between documentary and fiction cannot be resolved by their respective ontologies because their limits cannot be so radically defined, and the existence of one does not imply the absence of the other.

Within the framework of narration methodology, the filmed images in this thesis, while spontaneous and representing real people (i.e., not actors or characters) in real places (without staging), do not claim to be objective. Their relevance lies in the existence of a story that unites them, and the short film produced thus belongs more to the ambivalent terminology of docu-film, embracing the existence of both fiction and subjectivity. More than a formal or aesthetic choice, it is a stance regarding the impossibility of total neutrality in documentary filmmaking, as supported by filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-A. "The purposeful, object-oriented camera eye does not allow any filmed event to be simply fortuitous. Everything must be bathed with meaning".48 Minh-A critiques the way documentaries try to make us believe in authenticity and thus appears as a paternalistic action, as it claims to "give a voice" to Other peoples while hypocritically pretending not to interfere with them - but actually doing so in all sorts of technical and aesthetic ways. Like Jacquinot, she calls for a fluidity in documentary by encouraging a focus on the nuances that exist between a romanticism of the unknown and its forced brutal representation, to open up new visions that are not framed between these dualistic poles.

The visual narration methodology thus arises in the production of the short film, always through the creation of content aimed at stimulating new thoughts and going beyond a defined meaning. The process of building an emotional narrative is in fact considered in film and media cognitive theory as an intuitive way of structuring our relationship to the world and thus questioning it. <sup>50</sup> It is with this perspective that the sequence of filmed images occupies a space between a spontaneous documentary approach and an abstract

<sup>47</sup> Jacquinot, G. (1994). Le Documentaire, une fiction (pas) comme les autres Cinémas, 4(2), 61-81.

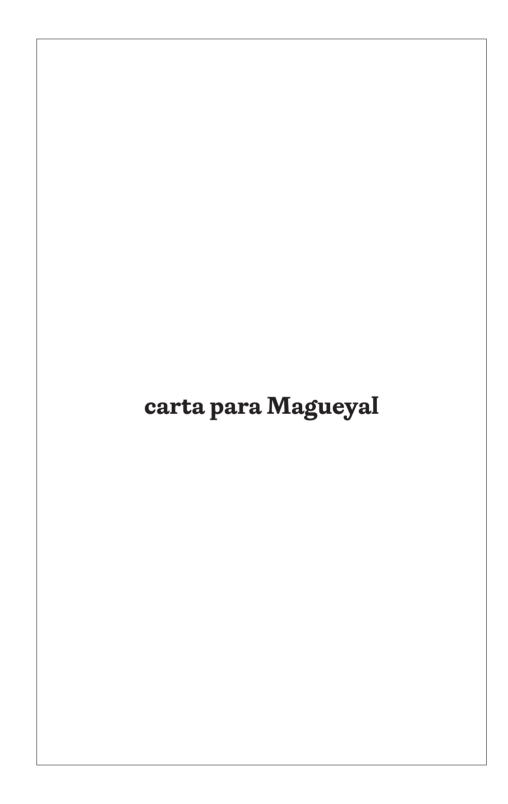
<sup>48</sup> Trinh, T. M.-H. (1991). When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender, and Cultural Politics. Routledge. p.53

<sup>49 &</sup>quot;This is actually called «giving voice» - literally meaning that those who are/need to be given an opportunity to speak up never had a voice before. Without their benefactors, they are bound to remain non-admitted, non-in-corporated, therefore, unheard." (Trinh, 1991)

<sup>50</sup> Bondebjerg, I. (2014). *Documentary and Cognitive Theory: Narrative, Emotion and Memory.* Media and Communication, 2(1), 13-22.

#### methodology

fiction, generating a diversified affectivity. The images were created without a prior script, but the goal of representing daily life implies, at its core, a subjective vision on my part, which is expressed through the manipulation of the sequence during editing, the intrusion of other audio materials such as music and audio messages, and through its experimental nature. The video thus serves as a complement to the photographic and theoretical materials in creating a varied imaginary of mezcal, but mostly functions as an archive of Yegolé. Chilo's family, the main protagonists of the film, is depicted in a way that stimulates the full range of connected narratives that exist around the figure of the pueblo and its ontological panora



I came across the members of Magueyal almost by pure chance. While searching for information about Otomi communities in Hidalgo, I stumbled upon photographs taken by an Italian photographer. I wrote to him to ask whether he had any contacts within these communities. He replied that he no longer did, but that a friend of his might know of an organization that could help me with my research. That is how his friend passed along the contact information for the Magueyal organization.

Before accepting my project and in order to better understand it, the family sent me a form with a series of questions about my motivations and asking what the project might offer to the community. I found this initiative to be thoughtful, sensitive, and wise. In light of the extractive dynamics often seen in photography, it struck me as a deeply responsible approach to first try and understand the precise intentions of anyone seeking to engage with vulnerable communities.

Our first meeting happened online and was marked by a sense of lightness and joy. It was reassuring to see that our goals aligned, and that there was room for mutual support. It was not until I met Araceli, Diego, and Sebastian in Ixmiquilpan that I realized Magueyal is, in fact, a family. Araceli, Fortino, and their two sons dedicate themselves to creating projects that aim to strengthen and empower the self-governance of Indigenous and campesino communities in the municipality of Cardonal, Hidalgo. Their goal is to support these communities in exercising their economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights through the active participation of their members. They organize events and workshops centered on agriculture, culture, and land.

My stay in Cardonal, which lasted a week, coincided with the inauguration of a *vivero* (agave nursery). The event was open to anyone in the community who might be interested, and included a conversation with a local entrepreneur who had succeeded in making a living

solely from cultivating pulque agaves and producing various derivatives of aguamiel<sup>1</sup>, such as pulque, agave honey, and distilled beverages. The participants—of all ages and genders—were highly engaged, often referring back to previous events and sharing how Magueyal's work had shaped their personal goals and situations. The nursery itself was created by planting hijuelos (young offshoots that grow near the agave mother plants), which residents had gathered from their own land. When the time came to plant their agaves in the vivero, the excitement was palpable. Great care was given to the soil, and different organic fertilizers were tested in separate rows to collectively assess which would best suit the local terrain. It was incredibly enriching to witness the exchange of knowledge about the various agave species, as shared by each participant.

My time in Cardonal was also marked by several visits to the fields, where I learned a lot, along with Sebastian and Diego, about the local agave varieties, thanks to the expertise of Don Adrián and Don Julián, two campesinos native to the region. Don Julián spoke with nostalgia about his childhood home made of *pencas* (agave leaves), telling us how fresh it was in summer, and how cosy in winter. Don Adrián took me to see one of the last remaining homes of this kind still standing in the community.

How impactful a single week can be. I owe as many thanks to everyone I crossed paths with in Cardonal as there are spines on a Xamini maguey.

<sup>1</sup> The aguamiel is a sweet liquid contained among some agave species' heart, that allows for producing pulque.

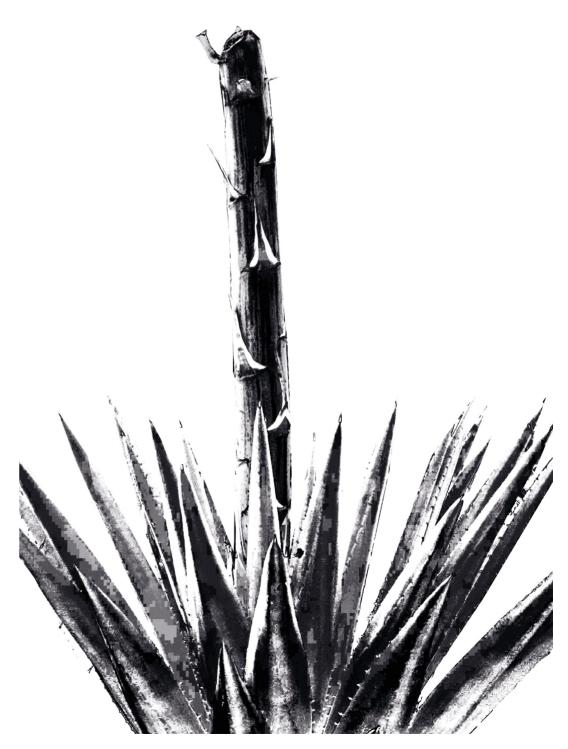


Araceli, Fortino, Diego, Sebas.

Hacen un trabajo y un equipo magnífico. Les agradezco mucho por haberme incluido en su proyecto; sé cuánto lo valoran, y con toda razón. También les agradezco por haberme ofrecido un acceso más íntimo a sus vidas y a su hermoso hogar. Puedo decir que les debo gran parte de mi cultura musical mexicana, y que aún sigo escuchando muchas de las obras que me enseñaron aquella noche. Gracias a Araceli por su valiosa lección sobre los compromisos; me ofreciste la enseñanza y el cariño de una madre.

Y un agradecimiento especial a Sebas por tus servicios de guía turística en Tolantongo... ¡cuánto quisiera estar bañándome en sus aguas en este momento!

Muchas gracias a todos. Espero volver a verlos muy pronto.



# 1. Baroque and Macondo as a lens

This section introduces two key texts — La modernidad de lo barroco by Bolívar Echeverría and Cien años de soledad by Gabriel García Márquez — as theoretical foundations for thinking through the system of agave and mezcal. Though not architectural in a conventional sense, these works carry a deeply spatial and temporal logic: they construct environments - material, symbolic, and affective - through which lived experiences are shaped, inhabited, and remembered. In this way, they offer valuable architectural lessons in how narratives can build and hold space. Both offer critical frameworks to approach the tensions between colonial legacies, capitalist modernity, and alternative forms of existence in Latin America. They come together in the way they revisit national traumas from a grounded and sensitive perspective, enhancing the creation of narrations that open the possibility for alternative models, converging through a baroque modality. In doing so, they become the basis for a spatio-temporal conception of mezcal, one that reconciles these two dimensions through the narrative project. Through their porous lens, the fragile present of mezcal appears not only more accessible, but also susceptible to transformation, resistance, and care.



1. baroque and macondo as a lens introduction

The architecture of agave — understood here as the network of geographical, economic, and social ties that historically and presently connect people to the agave plant in Mexico — is rooted in a series of dualistic relationships characteristic of the Mexican nation and the historical processes that have shaped Latin America. These dualisms, that will be further explored in the next pages, are absorbed into the narrative of mezcal. Throughout the thesis, these opposing forces, which are encompassed within a fictional sphere that corresponds to a broad idea of what will be referred to as baroque capitalism, exerting pressure on the spaces and temporalities of a genuine baroque modality of being, will serve as guide in questioning the modern project. By tracing these tensions through the mezcal world, the thesis aims not merely to critique capitalist modernity, but to expose its deep entanglements with systems of extraction and dispossession. Identifying these zones of friction opens the possibility of alternative narrations-counter-propositions that offer forms of relation, production, and memory outside the dominant modern narrative.

It is important to note that the theoretical framework adopted here is largely grounded in writings that seek alternative ways of seeing and living in the world—ways that diverge from the global capitalist project, what Bolívar Echeverría calls modernidad capitalista, what Guillermo Bonfil Batalla refers to as the proyecto occidental, and what John Law defines as the One-World World<sup>3</sup>. Opening up horizons of thought while reading this work will make it possible to engage with its anticolonial intentions and to perceive the opportunities that arise from seeking deeper relationships between the human and the more-than-human-relationships that can transcend the fatalistic acceptance of a destructive modernity, approaching what Arturo Escobar terms the other-than-modern<sup>4</sup>. Whether in public discourse, popular culture, or academic environments, the intuitive dominance of Western thought often prevents us from accessing reflections that move beyond the constraints of capitalist reality and its colonial relations. Moreover, the capitalist-colonial binomial alone tends to generate problems in reflecting on the analysis of their societies and their varied relationships with the land.<sup>5</sup> In everyday language, these two notions tend to overlap and merge, resulting in errors that undermine a lucid understanding of both local and global issues. This is partly because their principles converge, and once perceived as inseparable, it becomes difficult to distinguish their distinct implications. Yet capitalism and colonialism take on multiple forms, each shaped by specific and differing contexts-forms that are essential for analyzing the world of mezcal. In particular, this thesis

1 Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era.

will address the extractivist foundations of the capitalist regime and the ongoing historical presence of colonialism, as well as its internal reproductions.

In this context, this section aims to introduce two fundamental texts that shape the development of the thesis. Both written by Latin American authors, these works offer a critical lens on their societies and provide an opportunity to deepen geopolitical questions that situate agave within a broader context. Through their distinct narrative frameworks, La modernidad de lo barroco by Bolívar Echeverría and Cien años de soledad by Gabriel García Márquez propose spatial and temporal foundations from which to expand the narrative universes of mezcal. They offer a lens to recognize mezcal's universe as a rigid architecture, while also allowing us to think of a more fluid architecture with mezcal, acknowledging its rootedness in the land, its historical entanglements, and its affective charge. This approach situates mezcal within its national and international relations, between the imaginary and the real, and in its ongoing relationship to the Earth and to time.

<sup>2</sup> Bonfil Batalla, G. (1994). *México profundo: una civilización negada*. Grijalbo. 3 Law, J. (2015). What's wrong with a one-world world? *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 16(1), 126-139.

<sup>4</sup> Escobar, A. (2018). Designs for the Pluriverse. Duke University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes

## **Spatial ethos**

This section serves as an introduction to baroque theory, aiming to grasp its analytical potential and to move toward the possibility of approaching mezcal's actual situation through a shared lens. Drawing on Bolívar Echeverría's *La modernidad de lo barroco*, it interrogates the potential of the baroque as an alternative ethos in response to capitalist modernity. By mobilizing Deleuze's concept of the baroque fold, this section proposes a spatial reading of the narrations surrounding mezcal—one that reveals the tensions between a baroque rooted in the communal practices of Latin America and a baroque appropriated by the capitalist model. Adopting a baroque lens thus makes it possible to reach for the variety of a mezcal architecture, rendered invisible by the dominant market-driven narrative of the modern project.

The adoption of a baroque lens is introduced here as an approach that both explains and stimulates the need for a spatial study of mezcal that would reveal its entangled architecture. The relevance of engaging with this model lies in two key elements that form the foundation of this thesis. The first relates to a commitment to a multidisciplinary and inclusive vision of architecture while the second emerges from the fieldwork on which this research is based.

The abundance of theories surrounding the baroque suggests the possible existence of multiple baroques, depending on the meaning attributed to the term.<sup>6</sup> Monika Kaup, professor whose research is oriented towards borderland Latin American literature, identifies three historical phases of baroque cultural predominance: the European baroque—of Italian origin—of the 17th century; the baroque that emerged from the colonial project in Latin America; and the wave of neo-baroque production that began in the 20th century, which has since sparked new reflections around the definition of a contemporary neo-baroque.<sup>7</sup> It is to say that Severo Sarduy argues that as in the 17th century, the neo-baroque, this new "barroco furioso"<sup>8</sup>, could only come from America, from the "márgenes críticas o violentas de una gran superficie"<sup>9</sup>, in its "espacio a la vez lateral y

6 On baroque aesthetics: Walter Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama; Heinrich Wölfflin, Renaissance and baroque; Alejo Carpentier, Concierto barroco. On neobaroque as anticolonial and alternative modernity: Alejo Carpentier, Los pasos perdidos; Irlemar Chiampi, Barroco y modernidad; José Lezama Lima, La expresión americana; Severo Sarduy, Ensayos generales sobre el barroco. On baroque in colonial times: Édouard Glissant, Poétique de la relation. On baroque economy: Verónica Gago, Neoliberalism from below

The second reason behind the adoption of a baroque lens lies in the fact that its presence emerged as tangibly perceptible during the fieldwork conducted across mezcal-producing territories. The visible spaces of the new palenques oscillating between modernity and tradition, the relationships unfolding among actors in the industry, the tense debates concealing deeper stakes, and the unease that arises when these stakes are brought to light, are all marked by a stratification and complexity that recall a baroque modality absorbed into a capitalist narrative. This becomes particularly evident in the aesthetic and architectural density of the new spaces shaped by the mezcal world. The baroque lens thus offers a means to recognize this baroque product of capitalism, while remaining attuned to the poetic subtleties and mythical qualities that still constitute a genuine resistance within the rural universe to which mezcal belongs. In order to acknowledge it through both historical and contemporary perspectives—without falling into idealization—the pueblo is approached through its intrinsically baroque mode of being, drawing from the societal *ethos* proposed by Bolívar Echeverría.

#### The Nostalgic Taste of Mezcal

The current world of mezcal is shaped by dualisms so deeply rooted in its national condition that they leave little room for critical discussion. Opinions tend to swing from one extreme to the other, rarely allowing to encounter a middle ground. As international demand rises, pressure from the industry weighs increasingly on small producers, who struggle to meet the pace of a market logic that moves too fast. This creates a growing imbalance between craft and industry, expressed in a series of dualisms—tradition/modernity, local knowledge/modern science, community/individual—that echo the historical divide between Indigenous peoples and Spanish descendants since the Conquest.

<sup>7</sup> Baumgarten, J., Farago, C., Jacoviello, S., Kaup, M., Siracusano, G., & Hills, H. (2015). Conceptions and determinations of baroque and new baroque in the last decade A discussion between. *Perspective*.

<sup>8</sup> Sarduy, S. (1987). *Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco*. Fondo de Cultura Económica. p. 101.

<sup>&</sup>quot;furious baroque"

<sup>9</sup> Ibio

<sup>&</sup>quot;critical or violent margins of a huge surface"

abierto, superpuesto, excéntrico y dialectal"<sup>10</sup>. Contemporary discourse on the baroque stems from the resurgence of an early 20th-century intellectual current that still analyzed societies primarily through their architectural legacy, granting architecture a central role in the way social norms and attitudes were perceived. In this sense, architecture positions itself as an inherently multidisciplinary practice, whose intellectual possibilities extend far beyond the built object itself. The use of baroque theory thus allows architecture to be re-situated within its sociological, philosophical, and artistic dimensions. It is precisely by approaching it in this open and world-sensitive way that its narrational richness emerges—enabling it to contribute meaningfully to broader discourses on transition and alternative ways of being.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>quot;space that is simultaneously lateral and open, superimposed, eccentric, and dialectical"

These national dualisms mirror broader global oppositions like East-West and North-South and suggest the hegemony of what John Law described as the «One-World-World» (OWW): a hegemonic world made of a single dominant worldview. This notion is central to Arturo Escobar's work on Southern epistemologies, which aims to revalue alternative ways of knowing and being. In La Revolución Mezcalera, the scholar and sociologue Domingo García explains how so-called traditional mezcal—which, counterintuitively, refers to its current version—is largely shaped by a commercial narrative that fits easily into the logic of the OWW. 12 He describes how the dynamics that have fueled the idealized discourse around mezcal and the worship of tradition and authenticity emerged after the industry's crisis at the end of the 20th century, caused both by a drop in agave availability and by stigmas surrounding the product. Mezcal had already gained a first wave of tourist attention in Oaxaca in the 1970s, promoted through the folkloric and exotic image of the floating gusano in the bottle. 13 More recently, the Western fascination with the artisanal and rural aesthetic of mezcal has shifted into a nostalgic discourse, echoing Walter Benjamin's critique that modern mechanization leads to the disappearance of authenticity.<sup>14</sup> In this context, nostalgia for that authenticity seems to have become a driving force behind mezcal's revival. The search for a lost authenticity can be seen, for example, in how the drink is marketed with references to a pre-Hispanic imaginary, or in the growing valorization of the producer figure as an author, an artist with a singular touch. Since García Garza has already analyzed this dominant narrative extensively, the intention here is not to get into its details, but to acknowledge its existence in order to open the discourse to a more sensible and situated, critical approach.

The current crisis facing mezcal arises from these contradictions, woven through the tension between artisanal and industrial modes. From this perspective, mezcal can be seen as a small-scale reflection of broader national dynamics and eventually of Latin America more widely, through the Iens of Bolívar Echeverría's *ethos barroco.* <sup>15</sup> The thesis aims to unpack the narrative structure at play, and to recognize the physical and imaginary spaces that have shaped it and that it continues to generate. The baroque appears here as a tool that allows us to step outside of binary thinking—not to resolve it, but to name it and begin to unmake it.





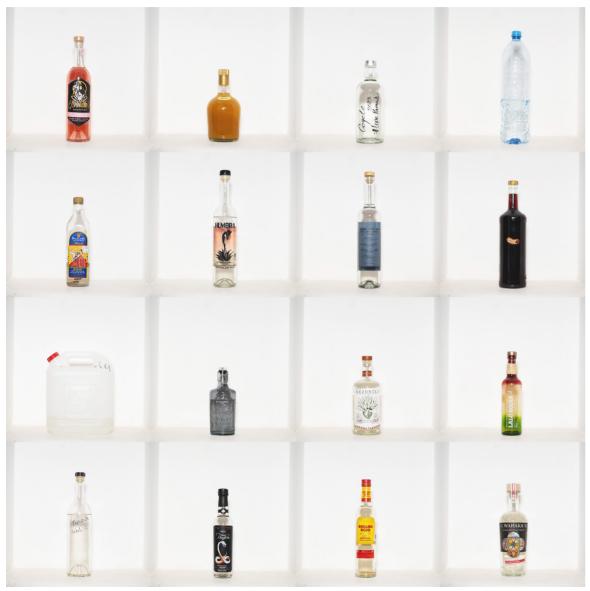
Vintage label and publicity of the mezcal Gusano Rojo, retrieved on Gusano Rojo website.

<sup>11</sup> Escobar, A. (2016). *Epistemologies of the South*. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana.

 <sup>12</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Los destilados de agave y la invención del mezcal tradicional. El colegio de Michoacán.
 13 ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin, W. (1986). The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In H. Arendt (Ed.), *Illuminations* (p. 217-252). Schocken Books.

<sup>15</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era.



Current diversity in mezcal bottle shapes and labels.

#### The baroque ethos<sup>16</sup>

Through the concept of historical ethos, Echeverría argues for the possibility of analyzing and understanding the origins of cultural activities and ways of living adopted by a group whose boundaries are defined neither by narrow national belonging nor by preestablished categories such as "East" or "West". According to him, four different ethoses were developed to enable the integration of a modernity that was primarily Western and European in nature, having embraced the capitalist project. In fact, this modern system would actually have managed to embed itself into already-existing cultural panoramas precisely thanks to (or because of) these ethoses. They therefore emerge as necessary responses to the fundamental contradiction that renders any innocent adherence to capitalism unsupportable: the accumulation of capital. In following Echeverría's thought, it is helpful to adopt his position regarding the Marxian contradiction between use value and exchange value, which he identifies as the core absurdity of Western society. In Echeverría's words, the "hecho capitalista" (capitalist fact) is a "conflicto permanente entre las tendencias contrapuestas de dos dinámicas simultáneas, constitutivas de la vida social: la de ésta en tanto que es un proceso de trabajo y de disfrute referido a valores de uso, por un lado, y la de la reproducción de su riqueza, en tanto que es un proceso de 'valorización del valor abstracto' o acumulación de capital, por otro". In this conflict, the use value is "sacrificada" (sacrified) and "sometida" (submitted) to the exchange one.<sup>18</sup> Based on this definition, it seems reasonable to think of the capitalist contradiction as a conflict that also absorbs, in some way, the series of dualisms mentioned earlier. Diagram X illustrates a tree of dualisms branching from this Marxian pair, as it applies to mezcal. While the "realist" reaction to the capitalist contradiction is the most common today-especially in the West, as economist Mark Fisher notes<sup>19</sup>—Echeverría identifies three other ways to navigate it, all four of which are grounded in modern artistic movements.

First, realism and romanticism form a pair, both aiming to dissolve the contradiction. The realist attitude, as described in Fisher's *Realist Capitalism*, recognizes no alternative to the capitalist project and thus accepts its sociocultural and productive potential as wholly legitimate, just, and creative. It blurs the lines between use value and capital, merging them into a single, undeniable and

<sup>16</sup> This section is conceived as a synthesis of the different *ethe* analyzed by Bolívar Echeverría in his book *La modernidad del barroco*. Unless otherwise noted, the content presented here is drawn directly from this work.

<sup>17</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era. p.37-38 "permanent conflict between the opposing tendencies of two simultaneous dynamics that are constitutive of social life: on the one hand, that of life as a process of labor and enjoyment oriented toward use-values; and on the other, the reproduction of its wealth as a process of "valorization of abstract value," or capital accumulation."

<sup>18</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era. p.38

<sup>19</sup> Fisher, M. (2009). Capitalist Realism. Is There No Alternative? Zero Books.

idealized reality—"militante" in the sense that it fiercely defends the creative power of capital accumulation. This is the mindset shared by many persons and organizations aligned with the dominant Western worldview and it is thus also very present in Mexico. The romantic ethos, on the other hand, does not merge the two values but instead conceals capital value behind use value. By recognizing only the potential rising from this mode of existence, it ignores both its causes and consequences, idealizing it as the best way to elevate the human spirit within nature. Capitalism, romanticized, becomes the longed-for key to ultimate individual fulfillment, to transfiguration.

A second pair, formed by the classical and baroque ethos, recognizes the capitalist contradiction, but whereas the first seeks to compensate for its fatal character, the second seeks to escape it. The classical approach does not deny the existence of the contradiction, but instead adopts a positive attitude toward it. It views exchange value as effective, consciously trying to draw constructive value from it, responding to a "estrategia de supervivencia" (survival strategy). It convinces itself that using capitalism wisely is enough of a compensation for its destructive consequences, making it possible to elevate exchange value to the level of use value, morally speaking. This ethos does not oppose capitalism, because it sees

resistance as wasted energy against a force too powerful to challenge. It therefore prefers to bow before it and make the best – of it, practically convincing itself that it has elegantly won this silent battle. It becomes a way of justifying something now too large to be confronted by human value, and of succeeding in living within it while pushing back any potential feelings of guilt. Finally, the baroque ethos seeks to resist capitalist reality by creating a bubble in which its contradiction temporarily does not exist, by attempting to transform the "bad side" of exchange value into something "good." The baroque ethos thus acknowledges the moral superiority of use value's quality and tries to keep it alive by converting exchange

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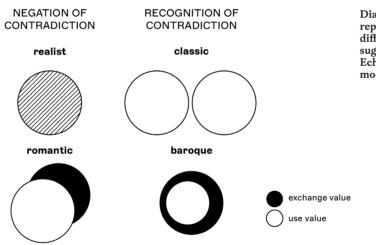
value into an imaginary dimension, one as qualitative as the use value it oppresses. Comparable to a mise-en-scène, the baroque attitude corresponds to a fictitious space that exists within a broader reality from which it seeks to isolate, to distance itself.

Like the classical, romantic, or realist ethoses, the baroque ethos responds to a society's need to exist daily through actions that appear coherent with the mode of existence chosen in response to the capitalist contradiction. These actions unfold in a specific time

USE VALUE	EXCHANGE VALUE
collective	individual
ancestral	modern
artisanal	industrial
past	future
cosmology	science
circular time	linear time
indigenous	Western
South	North

Table showcasing a series of dualisms among the mezcal world, based on the marxian contradiction between use value and exchange value.

and place and are therefore neither permanent nor exclusive. They can coexist, clash, and overlap within their physical and temporal boundaries. While the baroque ethos arises from a desire to make the unlivable vortex of modern capitalism bearable, the space it creates has the particularity of being fictitious and temporary—it is nothing more than a veil laid over the tensions born between the preexisting and symbolically opposed spaces of society. Just as baroque art was highly ornamental, this aestheticization of life is visible in the baroque spaces of modern everyday life, particularly through temporary "ruptures" with the capitalist contradiction, such as celebration, play, and art—or, in the case of mezcal, festivals, tastings, and bottle labels. These spaces, often bearing cultural value, function as "pauses" in the alienation of exchange value. They allow for "la destrucción y re-construcción de la 'naturalidad' de lo humano, de la necesidad de su presencia contingente".21 They simulate a whimsical hic et nunc sheltered from an inconceivable reality whose paradox is not only constraining, but seemingly impossible to resolve by other means. It is this attempt to flee the capitalist contradiction that will now hold our attention, since Echeverría highlights its importance in the formation of Latin America, and because the narrative around modern mezcal is built within the same foundational dualistic tensions.



Diagrammatic representation of the different societal ethē suggested by Bolívar Echeverría in La modernidad de lo barroco.

#### Una América latina barroca (a baroque Latin America)

According to Echeverría, the baroque ethos is dominant in Latin American society, as it was implanted so violently during the colonial era that it continues to be active today in the hybrid forms of its modernity—particularly through complex and stratified practices such as that of mezcal. In order to avoid engaging in a long and in-

ibid. 21 Echeverría, B. (1998). *La modernidad de lo barroco*. Ediciones Era. p.189

depth study of the colonial cruelties that led to the societal formation of Latin America—since this is not the objective of this work and i do not believe I have the proper words to describe it—I refer directly to Echeverría's nuanced yet stark reflections on what the 16th century represented in that context. This passage aims to contextualize the following century, corresponding to the peak of baroque art on the new continent, but also to offer a shared space of reflection and awareness regarding the events of the Conquest.

"Es sin duda indispensable enfatizar la gravitación determinante que ejerce el siglo XVI en la historia de América: su carácter de tiempo heroico, sin el cual no hubiesen podido existir ni los personajes ni el escenario del drama que le da sentido a esa historia. Insistir en lo catastrófico, desastroso sin compensación, de lo que aconteció entonces allí : la destrucción de la civilización prehispánica y sus culturas, seguida de la eliminación de las nueve décimas partes de la población que vivía dentro de ella.\* Recordar que, en paralelo a su huella destructiva, este siglo conoce también, promovida desde el discurso cristiano y protegida por la Corona, la puesta en práctica de ciertas utopías renacentistas que intentan construir sociedades híbridas o sincréticas v convertir así□ el sangriento "encuentro de los dos mundos" en una oportunidad de salvación recíproca de un mundo por el otro. Considerar, en fin, que el siglo XVI americano, tan determinante en el proceso modernizador de la civilización europea, dio ya a ésta la experiencia temprana de que la occidentalización del mundo no puede pasar por la destrucción de lo no occidental y la limpieza del territorio de expansión; que el trato en interioridad con el "otro", aunque "peligroso" para la propia "identidad", es sin embargo indispensable."<sup>22</sup>

\* Note by the author: "Una eliminación, sea dicho entre paréntesis, que parece no haberse cumplido exclusivamente por el exterminio directo de su cuerpo a manos de los conquistadores, a quienes lo que menos les convenía era un conti nente vacío, sino en buena medida a través de la actitud suicida, más inconsciente y somatizada que voluntaria y planeada -propensión a la enfermedad, apatía sexual, etcétera-, que el desmoronamiento de ¡as vie jas culturas despertó en la población indígena durante la segunda mitad de esc siglo."

[ENG]: "It is undoubtedly essential to emphasize the decisive gravitational pull that the sixteenth century exerts on the history of the Americas: its character as a heroic time, without which neither the characters nor the setting of the drama that gives meaning to that history could have existed. One must insist on the catastrophic, uncompensated disaster of what occurred there at that time: the destruction of the pre-Hispanic civilization and its cultures, followed by the elimination of nine-tenths of the population that lived within it.\* It must be remembered that, parallel to its destructive footprint, this century also witnessed—promoted through Christian discourse and protected by the Crown—the implementation of certain Renaissance utopias that sought to build hybrid or syncretic societies, thus attempting to turn the bloody 'encounter of the

two worlds' into an opportunity for reciprocal salvation, one world by the other. Finally, it must be considered that the American sixteenth century, so decisive in the modernization process of European civilization, had already offered the latter an early experience: that the Westernization of the world cannot proceed through the destruction of the non-Western and the cleansing of the expansionist territory; that engaging in an interior relationship with the 'other,' though 'dangerous' for one's own 'identity,' is nevertheless indispensable."

\*Note by the author: "An elimination, it should be said in passing, that does not seem to have been carried out exclusively through the direct extermination of indigenous bodies at the hands of the conquerors—who, after all, had little interest in an empty continent—but rather to a large extent through a suicidal attitude, more unconscious and somatized than voluntary and planned—susceptibility to disease, sexual apathy, etc.—that the collapse of the old cultures awakened in the Indigenous population during the second half of that century."

This radical 16th century is followed by the 17th century, when baroque art comes to dominate. During this period, the colonial powers' relationship with the 'Other' is expressed through a process of re-creating Catholic religion and European civilization, both imposed over the spirituality and lands of the Mesoamerican peoples. The colonial project thus takes form as a repetition of Europe, rather than as its historical continuity. Baroqueness becomes, for both parties, a way to internalize the presence of the Other so as to make it tolerable.

This attitude would in fact be at the root of the "absolute decoration" of baroque art, which seeks to depict the world in the same artificial and theatrical way that makes it acceptable. « Puede decirse así que lo característico de la representación del mundo en el arte barroco está en que busca reproducir o repetir la teatralización elemental que practica el ethos barroco cuando pone "entre paréntesis" o "en escena" lo irreconciliable de la contradicción moderna del mundo, con el fin de superarlo (y soportarlo)».<sup>23</sup> It is therefore not baroque art that would have generated an ethos, but rather a conflictual ethos that would have found its artistic expression in the baroque. The Cathedral of Puebla-the first Spanish city in Mexico-is a concrete example of baroque artistic manifestations linked to spiritual integration. Baroque in Latin America is characterized by the integration of pre-Hispanic iconography into European sacred decoration, in order to arouse an emotional response that facilitates evangelization, but also because often, it was the subjugated Indigenous peoples who were forced to construct the large-scale buildings, letting their imprints in the walls.

In light of colonial violence and the subsequent integration

<sup>22</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era. p.61

<sup>23</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era. p.213-214 "It can thus be said that what characterizes the representation of the world in Baroque art is that it seeks to reproduce or repeat the elemental theatricalization practiced by the Baroque ethos when it puts the irreconcilability of the modern world's contradiction 'in parentheses' or 'on stage,' in order to overcome (and endure) it."

process, it becomes easy to conceive that the imprint of this era in Latin America was so strong that it endures through the societal events that follow-from nation formation, to revolutions, to the current capitalist modernity. Verónica Gago, in her work on the reappropriation of neoliberal practices by popular economies in Latin America. also recognizes that the baroque attitude persists today through "a set of interlaced modes of doing, thinking, perceiving, fighting, and working: as that which supposes the superimposition of nonreconciled terms in permanent re-creation".24 Baroque thus appears as a societal narrative specific to Latin America, allowing the integration of an otherwise inconceivable mode of existence. This attitude remains relevant in a modernity built on a neoliberal capitalist model that reproduces colonial and extractivist dynamics, and is therefore pertinent to the analysis of those underlying the "mezcal market narrative. Since this thesis proposes the existence of baroque spaces of mezcal, Gilles Deleuze's theory of the baroque fold will serve as a bridge to transpose an intangible societal attitude into its sensory, affective, and material forms, and thereby perceive it in its spaces, relationships, and objects.



Altar of the Templo de Santo Domingo, in Puebla.

#### **Baroque spaces**

Echeverría's theory of ethos partly draws inspiration from Deleuze's concept of the *pli baroque*, as he seeks in its contemporary adaptation the possibilities for political alternatives. "¿Puede, por ejemplo, componerse en torno a él [paradigma barroco], a su reactualización neobarroca, una propuesta política, un 'proyecto civilizatorio' realmente alternativo frente al que prevalece actualmente?" To address Echeverría's vision, the thesis aims to explore the baroque theory's potential to amplify the currently dominant worldview, using it to shed light on the plural spaces of mezcal that are rendered invisible by the prevailing narrative. While the baroque stagings mentioned by Echeverría provide a conceptual value guiding the reflection, Deleuze's fold becomes an instrument to transpose them into space, aiming to recognize and define a spatiality of the baroque. The focus is on understanding how the baroque ethos manifests in

space through the figure of the fold, from a point of view pushing the metaphor to the recognition of hidden spaces.

The fold is both a figure and a concept that, at first glance, may seem peculiar. Focusing on the fold suggests that it could have been possible to focus on anything else, as its value is everyday and almost banal. One might think of a crease on a pair of pants, a letter folded in an envelope, or the movements of our own body. Yet, when one pays attention, the fold actually establishes radical spatial implications.

Deleuze's text Le Pli<sup>26</sup> provides interesting insights into how to conceive a baroque ethos space by examining the concept of monads. According to Leibniz, monads are multiple units that can be understood as the encounter between the soul and the «tourbillons du monde»27 (the turmoil of the world), composing both a finite boundary and the entirety of the infinite they contain. <sup>28</sup> The monadic condition of a thing implies that it cannot exist within anything but itself. "Pour que la monade unisse des mondes compossibles, pour que la matière s'indexe sur l'esprit, il faut selon Deleuze que le monde soit plié et que la monade englobe ce pli."29 As an abstract or ideal entity, "sans nom propre, 30" monads are neither visible nor livable, meaning we cannot consciously experience them in their truest form. They therefore exist through the support of metaphors in various artistic and intellectual contexts. From an architectural perspective, the ideal form of a monad corresponds to a building whose interior is perfectly isolated from the exterior, in impeccable autonomy. It is an obscure room, closed off on itself, whose light openings are invisible to its inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> It is through the reflected light that the interior decor gains its meaning as the total space of experience, as to be entirely independent from the outside, the inside must illuminate itself. Seventeenth-century baroque architecture, with its interplay of light and the deceptive relationship between interior and exterior, embodies this idea. In Le Pli, Deleuze defines baroque architecture as follows: «Baroque architecture can be defined by this severing of the facade from the inside, of the interior from the exterior, and the autonomy of the interior from the independence of the exterior, but in such conditions that each of the two terms thrusts the other forward». <sup>32</sup> This recognition of an independent inside and outside in Deleuze's work relates to Echeverría's idea that the baroque ethos corresponds to the choice of

<sup>24</sup> Gago, V. (2017). *Neoliberalism from Below: Popular Pragmatics and Baroque Economies*. Duke University Press.p.14

<sup>25</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era. p. 15 "Can, for example, a political proposal be constructed around it [the baroque paradigm], around its neo-baroque reactivation—a truly alternative 'civilizational project' in contrast to the one that currently prevails?"

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze, G. (2006). The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque. Continuum Books.

<sup>27</sup> Serres, M. (1982). Le système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques: étoiles, schémas, points. Presses universitaires de France.

<sup>28</sup> Jedrzejewski, F. (2017). Deleuze, la monade et le pli. In J.-C. Martin & F. Jedrzejewski (Eds.), *Deleuze, philosophe des multiplicités* (pp. 83-94). L'Harmattan. p.84

<sup>29</sup> Ibi

<sup>&</sup>quot;For the monad to unite compossible worlds, for matter to be indexed to spirit, Deleuze argues that the world must be folded and that the monad must encompass this fold."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>quot;without a proper name"

<sup>31</sup> Deleuze, G. (2006). The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque. Continuum Books.

<sup>32</sup> Deleuze, G. (2006). The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque. Continuum Books. p.32

a third alternative to the capitalist contradiction, which is neither its adherence (the interior) nor its rejection (the exterior), but rather the choice to "vivir otro mundo dentro de ese mundo." Like the monad, the interior that would correspond to the creation of a baroque space is unaffected by any external entity. Its light (or substance, decorations, meanings) comes from its own reflections. This world illuminates itself and completely isolates itself from an exterior that, in contrast, circumscribes it.

The monad contains a component that, from a photographic imagery perspective, is captivating. The ideal plays of light it insinuates represent a sort of utopian lighting known as chiaroscuro. The use of this light by the great baroque painters - with Caravaggio likely holding the most exemplary practice - has been a constant source of inspiration for photographers due to the mystery surrounding the unknown origin of the light source. In monads, this source is impossible, yet still present, evoking an inherently magical presence. Given the autonomy of the monad, what happens outside is irrelevant: attention is entirely focused on the subject, on the interior it represents. Modernity has generally sought to nullify the possibility of magic, striving for a scientific explanation behind every phenomenon in life and believing mostly in Historic facts.<sup>34</sup> In his investigation about black tourism<sup>35</sup> in Mexico, Mark Speakman finds that the notion of Liquid Modernity of Bauman<sup>36</sup> is of great relevance as a framework, as most of the persons participating in black tourism are doing-so in a process of recovering from the psychological scars inflicted by the Western-capitalist society.<sup>37</sup> Getting closer to the experience of magic becomes a way chosen by singular persons who are trying to overcome the alienating effects of modernity, both consciously and unconsciously. Similarly, the photographic image, like other forms of art, helps maintain the existence of magic within Western society, appearing like a myth and magic in photography could therefore be seen as baroque momentaneous shield. Often consumed as bubbles to escape an oppressing modernity, the coming back of myth and magic in photography could therefore be seen as baroque.<sup>38</sup>

The Baroque of Echeverría creates spaces that can be read both through the folds Deleuze identifies in Leibniz's mathematics and through the temporality he recognizes in Foucault's subjectivation, via what he calls Foucauldian plissements (foldings).<sup>39</sup> Deleuze sees the internalization of the external by the subject-central in Foucault's work—as a form of folding, «comme si le navire était un plissement de la mer». 40 Foucault argues that humans are filled with the external world, which, folding, comes to form the internal, accumulating layers that «font voir ou dire quelque chose de nouveau». 41 Thus, the subject is shaped by the folding of the space in which it evolves, but also by the one of the external time, which, folding, forms a memory of past experiences. 42 Echeverría speaks of a global internalization of the European world during the Conquest, as the reaction adopted both by the Mesoamerican peoples and the Spaniards as they gradually accepted the evidence of the obligation of co-habiting the territory.<sup>43</sup> This internalization has a character that accumulates the figure of the fold, in the form of a series of folds, or plissements, but also a notion that links space to time, in a cumulative memory of shared experience.

Deleuze observes that the narrative of folds presents a problem, as they require continuous transformation; there is always something new to invent, always something new to stimulate the fold. «The fold: the Baroque invents the infinite work or process. The problem is not how to finish a fold, but how to continue it, to have it go through the ceiling, how to bring it to infinity.» This is translatable into the constant evolution of the subject and, therefore, into the evolution of Latin American society post-colonialism, as well as into the model of mezcal. If the commercialization of gusano mezcal in the 70s was one of these folds, today it has become an indigenous graphic folded into a modern aesthetic. This accumulation of folds, tastes, and aesthetics creates the eclectic panorama of mezcal, eclectic in the Baroque

<sup>33</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). *La modernidad de lo barroco*. Ediciones Era. *"live another world within this world"* 

<sup>34</sup> Eliade, M. (1959). Cosmos and History. Harper & Brothers.

<sup>35</sup> Black tourism refers to the displacement of persons to travel to places characterized by evil, violent or traumatic events, or to places where black magic is known to have been practiced.

<sup>36</sup> Bauman, Z. (2002). Modernidad líquida. Fondo de cultura économica

<sup>37</sup> Speakman, M. (2024). Witchcraft tourism in Catemaco, Mexico: a liquid modernity perspective. *Tourism & Heritage Journal*, 6, 34-56.

<sup>38</sup> This relation in between the crisis of a liquid modernity and a going back to mysticism is referred also in the main article of the issue #15 of photographic online magazine, See-zeen: "It feels like the world is spinning faster, with a deluge of new information every day, information forgotten as it's shoved off the news cycle in days: political upheaval, war, Al, earth crisis, climate change... Stability slips away. To muffle the constant noise, we felt the need to turn inward and decided to do a feature on mysticism." This citation appears on the main page of the issue # 15, published on March 6th 2025. The whole article, dedicated to myth in contemporary photography, has been written by photographer Chen Chuanduan.

Chenduan, C. (2025, March 6). the manifestation of mysticism. photography's channeling and metaphor for reality. see-zeen. https://see-zeen.com/the-manifestation-of-mysticism

<sup>39</sup> Iftode, C. (2021). Self-Constitution and Folds of Subjectivation in Foucault. Ingenium. Revista Electrónica de Pensamiento Moderno y Metodología en Historia de la Ideas, 14, 35-42.

<sup>40</sup> Deleuze, G. (2004). Foucault. Les éditions de minuit. p. 104

<sup>&</sup>quot;as if the boat was a folding of the sea"

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 127

<sup>&</sup>quot;make see or say something new"

<sup>42</sup> Deleuze, G. (2004). Foucault. Les éditions de minuit.

<sup>3</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze, G. (2006). The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque. Continuum Books. p.39

sense of the theatrical rituality of repetition. Actually, according to Echeverría, this is one of the peculiar characteristics of the colonial project of Latin America, which seeks to «re-hacer Europa fuera del continente europeo». 45 By constructing the modern world as a theater, the Baroque ethos mocks, in a sense, the subordination of use value to exchange value by transforming the phenomenon into a fantasy where tragic reality becomes indistinguishable. Baroque art expresses this foundation of the Baroque ethos through radical ornamentation and the substitution of the essential with the appearance, of the eternal with the ephemeral. The folds Deleuze sees in Foucault thus mirror the principle of Baroque repetition brought forth by Echeverría, in a perspective of re-creation through the folding of an external reality onto an already existing reality.

In the light of Leibniz's and Foucault's folds, considering both an independence of the interior and its internalization of the exterior, I suggest that the spaces created by the Baroque ethos tend to produce the effect of an infinite mirror, a bubble encompassing various scales. For example, if the Baroque life model involves living in a reality that hides a Real, then it is composed of a number of existence spheres corresponding to the sum of collective and subjective experiences that evolve within them. The way of positioning oneself against the capitalist contradiction, if societal, is also individual, and thus, if not infinite, absolutely diverse and multiple. Let us first analyze a collective sphere, that of Latin American society in its generality, whose Baroque character has been widely defined by Echeverría. Within Latin America, there exist dynamics that reproduce this same sphere of being, this same fold. This is the case, for example, with the spaces formed by the current narrative around mezcal. If Latin America constitutes a Baroque subject, the dominant discourse of mezcal constructs its own monad within it, through the creation of its own narrative universe, independent of the external world surrounding it. This is how tradition and authenticity can exist without being exposed to the capitalist fatalism behind agro-extractive territories. When this external reality is inconveniently brought to light, it is internalized by the narrative itself, much like Foucauldian folds, in which the exterior is reintegrated into the interior. This process appears to activate itself when environmental critique threatens to obscure the narrative universe of mezcal. The narrative assimilates environmentalist discourse, not as a challenge to its structure but as a means to silence the external world, reinforcing its monadic enclosure. This mechanism could be seen as analogous to the interiorización (interiorization) Echeverría describes when he proposes the ethos as models for integrating capitalism. Within the mezcal narrative, there exists a multitude of spaces, dynamics, and actors-each forming smaller and thicker spheres that adhere to a Baroque mode of being, ultimately accumulating into a vast landscape of folds that might

Returning to Echeverría's desire to view the baroque fold as a potential political alternative, we aim to conceive the baroqueness of the spaces produced by the dominant narrative of mezcal in order to recognize them—and to reveal those it conceals, either by absorbing them into itself or excluding them outright. These spaces, found within baroque layers or in an excluded outside, represent the alternative narrations to that of the market. What is particularly ambiguous is that the dominant narrative encompasses opposite spaces and effects. For example, it folds on both the environmental issues it generates and the very spaces of the pueblo it threatens. Shedding light on these different architectures of the mezcal allows us to move away from the idealized propositions of the dominant narrative as well as to recognize the pueblo within its margins. This exercise, though not a fully formed "propuesta politica" (political proposition) - to recall Echeverría's words - nevertheless presents itself as an attempt to critically acknowledge and bring awareness to the plurality of mezcal and the possibilities of its own pluriverse.

be considered as a topographical, spatial map of mezcal and agave. Among these spaces, one could include tourist-oriented palengues and mezcalerías rising at an international scale. However, these folds of the dominant narrative evolve in parallel with the genuine baroque modality that persists in the rural world where mezcal is produced. Thus, mezcal festivals based on exchange value, while reproducing a baroque atmosphere, cannot be compared to traditional village celebrations, which emerge from a logic of communal use value. We will return to the specific distinction between these baroque microstructures throughout the thesis. What is important to understand at this stage is that the world of mezcal is shaped by a double baroque: one absorbed by capitalism-what we will refer to as baroque capitalism—and the other standing in resistance to it, rooted in the very nature of the pueblo, operating as an ethos. The nature of these two baroques-through their own folds, narrative independence, and repetition-creates an extremely dense and complex reality of what mezcal is.

other frequence of the first of

<sup>45</sup> Echeverría, B. (1998). *La modernidad de lo barroco*. Ediciones Era. p.64 *"re-make Europe outside the European continent."* 

1. baroque and macondo as a lens prophetic temporality

## **Prophetic temporality**

"[...] muchos años antes los gitanos llevaban a Macondo las lámparas maravillosas y las esteras voladoras.

- Lo que pasa - suspiró - es que el mundo se va acabando poco a poco y ya no vienen esas cosas." 46

As suggested through the connection drawn between architecture and narration, every narrative—just like any spatial configuration—requires a temporal dimension. While Echeverría's baroque, embodied in the notion of the fold, offers a framework to suggest a spatiality of the mezcal, the temporal multiplicity explored by Gabriel García Márquez in One Hundred Years of Solitude provides a complementary lens through which to reconsider the construction of time in relation to mezcal. The disappearance of Macondo—the novel's fictional village—unfolds in the final pages as a baroque gesture with prophetic resonance. In this convergence of time and space, the narrative opens toward a plural, dynamic, and creative understanding of temporality.

The actual mezcal narrative draws on an idealisation of its traditional authenticity. Simulating cohesion, the relationship between past and present within the dominant narrative is in fact conflictual and dichotomous, as each occupies an opposing function within it. The constant evocation of pre-Hispanic or traditional references contributes to perpetuating a fantasy for the consumer, idealizing a slow time through the artisanal production modes of small producers. Conversely, the mechanisms of the present support the techniques that allow mezcal to compete on a global market, fully integrating the capitalist model in its growth. In this sense, slow time is rural and fast time is industrial. Slow time is quality and fast time is quantity. Slow time is past and fast time is present (or future). In order to force coherence between past and present, the narrative folds back onto the latter to integrate it. It stratifies itself through attempts to justify modernity—for instance, by presenting innovation as necessary «to meet environmental requirements,» or by praising exports «to gain international recognition of the local know-how.» Entering into conflict with the concepts of tradition and authenticity, the present must be manipulated to fit into a narrative that only conceives of mezcal's existence within its baroque boundaries. This dualism between past and present thereby suppresses other temporalities existing within the world of mezcal and agave and within what surrounds and composes them.

In order to attempt to break from this temporal dualism, it

46 García Márquez, G. (2017). *Cien años de soledad*. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. p.184

seems relevant to draw inspiration from a narrative universe in which temporality far exceeds the triad of past-present-future and the fast-slow dichotomy, and where time moves through a series of transformations: compressing, diluting, expanding, repeating, vanishing, and eternalizing. From this perspective, the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Gabriel García Márquez<sup>47</sup>, becomes a model for analyzing the situation of mezcal—and eventually, more specifically, of the so-called *«pueblo mezcalero»*.<sup>48</sup> First of all, the novel meets a vast and plural temporal condition, uniting a cyclical temporality relatable to the campesino's myth and way of life and a linear historical time marked by the accumulation of events linking Macondo to the rest of the world. It also includes other more subtle temporalities, like the individual one Krishnamurti and David Bohm define as psychological<sup>49</sup>, or the accelerated time of modernity described by the philosopher and economist Hartmut Rosa.<sup>50</sup>

The temporality of *Cien años de soledad* is particularly complex, rich, and varied, reminding us of a cosmovision and the dissolution between the closed categories of past, present, and future. Through Macondo, this section will explore already established theories of time, in order to analyze the temporalities that govern life in the fictive pueblo of Macondo. By exploring how Cien años de soledad gently refers to real traumatic historic events occured in Colombia, we will conceive it as an opportunity to transpose its sensible temporalities to the mezcal delicate situation. This operation aligns with the prophetic tone of the novel, which appears as a genuine divination of the world's fate, conceived by García Márquez himself. One year after the publication of the book in 1967, he declared that «[t]oda buena novela es una adivinanza del mundo, y los críticos han asumido la grave responsabilidad de descifrarla, pero ninguno podrá transmitir a los lectores una visión real de 'Cien años' mientras no renuncie a su caparazón de pontífice y parta de que esa novela carece por completo de seriedad».<sup>51</sup> Not attempting, therefore, to take "seriously" the propositions of García Marquez in his book, the work here will be to draw inspiration from the vision of the world, of time and of being, that is proposed in its fantastic universe. In the context of a narrative methodology, this quote from Márquez becomes a mantra and engages with other theories of speculation in the conception of alternative temporalities of mezcal rising beyond the dualistic limitations of the dominant

<sup>&</sup>quot;[...] many years earlier, the gypsies used to bring to Macondo the marvelous lamps and the flying carpets.

<sup>-</sup> What's happening, she sighed, is that the world is gradually coming to an end, and those things don't come anymore."

<sup>47</sup> García Márquez, G. (2017). Cien años de soledad. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial.

<sup>48</sup> The term pueblo mezcalero emerges from the dominant narrative in motivating a tourism development of the zones of mezcal production. As we will later explore, this designation is reductive, as it flattens the rich diversity of relationships, communal practices, and cosmological dimensions of the pueblo into a purely productive framework.

<sup>49</sup> Krishnamurti, J., & Bohm, D. (2019). *Dove il tempo finisce* (C. Minoli & G. Fusi, Trans.). Astrolabio Ubaldini.

<sup>50</sup> Rosa, H. (2013). Accélération: une critique sociale du temps. La Découverte.

<sup>51</sup> Fiorillo, H. (2017, May 28). El gran libro de Gabo. El tiempo.

<sup>&</sup>quot;every good novel is a divination of the world."

1. baroque and macondo as a lens prophetic temporality

narrative. Finally, the work of Bruno Cruz Petit, who conceives this prophetic nature of the story through the notion of interiority, becomes a stimulation to push his reflection further by relating it to the baroque folding, in a fundamental reconciliation between space and time.<sup>52</sup>

#### Time in Cien años de soledad

# Ya esto me lo sé de memoria... Es como si el tiempo diera vueltas en redondo y hubiéramos vuelto al principio.<sup>53</sup>

The temporality of *Cien años de soledad*, stretching from the beginning of the narrative to its end, intertwines linearity and circularity over the span of a hundred years. While the trajectory from the founding of Macondo to its eventual extinction evokes the linear temporality of the Judeo-Christian apocalypse, the events that lead to this finality unfold cyclically nonetheless—through surreal environmental catastrophes and recurrent episodes that die and are reborn, like love and human life itself.<sup>54</sup> Still, the evolution of the characters follow the one of the society they are evolving in, where the initial acceptation of myth becomes shadowed by the coming of new technologies and a perceptible acceleration of life, interrupted by the massacre of the banana workers which appears as a first form of collapse of Macondo's universe.

Where monotheistic religions tend to shape a conception of time grounded in the linear unfolding of an individual destiny, polytheistic societies, by contrast, through the lens of cyclical thought, situate historical events and natural phenomena within a repetitive temporal order, and imbue them with collective meaning through the presence of myth. 55 Although myth has been significantly cast aside by Western thinking—deemed illogical and relegated to the realm of fiction—it remains, like philosophy, a mode of thought through which certain societies attempt to explain the world, its enigmas and phenomena, and grant it meaning through symbolic belief. 56 In the narrative fabric of Cien años, myth coexists with reality without necessarily clashing against it, in a «tranquila aceptación de

52 Cruz Petit, B. (2020). El espacio en «Cien años de soledad»: la interioridad como condición de la adivinanza del mundo. *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana* 49, 205-217.

Io sobrenatural". This becomes evident, for example, during long stretches of altered weather, like the summer that lasts for months, or the unending rain that follows. None of the cyclically recurring events in the narrative provoke particular astonishment among the characters; rather, what emerges is an affective reaction to this new reality. A similar resigned attitude appears in response to events that belong more strictly to a linear historical temporality—such as Aureliano's repeated comings and goings between Macondo and his revolutionary commitments—which nevertheless return again and again. The climax of his execution by firing squad, foreseen, invoked, and postponed repeatedly throughout the narrative, becomes a kind of floating narrative object, suspended between memory and anticipation, until the moment it finally anchors itself in the present. This suspension illustrates the porousness between myth and reality, through the blurring of temporal boundaries-where even the characters themselves seem unbothered by the distinction between cyclical repetition and linear progression.

