

UNNATURAL NARRATIVES, EMOTIONS, AND NEOLIBERALISM

Narrativas innaturales, emociones y neoliberalismo / Narrativas inaturais, emoções e neoliberalismo

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RESUMO

Do ponto de vista da dialética, bem como a perspectiva apresentada por *Wissenschaft* (ciência), implementada nos Estudos Marxistas Latino-americanos de Cultura e Mídia, este artigo tem como objectivo analisar as narrativas desnaturais/inaturais desenvolvidas por autores como Jan Alber, Henrik Skov Nielsen, etc. em relação ao pós-modernismo, dando ênfase ao emocional ligado à biopolítica. Elementos como a violação do terceiro, excluído da lógica formal dentro de narrativas desnaturais/inaturais, são analisados, como forma de eliminar a noção de mimesis e, ao mesmo tempo, através da não-referencialidade e abstração, acentuar o irracional (o que é emocional). Além disso, essas narrativas são entendidas como um meio de controlo social e de colaboração para a melhoria da extração de aspectos/elementos considerados como uma mais-valia, no contexto da actual crise sistémica capitalista. Da mesma forma, assume-se uma posição crítica em relação a essas narrativas, uma vez que, em termos políticos, não é possível aceitar essa estratégia de controlo económico e social, disfarçada de paradigma narratológico, no contexto de países do terceiro mundo.

Palavras-chave: Estudos Marxistas Latino-americanos, Narratologia, Pós-modernismo, Biopolítica, Ficção Científica.

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RESUMEN

Desde la perspectiva de la dialéctica y su noción de *Wissenschaft* (ciencia) implementada dentro de los Estudios Marxistas Latinoamericanos de la Cultura y los Medios, este artículo apunta a analizar las narrativas innaturales desarrollada por autores como Jan Alber, Henrik Skov Nielsen, etc., en relación con el post-postmodernismo y el énfasis en lo emocional ligado a la bio-política. Se analizan elementos como la violación del tercero excluido de la lógica formal dentro de las narrativas innaturales, como un medio para eliminar la noción de mimesis y, al mismo tiempo, a través de la no-referencialidad y lo abstraído, acentuar lo irracional (lo emocional). Además, estas narrativas son entendidas como un medio de control social y colaboración en el mejoramiento de la extracción de plusvalía, en el contexto de la actual crisis sistémica capitalista. Asimismo, se asume una

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posición crítica con respecto a estas narrativas, ya que, en términos políticos, no es posible aceptar esta estrategia económica y de control social, disfrazada de paradigma narratológico, dentro del contexto de los países del tercer mundo.

Palabras clave: Estudios latinoamericanos marxistas, narratología, post-postmodernismo, bio-política, ciencia ficción.

ABSTRACT

From the perspective of dialectics and its notion of *Wissenschaft* (science) implemented into Latin American Marxist Studies of Culture and Media, this article aims at analyzing unnatural narratives developed by authors such as Jan Alber, Henrik Skov Nielsen, etc., in relation to the emphasis on the emotional linked to bio-politics and post-postmodernism. It studies some elements as the violation of the excluded middle from the formal logics into unnatural narratives, as a means to eliminate the notion of mimesis, and at the same time through the non-referentiality and the abstracted, to accentuate the irrational (the emotional). Besides, these narratives are understood as a means of social control and of collaboration in the improvement of the extraction of surplus value, in the context of the current systemic crisis of capitalism. Also, it is assumed a critical position in regard to these narratives, since, in political terms, it is not possible to accept this economic strategy, disguised as a narratological paradigm, with nuances of social control, in the context of the Third-World countries.

Keywords: Latin American Marxist Studies, Narratology, Post-postmodernism, Bio-politics, Science Fiction.

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, a new narratological domain has been developed that is defined by its emphasis on the unnatural. Thus, unnatural narratives have supposedly come to set up a narrative scheme based on the rejection of the idea of mimesis, which has dominated the realm of narrative for centuries.

There is very little known about this new approach, particularly not in Latin America and in the Third World, in general. For this reason, it is necessary that unnatural narratives be introduced critically, and at the same time it is essential that we, Latin Americans and the Third World in general, adopt an extreme position in regards to the ideological consequences related to unnatural narratives.

Besides, in the context of the Latin American Marxist Studies of Culture and Media (Alfaro-Vargas, 2017a), the study of unnatural narratives and of the science fiction of the technocratic *novum* is of great significance for the impact of these

“cultural” manifestations on the capitalist economy and the social control of masses. For all this, it is important to analyze the cultural phenomena as a mass media.

In this context, it is stated the following thesis guiding this essay: the development of unnatural narratives appertains to the ideological and economic imperatives of neo-liberalism, marked by a systemic capitalist crisis, through their emphasis upon the emotional. To prove this thesis, it will be fundamental to define the notion of unnatural narratives, determine the relationship between unnatural narratives and the emotional, and establish the ideological role, played by unnatural narratives, within the neoliberal policies and in relation to the emphasis of the unnaturalness on the emotional.

THE NOTION OF UNNATURAL NARRATIVES

The aim of unnatural narratives is