This ambivalence suggests that the inhabitants of Macondo exist within a hybrid temporality, the result of colonial mestizaje and the early stages of integration of the capitalist project. Each individual's temporality becomes increasingly defined, while that of ?, focused on Melquíades's inventions, seems to represent an early interest in innovation—yet one that remains confined within the study room, in the enclosed universe of a sincere and profound curiosity. Aureliano, for his part, pursues his goals by stepping outside of Macondo's cyclicity, thereby navigating a different temporal path—one that is both global and personal. In a conversation with David Bohm, Jiddu Krishnamurti refers to this kind of time, intrinsic to the human condition, as psychological time.<sup>58</sup> This time, experienced internally and carried by the ego, may be the root of the deeper conflict inherent to the human condition: the tension between what one is and what one would (or should) like to be. The time of becoming, intrinsic to models established by various monotheistic religions, is also dictated by the capitalist mode of existence through its progressive trajectory of achievement via the accumulation of capital. At first, the inhabitants of Macondo show resistance to the new technologies introduced by Melquíades and his group. However, this initial refusal of the symbolic objects of the magic of pre-capitalist modernity gradually fades over the course of the novel, passing through an intermediate phase in which the invasion of new technological innovations places the inhabitants somewhere between wonder and confusion-until eventually, when the telephone is introduced, "ya nadie podía saber

<sup>53</sup> García Márquez, G. (2017). *Cien años de soledad*. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. p.169

<sup>&</sup>quot;I already know this by heart... It's as if time moved in circles and we had returned to the beginning"

<sup>54</sup> Cruz Petit, B. (2020). El espacio en «Cien años de soledad»: la interioridad como condición de la adivinanza del mundo. *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, 49. 205-217.

<sup>55</sup> Voss, A. W. (n.d.). The Notion of Time in the pre-Hispanic Maya Culture. *LiminaR. Estudios Sociales y Humanísticos*, *13*(2), 38-52.

<sup>56</sup> Sánchez-Antonio, J. C. (2020). Filosofía zapoteca, ciencias sociales y diálogo mundial de saberes. *Disparidades. Revista de Antropología, 77*(2).

<sup>57</sup> Rodriguez Monegal cited in : Vargas Llosa, M. (1971). *García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio*. Monte Avila Editores.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Quiet acceptation of the supernatural"

<sup>58</sup> Krishnamurti, J., & Bohm, D. (2019). *Dove il tempo finisce* (C. Minoli & G. Fusi, Trans.). Astrolabio Ubaldini.

a ciencia cierta dónde estaban los limites de la realidad". <sup>59</sup> Signs of modernity follow one another, and initial resistance consistently leads to eventual absorption. Arturo Escobar, in Designs for the Pluriverse, uses the reference of Macondo to reflect on the incidence of design in what current Latin American critical theory calls coloniality. From the world fairs, in the middle nineteenth century, design has become a criteria to judge the level of development of a society, of a civilization, in a "hierarchical classification of peoples in terms of race and culture".60 The innovative objects brought in Macondo were introduced from the outside and had a major influence in the becoming of the pueblo, because they appear as an invitation to perform new ways of beingthrough-practices. 61 Nonetheless, this way of internalizing modern standards aligns with Echeverría's baroque ethos, since despite the integration of modern externalities, Macondo's inner world resists. This is particularly perceptible through the Buendía household and Úrsula's determination to preserve a space of hospitality, community, and warm manners via carnivalesque performances, and even more specifically, through Melquíades's room.

Úrsula is actually one of the few characters to possess a more ambiguous form of psychological time, as she does not seek personal fulfillment. Instead, she responds to the cyclicity of her familial and natural environment, aiming for preservation rather than transcendence. Despite her attempts to compensate for the integration of modernity, the latter increasingly invades Macondo, becoming more and more acceptable. With this passive acceptance of modernity, the long descriptions that characterize the beginning of the novel gradually shorten over the pages and over historical time, giving way to an increasingly dense sequence of actions-consistent with the acceleration of modernity described by Hartmut Rosa. 62 Through the term acceleration, the philosopher and economist-starting with the very title of his essay—emphasizes the relationship between the changing speed of societal development and the time required to keep up with it. Time is thus repositioned as the denominator of a social acceleration, linked to speed and to a mobile process of change that comes into conflict with space. This acceleration is perceptible in the novel, for instance, in Úrsula's failed attempts to supply her homemade Iollipops to a growing population—her traditional methods no longer matching the accelerated standards of such a rapidly expanding society. "Los años de ahora ya no vienen como los de antes, solia decir [Úrsula], sintiendo que la realidad cotidiana se le escapaba de las manos.

Antes, pensaba, los niños tardaban mucho para crecer."63

In this surge of successive events, the tragic episode of the banana company massacre appears as a moment of historical rupture, briefly unsettling the narrative and plunging it into a temporal whirlwind where myth and reality completely blur for several pages. Indeed, "[f] or the writer, the banana company represents the political economy of modern technology and design, the main driving engine for the whirlwind of modernity." Thus, this event appears as a crisis, a point of no return in Macondo's accelerated degradation. At this moment, José Arcadio Buendía's precise memories of the massacre become buried under a dominant narrative that attempts to manipulate his recollection and that of all witnesses of the tragedy. The extractivist plantation emerges therefore not only as a modern enterprise that breaks with cyclicity, but also—as shown through the resulting massacre—as a historical void with deep political implications.

#### Agroextractivist trauma

## "Acuérdate siempre de que eran más de tres mil y que los echaron al mar."<sup>65</sup>

The narrative thread of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, though fictional, resonates with reality in a remarkably explicit manner. Through the physical and psychological invasion of Macondo by a foreign banana company, Gabriel García Márquez directly references the massacre carried out by the Colombian army against striking workers of the United Fruit Company plantation, which took place in the real village of Ciénaga, in the Magdalena region.<sup>66</sup>

In their research on the 1928 massacre, Elías Caro and Vidal Ortega indeed note the ambiguous nature of government communications regarding the number of victims. Initially reported by the government and the company as 8 deaths and 20 injuries, later accounts in various media raised the number to 100, while diplomatic documents estimated over 1,000 deaths.<sup>67</sup> The bodies, according to what José Arcadio Segundo says in the novel, were supposedly loaded onto trains and taken to the sea, where they were buried in mass graves—still undiscovered to this day. The inhabitants of the pueblo,

<sup>59</sup> García Márquez, G. (2017). *Cien años de soledad*. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. p.222

<sup>&</sup>quot;no one could know for certain where the limits of reality lay."

<sup>60</sup> Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the Pluriverse*. Duke University Press. p.31

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 30

<sup>62</sup> Rosa, H. (2013). Accélération: une critique sociale du temps. La Découverte.

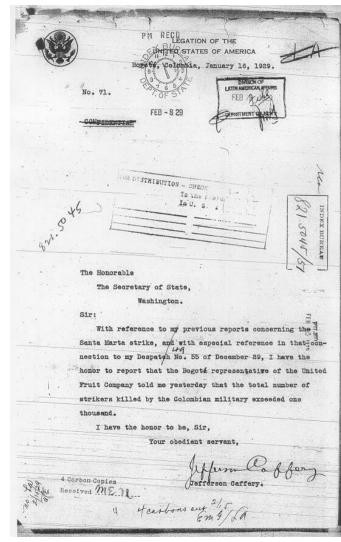
<sup>63</sup> García Márquez, G. (2017). *Cien años de soledad*. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. p.241

<sup>&</sup>quot;The years nowadays no longer come as they used to," Úrsula used to say, feeling that everyday reality was slipping through her fingers. In the past, she thought, children took a long time to grow up."

Escobar, A. (2018). Designs for the Pluriverse. Duke University Press. p.29
 García Márquez, G. (2017). Cien años de soledad. Penguin Random House
 Grupo Editorial. p.341

<sup>&</sup>quot;Always remember that they were more than three thousand and that they threw them in the sea."

<sup>66</sup> Elías Caro, J. E., & Vidal Ortega, A. (2012). The worker's massacre of 1928 in the Magdalena Zona Bananera - Colombia. An unfinished story. *Memorias. Revista digital de Historia y Arqueología desde el Caribe colombiano*, 9(18), 22-54. 67 ibid.



Archival photograph of the 1928 banana workers' strike in Colombia proving that the numbers of strikers killed exceeded a thousand. From Kevin Coleman, The 1928 Massacre of Banana Workers, The Photos we don't get to see.

fearful and disoriented, fled the town, resulting in a total victory and impunity for the American company. International media coverage at the time focused on the dominant narrative constructed by the United Fruit Company—today known as Chiquita—and by the Colombian government. Their coordinated version protected both their images by reducing the story to a few revolutionary bandits being executed, rather than acknowledging the massacre of more than a thousand workers.

It is in part to shed light on this national trauma that Gabriel García Márquez wrote *Cien años de soledad*, making Macondo a mirror of his native town, Aracataca, whose foundation was a result of the economic development brought by the banana zone of Magdalena. The narration thus carries a political burden, but more importantly, it becomes a tool for building a new imaginary that seeks to restore justice to a tragic reality that had been distorted, suppressed, and silenced. If the blurred boundaries between reality and myth in the novel—especially when it comes to the number of corpses transported by train—confront the hypocritical historical construction surrounding the real banana massacre, it is through the tangled, disorderly temporality that this tragedy further embeds itself in the collective imagination. Various temporalities—international, national, local, and individual—serve to contextualize the event across multiple scales.

By inscribing the massacre within a collective historical time, but also within the cyclical temporality of a village and the psychological time of its inhabitants, García Márquez addresses the problem of agrarian exploitation on many levels. The consequences of the massacre were never truly punished, and Chiquita Brands continues to exploit workers in the banana zones to this day, while intermediaries and consumers continue to buy from them. It was only in 2024 that an international trial-launched by the United Statesfinally imposed sanctions on Chiquita, requiring the company to financially compensate the families of the "official" 8 victims of the massacre. 69 This legal action is both historic—being the first time an American company was held accountable for human rights violations in another country<sup>70</sup>—and tragic, as it once again denies the existence of the thousands of other victims. This impunity clearly reveals the right still claimed by the Global North over the South, and thus, the neocolonial dynamics at the core of commercial relations between the West and the Other.

#### Time in the dominant narrative of mezcal

<sup>68</sup> Vargas Llosa, M. (1971). *García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio*. Monte Avila Editores.

<sup>69</sup> Fanti, C. (2024, June 13). La dittatura delle banane. *Il manifesto*. https://ilmanifesto.it/la-dittatura-delle-banane

<sup>70</sup> Taylor, L. (2024, June 12). US banana giant ordered to pay \$38m to families of Colombian men killed by death squads. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/11/chiquita-banana-deaths-lawsuit-colombia

Beyond the massacre, the case of agave plantations for mezcal shares many structural similarities with other extractivist dynamics unfolding across Latin America—such as soybean cultivation in the Amazon or avocado farming in Mexico. This form of commercial dependency, where a demand from Western countries imposes pressure on territories in the Global South - and eventually leads to their destruction - reproduces colonial logic. The inequities that emerge from this setting are absorbed and reproduced by dominant narratives that uphold these neo-colonialist modalities through neoliberal policies with growth-oriented objectives. As suggested by the narrative scheme of Macondo, these dynamics interact with time in a profound and disorienting way.

In Mexico, colonialism is intrinsic to the very foundational structure of the nation-state. Its historical process has almost never been fully obscured, as the colonial project was once a source of pride—just like the capitalist development project still is in some parts of the world. Colonialism is therefore not only a matter of historical international structures; it also exists within the nation itself. This problematic was first raised by lawyer and sociologist Pablo Gonzales Casanova in 1965 in *La democracia en México*<sup>71</sup>, and later expanded on by Professor Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado, under the concept of internal colonialism<sup>72</sup>, that relegates Indigenous and rural communities—such as those involved in mezcal production—to peripheral roles in respect to the privileged urban condition. Mezcal, then, is not only the subject of international demand but also embedded in domestic dynamics that marginalize the very territories and temporalities it depends on.

One such temporal structure has been conceptualized by Miguel de Unamuno as intrahistoria – a mode of being grounded in the cyclical rhythms of agricultural life, composed of repetitions of "estaciones del año, generaciones, altibajos de la fortuna, el alternarse de la buena y de la mala cosecha, el alternarse de periodos de Iluvia y de sequía, de períodos fértiles y de períodos estériles, etc". Literary scholar Roberto Paoli identifies this rural temporality in Cien anos, through the repetition of events and natural cycles that have been mentioned previously. Paoli argues that these repetitions shelter so-called traditional societies from the linear time of modernity. However, the complexity of a mezcal temporality resides in the fact that this temporal insulation no longer holds. Communication technologies, social media, and market integration now permeate even the most remote mezcal-producing villages, reshaping local perceptions and practices in real time. It is

71 González Casanova, P. (1975). *La democracia en México* (7th ed.). Ediciones Era. 72 Maldonado Alvarado, B. (2010). *Comunidad, comunalidad y colonialismo en* 

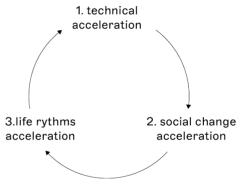
almost impossible for producing communities to remain permeable to this kind of influence, as suggested by the zapotec intellectual Javier Castellanos Mártinez who recalls that the government and the intellectuals, by recognizing (and respecting and admiring) the indigenous question, created confusion in the population, who "de buena fe" (from good will), accepted its condition. "Por eso, hoy lo más dificil para ellos es distinguir [como dices]: a qué acceder y qué rechazar". The artisanal knowledge once rooted in rural slowness is therefore subjected or exposed to global rhythms, even if at different and specific scales.

As previously mentioned, the narrative surrounding mezcal idealizes slow time, for example through focusing on the artisanal ways of production and the idea of local taste. This slowness recalls the lyrical lengths that characterize the initial part of cien anos, when Macondo was still free from technological innovation and industrial

velocity. Yet, it is to mention that time itself is not inherently fast or slow; what is at stake is rather a conflict of temporal structures and rhythms, as suggested by Hartmut Rosa. From within the mezcal narrative, the ideal cyclical time of rural communities stands in opposition to the fast-paced, linear rhythm of the industry. In this sense, slow time refers to artisanal and fast time to industrial. Slow time is unique quality, and fast time is banal quantity. What is paradoxical is that the very discourse of mezcal that celebrates slowness and authenticity simultaneously fuels the international demand that necessitates industrial acceleration.

This perspective echoes Rosa's idea of dynamic stabilization, in which the system needs to adjust through innovation to maintain a rhythmic equilibrium between production and demand. This translates into a spiral of acceleration where one technical improvement recalls another, for example when the practice of monoculture for accelerating cultivation demands to innovate on chemicals because of pest infestations. This concept of acceleration can therefore be seen here as a feature of Western temporality—one to which mezcal is subjected in its capitalist, consumerist condition, disconnected from the variety of temporalities existing in the agave plant and the campesino world.

In this way, what is happening to mezcal now appears as a mirror of the destiny of Macondo. In a rural context still preserved



Diagrammatic representation of Hartmut Rosa's acceleration cycle.

Oaxaca, México: la nueva educación comunitaria y su contexto. Universiteit Leiden. 73 Paoli, R. (2023). Carnavalesco y tiempo cíclico en Cien años de soledad. Revista iberoamericana, 50(128-129), 979-998. p. 987

<sup>&</sup>quot;seasons of the year, generations, ups and downs of fortune, alternating good and bad harvests, alternating periods of rain and drought, periods of fertility and sterility, etc."

<sup>74</sup> Mail exchanges with the author. February 2024.

<sup>&</sup>quot;That is why, the most difficult for them nowadays is to distinguish [as you said]: what to reach for and what to deny".

<sup>75</sup> It should be noted that Rosa's approach is based on the way time is experienced within a Western social structure, and therefore, his theory does not claim to apply to traditional societies. Since Mexico, just like the mezcal market, finds itself between these two categories, Rosa's theory appears as relevant to our analysis.

<sup>76</sup> Rosa, H. (2013). Accélération: une critique sociale du temps. La Découverte.

from the innovation tools of modernity, mezcal maintains a linear statu quo, while interacting actively with the circular dynamics of its environment and plant-based condition. This changes when new interest from the market obliges mezcal temporalities to develop along its exigence to respond to the expectations of a society of the immediate. In Cien años de soledad, technological innovations appear as a symbolic symptom of this entering in the spiral of acceleration, just like it is the case for mezcal production. The technological contributions of modern industry introduce a production speed that far surpasses that of ancestral methods, entering in conflict with the intrinsic temporalities of the agave's growth, but satisfying the demand. Rosa refers to this phenomenon as the erosion of resonance, that is as a growing incapacity of modern society to be attuned to the temporalities of the world. In this optic, technological innovation does not simply increase production capacity—it fundamentally alters our relation to time and more-than-human life.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, el tiempo del maguey—the time of the agave—cannot be reduced to a simplistic opposition between rural slowness and industrial speed. Such dualism obscures the entangled, overlapping, and multiple temporalities at play. The challenge, then, is to imagine how these temporalities can emerge and how to encounter coexistence and negotiation between cyclical and linear times. Cien años de soledad provides inspiration for this, not only through its cyclical structure but through its capacity to hold myth, memory, and rupture together. In this sense, the novel offers the base for the possibility of a temporal model for mezcal that embraces its complexity.

#### **Various Temporal Perspectives**

The current worldwide situation seems to show that Rosa's spiral of acceleration cannot continue indefinitely. Societal anxiety rises around the question of time, as it becomes the threat of a catastrophic ending and a symbol of unachieved objectives. Free from the imperative of crisis management, Cien años de soledad, through the safe zone of its literary narration, allows an effective and reachable space to take time to think time otherwise. This section therefore takes inspiration in the imaginaries and temporalities of Macondo to dialogue with the current thinking around temporal alternatives. Inspired by speculative approaches that call for a plural future and its reconciled relationship with time, it explores how these insights can meaningfully be referred to a mezcal and agave temporality. While Cien años de soledad ends in a way suggesting the death of Macondo, the conjunction of different forms of temporality brings an unexpected syntony of spatiotemporal dimension, appearing as a hopeful way to extend the possibilities of this ending that dialogs with baroqueness.

Throughout the novel, García Márquez suggests other forms

77 Rosa, H. (2021). *Résonance: une sociologie de la relation au monde.* La Découverte.

of temporality, sharing them with the reader through an imaginary narrative. One of these forms corresponds to immobility. "Ambos descubrieron al mismo tiempo que allí siempre era marzo y siempre era lunes, y entonces comprendieron que José Arcadio Buendía no estaba tan loco como contaba la familia, sino que era el único que había dispuesto de bastante lucidez para vislumbrar la verdad de que también el tiempo sufría tropiezos y accidentes, y podía por tanto astillarse y dejar en un cuarto una fracción eternizada."78 Through this passage, it is possible to conceive of the suggestion of a frozen time, proposed as a real temporality. Emphasizing José Arcadio's lucidity implies the alienation of all the other characters and thus, of the rest of the world that believes time necessarily flies by, that it flows regularly. It seems that Márquez proposes the possibility of permanence, a certain serenity in maintaining a status quo spatialized in Melquíades' room, «a part of mythical space in historical space», that hosts the manuscript containing the Buendia family's prophecy.<sup>79</sup> Compared with the society described by Rosa, this temporality appears to be completely opposed to modern acceleration. In this eternal Monday of March, the idea of growth and development becomes absurd and superfluous, allowing room to question them, something highly improbable within an accelerated society. The fact that time can suffer from "stumbles and accidents" also implies a radical break from the linear pattern of historical time, suggesting the openness to alternative temporal forms. It actually echoes the idea of an "ending of time", as José Arcadio seems to have encountered how to live beyond it.80

In *The Ending of Time*, Krishnamurti and Bohm question what could exist beyond time as we are able to conceive it.<sup>81</sup> They relate two parallel temporalities: the common astronomical chronology and the psychological one that exists within the individual, being its own invention, its own limited construction. The two thinkers are interested in what might exist beyond this psychological time and, without arriving at an absolute conclusion, they admit that something completely different must necessarily exist, thus entering into a cyclical perspective of renewal after ending. This pattern echoes a conversation I had with Don Lalo, a mezcal producer.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> García Márquez, G. (1992). Cien años de soledad / One Hundred Years of Solitude. Duke University Press.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Both discovered at the same time that it was always March and always Monday, and then they understood that José Arcadio Buendía was not as crazy as the family had claimed, but rather the only one who had enough lucidity to glimpse the truth that time, too, suffered stumbles and accidents, and could therefore shatter and leave an eternized fraction in a room."

<sup>79</sup> Cruz Petit, B. (2020). El espacio en «Cien años de soledad»: la interioridad como condición de la adivinanza del mundo. *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, 49, 205-217.

<sup>80</sup> ibid

<sup>81</sup> Krishnamurti, J., & Bohm, D. (2019). *Dove il tempo finisce* (C. Minoli & G. Fusi, Trans.). Astrolabio Ubaldini.

<sup>82</sup> The conversation with Don Lalo took place at his ranch, where he produces mezcal within a circular economy framework. The ranch's activities include cattle raising, a greenhouse, and mezcal production using handcrafted equipment made by the local community. November 2024.

With a frustration surpassed by a confident serenity, he told me that, according to him, the only thing to be done regarding mezcal and agave was to wait for the industry to enter into a crisis and collapse, so that it could then return to what it truly was, without this exaggerated international and commercial interest. This vision of a rebirth of a true mezcal tradition passing by its disconnection from the capitalistic world - here conceivable as its psychological time, its time of *becoming* - as if this situation was only a phase, aligns with a natural cyclical, embedded in cosmovision. Much like the cycle of seasons, the survival of mezcal, according to him, seems to lie in its belonging to a circular time rather than the linear and historical one following the progressivist modernity.

The Zapotec peoples of the central valleys of Oaxaca and the northern and southern Sierra, like all Mesoamerican peoples, conceive of a cosmogony governed by the order of a cyclical time where earthquakes, rivers, fire, caves, and the moon are living entities.83 These elements, stemming from a vitalistic philosophy, are found in this Reality that Fisher contrasts with capitalist reality.<sup>84</sup> As it is possible to understand in Black Elk Speaks, time, more than an external concept, is an embodied experience that relations oneself with land, community, ancestors and spiritual forces.85 The Lakota, like many other indigenous populations, measure time by moons rather than months, each of them representing the passing of the year through natural phases and cycles. Time is therefore both cyclical and sacred, but also non-hierarchical, stimulating simultaneity rather than opposition. The opposition of this vision of time with the dominant modernity accounts for how Western society has detached itself from life by devaluing what composes it and allowing itself practices of domination and destruction such as colonialism and extractivism. However, it goes without saying that certain elements from cosmogony and myth have tinted the intellectual world of several thinkers of Western origin. Paul Valéry, for example, sees in the myth the possibility of an everyday explanation of the world and the necessity for man to accept this sensitive ambiguity. Valéry's conception of time admits a non-human subjectivity that is closer to an integral model derived from a cosmogony than to that of an individual perspective rooted in psychological time: "Living beings are based on a cycle, or rather on a system of cycles and epicycles-of which they are only vaguely aware".86 The need, within Western thinking itself, to entertain the idea of time going beyond a linear chronology opens the possibility of recognizing conceptions and practices from other models of existence within a framework of «perseverance of

83 Sánchez-Antonio, J. C. (2020). Filosofía zapoteca, ciencias sociales y diálogo mundial de saberes. *Disparidades. Revista de Antropología, 77*(2).

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non-dualist philosophies», coming mainly from native cosmologies, but also within Western initiatives reaching for "alternative Wests or non-dominant forms of modernity".<sup>87</sup> Within this growing awareness, the regions of the world coming from a history of colonial domination rise strongly, revealing deep visions of alternative possibilities of life, through a particular consciousness of temporality that goes beyond the Eurocentered progressist one that justified the colonial project and its extractivist activities.

In the preface of their collective book *The Politics of Time*, Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr identify two dominant "disenchanted" and quite opposite currents of thinking that react to the potential collapse of the world.88 One of them, fatalist, focuses on ways to come to terms with the Earth by mitigation or acceptance. The other seeks redemption from a technological utopia. The authors, through their compilation, encourage new ways of considering the future, through "politiciz[ing] time beyond the alternatives of apocalypse and technolatry", starting from common reflections around Africa, a continent that has been both exploited and the object of compassion.<sup>89</sup> Reclaiming diverse temporalities is not merely a cultural act but a political one, opening pathways to imagine futures beyond the capitalist speed and colonial order that disrupted indigenous rhythms and narratives. The Latin American situation presents obvious similarities to the one of Africa, in its past, present and future. The Bolivian thinker Juan José Bautista S. expresses clearly the way that the colonial project and its own European version of modernity, interfered drastically with the ones that could have occured coming from other civilizations. 90 In his words, modernity «[t]runcó por la violencia el presente en el cual nos estábamos desarrollando e, imponiendo su presente y futuro, es decir, su realidad, negó nuestra realidad, nuestro pasado, nuestro presente y nuestro futuro». 91 Bautista, in his book Pensar desde América Latina, sees as necessary to re-evaluate a latin american autoconsciousness and subjectivity through the recuperation of its interrupted historical time. He suggests that this can only be achieved by Latin American themselves, as this time still exists through their «interioridad» and their "intersubjectividad comunitaria" (communitary intersubjectivity). This idea of reaching for communitarian thinking to reconnect with time has a strong meaning in the context of mezcal, as the majority of the pueblos where it is produced still function by community

Fisher, M. (2009). Capitalist Realism. Is There No Alternative? Zero Books.
 Neihardt, J. G. (1990). Alce Nero parla. Vita di uno stregone dei sioux Oglala.

<sup>86</sup> Ustun, B. (2018). "Time is Production": Process-Art, and Aesthetic Time in Paul Valéry's Cahiers. *Humanities*, 7(1), 4.

<sup>87</sup> Escobar, A. (2016). *Epistemologies of the South*. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana. p.22-23

<sup>88</sup> Mbembe, A., & Sarr, F. (Eds.). (2023). *The Politics of Time: Imagining African Becomings*. Polity Press.

<sup>89</sup> Machikou, N. (2023). Cum patior Africa: The Political Production of Regimes of "the Nigh". In A. Mbembe & F. Sarr (Eds.), *The Politics of Time: Imagining African Becomings*. Polity Press.

<sup>90</sup> Bautista S., J. J. (2014). *Qué significa pensar desde América Latina: Hacia una racionalidad transmoderna y postoccidental.* Ediciones Akal.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.243

<sup>&</sup>quot;[t]runcated by violence the present in which we were developing and, by imposing its present and future—that is, its reality—it denied our reality: our past, our present, and our future."

organisation. In these contexts, time is also a matter of caring for each

By contesting a productionist vision of the soil, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa explores how caring for it can become an act of long-term engagement from which emerges a diversity of timescapes. 92 The term, coming from Barbara Adam's Sociology of time, offers a way to focus on a tangible dimension of time through practice and actualization. It will be useful to refer to it as it engages with the possibility of a synchronicity of different temporalities that encounter in time-made landscapes, dialoguing deeply with space but also with embodied experience. Thinking of an alternative future can only make sense if this future is made out of different timescapes that interact, confront and enrich one another, rather than being submitted to a dominant one. Puig de la Bellacasa brings up how modern science is deeply embedded in a hegemonic progressionist timescape, just as economic thinking. As a result, talking about the world in terms of crisis arises actions of emergency that tend to « discount the future by focusing on the benefit of present generations», for example by justifying the exploitation of the soil as an answer to a world that is starving. 93 The fact is that in that way, the present is also discounted as the soil is not cared for, and nor are the people that are closer to it. This is something that emerges from the agave world, as the farmers are the last persons to benefit from the ups and downs of the market prices, and as some campesinos who are apart from the industry of the mezcal become entangled in its repercussions on the land. A concrete example is when Jalisco's soil got so damaged that it could not respond to the international demand for tequila, and needed agaves from Oaxaca, sacrificing other soils rather than caring for them. In this sense, the idea of Soil Times that arises from the Matters of Care of Maria Puig della Bellacasa appears as a really specific aspect on which to turn to in thinking of a temporality of the agave. It also allows to focus on the values and beliefs that exist behind cyclical and alternative times, highlighting the harmonious synchronicity emerging from a deeper attention to the world and its interconnectedness.

The final part of Cien años de soledad strongly suggests this idea of deep connections that transcends an only rational conception of the world, going beyond the duality between the linear and the circular and expressing a strong idea of encounter of timescapes. In the novel, the apogee of modernity, symbolized by the banana company, condenses into a real temporal vortex. In the final pages, the synchronization of all forms of temporality encountered during the lecture converges into a single moment and space, much like a Baroque fold. The existence of this vortex allows transcending the idea of an apocalyptic finality accompanying the disappearance of Macondo. In this sense, the end of the book seems to encourage a

Ibid. p. 186

reevaluation of modern ways of thinking about time by showing both the drastic and prophetic consequences of a modern temporal shrinking – in accordance with Rosa's acceleration – and, conversely, encouraging other possibilities for the expansion allowed by the overlapping of multiple temporalities.

#### Reconciliation of time and space

In the final pages of the novel, all the temporalities converge into a single moment, through Aureliano Babilonia's reading of Melquíades' manuscript, where he deciphers the last events of the Buendía prophecy just as they occur and just as the reader reads them. The physical object of the reader's book thus becomes the same as that of the character's, and his surroundings merge with the multiplicity of places and moments where these same lines have been read by readers around the world. Linear time, by definitively meeting cyclical time, creates a vortex that plunges into a disorienting realization where finality comes to equate continuity. This perpetuates a sort of prophetic mirage that transcends its singular apocalyptic finality, creating a paradoxical sensation of exploding implosion (or the infinite of the finite) that recalls the baroque fold.

Cruz Petit reflects on the sequence of events leading to this fateful moment. He observes that while the narrative begins externally, before the grandeur of the battlefield, it ends in an interior confined to the before indecipherable glyphs of Melquíades' prophecy, which are contained in a book, contained in a room, the last to be swept away in the final hurricane of Macondo.<sup>94</sup> He calls this space "biographical", as he associates it with an interiority of the author; García Márquez is the one writing the story of the Buendia, which is contained in the manuscript of Melquiades, which the reader holds in its hands. This interiority strongly dialogues with the Baroque one, as if the manuscript represented a sort of monad of Macondo; the ultimate manifestation of the boundaries of its existence. The indecipherable content of the manuscript is, in fact, what most evidently places Macondo, from the very beginning of the story, between myth and reality. It is indeed through the figure of Melquiades and the gypsies and the room where José Arcadio Buendia develops his knowledge of alchemy that the fate of the Buendías and the pueblo reaches a prophetic nature, through the natural acceptance of a supernatural dimension of the world. According to Cruz Petit, "[e]l último reducto espacial es así un espacio cerrado, de creación y memoria".95 He emphasizes, echoing the prophetic nature García Márquez assigns to the novel, that "[1]a novela funciona como una adivinación del mundo, un desciframiento de sus claves (el espacio y el tiempo que lo articulan)

<sup>92</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>94</sup> Cruz Petit, B. (2020). El espacio en «Cien años de soledad»: la interioridad como condición de la adivinanza del mundo. Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana,

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 215

<sup>&</sup>quot;[t]he last spatial stronghold is thus a closed space, of creation and memory"

#### 1. baroque and macondo as a lens

a través del recuerdo poético". This way of conceiving memory as central to understanding the world is akin to the space it occupies in Foucaultian folds. In this sense, the final moment suggests a folding that has gathered within it the cumulative time of Macondo in an epiphany - a time made of all times - bringing together its spaces, its history, and its souls into a single subject. The interiority of knowledge shares a same timescape with the long sentences that go back to the stylistic narration of the beginning of the book. The novel begins with Aureliano Buendía recalling certain moments of his life, these very moments that are revealed to Aureliano Babilonia and to the reader at the ending, in a sort of ultimate Baroque fold.

Considering Macondo from a Baroque perspective allows for a more considerate understanding of its spatiotemporal relations and elevates it to a model adaptable to the mezcal reality and its speculative destiny, in a sort of narrative dialogue with the prophetic nature of the novel. Macondo's story does not represent the entirety of a worldview, but it undoubtedly encompasses the principles at the base of the capitalist system and, more specifically, the neocolonial dynamics of Latin America. Offering a critique of how the Latin American forms of life are being absorbed by modernity, the novel of García Marquez dialogues with the baroque theory of Echeverria. This meeting between the two texts at the base of the thesis is deeply significant in a perspective of reconciliation between the two fundamental entities they strongly focus on: space and time. This strong communication between one another will be useful throughout the thesis to think of a spatiality of the mezcal in constant interaction with its temporality. While the novel starts with the specificity of an individual, a family, a village, and ends with a universal reflection, the last part of the thesis will reverse this process. After reflecting on the prophetic nature of the temporality in Cien años de soledad, we will attempt to anticipate its symptoms in a pueblo whose historical construction is similar, though obviously different, from that of Macondo. To do so, considering the different alternative temporal forms to the dominant mezcal narrative becomes particularly useful in stimulating a different imagination, from which plural spaces and temporalities can emerge.

carta para orlando

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 216

<sup>&</sup>quot;[t]he novel functions as a divination of the world, a deciphering of its keys (the space and time that articulate it) through poetic memory"

One afternoon, I was in a café in Cholula with my camera when a man approached me and asked if I was a photographer. He explained that he was working with a family who had a ranch south of Puebla, and that they were looking for photographers to come for a horseback ride and photograph the experience, to enrich their social media. I had never ridden a horse, nor had I ever wanted to. And yet, I let myself be guided by the opportunity, and a week later, I found myself in Calpan, at Edmundo's place, riding a horse for the first time, one hand on the saddle and the other on the camera. Their horses were all rescues: from animal abandonment centers, the streets, diseases. Their behaviors were disturbed, and each one had its own particular personality.

The first evening I spent at Edmundo's with his family and some friends, we ended up finishing one (or two?) bottles of tequila and went out at three in the morning to another village to eat "the best tacos of Mexico". Despite the drunkenness, I was terrified in the car even if Edmundo was driving at 20 km/h maximum on the winding roads of the villages near PopocatépetI. He was clearly drunk, much more so than I was. I clung to any spiritual thought, asking life to safely carry us to those tacos. I returned to Calpan several times to see Edmundo and his entourage. One evening, among the guests, was a young woman with whom I spoke about mezcal. She enthusiastically told me, "if you're interested in mezcal, you absolutely have to meet Orlando!"

A few days later, Orlando and I had our first video call, during which I immediately sensed the sincerity of his smile and the kindness in his gaze. He invited me to a cata – a mezcal tasting – at his friends' Monica home, in Puebla, who organizes group events in her beautiful house to taste Orlando's mezcals. It was the first time I tasted such a wide selection of mezcals, and, more importantly, they were explained to me according to the aromas of the different varieties of agaves. It was then that I discovered that I was drawn to madrecuishe for its lemongrass flavor, but I had a particular preference for tobala, which reminded me of a field of flowers. I forgot the flavors of coyote and mexicano that evening, as it was

too much information for my palate all at once. Yet, I already felt like an expert, though it was just an illusion; recognizing the taste notes of a few typical species from a specific region is minimal compared to the vast range of knowledge and expertise that exists within the world of mezcal. Thanks to Orlando, who has since constantly guided me in this universe, I have learned a little more each time. Enough to write this thesis. Without this direct sharing of knowledge, coming from experience and personal openness, it wouldn't have been possible.

It is Orlando who opened the door to Yegolé - the case studio of this thesis - to me. The mezcal produced there by his cousin Chilo is one of the ones sold under his brand, Barro Selvaje, along with that of his other cousin, Chenel. Orlando was supposed to accompany me the first time I went to Yegolé, but something came up, so I went alone. It took me six hours to get there, constantly stopping to admire and photograph the sublime landscapes of the valleys. When I arrived in Yegolé, it was night, very, very dark, and I had no signal to message Chilo or Orlando, nor any address to refer to, since houses there aren't identified by streets or numbers. I found Chilo in the center of the village after asking the town hall where he was. "Al bautismo!" they replied. Then, just as I was about to start the car again, Chilo appeared at my window, with the same warm smile as Orlando's. He had seen the headlights of my car coming through the curves at the edge of the village.

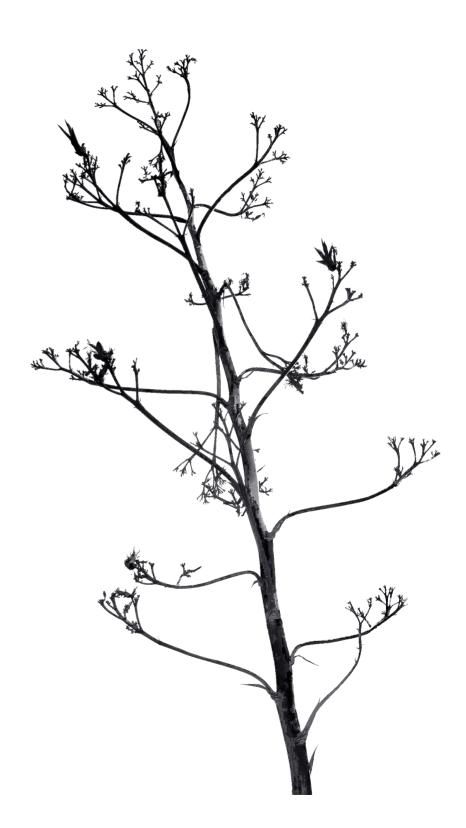
When I returned to Yegolé a year later, Orlando was finally able to accompany me. We had morning bath in the river and shared discussions full of light and passion, the same ones that had colored our voice messages throughout the year. Orlando answers all my questions with extraordinary patience, even though I sometimes ask him the same questions three times before fully understanding the details. He takes the little free time he has to guide me in my work. The way he believes in his family before believing in his product is, in my opinion, exemplary in terms of relationships in a world where competition is destructive, and that's why I've nicknamed him the "santo del mezcal."



Gracias, Orlando, por... pues, por todo. Son tantas las cosas por las que tendría que darte las gracias, en lugar de pedirte disculpas —como tú me dices que no debería hacer. Gracias por ser, ante todo, un amigo, y un faro de confianza. Por abrirme las puertas, no solo las tuyas, sino también las de quienes quieres. Por ofrecer un espacio de discusión que es, a la vez, crítico y sensible.

Tienes un don muy fuerte para la diplomacia natural y una disposición filosófica y espiritual ante la vida que son realmente admirables. Hay una fuerza en ti que me siento honrada de conocer. Es un placer colaborar contigo en cualquier proyecto. Donde tú tienes fe, yo también la tengo. Siento que me regalaste esa misma certidumbre, aunque llegué sin conocer nada de los temas que rodean tu vida. No hubo juicio de tu parte al dejarme acercar a ellos, y te lo agradezco profundamente.

Siempre es un placer saludarte, siempre un gusto saber que estás bien —gracias a Dios, como dices tú.



# 2. Spiny architectures Territories of agave

This section unfolds around a narrative gesture: that of giving voice to agave plantations through a trilogy of micro-scenarios, where the agaves Salmiana, Azul and Espadín - respectively the preferred monocultures for pulque, tequila, and mezcal production - become the protagonists of a historical and territorial fiction, from which emerge real informations. These facts come out of the stories spontaneously and without chronology. Displacing them from their historic temporality allows for the creation of a new one—composed of fragments that connect and converge, reinforcing the idea of a reconciliation between space and time. The traces of colonial plantations, both in their physical and symbolic permanence, share the same temporal space as those of the present. By weaving together literary and cinematographic languages, the assembled narratives aim to disarticulate the linear chronologies and spatial compartmentalizations that so often shape academic approaches to agave plantations and their alcoholic derivates.



# Prelude: a brief history of domestication

Because of their long life-cycle and their massive, stable and enduring presence, the agaves can symbolically be considered as witnesses of the historic process of what is now Mexican territory. The agave plantations indeed actively contributed to the formation of the nation across its different eras. They interact and transform together with it, as active participants of a shared history. As these epochs entangle, analyzing the place of agave separately across different historical periods proves insufficient to understand the role it plays within the nation. This narrative problem leads to a reversal of perspective: by positioning the agave itself as the central subject, and by foregrounding its relationships with humans—through domestication, industrialization, and ritualization-a historical and cultural topography of Mexico begins to emerge. Within this agave trilogy, the historical regimes do not appear as imposed frameworks; rather, they arise from the scenes themselves, through the dialogues and actions that unfold. It is through narrative that these layers of power and transformation are revealed—without reducing pulque, tequila, and mezcal to fixed symbols, but instead viewing them as entities continually reinvented, starting from the architecture of their plantations. As an opening, this prelude recalls the millennia-old ties between agave and humans, laying the groundwork for a critical dialogue with the dominant narrative of mezcal, situating it within a living continuum of uses and stories.

The relationship between humans and agaves dates back approximately 10,000 years, to what is now northern Mexico and the U.S. border region.¹ Yet the most tangible expressions of this long-standing contact are found in the codices of the Otomi, an Indigenous group from central Mexico, where agave gained symbolic and iconographic significance through its association with the fertility goddess Mayahuel.² Agave was central to pre-Hispanic life in multiple ways: as a source of food, textile fiber, construction material, and spiritual value. Today, the saying *«donde hay maguey no hay hambre»*³ is often repeated by campesinos as well as actors of the mezcal world, as part of the narrative surrounding the plant's importance to Indigenous and rural communities, past and present. As noted by Garcia Garza, "[i]n Mexico, one can observe a strong correlation between

the settlement patterns of Indigenous populations and the regions where agave grows naturally. Indeed, the plant played a key role in the process of sedentarization among nomadic tribes." This sedentarization process was pivotal in the emergence of the great Mesoamerican civilizations, for whom the domestication of agave and maize was foundational. The pre-Hispanic domestication of agave has since become the subject of numerous studies, as scientists look for ancestral insights that could address current issues in agro-industrial practices.

In the work of Wendy C. Hodgson, E. Jane Rosenthal, and Andrew M. Salywon on pre-Hispanic agave domestication in the Arizona region, separating humans from nature in scientific research on the plant reflects a colonial epistemological stance. Their findings describe the territorial organization of pre-Hispanic peoples as a «legacy of biocultural, non-natural landscapes». 5 To claim that Mesoamerican populations had a «non-natural» relationship to the land is problematic, insofar as it is an interpretation based on a worldview that does not belong to those being studied. Such judgment stems from a single, Western narrative that fails to recognize the nature of land-based relationships in other civilizations, applying its own terms instead. The intention here is not to idealize the agrarian practices of Mesoamerican civilizations, but to acknowledge that they rise from a fundamentally different logic of existence than the one currently dominating the same territory through extractive dynamics. In this light, Rosenthal's text poses a crucial question regarding the very idea of «natural history,» interrogating the place of past and present Mesoamerican peoples in relation to domesticated agave plants: "Do we define a natural ecosystem without Homo sapiens in areas where Indigenous People have clearly been a part? Additionally, what is a so-called natural environment if influenced by human activity decades and even centuries ago?"6 The way human activity is directly associated with the «denaturalization» of the environment continues to undermine the legitimacy of Indigenous relationships to the land, revealing a profound Western misunderstanding of their complexity. This view remains trapped in an oppositional framework where humans are placed outside nature, rather than as part of it. It questions without seeing or giving weight to the relational intricacies and belief systems that shape these interactions. This can be illustrated even more evocatively through the case of Lake Texcoco, where the Mexica built Tenochtitlan-now Mexico City-on an island marginalized by surrounding peoples. While they developed infrastructures to live with the lake, the nature of these interventions was fundamentally

<sup>1</sup> On agave-human relationships: Figueredo-Urbina, C. J., Álvarez-Ríos, G. D., García-Montes, M. A., & Octavio-Aguilar, P. (2021). Morphological and genetic diversity of traditional varieties of agave in Hidalgo State, Mexico. *PLoS ONE*, *16*(7).; Eguiarte, L. E., Jiménez Barrón, O. A., Aguirre-Planter, E., Scheinvar, E., Gámez, N., Gasca-Pineda, J., Castellanos-Morales, G., Moreno-Letelier, A., & Souza, V. (2021). Evolutionary ecology of Agave: distribution patterns, phylogeny, and coevolution (an homage to Howard S. Gentry). *American Journal of Botany*, *108*(2), 216-235. 2 Lastra, Y. (2005). El códice Otomí de San Mateo Huichapan. *Arqueología mexicana*, *XIII*(73), 32-38.

<sup>3 &</sup>quot;where there is maguey, there is no hunger"

<sup>4</sup> Garcia, D. (2018). *Le mezcal: enfant terrible du Mexique*. Presses universitaires François Rabelais.. p. 39

<sup>&</sup>quot;[i]n Mexico, one can observe a strong correlation between the settlement patterns of Indigenous populations and the regions where agave grows naturally. Indeed, the plant played a key role in the process of sedentarization among nomadic tribes."

5 Hodgson, W. C., Rosenthal, E. J., & Salywon, A. M. (2023). Pre-contact agave

domesticates - living legacy plants in Arizona's landscape. *Annals of Botany*, *1*(19), 1-17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.13

different from those that led the Spanish to drain it in order to build Mexico City.<sup>7</sup> Though both actions involved techniques—just as agave domestication does—their underlying approaches to inhabiting the land arise from radically distinct belief systems and modes of *being in the world*, which cannot be meaningfully compared.

This kind of ambiguity is precisely what this work seeks to move away from, by following the framework of thought proposed by Max Liboiron in their book Pollution is Colonialism. They discuss how the "conceptions autochtones de la Terre" are "aplaties sous la notion de Nature, du fait de relations coloniales ancrées dans la séparation, l'universalisme et la preuve scientifique de la résilience du monde naturel."9 By setting thresholds for Nature's capacity to absorb human activities, colonial science cannot distinguish between interacting with the land and extracting from it. Yet the pre-Hispanic domestication of agave was rooted in a reciprocal relationship with the land, supported by a cosmovision that sharply contrasts with contemporary extractivist logics. Indeed, "[d]ans une perspective coloniale, une relation à la Ressource est bonne et juste", 10 making it difficult for this perspective to adopt a critical and situated view of the incommensurable obligations that shape different ways of relating to land. Rosenthal's work and its ambivalence invites reflection on how agave plantations in the Sonoran desert might have been organized today, 500 years after the Conquest. But it is impossible to know with certainty, as this civilizational project was interrupted by the colonial one.

From the very beginning of the Conquest, the relationship between humans inhabiting what is now Mexico and the land changed dramatically. While the major sedentary pre-Hispanic populations had already begun the domestication of natural resources, their environmental and territorial impact remained minimal and was mostly limited to the Mesoamerican region, leaving surrounding areas untouched for nomadic peoples. The land was thus inhabited by vastly different populations, each with distinct civilizational projects. The Maya of the classic period (250-950AD), for instance, adopted a small-scale agricultural system rooted in family and community organization. Their caring of the rainy forest allowed them to create adequate conditions for culture without interfering with the local vegetation, while being enough to sustain big cities. Meanwhile,

the large urban centers in what is now central Mexico-those with the largest populations—developed community-based agriculture based on more extensive shared harvests.<sup>13</sup> One common thread among these diverse peoples was undoubtedly the milpa, a practice established between 7000 to 4400 before present, that persists today both within traditional rural life and under a new wave of Western fascination with the "sustainable" practices of Indigenous communities. 14 In 2019, the organization Slow Food published an article on milpa practices in Chiapas and this year the RSI (Radiotelevisione Svizzera) released a report on the biodiversity of the milpa system just two of many recent global publications on the subject. 15 Agave plays an essential role in the milpa. Based on the contemporary cultivation of the triad of maize, squash, and beans (maiz, calabaza v frijol), milpa corresponds to a biologically diversified field system that allows for organic reintegration into the soil and natural pest management.<sup>16</sup> Agave, thanks to its high water retention capacity, contributes to natural irrigation and has also historically been used as a natural barrier between crops, and eventually to delineate the land holdings of different owners. <sup>17</sup> The decline of *milpa* in Mexico today is directly related to agro-industrial production, whose roots date back to the hacienda system and to the beginnings of a progressive rupture between Indigenous peoples and the land—now controlled by colonial powers and transformed into capitalist extractivism.

Agave has been narrated through pre-Hispanic legends, colonial accounts, and into the current mezcal narrative, shaping a collective imaginary around the plant marked by admiration and indifference, respect and contempt, appreciation and repulsion. Their plantations are considered as a beautiful landscape, and they operate as very architectures of the agave, built into perfect lines and patterns. However, by focusing mostly on a unique species, the plantation structure leads to major problems in agave diversity, and biodiversity in the fields. While in the case of pulgue and mezcal a lot of species are used in the different regions of production, the plantation system usually relies respectively on agave Salmiana and Espadín, while the predominance of agave Azul is a well-known fact in tequila's world. Mezcal plantation reproduces the same strategy of monoculture that has been used in both pulque and tequila plantations in the past, one of the many elements emerging from the screenplays to suggest its barocity.

<sup>7</sup> Montero-Rosado, C., Ojeda-Trejo, E., Espinosa-Hernández, V., Fernández-Reynoso, D., Caballero Deloya, M., & Benedicto Valdés, G. S. (2023). Historical Political Ecology in the Former Lake Texcoco: Hydrological Regulation. *Land*, *12*(1113) 8 "Indigenous conceptions of Land"

<sup>9</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). *Polluer, c'est coloniser*. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes. p.89

<sup>&</sup>quot;flattened under the notion of Nature due to colonial relationships rooted in separation, universalism, and scientific proof of the natural world's resilience."

10 Ibid. p.122

<sup>&</sup>quot;in a colonial framework, a relationship to Resources is good and just"

<sup>11</sup> Hodgson, W. C., Rosenthal, E. J., & Salywon, A. M. (2023). Pre-contact agave domesticates - living legacy plants in Arizona's landscape. *Annals of Botany*, 1(19), 1-17

<sup>12</sup> Calder, B. (2022). Architettura ed energia. Einaudi.

<sup>13</sup> ibid

<sup>14</sup> Zizumbo-Villareal, D. (2010). Origin of agriculture and plant domestication in West Mesoamerica. *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution*, *57*, 813-825.

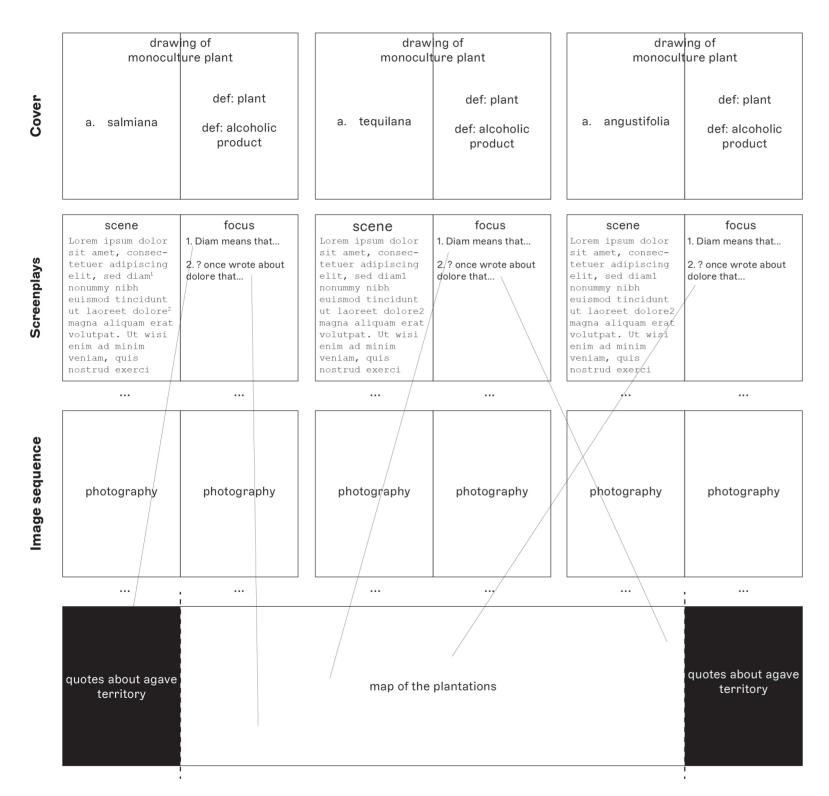
<sup>15</sup> Sistema milpa del Chiapas - Presìdi Slow Food. (n.d.). Fondazione Slow Food. Retrieved June 5, 2025; Berger, E. (2025, January 29). La biodiversità e i significati del metodo "Milpa". RSI.

<sup>16</sup> Zizumbo-Villarreal, D., Vargas-Ponce, O., & Rosales Adame, J. J. (2013). Sustainability of the traditional management of Agave genetic resources in the elaboration of mezcal and tequila spirits in western Mexico. *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution*, 60, 33-47.

<sup>17</sup> Fournier, D. (1983). Le pulque : boisson, nourriture, capital. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 69, 45-70.

2. spiny architectures trilogy of plantations

# **Trilogy of plantations**

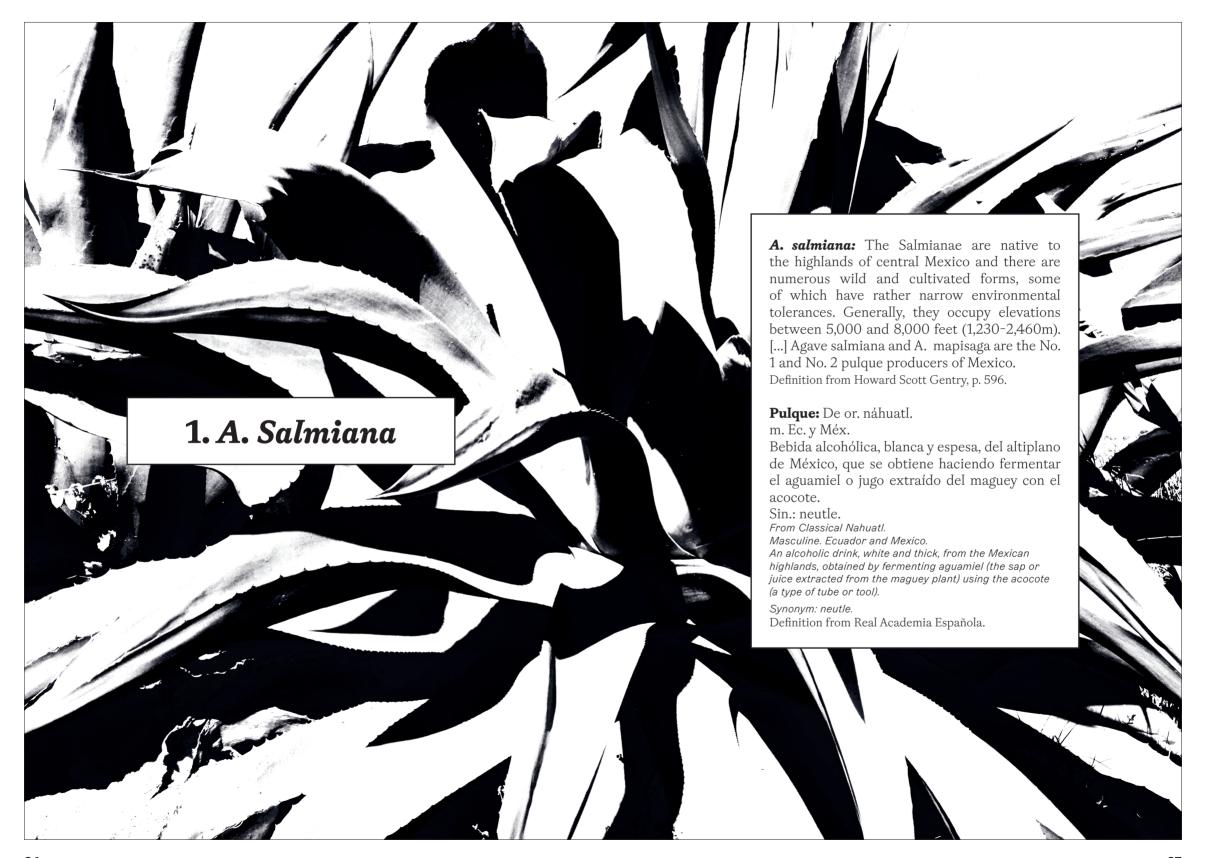


The agave plants are the very protagonists of this trilogy, involved in time and space in the soil, in the air and among the ecological functioning as well as productive dimension of the plantation system. While the plantations extend to other species, a specific one has been selected over the years for each drink.

In the screenplays, some specific words are put in evidence and associated with a number. These numbers appear on the page vis-à-vis, where some specifications - facts, historical information, statistics, references - are given about the selected passages. This strategy is used to let spatial stories flow without interruption, while offering an insight view of the history and mechanisms of the diverse plantations, letting its architecture emerge directly from the territory.

The result of these screenplays is not a movie, but a sequence of photographic images. Enhancing the visual power of the screenplays, the photographs are intended as suggestions; without being precisely situated within the written scenes, they open on a vaster array of ideas. They are displaced from the tension of the text, while unfolding its imaginary.

The map of the plantation holds all together the different spaces and times rising from the scenes, suggesting their reconciliation. It is a proposition of a spatiality and a temporality of the agave architecture, showcasing this system as a unicum in Mexico, deeply entangled and interconnected. The mezcal plantation's barocity is exposed as a result and a memory of the superposed foldings of the models that came before.



#### 1. EXT. FIELDS OF THE EX-HACIENDA PULOUERA IXTAFIAYUCA - DAY

It is a grey day, and the hacienda (Ixtafiayuca) stands empty. The red trim of its walls contrasts starkly against the dull sky. Everything seems still, abandoned, silent. Yet voices drift in from the fields just beyond the line of trees that marks the edge of the residential grounds.

Two men (DQMINGO, 80) and (JAVIER, 82) walk side by side through a (field) where the crops have not yet begun to grow. Min with Swith goats

#### **JAVIER**

Ya nos hemos hecho viejos, Domingo...

#### **DOMINGO**

Ah sí... viejos... ; te acuerdas cuando caminábamos por este mismo campo? ; Hace cuánto fue? ; Setenta años? Pues en realidad no caminábamos, ; corríamos! Siempre andábamos corriendo por todas partes.<sup>2</sup> hacienda as a plangiound **JAVIER** = provokey its structure

Sí, setenta años. Es cierto. Siempre corriendo. Así el trabajo se volvía un juego, ¿no?

#### **DOMINGO**

Así es amigo. ¿Te acuerdas cuando se te cayó el cigarro en la tina de pulque? 3 ; Tu padre nos sacó a palazos! Ahí sí que corrimos de verdad... I in the same field they are walking in now ... [Laughter]

**JAVIER** 

Corrimos entre los maqueyes sin que nos picaran. ; Tan fácil como si estuviéramos en las calles largas de la Ciudad de México! Aún somos ágiles, aunque menos rápidos.

#### **DOMINGO**

¿Tú qué sabes de las calles de México?

#### **JAVIER**

Estuve una vez, hace no tanto tiempo. Reemplacé a un chofer que tenía que entregar un pedido de pulque. Other flashback

#### **DOMINGO**

Ah, ya. Pues, pobrecito de tu papá...

#### **JAVIER**

Tenía miedo de que el jefe nos echara a la calle... ay, ¿a dónde hubiéramos ido todos?

#### **DOMINGO**

Eran otros tiempos... ¿te acuerdas de cuánta gente trabajaba aquí? Ahora llega más gente a ver las luciérnagas que a tomarse un pulque.

#### **JAVIER**

Y a comer pizzas!4 [Laughter]

luciernagos = fireglies

Old camion

people sit in the

Playpel eyes.

Plashback?

BW?

1. Haciendas formed a fundamental pillar of the extractive-colonial power structure established by the Spanish Crown to exert territorial control through representatives of the ruling classes. This system aimed to organize and regulate the production of local resources, to tax them, and to sustain an enduring economic dependency between the colony and Spain. As institutions, haciendas contributed to land concentration and to the perpetuation of a racialized and unequal social order—an order that continues to shape much of Mexico's rural organization to this day. Some of these haciendas, particularly those dedicated to pulgue production, were established in the central region of the country, in what are now the states of Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, and Puebla. These areas, historically marked by maguey cultivation, also benefited from their strategic proximity to the capital. As early as the 17th century, it is estimated that the city of Mexico consumed between 350,000 and 2.6 million liters of pulgue daily. It was only in the 18th century that production intensified on a large scale, particularly in the Llanos de Apan region, where several haciendas abandoned cattle ranching to dedicate themselves exclusively to pulgue production.<sup>2</sup> Although the Crown profited fiscally from this trade, it repeatedly sought to restrict pulgue consumption among Indigenous populations, citing its harmful effects on health and the notion that drunkenness exposed them to abuse by their employers.3 These paternalistic policies, presented as protective measures, contributed to reinforcing the image of the colonized subject as vulnerable, uncontrollable, and inferior—a stigma that persists to this day.4

2. The territory of the haciendas was vast and included a series of infrastructures dedicated to their economic functioning. The current territorial layout can be understood through its relationship with the hacienda, which serves as the cultural and economic center within a surrounding peripheral network. As a result, villages developed precisely within the boundaries of the hacienda. Holding regional productive hegemony, this structure contributed to the stagnation of the Mexican countryside, preventing independence and competitiveness within its communities—characteristics typical of feudal systems.5

before, were made out of leather (animal skins) 3. The tinas are the large barrels where pulgue accumulates for fermentation, housed in a specific room called the tinacal. Access to this space has historically been restricted: it is managed by the mayordomo del tinacal, who oversees its hygiene and controls the fermentation times and the progress of the process. Within the hierarchy of the pulgue hacienda, the mayordomo held the highest position after the owner. In some cases, this hierarchy still persists today in former haciendas or ranchos that maintain significant pulque production. This structural continuity reveals the deep colonial imprint on the organization of maguey pulquero plantations.<sup>6</sup> During fermentation, pre-Hispanic practices included songs and rituals dedicated to the pulgue deities, seen as mediators between the earthly world and cosmic powers. Under colonial rule, these songs were replaced by Catholic hymns.<sup>7</sup> This ritual shift accompanies a broader, quieter yet no less violent process: the de-Indianization of pulgue, through the symbolic disgualification of its sacred origins.

4. Most of the pulgue aristocracy's haciendas have today been converted into hotels or tourism-focused venues. The Ixtafiayuca hacienda, for example, offers tours of the firefly sanctuary, where each year between June and August thousands of fireflies light up the night. This tourism offering has adapted to an international and globalized demand, to the point that traditional dishes have sometimes been replaced by Western-inspired menus.

Balsley, H., & Velázquez, M. (2019). La construcción social del Pulque en México. Pistas para su revalorización: Turismo y Desarrollo Regional. Revalorar los productos turísticos en el program de Pueblos Magico en Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Wobeser, G. v. (2019). Características de la hacienda. In La formación de la hacienda en la época colonial: el uso de la tierra y el agua (pp. 69-88). UNAM.

<sup>3</sup> Corcuera de Mancera, S. (1991). El fraile, el indio y el pulgue : evangelización y embriaguez en la Nueva España (1523-1548). Fondo de Cultura Económica.

<sup>4</sup> Cadena, M. d. l. (2004). Indígenas mestizos: raza y cultura en el Cusco. IEP Ediciones.

<sup>5</sup> Tortolero, A. (2009). Les grandes exploitations mexicaines au cœur du changement agricole ? Routine ou innovation agraires : les élites de Chalco au XIXe siècle. In Élites et progrès agricoles: XVIe-XXe siècle (pp. 227-254). Presse Universitaires de Rennes.

<sup>6</sup> Conversation with the mayordomo del tinacal of the hacienda Xochuca, December 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Guerrero Guerrero, R. (1985). El pulque. J. Moritz.

2. INT. PULOUERIA ANTIGUA ROMA

Roma is a neighboorhood The scene takes place in a pulguería in Mexico City

decorated with blue mosaics. Its atmosphere is distinct and evokes another epoch3. The door swings open like an old saloon, and an elderly man enters, modestly but elegantly dressed. The scene takes place in a pulquería decorated with blue mosaics. Its atmosphere is distinct and evokes another time.

The door swings open like in a saloon, and an elderly man,  $\frac{1}{2}$ enters, modestly but elegantly dressed. really coord and

Jorge, ¿qué te damos hoy? ¿Una pinta?

Jorge looks around. A couple is seated in the corner where the light from the room's only window falls. Another pai stands at the bar, chatting with the bartender.

Pues qué te digo, ya sabes... ¿ustedes qué toman?

De avena. [raising his glass] ; Es muy rico! La pulgue de sabor JORGE - dis couraged

¿De avena? Ustedes güeros... [ddunutun]kaokonkunganahantunge Alexandria de la jóvenes, que se lo tomen natural el pulquito! Así pueden entender si está bien hecho o no. [Laughter]

The man grabs his pint of pulgue and leaves the bar. The camera follows him. He lights a cigarette and chats with passersby. His demeanor is both stern and humorous, his comments sharp and sarcastic, making it hard to tell whether he's telling stories, jokes, or the truth. He talks avidly with a woman.

I she stops to sit on a bench

Pues es que mejor que te trate bien tu señor por tan quapa que eres. A mi hermana se la trataba mal su esposo. Así que lo maté.

MUJER

¿En serio?

JORGE

Pues... tal vez, ya no me acuerdo. Era hace tantos años y yo era borracho. Puede ser que solo le di una buena lección. Seguramente se lo meritaba. No se pegan a las mujeres, aún menos a mi hermanita.

Without saying goodbye, the man pushes the saloon-style door open again. As he enters, he crosses paths with the couple who had been sitting in the corner; they greet each other. The man sits down in the beam of light that had been shining on the lovers.

- 1. The names of pulguerías are generally very original and often draw from popular & general and dictator of Mexico from 1870 to 1911. expressions.
- 2. The relationship between the pulgue hacienda system and Mexico City is very strong, marked notably by the arrival of the first railway in the region in 1866.8 Prior to this, transport was done by mule, which was a limitation given the short shelf life of pulgue, which only lasts a few days. It was thanks to the initiatives and stability allowed by the Porfirio Díaz regime that the railway reached the Apan region, and this is one of the reasons why the golden age of pulgue is associated with the Porfiriato.9 However, this ease of transport quickly resulted in overproduction, plunging the pulque industry into various crises that already highlighted the incompatibility between a precapitalist agricultural organization and a production and supply system emerging from a capitalist-leaning society. This same dualism can be found today in the mezcal production chain. The difference is that back then it was seen as a problem, whereas now it tends to be embraced within the positivist narrative of mezcal.
- 3. The symbolism surrounding maguey and pulgue dates back as far as the Postclassic Mesoamerican period. Over time, it has been transformed through a vast and rich artistic-cultural current—literary, musical, and visual. Foreign photographers who visited Mexico in the 19th century were captivated by a pulgue-inspired aesthetic, nurtured by national cinema, and laid the foundation for a visual archive documenting the condition of Mexico City's pulguerías at the start of the 20th century—an archive that is still displayed in many of them today.<sup>10</sup>
- 4. During the colonial period, Indigenous populations turned to a non-Christian, ritual consumption of pulgue as a way of fostering solidarity and quietly resisting oppressive colonial forces.11 Pulque still carries this deeply social and informal dimension, which through contemporary drinking practices—tends to transcend the classist and racist divides of Mexican society.

5 Violence in Mexico tends to be downplayed and normalized. 12 It seeps into individual experience narratives and is often associated with uncontrolled drinking. When listening to these stories, one must make an effort to contextualize and unpack them. I've noticed that the most significant part of these exchanges often lies in what is left unsaid—camouflaging a sense of helplessness in the face of violence, and seeking, through its telling, to purge trauma or provoke critical reflection. I've often found myself sitting around a table discussing this violence, and it is frequently the victims (mainly women) and witnesses who speak about it most openly. This contributes both to its deconstruction and, at times, to its normalization, as the subject is sometimes approached jokingly—something extremely delicate. The fundamental role of alcohol in these dramatic narratives is confirmed by the findings of the Encuesta Nacional sobre Consumo de Alcohol, where 68% of women and 52% of men see alcohol as a major issue nationwide. While this thesis does not aim to delve deeply into the relationship between alcohol and violence, within the framework of a study on mezcal, I believe it is necessary to serve as a vehicle for raising awareness on the topic. Mezcal is often perceived as a game, taken lightly and, as I often say, idealized. However, its more harmful consequences tend to surface in more intimate settings, where a privileged platform of communication allows us to collectively reflect on them.

<sup>8</sup> Information found at the station of Apan.

<sup>9</sup> Martinez Saldana, T., Jiménez-Velázquez, M. A., & Navárez Suárez, A. U. (n.d.). El cultivo de maquey pulguero: opción para el desarrollo de comunidades rurales del altiplano mexicano. Revista de Geografía Agrícola, 56, 33-44.

<sup>10</sup> Ramírez Rodríguez, R. (2007). La representación popular del maguey y el pulgue en las artes. Cuicuilco, 14(39), 115-149.

<sup>11</sup> Balsley, H., & Velázquez, M. (2019). La construcción social del Pulque en México. Pistas para su revalorización: Turismo y Desarrollo Regional. Revalorar los productos turísticos en el program de Pueblos Magico en Mexico.

<sup>12</sup> Reguillo, R. (2021). Necromáguina. Ned Ediciones.

Gonzales Rubio, B. (2024). Encuesta Nacional sobre Consumo de Alcohol - RESET México (for Vital Strategies).

#### 3. EXT. RANCHO SAN ISIDRO - NIGHT/SUNRISE

It is still night in the *maguey* fields of Rancho San Isidro. A man (ENRIQUE, 45) carrying a strange tool crosses a row and disappears again behind the plants. He is barely visible in the darkness. Only the sound of flying insects and a soft breeze can be heard. When the man vanishes, a suction noise breaks the stillness and stirs curiosity.

The camera zooms in on the man's face, which is barely discernible as a blinding light shines from his forehead. His face tightens as he brings the mysterious instrument to his mouth. The suction noise is now louder, closer.

The camera films a liquid (aguamiel) coming out of the man's tool and collecting in a sack. It glistens in the night, illuminated by the same artificial light that was blinding.

The camera pulls back to reveal the sack, tied to a donkey. It is tied by a rope to the *penca* of a large agave. The sun rises over the mountains behind the donkey, and everything becomes more visible.

# 4. INT. HOUSE OF THE TLACHIQUERO IN RANCHO SAN ISIDRO - NIGHT Ly dark with near light.

A boy (BRIAN, 10) is drawing strange monsters in the kitchen, while his mother (SOFIA, 40) is serving eggs. The man enters and strokes the boy's head before sitting at the table. The red pencil he's using runs dry on the paper.

BRIAN -> percept vely smant

¡Papá! Ya no tengo más rojo.

#### **ENRIQUE**

Vale, cuando vamos al pueblo te compro uno nuevo. Pero paciencia, no tengo días de pausa para ir hasta aún un par de semanas.<sup>3</sup> [Looking at his wife] Qué ricos tus huevos de flor, amor. Mañana te llevo un mixiote.<sup>4</sup>

#### SOFIA

Gracias, son muy sabrosas las flores, se ve que son frescas. $^{5}$ 

#### BRIAN

Papá, ¿esta noche puedo venir contigo a recoger el aguamiel?

#### **ENRIQUE**

No, hijo. Ya lo sabes, mañana tienes que ir a escuela. Pero me puedes encontrar al *tinacal*. El *mayordomo* se enfermó así que lo voy a remplazar.

#### SOFIA

¿Entonces mañana no tienes pausa? ¿Te llevo algo para comer al campo?

#### ENRIQUE

No será necesario, me bastará el pulquito.

1. Pulque is the result of the controlled fermentation of aguamiel, a sweet water produced by the agave at its core, during the cutting of its quiote. This water is collected using an acocote, an instrument that allows it to be sucked out without the aguamiel coming into contact with saliva. The collected liquid is then stored in sacks carried by donkeys and poured into the tinas in the tinacal. Nowadays, tractors are also used, but donkeys are still preferred—both as companions and because they navigate better through the rows of agave. It is in the tinacal that the aguamiel ferments until it becomes pulque, whose alcohol content ranges between 4% and 6%.14

- 2. The work of the *tlachiquero* is particularly solitary, and the presence of the donkey becomes crucial as it represents a privileged relationship between human and animal labor. I once spoke with a man who told me he loved his donkey as much as his children, because he saw it every day, like them, and it faithfully accompanied him throughout the day in the fields.
- 3. The working schedules of some *tlachiqueros* have not changed since colonial times—or may have even worsened—since few people are now willing to work so much, and the pay is very low. The *tlachiquero* must make rounds through the fields 2 to 3 times a day to extract *aguamiel* from each agave, and the number of plants can exceed 1,000. The *aguamiel* is collected very early, before sunrise, and brought to the *tinacal*. A series of tasks then awaits the *tlachiquero* before making another round in the afternoon. This work is done every single day without exception. Vacations are not permitted, except for major events such as baptisms and weddings of important family members. *Tlachiqueros* live on the grounds of the *ex-haciendas* or *ranchos* and have few opportunities to leave. Their wives play an important role in organizing family life, but they too often remain isolated due to their household and ranch duties.
- 4. The *mixiote* is the cuticle of the agave's pencas. Its remotion is nocive for the plant, directly affecting its photosynthesis. Still, this fascinating white sheet is known for the particular flavor it gives to the so-called *mixiote*, a dish in which ingredients are cooked in this tasteful enveloppe. As the value of the mixiote is quite high—but not worth 8 years of growing a maguey—there is a rising attempt to steal it from the producers, resulting in a black market.
- 5. The flowers of the *quiote*, like other parts of the agave, are edible when cooked. A common saying goes, «donde hay maguey, no hay hambre»—"where there is maguey, there is no hunger"—referring to the plant's multiple nutritional possibilities, as well as the wide range of everyday uses: its fibers, its spines as needles, or its leaves as building material.
- 6. Often, *pulque* workers consume it in large quantities, given how little free time their labor allows, and due to the nutritional properties of *pulque*, which give a sensation of fullness.

<sup>14</sup> All the information of this scene was provided by the tlachiquero of rancho San Isidro (name let voluntarily anonymous).

#### 5. EXT. IN AN AGAVE FIELD IN HIDALGO - DAY

A man (DON ADRIAN, 60) walks through a field. There are some agaves, but the vegetation is varied, brightened by the dominance of yellow flower tufts. Don Adrian, machete in hand, cuts through branches as he carves a path, followed by a young man with a notebook (DIEGO, 28), and one with a camera (SEBASTIAN, 26).

#### DON ADRIAN

Este es un Xamini.

DIEGO > pointing on almost identical agave

3 about 20-40.

¿Y este también?

#### DON ADRIAN

Pues... él tiene las espinas más chicas, ¿no lo ves? Son bien diferentes. De él se puede sacar el aguamiel para el pulque, mientras del otro, viene un pulquito muy amargo. Pero tiene fibras buenas, aunque ya casi nadie les usa. Aún tengo un ayayate³ hecho por la fibra de este mismo tipo de maguey. ¡Son más de 30 años que lo tengo!

#### 6. EXT. IN A FIELD CLOSE TO A HOUSE IN HIDALGO - DAY

A woman digs a hole in the ground with her bare hands and a metal tool. After a while, she pulls out a small agave. She carries it into a braided plastic bag filled with other agaves to a car at the edge of the field, where a man is waiting. The car drives off.

7. EXT. AT THE MAGUEYAL OFFICE - DAY

The woman gets off the bus. Outside, several people greet her, also holding agaves. A car is parked nearby, its trunk open and filled with more agaves. People chat. There's laughter, but all is calm. One voice (ARACELI, 53) eventually rises above the crowd.

#### ARACELI

Vale compañeros! Vamos a empezar a sembrar, si les parece acérquense. Nos va a explicar nuestro asistente cuáles abonos usar y como formar las hileras del vivero. 6

The camera lingers on people talking near the agavefilled trunk, under the shade of a tree. Their words become audible.

#### HOMBRE A

¡Es bien marrón tu maqueycito!

HOMBRE B (Shightly worried

A ver pásame esto. [cutting the plant with a machete]

HOMBRE A
¡Pues ves! Lleva picudos. No se puede sembrar.

The man keeps striking at the plant's base with his machete.

1. A major drought has struck the region of Hidalgo in recent years. Heavy rains in the spring of 2024 allowed for an exceptionally dazzling bloom of wild sunflowers. However, the drought has returned, threatening the water supply for both agricultural use and the personal consumption of residents in several already vulnerable communities.<sup>15</sup>

2. The Magueyal association, based in El Cardonal, in the Mezquital Valley of Hidalgo, offers training activities to campesinos (peasant farmers) with the goal of restoring their decision-making power over the future of agricultural practices in the region. Special attention is given to the maguey, a plant that is both a cultural legacy of the Otomi people and an important economic driver. One of Magueyal's missions is to highlight campesinos' knowledge of their land. In this spirit, they created a catalog where different species of agave, empirically identified by the local population, are documented to help determine their main properties. This initiative reflects the perspective of Ana Valenzuela Zapata, who criticizes the lack of recognition of agave diversity in academic models. In Indeed, only recognizing agave species by their productive potential is extremely reductive and dates back to the hacienda regime. Hernandez Fabián, in his study of pulque-producing haciendas in Tlaxcala, explains that for this same production-oriented interest, "hacienda documentation makes no reference whatsoever to maguey types, let alone species". In the maguey types, let alone species ". In the maguey types, let alone species".

3. The ayayate is a fabric made out of the agave fibers, used before for wedding rebozos (long sharps), or for carrying babies. Its use has declined as it has been replaced by modern materials (mostly plastics or non-organic textils). The same phenomenon occured with the houses made out of maguey pencas and quiotes, replaced by cement.

4. One method of reproducing agave plants is through their exact genetic offspring, known as the hijuelo (daughter plant), which grows spontaneously next to the mother plant. Harvesting and replanting them in a larger space is one of the most commonly used methods due to its effectiveness, but it limits the genetic diversity of the plants.

5. One of the activities promoted by Magueyal is the establishment of a collective, collaborative, and educational nursery to encourage the study of appropriate agricultural practices among campesinos, while simultaneously protecting local maguey diversity through documentation and reproduction.

6. The picudo is the main pest affecting the survival of magueys across Mexico. It is an insect that settles at the base of the plant's leaves, and through the cracks it creates to lay its eggs—and the viscosity of its larvae—it causes the accumulation of harmful bacteria that lead to the plant's death.¹9 Although it has always been present in plantations, it became invasive in recent decades. Most scientific articles on the picudo focus on its economic damage to industries and on control, but few have addressed the reason of the infestation. The main one put forward by scientists so far is the human-driven migration of agave plants.²0 The agronom Fernando Vázquez, however, argues that the spread of the picudo must also take into account the reduction of biodiversity in the fields, which makes agave the sole host for the insect's eggs. The use of chemical products also weakens the plants resistance against bacterial threats and renders them vulnerable hosts. Finally, the recent droughts have had a considerable impact on the complex relationships between agave plants and their environment.²1

<sup>15</sup> González, N. (2025, May 7). La Jornada Hidalgo. La Jornada Hidalgo. https://lajornadahidalgo.com/sequia-moderada-se-intensifica-en-hidalgo-conoce-municipios-mas-afectados/

<sup>16</sup> Magueyal, Sujeto y Comunidad A.C. (n.d.). Magueyal. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from https://magueyal.org

<sup>17</sup> Mail communication with Ana Valenzuala Zapata

<sup>18</sup> Hernández Fabián, A. J. (n.d.). El cultivo del maguey en una hacienda pulquera a inicios del siglo XX: el caso de San Bartolomé del Monte, Tlaxcala. *Bloch. 1*(3), 10-27. p.21

<sup>19</sup> Enríquez-Vara, J. N., Salazar-Rivera, G. I., & Gschaedler-Mathis, A. C. (n.d.). Situación del picudo del agave y alternativas de control en las zonas productoras de mezcal del Pacífico sur. *Horizontes Transdisciplinarios*, 1(1), 115-124.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.; Arista-Carmona, E., & González-Hernández, H. (n.d.). Incidencia, fluctuación poblacional y porcentaje de severidad de Schyphophorus acupunctatus en maguey pulquero en el noreste del estado de México. *Fitotec*, 46(2), 157-165.

<sup>21</sup> Conversation with Fernando Vazques

2. spiny architectures trilogy of plantations - salmiana

## Translation screenplays

#### 1. EXT. FIELDS OF THE EX-HACIENDA PULQUERA IXTAFIAYUCA - DAY

It is a grey day, and the hacienda Ixtafiayuca stands empty. The red trim of its walls contrasts starkly against the dull sky. Everything seems still, abandoned, silent. Yet voices drift in from the fields just beyond the line of trees that marks the edge of the residential grounds.

Two men (DOMINGO, 80) and (JAVIER, 82) walk side by side through a field where the crops have not yet begun to grow.

#### **JAVIER**

We've grown old, Domingo...

#### DOMINGO

Ah yes... old... do you remember when we used to walk through this same field? How long has it been? Seventy years? Well, actually we didn't walk—we ran! We were always running all over the place.

#### JAVIER

Yes, seventy years. That's true. Always running. That way, the work felt like a game, didn't it?

#### DOMINGO

That's right, my friend. Do you remember when you dropped your cigarette into the pulque vat? Your father chased us out with a stick! Now we really ran...

#### [Laughter]

#### JAVIER

We ran through the maguey plants without getting pricked. As easily as if we were on the long streets of Mexico City! We're still agile, just not as fast.

#### DOMINGO

What do you know about the streets of Mexico? **JAVIER** 

I was there once, not so long ago. I filled in for a driver who had to deliver a pulgue order.

#### **DOMINGO**

Ah, I see. Poor old man, your father...

#### **JAVIER**

He was afraid the boss would throw us out on the street... ay, where would we all have gone?

#### DOMINGO

Those were different times... do you remember how many people used to work here? Now more people come to see the fireflies than to drink pulque.

#### JAVIER

And to eat pizzas! [Laughter]

#### 2. INT. PULQUERIA ANTIGUA ROMA - DAY

The scene takes place in a pulguería in Mexico City decorated with blue mosaics. Its atmosphere is distinct and evokes another epoch. The door swings open like an old saloon, and an elderly man enters, modestly but elegantly dressed. The scene takes place in a pulguería decorated with blue mosaics. Its atmosphere is distinct and evokes another time.

The door swings open like in a saloon, and an elderly man enters, modestly but elegantly dressed.

#### BARMAN

Hey, Jorge, what'll you have today? A pint?

Jorge looks around. A couple is seated in the corner where the light from the room's only window falls. Another pair stands at the bar, chatting with the bartender.

#### JORGE

Well, what can I tell you, you know... what are you having?

#### MAN

Oat pulgue. [raising his glass] It's very good! JORGE

Oat? You pale guys... [the man looks puzzled, Jorge places his hand on his forehead voungsters, drink the pulguito natural! That way you can tell if it's well made or not. [Laughter]

The man grabs his pint of pulgue and leaves the bar. The camera follows him. He lights a cigarette and chats with passersby. His demeanor is both stern and humorous, his comments sharp and sarcastic, making it hard to tell whether he's telling stories, jokes, or the truth. He talks avidly with a woman.

#### **JORGE**

Well, your man better treat you well for being so beautiful. My sister's husband treated her badly. So I killed him.

#### WOMAN

#### Really? **JORGE**

Well... maybe, I don't remember anymore. It was

so many years ago and I was a drunk. Maybe I just gave him a good lesson. He probably deserved it. You don't hit women, even less my little sister.

Without saying goodbye, the man pushes the saloon-style door open again. As he enters, he crosses paths with the couple who had been sitting in the corner; they greet each other. The man sits down in the beam of light that had been shining on the lovers.

#### 3. EXT. RANCHO SAN ISIDRO - NIGHT/ SUNRISE

It is still night in the maguey fields of Rancho San Isidro. A man (ENRIQUE, 45) carrying a strange tool crosses a row and disappears again behind the plants. He is barely visible in the darkness. Only the sound of flying insects and a soft breeze can be heard. When the man vanishes, a suction noise breaks the stillness and stirs curiosity.

The camera zooms in on the man's face, which is barely discernible as a blinding light shines from his forehead. His face tightens as he brings the mysterious instrument to his mouth. The suction noise is now louder, closer.

The camera films a liquid (aguamiel) coming out of the man's tool and collecting in a sack. It glistens in the night, illuminated by the same artificial light that earlier had been blinding.

The camera pulls back to reveal the sack, tied to a donkey. It is tied by a rope to the penca of a large agave. The sun rises over the mountains behind the donkey, and everything becomes more visible.

#### 4. INT. HOUSE OF THE TLACHIQUERO IN **RANCHO SAN ISIDRO - NIGHT**

A boy (BRIAN, 10) is drawing strange monsters in the kitchen, while his mother (SOFIA, 40) is serving eggs. The man enters and strokes the boy's head before sitting at the table. The red pencil he's using runs dry on the paper.

#### BRIAN

Dad! I don't have any more red.

#### ENRIQUE

Alright, when we go to town I'll buy you a new one. But be patient, I won't have any days off to go for at least a couple of weeks.

[Looking at his wife] Your flower eggs are delicious, love.

#### SOFIA

Thank you. The flowers are very tasty—it looks like they're fresh.

#### BRÍAN

Dad, can I come with you tonight to collect the aquamiel?

#### ENRIQUE

No, son. You already know—you have school tomorrow. But you can meet me at the tinacal. The mayordomo is sick, so I'll be filling in for him.

So no break tomorrow either? Should I bring you something to eat in the field?

#### **ENRIQUE**

It won't be necessary—the little pulgue will be enough for me.

#### 5. EXT. IN AN AGAVE FIELD IN HIDALGO - DAY

A man (DON ADRIAN, 60) walks through a field. There are some agaves, but the vegetation is varied, brightened by the dominance of yellow flower tufts. Don Adrian, machete in hand, cuts through branches as he carves a path, followed by a young man with a notebook (DIEGO, 28), and one with a camera (SEBASTIAN, 26).

#### DON ADRIAN

This is a Xamini.

DIEGO

And this one too?

#### DON ADRIAN

Well... it has smaller spines, don't you see? They're really different. From this one you can get aguamiel for pulque, while from the other, you get a very bitter pulguito. But it has good fibers, although almost no one uses them anymore. I still have an ayayate made from the fiber of this very type of maguey. Oh, I've had it for more than 30 years!

#### 6. EXT. IN A FIELD CLOSE TO A HOUSE IN HIDALGO - DAY

A woman digs a hole in the ground with her bare hands and a metal tool. After a while, she pulls out a small agave. She carries it into a braided plastic bag filled with other agaves to a car at the edge of the field, where a man is waiting. The car drives

#### 7. EXT. AT THE MAGUEYAL OFFICE - DAY

The woman gets off the bus. Outside, several people greet her, also holding agaves. A car is parked nearby, its trunk open and filled with more agaves. People chat. There's laughter, but all is calm. One voice (ARACELI, 53) eventually rises above the crowd.

#### ARACELI

Alright, comrades! Now we're going to start planting, if you agree, come closer. Our assistant will explain which fertilizers to use and how to form the rows for the nursery.

The camera lingers on people talking near the agave-filled trunk, under the shade of a tree. Their words become audible

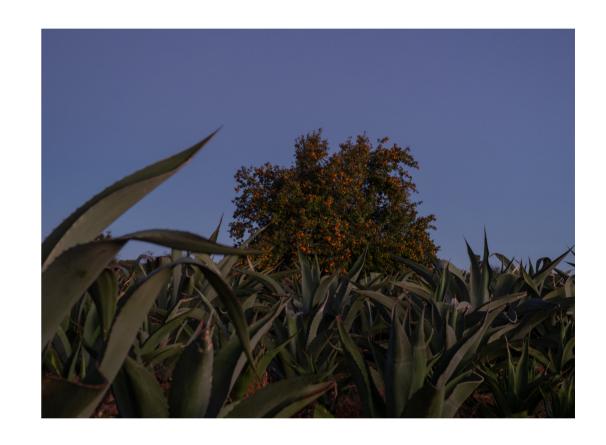
Your little maquev is really brown!

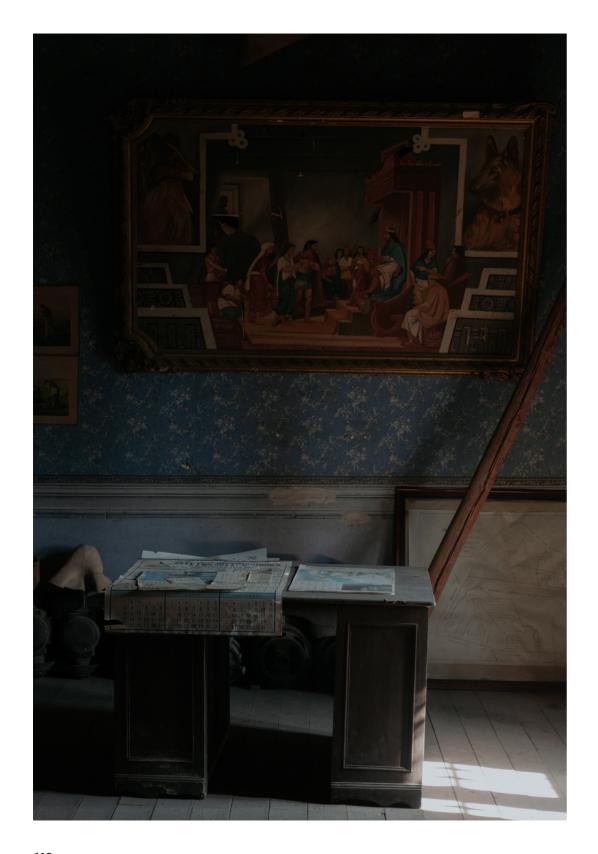
Let me see this. [cutting the plant with a machete]

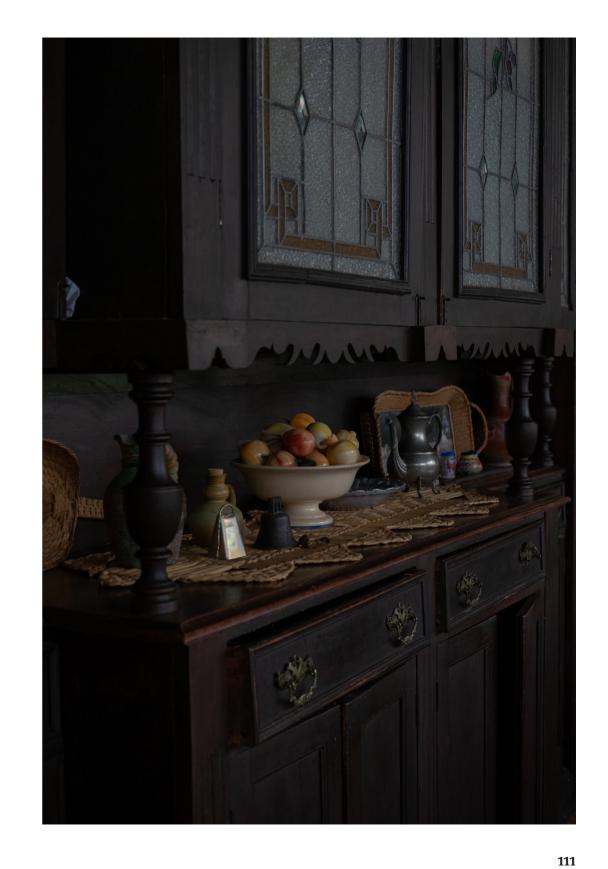
Well, see! It has picudos (weevils), It can't be

The man keeps striking at the plant's base with his machete.



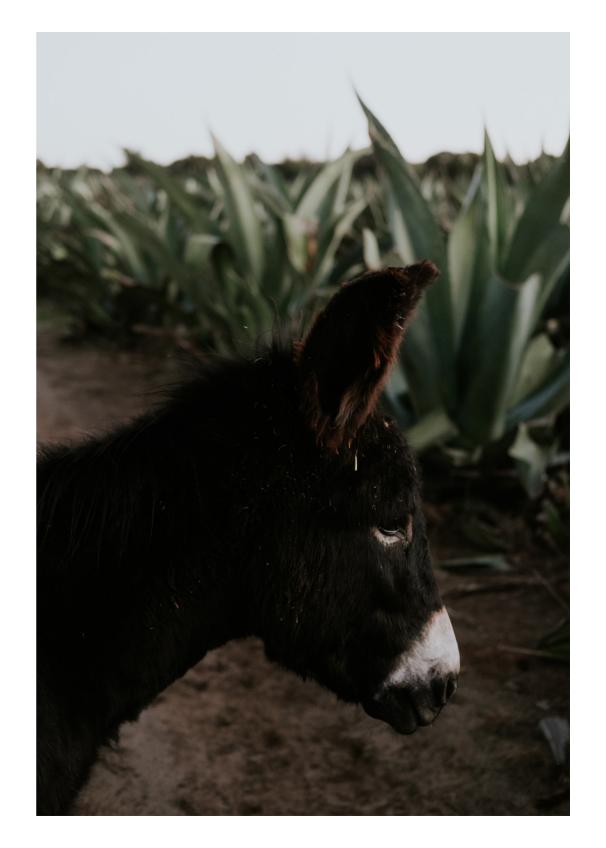












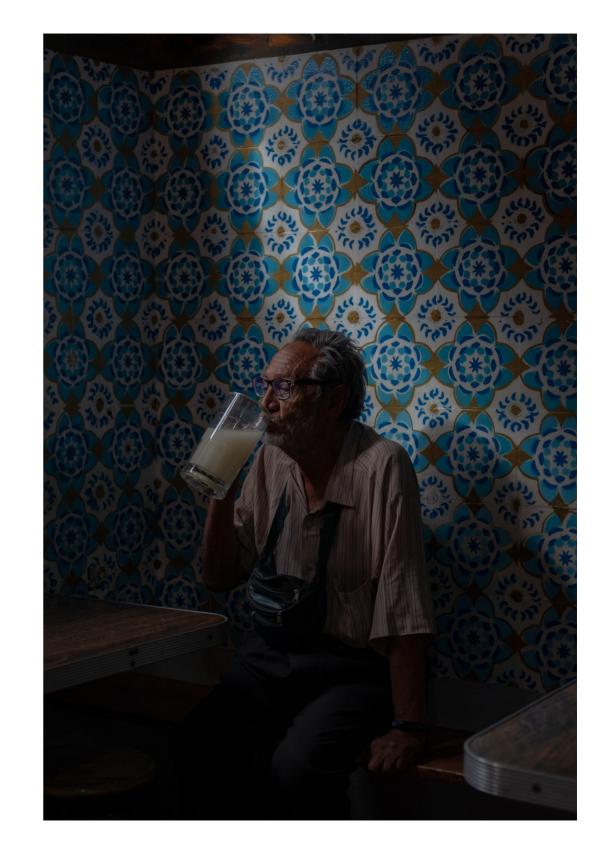








Top: Pulquería "El Templo del Amor," Mexico City, ca. 1890. Photograph from the Felipe Teixidor collection, Fototeca Nacional, INAH.
Bottom: Interior of a pulquería in Mexico City, circa late 19th or early 20th century. Historical photograph featured in the ArchDaily México article "Archivo histórico fotográfico: cantinas y pulquerías de la Ciudad de México."

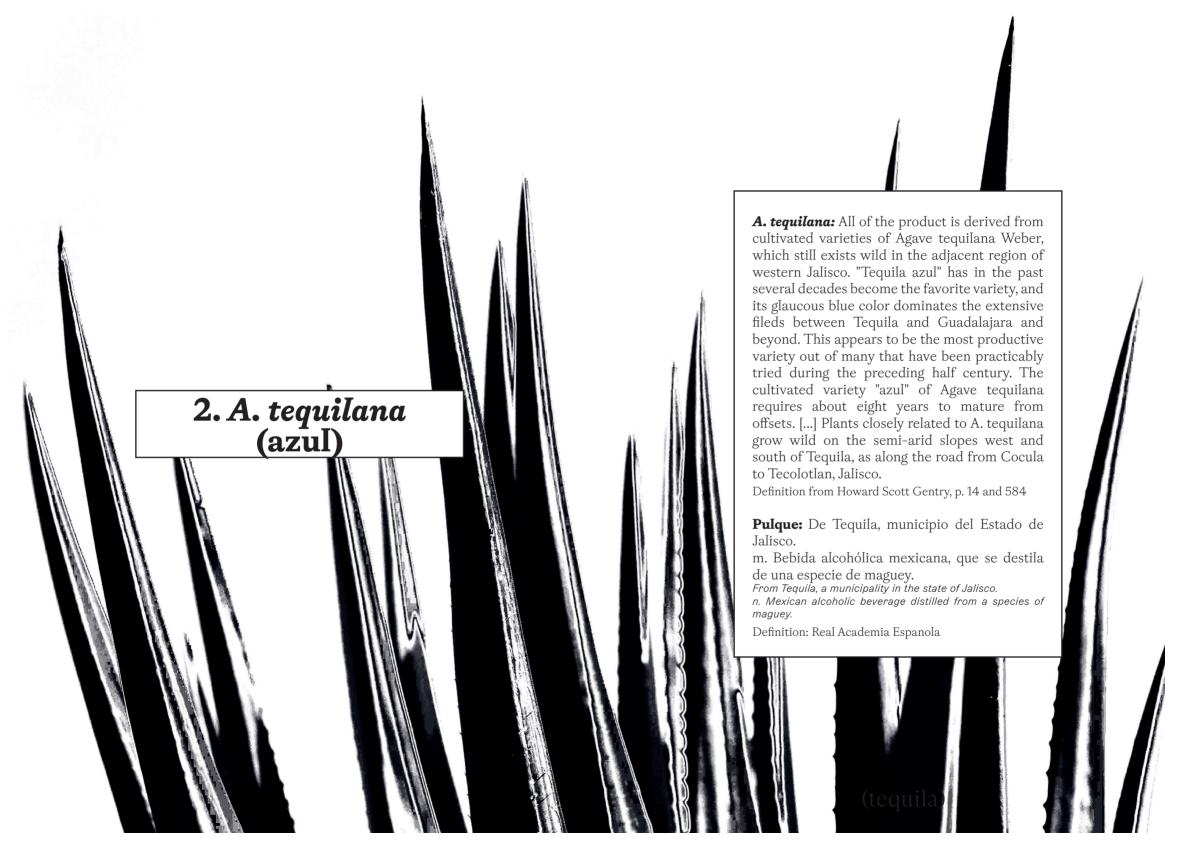












#### 1. EXT. EL CASTILLO DEL TEOUILA - DAY

A drone shot starts very close, from above, showing a woman's hands. Her movement is repetitive and mechanical. The camera slowly pulls back, showing the woman fully. As the drone distances, it becomes clear that she is inside a glass room where machines continue the mechanical motion of her hands, sticking etiquetas to bottles. Around the glass walls rise other stone walls. The drone pulls back further, and the stone walls continue to rise high. Soon, these walls become towers. Between the stone walls forms a central space — a courtyard into which the glass room housing the woman is inserted. Above the courtyard, a glass bridge connects the two wings of the building. The towers finally end with medieval conical elements. The camera stops on a final view:

2. INT. CELLAR OF EL CASTILLO DEL TEQUILA - DAY la but no light

A dark room remembers a medieval court. The room is lit only by candlelight from a large chandelier crowning the center of a long table, where the king (BUSINESSMAN) and his subjects (JIMADOR, MARIACHI) sit. The businessman, dressed in a suit and tie, drinks tequila from an elegant glass.

BUSINESSMAN (enthusiastic)

¡Caballeros, escúchenme bien! No vamos a construir una torre cualquiera... vamos a levantar *LA* torre. Una maravilla donde podrán hospedarse todos los que creen en el poder de nuestro tequila. ¡El epicentro de nuestro imperio embotellado!

The mariachi stands up with an exaggerated gesture.

MARIACHI (trasing)

¿Una torre tan alta como esa torre central? ¿Como un enorme sombrero puntiagudo que corona el castillo?

BUSINESSMAN ((Mnf.kmHy))

¡No, no, no! Eso es para principiantes. Nosotros vamos a lo grande: veinte pisos³ de puro orgullo tequilero!

JIMADOR [skeptal, but admiring]

¿Veinte pisos? Eso suena a locura... pero ¿saben qué? ¡Me encanta esa locura! ¡Eres un visionario, caballero!

BUSINESSMAN (۱۹۸۱)

¡Y eso no es todo! Nuestra torre se integrará perfectamente con el paisaje, será una flecha lanzada directo al cielo. Desde cada uno de esos pisos, nuestros visitantes podrán admirar los magueyes verdes... ¡verdes como nuestro tequila!<sup>4</sup>

CUT TO:

A construction site filmed continuously for months. We only see large trucks digging a deep hole in the ground.

1. Teguila facilities today are mostly industrial in nature, although some cases of artisanal production are re-emerging, influenced by the renewed interest around this mezcalspecific value. The industrialization process began at the end of the 19th century, propelled by development measures under the Porfiriato regime, the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. The Porfirian period marks the Mexican imagination as a time of great wealth and innovation. Seeking to bring the Mexican nation into the ideals of Western modernity, it stimulated a regime of massive exploitation of nature characteristic of the capitalist logic of the time. "En términos del ambiente, el desarrollismo porfirista tenía varios efectos, pero un fenómeno predominó por encima de los demás: el de la mercantilización masiva de la naturaleza. Donde antes existían montes y ríos ya se veían bosques maderables y agua de regadío."22 From 1870, the famous Sauza family, among others, owned tequila factories in the city of Tequila.<sup>23</sup> Through the industrialization of its production methods, the Sauza family helped promote teguila as a symbol of a hygienic drink, in opposition to pre-Hispanic fermented beverages such as pulque with its cloudy consistency. The spread of the idea of tequila as a modern national drink was reinforced by its recognition at early 20th-century world expositions. The historic distillery of the current José Cuervo house, La Rojeña, won the grand prize at the 1909 International Exhibition of Food and Hygiene in Paris, among others.

2. El Castillo del Tequila is a tourist and commercial infrastructure in the city of El Arenal, about 30 minutes from Tequila. The castle combines several services, such as tasting activities, a shop, a restaurant, a bar, and an event hall, all revolving around the theme of tequila. It is also a production site for three different brands, bottled on-site and visible to the public. The castle is located on the Tequila route, passing through the city of the same name, and is part of the "paisaje agavero" (agave landscape), listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.<sup>24</sup>

3. The group behind El Castillo del Tequila undertook the construction of a 20-story hotel tower, the only one of its kind in the rural territory between Guadalajara and Tequila.<sup>25</sup> While this intervention reflects the existence of large-scale national and international tourism requiring infrastructure, it also manifests a clientele different from that of mezcal, which tends to seek a more contained scale of authenticity. The tower proposed by El Castillo del Tequila represents an attitude toward the capitalist contradiction that moves away from the baroque trend and embraces realism. Although the reproduction of 16th-century architecture in the castle reflects a certain baroque style, the overall aesthetic of the tower project fits within a commercial and cultural logic responding to the capitalist modernity project and its anthropization of nature, justified by an idea of development as the only possible future.<sup>26</sup>

4. The trend toward sustainability awareness also touches the commercial logic of tequila, although its industrial structures do not engage as strongly with the scale of community and environmental relationships characteristic of small agave producers. In El Castillo del Tequila's narrative, sustainable tequila producers who "adopt sustainable practices can reduce their carbon footprint and minimize their impact on the ecosystem while simultaneously promoting corporate social responsibility."<sup>27</sup> The environmental awareness of the tequila industry relates to standards belonging to Western frameworks, viewing Earth and pollution as calculable entities.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Boyer, C., & Radding, C. (2017). Las fronteras historiográficas del medio ambiente. In *Historia, medio ambiente y áreas naturales protegidas en el centro-norte de México* (pp. 17-49). El Colegio de San Luis.

<sup>&</sup>quot;In environmental terms, Porfirian developmentalism had several effects, but one phenomenon predominated above the others: the massive commodification of nature. Where once there were mountains and rivers, now there were timber forests and irrigation water."

<sup>23</sup> Gómez Arriola, I. (2012). *Tequila: De la antigua taberna artesanal a una industria de alcance global.* Camara nacional de la industria tequilera.

<sup>24</sup> Paisaje de agaves y antiguas instalaciones industriales de Tequila. (n.d.). UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from https://whc.unesco.org/es/list/1209

<sup>25</sup> Conversation with a representant of the Castillo del Tequila

<sup>26</sup> Fisher, M. (2009). Capitalist Realism. Is There No Alternative? Zero Books.

<sup>27</sup> El compromiso de una tequilera sustentable. (n.d.). El Castillo del Tequila. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from https://elcastillodetequila.com/el-compromiso-de-una-tequilera-sustentable/

<sup>8</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.

#### 3. EXT. AGAVE FIELD IN EL TULE, OAXACA - DAY

In a rural area by a national road, a man (LUIS) walks down a dirt road perpendicular to it. Around him, various types of crops are visible, but corn and agave predominate. In the distance, someone shouts. The man pays no attention until he realizes the shout is meant for him. The camera follows the direction of his head as he turns around.

A man (PANCHO), in the agave field, waves his arms and runs lightly toward the road. He arrives at a reasonable distance from the other man.

#### **PANCHO**

Oye compañero, no tendrías un poco de aguita? Es que me olvidé la mía y a trabajar bajo este sol, sabes...

#### LUIS

!Cómo que no, para servirle!

The man takes a plastic water bottle out of his backpack. Pancho drinks eagerly.

#### LUIS

Oye y estos magueyes, ¿de quién son?

#### **PANCHO**

Pues aún no se sabe, hombre.

#### LUIS

¿En qué sentido?

#### PANCHO

O sea, por ahora son del dueño del campo, pero los puso solo para los tequileros.

## ¿Los tequileros? ¿Aquí en Oaxaca?¹

PANCHO
Sí, sí. Es que sabes, ahí en Jalisco ya no crece nada y les falta espacio. Solo que ahora el dueño los puso y se bajaron los precios, así que está esperando que se suban de nuevo

para venderles.<sup>2</sup>

#### LUIS

Ah... ¿y cuándo será esto?

#### PANCHO

and

Pues nunca se sabe, pero él así lo quiere hacer. Aún faltan algunos años hasta que sean maduros entonces le queda tiempo... Pero pues. Los de al lado no tuvieron chance, y ahora mira su campo... abandonaron todo. Mira estas hierbas, casi ya no se ven los magueyes.

The camera follows the gaze of both men as it moves toward the field. It is filled with tall weeds through which a few agaves can be seen.

- 1. Due to the shortage of agave azul in Jalisco, some intermediaries and producers have begun sourcing agave from other regions, such as Oaxaca, in order to obtain the necessary quantities of maguey for tequila production. However, this practice raises serious ethical and legal concerns, as the Denomination of Origin for Tequila (DOT) strictly requires that tequila be made exclusively from agave azul grown in designated areas, primarily within Jalisco. The use of agave from Oaxaca is not disclosed on product labels, making it untraceable and misleading to consumers. This concealed practice reflects an internal extraction dynamic—transferring resources from one region to another within national borders—while violating both regulatory standards and principles of transparency.<sup>29</sup>
- 2. This situation has become common for many campesinos in Oaxaca, who struggle to keep up with the highly unstable agave market, due to the increased demand for mezcal and environmental problems in Jalisco. Since agave takes a long time to grow, estimating its economic potential at the time of planting is completely speculative. In an interview conducted with Eduardo Rojas Zavaleta, a deputy from the La Costa region of the State of Oaxaca, he explains how, given the crisis in Jalisco, other states like Oaxaca and Puebla have started planting agaves en masse over the last 5-7 years, following the high value of a now exhausted demand. Once they finally reach maturity, the price of maguey has drastically dropped, causing serious economic losses for those who cultivate it. While maguey was worth between 25 and 30 pesos per kilo in 2023, it was bought between 3 and 7 pesos per kilo in 2024. Waiting for better offers, some growers let their fields deteriorate, or simply never receive any.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Based on conversations with a friend and mezcal brand owner, whose identity is being withheld out of respect for the sensitivity of the topic.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Eduardo Rojas Zavaleta, ex-deputy of the Partido Revolucionario of La Costa, Oaxaca. November 14th 2024. The interview was conducted few days after the end of the Congreso de Oaxaca, where Rojas Zavaleta presented the new law of tourism of Oaxaca. This congress marked the end of his term as a deputy of La Costa.

#### 4. EXT. ROAD FROM EL ARENAL TO TEQUILA - DAY

The scene takes place during the international film festival of Tequila. The curtains open before the audience, revealing a screen where a film is being projected. The brightness of the screen softly illuminates the heads of the viewers, who silently watch it. Then the camera enters the screen and becomes the film, a modern adaptation of Mexican cine de oro, repeating its main conventions.

A man (SANTIAGO, 35) is in a luxury convertible car with a woman (VANESSA, 34). They listen to a ranchera song. $^2$ 

#### SANTIAGO

Ayayayay, ¿dónde andarán, esos ojitos que me hicieron suspirar?

He strokes Vanessa's face, who smiles shyly. The agave landscape of the Tequila region scrolls past them. They drive fast, until they are stopped by a police patrol. Santiago lowers the window at the officer's indication. He removes his sunglasses.

Vahile answerry

SANTIAGO (over - confident)

Buenas tardes, mi capitán. ¿Qué viento lo trae hasta estos parajes tan calurosos?

OFFICER (Jeriou) and stiff)

Buenas tardes. Control de rutina, señor. Esta zona ha tenido... movimientos inusuales.

#### SANTIAGO

Pues qué pena. Justo hoy que sólo venimos a contemplar $_{hij}^{Wift}$  el azul del agave y el dorado de nuestra historia... es que la hermosa mujer que tengo a mi lado no tiene el placer de haber nacido en esta tierra.

#### **OFFICER**

¿Y la señorita confirma esta noble empresa?

VANESSA (Shy but elegant)

Sí, señor. Me prometió el atardecer más bello de Jalisco.

#### OFFICER (more reloxed)

Muy bien, bienvenida... ¿Señor, no llevan armas ni intenciones dudosas?

SANTIAGO

lla de

Oficial, la única arma que porto es esta botella de tequila...; y un corazón en fuego! -> puto his hand on OFFICER his heart.

Cuídese. En estos tiempos, hasta los más sinceros pueden perderse en los caminos espinosos. . del amor.

SANTIAGO Stong, poetic pause

¿Υ quién no, mi capitán? Pero si me pierdo… que sea entre los agaves que me vieron crecer.

(ς with ζιήους tone.

The officer signals them to go. Santiago starts the engine.

1. The *cine de oro mexicano* refers to the golden age of Mexican cinema, mainly during the 1940s and 1950s. The cinematic style developed in this period staged the emblems of *mexicanidad*, powerfully contributing to the construction of a national culture. This identity-building process is considered one of the most significant investments by a Western state in the creation of a collective imaginary, marking a close alliance between public policies and the cultural industry—a dynamic extensively studied from historical and anthropological perspectives.<sup>31</sup> The representation of this identity relies on the mestizo universe of the *charro*, the folkloric music of mariachis, and the hygienic intoxication of tequila. These elements compose the portrait of a modern patriarchal society, tense between an idealized rural nostalgia and an emerging urbanity. The symbolic importance of tequila in Mexican cinema has consolidated its status as a national icon. It is from this perspective that an international film festival was founded in Tequila nearly ten years ago, with the goal of "*mantener vivo el vínculo entre la bebida nacional y el arte*".<sup>32</sup>

2. Marie Sarita Gaytan and Ana Valenzuela Zapata open their article *Más allá del mito: mujeres, tequila y nación* with a quote taken from a Tequila tourist brochure in 2007. The flyer reads: "*Tequila, la bebida que nos hace recordar la masculinidad del mexicano varonil*".<sup>33</sup> The virile Mexican is the one from the *cine de oro* films, the hero who negotiates the affairs of the *pueblo* in cantinas where women cannot enter, under the shadow of their gaze. These cantinas, where tequila is the star, represent as much a place of informal politics tinged with honor-based violence as a place of celebration, camaraderie, and emotionality stemming from romantic misfortunes. It is in these entirely masculine spaces that men let their tears flow for lost love, before presenting themselves to women with macho assurance. It is tequila that justifies this spontaneous emotional vulnerability. The article by Gaytán and Valenzuela Zapata aims to make visible the role of women in alcohol production in Mexico—a role long erased by a macho national identity.

3. Until recently, the city of Tequila was primarily an industrial center devoted to the production of the national drink. Its inscription in the Pueblos Mágicos program in 2003 marked a decisive turning point, allowing it to benefit from institutional support to develop tourist infrastructure. Whereas it welcomed about 18,000 visitors in 2003, this number climbed to 500,000 in 2019, consolidating the Tequila Valleys region as a major tourist destination, both nationally and internationally.<sup>34</sup> However, this region is also sadly known for the persistent presence of groups linked to drug trafficking. The scenario evoked here is anchored in a personal experience: while driving alone to photograph the agave landscape between El Arenal and Tequila, I was stopped at a checkpoint. The National Guard questioned me about my possible possession of weapons or illicit substances. These controls, far from anecdotal, are justified by the discovery, for more than two six-year presidential terms, of drug trafficking-linked extermination camps in the vicinity. Activists, militants, and families of the disappeared continue the fight against impunity in the region near the city of Guadalajara. On March 5th, the Collectivo Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco discovered a camp in Teuchitlán, 70 km on the other side of Tequila, southwest of its namesake volcano. In addition to clothes and personal objects, they found human remains and clandestine crematory ovens. 35 These events position the territory of Tequila between the cradle of national identity and the silent witness of violence and disappearances whose victims are often voung men seeking work.

<sup>31</sup> Rodriguez Rodriguez, I. (2024). Representación histórica e identidad nacional en el cine mexicano de los setenta. *Inflexiones*, *15*, 101-133.

<sup>32</sup> FICTEQ. (n.d.). Sobre nosotros. Fictequila. Retrieved June 7, 2025, from https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=festival+cine+tequila&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8

<sup>33</sup> Sarita Gaytan, M., & Valenzuela-Zapata, A. G. (2012). Más allá del mito: mujeres, tequila y nación. Mexican Studies, 28(1), 183-208.

<sup>34</sup> Artega Vidiella, F. d. (2021, September 28). *Tequila y la metodologia DTI*. Segittur. Retrieved June, 2025, from https://www.segittur.es/blog/destinos-turisticos-inteligentes/tequila-y-la-metodologia-dti/

<sup>35</sup> Proceso (la redacción). (2025, March 11). Así funcionaba el rancho de Teuchitlán, el campo de adiestramiento y exterminio del CJNG. *Proceso*. https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2025/3/11/asifuncionaba-el-rancho-de-teuchitlan-el-campo-de-adiestramiento-exterminio-del-cjng-347186.html

#### 5. EXT. AN OBSERVATORY LOOKING AT AN AGAVE AZUL FIELD -

The couple is sitting on the low wall of an observatory pinket. overlooking the vast fields of agave azul stretching as far as the eye can see, across valleys and mountains. They drink tequila from small glasses. Santiago stands, speaking with grand heroic gestures, while Vanessa sits, thoughtful. In this rural landscape, there is no one else but them, and almost no cars passing on the large paved roads, neither trains on the railway. 1 The fields are still, no workers walk among them, and a few tractors are stopped in the shade of the few trees.

VANESSA (Soffly Arammetre.) ¿Alguna vez pensaste quién planta todo esto?

SANTIAGO ( evasive and mocking)

Pues mi niña... hay gente para eso. Jimadores. Les pagan.

VANESSA

¿Y esta tierra, quién la paga? Mira como se cansó, mira como está cansada esta tierra ocra, se recuerda todo.<sup>2</sup> Y solo quisiera florecer como estos quiotes que desaparecieron. Mira alrededor, ;no hay ni uno! SANTIAGO (Slightly irritated)

Vale, no te pongas así. Te llevé a conocer la belleza de mi tierra, no a llorarla. Ten, tómate este trago, y piensa en el poder que lleva el sabor de todo este

cansancio.

VANESSA

Santiago, tú solo sientes su sabor... te pido escuchar eldrink it. silencio de los que lo hicieron posible.

A silence. (Santiago is still holding the tequila bottle.)

The camera captures the two protagonists. The breeze slightly lifts Vanessa's dress, acting like the voices she refers to. Santiago's puzzled gaze drifts toward the horizon. A brilliant sunset bathes the scene in bright orange.

1. It was José Cuervo himself who initiated a railway project connecting Teguila to Guadalajara. The introduction of the railway in the region greatly contributed to the accelerated commercialization of tequila and its integration into the international market. The golden era of tequila in the specific region of Jalisco began at the end of the 19th century and lasted until the Mexican Revolution years, around 1920. This era characterizes its plantations as the industrial object of a growing extractivist trend enabled by new tools, techniques, and transportation. However, it is important to mention that before its industrialization, teguila production was also part of a colonial project through the hacienda system and periods of prohibition by the Spanish crown.<sup>36</sup> It was then known as "vino mezcal de tequila," implying that tequila is actually a type of mezcal—a surprising fact for non-experts. The name shortened over time alongside the logic of the industrial market, after which industrial production techniques transcended the state borders and were reproduced in other territories. Today, the DOT (Denomination of Origin Tequila) recognizes, in addition to 125 municipalities in Jalisco, between 7 and 30 municipalities in the states of Michoacán, Tamaulipas, Navarit, and Guanajuato.

2. The soil of Jalisco has been deeply marked by decades of extractivist agricultural practices linked to the monoculture of agave azul for teguila production. This industrial model is based on a logic of maximum short-term yield, often at the expense of local ecological balances. Intensive cultivation without crop rotation or soil rest has caused a progressive loss of fertility, forcing producers to adopt technoscientific solutions like in vitro micropropagation and genetic cloning of agave plants.<sup>37</sup> This cloning, while effective in stabilizing supply, impoverishes genetic diversity, and consequently ecological resilience and the variety of agave's aromatic profiles, reducing the sensory and territorial anchoring of tequila.

In traditional mezcal practices, notably in regions like Oaxaca, agave is cultivated within an agroecological system that includes crop rotations and the ancestral practice of the milpa. This system—based on the association of corn, beans, and squash—naturally enriches the soil and contributes to sustainable resource management. Yet this logic has been completely marginalized in tequila production zones, where the appellation of origin logic, while protecting some terroir aspects, paradoxically validated an industrialized production system uprooted from these subsistence practices.

The consequences of this intensification go beyond Jalisco's borders: the agave shortage in the region has led to pressure on other Mexican territories, notably mezcal regions like Durango, San Luis Potosí, or Guerrero. In these regions, the industry seeks to buy wild or semi-wild agaves at fluctuating prices, provoking speculation and a socio-economic imbalance that endangers traditional peasant agriculture.38 In response, peasant collectives, artisanal producers, and agroecology researchers call for a profound revision of the production model, revaluing local knowledge, botanical diversity, and the energy sobriety of the palengues. This ecological, productive, and identity imbalance between industrial tequila and artisanal mezcal poses a central tension in the contemporary representation of agave in Mexico: that of a national emblem glorified in cinema, festivals, and tourist circuits, but whose living roots are in danger.

<sup>36</sup> Gómez Arriola, I. (2012). Teguila: De la antigua taberna artesanal a una industria de alcance global. Camara nacional de la industria tequilera.

<sup>37</sup> Valenzuela Zapata, A., & Nabhan, G. P. (2004). Tequila: A Natural and Cultural History. University of

<sup>38</sup> Bautista, J. A., & A. Smit, M. (2012). Sustentabilidad y agricultura en la "región del mezcal" de Oaxaca. Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Agrícolas, 3(1), 5-20.

2. spiny architectures trilogy of plantations - azul

### Translation screenplays

#### 1. EXT. EL CASTILLO DEL TEQUILA - DAY

A drone shot starts very close, from above. showing a woman's hands. Her movement is repetitive and mechanical. The camera slowly pulls back, showing the woman fully. As the drone distances, it becomes clear that she is inside a glass room where machines continue the mechanical motion of her hands, sticking etiquetas to bottles. Around the glass walls rise other stone walls. The drone pulls back further, and the stone walls continue to rise high. Soon, these walls become towers. Between the stone walls forms a central space — a courtyard into which the glass room housing the woman is inserted. Above the courtyard, a glass bridge connects the two wings of the building. The towers finally end with medieval conical elements. The camera stops on a final view: the Castillo del Tequila seen in its entirety.

# 2. INT. CELLAR OF EL CASTILLO DEL TEQUILA - DAY

A dark room remembers a medieval court. The room is lit only by candlelight from a large chandelier crowning the center of a long table, where the king (BUSINESSMAN) and his subjects (JIMADOR, MARIACHI) sit. The businessman, dressed in a suit and tie, drinks tequila from an elegant glass.

#### BUSINESSMAN (enthusiastic)

Gentlemen, listen well! We are not going to build just any tower... we are going to raise THE tower. A marvel where all who believe in the power of our tequila can stay. The epicenter of our bottled empire!

The mariachi stands up with an exaggerated gesture.

#### MARIACHI

A tower as tall as that central tower? Like a huge pointed hat crowning the castle?

#### BUSINESSMAN

No, no, no! That's for beginners. We're going big: twenty floors of pure tequila pride!

#### **JIMADOR**

Twenty floors? That sounds crazy... but you know what? I love that craziness! You're a visionary, sir! **BUSINESSMAN** 

And that's not all! Our tower will integrate perfectly with the landscape, it will be an arrow shot straight into the sky. From each of those floors, our visitors will be able to admire the green magueys... green like our tequila!

#### CUT TO:

A construction site filmed continuously for months. We only see large trucks digging a deep hole in the ground.

# 3. EXT. AGAVE FIELD IN EL TULE, OAXACA - DAY

In a rural area by a national road, a man (LUIS, 55) walks down a dirt road perpendicular to it. Around him, various types of crops are visible, but corn and agave predominate. In the distance, someone shouts. The man pays no attention until he realizes the shout is meant for him. The camera follows the direction of his head as he turns around. A man (PANCHO, 48), in the agave field, waves his arms and runs lightly toward the road. He arrives at a reasonable distance from the other man.

#### **PANCHO**

Hey, compañero, wouldn't you have a little water? I forgot mine and working under this sun, you know...

What do you mean no? At your service!

The man takes a plastic water bottle out of his backpack. Pancho drinks eagerly.

#### LUIS

Hey, and these magueys, whose are they?

#### PANCHO

Well, nobody knows yet, man.

#### LUIS

In what sense?

#### **PANCHO**

I mean, for now they belong to the landowner, but he put them only for the tequila makers.

#### LUIS

The tequila makers? Here in Oaxaca? **PANCHO** 

Yeah, yeah. You know, in Jalisco nothing grows anymore and they're short on space. It's just that now the owner put them there and the prices dropped, so he's waiting for them to go up again to sell to them.

#### LUIS

Ah... and when will that be?

#### PANCHO

Well, you never know, but that's how he wants to do it. There are still some years until they mature so he has time... But, well. The neighbors didn't get a chance, and now look at their field... they abandoned everything. Look at these weeds, you can hardly see the magueys anymore.

The camera follows the gaze of both men as it moves toward the field. It is filled with tall weeds through which a few agaves can be seen.

# 4. EXT. ROAD FROM EL ARENAL TO TEQUILA - DAY

The scene takes place during the international film festival of Tequila. The curtains open before the audience, revealing a screen where a film is being projected. The brightness of the screen softly illuminates the heads of the viewers, who silently watch it. Then the camera enters the screen and becomes the film, a modern adaptation of Mexican cine de oro, repeating its main conventions.

A man (SANTIAGO, 35) is in a luxury convertible car with a woman (VANESSA, 34). They listen to a ranchera song.

#### **SANTIAGO**

Ayayayay, where are those little eyes that made me sigh?

He strokes Vanessa's face, who smiles shyly. The agave landscape of the Tequila region scrolls past them. They drive fast, until they are stopped by a police patrol. Santiago lowers the window at the officer's indication. He removes his sunglasses.

#### **SANTIAGO**

Good afternoon, my captain. What wind brings you to these hot lands?

#### **OFFICER**

Good afternoon. Routine check, sir. This area has had... unusual movements.

#### SANTIAGO

What a shame. Just today when we only come to admire the blue of the agave and the golden of our history... it's just that the beautiful woman by my side wasn't lucky enough to be born in this land.

#### **OFFICER**

And does the lady confirm this noble purpose? **VANESSA** 

Yes, sir. He promised me the most beautiful sunset in Jalisco.

#### **OFFICER**

Very well, welcome... Sir, you're not carrying weapons or suspicious intentions, are you?

#### SANTIAGO

Officer, the only weapon I carry is this bottle of teguila... and a heart on fire!

#### **OFFICER**

Take care, sir. Nowadays, even the most sincere can get lost in the thorny paths... of love.

#### SANTIAGO

And who doesn't, my captain? But if I get lost... let it be among the agaves that saw me grow.

The officer signals them to go. Santiago starts the engine.

# 5. EXT. AN OBSERVATORY LOOKING AT AN AGAVE AZUL FIELD - DAY

The couple is sitting on the low wall of an observatory overlooking the vast fields of agave azul stretching as far as the eye can see, across valleys and mountains. They drink tequila from small glasses. Santiago stands, speaking with grand heroic gestures, while Vanessa sits, thoughtful. In this rural landscape, there is no one else but them, and almost no cars passing on the large paved roads. The fields are still, no workers walk among them, and a few tractors are stopped in the shade of the few trees.

#### VANESSA

Have you ever thought about who plants all of this? **SANTIAGO** 

Well, my girl... there are people for that. Jimadors. They get paid.

#### VANESSA

And this land, who pays it? Look how tired it is, look how tired this ochre earth is, it remembers everything. And it would only want to bloom like these quiotes that disappeared. Look around, there's not a single one!

#### **SANTIAGO**

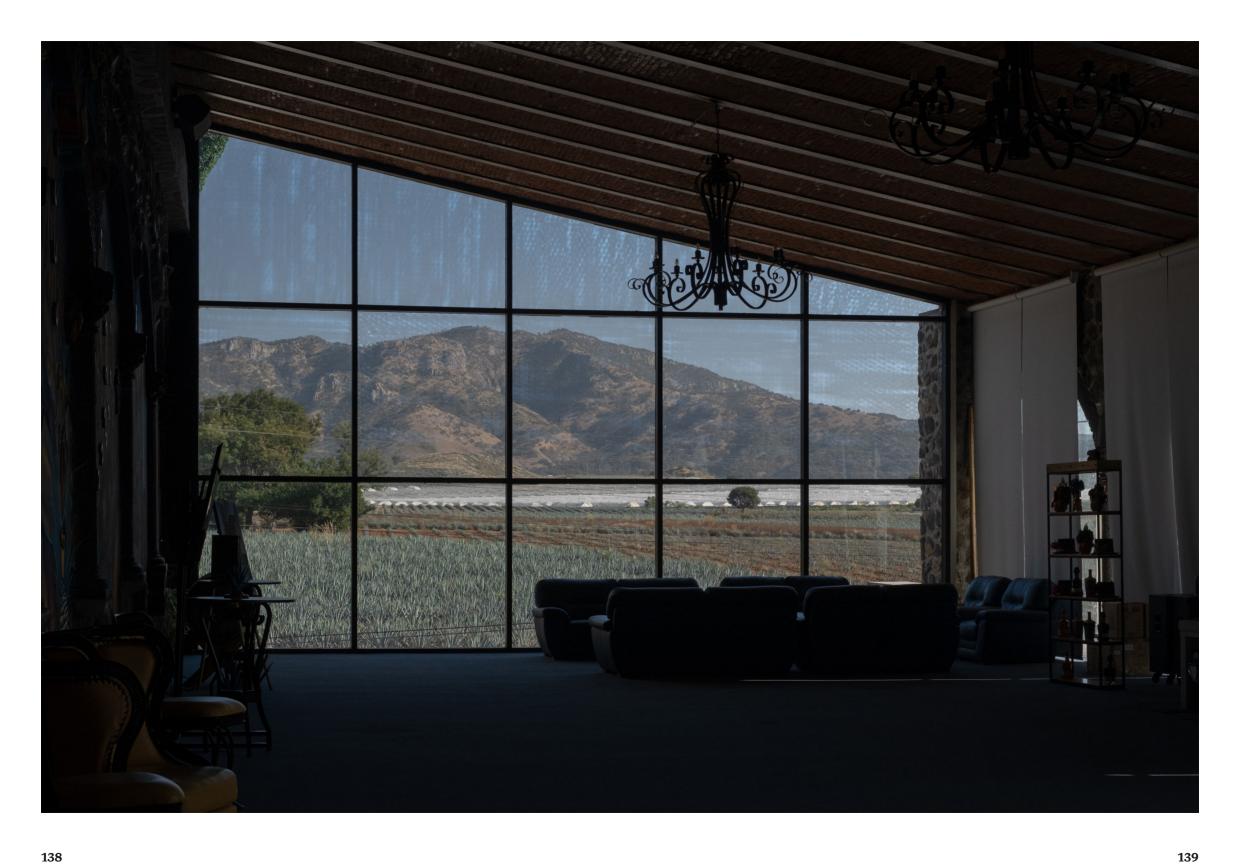
Alright, don't get like that. I brought you to see the beauty of my land, not to mourn it. Here, take this drink, and think about the power carried in the flavor of all this tiredness.

#### **VANESSA**

Santiago, you only taste its flavor... I ask you to listen to the silence of those who made it possible.

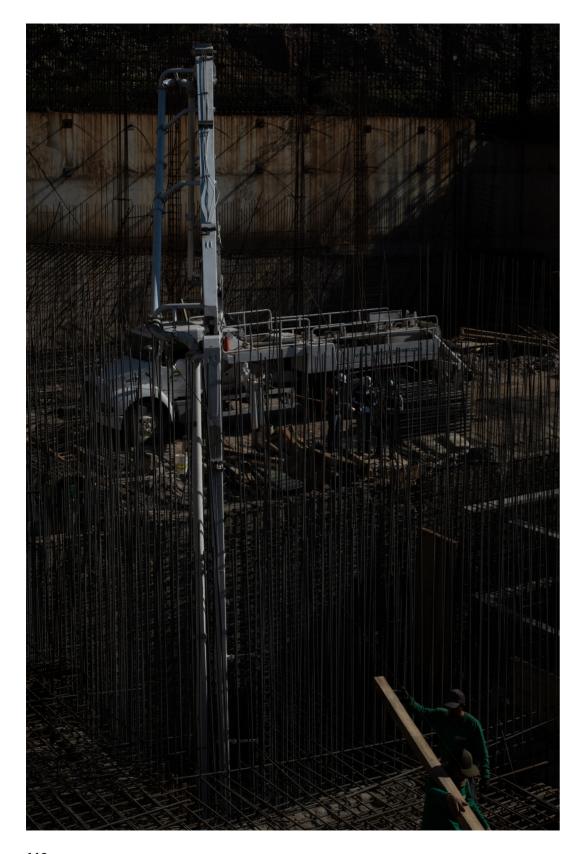
#### A silence.

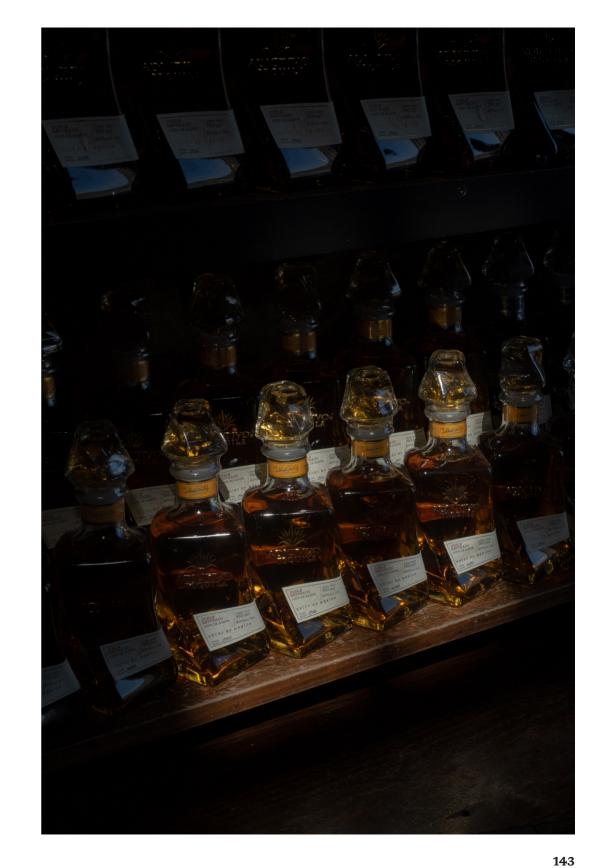
The camera captures the two protagonists. The breeze slightly lifts Vanessa's dress, acting like the voices she refers to. Santiago's puzzled gaze drifts toward the horizon. A brilliant sunset bathes the scene in bright orange.

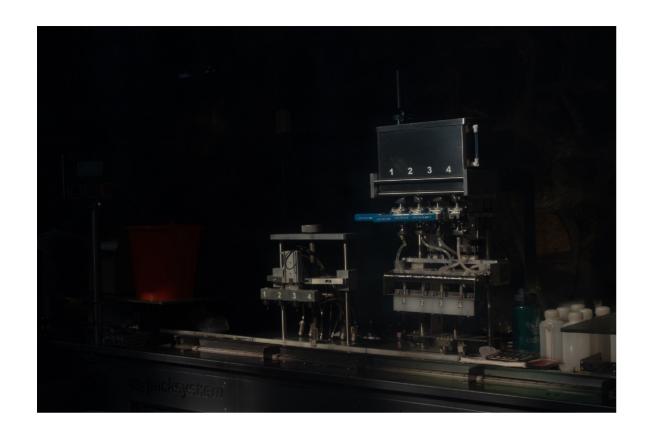


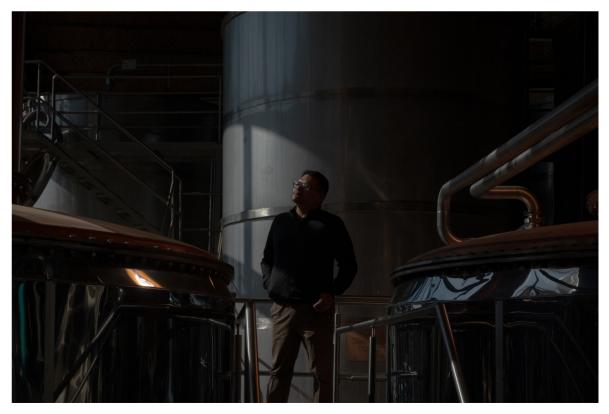














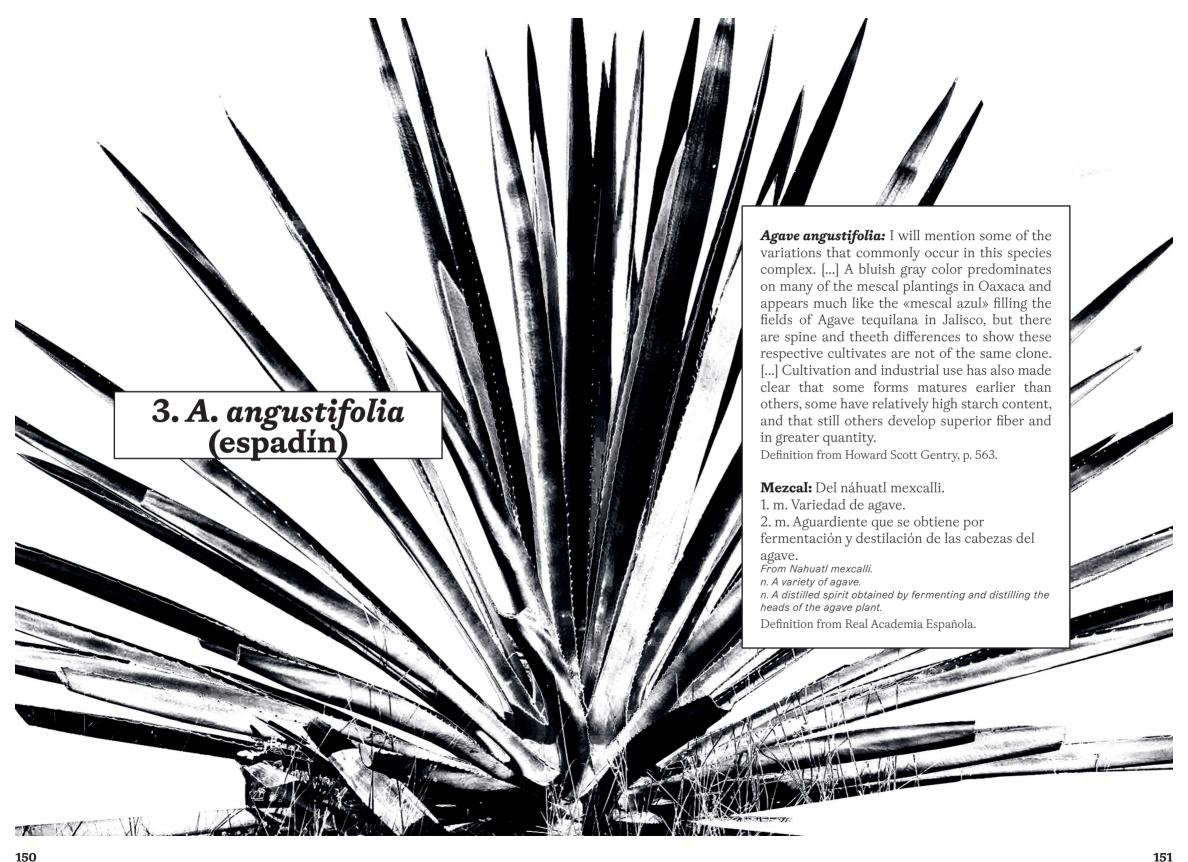






Movies from the Cine de Oro featuring the stars Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante, mariachis and tequila. Top: El enamorado Middle: Dos tipos de cuidado Bottom: ¡Ay, Jalisco no te rajes!





### 1. EXT. RANCHO ON THE COAST OF OAXACA - DAY/NIGHT

In the last rays of sunlight, a woman (MARIA, 38) stands at the back of a white pickup truck. Her hair floats lightly, blown by the wind created by the moving vehicle. She faces away, occasionally turning her head to admire the landscape. She embodies a quiet peace, a sense of freedom. Around her, several mountains offer an idyllic view: bluish agave plants contrast with the bright green jungle vegetation, drawing the eye to a panoramic viewpoint framed by Mediterraneanstyle columns. 1

We see the woman climbing the steps and sitting on the ledge of an observatory. A little behind the lookout, the driver (LEONARDO, 58) gets out of the truck. The sound of the door slamming interrupts the ambient noise: the buzz of insects and voices from the villages below, carried through the humid air . and a radio.

LEONARDO -> hanging on a cell phone.

Rolando está por llegar, se disculpa por su retrazo y dice que espera que disfrutes de la vista.

MARIA (with stars in her eyes)

¡Y como la disfruto! Me podría quedar aquí toda la noche. **LEONARDO** 

;Ah! Mejor que no. Parece todo lindo aquí pero fíjate: hay serpientes y cosas. Mejor que no, te digo yo.

MARIA

Serpientes o políticos... ¿qué elegir? (both laugh)

2. EXT. BY THE POOL - NIGHT

relaxed ambaians. The heat is made visible by the sweat At the edge of a pool stretching toward a landscape where,  $\frac{00.0000}{\sqrt{5}}$ in the darkness, only a few scattered lights are visible.

Maria chats with a man (ROLANDO), in a professional yet relaxed atmosphere, a glass of mezcal in hand:

MARIA

Te fue muy bien el otro día al congreso de Estado, ¿no? ROLANDO

Pues nada mal. Pero estoy feliz de que sea mi último mandado. Tengo ganas de pasar más tiempo aquí, entre los agaves v el mar.

MARIA

Vi antes, están creciendo bien, ¿no?

ROLANDO (enthus ractic and playful. His activate changes while speaking of agance) ¡Viste! Ahora solo faltan algunos años y ya sabremos si

están tan dulces como los tuyos... ¿o tal vez más?

¡Imposible! No digas tonterías, tus magueyes de la costa no pueden ser tan dulces como los miahuatecos.<sup>2</sup>

Veremos, veremos... looking at the Starry landocape

1. The region of the Central Valleys of Oaxaca is now considered one of the most suitable zones for agave cultivation. Until the 1940s, it was covered in agaves pulgueros and produced mainly ixtle and pulque—two industries that collapsed with industrialization. Since the 1980s, its territory has been gradually transformed into a "Mecca of espadín." While the initial aim was to stimulate rural development, the concrete outcomes have more often resulted in ecological degradation without any real improvement in the economic conditions of the pueblos. Wealth has been concentrated in the hands of investors and mezcal brands, while the region still bears the environmental consequences: deforestation, use of chemical inputs, and the replacement of local agave species with espadín monocultures.39 Espadín, adaptable to various climates and soils, is now cultivated well beyond its native zones. This is the case on the hills of this ranch, where no one yet knows how long these two-year-old espadíns will take before beginning to raise their quiotes, as they are the first of their kind planted in this region. It's an experiment initiated by the ranch's owner—a politician and mezcal brand proprietor—who wants to observe not only how the plants respond to a radically different climate but also how the environment affects the flavor notes of the mezcal distilled from their piñas. In the longer term, this experiment could pave the way for plantations on other lands, particularly on coastal ejidos, to allow local communities to benefit from the booming market. Agave, which typically grows in more arid or forested areas, now finds itself in the extremely humid environment of the coast. The result is a hybrid landscape. The way the plants are arranged appears entirely natural and spontaneous. Yet it is, in fact, a radical act of planting—an introduced species taking root in a land not its own. Beyond the agaves disrupting the ecological codes of the selva, the miradores (viewpoints) assert themselves as unusual architectural gestures, reproducing aesthetic standards foreign to the reality of the region and landscape, meant to evoke a kind of introspection, a ceremonial tone. The plantations thus become a stage, a theatrical representation, with the viewer confined in a monad of columns.

2. There exists a certain rivalry among mezcal-producing regions. The notion of terroir, especially reinforced by the denomination of origin (DO), aims to emphasize the uniqueness of each territory-its soil, climate, flora-and their impact on agave growth and the flavor profile of mezcal.<sup>40</sup> This recognition of regional diversity becomes a key factor for consumers who link their taste preferences to specific and varied regions. However, the proposed NOM-199 regulation proposed in 2015 posed a threat to this heterogeneity. It sought to group all agave distillates lacking a DO under the generic label komil, thereby homogenizing their cultural and territorial distinctions. Moreover, it allowed so-called industrial mezcals to be diluted with up to 49% other sugars—something already permitted in tequila production.<sup>41</sup> The proposal sparked massive mobilization. Its main opponents-defenders of artisanal mezcal—relied on the concept of terroir to assert the importance of small producers threatened by such standardization. Under pressure from activist organizations such as the Tequila Interchange Project, Frente Mayahuel, and the Maestros y Maestras del Mezcal movement, the proposal was withdrawn by the government in 2017.42 Still, García Garza critically points out that the very idea of terroir functions as a capitalist strategy that establishes a hierarchy of territorial quality. The way it is used as an economic weapon by both industry and small producers highlights an ambiguity rooted in the fact that terroir is ultimately a social construct. Based on the belief that a product's flavor derives from its land, it excludes other factors that shape mezcal's taste. In fact, there are many influences on flavor nuance—such as regional production techniques or generational and cultural practices. By focusing solely on territory, we risk rendering these human factors invisible, even though they are just as fundamental as the "more-than-human" conditions of terroir.

García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. El Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>40</sup> ibid.

<sup>41</sup> ibid.

<sup>42</sup> ibid.

### 3. EXT. DIRT ROAD ON A CLIFF - DAY

At the beginning of sunset, two men descend from the mountain in a tuktuk. The landscape is semi-desert. The tuktuk moves along a dirt road flanked by agaves, cacti, and mezquite. The older man (LUCANO, 72) has a chihuahua resting on his knees. The two men chat calmly, but their conversation is inaudible. 6 without looking at each other.

The camera frames the front window, dirtied by dust and grime. After a few seconds, the expressions of the passengers change—they (was assumptioned and begin to smile. Severo waves, while the driver (CHILO, 45) brakes and brings the tuktuk to a stop.

The camera returns to a wide shot. We see that the tuktuk could go no further because a large red truck is blocking the road.

Chilo approaches a group of men standing behind the truck. He addresses everyone, but it's a man in a tank top (MANUEL), 28) who answers. His shoulder is bruised purple and bleeding slightly.1

CHILO (gets of the consmiling) + lucano Pollows,

Ove, ¿qué pasa aquí? ¿Se quitan de la carretera o qué?

MANUEL -> holding a compress of water Pues, hay un precio ¿sabes? ¡Dos piñas y te dejamos On hij Showldw. pasar!

Soy de vacancia hoy, pero bueno

The camera turns toward the slope of the mountain. Two men emerge, each carrying large piñas with both hands, resting them on their shoulders. Chilo heads down the slope and disappears into the underbrush. He returns a bit later, now also carrying a piña on his shoulder.

CHILO

Pues sí, están bien listos ¿no? ¿Cuándo horneán? MANUEL

Mañana, pero a ver si se mueven estos chamacos!

The rest of the men-about a dozen-complain and laugh together in an indistinct, cheerful cacophony.

CHILO

Dale dale, me avisas y paso a ayudarles

Oye chicos, ¿me mueven este pa' nuestro compañero?

The truck moves to the edge of the path. The tuktuk drives past, and we see Chilo's hand farewell.

- 1. Artisanal mezcal produced from wild agave varieties involves harvesting under often extremely difficult conditions. These plants are generally not cultivated, although some initiatives now aim to reproduce them in viveros due to the growing risk of their disappearance caused by overexploitation. Since they reproduce primarily through pollination, cutting them before maturity prevents spontaneous regeneration. Their growth can take up to 25 years, making their survival particularly precarious. Some species grow only in steep, semi-desert, rocky areas that are inaccessible to machinery. Workers must then harvest the piñas by hand and carry them over long distances sometimes on their shoulders—despite the fact that they often weigh over 60 kg (130 lbs). Raw agave sap is abrasive, and when combined with the weight of the piñas, frequently causes injuries to those who harvest them. These bodily marks, however, are often normalized—sometimes even implicitly shown as tattoos of virility. What was once an occasional practice, intended to supply mezcal for community needs or special events, is now intensified by market demand. In the Tehuacán-Cuicatlán biosphere region, several communities report the looting of wild agaves on their land up to once or twice a week.<sup>43</sup> The more remote regions are better protected from this kind of criminal activity, but they carry the responsibility of ensuring harvesting practices that allow for plant regeneration—standards that are not always respected.
- 2. In some rural mezcal-producing regions, the community spirit still deeply shapes labor dynamics. Palengues sometimes cooperate with each other in a logic of reciprocity. While economic competition has begun to strain these relationships, mutual aid remains a foundation. Taking part in key stages of production—harvesting piñas, cooking, grinding—is less a matter of monetary exchange than of community service, often rooted in social bonds and mutual obligations among residents. A study by Juan Antonio Bautista indicates that 48.5% of producers in the El Camarón region an area with a strong legacy of agave culture—learned the trade through the direct transmission of knowledge from another producer in the community. In Matatlán, 70% of producers were taught by a family member.44
- 3. The growing demand for mezcal—and therefore for agaves—has transformed the organization of labor. When community-based mutual aid is no longer sufficient, expanding palengues hire day laborers or seasonal workers, reintroducing dynamics of domination and labor exploitation.<sup>45</sup> These workers often come from neighboring areas without agave plantations or from small towns where the economy is not centered around mezcal. They are often young men who take on the most physically demanding jobs in the production chain for wages that are often negligible considering the hard labor involved. However, these jobs can offer opportunities for learning and upward mobility within the mezcal industry. This type of labor marks a rupture from a regime based on community self-management—one now stifled by market pressures.

Lucio López, C. F. (2020). La crisis de las denominaciones de origen en México como figuras de reconocimiento y protección. El desafortunado caso de un mezcal llamado "raicilla". Verdebandera. 44 Bautista, J. A., & A. Smit, M. (2012). Sustentabilidad y agricultura en la "región del mezcal" de Oaxaca. Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Agrícolas, 3(1), 5-20.

<sup>45</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. El Colegio de Michoacán.; Valenzuela-Zapata, A. G., & Sarita Gaytan, M. (2009). La expansión tequilera y las mujeres en la industria: del símbolo al testimonio. Revista Sociedades Rurales, Producción y Medio Ambiente, 9(18), 168-195.

### 4. EXT. PALENQUE - DAY

A group of young people are in an animated discussion around a table. The afternoon light hits them under the portico of a patio. They pour mezcal into vasos veladoras and raise their glasses:

TABLE 1 - a group of young persons

Salud!

TABLE 2 - a group of older persons.

Salud! [laughter]

A boy (BRUNO, 16) and a girl (ITZA, 16), who were earlier at the first table, are now sitting on a small folding bed made of woven fibers and wood.<sup>2</sup> Around them are visible elements of a palenque: barrels, pitchforks, and plastic jugs. They laugh intimately, but their words are inaudible. In the distance, someone calls out.

A mixed group leaves the tables, walking down a dirt path toward a rural landscape. The teenage couple follows, holding hands. Someone carries a speaker, playing Vicente Fernández:

«;Ay Martín! No cabe duda que también de dolor se canta, cuando llorar no se puede...»

The camera focuses on the face of a young man (CHIKIS, 30), who imitates the singer's mariachi-style $^3$  lament.

### CHIKIS

Ayyyyayayayayyyyy! [laughter]

Behind him, the rest of the group laughs. Some join in the song. Their steps are slightly wobbly, loosened by alcohol. The camera maintains this frontal view until they merge into a line between rows in an agave field. The camera films the horizon and the sunset backlighting the agave plants, whose sharp silhouettes are outlined against the light. The group's voices and laughter continue in the background.

¡Aquí! Aquí está perfecto!

ITZA a shouldy so the movement recalls

the digginary of their

Sí sí, aquí está bien, que se encienden!

The camera pulls back to include the whole group in the frame. They hold *cohetes* (fireworks) in their hands. One of them moves from person to person, lighting each *cohete* in turn. The fireworks hiss, spark, and explode into bursts of light and smoke. Amid the laughter, the voice of an older man (MELITON, 70) rises up.

¡Para nuestros muertos!5

MELITON > everyone risks
Hacir glows

1. Mezcal is often served in *vasos veladoras* (candle glasses). These small glasses were originally intended to hold votive wax in church altars. This aesthetic detail of mezcal consumption reflects a religious syncretism rooted in both ritual gestures and the recent cultural trends surrounding the spirit.<sup>46</sup> Produced and consumed mainly in rural regions of Mexico, mezcal is associated with a spirituality that blends popular Catholicism with Indigenous cosmovisions. It is both a sacred and profane beverage, present in celebrations, rites of passage, and offerings to the dead. The origin of this custom is uncertain, as other schools of thought consider the *jicara*—a vessel made from the dried fruit of the jicaro tree—to be the traditional container for drinking mezcal. Several mezcal brands have published articles on their websites and blogs about how and in what kind of glasses mezcal should be drunk.

2. The distillation of mezcal using traditional stills is a lengthy process that can last through the night. It is common for maestros mezcaleros to sleep near the tinaja or condenser. They sleep in short intervals, waking regularly to switch collection vessels or monitor temperature. Sometimes, they take turns with a companion. The mild climate of southern Mexico often allows for sleeping under the stars, on a small fiber bed or a *petate*.

3. Vicente Fernández, an emblematic figure of mariachi, is the voice of borrachera culture and rural passions. His song La Ley del Monte conveys the codes of honor in rural life, embedding the agave plant within a romantic narrative in which the protagonist carves his lover's name into a maguey leaf. This act stands as proof of love before the "law of the mountain". When that love ends, the woman cuts off the leaf—but the maguey sprouts new leaves already engraved with their names, for the plant "speaks." Fernández thus casts the agave as a living witness to rural life, a permanent, timeless presence that absorbs, stores, and reveals. Although Vicente Fernández is more strongly associated with tequila—being from Jalisco—the ranchera influence extends across Mexico's rural imaginary. His stage presence, with a bottle of tequila and a pistol, underscores a performative masculinity typical of the mariachi genre.<sup>47</sup>

4. The proximity of agave fields to traditional palenques reflects a territorial logic in which raw material and production are inseparable. Before the mezcal boom, it was unthinkable for small producers to own a palenque without having agave nearby. This reality is now shifting with modern infrastructure and industrialization. Still, the spatial and symbolic connection between field and distillery remains strong—both in the rural day-to-day and in the tourist imaginary, where site visits often combine both spaces. This continuity reinforces the idea of a living and ritualized agavero territory.

5. Mezcal plays a central role in life's major events in rural regions—from births to funerals. Used as a remedy for teething pain in infants or to relieve physical and emotional ailments, it acts as a daily elixir. Its connection to life is also inscribed in the biology of the agave plant, which blooms only once, generally after 7 to 25 years, and dies shortly thereafter. This cycle closely mirrors the human condition. «Chaque gorgée de mezcal traduit les forces naturelles censées garantir la régénération de la vie sur terre. La consommation de mezcal symbolise l'énergie nécessaire pour préserver la continuité de la vie au-delà de la mort. Ceux qui savent d'où vient le mezcal sont conscients que chaque goutte symbolise cette énergie vitale. 48 This is why mezcal holds a central place in Día de Muertos celebrations, appearing both on altars as offerings to ancestors and in the hands of the living as they celebrate—served in the same vasos veladoras.

<sup>46</sup> Amor, L. (2020, December 5), ¿Por qué el mezcal se toma en vasos de veladora? El diario.

<sup>47</sup> Sarita Gaytan, M., & Valenzuela-Zapata, A. G. (2012). Más allá del mito: mujeres, tequila y nación. *Mexican Studies*, *28*(1), 183-208.

<sup>48</sup> Garcia, D. (2018). *Le mezcal: enfant terrible du Mexique*. Presses universitaires François Rabelais. P.158-159

<sup>&</sup>quot;Each sip of mezcal expresses the natural forces believed to ensure life's regeneration on Earth. The consumption of mezcal symbolizes the energy needed to sustain life beyond death. Those who know where mezcal comes from understand that every drop embodies that vital force."

<sup>49</sup> Maldonado Alvarado, B. (2010). Comunidad, comunalidad y colonialismo en Oaxaca, México: la nueva educación comunitaria y su contexto. Universiteit Leiden.

2. spiny architectures trilogy of plantations - espadín

## Translation screenplays

# 1. EXT. RANCHO ON THE COAST OF OAXACA - DAY/NIGHT

In the last rays of sunlight, a woman (MARIA, 38) stands at the back of a white pickup truck. Her hair floats lightly, blown by the wind created by the moving vehicle. She faces away, occasionally turning her head to admire the landscape. She embodies a quiet peace, a sense of freedom. Around her, several mountains offer an idyllic view: bluish agave plants contrast with the bright green jungle vegetation, drawing the eye to a panoramic viewpoint framed by Mediterranean-style columns.

We see the woman climbing the steps and sitting on the ledge of an observatory. A little behind the lookout, the driver (LEONARDO, 58) gets out of the truck. The sound of the door slamming interrupts the ambient noise: the buzz of insects and voices from the villages below, carried through the humid air

### **LEONARDO**

Rolando is about to arrive, he apologizes for his delay and says he hopes you enjoy the view.

MARIA

And how I enjoy it! I could stay here all night. **LEONARDO** 

Ah! Better not. Everything seems nice here but look: there are snakes and stuff. Better not, I'm telling you.

### MARIA

Snakes or politicians... what to choose?

### 2. EXT. BY THE POOL - NIGHT

At the edge of a pool stretching toward a landscape where, in the darkness, only a few scattered lights are visible. Maria chats with a man (ROLANDO, 52), in a professional yet relaxed atmosphere, a glass of mezcal in hand:

### MARIA

You did really well the other day at the State Congress, right?

### **ROLANDO**

Not bad. But I'm happy it's my last term. I want to spend more time here, among the agaves and the sea.

### MARIA

I saw earlier, they're growing well, aren't they?

You saw! Now just a few years and we'll know if they're as sweet as yours... or maybe sweeter?

Impossible! Don't say nonsense, your coastal agaves can't be as sweet as the Miahuateco ones. **ROLANDO** 

We'll see, we'll see...

### 3. EXT. DIRT ROAD ON A CLIFF - DAY

At the beginning of sunset, two men descend from the mountain in a tuktuk. The landscape is semi-desert. The tuktuk moves along a dirt road flanked by agaves, cacti, and mesquite. The older man (SEVERO, 78) has a chihuahua resting on his knees. The two men chat calmly, but their conversation is inaudible.

The camera frames the front window, dirtied by dust and grime. After a few seconds, the expressions of the passengers change—they're surprised and begin to smile. Severo waves, while the driver (CHILO, 48) brakes and brings the tuktuk to a stop.

The camera returns to a wide shot. We see that the tuktuk could go no further because a large red truck is blocking the road.

Chilo approaches a group of men standing behind the truck. He addresses everyone, but it's a man in a tank top (MANUEL, 28) who answers. His shoulder is bruised purple and bleeding slightly.

### CHILO

Hey, what's going on here? Are you going to move off the road or what?

### MANUEL

Well, there's a price, you know? Two little agaves and we'll let you pass! [laughter]

### CHILO

I'm off duty today, but alright.

The camera turns toward the slope of the mountain. Two men emerge, each carrying large piñas with both hands, resting them on their shoulders. Chilo heads down the slope and disappears into the underbrush. He returns a bit later, now also carrying a piña on his shoulder.

### CHILO

Well yes, you're pretty ready, huh? When do you bake?

### MANUEL

Tomorrow, but let's see if these kids move!

The rest of the men—about a dozen—complain and laugh together in an indistinct, cheerful cacophony.

### CHILO

Alright, alright, let me know and I'll come help.

Hey guys, can you move this truck for our friend?

The truck moves to the edge of the path. The tuktuk drives past, and we see Chilo's hand farewell.

### 4. EXT. PALENQUE - DAY

A group of young people are in an animated discussion around a table. The afternoon light hits them under the portico of a patio. They pour mezcal into veladora glasses and raise their glasses:

### TABLE 1

Cheers!

### TABLE 2

Cheers! [laughter]

A boy (BRUNO, 16) and a girl (ITZA, 16), who were earlier at the first table, are now sitting on a small folding bed made of woven fibers and wood. Around them are visible elements of a palenque: barrels, pitchforks, and plastic jugs. They laugh intimately, but their words are inaudible. In the distance, someone calls out.

A mixed group leaves the tables, walking down a dirt path toward a rural landscape. The teenage couple follows, holding hands. Someone carries a speaker, playing Vicente Fernández:

"Oh Martín! There's no doubt that we also sing through pain, when crying is impossible..."

The camera focuses on the face of a young man (CHIKIS, 30), who imitates the singer's mariachistyle lament.

### CHIKI

Ayyyyayayayayyyyy! [laughter]

Behind him, the rest of the group laughs. Some join in the song. Their steps are slightly wobbly, loosened by alcohol. The camera maintains this frontal view until they merge into a line between rows in an agave field.

The camera films the horizon and the sunset backlighting the agave plants, whose sharp silhouettes are outlined against the light. The group's voices and laughter continue in the background.

### **ITZA**

Here! Here is perfect!

### CHIKI

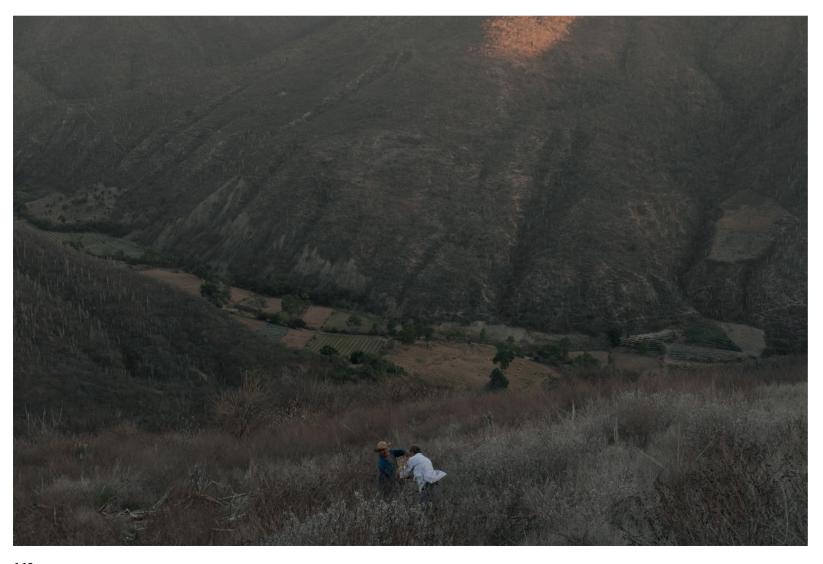
Yes yes, here is good, light them up!

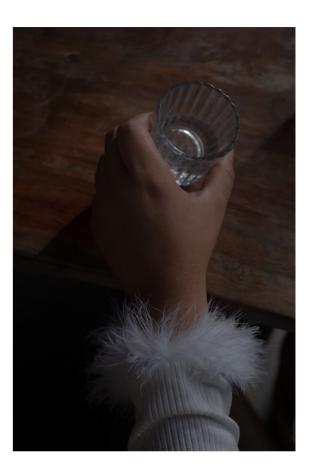
The camera pulls back to include the whole group in the frame. They hold cohetes (fireworks) in their hands. One of them moves from person to person, lighting each cohete in turn. The fireworks hiss, spark, and explode into bursts of light and smoke. Amid the laughter, the voice of an older man (MELITON, 70) rises up.

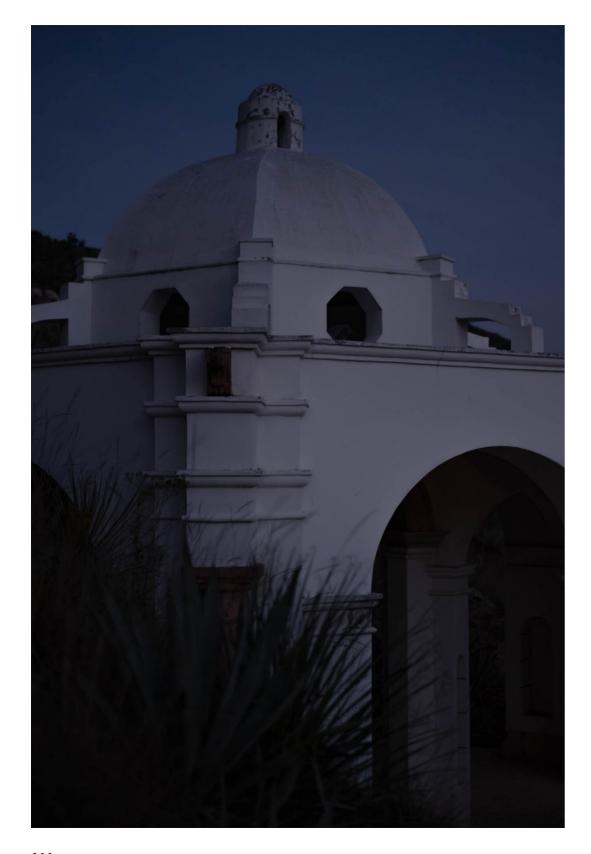
### **MELITON**

To our dead ones!







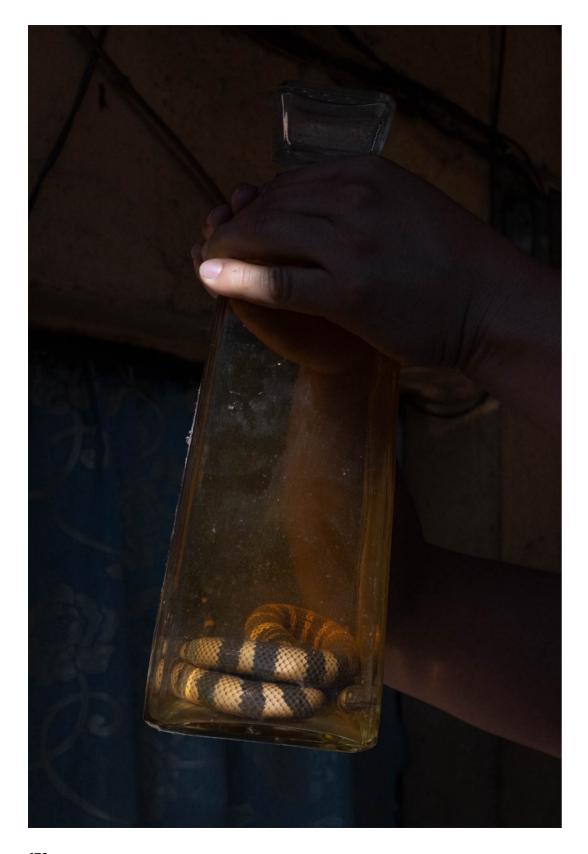


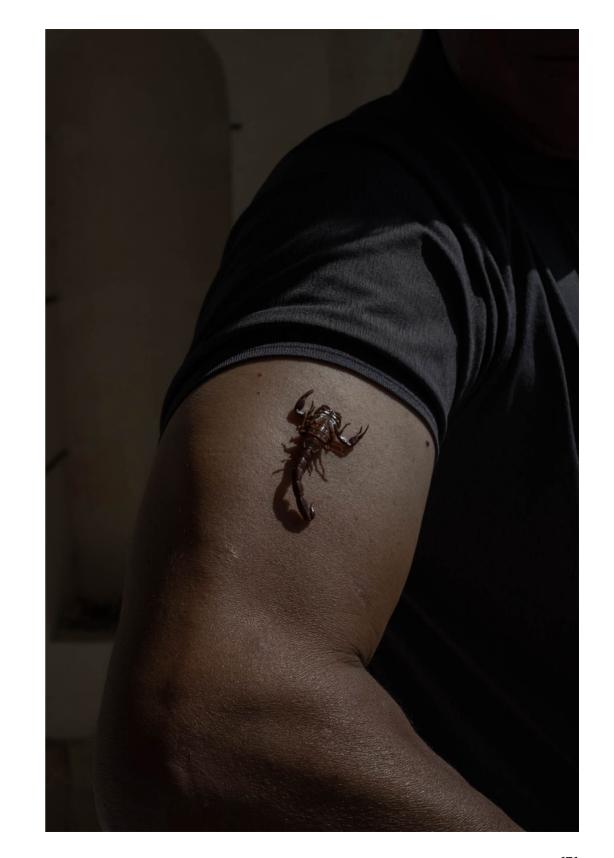






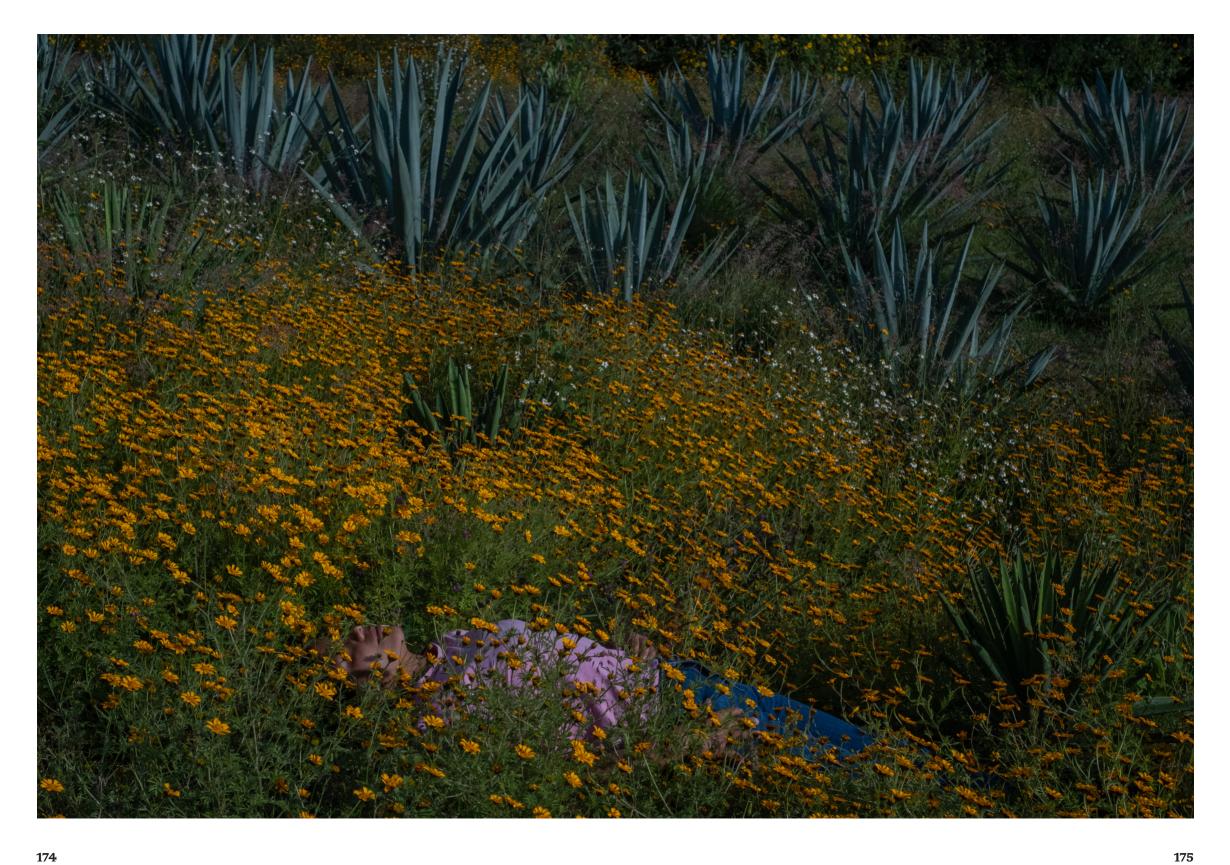












2. spiny architectures trilogy of plantations







# Nanacamilpa, Tlaxcala A. salmiana

**Tequila, Jalisco**A. tequilana

**Santiago Matatlan, Oaxaca** A. angustifolia

2. spiny architectures trilogy of plantations

### **Plantation map**

Shaped by dominant narratives, the cartographic representation of agave in Mexico is closely tied to its productive uses—particularly the manufacture of alcoholic beverages such as mezcal and tequila. The most widely circulated maps do not show the plant in its full diversity, nor in the multiplicity of its life forms: they reduce it to raw material for distillation. The most frequently cited reference map today, produced by CONABIO¹, for example, was created in the context of the recent mezcal boom and highlights only a handful of specific species directly tied to its production. Other territories—rich in wild agaves or home to ancient vernacular knowledge, such as Baja California or the Sonoran Desert—appear as blank spaces.² These absences are not neutral: they reflect a logic in which agave only exists where it functions as a profitable resource.

Acting as a provocation to this phenomenon, the proposed map does not seek to fill in those blanks but to expose their underlying mechanisms. It engages with the dominant representational logic in order to underscore its limits and subvert its assumptions. It does not claim to offer a complete image of agave in Mexico, nor to represent its biodiversity or diffuse presence across the land. On the contrary, it exaggerates the most recurrent bias in existing maps: it only shows the plantations. By introducing the trilogy of *pulque*, *tequila*, and *mezcal*, it sketches a geography of agave plantations that resists conventional segmentations of time and space. In this sense, it enters into dialogue with the timescapes as conceived by María Puig de la Bellacasa, offering an overview of agave plantations interacting affectively with each other and with the viewer-within a dissolution of their temporalities and landscapes. "If we want to think the possibility of a diversity of practices and ontologies, the progressive, productionist, anticipatory temporal regime, although dominant, cannot be the only one, nor is it exempt from coexisting with other timescapes, as well as it comports tensions within a variety of timescales that comake and might contest each other." By inscribing agave plantations in Mexico within a shared history-where colonial, industrial, and vernacular regimes are interdependent—the map does not merely reveal layers of a fixed past. It activates plural temporal scenarios in which colonial

extraction, agro-industrial exploitation, and vernacular practices of cultivation and transformation coexist. Time becomes at once frozen, regressive, propelled, and repeated. In this sense, the map renders visible a conflictual temporal landscape, where the slow growth of the agave—sometimes over several decades—comes into tension with the accelerated circuits of global commodification. Daily actions, discreet agricultural gestures, and the artisanal transformation of pulque or mezcal become ways of making time otherwise—outside logics of productivity or innovation. Within a counter-cartographic framework, this map is not a cartography of agave, but rather an avowed narrative of the places where it is cultivated, extracted, transformed, and commercialized.

It is in this back-and-forth communication between image and text, between map and narrative, that a plural reading of agave takes shape: not as an isolated plant, but as a living web of temporal and affective relations. The texts enrich the map by projecting lived durations, subtle gestures, and forms of resistance, while the map, through its formal stance, creates the conditions for a displaced gaze on the spatio-temporal arrangement of the plantation. Together, they contribute to a speculative counter-cartography in which time, territory, and affect are no longer disentangled.

En esos llanos tristes en que falta el agua, y que sólo lo fertilizan las lluvias, crecen asombrosamente los agaves, y sólo se descubren las extensas magueyeras y uno que otro sembradío. (Luis Velasco, escritor, 1890) La región del maguey, destituida de arboledas, es una tierra delgada, pedregosa y árida en muchos lugares, presentando en lo general un aspecto de monotonía que desconsuela, pues nada hay tan triste como una hacienda de pulque... (Manuel Payno, escritor y periodista, 1864) Este paisaje forma parte de la Ruta del Tequila, una de las mejores rutas turísticas de México, comprende 34 658 hectáreas, de los municipios de Arenal, Amatitán, Tequila, Magdalena y Teuchitlán, está situado entre el volcán de Tequila y el profundo valle del Río Grande. (Consejo regulador de Tequila, 2024)

Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad, of the

Hodgson, W. C., Rosenthal, E. J., & Salywon, A. M. (2023). Pre-contact agave domesticates - living legacy plants in Arizona's landscape. *Annals of Botany*, 1(19), 1-17

The table presented in the research by Hodgson, Rosenthal and Salywon on the pre-hispanic domestication of maguey indicates the wide variety of endemic agaves in the Sonora desert and in Baja California, two regions where almost no icon of agave appear on the map of CONABIO. While it is coherent with the purpose of the mapping which aims to show the regions of mezcal, it creates a confusion of representation, as it is probably the most scene map of agaves right now.

<sup>3</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. University of Minnesota Press. p. 175-176



El [maguey] es un árbol que en la Nueva España estiman mucho los indios, y de ordinario tienen en su habitación alguno o algunos de este género para ayuda a su vida; y en los campos se da y le cultivan. (Jose de Acosta, misionero evangelista, 1590) Mayahuel es la montaña, la serpiente y las frutas, la madre del agave y la diosa del mezcal. La unión entre el hombre, el cielo y la tierra. (Mezcal Unión, 2022) En tiempos de globalización y bonanza comercial, los actuales mezcales son más parecidos a las hortalizas que a las plantas semidesérticas [...] La clonación, la reproducción en invernadero y vivero, la fertirrigación y otro tipo de tecnologias también se aplican de una manera sin precedentes. (José de Jesús Hernández López, antropologa 2015)

# 3. Mezcal beyond the myth the pueblo mezcalero

This part looks specifically at a spatiality of the mezcal, observing it under a baroque and neobaroque lens to recognize the spaces coming from baroque capitalism and the baroque ethos of the pueblo. Following the construction of the Myth of Mezcal becomes a strategy to further look at its spaces of consumption and production from a more critical point of view, unfolding the layers of their baroqueness. The aim is to switch from a perspective looking at mezcal as a commodity to one that re-centers it among the subject of the pueblo, where mezcal is produced, consumed, and lived.



# The myth of mezcal

"Una macchina mitologica trasmette e amplifica la forza mitopoietica: la incorpora per riprodurla, per rigenerare mitologie, racconti, narrazioni, figurazioni artistiche, plastiche, simboliche, fantastiche."

Guido Boffi<sup>1</sup>

This section explores how the dominant baroque narrative of mezcal is fueled by a "mythological machine". The creation of spaces where the ritual sphere of the Myth of Mezcal can occur allows the possibility of sensorial and participative experiences that arise a sense of consciousness among the consumers. Through the rising interest in mezcal enhanced by tourism, the Myth of Mezcal becomes fueled by another one: the myth of development. In this progressist idea of development, the figure of the pueblo, within its rural margins, becomes as valorized as objectified.

Through the baroque qualities observed in the structure and layout of its plantations, it becomes possible to recognize how the dominant narrative of mezcal permeates the social fabric and popular beliefs via its spatialization—in the form of planning, design, and architecture. If mezcal has been able to construct such a powerful baroque sphere, if the narrative and its spatial expressions have fed off one another so aggressively, it is because both have managed to communicate through a discourse whose effectiveness transcends purely economic or practical motives—which, in the fragile and resistant context of Oaxaca, could have otherwise been contested and dismantled. Drawing from Domingo García Garza's reflections on the creation of traditional mezcal, as well as the notion of development conceptualized in The Development Dictionary, edited by Wolfgang Sachs, it is proposed that the force so vigorously sustaining and feeding the reciprocity between mezcal's narrative and its spatial manifestations corresponds to a process of mythification. In Furio Jesi's vocabulary, this process operates as a "mythological machine".2 Within the narrative, mezcal is born from a myth that elevates it spiritually above other spirits sharing its market, such as whisky and eau-de-vie. As previously conceptualized, this same narrative then designs spaces that feed this myth through strategies advocating for an aesthetic, sensorial, and emotional experience. The consumption of mezcal is mythified through a positivist discourse in which the producing communities become the object of a project. Through the commodification of mezcal, they are looked at from a privileged and interested gaze, one that reproduces colonial and extractivist dynamics concealed beneath the mythification of paternalist development perspectives.

Myth is an inaccessible entity. Since it is impossible to determine whether it truly exists or not, it remains abstract. According to Furio Jesi, what sustains the power of myth is therefore not the myth itself, but the "mythological machine" that unfolds around it, generating narratives, figures, symbols, and fantasies.3 Mythology is, in itself, a form of storytelling that helps explain the world and everything within it. In native and traditional societies, it replaces a linear religious or scientific historical consciousness of creation by explaining cosmology and metaphysical relationships through heroic figures and events.<sup>4</sup> In its self-enclosure and its instrumentalization of ritual, myth becomes a significant element of the baroque ethos. Through the strength of its mythological machine, it tends to create a dimension that revolves around its center, supporting insular social attitudes-if not ideologies. From this perspective, the Myth of Mezcal becomes a pretext to feed the mythological machine, the engine of the dominant narrative. In this sense, the narrative of mezcal can be understood as a product of mythopoietic force.

### **Concept: Mezcal is traditional and authentic**

In La Revolución Mezcalera, García Garza explores the mythification of mezcal through what he calls the "discurso de los 400 conejos" (discourse of the 400 rabbits). He highlights the process of the maguey's «rehabilitación" (rehabilitation), which helped elevate mezcal to the status of a "tradicional y autentico" (traditional and authentic) beverage by appropriating the pre-Hispanic deity associated with pulque, Centzon Totochtin, or the 400 rabbits. As García Garza defines it, this new construction of maguey by the market is a "poderosa herramienta retórica y narrativa". This narrative draws on the mythology of pre-Columbian civilizations, Indigenous spirituality, and the ethnic identity of producers in a process of mythification aimed at satisfying the fantasies of consumers—in other words, rendering these entities "slaves" to Western "dreams and experiences", to borrow the words of Wolfgang Sachs.

According to writer and journalist José Luis Trueba Lara, because the Mexican nation is influenced by both Mesoamerican myths and the baroque aestheticization of Catholicism during colonial times, it is built on a continual mythification of its own formation process. Criticizing Mexicans' general lack of awareness regarding

<sup>1</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). *La revolución mezcalera*. Colegio de Michoacán.; Sachs, W. (Ed.). (2010). *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>2</sup> Boffi, G. (2015). Derive e macchinazioni mitologiche. Omaggio a Furio Jesi. *Itinera*, (99), 95-114. p.109

<sup>3</sup> ibic

<sup>4</sup> Eliade, M. (1954). Cosmos and History. The Myth of Eternal Return. Harper & Brothers Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>6</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). *La revolución mezcalera*. Colegio de Michoacán. p.66 *"a powerful rhetoric and narrative instrument"* 

<sup>7</sup> Trueba Lara, J. L. (2024). *Mitos mexicanos: Ocho historias que no te contaron en la escuela y nos inventaron como nación*. Penguin Random House.

the historical facts behind the various myths shaping their collective imagination, Trueba Lara examines how these myths contribute to the masking of sensitive realities. This phenomenon aligns with the narrative function of myth-its ability to integrate historical traumas in a softened, diluted manner while allowing for broader interpretation.8 However, as Trueba Lara suggests, in modern society, myth can easily be reduced to an instrument that enables certain forms of power to be absorbed and accepted without opposition, or it can contribute to the dispersion of memory, drifting between reality and invention. This potential danger of mythological thinking reflects Jesi's ideas about the risks of ideological constructions around myths, which can "hypnotize" and have a "fascinatory strength" that can alter the critico-intellectual reflexions of someone under its spell.9 Myth can indeed be created with intentional purposes—for instance, by structures such as religion and politics, and in the case of mezcal, by the economy and the market. In his hommage to Furio Jesi, Guido Boffi indeed writes: "vi sono usi intenzionali dei miti che invece, dichiarandosi veraci senza esser veri, devono semplicemente ben funzionare in vista di interessi e scopi determinati."10

Following Trueba Lara's ideas about the construction of myth, the one of mezcal does not only resonate in international consumers or naif tourists; it also becomes part of the narratives that define the nation. The imaginary it produces is no longer solely built to satisfy a foreign fantasy, but is also internalized within the national collective imaginary, where myth and reality grow increasingly blurred. García Garza also points out how this new narrative allows the negative effects of mezcal production to be concealed. This again suggests the baroque nature of such commercial endeavors, whose silent repercussions include a lack of clarity around national issues—precisely the kind of obscuring Trueba Lara criticizes.

### Design: Strategic publicity and mezcal tourism

Because of the ambiguous existence of the myth, what makes it insert the collective imaginary is rather its mythological machine. In Western societies, myth has generally dissolved in daily representations, handed over to the fervent search for rational truth promoted by capitalist modernity. Roland Barthes' Mythologies analyzes a series of everyday micro-myths in 1950s French society, highlighting how they contribute to the "naturalization of history". He argues that myth survives through distraction and entertainment, via

8 Cho, G. (n.d.). La transformación poética de la violencia estatal. En torno a Cien años de soledad y Actos humanos. *Palabra Clave*, 26(3).

culture and everyday objects that mythologize progressive modernity by making it appear natural, thus rendering dominant ideologies invisible. For example, a Paris Match cover showing a Black soldier saluting the French flag offers a mythologized and idealized image of colonizer-colonized relations. The replacement of wooden toys with synthetic materials resembling household objects subtly prepares children for integration into a productive model by training them for roles prescribed by modern society.<sup>12</sup>

Today, as the alienating effects of modernity become increasingly apparent—through technological dependence and a pathological acceleration of time—societal myths tend to turn toward spaces where this modern reality is momentarily suspended or challenged. The "green" myth has populated the collective imagination with an ecological awareness opposed to destructive industrial practices—until the word itself was banned from advertising due to its loss of meaning. Travel has taken on a mythical dimension in a work-centered society, becoming a symbolic escape from capitalist obligations. This tendency in Western society to seek refuge from daily life strengthens the appeal of imagined, ephemeral rituals that, once ordinary life resumes, accumulate a nostalgic and emotive value.

It is within this societal desire to escape capitalist modernity that mezcal so seamlessly enters the Western market: it appears as a pause from modern life and an opportunity to wander freely through a spatio-temporal universe where modernity seems to fade. It is intuitive now to see these dynamics as the results of a baroque attitude, but the materials that compound the universe of the narrative could more likely be seen as products of the mythological machine. In this sense, the way we must explore the mythification of mezcal here is through the *«analisi della interna e autonoma circolazione linguistica che rende mitologici quei materiali»*. This circulation in the digital era could be translated as social media, and these materials as publicity.

While the society described by Barthes was just beginning to be affected by billboards, today's world is constantly bombarded with images. Advertising and digital marketing spaces are endless, often disguised as informative podcasts, emotionally resonant blogs, or dreamlike photos sold at the cost of a single Instagram post. These are the very channels through which the myth of mezcal spreads. Many mezcal communities are formed online, within a design framework

<sup>9</sup> Boffi, G. (2015). Derive e macchinazioni mitologiche. Omaggio a Furio Jesi. *Itinera*, (99), 95-114.

<sup>10</sup> ibid. P.107

<sup>&</sup>quot;there are intentional uses of myths which, while claiming to be truthful without being true, must simply function well in view of specific interests and objectives."

11 Barthes, R. (1974). Miti d'oggi. Einaudi.

<sup>12</sup> ibid.

<sup>13</sup> On alienation: Guy Debord, La société du spectacle; Karl Marx, Le capital; Christoph Türcke, La società eccitata. On acceleration: Hartmut Rosa, Accélération: une critique sociale du temps, Zygmunt Bauman, Modernidad líquida. On the green myth: Vandana Shiva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development. Arturo Escobar, Design for the pluriverse. On nostalgic turn: Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.

<sup>14</sup> Parlement européen. (2024). Écoblanchiment : comment l'UE réglemente les allégations écologiques. Parlement européen.

<sup>15</sup> Jesi, F. (2013). Quando Kerényi mi distrasse da Jung. In *II tempo della festa* (pp 224-231). nottetempo. p.225-226

<sup>&</sup>quot;analysis of the internal and autonomous linguistic circulation that renders those materials mythological"

that easily reaches a global scale. Through images of bottles bearing labels that suggest tradition and authenticity, and through tasting videos, indirect advertising cultivates global interest in mezcal and fuels the desire to travel to Oaxaca to experience it firsthand. As Garcia Garza even suggests, »las nuevas tradiciones nacionales en la era del capitalismo digital, en este caso la mezcalera, se forjan simultáneamente en varios países debido al uso de las redes sociales y del idioma inglés». <sup>16</sup>

Because of this simultaneity, the dominant narrative of mezcal today is actually largely shaped by Western criteria arising from a globalized economy. It responds to a growing interest in what is sustainable, ecological and healthy, aligning with ethical standards promoted by climate awareness campaigns and the feelings of guilt experienced by a privileged clientele aware of global injustices. In this way, mythology becomes the most effective vehicle for penetrating Western markets. At this point, narrative and architecture dialogue directly in creating spaces that allow the materialization of the myth into rite, offering a ceremonial space rooted in ancestral values, embraced by a Western society that seeks to flee from itself.

### Architecture: spaces of consumption and production

These spaces will be analyzed independently in the next two sections of this chapter so as not to disrupt the flow of the mythological machine. However, it is important to clarify that the ensuing conditions of experience and meaning both arise from and are deeply embedded within the existence of these architectures.

### **Experience: Emotive rituals and «consciousness»**

The mythological machine creates a space of mythification, a bubble of existence orbiting at a constant distance around the myth, made tangible through the rites and ceremonies that celebrate it. The sacred dimension of the myth is then re-enacted through ritual, which allows for the continual recentering and repetition of a significant cosmogonic event in a performance where the ritual space suspends everyday time to reconnect with mythical temporality. In this sense, rite is an instrument of mythology, a key of access to the reproduction of the myth, embodied by its adepts during festivities or ceremonies. Through the use and staging of symbolic objects, humans can elevate themselves as subjects and attain a fully conscious experience of life, beyond the norms of daily existence. In Greek mythology, however, it is the transition from subject to object that characterizes divine trance. By positioning oneself as an observer of things, the individual attains the status of spectator, a position reserved for the gods. In

this perspective, the ceremony requires spectators, which justifies its strong collective value.<sup>17</sup>

Echeverría notes that the baroque aestheticization during the colonial era stemmed from a desire to renew the religious experience and attain the fullness allowed by ritual ceremony. 18 Since capitalist contradiction requires a separation between the productive time of exchange value and the unproductive time of use value, an inconceivable split emerges in everyday life—one that the baroque society attempts to overcome through an excessive aestheticization of life, blurring the boundaries between reality and illusion, and elevating the baroque subject to the status of observer. Mythology and its ceremonial acts were already deeply present outside the European continent and form the basis of spirituality among the native populations of Latin America. The rituals of Mesoamerican societies encompass both the collective and the private/domestic spheres, enabling the acceptance of life and death, as evidenced by the Monte Albán figurines from Oaxaca, which still adorn Day of the Dead altars in Mexico today.<sup>19</sup>

The myth of mezcal is made possible, in part, through the participation of both national and foreign visitors in its production process at traditional palenques, small artisanal distilleries. Arcelia Toledo López's study on consumer habits highlights that the inclusion of mezcal experiences—organized tours where the process is explained—represents a new commercial innovation. These experiences spark curiosity, understanding, and a sense of participation, all of which deeply influence consumer emotions and purchasing decisions. This sales strategy, built on sensory experience, starts with the design of tourism in Oaxaca and the creation of spaces adapted to maintain the Myth of Mezcal. The emotional bond forged by visitors with a bottle purchased in situ helps fuel the growing appeal of mezcal tourism.

If the narrative surrounding mezcal plays such a key role in its marketing, it is in fact because consumer choice is driven by hedonic and emotional values that must be stimulated—this is the logic of marketing. In the case of mezcal, these values are especially shaped by an awareness of the conditions of the communities that produce it. Mezcal consumers are often described and defined as being socially and environmentally conscious, attentive to the socio-cultural and ecological issues underlying the product. While factors related to taste and the gustatory experience still largely guide consumer choices, many acknowledge that their main hedonistic motivations for purchasing mezcal include the benefits it brings to small producers, the

<sup>16</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán. p.36 "the new national traditions in the era of digital capitalism—in this case, the mezcal tradition—are forged simultaneously in multiple countries thanks to the use of social networks and the English language."

<sup>17</sup> Kerényi, K. (1999). La Religion Antigua. Herder.

<sup>18</sup> Echeverría, B. (2000). La modernidad de lo barroco. Ediciones Era.

<sup>19</sup> Winter, M. (2002). Monte Albán: Mortuary Practices as Domestic Ritual and Their Relation to Community Religion. In P. S. Plunket (Ed.), *Domestic Ritual in Ancient Mesoamerica*. Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California.
20 Toledo-Lopez, A. (2024). Valores Hedónicos-Emocionales y el Comportamiento de Compra: desde la percepción del consumidor de mezcal. In *Aspectos socioeconómicos del Agave-Mezcal* (pp. 220-244). Universidad Tecnocientífica del Pacífico S.C.

development of Indigenous and local communities, the preservation of ancestral tradition, and its contribution to the economy.<sup>21</sup>

# Meaning: The Myth of Development (or al perro más flaco se le van las pulgas)<sup>22</sup>

The perspective of mezcal as a potential engine of socioeconomic development for marginalized producing communities shapes both public debate and academic literature on the subject. As Gustavo Esteva cautions in his seminal essay The Development Dictionary, the term development is rarely questioned today, having been accepted as an unquestionable good ever since President Truman introduced it into political discourse in 1949.<sup>23</sup> "We must embark [President Truman said] on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism - exploitation for foreign profit - has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing."24 Development, often interchanged with growth and progress, is in this way generally assumed to be both an opportunity and a benefit for rural communities. Yet, for Esteva, development which by definition implies the existence of underdevelopment—is "a concept [that] does not allude to real phenomena."25 Used in many different sectors to refer to many different dynamics, it lost its meaning over the centuries. It has become a Western construction grounded in the hegemonic value of a linear model where the world is seen through a single, homogenizing lens, and all other forms of existence are deemed inadequate or outdated. In other words, "development [is] a conservative, if not reactionary, myth".26

Originally centered in its homonymous city, the tourism of Oaxaca moved toward the regions of Huautla de Jimenez for psychedelic experiences, extending to Santiago Matatlán and San Pablo Villa de Mitla as early as the 1970s, in line with hippie ideals. It is now known to be a "hipster" destination that can guarantee a personalized service for visitors wanting to have a more intimate

21 Toledo-Lopez, A. (2024). Valores Hedónicos-Emocionales y el Comportamiento de Compra: desde la percepción del consumidor de mezcal. In *Aspectos socioeconómicos del Agave-Mezcal* (pp. 220-244). Universidad Tecnocientífica del Pacífico S.C

experience with local culture.<sup>27</sup> Promoted through the so-called mezcal route, mezcal tourism now reaches ever-deeper into producer regions. Even remote communities now host groups of visitors in their palenques, often gaining significant income in return, reinforcing the myth of tourism as a tool for development.

While this narrative centers the figure of the maestro and the pueblo mezcalero, a literature review on mezcal by Mauricio Alzate Gómez and Humberto Thomé-Ortiz reveals how these actors are often excluded from meaningful representation: "Although in some texts the subject is identified as a peasant or an indigenous, this does not go beyond a condition that he takes for granted, that is, as a criterion of identification of his belonging to the rural territory [...]".28 This reflects how the promotion of Indigenous tourism tends to portray rural and native communities as folkloric objects, compelling them to stage themselves in a spectacularized manner to "agradar el ingenuo turista". <sup>29</sup> Zapotec intellectual, essayist and playwright Javier Castellanos Martínez critiques this form of tourism, which is driven by selfish external motivations justified in moral claims to "help" the Other.<sup>30</sup> In her analysis of how spontaneous, selfless help has morphed into a hypocritical, calculated modern event, Marianne Gronemeyer indeed critiques that "the idea of help, now, is charged with the aura of justification".31 While mezcal tourism and marketing narratives eagerly promote Indigenous tourism and its development potential as forms of support, Castellanos Martínez, from the perspective of the pueblos originarios (native people and their descendants), asserts that "[e]] turismo, como la prostitución, la venta de drogas, las funerarias. la política, son actividades aunque necesarias poco edificantes, lograr erradicarlas sería un gran logro para la humanidad". 32 Since the impacts of this type of tourism primarily affect Indigenous populations—"al perro más flaco se le van las pulgas"—he calls for a more serious and profound reflection on what tourism truly brings to these communities.<sup>33</sup>

The reflections of Castellanos Martinez trace the arrival of tourism to the Indigenous pueblos of Oaxaca. While not focused specifically on mezcal, his approach sheds light on the discursive

<sup>22</sup> Expression taken from: Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). *Imaginando el destino*. Pluralia.

<sup>23</sup> Esteva, G. (2010). Development. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary:* A Guide to Knowledge as Power. Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>24</sup> Truman, H.S. (1967), Inaugural Address, 20 January 1949, in *Documents on American Foreign Relations*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.7

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.21

<sup>27</sup> Interview con Eduardo Rojas Zavaleta, ex-deputy of the Partido Revolucionario of La Costa, Oaxaca. November 14th 2024. The interview was conducted few days after the end of the Congreso de Oaxaca, where Rojas Zavaleta presented the new law of tourism of Oaxaca. This congress marked the end of his term as a deputy of La Costa.

<sup>28</sup> Alzate Gómez, M., & Thomé-Ortiz, H. (2024). What happened to the subjects? Questions about mezcal. *Economia agro-alimentare*, *26*(1), 11-35.

<sup>29</sup> Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). *Imaginando el destino*. Pluralia. p.217 *"please the naïve tourist"* 

<sup>30</sup> Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). Imaginando el destino. Pluralia.

<sup>31</sup> Gronemeyer, M. (2010). Helping. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary:* A Guide to Knowledge as Power. Bloomsbury Academic. p.56

<sup>32</sup> Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). *Imaginando el destino*. Pluralia. p.220 "[t]ourism, like prostitution, drug trafficking, funeral services, and politics, are necessary yet unedifying activities—eliminating them would be a great achievement for humanity."

<sup>33</sup> Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). *Imaginando el destino*. Pluralia. P.220 *"the skinniest dog gets all the fleas"* 

mechanisms that support its commodification and elevate it into a myth. This critique invites us to rethink the relationship that mezcal's baroque narrative establishes with local communities. Castellanos Martínez questions the tensions between the claimed authenticity of intercultural encounters and the economic logic that underpins them. He illuminates the risk of identity performativity, in which staged cultural expressions for tourist consumption become internalized by the communities themselves.<sup>34</sup> This dynamic of engaño (illusion) takes on particular intensity in the case of mezcal. The spirit becomes a privileged vehicle for regional identity narratives, built through discursive frameworks that blend vernacular knowledge, Indigenous spirituality, and artisanal practices. Although rooted in local traditions, the mythologization of mezcal also contributes to the market-driven objectification of rural communities, under the guise of an ethical discourse of sustainability, recognition of the Other, and the preservation of ancestral knowledge.

By mythologizing mezcal as a driver of rural socio-economic growth, its dominant narrative also reinforces the broader myth of development, a notion that is outdated and colonial in nature. The consumer's desire to "help" the producing regions through their purchases reflects an empathy that is rooted in a moral and economic relationship structured by a sensation of superiority. Even if this intention promotes a positive image of a community by celebrating one of its cultural products, it simultaneously reinforces, hypocritically, a sense of that community's "undignified condition," by constantly and implicitly alluding to its supposed underdevelopment.

### **Beyond the Myth**

The mythification of mezcal has made it exceedingly difficult to conceive of it beyond its market boundaries, as the majority of literature on the subject aims to highlight its potential for development—touristic, economic, and social. While this focus is understandable given the challenges faced by the communities involved, integrating mezcal into a brutal capitalist system necessarily contributes to an oppression of its most vulnerable spheres. These development prospects, already problematic in their terminology, soon become illusory. Truman's vision of development has today evolved into the idea of sustainable development, reinforced by the Brundtland Commission and the United Nations' goals. However, social and ecological values are promoted within the same framework that defines the progress of so-called underdeveloped countries based on what separates them from those with the best indicators, in a

constant cycle of comparison, competition, and superiority judgments rooted in Eurocentric criteria. It is this Western idea of ecology and human development that underpins the market narrative of mezcal, whose mythologization has created opaque, baroque boundaries.

Esteva concludes his essay on development by honoring the efforts of the commons—social organizations based on non-economic, community-driven principles—that have redefined their needs and, in doing so, their position within the only form of existence offered by capitalism.<sup>37</sup> This alternative lifestyle, nearly revolutionary in Europe, could learn much from the communal system of the pueblos of Oaxaca, where mezcal is predominantly produced. Rather than conforming to the market conception of mezcal, the next chapters of this section analyze its invisibilized spaces, hidden in its baroque folds, attempting to bring forward the producing communities and the variety of subjects within them. By first acknowledging the mythification process of mezcal, it becomes more intuitive to dismantle the constructed ideas and, as suggested by Castellanos Martínez, to engage in a deeper and more serious exploration of the profound human and more-than-human relationships involved in the production of mezcal.

By focusing on the rural condition of the mezcal, the next two sections of this part will conduct the analysis of the spaces of consumption and production that arise from and apart the dominant narrative. Through the drawings of spaces of consumption, the creation of a gradient will allow the baroque spaces of mezcal to flow from their international reproduction inserted into baroque capitalism logics, to the marginal spaces of their own baroque frontiers. This proximity with the rural reality will allow to introducet the palenque as a specific spatiality among the baroque ethos of the pueblo, in an attempt to expand its layers of production spaces using the fragmentation concept coming from a latin neobaroque perspective. Fragments are chosen as entities following the methodological narraton tool to combat a singular narrative through plural ones. They allow to unfold the hidden spaces of the mezcal universe that have been buried by the baroque narrative. This exercise also provides a suggestive imaginary vision that amplifies the potential meanings of what has been constrained by uniformity. Finally, through the spaces of consumption, we will see how the baroque spaces of mezcal transcend both territorial and conceptual boundaries, reproducing themselves internationally and at the margin of their own baroque frontiers.

<sup>34</sup> Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). Imaginando el destino. Pluralia.

<sup>35</sup> Esteva, G. (2010). Development. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>36</sup> Sachs, W. (Ed.). (2010). *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>37</sup> Esteva, G. (2010). Development. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary.* A Guide to Knowledge as Power. Bloomsbury Academic.

# **Mezcal spaces**

This part looks specifically at a spatiality and an architecture of the mezcal looking at it under a baroque and neobaroque lens. Following the construction of the Myth of Mezcal becomes a strategy to further look at its spaces of consumption and production from a more critical point of view, unfolding the layers of their baroqueness. The foal is to switch from a perspective looking at mezcal as a commodity to one that re-centers it among the subject of the pueblo, where mezcal is produced, consumed and lived.

It is important to underscore that the structure of this section is intentionally fluid, shaped by the logic of the mythological machine to trace and isolate the spaces of both consumption and production. While it may initially seem counterintuitive to begin with the consumption spaces rather than production—given the chronological linearity of the productive chain—this reversal is deliberate. It stems from a desire to re-center mezcal within the pueblo, beginning from its most unrooted and deterritorialized spaces and gradually moving toward those most embedded within rural life. This conceptual inversion allows us to expose the extent to which mezcal is displaced and reassembled through the dominant narrative. In this sense, the mythological machine offers an entry point by revealing how the dominant narrative emerges from, and in turn nourishes, specific architectural forms tied to mezcal. These architectures are analyzed through two distinct lenses: consumption spaces are explored through descriptive drawings and field notes; production spaces, by contrast, are approached through a more literary and poetic methodology, reflecting the fragmented and elusive nature of the palenque.

The intention is to stage a gradient of consumption spaces, beginning with the international mezcalería-arguably the most disconnected from the relational context of the pueblo-and progressing toward more intimate and situated spaces of consumption, such as the maestro mezcalero's home. At this threshold, it becomes almost intuitive to introduce the palengue as the fundamental architecture of mezcal-an architectural form that embodies the baroque ways of being-in-relation that persist within the pueblo. The palenque is a significant point of tension, as it is both an architecture coming from a rural aesthetic of being, and a constructed product of the baroque capitalist narrative. While their aesthetics, modes of construction and materials differ, they all hold the same four different and radical spaces, belonging to the four different production steps. These spaces will be fragmented into minor subjects to conduct a wider analysis of mezcal's implications in the pueblo. While the gradient of consumption spaces remains deliberately suggestive—rejecting rigid categories in favor of nuanced spatial interpretation—the analysis of production spaces returns to a more theoretical register. It seeks to articulate the palenque not merely as a fixed site of labor, but as a



I met Cain at a mezcal festival in CDMX. We were heading to a restaurant to eat together, among a small group of mezcal enthusiasts, people who had known each other for a long time or only a short while, and strangers like me. Cain and his girlfriend Mabi suddenly and naturally became figures of trust for me. I had spoken to him earlier, when he was presenting his mezcal behind one of the many stands that were set up. He served it in a penca, like a funnel, which made him very popular. We talked about Dia de Muertos, and I told him that I would have liked to discover its more intimate context, far from the tourist parades and the frenzy of the city. He told me that at his home, in Miahuatlán, the festivities were very special, and that I was welcome there.

This spontaneous invitation turned into five days of initiation into the Miateca traditions, during which Cain and his whole family welcomed me as one of their own, not only among their living but also among their dead. I followed him on errands to prepare the altar and the tamales. With Dylan and Itza, I made the flower bouquets that he hung on the arch. He took me to sing serenades until dawn and play Scrabble in the family of his friends. We sang in a duet, "ay Martin, no cabe duda que también de dolor se muere, cuando cantar no se puede." We palenqueed, set off so many cohetes, "the ones that make noise" for him, and "the ones that make smoke" for me, we drank mezcal, obviously carefully chosen from his precious collection of bottles. I made tamales with his mother, his sisters, and his aunt, and I placed a photo of my mother on their family altar.

With them, I felt her arrive and depart with the white smoke of the cohetes in the midday blue sky. These are relationships that form in a raw and vulnerable way. Imprinted with a sense of humanity in its purest form,

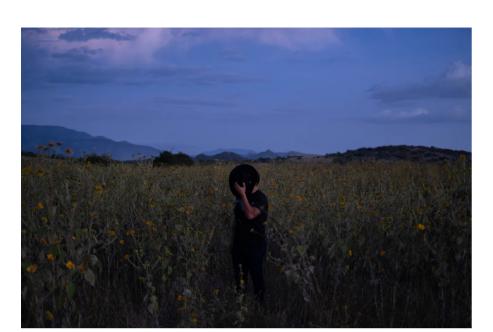
translated by the delicate balance between welcoming and being welcomed. It was magical.

During the weeks in which I was staying in Oaxaca, Cain would drive me to different places to visit mezcaleros and mezcaleras. Thanks to him, I met Lalo Angeles, and Berta Vasquez, two important personalities of the mezcal world, with whom I had the pleasure to share significative and profound conversations around the past, present and future of the mezcal.

Caínis deeplypassionate about the world of mezcal and has a refined understanding of its many complex and delicate dimensions. In the mezcal community, he would be considered a coyote—an intermediary who purchases mezcal from producers and resells it to others. Although this role is often viewed critically due to its potential for unfair practices and underpayment of producers, Caín approaches his position with a strong sense of ethics. He is quietly critical of those who do not compensate producers fairly and strives to maintain respectful and transparent relationships throughout the mezcal supply chain.



<sup>1</sup> In Oaxaca, people refer to the action of spending some friendly time at the palenque as *palenquear*. Which could be translated as *to palenque*.



Cain, gracias por tu tiempo, por toda la gente que me presentaste, y por los chismes que me compartiste. Pues estos chismes me enseñaron un lado del mundo del mezcal que solo tu osaste presentarme, y al hacerlo me hiciste sentir más aceptada y más partícipe de este universo que es maravilloso porque, como nosotros, no es todo perfecto, tiene sus fallas y sus vergüenzas, sus heridas y sus culpas. No podría ser mexicano si fuera despojado de todo su drama, de sus gritos, llantos y risas de mariachis. Te agradezco por tu amistad y tu sinceridad. Eres mi segundo santo del mezcal, ya que sabes que el primer lugar no lo puedo quitar a Orlando. Pero sé que eres bastante humilde para aceptarlo y bastante listo para apreciar al chiste, ya que me enseñaste más tonterías de segundo grado que cualquier otra persona.

Gracias de todo el corazón por cuidar de la güerita que soy.

### mezcal spaces

dynamic node within the pueblo's expansive and affective network of relations. This exploration unfolds through a map of the palenque, which then opens into the sequential steps of production, allowing each gesture to reveal layers of embedded meaning and spatial resonance.

In doing so, this section offers not just a glimpse into the so-called *pueblo mezcalero*, but a critique of that very terminology. It challenges the reduction of the pueblo to a productive label, showing instead how mezcal is entangled in a far more complex web of relations that exceeds the boundaries imposed by the dominant narrative. Through both the operation of the mythological machine and the architectural analysis it enables, this part defends a vision of the pueblo as a living, relational space—one that precedes and exceeds the myth of mezcal itself. It is from this reconfigured lens that the path opens toward the case study that follows in the next part, showcasing the pueblo of Candelaría Yegolé in its modalities of resistance, through sensible mezcal production.

3. mezcal beyond the myth mezcal spaces

# Consumption

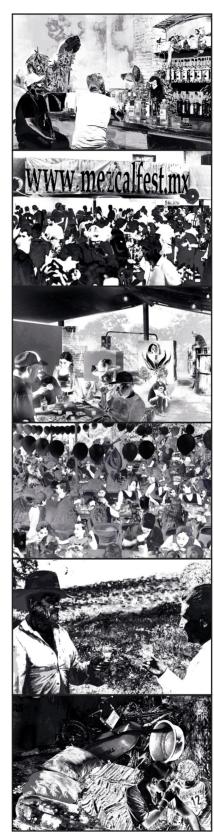
The spaces of consumption of mezcal could be divided in two radical categories: the ones that existed before the actual boom of mezcal, and the ones that are born as a result of its commodification. As the first ones are mainly local and immersed into a campesino way of living, the seconds are expanding nationally and internationally following a particular design inspired by the Myth of Mezcal. However, some spaces of consumption are always more definitely appearing as a hybrid version of these two opposite contexts. Exploring the variety of spaces of consumption rising from the mezcal narrative, this section does not pretend to make a critical lecture of it, but rather to let their different shadings of baroqueness suggestively emerge through drawings and short evocative descriptions.

The spaces of mezcal consumption have expanded in recent years in response to the dominant narrative, giving rise to fully-formed architectures of mezcal built around its mythification. However, those that existed before mezcal became a commodified product continue to persist and are insistently reproduced within the rural areas where it is produced. These architectures, more spontaneous and rooted in daily life, also possess a strong ritual dimension.

This section seeks to analyze the different spaces of mezcal consumption without imposing a strict categorization between those that emerge from pueblo-based consumption and those belonging to an economic regime. It draws on photographs of various consumption sites to highlight their specific characteristics through a process that standardizes color and lighting, in order to foreground the presence of mezcal and the bodies that ritualize it. The aim is to examine how these bodies perform and reproduce within the space, operating around mezcal as a site of shared ritual.

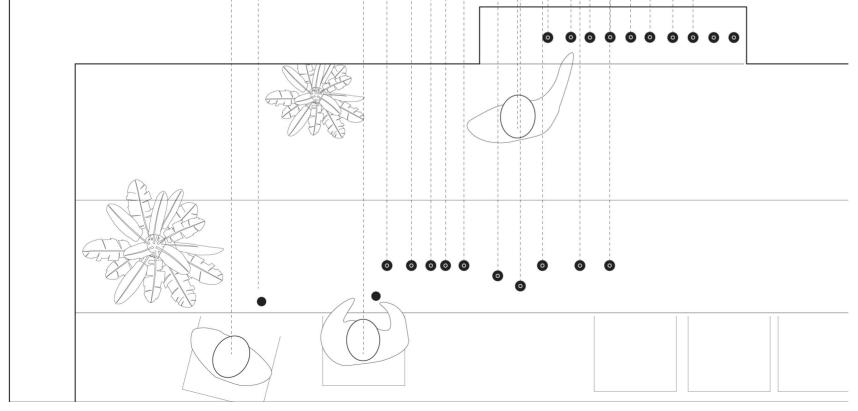
The images are presented in an order that suggests a gradient—from the most commodified spaces to those embedded in pueblo life. Working through gradation rather than fixed categories allows for a consideration of the fluidity between these different spaces and recognizes their overlapping nature: spontaneous and organized, local and global, everyday and exceptional. Over the images, drawings of the plans of these sites are layered in a diagrammatic logic, reconstructing the scenes in order to conceive the architectural schema of the ritual within each space of consumption. Brief descriptions of spatial elements provide further insight into their significance.

The result is a series of drawings from which the spatial specificities emerge—those that position mezcal as a mythified object and evoke the baroque nature, whether capitalist or rural, of the spaces surrounding it. The gradient, moving from the space most shaped by narrative to the one it tends to invisibilize or idealize, gradually draws closer to the pueblo as the central subject of a mezcal spatiality—ultimately introducing the palenque, its production site rooted in rural reality.





Mezcalería Hembra, Ciudad de Oaxaca



### The mezcalería

In recent years, mezcal has become the protagonist of a growing number of festivals, both within Mexico and abroad. Cities and pueblos across the country now host their own catas (tasting events), and in Mexico City alone, dozens occur annually, each blending celebration with commercial strategy. Internationally, mezcal has gained a foothold in cosmopolitan markets: for instance, a recent gathering in Rome brought together mezcaleros from Mexico to present their products to European bar owners, distributors, and curious connoisseurs. These events are not merely marketplaces—they are spatialized performances. The act of tasting mezcal is itself a ritual. However, it unfolds within spaces intentionally shaped by commerce.

Architecturally, the typical layout of a mezcal festival reveals the entanglement between experience and exchange. Long tables create bilateral zones: on one side, the brand representatives present the product; on the other, visitors engage in guided tastings. Movement through these spaces is fluid and informal. Attendees drift from table to table, cupping small portions of mezcal, engaging in conversation. Each interaction holds the potential for transaction—whether an immediate sale or the more abstract economy of réseautage.

This spatial organization reinforces the dual nature of mezcal festivals: they are at once sacred and strategic. The ceremonial gestures of tasting are recontextualized within an arena shaped by capital. As mezcal is increasingly globalized, its ritual dimensions translate into experiences designed for consumption. What is also local and embodied is here performed in curated, commercialized stages—each glass both an offering and a product. In this context, the architecture of the festival becomes a critical site of observation. The design of the events produce a temporary space where sensorial engagement and economic intention overlap.

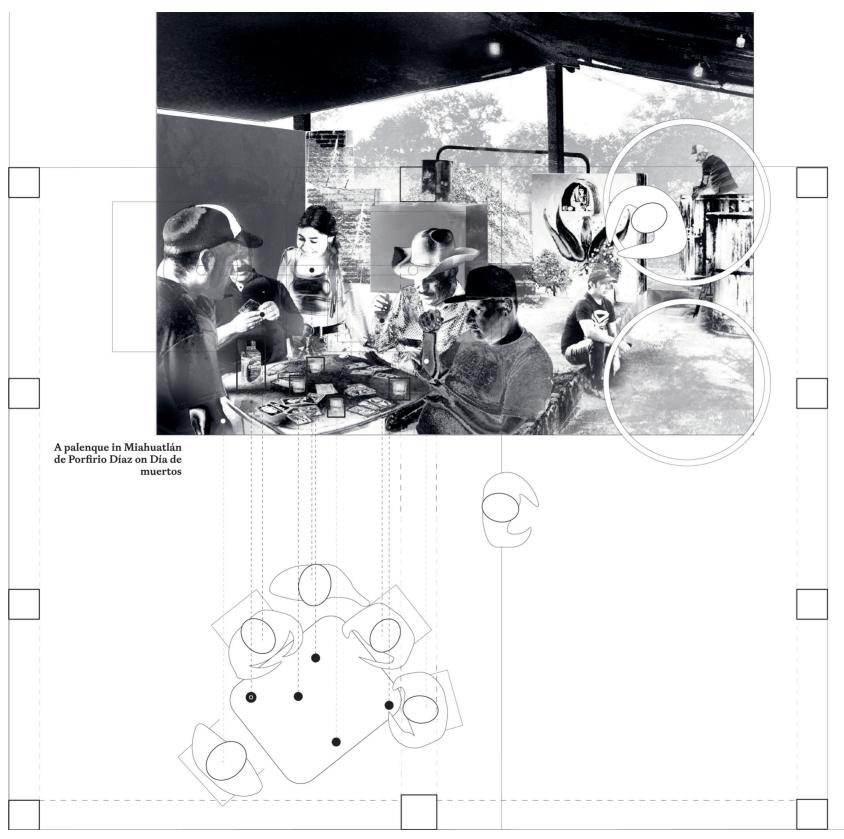


### The festivals

In recent years, mezcal has become the protagonist of a growing number of festivals, both within Mexico and abroad. Cities and pueblos across the country now host their own catas (tasting events), and in Mexico Cityalone, dozens occur annually, each blending celebration with commercial strategy. Internationally, mezcal has gained a foothold in cosmopolitan markets: for instance, a recent gathering in Rome brought together mezcaleros from Mexico to present their products to European bar owners, distributors, and curious connoisseurs. These events are not merely marketplaces—they are spatialized performances. The act of tasting mezcal is itself a ritual. However, it unfolds within spaces intentionally shaped by commerce.

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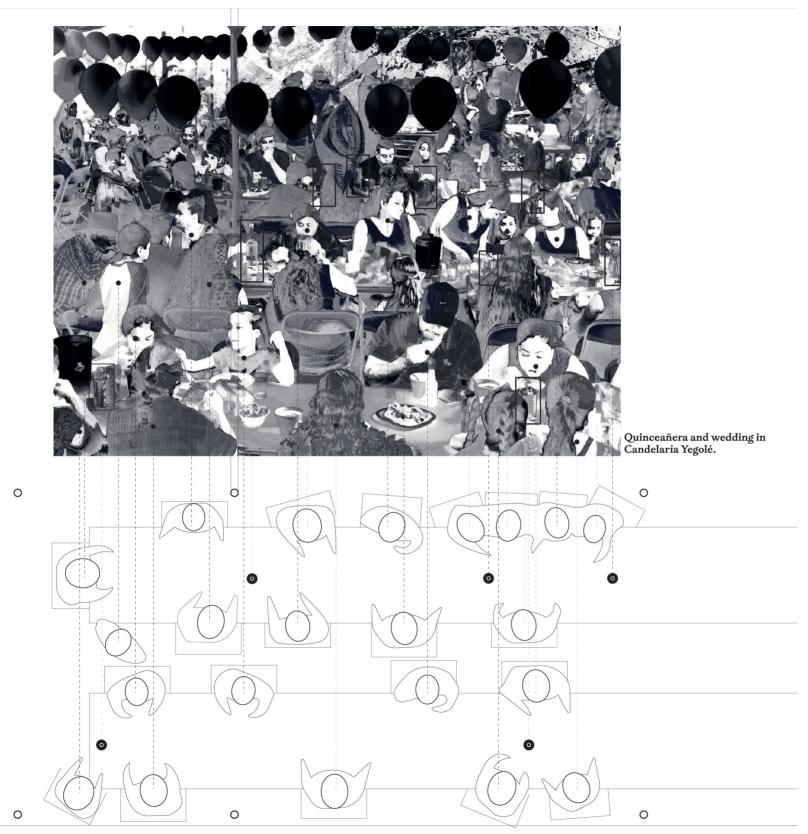
# Palenquear

To palenquear is to gather with friends and fellow mezcal enthusiasts to visit the palenque of a producer who is dear to you, or whose mezcal has sparked your interest. It is a moment for sharing time in good company, and for talking about mezcal or anything else.

It is also an opportunity to take part in a step of the production process, whichever it may be. In this sense, palenquear echoes a form of communal participation. Guests often help out according to their skills and knowledge, assisting the maestro mezcalero or the person in charge of the palengue who has welcomed them. Frequently, a key phase of production becomes the reason for the visit, not only to better understand a particular producer's practice, but also to collaborate in the making of a specific batch. The start of the cooking process or the cutting of the agave piñas is often the perfect time to bring friends together and help with this physically demanding task. Still, the final distillation is just as compelling a reason to make the trip: to taste mezcal freshly drawn from the still, warm and alive with aroma.

Palenquear is a soft and expansive timescape—an elastic experience. It may begin as a casual drink with friends, but often unfolds over an entire day. To palenquear, one first needs a palenque. This anchors the act of drinking in a rural setting. Reaching the palenque often involves a significant journey—one that justifies lingering, stretching time out across conversations and cups of mezcal.

The more palenques one visits, the more their differences become apparent. These visits spontaneously evolve into something like a mezcalero social circle. It forms a living network of relationships where the ritual act is everpresent and rooted in the very architecture of the production, superposing production and consumption.



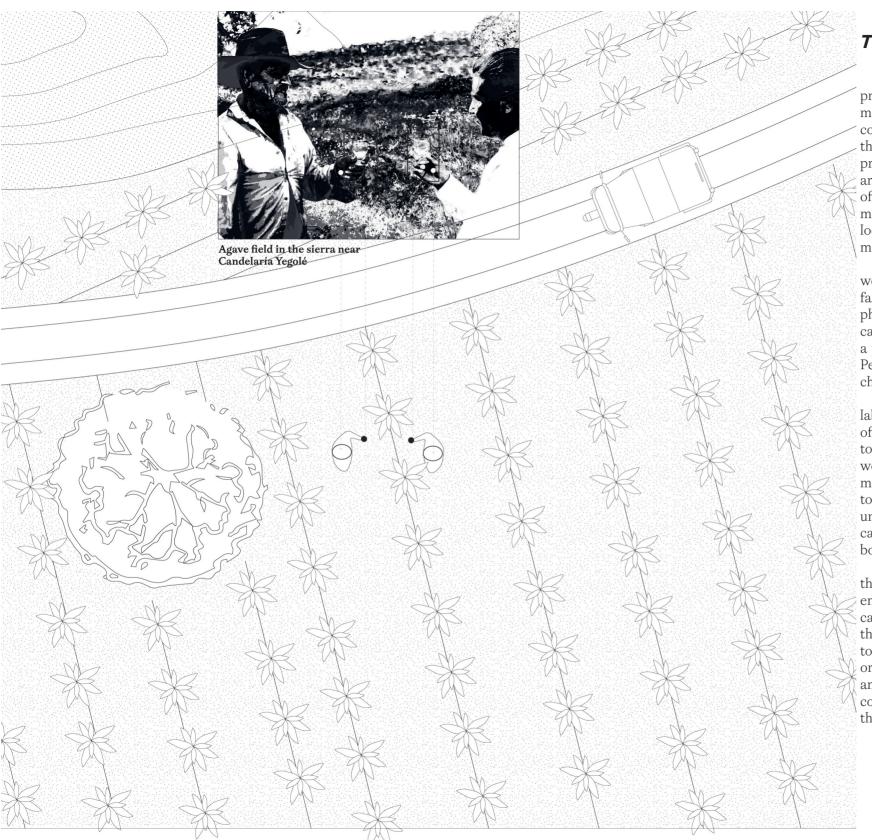
### The fiesta

The architecture of the fiesta feels spontaneous but is carefully orchestrated. A truck arrives carrying a large blue-and-yellow striped chapiteau, a tent reminiscent of a circus, marking the start of an ephemeral architectural performance. Four men, expertly coordinated and guided by the fiesta organizer, begin assembling the structure. Anchoring points include the unfinished second floor of the house, with metal hooks embedded in concrete; the neighboring house's roof; and a large tree clinging to the garden's cliff. Where these supports are absent, slender cylindrical columns quickly rise to bear the fabric's tension.

The same crew delivers and arranges tables and chairs, repeating a choreography of construction. Spatial arrangements follow both function and tradition: generous gaps around tables hold large cauldrons for cooking meat. A long table beneath the cliff becomes a makeshift carnicería, where men sort and hang slabs of meat, preparing for cooking.

As the fiesta unfolds, cauldrons move to the periphery and the chapiteau area transforms into a communal dining hall. Aligned tables gather people who share food and mezcal, served ceremonially from elegant bottles produced by the host. The ritual of sharing it - through a humble "salud" and passing the glass - unites familiar faces and strangers alike.

Beyond dining, mezcal flows continuously. Guests bring their own in varied containers, sharing in a constant ceremony. Some dance with drinks in hand; others place bottles nearby while talking, returning to communal toasts. This act of drinking is as much ritual as festivity, deeply embedded in the fiesta's cyclical nature. Each event repeats the same architectural improvisation and social choreography, sustained by days of relentless preparation and unspoken codes.



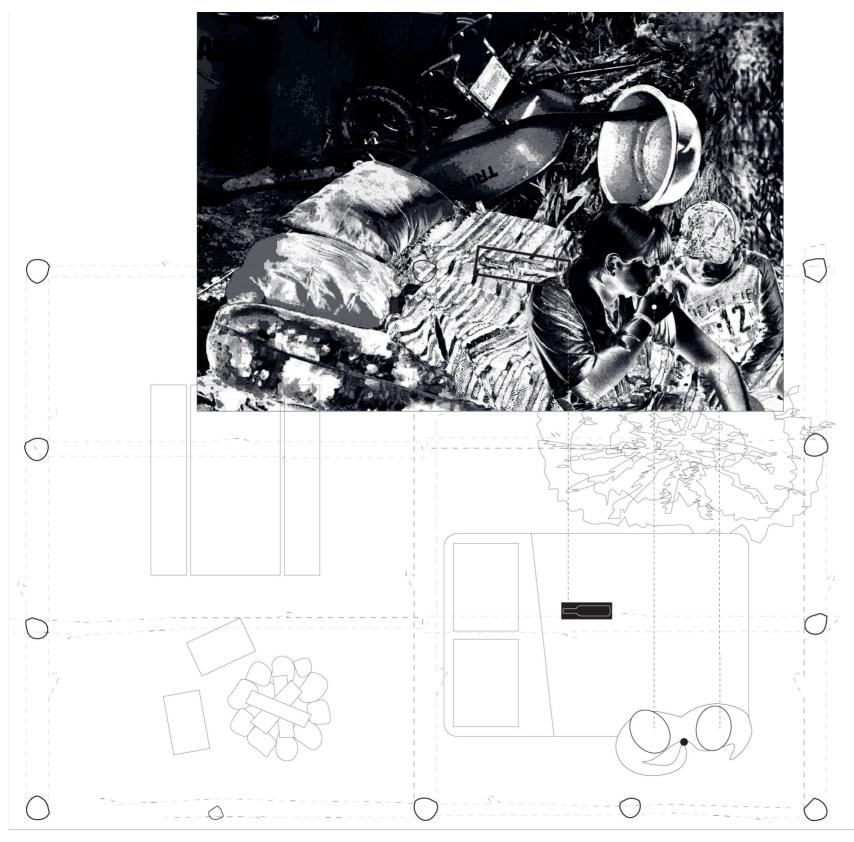
# The campo

In some rural areas where mezcal is produced, agricultural work remains the most meaningful and valued activity within the community. The inhabitants typically cultivate their own crops, such as maize, and some products—like fruit trees in the pueblo of Yegolé—are shared communally. These raw materials, often transformed into by-products (for example, maize into tortillas), also circulate within local monetary exchanges among community members.

Traditionally, it is the men who primarily work the fields, though their wives or other family members occasionally assist. Due to the physically demanding nature of the work, the campo (countryside) evolves into more than just a place of labor—it becomes a vital social space. People gather during breaks or collaborate on challenging tasks that require collective effort.

In these moments of pause and communal labor, mezcal plays a significant social role. It is often brought to the fields as a reason or excuse to share a moment of connection. In Yegolé, some workers even keep a bottle of mezcal in their mototaxi—the most common mode of transport to the remote fields in the sierra. When cups are unavailable, inventive solutions arise: the bottle's cap may be used, or the top of a plastic water bottle is cut off to create a makeshift container.

Mezcal consumption takes place directly in the fields where the agaves are harvested, deeply embedded in the spatial and cultural fabric of the campo. It is regarded as a helpful aid, warming the body in cold weather and providing strength to endure fatigue. Whether shared during work or savored in ritualistic pauses of contemplation and relaxation, mezcal consumption fosters community bonding and enhances the rhythm of the campo's timescapes.



### The house

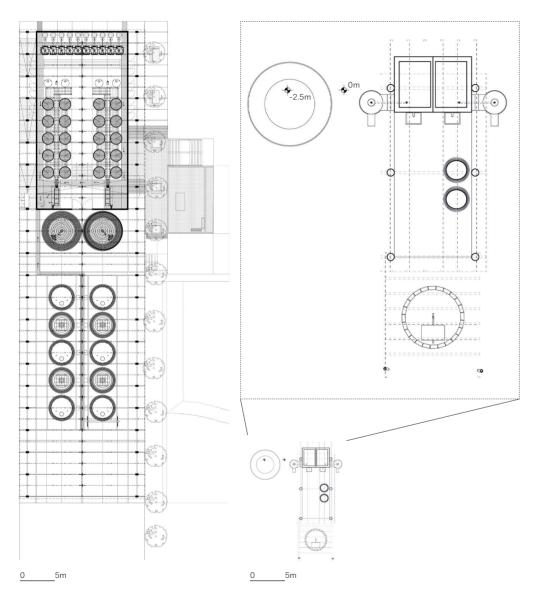
In the pueblo, mezcal is most often consumed in groups and with guests, rather than in solitude. Yet the act of drinking mezcal in these contexts rarely revolves solely around its intoxicating effects. Instead, it functions as a quiet but vital part of domestic medicine. A bottle of mezcal is typically kept within arm's reach—not just to be poured into a glass, but to be dabbed onto mosquito bites, rubbed onto the skin for cuts, or massaged into the stomach to ease cramping or digestive pain. For fever or nausea, it may be sipped in small amounts. For headaches, it is often applied directly to the temples or the nape of the neck. Its use is not limited to adulthood; it enters childhood and even early infancy, sometimes rubbed on a teething baby's gums as a soothing balm. In the communities that have cultivated agave and produced mezcal for centuries, its medicinal value is embedded in lived memory and oral tradition. Its power is understood as an extension of the maguey plant itself and of its curative properties.

While the architecture of the home may not be formally shaped by mezcal consumption, it is nevertheless structured by its presence. The house becomes the primary and most enduring site of its ritual use—not in a ceremonial sense, but in the rhythm of the everyday. Here, its ritual is quiet, embodied in actions that pass through generations: a hand reaching for the bottle, the cork creaking open, a small cloth soaked and applied with care. In this way, the domestic space is not transformed architecturally, but becomes charged through use, layered with a kind of ambient rituality.

Rather than formal spaces of consumption such as bars or mezcalerías, the home offers a slower, subtler expression of mezcal's cultural meaning—one where care, healing, hospitality, and ancestry unfold not through spectacle, but through daily, embodied acts.

3. mezcal beyond the myth production

# Plans of a semi-industrial palenque and a shared communal artisanal palenque.



Estudio ALA, 2024 Jiquilpan de Juaréz, Michoacan

Shared palenque Candelaria Yegolé, Oaxaca

### **Production**

"La misión del curioso de hoy, la del espectador del barroco, es detectar en el arte la retombée o el reflejo de una cosmología para la cual el origen es casi una certeza pero las formas que lo sucedieron un hiato inconcebible, casi una aberración. [...] un neobarroco en estallido, en el que los signos giran y se escapan hacia los límites del soporte en que ninguna fórmula permita trazar sus líneas o seguir los mecanismos de su producción. Hacia los límites del pensamiento, imagen de un universo que estalla hasta quedar extenuado, hasta las cenizas. Y que, quizás, vuelve a cerrarse sobre sí mismo."

Severo Sarduy<sup>38</sup>

This section examines the production spaces of mezcal within the rural context of the pueblo, focusing on the palenque as a productive system and symbolic site. By reframing it as a fragmented model, it goes beyond the tensions between tradition and modernity embodied in mezcal-making practices. Each production stage is analyzed through a specific fragment, which becomes a point of departure for broader reflections around important thematics of the mezcal universe. This shift from the interior-centered baroque narrative to a neobaroque expansion opens a reading of mezcal production grounded in its local, interconnected realities rather than in its mythologized commodification.

Fifteen billion years ago, a cosmic explosion led to the formation of the universe. From this improbable event - which just as easily might never have happened — we are the debris. Debris of a universe whose constant expansion makes its grandeur, possibilities and mysteries unimaginable. A universe whose bodies move apart, separate, dilate, and stretch. While today we explain the world's formation through the Big Bang theory, pre-radioastronomic cosmologies had an even more enigmatic vision of it. In this sense, the first Baroque emerged as a reaction to the unsettling astronomical discoveries of the 17th century, breaking with the idea of a geocentric universe. In the identity crisis that followed, art tended to adopt a reflexive, mirror-like tendency, as seen in the introspective light of chiaroscuro and in Velázquez's reflections. Looking at the currently accepted cosmological model - based on creation through the Big Bang — Severo Sarduy proposes as *neobaroque* an artistic and societal tendency that exposes the discontinuity between the formation of the

<sup>38</sup> Sarduy, S. (1987). Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco. Fondo de Cultura Económica. p.40

<sup>&</sup>quot;The mission of today's curious observer, that of the Baroque spectator, is to detect in art the reverberation or reflection of a cosmology in which the origin is almost a certainty, but the forms that followed it are an inconceivable hiatus—almost an aberration. [...] a neobaroque in explosion, where signs spin and escape toward the edges of the medium, where no formula can trace their lines or follow the mechanisms of their production. Toward the limits of thought, the image of a universe bursting until it is exhausted, reduced to ashes. And that, perhaps, closes back upon itself."

world and what it has become.<sup>39</sup> Since we walk upon the geological remains of the creative event, it is both present and absent, part of the everyday and yet unimaginable.<sup>40</sup> It is the residue of a space and time *before*, infinite and inconceivable, which the neobaroque takes up and expands. The "fallout" of the neobaroque is therefore the constant explosion of meaning and signification through phonetic and graphic material. Rather than submitting to the scientific homogenization of modernity and its "*economía burgues*" (bourgeois economy), the neobaroque disturbs this order through a fragmentation of the residues of the universe's creation, following a logic akin to cosmic expansion.<sup>41</sup>

In Latin America, the neobaroque reactivates a potential for diversity in collective political, artistic, and social discourse, without having to directly reference the baroque heritage brought by the Spanish - a legacy that consolidated a false cultural symbiosis between native peoples and colonizers. The neobaroque emerges as a fundamentally Latin American current. This baroque predisposition, as argued by Echeverría and written by Alejo Carpentier, stems from the fact that "toda simbiosis, todo mestizaje, engendra un barroquismo".<sup>42</sup> The historical continuation of colonialism in Latin America, both in its extractivist and internal forms, as well as the tensions between a Western audience and rural Mexican culture, make mezcal a fertile ground for a baroque narrative and the construction of its own mythology. Within this narrative, the spaces of production are central. Located in rural settings, palengues are not only productive spaces but also sites of tourist experience, reinforcing both the myth of mezcal and that of community development. If palengues are thus an integral part of the mezcalero imaginary, they are also contested, as they often respond to market-driven logic underlying the new fascination with the product. On the one hand, they represent the continuity of ancestral techniques, whose aesthetic value is shown through instruments that retain authentic forms and materials, drawing in visitors. On the other hand, they tend to hide the traces of technical modernization that occurred with development initiatives in the early 2000s, aiming to create a mezcal adapted to Western tastes.<sup>43</sup> In this sense, the *palengue* itself, as a productive structure, becomes the object of tensions between a rural dimension and a commercial interest. The encounter of this latter-day hybridization generates a baroque logic, with the narrative absorbing it into itself, rendering opaque the boundaries between traditional and modern functions.

39 Sarduy, S. (1987). Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

To avoid reinforcing and reproducing the dualistic narrative that frames the palengue as a baroque production space, the goal will be to shift toward Sarduy's neobaroque perspective in order to envision its potential for expansion and constant mutation. By following this strategy, the palenque is displaced from the baroque narrative that recenters it upon itself, and instead moves toward the extended possibilities of its neobaroque actualization. Fragmentation becomes an opportunity to expand the subject of the palenque and its potentialities, by revealing the ones it contains. Rather than focusing on the cycle of production stages, or on their obvious formal structures and techniques, this section explores a chosen fragment from each stage. The result is a four-part composition — itself fragmented of what the space of mezcal production is, beyond the boundaries it establishes. If the baroque narrative folds in on itself, Sarduy's neobaroque perspective suggests that its universe must first expand, "hacia los límites del soporte en que ninguna fórmula permita trazar sus líneas".44 What defines a production stage goes beyond its practical function, since everything is analyzable, everything fragmentable: "[...] el cuerpo en órganos, la moral en casos - los jesuitas los codificaron -, el comercio en operaciones de cálculo y contabilidad, el oro en monedas uniformamente calibradas y acuñadas, la tierra en Estados de fronteras precisas, la arquitectura en órdenes, la ciudad en unidacles fragmentarias, reducibles a figuras geométricas [...]".45 These fragments then become subjects in their own right — carriers of deeper, more specific meaning that can go beyond preconceived ideas and suggest alternative visions.

The fragments analyzed across the different stages of mezcal production are conceived as residues of the creation of its narrative, through which we seek to amplify it. The neobaroque vision of Sarduy allows us to read the space of mezcal production not as a fixed cultural essence, but as a field of semantic expansion, where each stage of production becomes an autonomous narrative fragment reflecting symbolic and plural universes. On the next page, a comprehensive drawing of the palenque helps situate these fragments within the broader context of the site and the various stages of mezcal production.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.209

<sup>42</sup> Carpentier, A. (2002). Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso. In *Ensayo cubano del siglo XX* (pp. 333-356). Fondo de Cultura Económica.

<sup>&</sup>quot;all symbiosis, all mestizaje, generates a baroquism"

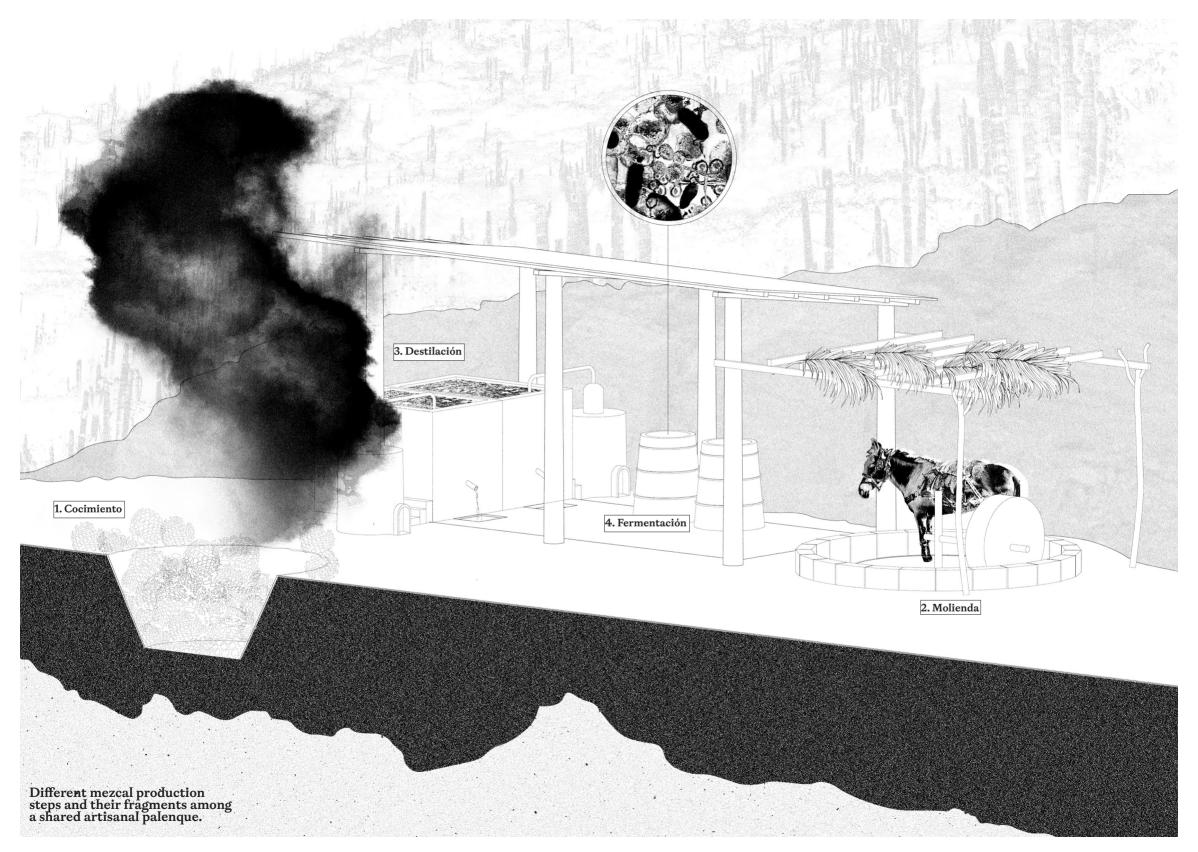
<sup>43</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>44</sup> Sarduy, S. (1987). Ensayos generales sobre el Barroco. Fondo de Cultura Económica. p.41

<sup>&</sup>quot;toward the edges of the medium where no formula can trace its lines"

<sup>45</sup> ibid. p.1

<sup>&</sup>quot;[...] the body into organs, morality into cases — the Jesuits codified them — commerce into accounting and calculation operations, gold into uniformly minted and calibrated coins, land into states with defined borders, architecture into orders, the city into fragmentary units reducible to geometric figures [...]."





# Cocimiento (cooking)

«La poética del humo reside en su movimiento perpetuo, movimiento imposible que se extiende en el mundo hasta desvanecerse.»<sup>46</sup>

Wilfredo Machado

One must travel the road to Santiago Matatlán early in the morning to truly appreciate the beauty of the smoke rising from the palengues, when the orange sunrise merges with the misty dew of the surrounding agave fields. The smoke that ascends from the conical underground ovens used to cook mezcal signals the start of its production and acts as a rallying signal, much like an SOS, bringing people together, as it marks the stage that requires the most manpower—often supplied voluntarily by the producer's family and local community members. The mezcal cooking process fascinates with its technical simplicity, evoking a distant pre-industrial era. Indeed, it is thought to be the only step in the production process that remains entirely pre-Hispanic in origin. For this reason, it shapes mezcal's narrative universe, emerging as the key element that links modern production to its Indigenous roots. Mezcal is often casually described to the uninitiated as "smoky tequila." While it's important to clarify that mezcal's organoleptic range extends far beyond this single note, it's undeniable that the cooking method leaves a distinct aromatic imprint—que crean la ilusión de una conexión con la era prehispánica.47 On a sensory level, the smoky quality alludes to smoke itself as an object arising from distant times and realities. becoming a romantic metaphor akin to Walter Benjamin's aura. 48

Can you imagine the air filled with smoke? It was. The city was vanishing before noon or was it earlier than that? I can't say because the light came from nowhere and went nowhere.

This was years ago, before you were born, before your parents met in a bus station downtown.

She'd come on Friday after work all the way from Toledo, and he'd dressed in his only suit.

[...]

Go back to the beginning, you insist. Why is the air filled with smoke? Simple. We had work. Work was something that thrived on fire, that without fire couldn't catch its breath or hang on for life.

Philip Levine<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Machado, W. (2003). *Poética del humo: antología impersonal.* Fundación para la Cultura Urbana.

<sup>47</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). *La revolución mezcalera*. Colegio de Michoacán. p.142

Traduction: "that create the illusion of a conexion with the pre-hispanic era" 48 Benjamin, W. (1986). Illuminations. Schocken Books.

<sup>49</sup> Levine, P. (1998). Smoke. Poetry.

In line with the broader search for authenticity, this attraction to smokiness can be seen as part of a renewed fascination with the old, a nostalgic reaction to a crumbling modernity. The taste of mezcal thus appears as a return to the past, a form of time travel, animated by the pre-Hispanic nature of its oven and reinforcing a narrative of ancestral tradition. In this light, Escobar's proposition that "[p]erhaps time has come to stop regarding any reference to tradition as pathological, romantic, or nostalgic," invites us to push this social diagnosis further. 50 The smoke of the palenques, rising from ovens steeped in tradition, intuitively evokes a return to the essential—a productive simplicity grounded in nature, where fire, earth, stone, and plant come into contact to lay the foundations of a rich gustatory world. In this sense, the cooking stage is the one that most strongly suggests a connection to the Earth, characteristic of rural life removed from an exhausted modernity. It is therefore worth serious attention, rather than being hastily dismissed as a mere nostalgic whim of the consumer.

## Rural beauty: a question of proportion

Omar Felipe Giraldo and Ingrid Toro, in Afectividad ambiental, merge Ivan Illich's interpretation of Leopold Kohr's concept of proportion<sup>51</sup> with the notion of beauty to rethink a rural aesthetic.<sup>52</sup> Observing how campesinos often evaluate the quality of a plot of land based on its beauty rather than its productivity—describing it as beautiful rather than good or high-yield-they sought to understand what motivates such a judgment. Part of the answer lies in Mesoamerican languages, where the words for «beautiful» and «good» are etymologically intertwined, suggesting that "algo que es bello o algo que llega a ser nominado como bello, debe ser bueno en un sentido recreativo, dignificante, florecedor de la existencia".53 This is the case, for example, with kualtsin (beautiful) and kuali (good) in Nahuatl.<sup>54</sup> In this way, goodness and beauty together form an aesthetic criterion that transcends superficiality, suggesting a harmony between the useful and the pleasing. This understanding of aesthetics—governed by both functional and visual value-points to a deeply sensory relationship with space. It also echoes Kohr's principle of proportionality, extending into the organization of the land itself. In rural contexts, proportion guides crop selection, land formation, and intergenerational practices that have long sustained community balance. This proportionality is embedded in the textures, patterns, and colors of the rural landscape, forming an empathetic and affective relationship with those who live

Escobar, A. (2017). Designs for the Pluriverse. Duke University Press. p.129
 Illich, I. During a lecture at the Schumacher Center for New Economics. 1997.

within it—who recognize in it the network of relations sustaining its harmony. In this sense, the smoke of the *palenque* belongs to this rural mezcal landscape.

However, Western sustainability standards often generate a counter-narrative, as the smoke becomes a vehicle for a dual form of pollution: direct-through the visible carbon released into the atmosphere—and indirect, through the deforestation required to supply firewood. The smoke also becomes a visible symbol of what is otherwise invisible: "el reemplazo de las especies regionales, el desarrollo de la agricultura intensiva, el uso de productos químicos, la deforestación. la lucha por el agua, el empobrecimiento de suelos, el debilitamiento genético de las especie de alto rendimiento, la modificación del paisaje, el desplazamiento de la frontera agrícola"55—all of which are consequences of the rising demand for mezcal, though far harder to see than the smoke itself. To internalize this problematic critique, the dominant narrative incorporates environmentalist discourse into its branding, or gives it form through actions that aim to mitigate the environmental impact of the cooking stage. These include technological innovations such as burning pressed bagazo blocks or using gas to avoid tree-cutting, or adopting industrial brick ovens that limit smoke and combustionbut also alter the mezcal's signature flavor. 56 These strategies aim to preserve the traditional agave cooking practice while attempting to sidestep the conflict between its aesthetic power and its apparent ecological devastation. Yet their intentions appear more economically driven-focused on keeping the narrative alive-than guided by sincere concern. This is evident in the marginalization of campesino knowledge and in the technological fervor of the "Green Revolution," as critiqued by Bautista and Smit in their study of mezcal agriculture in the Oaxaca valleys.<sup>57</sup>

#### Incommensurable

The criteria of aesthetic proportionality and that of quantifiable contamination converge in the concept of *incommensurability*, as articulated by Max Liboiron in their work on pollution and environmental justice.<sup>58</sup> "L'incommensurabilité est le fait de ne pas partager de terrain commun rendant possible un jugement ou une comparaison; elle caractérise des "projets qui ne peuvent tout simplement

<sup>52</sup> Giraldo, O. F., & Toro, I. (2020). Afectividad ambiental: sensibilidad, empatía, estéticas del habitar. El Colegio de la Frontera Sur.

<sup>53</sup> Alvarado Pizaña, P. (2019). La Politicidad del Habitar desde la Dimensión Sensible. *Bajo el volcán*, 1(1), 131-151. p.135

<sup>&</sup>quot;something that is beautiful or something that gets to be named as beautiful, has to be good in a recreative, dignifying, flourishing sense of the existence".

54 | Ibid. p. 135

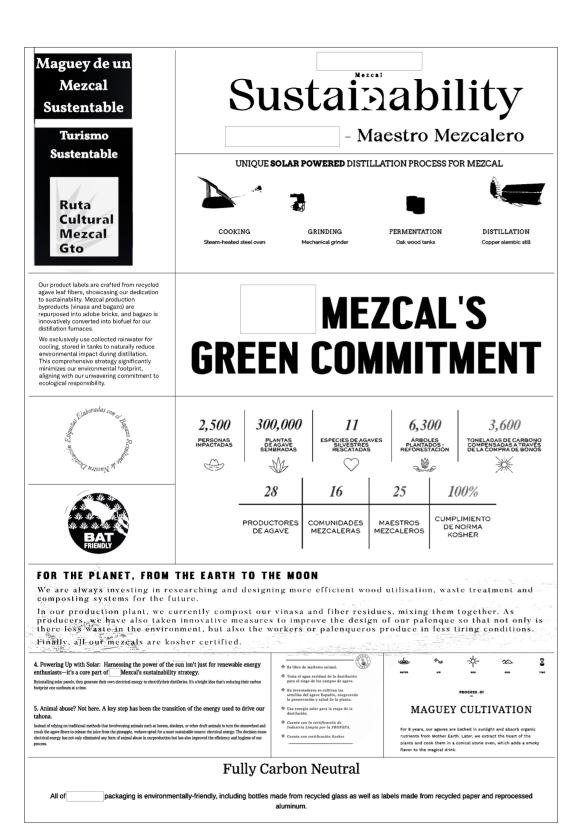
<sup>55</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán. p.231 "the replacement of regional species, the spread of intensive agriculture, the use of chemicals, deforestation, struggles over water, soil impoverishment, the genetic weakening of high-yield species, landscape modification, the shifting agricultural frontier"

In his text, Garcia Garza associates these impacts with the adoption of the espadín monoculture.

<sup>56</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>57</sup> Bautista, J. A. (2012). Sustentabilidad y agricultura en la "región del mezcal" de Oaxaca. *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Agrícolas*, *3*(1), 5-20.

<sup>58</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.



Collage of publicities around sustainability on the websites of different mezcal brands

pas communiquer, être alignés ou alliés.""59 In our specific case: rural proportionality versus extractivist market dynamics. Modern sciences seek to define acceptable limits of contamination through empirical thresholds, without acknowledging that these standards confront other forms of existence for which they hold no meaning. The impacts of pollution—and therefore its boundaries—cannot be fully measured, because they do not affect all beings equally, nor is it possible to assess all of their contextual effects. 60 Intergenerational practices of mezcal cooking are thus forced to evolve in order to align with a dominant narrative of baroque capitalism that is too entangled to recognize the incommensurability between a context rooted in rural aesthetics and another governed by international carbon metrics. This mutual incomprehension gives rise to moral judgments, which in the case of mezcal take the form of condemning certain practices or adopting others, in order to conform to the dominant narrative. Such a mechanism reproduces unequal and colonial forms of power relations. Felix Hernandez Monterrosa, owner of the mezcal brand Cuish, raised this issue in a conversation we had, noting how the brands that most publicly proclaim environmental awareness are often the ones that pollute the most. In his view, the campesino, who operates within proportional systems passed down generationally, does not question whether his actions are contaminating the environment-because they are part of it, and therefore do not stand in opposition to it. Felix's perspective powerfully connects the principles of incommensurability and proportion. He suggests that the ecological impacts of a small producer—or of such producers as a collective system-cannot be compared to those of an industrial operation, as they are dimensionally and conceptually opposed. While small producers uphold a rural aesthetic, industry - or even high-scale plantations and artisanal production systems - exert power over territory by breaking with this proportion. These actors commercially justify themselves by adopting technological practices meant to support its moral standing.

Seeking to resolve the ecological challenges surrounding mezcal production through a dualistic lens—tradition versus pollution—narrows the narrative field, forcing producers to comply with a dominant discourse. The value of the cooking stage goes far beyond its environmental repercussions: it embodies both a specific relationship to the Earth and a participatory way of being in the world, as it is the phase in which the majority of the community (and visitors) can engage and take part. In light of the environmental ethos proposed by Felipe Giraldo, traditional cooking practices foster a bodily awareness of one's relationship to the Earth, through direct participation in

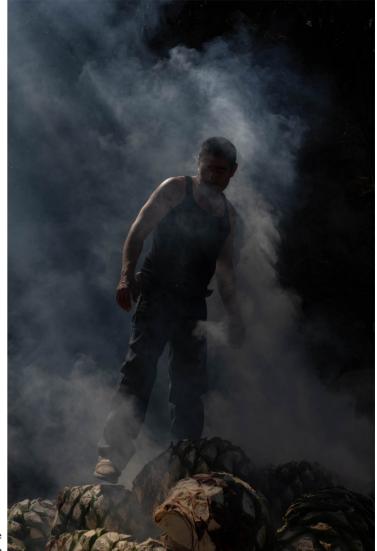
<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.214, quoting Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2022). *La décolonisation n'est pas une métaphore* (J.-B. Naudy, Trans.). Rot-Bo-Krik.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Incommensurability means that certain frameworks do not share a common basis for judgment or comparison—that is, "projects that simply cannot speak to one another, cannot be aligned or allied".

60 Ibid

the transformation of a plant from its subjective form into that of a product. «El ethos ambiental parte del contacto con los seres del mundo y la consciencia de lo que implica ese contacto. Comienza con el involucramiento del propio cuerpo, de la confrontación inmediata con situaciones de las que nos hacemos conscientes, como cuando prestamos atención al trasegar de la manzana y sus senderos recorridos hasta tocar la superficie de nuestra lengua.» <sup>61</sup> This phase, then, is fundamental insofar as it enriches the relational system between humans and agave. Mezcal not only embodies this process but is also consumed into cultural and relational practices, participating into this web of sensible dynamics that make it way more than a simple commodity. It becomes an important subject to understand that sustainability goes far beyond the standards promoted by a dominant narrative shaped by a distorted Western conception of environment and ecology.

In this sense, the smoke of mezcal—both in its literal and metaphorical sense—was never a problem when its production regime operated within thresholds that maintained a proportional balance: between trees cut and trees left standing, agaves harvested and agaves planted, waste produced and reused, or carbon released into the sky above Oaxaca and that retained in its soil. In response to ecological critiques of the agave cooking methods used for mezcal, one might be tempted to whisper that the smoke of a *palenque* is terribly beautiful. And they would probably be right.



Preparation of the mezcal oven.



Covered mezcal oven.

<sup>61</sup> Giraldo, O. F., & Toro, I. (2020). *Afectividad ambiental: sensibilidad, empatía, estéticas del habitar*. El Colegio de la Frontera Sur. p.52

<sup>&</sup>quot;The environmental ethos begins with contact with the beings of the world and the awareness of what that contact implies. It starts with the involvement of our own body, with the immediate confrontation with situations we become aware of—like when we pay attention to the journey of the apple and the paths it has traveled until it touches the surface of our tongue."



# Molienda (grinding)

"For all of us, becoming indigenous to a place means living as if your children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it." 62

Robin Kimmerer

Chilo pours salt into an old tire, beneath a scraggly tree from which hangs another tire, where Yair swings back and forth. The white powder seems almost magical, because just minutes later, the silhouettes of three horses—drawn to it—begin to break the horizon lined by a hill and the sharp branches of agave plants. The horses approach the tire, unbothered by Yair who keeps playing and shouting. They come solemnly, yet without suspicion, and begin to lick the salt.

Do horses have such a strong sense of smell? Or was it their hearing that guided them? Yet Chilo didn't shake the salt bag. He didn't call them. They simply arrived, on their own, in a ritual between them and him that I can't explain. When I ask, he simply replies, "Pues, Io saben."

They know.

How they know is beside the point.

The horses stay with us the entire evening, even though we offer them nothing more to eat. They wander off a little when I try to get closer. That's my fault, they sense my own hesitation. When I ask Chilo where they come from, he answers that they belong to "un compañero que vive por aquí."

Por aquí... butthere isn't a house for miles around. Distance, it seems, is relative. Por aquí seems to mean a zone, one of the cerro, of this thorny territory where horses, rabbits, coyotes, thousands of grasshoppers, and compañeros cohabit. Por aquí makes more sense in terms of relationships than in measurable units.

When night falls, the horses disappear into the darkness. When we wake the next morning, they're close again, grazing in the fields.

At Chilo's palenque, a horse moves in slow circles, pulling the heavy stone of the tahona, crushing the cooked agave fibers. From time to time, when the horse stops, Chilo calls him, tugs gently, strokes his side. The horse starts again. It's not his horse—it belongs to another farmer who lends it to him during the few days of the year he produces mezcal. If the horse isn't available, another compañero lends him a mule—the same one that sometimes helps Chilo's father-in-law grind agave. But that's even rarer, since Don [?] only makes mezcal for personal use, or to contribute to some celebration in the pueblo.

<sup>62</sup> Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). Braiding Sweetgrass. Milkweed Editions. p.22

## **Grinding the maguey**

The crushing of cooked agave can be done in various ways, using techniques that range from manual to highly mechanized. Among these methods, the most common are: wooden mallets, the tahona, the mechanical tahona, and industrial mills. The first involves a pit dug into the ground-usually lined with stones-into which the material to be broken down (in this case, cooked agave) is placed, and then pounded repeatedly with a heavy wooden mallet. This technique is essentially a giant mortar, likely of pre-Hispanic origin. The tahona is a rotary mill: a large stone wheel that crushes agave by rolling over it, activated by the circular movement of a horse or mule. This Greco-Roman milling practice was introduced to Mexico during the colonial period, though it didn't become widespread until the 19th century.<sup>63</sup> It played a major role in colonial Latin America, especially in Chile, where it was tied to the rise of an intensive flour industry.<sup>64</sup> The shift from grain grinding to agave crushing gives the mezcal tahonas a uniquely Mexican significance. 65 Mechanical tahonas have gradually replaced these «blood-powered» mills for reasons that are temporal, economic, and ethical.

Broadly speaking, the choice of grinding method depends on three factors: the region of production, the socio-economic context, and tourism value. In Oaxaca, for example, the tahona only arrived quite late, in the 20th century.66 Some regions retained the use of wooden mallets due to marginality or deliberate resistance, as is the case in Santa Catarina Minas. From an economic standpoint, it is important to consider that the chosen method often hinges more on the producers' capacity to invest in new equipment than on the pursuing of an ancestral ideology. Those with fewer resources often demonstrate great creativity in the design and architecture of their palengues and tools. As financial means increase, so does the possibility of investing in technologies that reduce physical labor or that allow them to differentiate their practices to attract visitors, generating additional income. And this is where things get complicated—because tourists' preferences regarding how agave is crushed are highly paradoxical. In search of authenticity, they tend to value traditional methods. Yet, when those traditions clash with their own ethical, environmental, or aesthetic standards, tension arises. The dominant narrative is then forced to bend, justify, or conceal its contradictions. This phenomenon becomes especially visible in the stage of molienda, as the Western consumers are likely to condemn the use of horses or donkeys in the grinding process as animal cruelty. This tension is what we will refer to as the paradox of the horse.

#### The paradox of the horse

In *Polluer c'est coloniser*, Max Liboiron argues that our relationships and obligations to the world are not all the same.

"Different groups have different roles in alterlives, reconciliation, decolonization, indigenization, and anticolonial work." 67

"Sometimes those obligations overlap, and sometimes they are at odds."68

What they mean is that, by virtue of our position in the world, we carry different responsibilities toward it and toward the ways we move within it, or act, write and speak about it. Liboiron gives the example carried by legal scholar Andrew Brighten regarding its observation of a fishing court on animal-related Aboriginal right, involving a Musqueam community. Like most federal systems, the Canadian jurisprudence does not take into account the different positionality of the Musqueam fishers, nor the complex set of relationships that bind them to the activity of fishing. In disrupting these fragile relational systems by seeing the fishes only like resources, the legislative apparatus commits the error of assuming the possibility of an only numeric quantification of the economic exchanges coming from fishing in this community, to assess the importance of this commercial relationship in their culture.<sup>69</sup> In doing so, it denies an entire relational balance, one that has been slowly and collectively formed over thousands of years—long before any of the practices that caused harm to the ecosystem even existed.

These ambiguous relational dynamics similarly appear in the discourses surrounding the ecological and ethical criteria of mezcal production. This is where the concept of the horse paradox takes on its full meaning: the public desires mezcal to be the result of authentic, respectful, and traditional relationships with the land, yet rejects a practice that is indeed authentic according to its own worldview-while remaining ignorant of the perspectives of those at the core of the very subject they idealize. The molienda stage is a key moment where this paradox becomes visible, opposing the criterion of tradition tied to the ancestral imagery of the horse with the ethical perspective that views the horse as mistreated. Influenced by dominant narratives and, in some sense, dependent on them, some palenques turn to mechanical tahonas, praising their awareness of animal abuse and thereby adopting a morally superior position over those who maintain traditional methods. This attitude raises a double issue: breaking authentic relational ties by hiding the true nature of this choice—which often boils down to production efficiency—and economically benefiting further by promoting their own ethical image. Additionally, this stance discredits competitors who lack the same resources or who maintain a different, perhaps more reciprocal,

<sup>63</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>64</sup> Lacoste, P. (2018). Molinos harineros en Chile (1700-1845): implicancias sociales y culturales. *América Latina en la historia económica*, *25*(3), 103-132.

<sup>65</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán. p.102

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 102

<sup>67</sup> Liboiron, M. (2021). Pollution is colonialism. Duke University Press. p.22

<sup>68</sup> ibid. p. 127

<sup>69</sup> ibid. p.55

From: Brighten, "Aboriginal Peoples and the Welfare of Animal Persons," 39.

relationship with the horse itself.

The fact that outsiders explicitly judge the use of animals in the process of grinding agave fibers—even though this practice stems from the very same tradition these outsiders claim to value becomes reason enough to seek to adapt the practice. This reveals the powerful impact of the market on the organization of palenques and how the West continues to adopt a superior gaze over alternative ways of life. The horse paradox is particularly interesting because it also pits ethical criteria against ecological ones. Replacing the horse with a motor not only alters the traditional profile that this very audience seeks in mezcal, but also entails the consumption of polluting energy resources—which, paradoxically, are accepted and even valorized in this case. The spontaneous denunciation, fueled especially by social media and advertising, overlooks the historically conscious relationships developed between humans and the horses or mules that motivate their use for this task. Yet, this is an example of obligations surging from the interactions between some groups of humans and the Earth.<sup>70</sup> In this sense, the use of the horse by producing communities is justified by their particular obligations.

Due to its significance in maintaining the narrative continuity of tradition and authenticity, the tahona exists as a baroque element of mezcal production, in the sense that it evokes a journey through time for visitors and thus helps forge a narrative where past and present flirt in a hallucinatory relationship. However, this baroqueness depends on the reasons behind its use. The concepts explored in this section argue that there is a distinction between a use that might be forced by a narrative and one that is necessary. The former refers to the exploitation of an archetype to create a fictional, theatrical scene aimed at generating tourist flow and deriving economic surplus from the tahona itself, referring to a baroque capitalism. The latter corresponds to its use under circumstances where the choice cannot be made-because economic impossibility prevents opting for a mechanized alternative—or where the choice responds to a far more complex set of relationships between humans, horses, and the Earth. The horse is part of rural life both when it turns the tahona and when it gallops freely in the fields, facilitating through its feeding the campesinos' care for the land. The way humans use the horse arises from an informal, reciprocal pact surging from the rural way of life of the pueblo. This stands in opposition to judgments of cruelty stemming from a paradoxical Western viewpoint, where considering the horse as a highly vulnerable subject borders on objectification. Mistreatment of the horse is likely more prone to occur outside of this pact than in places where it is valued—where relationships between humans and horses are based on an economic factor more determinant than a symbolic contract with the Earth.

# Reindigenizing or recommunizing the agave?

The majority of the international mezcal audience seeks in this spirit an artisanal ideal rooted in distant times and imbued with a strong "natural" component, aligned with the current Western fascination for all things green and sustainable. Alongside this mass ecological interest evolves a fascination with indigenous ways of life, which—of course—remains equally superficial. Mezcal, originating from a rural context and strongly associated with the state of Oaxaca, which has a pronounced indigenous character, becomes the perfect product to meet this demand. Garcia Garza notes that this Western gaze and its criteria, along with tourism, have contributed to the mythification of mezcal by exoticizing its rustic and vernacular production structures. Even more, they have contributed to "reindianizar" (reindianize) and "etnicisar" (ethnicize) their own vision of agave, mezcal, and its producers. Blogs, enthusiast groups online and on-site have thus impacted producer behavior, as «[e]mpujados por la presión del mercado, algunos productores se pliegan a los imperativos de la demanda y eventualmente realizan "performance estratégicos" para indianizar su identidad». 71 But what does it mean to "indigenize," or even "reindigenize," when indigeneity itself remains such a complex issue in present-day Mexico?

In Latin America, the enduring presence of native peoples is an indisputable fact, and the manifestation of indigeneity is extremely diverse. This multiplicity represents the infinite possibilities of other ways of being that are little or not at all considered on a global scale. Even within Mexico itself, it is impossible to give a unified definition of the characteristics of the *pueblos originarios*, since they differ according to multiple criteria—be it practices, territories, languages, knowledge, or relational aspects with the land. In the case of Oaxaca, the boundaries between being indigenous or not are extremely fluid and poorly understood by a Western society that tends toward excessive categorization. These groups, not forming part of a cohesive "We," are necessarily projected into the Other—an Other whose content is, however, plural: "un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos," as the Zapatista saying goes.<sup>72</sup>

The territory of Oaxaca is made up of a particularly large number of communities organized according to usos y costumbres (uses and customs), a mode of public and spiritual life based on the principle of community.<sup>73</sup> Although language is often prioritized universally as the primary criterion for defining identity belonging,

<sup>70</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes

<sup>71</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán. p.223 "[p]ushed by market pressure, some producers yield to the imperatives of demand and eventually perform 'strategic performances' to indigenize their identity."

<sup>72</sup> Escobar, A. (2016). Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South. *Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana*, 11(1), 11-32. p.20

<sup>&</sup>quot;a world where many worlds fit"

<sup>73</sup> Castellanos Martinez, J. (2020). Kon dxekenha kan gak. Imaginando el destino. Pluralia.

Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado highlights how the tendency toward communal life is arguably the most determining factor of indigenous identity in Oaxaca: "Definimos al indio como un ser comunal y esa comunalidad sobrevive a la pérdida de la lengua materna e incluso a la desterritorialización. Prácticamente todas las comunidades rurales en los que la mayoría de su población ya no habla una lengua india, siguen practicando la comunalidad en sus cuatro aspectos principales: territorio, poder, trabajo y disfrute"." As can be discerned from Alvarado's words, community, while being the most solid criterion for considering indigeneity, is not exclusively characteristic of being indigenous but also of rurality. From this perspective, how does a community that no longer identifies as indigenous but adheres to the norms governed by the communal system differ from the original populations to which the ecological narrative connects as an ideal, to the point of seeking to "re-indianize" mezcal?

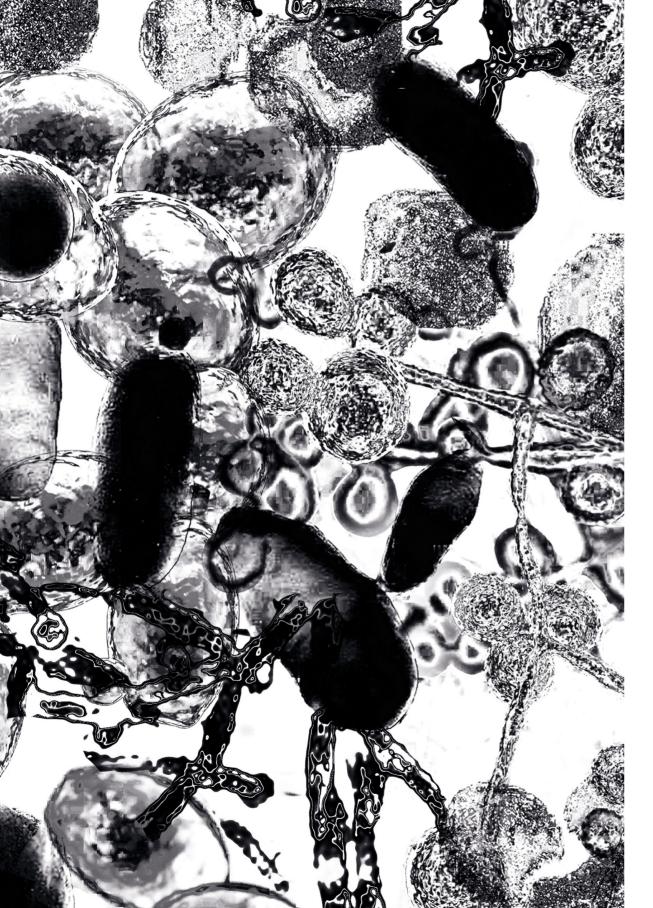
The persistence of an indigenous identity often manifests through deeper relationships with the land, rooted in a cosmology and reinforced by communal organization that assigns each individual a place within a plural existence. However, these same characteristics are also found in communities that, due to numerous historical, territorial and political factors, no longer identify themselves as indigenous. Their modes of existence remain closely related to those of communities considered original or descended from them. It is therefore important to broaden and soften the limiting boundaries that prevent the conception of a pluriverse. In this regard, Robin Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass* suggests the idea of *becoming native*. 75 This way of perceiving nativeness beyond the lineage-based criteria that define indigeneity opens the possibility of re-centering strong identitary belonging to the Earth by adopting symbiotic relationships with the land. Thus, considering a strict, clearly defined boundary for indigenous belonging is as nonsensical as it is limiting. This is not about devaluing indigenous knowledge and ways of being, but about recognizing their nuances. Excessive categorization and identification tend to obscure the richness of social and relational phenomena in the world and render invisible communities that, through their relationships with the land, diverge from Western standards. The "reindianization" of mezcal, constructed around its myth and through symbols borrowed from pulque, tends not only to mask its reality but also pressures some producers into a delicate identity performance.





<sup>74</sup> Maldonado Alvarado, B. (2002). Los indios en las aulas: dinámica de dominación y resistencia en Oaxaca. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. p.29 "We define the 'indio' as a communal being, and this communality survives the loss of the mother tongue and even deterritorialization. Practically all rural communities where the majority of the population no longer speaks an indigenous language still practice communality in its four main aspects: territory, power, labor, and enjoyment."

<sup>75</sup> Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). Braiding Sweetgrass. Milkweed Editions.



# Fermentación (fermentation)

"Scale is not about relative size. Scale is about what relationships matter within a particular context." <sup>76</sup>

Max Liboiron

Brettanomyces sp. Candida apicola C. boidinii C. coliculosa C. intermedia C. lusitaniae C. parapsilosis C. rugosa C. utilis C. zemplinia Citeromyces matriensis Clavispora lusitaniae Cryptococcus albidius C. humícola C. kuetzingii C. laurentii C. uniguttulatus Debaryomyces hansenii Dekkera anómala Hanseniaspora guilliermondi H. osmophila H. uvarum Issatchenkia orientalis Kloeckera sp. Kluyveromyces lactis K. marxianus Lactobacillus farraginis L. kefiri L. plantarum L. pontis Meyerozyma guillermondii Pichia fementans P. guilliermondii P. kluyveri P. kudriavzevii P. manshurica P. membranifaciens P. mexicana Pseudozyma prolífica Rhodosporidium fluviale Rhodotorula glutinis R. mucilaginosa Saccharomyces cerevisiae S. unisporus Schizosaccaromyces pombe Schwanniomyces castelli Sporidiobolus salmonicolor Torulaspora delbrueckii Weissella cibaria W. paramesenteroides

S. cerevisiae is the most studied eukaryote and the most important in human nutrition, having been used since antiquity for breadmaking. Issatchenkia orientalis is a yeast resistant to low pH, making it an excellent producer of organic acids that can replace fossil fuels. Pichia mexicana is a fungus found in the necrotic tissue of cacti in the Sonoran Desert. Candida parapsilosis is an invasive fungus posing infection risks in human wounds. Rhodotorula glutinis is a pink yeast whose pigments are used in the development of industrial dyes. It is found in air, soil, and the phyllosphere (the surface of leaves). Rhodosporidium fluviale is an aquatic yeast with red pigments, whose name is associated with a pathogenic fungus that has developed resistance to human antifungals. All these microorganisms contribute to the fermentation process of the mezcal, from the agave in the field to the barrel.

<sup>76</sup> Liboiron, M. (2021). *Pollution is colonialism*. Duke University Press. p.22 77 Parapouli, M., Vasileiadis, A., Afendra, A.-S., & Hatziloukas, E. (2020). Saccharomyces cerevisiae and its industrial applications. *AIMS Microbiol*, 6(1) 1-31

<sup>78</sup> Liu, Z., Gia Tran, V., Martin, T. A., Tan, S.-I., & Zao, H. (2025). Issatchenkia orientalis as a platform organism for cost-effective production of organic acids. *Metabolic Engineering*, 89, 12-21.

<sup>79</sup> Miranda, M., Phaff, H.J., & Starmer, W. T. (1982). Pichia mexicana, a New Heterothallic Yeast from Cereoid Cacti in the North American Sonoran Desert. *International Journal*, 32(1), 101-107.

<sup>80</sup> Trofa, D., Gácser, A., & Nosanchuk, J. D. (2008). Candida parapsilosis, an Emerging Fungal Pathogen. *Clin Microbiol*, *21*(4), 606-625.

<sup>81</sup> Hernández-Almanza, A., Montanez, J. C., Aguilar-González, M. A., Martínez-Ávila, C., Rodríguez-Herrera, R., & Aguilar, C. N. (2014). Rhodotorula glutinis as source of pigments and metabolites for food industry. *Food Bioscience*, *5*, 64-72.

<sup>82</sup> Bowman, V. (2024). Are warmer temperatures causing fungi to attack humans? Two deaths in China suggest it may be. *The Telegraph*.

## **Cultivating Diversity**

In a collective research project focused on the microbial ecology underlying the aromatic profiles of mezcal, it was found that the state of Oaxaca hosts the greatest biodiversity of microorganisms during the fermentation stage.83 All the microorganisms mentioned above participate, one way or another, in mezcal fermentation in this region, and consequently, in its flavor. They maintain synergistic or antagonistic relationships that contribute to creating an ecological climate conducive to fermentation.84 The community interactions between species lead to the predominance of certain volatile compounds over others, directly influencing the gustatory perception of mezcal. Multiple factors affect the balance of the fermentation environment, but its defining feature is heterogeneity. Even within the same palenque and with the same agave variety, the taste characteristics of mezcal may vary according to changes in the production chain or climatic conditions. Cultural practices and the rural environment contribute to the diversity of microbiological species present during fermentation, and this knowledge is generally passed down among mezcal producers, whether based on scientific understanding or cosmological conceptions.

The production stages, both in their timing (seasonal cycles) and spatial dimensions, all influence in some way the diversity of microorganisms present at the fermentation stage. From the moment the agave plant comes into contact with its soil, interactions between it and the endophytic macrobiota become activated. 85 Since production requires large quantities of agaves, all these interactions accumulate. In the case of wild agaves, these relationships multiply compared to domesticated crops or those treated with chemicals such as pesticides and fungicides. The latter practice, following an industrial model, tends to drastically reduce biodiversity in the fields. Also in the context of mass production, agaves are often harvested before their flowering stalk (quiote) begins to grow. This practice tends to decrease microbiological diversity for two reasons. First, cutting the quiote prematurely means the plant has not yet reached maturity. In contrast, traditional mezcal producers empirically recognize plants mature enough to be selected. When the plant raises its quiote, it transitions from a vegetative stage to flowering, mobilizing complex carbohydrates to feed its flower that can grow up to 10 meters high, significantly influencing its microbial community. Second, cutting the quiote causes the agave to "bleed" a red liquid, earning them the name "bloody agaves." As with any wound, the injury becomes host to various bacterial interactions. If there is no quiote to cut because the

83 Becerra Lucio, P. A., Diego-Garcia, E., Guillén-Navarro, K., & Peña-Ramírez, Y. J. (2022). Unveiling the Microbial Ecology behind Mezcal: A Spirit Drink with a Growing Global Demand. *Fermentation*, 8(11), 1-17.

agave did not yet reach maturity when it was taken for production, interactions between its wound and the field microbiota are lost.

When the *piñas* — the agave hearts stripped of their leaves and removed from the soil — are transported to the *palenque*, they come into contact with the surface of a truck that has carried other loads before. They are exposed en route to bacteria present in the air. Upon arrival at the *palenque*, they are placed near the oven, where they may rest for days until fungal proliferation becomes evident. Some producers hold very strong opinions about whether allowing these fungi—whose colors can range from turquoise to radioactive apricot, or whose textures resemble white cotton—is beneficial or disastrous.<sup>86</sup>

During cooking, it is assumed that the agaves are sterilized by heat; however, contamination from the environment resumes as soon as the oven is opened and the cooked plant flesh comes into contact with unsterilized agricultural tools, untreated water, and animals present in the rural setting of the palenque or during fiber crushing by horses or donkeys. The mechanization of the crushing process tends to reduce microbiological interactions within the palenque as well.

Once the crushed fibers are placed in fermentation barrels, they come into contact with various tools that have themselves been in contact with raw plants, leading to cross-contamination. Human contact with the fibers increases due to manual handling and sometimes the producer stepping directly into the barrel to stomp and compress the fibers. Under these conditions, fermentation begins during an initial phase lasting 2 to 3 days. The end of this stage is empirically determined by producers listening to the sound of bubbling. A certain amount of untreated water is then added, and the mixture rests for 8 to 20 days, depending on weather conditions and local practices. During this time, various forms of life actively interact with the barrel's contents, including butterflies, bees, and fruit flies flying around.

Although these spontaneous interactions suggest that the microbiotic makeup of artisanal mezcal is inherently heterogeneous, studies indicate that the unconscious and involuntary domestication of microbial flora within the palenque has refined their relationships over the years.<sup>87</sup> The climatic, territorial, vegetal, and animal characteristics surrounding the ecology of a specific palenque, repeated cyclically through its production stages, have influenced the competitive relationships among microorganisms to the point of fostering a functional balance.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.6

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Unless otherwise noted, the subsequent analysis of microbial accumulation in mezcal production draws from Becerro Lucio et al. (2022)

<sup>86</sup> Based on personal conversations with maestros mezcaleros from different regions, views diverged regarding the significance of fungal growth on maguey before the cooking stage.

<sup>87</sup> See: Verdugo Valdez, A., Segura Garcia, L., Kirchmayr, M., Ramírez Rodríguez, P., González Esquinca, A., Coria, R., & Gschaedler Mathis, A. (2011). Yeast Communities Associated with Artisanal Mezcal Fermentations from Agave Salmiana. *Antonie Van Leeuwenhoek, 100,* 497-506.; Pennisi, E. (2022). Foodmaking Microbes Bear Marks of Domestication. *Science, 377*(6601).

#### The Violence of Homogenization: A Question of Scale

The diversity of yeasts, fungi, and bacteria involved in mezcal fermentation fits within a complex relational system far beyond that which arises among microorganisms inside the fermentation barrel. The places where agave is cultivated and those through which it is transported to the production site are all spaces of interaction between these microorganisms and other forms of life that are part of them. This invisible relational system depends on influences of imposing dimensional scale-meteorological, geological, and cultural factors-interacting with microscopic organisms. This contrast of scale makes it difficult to conceive relational ties uniting them. In Pollution is Colonialism, Max Liboiron draws a parallel between scale and violence.88 They invite us to focus on the different relational implications that exist at various scales, rather than attempting to consider them only globally. For example, they refer to the fact that there is BPA contamination in 91% of Canadian subjects. Since BPA is not harmful at the scale of the human organism, a critique based on colonial scientific standards might justify this contamination as acceptable, relying on quantitative criteria that admit that low BPA contamination causes no harm for health. Yet, at the scale of the sample, it appears as an unacceptable structural violence that nearly all Canadians now contain this chemical substance. By applying this reasoning to the microbial diversity of mezcal, it is possible to underline how commercial needs for homogeneization acts as a violent threat for the diversity of microorganisms. Market trends seek to homogenize the taste of producers' mezcal, since a stable flavor facilitates sales and symbolizes control over the practice's factors-an emblem of hygiene. The interactions between different yeasts impact the creation of mezcal aromas during distillation, and therefore its flavor. Science is therefore used to select the microorganisms that contirbute in the production of the chosen taste and discard the others, figuring. Just as low BPA contamination does not affect health, lowering the diversity of microorganisms at the barrel scale does not reduce the quality of mezcal, so this practice is accepted. Still, if the fact that 91% of Canadian are contaminated appears as an exageration, the fact that many productions of mezcal could be homogeneized in that way would have a strong impact on global micro-organisms diversity among the mezcal world, reducing its possibilities of both spontaneous and conscious (through different cultural practices) heterogeneity.

The type of mezcal produced today is recognized as having the most interesting organoleptic properties for both the untrained international palate and Mexican mezcal experts.<sup>89</sup> It is the product of a blending between producers' empirical knowledge, laboratory studies, and production interventions based on this science, supported

by various scientific teams. Chemical studies of mezcal properties have contributed to developing techniques that allow greater process stability and reproducibility. In this case, homogeneity is a mark of excellence made possible through scientific knowledge and technical assistance with "pretensiones no de sustituir procesos sino de mejorar" the empirical ones of producers. 90 Many articles regarding mezcal explore taste properties that arise during fermentation and distillation process, combining genetic models or production techniques to stabilize flavor and improve production efficiency. 91 The valorization of scientific discoveries regarding mezcal is therefore not innocent but subject to interested knowledge. It is deeply linked to economic and even political interests and fits within power dynamics, insofar as traditional knowledge is invalidated and accelerated by the ambition of progressive discovery.

It is thus when looking at a broader scale of the microbial diversity involved in fermentation that a certain form of violence occurs, highly linked to homogeneization. When practices-both culturally dependent and independent-are modified to meet commercial needs, the reduction of microbial biodiversity becomes a violent result. Indeed, whether biodiversity decreases or increases matters little. The violence lies in controlling interactions that produce new power relations among them, which mirror those existing between scientists and campesinos. "Instead of focusing on harm [...] we can look at violence, which is the origin of potential harms."92 In our case, the potential harm is a reduction or controlled manipulation of biodiversity, including changes in practice based on judgments originating from a commercial need to homogenize production. These dynamics of violence reproduce similarly when monoculture plantations require pesticides that eliminate micro-life in the fields.

#### **Diversity and Soil Health**

The reduction of biodiversity at the microscopic scale is also representative of the situation of Mexican soils. It is within the soil that the various interactions between communities of microorganisms begin-microorganisms that will accompany the agave throughout its growth and later participate in the fermentation of its crushed fibers. In the Jalisco region, soil depletion caused by the overexploitation of agave azul plantations has led tequila producers to turn towards the soils of Oaxaca. In Hidalgo, recent years of drought, the repercussions of agricultural practices based on monoculture and chemical use,

Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.

García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>90</sup> ibid. p.18

<sup>&</sup>quot;not the intention to replace processes but to improve"

<sup>91</sup> See: Barrera-Perales, O. T. (2024). Paisaje mezcalero de Guerrero: Herencia de prácticas y saberes. Revista Peruana de Antropología, 9(15), 129-144.; Contreras-Negrete, G., Valiente-Banuet, A., Molina-Freaner, F., Partida-Martínez, L., & Hernández-López, A. (2024). Agricultural Practices and Environmental Factors Drive Microbial Communities in the Mezcal-Producing Agave angustifolia Haw. Microbial Ecology, 87(181).; ADD

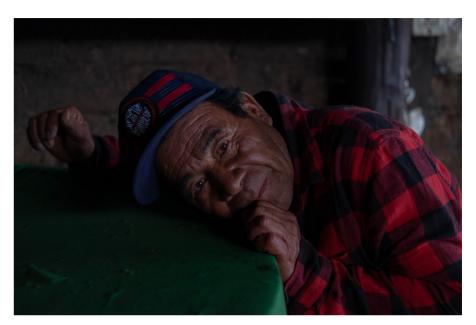
<sup>92</sup> Liboiron, M. (2021). Pollution is colonialism. Duke University Press. p.85

as well as the invasion of the *picudo* beetle, have become a major threat to soil quality. Agaves are increasingly infested by this insect, and campesinos observe a drastic decline in both their number and diversity within their lands. In the Mezquital Valley, the Magueyal initiative undertakes the enormous task of preserving local knowledge of the agave and maintaining its diversity in the territory. This mission necessarily involves special attention to the soil. At the microscopic level, caring for diversity means first and foremost caring for the soil.

Through workshops with campesino communities—whether or not they strongly identify as Hñähñu in the region—Magueyal has collaborated with local scientists to foster a dialogue between different epistemologies. Campesinos can visually distinguish different agave plants by the subtle shapes of their spines and textures, while scientists possess instruments that reveal what is otherwise invisible. During one such workshop, the local soil was observed under a microscope, revealing unimaginable creatures. The campesinos were fascinated to see what lived in their soil, and the scientific instrument helped raise awareness of their territory—a sensitivity that had diminished after years of drought and destabilization of the agave ecosystem.

This experience echoes the anthropologist Anna Tsing's idea of science as translation. While in her book The Mushroom at the End of the World she refers to an international translation involving a variety of different languages, it is also possible to apply her reflection to the translation between different forms of knowledge. 93 The campesino holds highly contextual empirical understanding, based on experience of their environment and hereditary transmission. Regarding the soil, certain concrete practices are implemented to promote its health for example, the *milpa*, which maintains soil and land biodiversity, is a practice dating back thousands of years. However, some changes affect the campesino environment's balance at a scale or pace too large for rural knowledge to respond immediately. Although chemical use is not valued by campesinos, they sometimes find themselves forced to use it to meet market pressures. The impacts on the soil are not part of the ancestral understanding of the land. Science becomes a means of translating this problem, through the microscopic lens of the interactions occurring there.

Scientific knowledge, like translation, is never neutral. It supports power dynamics and is guided by questions of scale and perspective. Often, sciences serve economic interests, where translation is merely a tool of efficiency—for example, generating knowledge about soil to control it and make it more productive in order to sell more plants or mezcal. However, in some cases, it also represents a disinterested opportunity, aimed at restoring balance within an environment of attachment, as is the case in the communities of Hidalgo, which no longer live off the maguey anyway. Rather, the plant belongs to their worldview for millennia, and caring for it is necessary and intuitive.





<sup>93</sup> Tsing, A. L. (2021). The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins. Princeton University Press.



# Destilación (distillation)

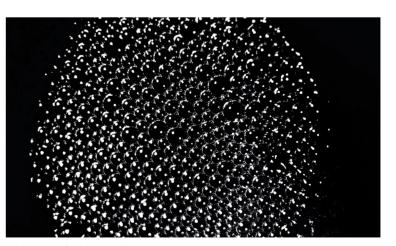
#### La primera para la Tierra.

Common saying among the mezcalero world

Yair throws himself into the river, and the currents carry him away at a surprising speed. He sinks to the bottom and resurfaces alternately. In these movements, his body seems rubbery—completely flexible and malleable. Fully submerged, his solid form begins to dissolve, and his skin blends with the sand and stones. He becomes almost imperceptible, until his arm slices through the surface at the exact moment he passes under a tree branch, which he grabs onto. As his body stretches and takes on a vertical shape, he cuts through the river. Once he catches his breath, he launches himself toward the bank, skillfully walks over the small rocks, runs back to the exact spot where the water is deep enough for full immersion, and plunges back into the liquid course.

In the distillation tank, dead butterflies look like constellations.

After climbing the cerrito all the way to the cruz, Chilo sits down with its guests. He offers each of them a cup, all of them different: a jicara, a vaso veladora, a yellow metallic cup, a ceramic cup with a painted duck at the bottom, a plastic one, and a little little barro cup, that can contain only a single sip. He serves everyone except himself and after the collective salud, he inclines his bule towards the ground, nourishing the dry soil with mezcal, saying: *«La primera para la Tierra».* 



Perlas (pearls) of mezcal in a jícara.

#### **Clearer Than Water**

In the 16th century, immigrants from Asia—particularly from the Philippines—arrived on the coast of Colima. With them, they brought a knowledge that would become the subject of a vast cultural exchange: distillation. The apparatus used by Asians since at least the 14th century to distill previously fermented foods like rice or wheat was first introduced to the region of New Galicia (Colima, Jalisco, and Navarit) through the production of vino de coco, made from coconut palm fruit. 94 Although there is ongoing debate about the possibility of a pre-Hispanic distillation, no tangible archaeological evidence has yet confirmed this hypothesis. The most plausible counterargument is the complete absence of any metal container associated with pre-Hispanic life—something essential to cooling the liquid in the final stage of distillation. While the Asian distillation apparatus could be made from local materials such as clay, wood trunks, or agave leaves (pencas), it still necessarily required a metal container. Metal smelting, while part of 13th-century Asian knowledge, was not part of the pre-Hispanic world.95

As mentioned earlier, Mesoamerican peoples already consumed a fermented agave beverage, pulque, whose alcohol content is much lower than that of mezcal. In a syncretism characteristic of the cultural blending that occurred in Latin America, Asian knowledge merged with pre-Hispanic expertise in cooking, fermenting, and consuming agave, resulting in the first distilled form, which García Garza refers to as *proto-mezcal*. As early as 1621, Spanish priest and historian Domingo Lázaro de Arregui noted that maguey was being used in New Galicia to produce "un vino por alquitara más claro que el agua y más fuerte que el aguardiente y de aquel gusto". This description aligns with García Garza's idea that the distillation of maguey ferment contributed to its deindigenization. Deindigenization, in this case, refers to the colonial appropriation of the agave, severing the ties that Indigenous peoples had with the maguey. 98 Assigning it market value, privatizing its plantations, and controlling its use were all acts that secularized the plant and progressively alienated it from its original communities.

Whereas *pulque* was perceived negatively by Spanish colonizers—due to its murky appearance and viscous texture—*vino mezcal* inspired admiration and sparked particular interest in *maguey*.

The distillation of agave thus spread throughout Mexico during the colonial period with the introduction of the more efficient Arab still, which remains the most widely used apparatus in agave distillation today. Spanish techniques, stemming from the distillation of grape must in the 18th century, contributed to the transformation of the product into an agave *eau-de-vie*. This tradition spread throughout much of New Spain up to the mid-20th century, according to García Garza. Subject to increasing industrialization in the region of Jalisco—where it would come to be known as *vino mezcal de Tequila*—mezcal, through tequila, became a symbol of Mexican national identity.<sup>3</sup>

## **Modern Liquid**

As described by Zygmunt Bauman in Liquid Modernity, forms capable of liquefying in both economic and symbolic terms become the dominant vectors of recognition and value within capitalist modernity. 99 The process of de-indigenization of the maguey, through which its juices took on a perfectly liquid form, gradually allowed mezcal to flow into the mechanisms of modern commerce. Distillation allows for far superior preservation of the product compared to the fermentation of pulque, which confines it to a context of local consumption. From this perspective, the viscosity of this pre-Hispanic product roots it in a cultural context whose flows are limited to a specific territoriality, a defined space, and a temporality determined by its perishable nature. In contrast, the timeless preservation of the distilled beverage allows it to expand. Railroads greatly contributed to its national and eventually international dissemination, and their significance is undeniable. The privatization of tequila and its railway distribution system constitute a spatial appropriation that Bauman associates with heavy modernity: "Heavy modernity was the era of territorial conquest. Wealth and power were firmly rooted in the land [...]".100 This applies equally to the colonial regimes of both tequila and pulque haciendas, indicating a gradual liquefaction of agave-based beverages.

That is to say, while the liquid nature of tequila earned it broad recognition due to its hygienic properties, appreciated by modernity, the infrastructures at the time remained somewhat rooted and heavy. The industrial modernization of tequila represents a transitional phase toward the true liquefaction that mezcal is currently undergoing, reflected in its very transparency. Today's mezcal, in its distilled, clear, and transportable form, benefits from technological and digital infrastructures that allow it to fully flow within the modern capitalist model. It is this liquidity, united with that of modernity, that allowed it to cross cultural and geographic borders and enter international markets. This Bauman's quote also captures the issues faced by small-scale producers who fail to keep up with the frenzied pace of

<sup>94</sup> Valenzuela Zapata, A. G., Regalado Pinedo, A., & Mizoguchi, M. (2008). Influencia asiática en la producción de mezcal en la costa de Jalisco. El caso de la raicilla. *Análisis*, 11(33), 91-116.

<sup>95</sup> ihid

<sup>96</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>97</sup> Description of Nueva Galicia by Domingo Lazáro de Arregui in 1621, cited in: Valenzuela Zapata, A. G., Regalado Pinedo, A., & Mizoguchi, M. (2008). Influencia asiática en la producción de mezcal en la costa de Jalisco. El caso de la raicilla. *Análisis*, 11(33), 91-116. p.996

Traduction: "a wine by still clearer than water, stronger than brandy, and with that taste"

<sup>98</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.

<sup>99</sup> Bauman, Z. (2002). *Modernidad líquida*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.100 Ibid. p.122

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large mezcal industries and their foreign investors. The distribution of mezcal, in its modern system, is therefore a matter of political struggle and power.

Yet, this integration of mezcal into the circuits of liquid modernity is not enough to explain its current popularity. Its global diffusion, though made possible by globalized capitalist infrastructures, is fueled by a dominant narrative that tells quite the opposite story. If interest in the product is so high, it is not so much because of its transparency and liquidity, but because of a narrative that conveys the slowness of memory and a status of resistance, grounded in stillness. In this sense, it is mezcal's apparent opposition to the kind of modernity described by Bauman that has allowed it to establish itself as the quintessential spirit of today's world.

# **Baroque liquidity**

In Bauman's societal narrative, all liquidity implies movement, a dissolution of stable forms down a slippery slope toward an uncertain and unstable modernity. Mezcal, seemingly absorbed by this movement—through its physical fluidity and mobility on international markets—nonetheless appears to resist this trend. While its dominant narrative allows it to enter the channels of liquid modernity, the very traditions it upholds imply gestures of permanence born from a slow, ritual memory that escapes capitalist acceleration. Bauman, in his definition of modernity, does not consider forms of resistance: liquidity operates as a river that permanently overflows, inundating everything in its way. It is in this misty space that the Latin American baroque ethos proposed by Echeverría emerges from the flood. The modern force that commodifies mezcal confronts the folds of its baroque roots, which anchor its memory. It is through its baroqueness that mezcal resists, fragments, and reproduces itself against the homogenizing force of modernity, through regional distillation practices and local knowledge. It is not solid, as this is neither its chemical nature nor its function. It instead belongs to a baroque liquidity—that is, another current flowing in tension with the liquid modernity. Mezcal behaves like a stable liquid, anchored in the memory of its rural practices.

Mezcal has indeed transformed over the years, as García Garza notes in describing its "Revolución". It has, so to speak, emancipated itself—by Bauman's criteria—by integrating into the global market through baroque capitalism. However, this circulation has not entirely diluted its ethos. If we distinguish baroque capitalism—a commercial form exploiting tradition—from the baroque ethos—existential and aesthetic—we can also distinguish Bauman's liquid modernity from the baroque liquidity of mezcal. While the former erases through dilution, the latter recomposes as a form of resistance. Mezcal thus becomes a critical exception to the Baumanian paradigm, in that its

circulation does not necessarily imply a loss of meaning, but rather its reactivation. Distillation is a key step in this process, as the liquid is actually fragmented and ritualized. These two dynamics represent the concrete modalities of this baroque resistance, amplified by the intoxicating properties they create.

# **Fragmented**

One of the most ambiguous themes in mezcal production lies in the techniques of distillation. At the heart of the debate is the practice of double distillation and the separation of "heads" and "tails" from the "heart"—that is, discarding the first and last fractions of liquid and preserving its core. This repetition of distillation serves to eliminate imperfections and reduce toxicity. García Garza links the popularization of this practice to technical campaigns launched in 1994, which aimed to counteract the drop in quality during a time of industry crisis. During that period, large companies purchased mezcal at extremely low prices, underpaying producers who, in turn, became less invested in maintaining quality. 102 Because a second distillation results in volume loss, many producers began to sell mezcal after only one distillation-reasoning that the liquid would be diluted by companies anyway. García Garza interprets this corrective gesture as a turning point: the founding act of the so-called "mezcal revolution", which repositioned the spirit as a high-quality product now marketed and celebrated.

Today, double distillation—demanding precision and rigor—is closely associated with the expertise of the maestro mezcalero. It inscribes a kind of "artist's touch" into a technical process, and here, the dominant narrative begins to tangle. Though often portrayed as a traditional gesture, double distillation also draws from empirical learning, tacit science, and even recent technical training. I met several producers who firmly claimed that this method had been practiced for generations in their village, independent of external influence. Its origins remain ambiguous, multiple—transmitted orally across villages and generations. The intention here is not to complicate the debate, but to sidestep it. Rather than getting stucked on the legitimacy or historical roots of distillation methods, the focus shifts to their expansive nature. No matter their provenance or place in the prevailing narrative, distillation—double or not—always involves a fragmentation of the liquid.

To produce a mezcal with refined flavor, one must "cut" the heads and tails. The first fractions emerging from the still are highly alcoholic (60–80°), while the final ones contain bitter or even toxic volatile compounds. What might be considered industrial waste becomes a resource for home remedies in rural contexts. Tails are discarded due to their toxicity, but the potent heads are infused with

<sup>101</sup> The first chapter of Bauman's book is called "Emancipation". Bauman, Z. (2002). *Modernidad líquida*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

<sup>102</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán.103 ibid.

medicinal herbs to treat stomach aches, wounds, or fevers. What is left aside transforms into a significant product. This chemical interaction materializes a campesino relationship with more-thanhuman entities rooted in embodied knowledge. 104 During distillation, mezcal splinters into meaningful parts, and the act of cutting gets both practical and aesthetic. In double distillation, these fragments are evaluated and sometimes reintroduced into the heart. Each cut is a moment of discernment. The liquid becomes matter to be smelled, tasted, questioned. The intuitive, imprecise nature of this phase affirms the ongoing heterogeneity of mezcal production. While scientists strive to set technical standards that homogenize batches for the market, traditional practices resist this flattening impulse of modern science and capitalism. 105 This fragmentation concerns not just space, but time. Repeating the distillation introduces a cyclical temporality—a gesture of return that is, in a way, anti-productive. It slows the pace, disrupting the flow of modern liquidity, and becomes a baroque performance, tensed between memory and variation.

In dominant narratives, baroque capitalism tries to obscure the scientific dimensions of distillation, favoring a romanticized image of tradition. Yet even in the presence of scientific instruments, the fragments of distillation maintain their baroque nature. Producers occasionally invited me to taste the heads and tails of their batch. This moment of trust-marginal, even transgressive-involved sharing the "condemned" parts of their product. And yet, just after this intimate gesture, they would often pull out an alcoholmeter to confirm what they had already assessed by taste. The test doubles itself-intuition and science intertwine in a nearly theatrical performance. I remember Chilo, a producer who had not drunk a drop of mezcal in years, estimating alcohol content with remarkable accuracy just by smelling and observing the shape of the pearls. 106 These tests unfolded in a small room of his home, late at night, in an atmosphere suspended between a mad scientist's lab and a ritual chamber. There is, in this setting, a striking parallel to the room where Melquíades practiced alchemy in Cien años de soledad. This is not metaphor or analogy, but a local aesthetic of science, amplified by non-Western epistemologies. Here, imprecision resists homogenization, and the convergence of technique and intuition becomes a site of tension-a space from which the baroque possibility of plurality emerges.

#### Ritualized

The act of distillation itself is ritualistic: producers wait long hours for the liquid to flow, sometimes staying up all night or alternating shifts with a compañero. Yet it is in a particular drinking practice, rooted in rural beliefs and modalities, that the ritualization of the liquid anchors it to its place of origin, consecrating it as a form of baroque liquidity. Mezcal does not circulate only through bodies or markets: it is a medium of relation to the Earth, to life, and to death.

In some regions, it is customary to offer the first sip of mezcal to the Earth-literally. After toasting with those with whom it is shared, a small portion is poured on the ground. 107 The liquid that falls is fixed there, in an act of radical permanence that completely opposes the circulation it assumes in Bauman's modern liquidity. Mezcal, in this moment, is deliberately sedimented. According to capitalist logic, interrupting its circulatory flow would be wasteful—an offense to its market value. As a baroque liquid, however, mezcal acquires meaningful, spiritual, and community-anchored value. By not being drunk, it becomes another fragment-separated from the cup and its contents, now dedicated to the Earth. It becomes an agent, bearer of a precise message. The act holds two particular and distinct meanings and many others, depending on region, village, and individual. For some, it is a gesture of gratitude to the Earth for allowing the agave to grow, be harvested, and transformed into this magical liquid—a direct reference to soil as a living entity. In other customs, the gesture is not for the Earth, but for the dead buried in it. Pouring mezcal on the ground establishes a platform of communication with the souls resting there. It refers to affect, but also to memory—to the cups once shared, now transmitted through alternative channels blending spirituality and spectrality. The dead never fully disappear, as indigenous and rural worldviews maintain communicative platforms with them hence the origins of Día de Muertos. In this drinking ritual, the Earth becomes that platform, and the act is repeated whenever mezcal is shared, reproducing the ceremonial gesture.

The ritualization of mezcal consumption is inscribed in the baroque ethos predominant in its production regions. The narrative based on baroque capitalism appropriates these rites and transforms them into performances meant to fascinate the visitor and include them in exoticized practices. Reproduction can be seen as a way to recognize and promote this relational system—but also risks denaturing and trivializing it. It becomes difficult to distinguish whether gestures are performed for tourists or from genuine belief. It is in these subtle tensions that narrative acts as a dark force upon the baroque. The ritual, repeated under the market's gaze, oscillates

<sup>104</sup> Conversation with Chilo López, maestro mezcalero, June 1st 2025.

<sup>105</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). *La revolución mezcalera*. Colegio de Michoacán. ; Liboiron, M. (2024). *Polluer, c'est coloniser*. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.

The pearls of the mezcal are created by pouring the liquid into a recipient. It is known to be an indication of good quality mezcal, as the bubbles tend to last longer when the mezcal is at what is considered a good alcohol graduation, in between 48° and 52°. The pearls, in the dominant narrative, became a whole aesthetic that fascinates both the beginners of the mezcal world and the experts.

<sup>107</sup> All the information about the practice of the dropping comes from oral transmission during conversations I had with maestros mezcaleros of different zones of Oaxaca and Guerrero, as well as a specific conversation on the subject with Cecilio Lopez Mendez, maestro mezcalero, on June 1st 2025.

between fidelity to its origins and commercial reinvention. Whether the capitalist narrative uses the baroque for economic interests, or whether the baroque clings to it for survival, remains a complex and perhaps unresolvable question

# Intoxicating

The liquefaction of pulgue and its purification through distillation since colonial times frame mezcal as a product of a syncretism that was never equal—and remains a deeply sensitive and contested matter. Javier Castellanos Martínez, in his book Kon dxekenha kan gaka. Imaginando el destino, shares a conversation with a paisano that reveals the asymmetric nature of "influence" as an imposed force rather than a mutual exchange. After reflecting on Western influence over the pueblos originarios, the paisano states: "Ustedes los intelectuales se dejaron influenciar en su pensamiento, y eso nos lo vienen a enseñar con la escuela, con la iglesia, con la música, con todo. Si ustedes que están dedicados a pensar no pudieron librarse del influjo de lo de afuera, nosotros más indefensos, porque estamos apurados buscando el sustento, menos ibamos a poder dejar de ser influenciados." This acute recognition echoes Frantz Fanon's powerful critique of colonial power structures, which imposed a rigid, unequal dualism on the colonized subject. Fanon writes: "La bourgeoisie coloniale avait martelé dans l'esprit du colonisé l'idée d'une civilisation parfaite... L'intellectuel colonisé avait adopté les formes de pensée et les normes culturelles du colonisateur. On lui avait donné deux choix : être un traître ou un renégat". 108 Here, Fanon exposes the crushing pressure exerted by colonial domination, in which the colonized intellectual becomes trapped between two inescapable identities—forced either to betray their origins or to be cast out as apostates. This imposed binary highlights the asymmetric power relations and the violent impact of influence as coercion, rather than as mutual cultural exchange. Similarly, modern mezcal emerges from unequal commercial logics that perpetuate neocolonial relationships within neoliberal economies and internal colonialism. The dominant narrative transforms mezcal into a fluid commodity, detaching it from its cosmological roots in an attempt to universalize and commercialize it. Distillation was the initial step in this long process of modernization-one that reflects ongoing histories of imbalance, domination, and imposed transformation.

Intoxication, in this context, becomes a nodal point between memory and resistance. While pulque-an ancestral drink from the maguey—was once reserved for specific figures and moments, implicitly recognizing its transformative power, colonization partook

108 Fanon, F. (2002). Les damnés de la terre. La Découverte. P.200

in a deindigenization of the maguey, erasing its ritual, communal, and cognitive dimensions. Pulque intoxication was long at the heart of colonial discourses of disqualification. As García Garza notes, «la diabolización de su consumo traducía el racismo v el desprecio por las culturas indígenas. Tanto por razones religiosas, éticas, sensoriales y sociales su consumo fue criticado sin por ello limitar su producción». 109 This moral judgment on the intoxicating effects of pulgue reveals a colonial tension between interest and contempt: its fabrication is tolerated for the capital it produces, but its use-especially among Indigenous bodies—is condemned, seen as vulnerable, irrational, or excessive. Intoxication thus becomes a symptom of structural racism, of a deindigenization project where sensory alterations are linked to lack of self-control and cultural deficiency. Paradoxically, this same pulque is today valorized in heritage discourses and even in urban hip circles nostalgic for "authenticity." The intoxication of tequila, meanwhile, became a national symbol thanks to its liquefaction and use of Western techniques. Mezcal's intoxication is described by the dominant narrative as magical: «el pulque y el mezcal comparten la materia prima para su elaboración y ambas producen una embriaguez considerada como 'especial', 'diferente' e incluso 'mágica'». 110 Indeed, mezcal, through the purity of its ingredients and the attentiveness of its distillation, produces an alcohol that causes no hangover. Proper distillation eliminates the ethanol that causes headaches. It is also generally consumed with attention and responsibility during ceremonial festivities. This historical shift-from colonial rejection to heritage valorization—shows that intoxication, far from being a mere physiological state, is shaped by power, race, and cultural legitimacy. It becomes an ideological marker: demonized when it touches Indigenous bodies, celebrated when filtered, distilled, and «purified» through Western techniques. Thus, the intoxication of mezcal-now adorned with exotic or mystical flair-still carries the unresolved tensions of colonial dispossession and persistent cosmologies. It is in this in-between-between commercial recuperation and ritual survivance—that mezcal asserts its resistance.

Through its fragmentation, ritualized consumption, and the unique intoxication it provokes, mezcal resists liquid modernity. In its expansion, in the relational platform it creates, and in its sensory vertigo, it becomes a baroque subject: amplified, remembered, troubled. This is where the baroque liquidity of mezcal fully reveals itself. Its transparency is physical, but its meaning is saturated—with memory, colonial tensions, and cosmological persistence. Mezcal's baroque liquidity becomes troubled through its resistance.

<sup>&</sup>quot;The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the colonized mind the idea of a perfect civilization... The colonized intellectual had adopted the forms of thought and the cultural standards of the colonizer. The colonized intellectual had been given two choices: to be a traitor or an apostate."

<sup>109</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezcalera. Colegio de Michoacán. p.63 «the demonization of its consumption reflected racism and contempt for Indigenous cultures. For religious, ethical, sensory, and social reasons, its consumption was criticized without limiting its production.»

<sup>«</sup>pulque and mezcal share the same raw material and both produce a drunkenness considered 'special,' 'different,' even 'magical'»

3. mezcal beyond the myth



Serpentine in its cold water bath. The vapor from the boiling fermented mash travels through this copper coil that cools it down, condensing it back into liquid mezcal.





Artisanal palenque, Santiago Matatlán.

# 4. Yegolé disappearing

This part explores the critical position of the pueblo of Yegolé, caught between its baroque nature and the pressure of baroque capitalism, provoking a speculative imaginary of its disappearance based on the prophecy of Macondo. By opening to a market culture, the pueblo is threatened by the loss of its own identity, dissolving into commercial, capitalist, and extractivist dynamics. In the context of Latin America, the weight of disappearance is highly evocative and provocative, touching on profound traumas. By focusing on the forms of resistance that emerge from it, disappearance is conceived through its potential to open up alternative modes of existence. Its imaginary, through the highlighting of forces that refuse to disappear, becomes an opportunity to rethink living-with mezcal, rather than being mezcalero as imposed by the dominant narrative. The final result is an archive project of the pueblo of Yegolé—a visual narration in the format of a photobook and a short film, featuring how life persists there, within the folds of its baroqueness.



4. yegolé disappearing introduction

Is Yegolé a pueblo mezcalero? A few years ago, this term probably would have made no sense at all, and even less so applied to this tiny village located three hours by car - at least one hour on dirt roads — from the city of Oaxaca. Before questioning its mezcal producing identity, it seems relevant to recall what a pueblo actually is. Since this question has been introduced throughout the thesis, it will be summarized as follows: a pueblo is a rural village based on community organization. The word pueblo itself fundamentally refers to a population. To consider it as a place therefore implies the establishment of a population within a specific territory. According to Luis Tapia, its existence is marked by tension and is the result of a complex relational system: "[...] la noción de pueblo se contrapone a lo que se puede nombrar de varios modos: oligarquía, élite, clase dominante o bloque dominante, burguesía, burocracia. Esto implica que la noción de pueblo es una noción relacional. Emerge en relación con otro polo, que es el polo de la concentración de la riqueza, del poder político y el reconocimiento social."1

Yegolé is a village where mezcal has been produced for generations. In the surrounding mountains, some people still maintain an original method of production, untouched by the hygienic and sanitary standards of the new "modern" production norms. Only recently have these standards begun to assert themselves among the larger of the small producers who have joined the NOM-070², leading to the expansion of their *palenques* in response to increased market demand. The mezcal produced by Rey Campero, whose facility sits along the riverbank, is, for example, highly sought after by connoisseurs.³ The flavor profile of mezcal from Yegolé is distinctive. It belongs to an uncommon terroir, since few medium-scale producers are based there. Rey Campero's *palenque* was only recently renovated to increase output in line with demand. Its architecture is designed

to optimize workflow<sup>4</sup>, and its aesthetic blends into the local style, vet its dimensions are outsized compared to the rest of the village. The only constructions that come close in scale are the church and the other major palengue, Vago. Vago's palengue is located a bit further away, though still within the village center, and is built on two levels. A recent extension added a rooftop terrace where the handful of foreign visitors arriving on organized tours can sit to sample the brand's mezcal while enjoying views of the valley and river. More and more palengues owned by large brands are crafting a new image involving the presence of the architect. In the context of Yegolé and other pueblos where most homes are self-built, this is a relatively novel and unusual practice. These aestheticizing initiatives - globalized and curated - of mezcal's architectures and infrastructures are the markers of a gradual vet accelerated transformation. Tourism stimulation is only one facet of the complex dynamics exerting pressure on Yegolé in a mythologization of its development.

If the *pueblo* of Yegolé is a baroque subject par excellence, the forces tying it to the mezcal trade are highly significant. It therefore represents an ideal case study for reflecting on the nature of the relationship between the baroque and baroque capitalism. Is Yegolé's baroque nature consciously performed in service of capitalism as a means to endure and resist? Or is it simply fertile ground for investors who see in it a tourism development project, privileging the interests of the visitor at the expense of the pueblo, once again cast aside of its own story? Are its values, traditions, and ways of life being casually exoticized for those who extract a selfish souvenir from them? If so, then baroque capitalism tragically consumes the baroque ethos, leaving behind only the crumbs of its resistance. Just as capitalist contradiction has been for Latin America since the Conquest, this situation appears equally unacceptable and intolerable. It is, in that sense, the drama of the drama—the resistant absorbed by the very force it strives to resist. To borrow the words previously quoted of Castellanos Martinez, tourism then appears as a defeat, as a prostitution. As the obligation to submit to the Western gaze in order to reap economic benefits and infrastructure, under the guise of development. A development that responds to a single standard of existence: that of the hegemony of a One-World-World.

The mechanisms linking Yegolé's baroque and the dominant mezcal narrative are so complex that it would be overly ambitious to try to dismantle them—or perhaps already too late to stop them. What this thesis proposes instead—as a narrative, archival, photographic, and cinematographic project—is to bear witness to the existence of a pueblo *living with* mezcal without necessarily *being* mezcalero. The idea is to break away from the market narrative, from the roots of its concept to the idealization of development that comes from it. If mezcal is traditional and authentic, it can probably only be so

<sup>1</sup> Tapia Mealla, L. (2022). *Dialéctica del colonialismo interno*. Traficantes de sueños. p.22

<sup>&</sup>quot;[...] the notion of pueblo is opposed to what can be named in various ways: oligarchy, elite, dominant class or dominant bloc, bourgeoisie, bureaucracy. This implies that the notion of pueblo is a relational notion. It emerges in relation to another pole, which is the pole of concentration of wealth, political power, and social recognition."

<sup>2</sup> The NOM-070-SCFI-2024 is the adjourned version of the standards established by the Mezcal Regulatory Council. It governs the criteria that allow batches of mezcal to be officially recognized as such and labeled under the designation of origin mezcal. Its value is highly contested. On one hand, it enables regulation aimed at protecting consumer health and preserving the terroir; on the other, it confines mezcal within a narrow and elitist scientific standard that is inaccessible to the production methods of certain producers. The issue is extremely complex and equally politicized. It has been deliberately left out of this thesis, first because many authors have already thoroughly addressed its critique, its dissemination, and its socio-cultural impacts (cite authors); and secondly, because the theme deviates from the objective of positioning the pueblo as the central subject. The NOM and its legislative apparatus originate primarily from the need to control a market, which shifts the discussion away from the core focus of this work.

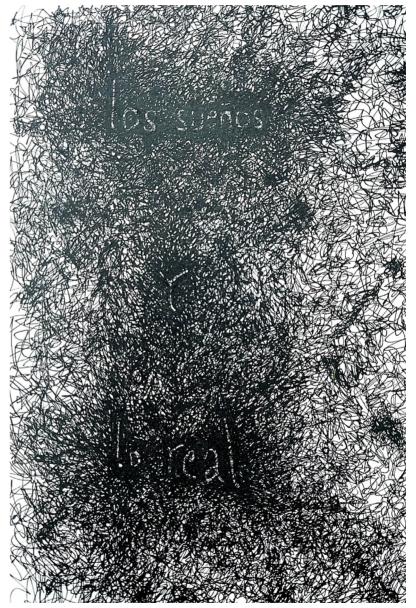
<sup>3</sup> This information has been shared with me during various catas (mezcal tasting events), and particularly during a conversation with Omar Trejo, of the Mis Mezcales shop in Ciudad de México, October 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Information shared with me during a visit at the Rey Campero palenque, in Candelaría Yégolé, in January 2023.

4. yegolé disappearing introduction

outside of a market that commodifies it, or maintaining a conscious balance within it. The moment the commercial sphere overtakes the communal one, tradition and authenticity become nothing more than illusions—illusions instrumentalized by baroque capitalism. Tourist and advertising design that create globalized spaces marks its first spatial and territorial incursion, where sensory experiences are shaped to generate feelings of participation and helpfulness. Yet the visitor's interest is spontaneous and instrumental; it vanishes after the visit. The relationships born out of tourism are thus ephémères and become trivial, almost absurd, when situated among all the enduring ones that exist around the pueblo. It must be clarified that the aim is not to deny the legitimacy of the pueblo's participation in the mezcal trade, but rather to reevaluate what mezcal is as a tradition and what role it plays as a market product in the permanence of the spatial and architectural organization of the pueblo. The goal, borrowing the terms of the thesis, is to define mezcal's position in relation to the baroque nature of the pueblo, and that of baroque capitalism. Far from engaging in dualistic logic, the proposition of various narrations instead creates the possibility of moving between these two realities without fueling oppositional conflict.

This section unfolds in three parts. First, a return to Macondo allows Yegolé to be situated within its prophecy and to anticipate and recognize its key dynamics. Comparing Yegolé to Macondo becomes a way to position mezcal and agave within the pueblo as a subject, using the delicate approach of literature and surreal storytelling. The final vanishing of Macondo becomes an opportunity to reflect on the theme of disappearance and to recognize the mechanisms of resistance and permanence it motivates. The second part is then dedicated to exploring the meaning of disappearance, through an open reflection on its place within myth, cinema, and reality. Finally, the notion of archive is explored as a key concept of the final narration project; an archive of alternative existence, of baroque resistance, and of the plurality of worlds that truly surround the pueblo of Yegolé. A photographic and cinematographic archive of what exists in the margins of a suffocating dominant narrative; an visual archive of what still silently but vigorously opposes it; an archive whose narrative power calls for the endurance of dream and memory.



Los sueños y lo real, drawing by Leandro Cappetto.

4. yegolé disappearing prophecy and speculation

# **Prophecy and speculation**

"In practice, Ozanana – the land of pineapples – does not exist.
Childhood meant inventing your own lands
[...]
We could name or rename each thing
And we could dream with things
[...]
I imagined myself as each element
I was wind sky
I was clouds ships
I was seas waves"
Rodney Saint-Eloi

As mentioned earlier, the prophetic vocation that García Márquez gives to his novel, which takes on considerable significance in its final pages, deserves to be heard and explored. More than just a literary ending, it constitutes a genuine critical suggestion about the drastic consequences of extractivist economies on rural areas of the Global South. Although anchored in a specific contextual reference, Macondo can be transposed onto the histories of various pueblos that have disintegrated under the pressure of foreign interests in their resources. It is with this perspective that the prophecy of Macondo is applied to the case of Yegolé. It becomes a justification for the speculative stance adopted regarding its potential disappearance.

# **Prophecy**

The writing of *Cien años de soledad* serves as a way for the author to critique and confront the trauma of a specific historical event — the massacre by the banana company now known as *Chiquita*, in the Santa Marta region of Colombia. Its final disappearance stands as a prophecy, not so much an end as a warning of the insidious and persistent effects of extractivist and colonial logics on rural areas of the Global South existing outside urban centers. These urban centers are mentioned in the novel only as inaccessible ideas from which political power originates, while the story unfolds around a social context belonging to the pueblo, a rural village based on communal organization. The question of the pueblo remains as delicate today as it was in the years when García Márquez wrote his novel. Its relationship with urban areas and their imaginaries reveals a continuation of the colonial historical process. In the mezcal regions, the monopoly on



Illustration of Macondo by Luisa Rivera for the 2017 edition of the Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial of Cien años de soledad, by Gabriel Garcia Márquez.

agave monoculture by large companies, both national and foreign, and the appropriation of the largest brands by industrial or celebrity figures reproduce exchange dynamics unfavorable to small producers and their communities, threatening the very possibilities of existence intrinsic to the pueblo.<sup>7</sup>

From a comparative perspective, if one sticks to historical temporality, the bananas of Macondo can be seen as a symbolic equivalent of Yegole's agave, which legitimizes the speculative discussion about its disappearance. As mentioned earlier, since colonial times, agave was already cultivated in the Hidalgo region, mainly to supply the pulgue industry. The exploitation of agave comparable to Macondo's bananas appears between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, notably in the Jalisco region with the rise of tequila. This period corresponds to a phase of global industrialization marked by an intensification of technical and logistical capacities favoring commercial expansion from North to South. In this context, Western capitalism imposed itself as a model of success, progress, and development - rarely questioned regarding its consequences. The colonial trajectories of Colombia and Mexico show striking similarities in how colonial structures transformed into neocolonial extractivist dynamics through capitalist expansion.8 These are precisely the dynamics that strike Macondo, sealing its prophetic fate of disappearance.

<sup>5</sup> Saint-Éloi, R. (2023). To Speak and Betray Nothing? In A. Mbembe & F. Sarr (Eds.), The Politics of Time: Imagining African Becomings. Polity Press. p.266 "In practice, Ozanana – the land of pineapples – does not exist. Childhood meant inventing your own lands [...] We could name or rename each thing / And we could dream with things [...] I imagined myself as each element / I was wind sky / I was clouds ships / I was seas waves"

<sup>6</sup> Vargas Llosa, M. (1971). *García Márquez: Historia de un deicidio*. Monte Avila Editores.

<sup>7</sup> Maldonado Alvarado, B. (2010). Comunidad, comunidad y colonialismo en Oaxaca, México: la nueva educación comunitaria y su contexto. *Universiteit Leiden*.
8 **On colonialism and extractivism in Latin America:** Galeano, E. (2023). *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*. Siglo XXI Editores - México.; Svampa, M. (2019). *Las fronteras del neoextractivismo en América Latina: conflictos socioambientales, giro ecoterritorial y nuevas dependencias*. CALAS, Maria Sibylla Merian Center.

## 4. yegolé disappearing

The mezcal industry, developing on the margins of tequila and promoting cultural tourism in Oaxaca since the 1970s, corresponds to the period when García Márquez wrote Cien años de soledad. Several experts agree that during the first wave of mezcal trade, it was still little valued.9 This statement regarding mezcal's value is only reducible to an economic viewpoint. Culturally, mezcal had long been part of rural life and its spiritual, medicinal, and ritual practices, as is still the case in pueblos like Yegolé. 10 It was incorporated into spheres of community life, already baroqued by the colonial era through Christianization and other imposed and reproduced regimes of existence. At that time, several Latin American villages had already been stripped of their relations with their environment. It was during these years that Eduardo Galeano published Las Venas abiertas de América latina, a book guickly persecuted, censored, and hidden. 11 The critique of the North-South exploitation model, repeated since colonial times, has often been marginalized by dominant institutions eager to preserve an idealized image of their role in development. It was a time when the term "Third World" was commonly used and when the "American Empire" was growing at a frenetic pace, only just beginning to be critiqued by internal movements. Mexico, situated territorially and socioeconomically between North and South, sought to follow this model, while its baroque resistance increasingly concentrated in rural areas. Bonfil-Batalla writes that "[e]ntre campo y ciudad las relaciones nunca fueron de igual a igual, sino de sometimiento de lo indo-rural a lo urbano-español. Esta identificación perdura hasta hoy, tanto en sectores urbanos como entre la población india y rural tradicional. Es una identificación respaldada por el dominio que ejerce el México urbano sobre el México rural".12

The situation described by Guillermo Bonfil-Batalla highlights the historical continuation of the phenomenon that allows us to relate Macondo's prophecy to Yegolé's contemporary case. This prophecy, though anchored in a critique of extractivist and neocolonial dynamics, is not limited to a historical or economic reading. It holds significance in the very fabric of human relationships, imaginaries, and temporalities shaping the world of the pueblo. Macondo does not disappear only due to external historical forces, but through the gradual erosion of what made it a world — community, connection to the land, shared memory, daily gestures. Within this slow dissolution, certain figures stand as discreet yet tenacious resistances. Among

carta para los lópez-sánchez

 <sup>9</sup> García Garza, D. (2023). La revolución mezclara. El Colegio de Michoacán.
 10 Pardo, J., Reinhardt Kirchmayr, M., & Gschaedler, A. (2023). Saberes y

<sup>10</sup> Pardo, J., Reinhardt Kirchmayr, M., & Gschaedler, A. (2023). Saberes y tradiciones que dan identidad y sabor a los mezcales en Guerrero y Oaxaca. *Horizontes Transdisciplinarios*, 1(1), 125-135.

<sup>11</sup> Galeano, E. (2023). *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*. Siglo XXI Editores - México.

<sup>12</sup> Bonfil Batalla, G. (1994). México profundo: una civilización negada. Grijalbo. "[b]etween countryside and city, relations have never been equal, but rather one of subjugation of the Indo-rural to the urban-Spanish. This identification persists today, both in urban sectors and among the indigenous and traditional rural population. It is an identification supported by the dominance exercised by urban Mexico over rural Mexico".

I arrived in Yegolé for the first time during a baptism at Josefina's parents' house, Lucano and Sofia. I was the only güera, and so, in a way, I got baptized too. Since then, Chilo has never called me anything else. I can still hear his voice calling, "¡Güera!", from the house to the river — there's never any doubt he means me. That night, I had the chance to meet many family members — people I would see again a year and a half later at Chilo and Jose's wedding. It was a powerful and beautiful feeling to embrace them again.

When I thank Chilo for anything, he always asks me why. It has almost become a ritual. I say *thank you*, he says *why*, and I answer, *because*. Everything comes from the heart; every moment is shared because it is meant to be, and so — in his view — there is nothing to thank for. What you give, you will receive. I could say this applies to Yegolé in general, but I do not want to idealize life in the pueblo. Relationships are complex, and every member of the family has told me something about the challenges of small communities. But this principle certainly holds within this family, and in the bond I share with them.

Ceci addressed me with usted (the formal «you») until the second time I came — just like she does with her parents — even though I asked her many times not to. I was so happy when, eventually, our friendship and shared trust dissolved those formalities. I do not feel I deserve any more respect from her than she does from me. She opened her world and her vulnerability to me, sharing emotions she knew would become part of my work. That takes a deep kind of trust, and I am so grateful for what grew between us.

José keeps trying to make me eat meat. It is inconceivable to her that I would not. But the last time I visited, she went out to buy chayotes to make me a delicious vegetable stew. The first time, we made a deal: her permission for me to take her portrait in exchange for me eating a bowl of chicken soup — from a chicken she had just killed. That exchange sealed a pact. After that,

she no longer cared about the camera, and I sometimes tried the meaty dishes. But we never asked too much of each other, respecting one another's sensibilities. José is a hugger, a laugher, a precious soul — a giver.

The first time I arrived in Yegolé, the first family member I met — right after Chilo appeared at the car window — was Yair. He looked at me with small, deep eyes full of tenderness, as if I were some kind of alien, then suddenly hugged me. It has been amazing to watch him grow across these three visits. Yair would follow us while we filmed, then quietly lie down on a towel or a sweater beside my feet, just to stay close.

When I came back the second time with my brother, I worried that his poor Spanish would make things difficult. If the first night was a bit rocky, by the second day it was already better. The imagination of the pueblo is such that words become secondary — communication finds other paths: expressions, gestures, movement, gazes. When Yair said Renaud was his best friend, my heart melted. The same happened when Lulu and Matis came for the film. José could only talk about Lulu, and they all lovingly teased Matis, mimicking our behavior with him as if they understood even our jokes in French. In fact, at some point, Yair let us know he understood some of what we were saying, referencing something we had discussed only between us. That, to me, was a beautiful sign: the imprints are reciprocals.

It is always hard to leave Yegolé. This last time was harder still, because I do not know when I will have the opportunity to return. But I know I will. I promised them — and myself — that I would. And soon. At Chilo and José's wedding, I cried. I cried when I saw Cecilia dressed in purple for her quinceañera. I cried when I hugged Yair goodbye the first time I left. I cried because I love this family — as if they were a little bit mine.

Like Chilo told me: in the pueblo, everyone is family, and so am I.



Gracias a los cuatro por todo, aunque sé que no me lo van a aceptar.

Es un regalo de la vida que me haya puesto en sus caminos, tan alejados del mío, en su bonito pueblo del río de piedra. Gracias por enseñarme un montón de cosas con una paciencia legendaria, por cuidarme, pero también por no cuidarme demasiado y hacerme sentir, de verdad, como en casa —y no solo como una huésped.

Sé que mi presencia implicó compromisos con sus deberes del campo, de la escuela y de la vida cotidiana. Ojalá un día pueda regresar de una forma tan natural que ya no interrumpa sus ciclos, y que incluso pueda entrar en ellos con una fluidez nacida de la costumbre y del cariño.

Les echo de menos —a ustedes, a Canelo-Tommy, a Tilín-Tilín, las guanábanas, Chuky, el río y los magueyes.

Nos vemos pronto. Y, hasta entonces, deseo con todo mi corazón que a cada uno de ustedes les vaya lo mejor, en cualquier modo este mejor sea.

## prophecy and speculation

them, Ursula, in her femininity, embodies this other circular and baroque temporal dimension, opposed to the linear, conquering time of modernity. She refers somewhat to the wisdom of a potential matriarchal society, which was, however, crushed by an ideal of grandeur: first the micro-civilizational project of Macondo, then the technical innovations of the gypsies, then wars and revolutions. Ursula, from the beginning of her own story and Macondo's, is not considered in her mythical wanderings. While she worries about the prophecy regarding consanguineous relations in her family — haunted by the idea that her son might be born with a pig's tail — her torments are taken lightly. Constantly overshadowed by masculine ambitions, she nonetheless represents the pillar of the family and thus the village, a pillar confined within the rooms of the family house, embodying a spirit of community she literally keeps standing. Ursula remains present almost until the end. She is so old that her age belongs to the surreal elements composing the story. Her constant reappearance is uncanny, as if she represents the last breaths of a form of resistance forgotten and overwhelmed by modernity. Her presence in the novel then becomes a key to thinking about other forms of survival, other ways of inhabiting a threatened world — and an echo figure for other pueblos like Yegolé. This irrevocable presence testifies to a natural and mythical circular time that characterizes baroque campesino life, while the men around her come and go in singular events coming from the modern project. The men, leaving or invading Macondo, connect its cyclicity with historical linearity in a temporal overlap that leads both to the fatal event of Macondo's disappearance and to its infinite, indefinite, universal prophetic transposition.

In the mezcal world, as in the Latin American society portrayed by García Márquez, the female figure is both revered and repressed. An entire branch of feminist studies from Latin America could be explored in this perspective. However, this work is beyond the scope of this thesis, and the mention of Ursula as a resistant subject here mainly invites recognition of the importance of presence - even if erased - and community care as radical acts of resistance against the regime to which both Macondo and Yegolé are subjected. One of the threats hanging over the permanence of Yegolé is the massive emigration of its inhabitants, especially men, seeking other life opportunities abroad, mainly in the United States. As in Macondo, the men leave while the women stay. This position fits within extremely complex social and cultural dynamics that once again establish continuity in the pueblo's situation and position Yegolé within García Márquez's prophetic critique regarding its disappearance under modern pressures.

# **Speculation**

Since the Conquest, the city has imposed itself as the subject of a historical project, relegating the pueblo to the status of an 4. yegolé disappearing prophecy and speculation

object of domination. Benjamin Maldonado Alvarado highlights the importance of imagination and imagery in creating a collective vision aimed at decolonization. According to him, as long as the dominant group holds the monopoly on imagination, it can guide the dominated within its colonial project and thus even reduce their possibilities to nurture alternative paths.<sup>13</sup> From this perspective, speculation is not a simple fictional projection: it becomes a method of subjective affirmation, a narrative act intended to rebalance the imagination in favor of the pueblo. Far from being a gratuitous exercise, it is a way to name and amplify the concrete pressures exerted on Yegolé: extraction, rural exodus, identity reconfiguration, and the weight of a commercial mezcal imaginary. Through a visual narration rooted in its cultural forms, between myth and daily life, the speculation about Yegolé's disappearance seeks to open a situated space of expression. The choice of disappearance as a speculative imaginary expands the reflection around the prophecy of Macondo. It concretizes García Márquez's critical exercise by observing what emerges around his warning.

Disappearance is particularly evocative, as it exists in Yegolé in three specific forms. First, through the formation of the pueblo from the disappearance of other smaller pueblos that populated its surrounding mountains in the recent past. This migratory phenomenon, which now affects Yegolé itself, appears as a second form of disappearance threatening it. Over recent years, several families have chosen to move to the city. Others have seen family members, mostly men, leave for the United States in search of better economic opportunities. The commemorative plaque from the church's 2006 foundation expresses special gratitude to the migrants for their economic support in making its construction possible. Finally, the invasion of extractivist phenomena constitutes a third threat. In this respect, the case of Nejapa de Madero stands as a concrete example. This village, located in the Yautepec district, neighboring Yegolé, corresponds to the largest agave production zone in Oaxaca, mainly monoculture of espadin on its mountains, victims of massive deforestation. This form of disappearance, involving invasion rather than emptiness, is more symbolic than material and refers to the disappearance of the forms of life characterizing the pueblo, subjected to a hegemonic extractivist logic.

Maldonado Alvarado heavily relies on discourse around internal colonialism to criticize the colonial reproductions that still weigh on *pueblos originarios* — indigenous communities with Mesoamerican ancestry. Yegolé does not claim to be a pueblo originario. Yet, its communal, rural, and baroque forms of life place it within a marginalization logic comparable to that denounced in

the context of internal colonialism. The question of identity and its cultural derivatives is extremely complex there. The inhabitants of Yegolé report discrimination from people in other surrounding towns, where they are anyway called "yopes," a pejorative term referring to indigenous beings. 15 If Yegole's geographical region is indeed characterized by an unusual absence of pueblos originarios for the state of Oaxaca, it is partly due to historical processes that previously eradicated their possibilities of existence. Yegolé thus also stands at the center of tensions operating between its baroque rural resistance and the charisma of baroque capitalism penetrating it with growing insistence. Petit Cruz, in his analysis of a Cien años de soledad temporality, refers to a campesino temporality, which he conceives as isolated from the historical temporality characterizing the urban, relying on Unamuno's "intrahistory". In the case of a pueblo like Yegolé, it is now impossible to separate the possibility of an exclusively intrahistorical time from linear history, as much as it is impossible to deny the permanence of indigenous culture by limiting oneself to the criterion of unmarked belonging or the absence of an indigenous language. First, because modern technological elements have permanently and radically carried the Western imaginary through cell phones, since the signal reached the pueblo more than three years ago. Then, because the civilization project that Petit Cruz associates with linear temporality depends not only on territorial extraction but also on a tourist staging involving the participation and exoticization of the inhabitants. Temporal and identity questions thus necessarily intersect in the advertising and tourism strategies of the mezcal trade. The mechanisms of a colonial domination system remain visible and active, and one only has to look at the mutilated mountains of Nejapa de Madero to recognize the colonial exploitation of a territory. If polluting is colonizing, as Max Liboiron explains well, there is no doubt about the nature of the relations operating in this region.17

The prophecy of Macondo thus stands as a plausible warning about Yegolé's future. In this light, the intention is to provoke the pressure exerted by the agave system on Yegolé and to push to the limit the process of modernization, development, and globalization underway there, following the epiphanic path traced by García Márquez at the end of *Cien años de soledad*. Speculation is used to anticipate a possible disappearance of the pueblo of Yegolé, in order to highlight its manifestations of resistance. The threats weighing on the pueblo are ambiguous, shared between the void of emigration and the excess of invasion. This ambivalence thus leaves room for multiple imaginaries, imaginaries formed by the pueblo from its intrinsic baroque resistance.

 <sup>13</sup> Maldonado Alvarado, B. (2010). Comunidad, comunidad y colonialismo en
 Oaxaca, México: la nueva educación comunitaria y su contexto. *Universiteit Leiden*.
 14 Maldonado Alvarado, B. (2010). Comunidad, comunidad y colonialismo en
 Oaxaca, México: la nueva educación comunitaria y su contexto. *Universiteit Leiden*.

<sup>15</sup> Conversation with a maestro mezcalero of Candelaría Yegolé, December 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Cruz Petit, B. (2020). El espacio en «Cien años de soledad»: la interioridad como condición de la adivinanza del mundo. *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, 40, 205-217

<sup>17</sup> Liboiron, M. (2024). Polluer, c'est coloniser. Editions Amsterdam/Multitudes.v

4. yegolé disappearing on disappearance

# On disappearance

This section proposes a reflection on the real and imaginary forms of disappearance, aiming to recognize the multiple meanings and implications that can be explored through a visual narration project of Yegolé. Two main approaches to disappearance are highlighted, constituting a political and ethical aesthetic of resistance in opposition to it. The first, focusing on the reality of territorial struggles in Oaxaca, proposes spectrality as a creative intermediary between presence and absence. The second explores the cinematic universe of *Twin Peaks* by David Lynch, dwelling on the question of the dream as a spacetime that blurs the boundaries between reality and the imaginary of disappearing. These two themes engage in dialogue with the universe of Macondo as a constant reminder of its prophetic nature. Together, these mechanisms, deriving from a baroque logic, justify and guide the aesthetic approach of the Yegolé archive project.

# Real Specters

Este pueblo está lleno de ecos. Tal parece que estuvieran encerrados en el hueco de las paredes o debajo de las piedras. Cuando caminas, sientes que te van pisando los pasos. Oyes crujidos. Risas. Unas risas ya muy viejas, como cansadas de reír. Y voces ya desgastadas por el uso.

Pedro Páramo, Juan Rulfo<sup>18</sup>

In the context of Latin America, the phenomenon of disappearance is absolutely concrete. The desaparecidos of the military dictatorship in Argentina, the faces of the disappeared in Mexico whose photos haunt the zócalos of many cities, the disappeared from the Guatemalan armed conflict, and the disappearance of women and young girls through an alarming rate of femicides across the continent are but a few human forms of disappearance existing in everyday reality. As Galeano points out in his work, this plague lies at the very foundation of Latin American colonial history, having led to the disappearance of a large majority of its indigenous peoples, and, in Mexico's case, of the Mesoamerican civilization.<sup>19</sup> He also highlights how extractivist dynamics contribute to the disappearance of fauna and flora through human-induced phenomena such as deforestation, flooding, or fires. The imaginary created around disappearance in the literary, poetic, and visual universe of Latin American authors and artists thus stems from a reading and interpretation of a real

18 Rulfo, J. (2005). Pedro Páramo. RM. p.44

This town is full of echoes.

It seems as if they were trapped inside the hollow walls or beneath the stones. When you walk, you feel footsteps following yours.

You hear creaks. Laughter. Some laughter already very old, as if tired of laughing. And voices worn out from use.

19 Galeano, E. (2023). Las venas abiertas de América Latina. Siglo XXI Editores -México. and traumatic phenomenon rooted in colonial past but still vividly present and threatening the future.

For some pueblos in Oaxaca, disappearance is indeed no mere imaginary but an absolute reality. The struggle for land affects a great number of communities, especially indigenous ones, forced to displacement for primarily economic and extractivist interests over their territories. In 2023, the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH) counted over 380,000 people internally displaced nationwide, with Oaxaca's and Chiapas' indigenous persons being the most affected states.<sup>20</sup> In March 2024, the houses of the village of Cerro Metate, a pueblo in the municipality of San Juan Mixtepec, were violently shot at, destroyed, and burned.<sup>21</sup> The village, home to 15 families, was reduced to ashes, through which only traces of daily life remain visible. After 14 years of resistance, its inhabitants were definitively forced to abandon their lands, with nowhere to go. Beyond residences, the surrounding forest, potable water systems, and fertile lands, including agave plantations cultivated communally for years, were also destroyed. This situation led to discussions between Mixtepec and Yosoñama, a neighboring pueblo accused of these acts, tensions exacerbated by paramilitary group presence. Although a peace agreement was signed by both parties on January 12, 2021, violence persists, transforming an agrarian conflict into a profound political and social struggle.<sup>22</sup>

Volumes could be written on the historical complexity and violence of these rural dynamics. Here, however, the focus is less on factual analysis than on what they reveal: an increasing tension leading to the disappearance of pueblos or their community structures. Awareness of the tension leading to this disappearance is enough to outline the tangible portrait of the agrarian problem. The case previously analyzed involves two communities fighting for a forest that provides them resources and economic support. The scale remains contained compared to other contexts, such as the construction of the Miguel Alemán dam, which forcibly displaced 22,000 people, the majority from indigenous communities.<sup>23</sup> Large projects aiming to produce renewable energy are often associated with development and progress, whereas they actually cause destructive impacts on populations displaced from territories to fulfill a project that is not their own.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the myth of development acts as a ravaging element against alternative ways of life existing on territories desired by capitalist extractivist logic,

<sup>20</sup> García, J. (2024, 11 11). Un pueblo en ruinas y la lucha por el territorio en Oaxaca, México. *enun2×3*.

<sup>21</sup> ibic

<sup>22</sup> Secretaría de Gobierno de Oaxaca. (2021, 01 12). Brinda segrego atención a las comunidades de Santo Domingo Yosoñama y San Juan Mixtepec. Gobierno. oaxaca. gob.mx

<sup>23</sup> González Canales, Y. Y. (2023, December 8). Desplazamiento forzado por proyectos extractivos: una mirada a las presas en México. *IBERO*.

<sup>24</sup> García Arenas, V. (2007). La Presa Presidente Alemán. «Un gran monstruo devorador de hombres». *Boletín del Archivo Histórico del Agua*, *35*, 50-54.

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Drawing by Maria Nikolaeva. *Pedro Páramo Part 2*. Published on Behance, 2018



Entrance of the Black Lodge, Twin Peaks, Season 1. Series by David Lynch and Mark Frost, 1990.

whether ecological or not. The displacement phenomenon it causes produces a true disappearance of the pueblo, in its raw sense and devoid of any constructive imaginary. The pressure on Yegolé and its region regarding agave production for mezcal, highly visible in the neighboring territory of Nejapa de Madero, is thus at risk not only of agrarian conflicts but also of a distortion of territorial identity and the complex relations between human and more-than-human subjects.

From a speculative perspective, the narration of the renowned Mexican novel *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo is particularly interesting in that it creates a narrative of disappearance based on the real question of land struggles.<sup>25</sup> Although written in 1955, the novel remains current in its depiction of the disappearance of a pueblo through its ghostly inhabitants. In Pedro Páramo, Comala—the fictional pueblo represents the outcome of agrarian conflicts, where not only the land but also its inhabitants have become ghosts. The deceased residents, who should rest underground, live an eternal daily life as if time had never passed, symbolizing that the oppression inflicted by the power-hungry Pedro Páramo prevented them from finding peace. The village's disappearance is the result of an unjust land management under the hands of this landowner whose logic is deeply capitalist and individualist. His victims exist in an indefinite state between life and death as specters. In this sense, Juan Rulfo uses the figure of the specter to critique a failed agrarian revolution, connecting to Derrida's "hauntology" as developed in Specters of Marx. 26 Rulfo brings Comala's inhabitants out of silence by giving them their own voice through a performance that neither implies absence nor presence.<sup>27</sup> He offers them an alternative existence within a Western project that maintains them in an ambiguous position without ever recognizing them. Derrida's specters, in Rulfo's imagination, represent an opportunity to articulate past trauma and transform it into a future with multiple possibilities. The spectral condition opposes the binary of life and death, admitting an intermediate state from which new possibilities may emerge. It is thus resistance through survivance.

Thus, Comala and its ghosts become an inspiration for reflecting on the current disappearance of the pueblo in the agrarian relations that shape its existence. Although the disappearance imaginary surrounding Yegolé does not directly rest on this form of conflict, it is natural to consider it a potential problem in a speculative optics where industry would seek to seize its territory, reproducing an interested invasion leading to cultural disappearance. Hauntology becomes the key to resisting a space between being and non-being, breaking again with a binary radicalism and allowing for the opening onto other existential dimensions. It develops the possibility of an imaginary populated by highly symbolic figures representing what may exist

between these extremes across Yegolé's different times and spaces. This relates in a certain way to being *mezcalero* according to baroque capitalist logics, or not being, by erasing oneself from this eventuality through adopting plural and alternative positions of coexistence with mezcal. The speculation on Yegolé's disappearance thus draws meaning from the reality of other pueblos in its national and regional context but becomes fertile ground for creating an imaginary that unfolds alternative possibilities through forms of resistance triggered by the perspective of disappearance.

#### Folded dreams

These ideas speak so strangely. All that we see in this world is based on someone's ideas. Some ideas are destructive, some are constructive. Some ideas can arrive in the form of a dream. I can say it again: some ideas arrive in the form of a dream.

Log Lady, Twin Peaks 1.03<sup>28</sup>

The imaginary of the narrative universe, across all media, has long embraced the theme of disappearance. In the mythology surrounding various pueblos of Latin America, duendes are entities taking on human morphology in order to abduct children. Taking various forms depending on the region, they are generally associated with the phenomenon of disappearance. The imaginaries orbiting disappearance – or the seemingly passive act of disappearing – carry multiple meanings, yet tend toward a shared ontological depth. The case of director David Lynch, particularly his series Twin Peaks<sup>29</sup>, is probably among the most compelling in the cinematic world for reflecting on a narrative of disappearance. It is through its relationship with dimensions belonging to an "other reality" and its porous aesthetic that the series becomes relevant to the elaboration of alternative visual narrations. Disappearance is closely tied to dream and memory, through a structure and imaginary that recall the baroque as a space of opening and expansion.

A key element of the series lies in the central importance of a red curtain, perfectly pleated, whose spatial boundaries are uncertain. The rooms it encloses are in constant repetition, recalling an ideal baroque aesthetic. In this sense, the Lodge acts as a baroque monad, containing other worlds enveloped by a higher entity. Events, marked by camera work that recreates certain movements and situations through mirrors, illusions, and trompe-l'œil, unfold within a complete temporal deformation, reproducing a baroque logic of repetition and constant reconstruction. The reference to the baroque in the series coincides with a mystical and disturbing universe, corresponding to nothing more explicit or comprehensible than "something else"

<sup>25</sup> Rulfo, J. (2005). Pedro Páramo. RM.

<sup>26</sup> Derrida, J. (1994). Specters of Marx. Routledge.

<sup>27</sup> Önder, A. (2025). Spectral Dialogues: Unveiling Histories of Injustice in Pedro Paramo Through Lyotard's "Differend" and Derrida's "Hauntology". *Trakya University Journal of Faculty of Letters*, 15(29), 225-241.

<sup>28</sup> Lynch, D., & Frost, M. (Creators). (1990). *Twin Peaks* [TV series]. Lynch/Frost Productions.

<sup>29</sup> ibid.

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beyond life as we know it. It is conceived here as an ontological crisis inviting us to recognize the instability of existence through its alternative possibilities, to question the order that governs the world, and to challenge its defined and definable forms.

Dream thus becomes a fundamental element, since it operates in each individual as an intrinsic narrative form through which the possibility of other worlds becomes possible, repeated, and irrevocable. The techniques used — visual filters and camera angles - suggest a dreamlike dimension, whose aesthetic opposes that of waking, or "normal," life. However, in certain scenes, the various dimensions intersect within reality, where they are often felt but quickly ignored, as in the case where some characters feel a strange vibration in their hand. Becoming aware of this phenomenon, they do not seek to find a cause or a cure, as they might for any other more explainable and recognized physical disorder. The signs of another world within the waking state are rarely developed, whereas those experienced by Agent Cooper, the main character, in his troubled nights are accepted and analyzed by his peers. Since Lynch's work heavily critiques the American model, this could be a way of provoking the fact that little importance is granted to an awakened imaginary that confronts it. The sleeping dream then becomes the only resource for truly engaging with alternative forms of existence. The elements it contains disappear and reappear in concrete forms. They belong to an alternative universe whose access requires disappearance. Characters entering the parallel dimension — materialized by the spontaneous appearance of the Lodge's red curtains in a specific part of the forest - can only enter by disappearing for an unpredictable period of time. The fact that the curtains only manifest in a specific location implies a ritual character, which the director connects in the narrative to the presence of North American First Nations peoples. This detail recalls the rituality of the baroque ethos and grounds its conscious roots in life forms that do not belong to the modern Western project.

What must be retained from *Twin Peaks* in the context of this thesis is the radical way in which Lynch admits the existence of entirely other possible worlds through the creation of temporalities and spaces outside the conventional ones. In this sense, the third season particularly communicates with the idea of crystalline time in Deleuze.<sup>30</sup> The distinctions between past, present, and future are blurred by a narrative structure formed by the dream itself. Deleuze, in conceiving his crystal-image, refers to Bergson and his diagrams of dream-image and memory-image to point out a splitting of time. "L'image-cristal n'était pas le temps, mais on voit le temps dans le cristal. On voit dans le cristal la perpétuelle fondation du temps, le temps non-chronologique, Cronos et non pas Chronos. C'est la puissante Vie non-

organique qui enserre le monde".31 Thus, the crystal-image carries the conception of time toward the possibilities of other forms of existence. Bergson considers that humans carry a virtual image of themselves through their memories and reveries, an image not situated in a fixed present. This is something that strongly manifests in the act of being an actor, of playing a role, of doubling oneself. This phenomenon is amplified by Lynch's doppelgängers in Twin Peaks, as characters are duplicated between this other world and reality, dissolving their spatial and temporal boundaries through the force of a non-organic Life. This Life, conceived by Deleuze as an impersonal life existing through language and the artistic universe, becomes almost a reflection on the narrative powers of the world. Lynch raises the discourse on reality to another level, suggesting that what seems to exceed it still exists along its edges. In Lynch's narrative, the dream distances itself from desire or concrete aspiration, and instead engages with its imaginary forms, whether asleep or awake. The unreal and the real, the dream, the reverie, memory and the present, share spaces, objects, memories, bodies, and souls.

It is interesting to note how the first pages of *Cien años de soledad* open with the famous memory of Colonel Aureliano Buendía encountering ice for the first time. *«Muchos años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, el coronel Aureliano Buendía había de recordar aquella tarde remota en que su padre lo llevó a conocer el hielo.» ^{32} Ice, in its crystalline aesthetic, becomes an opening onto the split of time, onto the temporal distortions that will shape the structure of Márquez's novel, and the existence in Macondo. Its disappearance, in the final pages, appears as an epiphanic moment acting as a passage or portal allowing communication between the different possibilities of existence that open up when the imposed limits of a single reality — the modern one — dissolve. It thus becomes a bridge between dream as a matrix of the imaginary and its manifestation as a project. It is an invitation to think otherwise, and to draw inspiration from it.* 

In *Twin Peaks*, as in his films, Lynch deploys an imaginary where the dream is not only inward evocation, but expansive narration. The dream becomes a transitional space from which other forms of life, other arrangements of the real, can emerge. In Lynch, as in García Márquez, disappearance — enmeshed in universes where myth and the surreal coexist — is not an end, but a threshold: it provokes, it calls, it moves. It does not close, it opens.

<sup>31</sup> ibid. p.109

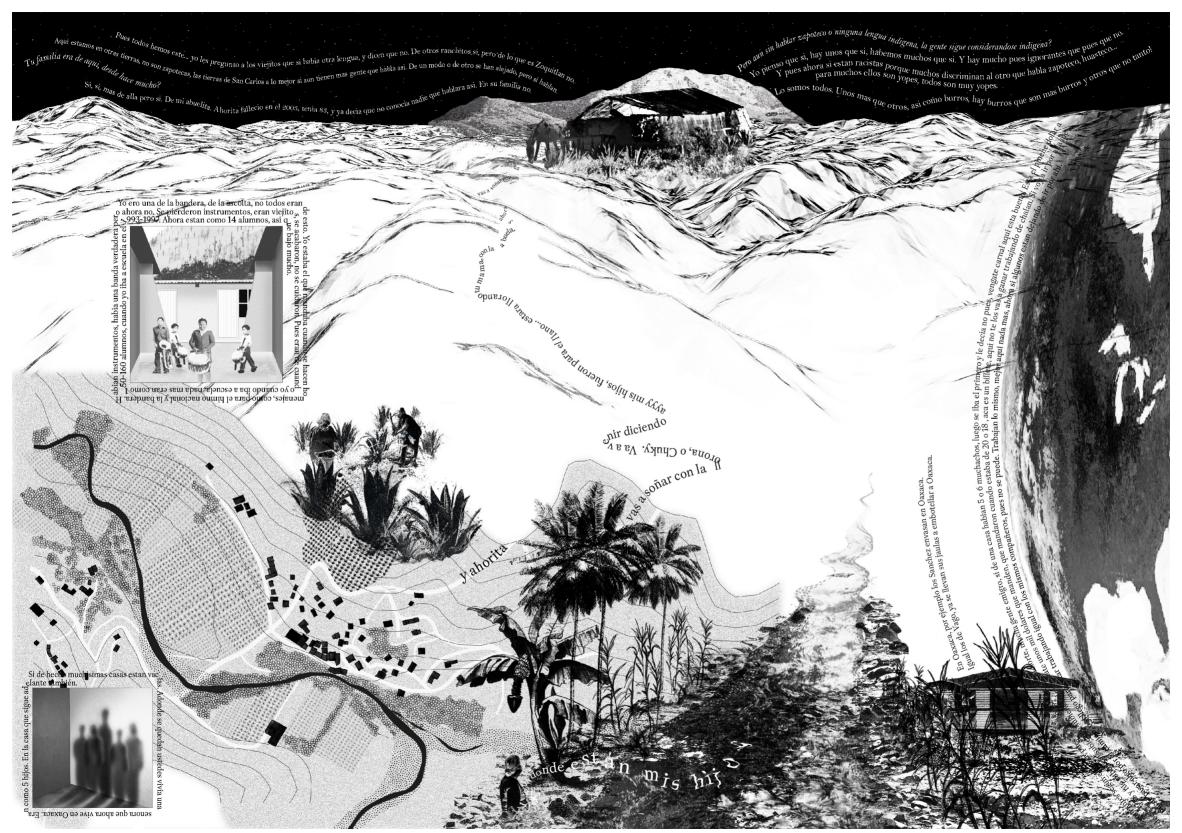
<sup>&</sup>quot;The crystal-image was not time itself, but one sees time within the crystal. In the crystal, one sees the perpetual foundation of time — a non-chronological time, Cronos rather than Chronos. It is the powerful, non-organic Life that envelops the world."

<sup>32</sup> García Márquez, G. (2017). *Cien años de soledad*. Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial. p.13

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze, G. (1985). L'image-temps. Editions de Minuit

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# An archive of resistance

« Looking at archives through the eyes of artists helped me to formulate my questions and to understand what I needed to ask: Is this real? Is this a performance? And if it's a performance, what is it trying to perform? They taught me to look at affect in the faces of people depicted in photographs, because that might be telling me a different story than the official narratives wanted me to know. »

Tina Campt<sup>33</sup>

The project of Yegolé reimagines the archive as a speculative and affective space, resisting its colonial legacy of control. Through the oral histories of Yegolé and stories of its dailylife, it proposes a visual and audio-visual memory built in the present for a threatened future. Storytelling becomes an act of resistance, where fading voices become the first traces of an archive rooted not in structures of power, but in care and shared experience.

The notion of the archive carries a legacy of control and power closely associated with colonial regimes of domination. In her essay *Venus in Two Acts*, Saidiya Hartman lingers on the brutal ways in which historical archives recount the past: "*The libidinal investment in violence is everywhere apparent in the documents, statements and institutions that decide our knowledge of the past*".<sup>34</sup> Though focused on enslaved women of the Atlantic, her critique applies to the broader construction of the archive within the colonial world. This critique is shared by scholars such as Marisa Fuentes who, in *Dispossessed Lives*, explores the violence of British archives toward subaltern subjects, specifically enslaved Black women.<sup>35</sup>

The archive is a central concept within Black feminist theory, as colonial domination imposed a profoundly limited and manipulated system of knowledge production. Colonial archives were constructed by those in power, who could select, rewrite, or erase fragments of lives that did not belong to them. In this sense, the fragmented archive is generative of disappearance. In *Ghostly Matters*, Avery Gordon traces the specters of those who have disappeared, through their haunting — much like the ghostly characters of *Pedro Páramo*, whose presence endures through erasure. Through an alternative, literary mode of writing, Gordon commits to a sensitive and affective sociology. Rejecting an objective viewpoint, she encourages a speculative and imaginative approach to the silences of the archive. Considering that even «real» archives are embedded in fiction, she urges us to address

33 Campt, T. (2023). Listening and Writing to Images: Tina M. Campt and Jace Clayton in conversation. *e-flux*, (136).

historical cracks as haunted gaps: "And in this sense, haunting is essential to this laborious work. After all, we need to know that something is missing in order to even begin to look for it or its dispersion of gestures anywhere, in the archive or in the imaginary zone". 56

The archive is generally associated with the past. The speculative disappearance of Yegolé invites the construction of an archive in the present — one that would stand as the past of a possible, fictional future. This manipulation of time echoes the logic adopted by García Márquez, who disrupts a totalizing linear temporality in favor of loops, jumps, and digressions. Building a memory that reflects the ongoing daily existence around mezcal allows one to freeze time and contemplate its rituals, its relation to territory, its multiple temporalities, and its deep entanglement with the pueblo — outside the oppressive and limiting logic of capitalist extraction. Memory enables a form of lucidity not rushed by the frenzy of an accelerated present, allowing for the recognition and amplification of baroque gestures of resistance that stand against the disappearance of the pueblo. This temporal displacement draws from Sara Jane Cervenak's thinking on the mobile image, which she sees as a means to disrupt dominant temporalities by situating the image in a speculative, poetic spacetime, thereby opening a freer field of reflection and interpretation.<sup>37</sup>

## The archive of Yegolé

These references advocate for the creation and exploration of imaginary archives as a means of reclaiming histories whose subjects have been silenced or erased. This critical approach to the archive informs the Yegolé project-not as a documentary record, but as a speculative one: a memory constructed in the present for a possible future. And the future at stake is one of disappearance, brought on by the extractive logics of neocolonial capitalism. From this perspective, the speculative vanishing of Yegolé becomes a call to action: the urgent need to build an archive as an act of resistance against erasure. This archive takes shape as a visual and audiovisual storytelling project centered on the pueblo of Yegolé. It consists of a photobook and a short film. The material engages with the spatialities of resistance by exploring the porous textures of the village, the layering of spectral presences with daily life, and the quiet force of ritual repetition. It seeks to elevate the baroque ethos and aesthetic that underpins these dynamics. The photobook unfolds on two intertwined levels: first, an intimate family archive that asserts the continuity of life; second, a speculative archive of the specters that might haunt the pueblo, should the dominant mezcal narrative lead to its obliteration. The short film focuses on Cecilia, a fifteen-year-old girl caught at a threshold between staying in the pueblo or leaving in pursuit of education and

<sup>34</sup> Hartman, S. (2008). Venus in Two Acts. *Indiana University Press*, *12*(2), 1-14. p.5 35 Fuentes, M. J. (2016). *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the* 

Archive. University of Pennsylvania Press, Incorporated.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon, A. (2008). *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. University Of Minnesota Press. p.178

<sup>37</sup> Cervenak, S. J. (2018, May). The Problem of After. ASAP/Journal, 3(2), 306-310.

new opportunities. Through this performance, Cecilia embodies the tension between divergent futures—the rooted and the displaced, the local and the global—and the emotional complexity each path holds. As she moves through her surroundings, she encounters a deep, affective pull that anchors her to place, to memory, and to the spectral traces of what might be lost.

Drawing from the idea of the *quiet image* introduced by Campt, daily life in Yegolé becomes a quiet humming of Baroque resistance — not only against the pressures of the mezcal industry, but against the broader capitalist project threatening the rhythms of the pueblo. Viewers and listeners are thus invited to consider this quiet as both literal and symbolic: life in Yegolé is indeed marked by the calm sounds of a rural atmosphere, but *quiet* here also evokes the silence of a speculative permanent absence, and the images hum in resistance to it. Campt invites us to listen to this hum as affective frequencies. As she writes, "listening to images opens up the radical interpretive possibilities of images and state archives we are most often inclined to overlook". While the seriality of Uganda's ID photos, for example, implies reproduction as control, the seriality of Yegolé's wedding portraits functions as a baroque gesture of reproduction — a revendicated form of permanence.



<sup>38</sup> Campt, T. (2017). Listening to Images. Duke University Press. p.5

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# **Photobook**

There in Yegolé evokes both a physical and symbolic distance from the norms of modernity, from urban life, from a reality extracted from mythic roots. Yegolé is, in many ways, an oasis. The Río Quiechapa allows life to flourish among the spines of the organ pipe cacti, the mezquital trees, and the agaves. But it is also an oasis in another sense: a place that harbors alternative ways of being, echoing the baroque ethos of Bolívar Echeverría.

"In Yegolé, there's almost only one family — the Sánchez," someone once told me. Yet more arrived, from places considered even more remote, judged by their distance from Oaxaca City or the main roads that never quite reached them. Families arrived only a few decades ago, slowly migrating from scattered ranchos in the Sierra. They fled community tensions, some of them linked to the cultivation of marijuana. The commemorative plaque in the church of the Virgen de la Candelaria acts as a recognition and a reminder that migration continues to shape daily life in Yegolé. These displacements bring both absence, through departure, and renewal, through the possibility not just of staying, but of staying better. Thanks to remittances from workers in the United States, local infrastructure is adapting to new expectations of life, while still shaped by the creative ingenuity of the campesino. This quiet form of economic mestizaje creates a unique space, an oasis of resistance against erasure.

This photobook tells the visual story of Yegolé as a baroque entity within the globalized landscape of mezcal. It lingers on the pueblo's specters and dreamlike atmosphere not as nostalgia, but as a form of resistance. It offers an archive of what lives on the margins of the dominant mezcal narrative. Yegolé is more than a pueblo mezcalero. That label is too narrow. Even if two large palenques draw short-term visitors from abroad since a couple of years, the life of the pueblo extends far beyond mezcal. What is truly at stake is therefore the permanence of the pueblo as it is—inhabited by its own people, shaped by its own architecture and communal rhythms. In a world driven by a singular vision of progress and capitalist development, the gestures of daily life in Yegolé—rooted in companionship, reciprocity, and ritual repetition—offer a vision of alternative futures that must be considered in light of our climate and societal collapse.

There in Yegolé unfolds as an archive of what resists and what endures. Of the quiet, cyclical gestures of daily life. Of fiestas that trace the passage of time through ritual and joy. Of a place that sustains itself — not through imposed meanings or external gaze, but through the stubborn, living continuity of its own presence.

The book is presented alongside the thesis in a dummy version, featuring four chapters: luna, sol, invierno, verano. These chapters are an echo to the cyclicity of time in the pueblo, and in this way, an echo to my original photography project on mezcal: El tiempo del maguey. There in Yegolé, through its four chapters, dialogues with the initial project in expressing the intrinsic temporality of Yegolé, where mezcal is produced and participates to the rythms of life. It is possibly the beginning of a series of bigger chapters on the mezcal world. Possibly the beginning of a very long term project on Yegolé itself. The future of this book is open and uncertain, expandable and adaptable. Inspired by the baroque character of the pueblo, it embraces infinite repetitions, re-configurations and imagination. Its format is therefore presented as spontaneous and evocative of the multiplicity of its future possibilities.

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### Short film

As I write these last lines, I am sitting at a hand-crafted table, on a second cement floor without walls. Insects keep falling on my keyboard and crawling across my screen. I hear the sound of the river, louder than usual after yesterday's passing of Hurricane Eric, and the fireflies. It is midnight, and I've just come back from the river with Ceci, her brother Yair, and a team of three filmmakers: my brother Renaud, the director; Lulu, the director of photography; and Mathis, the technical assistant. We were all so, so tired – exhausted by the intensity of the past few days, between Ceci's quinceañera and the wedding of her parents. Tired, but still, we walked at night to the river, carrying a Little Caesar's pizza someone from the pueblo had brought back from a trip to Oaxaca. Tired, so Yair fell asleep curled up in my sweater between takes, lying on the stones along the riverbank. Tired, so I gave Ceci a jar of gianduja paste I had brought her from Turin, hoping it would give her a bit of energy while our joyful but slightly stressed team tried to figure out lighting, composition, and lenses in a difficult environment — with non-actor children, under the stars.

In these days, I have often found myself thinking about the meaning of our work here, about the ethical questions that constantly resurface. I kept coming back to a question Ceci asked me on the very first day: "Why are you interested in here?" A year ago, I could not have answered that without falling into romanticism — saying something like how beautiful the landscape is, how pure the air feels, or how simple life seems. But life is not simple here. Not at all. And the air sometimes fills with the heavy smells of meat smoke, or animals in decay. I still find the river, and the oasis it creates in the middle of these spiny mountains, utterly enchanting. But for young souls who can almost never leave the valley, this same landscape can feel suffocating. After three trips to Yegolé and two years researching mezcal spaces, I can now say with clarity that I am interested in here because it resists. It resists even the narratives it absorbs, staying still as a place of creativity and alternatives, of endless rethinking and redoing.

At the river, I felt—if only for a moment—that this is what we were doing: repeating a scene over and over. Ceci lying by the water, looking at her hand. Yair repeating fifteen times: "Ceci, ¿te vas a ir?" When my brother asked me to tell Yair to say that line, I worried about how Cecilia — standing next to me — would react. After all, this short film is about her life. And even though I had sent her the script months ago, I was never entirely sure how clear it was to her — and that, for me, was a deep concern, one that often left me uncomfortable these days. But when she heard it, she answered playfully: "Pues no sé." (Well, I do not know). Not knowing whether to leave or to stay, in this scenario, appears itself as a form of resistance. In a community where people are often either sure to stay or sure to leave, Cecilia's ambiguous position opens a third option. Or infinite options. Of staying while

wandering. Of leaving while rooting. Of being absent, anyway. In this way, she embodies the complexity that is always present here — the way the pueblo absorbs outside pressures and reworks them through rituals, through talismans, through its own language of resistance.

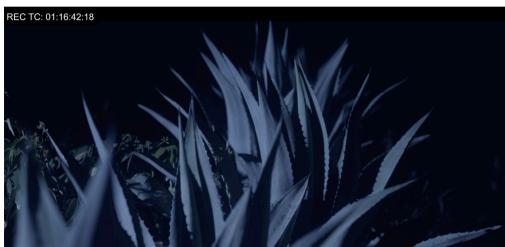
The film, as an archive of this ambiguous position between absence and presence, becomes an architecture of resistance shaped by the pueblo's ways of inhabiting space, of relating to the Earth, of weaving together different temporalities into lived experience. Here, architecture is not about permanence or monuments; it is something scaled to the human body, to the imagination and temporally rooted in repetition and circularity. The spaces breathe, expand, multiply, and replicate. The film carries these visions — of land, of ritual, of movement — and in doing so, becomes itself an act of resistance. The manifestation of the possibility of being, seeing, and existing otherwise.



The film crew and the main actors, from left to right:
Matis Piché, technical assistant
Cecilia Lopez, actor
Cecilio Lopez, actor
Frédérique Gélinas, interprete/mediator
Yair Lopez, actor
Josefina Sanchez, actor
Lucrezia Galli, director of photography
Renaud Gélinas, director

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4. yegolé disappearing not the end: epilogue

### Not the end: epilogue

In The Storyteller, Walter Benjamin argues that storytelling, rooted in oral tradition, preserves a form of memory that is communal, experiential, and wise - Erfahrung.39 In contrast to modern. individualized forms of memory (Erlebnis), oral storytelling enables the transmission of meaning across generations. Yet modernity threatens this capacity for remembrance: the sensory overload of cities and the acceleration of technological life diminish the mind's ability to absorb experience through a relaxed, contemplative state. "If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience".<sup>40</sup> In spaces where oral tradition remains the norm, the slow shift toward modernity — one that annihilates boredom — unfolds delicately. In the case of Yegolé, a pueblo without a written archive, the richness of its history lives primarily through oral storytelling — stories that carry not only individual lives but collective experiences, cultural practices, beliefs, and more-than-human relationships. As these voices fade, its speculative disappearance is not only factual but epistemological: an entire way of knowing the world risks vanishing with it. The creation of a visual and audio-visual archive thus becomes an urgent and poetic gesture — not one of control, but of care, echoing Benjamin's call to preserve the wisdom carried by those who still tell stories.

I conclude the writing content of the thesis abruptly, to open more room for the images. They are the proper conclusion of this work and they do not need more words. Still, i must warn about my position within the narration, in order to acknowledge the impossibility of objectivity within this archive. Following Benjamin's reflections on the relationship between the storyteller and the listener, I position myself between these two roles. On the one hand, this thesis is nothing but my own narration of mezcal. Another person could have reported the information I absorbed in a completely different way, and I myself had to choose which story to tell among an infinite number of possible narrative sequences. From the structure of the index to the graphic format, to the subjects I selected, I temporarily assumed the role of mezcal's narrator. Since I met so many people working hard to tell about its complexity, I realize how delicate it is for me to claim a place within their immense labor. On the other hand, the fact that I was able to conceive my own way of telling it is because I got invested in the position of listener — being "guided by [my] desire to remember what [1] had heard," to borrow Benjamin's words. I filtered, both automatically and afterward, the information shared with me. Of course, the fact that most contemporary academic, scientific, and socio-cultural narratives are conveyed in written form reduces the degree of memory required of the listener. However, in the context of fieldwork, stories

Benjamin, W. (1986). The Storyteller. In *Illuminations*. Schocken Books.Ibid. p.91

research frame to become personal confidences — neither annotated nor recorded. My memory was therefore a necessary and heavily relied upon ally. According to Benjamin, "Memory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation." In the case of Yegolé, this is precisely how the village's history has been transmitted. The voice is thus a form of archive — just like the pre-Hispanic objects Chilo collects from the hill behind his house, or the materials I produced and shared with the inhabitants.

This is not the end because the pueblo resists.

This is not the end because I feel, with certainty, that my bond with Yegolé will draw me back.

This is not the end but rather its endless reproduction, in forms that will transcend being here or there.

The mezcal, the maguey, and Yegolé have become part of me. This thesis profoundly changed how I see the world and how I perceive its possibilities of multiplicity. And with that, it gave me a solid hope: that there are real alternatives to the decay and despair that is characteristic of the global collapse. I believe architecture does its best work when it critiques, when it reimagines our ways of being in the world and of shaping it — when it gets involved, becomes affected, becomes sensitive. This project allowed me to explore this path, and it has strengthened my belief that architectural thinking can be a radical tool, one I feel motivated to expand over the years to imagine, feel, and design otherwise.

often take shape within casual conversation and leave the formal

4. yegolé disappearing not the end: epilogue

"Con mucho gusto te comparto lo que vo tengo como conocimiento. Fijate que efectivamente no hay material sobre la historia de Yegolé puesto que es una rancheria muy pequena. La mayor cantidad de personas que han habitado en este lugar han sido alrededor de 400 personas, pero esto fue en su auge. hace mas o menos 15 años, o 20 años. Y se ha ido haciendo cada vez mas pequeño el pueblo porque mucha gente también sale de ahi, se emigra, se fueron a Estados Unidos, o se fueron a la ciudad de Oaxaca a buscar mejores oportunidades. En la historia de la familia anteriormente se situaba en otro espacio, en otro lugar que va no existe. Se llamaba Agua Escondida o bueno lo conocian como Agua Escondida o Corral Viejo. Entonces, pues si, son lugares en los que en alguna ocasion hubo poblacion, hubo personas, pero ya no existe, solamente existen las ruinas de las casas, de restos de casas que pudieron haber sido habitadas en algun tiempo. Yo de niños recuerdo que visitabamos a la abuelita que vivia en corral viejo, pero ya no existe. Entonces cuando ellos tenian a sus hijos, lo registraban no como corral viejo pero si no como de totolapam, que es el municipio mas cercano a esta rancheria. San Pedro Totolapan. Entonces como se registraban como si hubiesen nacido en San Pedro Totolapam, pues no habia forma de demostrar que habian nacido en corral viejo porque no existia este espacio. Se conocia por los locales, pero no por el estado. Legalmente los documentos no existen de este lugar, asi como corral viejo y agua escondida, pues también existen otros espacios de Nejapa. Llegaron personas a Yegolé de El Guaje, de La Trampa también, son lugares, rancherias, localidades muy pequeñitas, en las que habitan personas y pues se fueron conociendo, muchos vivieron ahi porque se casaron con personas del lugar cuando eran poquitas. Estoy hablando del asentamiento moderno en Yegolé, porque es un hecho que ahi habito una civilizacion previa, hace miles de años y seguramente fue también de una gran cantidad, no creo que hayan sido poquitos, por la evidencia que existe en Yegolé, ahi en el cerro de Chilo. Es complejo porque ni el estado tiene nocion, ni en el estado como tal, y el istituo nacional de antropologia y historial tampoco tienen conocimiento de este lugar. Entonces si es complejo, efectivamente no se puede demostrar con un documento escrito todos estos hallazgos que hay ahí en Yegolé. No le han dado tal vez la importancia, o no han tomado el tiempo para poder documentarlo. Entonces lo que existe verdaderamente es platicas, conocimientos que se comparten de persona a persona, pero hasta ahi. Entonces no hay como tal una historia real de la cementación o del nacimiento de Yegolé. Sigue cada vez teniendo menos habitantes. No creo que vava a desaparecer como desaparecieron los otros pueblitos, las otras rancherias, pero creo que la historia de Yegolé ha de tener alrededor de unos 150 años hacia atras del ser habitado, de ser un lugar que produce granos, semillas, frutos, y por supuesto maguey."

"I'm happy to share with you what I know. You see, there really isn't much material about the history of Yegolé because it's a very small hamlet. The highest population it's ever had was around 400 people, and that was during its peak, about 15 or 20 years ago. Since then, the town has become smaller and smaller because many people have left—some emigrated to the United States, others moved to the city of Oaxaca in

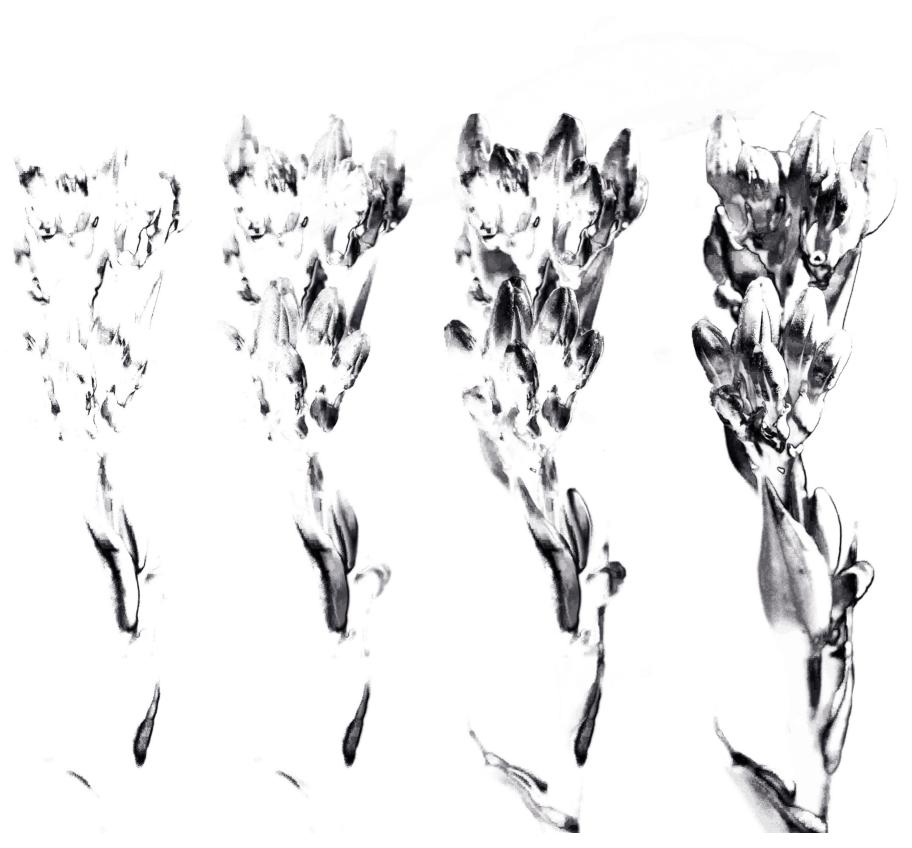
search of better opportunities. In terms of family history, people originally lived in another place, which no longer exists. It was called Agua Escondida, place, which no longer exists. It was called Agua Escondida, or at least that's what people knew it as, or sometimes Corral Viejo. These were places that once had people living there, but now they're gone. All that remains are the ruins of houses—just remnants of homes that were once inhabited. I remember as a child visiting our grandmother who lived in Corral Viejo, but it no longer exists. So when people had children back then, they wouldn't register them as being from Corral Viejo but rather from Totolapam, the closest municipality to this hamlet—San Pedro Totolapam. So, since births were registered as if they happened in San Pedro Totolapam, there's no official way to prove someone was born in Corral Viejo, because that place didn't legally exist. It was known locally, but not officially recognized by the state. There are no legal documents for Corral Viejo or Agua Escondida.

Escondida.
There are other places in Nejapa like this too. People arrived in Yegolé from El Guaje, from La Trampa—very small hamlets or settlements where people lived. Many came to live in Yegolé because they married someone from there when it was still just a small community.
I'm talking here about the modern settlement of Yegolé, because it's a fact that a previous civilization lived there thousands of years ago. And they probably weren't few in number, judging by the evidence that exists, especially in the Cerro de Chilo. It's complicated because neither the state nor the National Institute of Anthropology and History has any real knowledge of this place.

any real knowledge of this place.
So yes, it's complex. There's no written documentation to prove the findings that exist there in Yegolé. Maybe the place hasn't been given importance, or no one has taken the time to document it. So what really exists are conversations, oral knowledge passed from person to person, and that's it.
There's no official, documented history about the founding of Yegolé. Its population keeps shrinking. I don't think it will disappear like those other little villages did, but I do believe Yegolé has been inhabited for at least 150 years—as a place that produces grains, seeds, fruits, and of course, maguey."

Voice message, Orlando, March 15th 2025

Mensaje audio, Orlando, 15 marzo 2025





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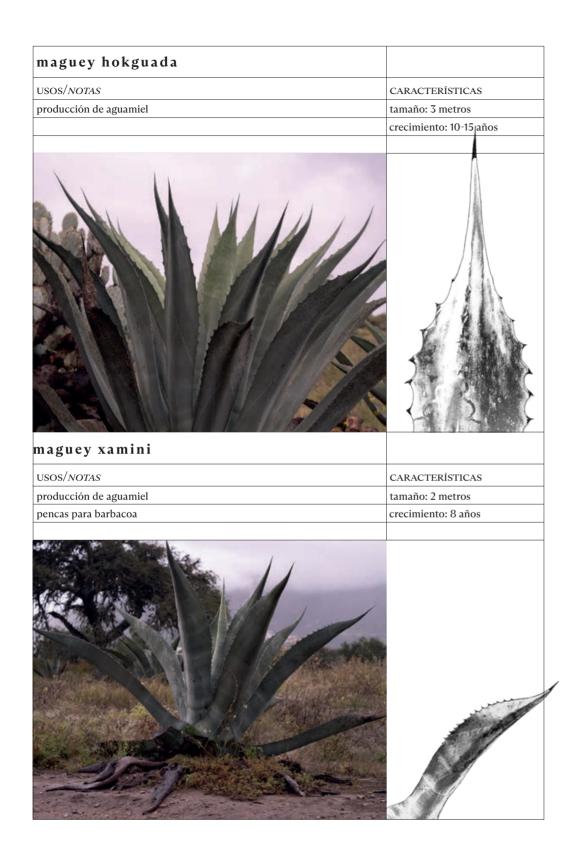
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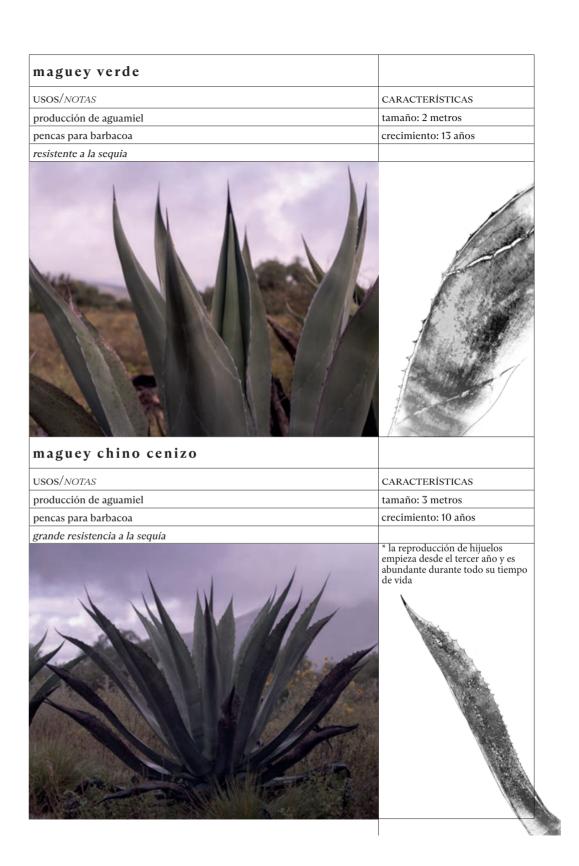
**Appendix** 

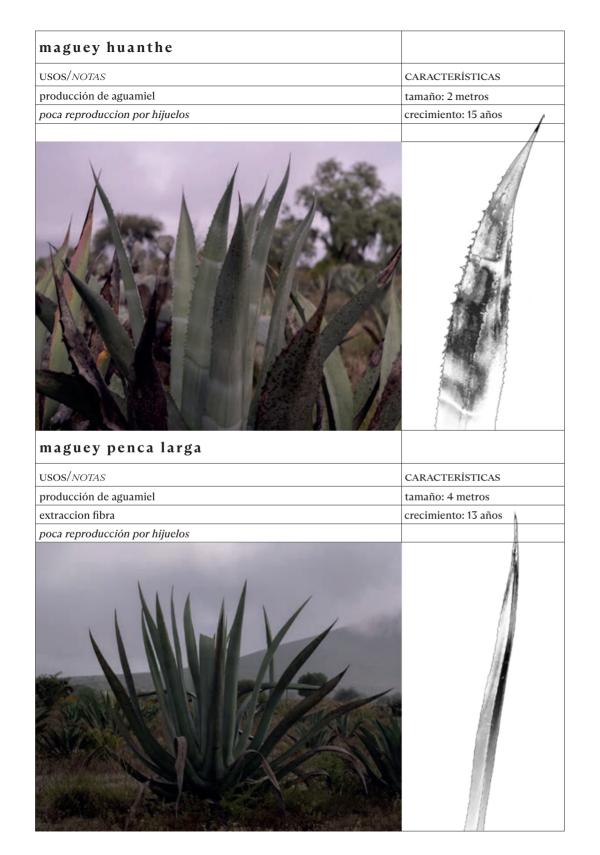
1. Catalogo Magueyal

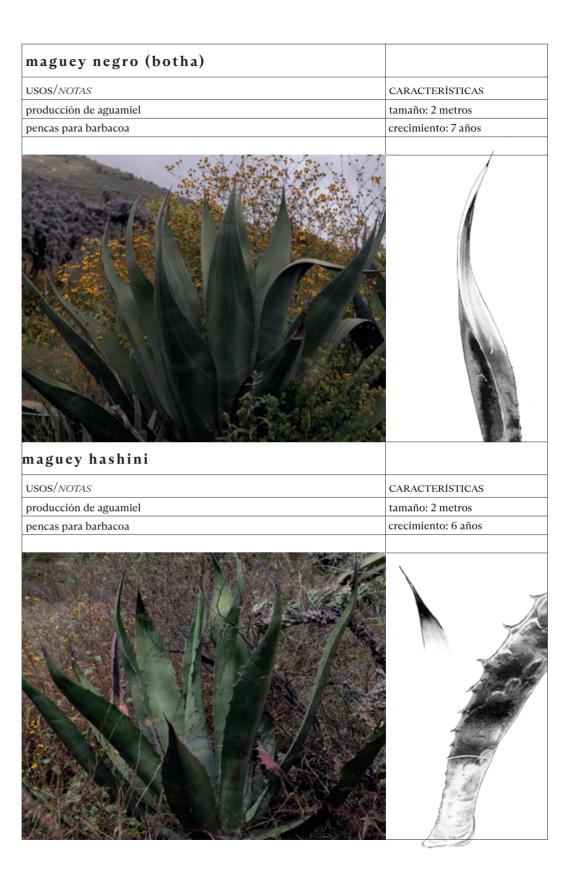
# Magueyes del Cardonal, Hidalgo Inserir breve texto sobre la intencion de este catalogo y la metodologia adoptada (caminada en el campo con habitantes de la comunidad) NOTAS La reproducción media de una planta de maguey es de 4 plantas por año y empieza después de los 5 años de vida (dependiendo de las condiciones de la especie, el suelo y el clima.

USOS/NOTAS	CARACTERÍSTICAS
producción de insectos (chinicuiles)	tamaño: 3 metros
producción de aguamiel pencas para barbacoa	crecimiento: 13 años
usos/ <i>NOTAS</i> producción de aguamiel	CARACTERÍSTICAS tamaño: 3 metros crecimiento: 10-15 años
	crecimiento: 10-15 anos









USOS/NOTAS  CARACTERÍSTICAS  tamaño: 2 metros  crecimiento: 9 años	maguey gordo	
	USOS/ <i>NOTAS</i>	CARACTERÍSTICAS
crecimiento: 9 años	pencas para barbacoa	
		crecimiento: 9 años
	producido por: Magueyal, sujeto y comunidad A.C.	

# 1. Photography festivals, awards and publications

### A. Photomatch, Torino Foto Festival

Presentation of the photo project for Photomatch, in collaboration with Lodz Fotofestiwal, during the Torino Photo Festival

### B. seezeen

O



Submit

### frédérique gélinas



Your name
Frédérique Gélinas
Place of birth
Quebec, Canada
Place where you live now
Turin, Italy
3 words to describe you

as the glass (fragile, resistant, transparent)
Why do you take pictures?

It allows me to embrace nostalgia. Photography holds a strong sense of the past that intrigues me because it makes life so meaningful. Flirting with time appears to be the best way for me to play with the world, to question it and to explore its magical, dreamlike dimension.

### Where do you get your inspiration?

From intuitive visions and dreams, from spontaneous moments and souvenirs. Loan he inspired by a stranger's expression that evokes a story

Publication in seezeen magazine, issue #15

### C. Photographer of the Year

### D. Andrei Stenin International Press Photo Contest

2 0 2 4 Finalist

82nd Annual

Environmental Vision Award





Espadin, the most common agave used for mezzal production, takes about 9 years to grow; wild agaves - up to 30 years. The western request for maccal a presuming the Mexican territory at a far too aggressive rate for the plant's intrinsic temporalities. The agave system is facing the confrontation of the ancestral time with the haste of a liquid modernity, it needs to accelerate not to die and idealy down to survive. The Time of Agave is tabu and sharms, proudness and identity. Covering both the pudue and mezcal regions, as well as using time as a reading-key to highlight the damaged agave system, the photos aim to show the subtile and sansible testimonics of a territory living the consequences of its own economic apoges.

Pelenque in Candelaria Yagolé, Cavaca, Mexico - To produce mezcal, an oven needs to burn for six to seven hours before reaching the adequate temperature. Once reached, the

2nd place, Environmental Vision Award

1st place, Andrei Stenin International Press Photo Contest, Category: Series

# 3. Application Tequila Interchange Project: proposition of the project of a communal palenque

### PROPUESTA DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y PROYECTO: UN PALENQUE COLECTIVO DE USO SOCIAL EN CANDELARÍA YEGOLÉ

#### Abstracto

El provecto de búsqueda fue previamente desarrollado al interno de mi tesis de maestría en arquitectura para la sostenibilidad al Politecnico di Torino, en Italia. A través de una metodología basada sobre la narración, la tesis une reflexiones espaciales, antropológicas, filosóficas, y de orden socio-política para ofrecer una contranarrativa a aquella establecida por el mercado actual del mezcal. Se basa sobre la teoría del ethos baroco del filosofo Bolivar Echeverría para explorar como la narrativa del mercado del mezcal promueve y crea espacios barocos que ocultan las realdades más sensibles y concretas que componen una pluralidad del mundo del mezcal. A través del pueblo de Candelaría Yegolé, considerado como pueblo mezcalero, se quiere mirar afuera de esta reciente categorización superficial para dar visibilidad a la complejidad de la entidad del pueblo mexicano. Se pone un enfoque particular a las redes relacionales que unen sus habitantes a su entorno masque-humano y en particular a las que sitúan el universo del mezcal en una más amplia cultura del agave en México. En Yegolé, como en otros pueblos de los valles centrales de Oaxaca, las practicas alrededor del mezcal llegan a ser una oportunidad para quedarse en el pueblo y frenar la emigración masiva que amenaza su desaparición especulativa. Por otro lado, las consecuencias de una industria extractiva del agave amenazan también la diversidad de las formas de vivir en las comunidades rurales. La tesis se apoya sobre un proyecto fotográfico profesional y artístico y sobre un cortometraje experimental para conceder voz real a los habitantes de Yegolé en la óptica de una investigación participativa, y para crear un archivo visual de un lugar que fue fundado espontáneamente por el conjunto de comunidades cercanas que desaparecieron sin dejar huellas. El proyecto propuesto ahí es una extensión concreta del trabajo de tesis, a través de la concepción y la construcción colectiva de un palenque (micro-fabrica de mezcal artesanal) comunitario en la comunidad de Candelaría Yegolé, con espacios sociales.

### • Beneficiarios directos y ubicación de la investigación

Los beneficiarios directos del proyecto son los 144 habitantes de Candelaría Yegolé, en el municipio de Zoquitlán, en Oaxaca, un pueblo que está navegando sobre la ola del crecimiento de la demande de mezcal. La idea es de crear un proyecto que sea alcanzable para toda la comunidad en términos de oportunidades y de valor social. Las pequeñas comunidades productores de mezcal son las primeras a sufrir de las consecuencias de la creación de un monopolio por grandes industrias y empresas. El proyecto que se propone es el resultado de una investigación mirada en la comunidad de Candelaría Yegolé, y que sería la concretización física y material del bagaje teórico de mi tesis en arquitectura, sobre los espacios del mezcal.

### Objetivos que se esperan alcanzar a través del proyecto

La propuesta de investigación sería la de expandir el trabajo de tesis para concretizar actividades de participación colectivas en la comunidad de Yegolé, a través de la construcción de un palenque colectivo. En este modo, el proyecto tiene dos objetivos concretos.

- 1. Sostener a la comunidad de Yegolé en sus propios poderes decisionales respecto a su futuro en la producción de mezcal. El pueblo enfrenta problemas vinculados con la poca atención económica y participativa de parte del Estado en iniciativas de orden social. Se ve particularmente difícil el acceso a la educación y la falta de oportunidades para la valorización de las mujeres. En este sentido, el palenque estaría idealizado como espacio maleable en que existiría un aula dedicada a actividades de educación, de formación y de reunión social, ampliable con el tiempo para estimular nuevas ideas. Se habla de una intervención de carácter menor, en que pocos materiales crean un espacio eficaz que responde a las exigencias de la comunidad. El proyecto arquitectónico se pone ahí como potencialidad de fortificar una solidaridad comunitaria desde su idealización hasta su uso, y pasando por su construcción colaborativa.
- 2. La creación de un archivo visual de Yegolé, a través de un trabajo fotográfico profesional dedicado enteramente a su paisaje y sus topografías humanas, agaveras, mezcaleras y más. Sería un primer grande trabajo de documentación y de fotografía de valor artístico sobre un pueblo y su historia de adaptación hacia el boom mezcalero como factor de oportunidades y de riesgos. El trabajo de fotografía podría luego transformarse en libro o muestra internacional. El proyecto tiene la ambición de decostruir

la idea según la cual la creación artística y la investigación académica no pueden compartir un idioma común.

• Entregables del proyecto que demostrarán el logro de los objetivos

Los entregables más concretos serían el palenque colectivo, los documentos arquitectónicos (diseños, planes) y la documentación fotográfica de calidad de su construcción. Se imagina también la escritura de un artículo sobre la pertinencia de la arquitectura participativa en los contextos de comunidades vulnerables. El artículo sería basado sobre el bagaje teórico detrás de la tesis, o sea sobre una bibliografía que busca a participar a una discusión colectiva y sin fronteras sobre narrativas de transición hacía un futuro anticolonial y postextractivista. La promoción de actividades comunitarias en el mundo del mezcal tiene el objetivo de romper con una arquitectura mezcalera que responda a exigencias de mercado, para crear espacios del mezcal a escala de las comunidades que contribuyen a la existencia de una cultura del agave.

### • Justificación de la pertinencia del proyecto

Como mencionado antes, la narrativa de mercado del mezcal es problemática porque le quita su legitimidad a los pueblos donde se produce mezcal en la toma de posición decisional respecto al futuro del mezcal y en participar en modo activo a promocionar narrativas diferentes de la establecida por las fuentes de poder económico. El proyecto en este sentido es altamente pertinente, porque busca a romper con los estigmas de esta narrativa de mercado para proponer otra, andando más allá de una búsqueda puramente teórica para transformarla en un proyecto concreto y mirado.

### Metodología

La metodología de la tesis se basa en la narración, y por continuidad, se considera continuar con este enfoque metodológico. Las historias que componen la vida en Yegolé están más que todo basadas en narraciones orales, y fue en este modo que me alcanzó la mayoridad de la información que pude recolectar sobre este pueblo, visto que sus archivos escritos y visuales son muy limitados o inexistentes. La narración es gran parte de cómo esta percibida y compartida la vida ahí, y por esto me parece oportuno usar este mismo instrumento de comunicación para elaborar el proyecto. La narración existe al interior del concepto del proyecto arquitectónico, así que sería un tema trabajado con la comunidad en la idealización del palenque: ¿qué historia quieren contar, todos juntos, a través de su palenque compartido? A través de un primer taller con la comunidad, se podría profundizar este tema, que debería también encontrarse a través del proyecto fotográfico. Las fotográfias son una narración visual en si. En este sentido, será importante que la estética del proyecto fotográfico de archivo sigua la línea trazada por la comunidad a nivel narrativo. Finalmente, esta superposición de métodos de comunicación basados en la narrativa fortalece la idea de creación de contra-narrativas a la del mercado del mezcal, para alargar las prospectivas de comprensión del mezcal que lo acerquen a la vida, y lo alejen de su absorción por el régimen capitalista.

### **CRONOGRAMA MENSUAL**

Junio 2025	Visita a Candelaría Yegolé (ya prevista) para empezar planeando con la comunidad a través de una actividad de workshop para imaginar la concepción del espacio del nuevo palenque.
Julio-septiembre 2025	Elaboración de un diseño de propuesta del palenque para la comunidad, con comunicación a distancia a través de Whatsapp. En esta fase se desarrollaría una idea más clara de los costos de construcción, basados en la elección del material y la aproximación de su cantidad.
Octubre 2025	Visita a Candelaría Yegolé para la construcción del palenque con la comunidad. Elaboración de las fotografías.
Noviembre 2025	Redacción del artículo y edición del trabajo fotográfico en un catalogo de archivo para entregar a la comunidad y para promover a través de participación a concursos fotográficos.
Diciembre 2025	Mes en que se piensa haber entregado todos los entregables del proyecto de investigación participativo.

### **PRESUPUESTO**

La mayoridad de la beca sería orientada en cubrir los gastos del material necesario para la construcción del palenque y la herramienta para la producción del mezcal. Los saberes compartidos entre mi formación como arquitecta y las competencias de albañiles presentes en la comunidad bastan para elaborar el diseño del palenque y construirlo, ya que el diseño se basaría en la creación de un espacio realizable por autoconstrucción, para incluir todos en el proceso. En este momento, los presupuestos son muy vagos porque la idealización del palenque hace parte del proyecto y es entonces imposible estimar con exactitud los costos en esta fase. Lo que se puede definir es que de los 5000\$ de la beca, solo 1000 irían en cubrir mi viaje hacia la comunidad, mientras todo el resto sería dedicado al palenque y a los instrumentos necesarios para la producción del mezcal. Así, la separación entre 2000\$ para material de construcción y 2000\$ para los de producción es una estima que puede estar revisada en fase de proyecto. Lo importante es considerar que de una manera o otra, se tiene intención de respectar este costo total de 4000\$ para la construcción global del palenque.

No se está trabajando con otra organización sin fines de lucro para realizar este proyecto, así que los fondos totales serían los de la beca.

### INTERÉS POR PARTE DE LA COMUNIDAD DE CANDELARÍA YEGOLÉ

La propuesta de este proyecto ha sido elaborada con la participación activa de la comunidad de Candelaría Yegolé, lo que es una manifestación de su interés en concretizarlo. Para testimoniar de su entusiasmo y voluntad, los habitantes escribieron una carta con algunas firmas de sus miembros que apoyan la propuesta del proyecto del palenque comunitario a uso social.

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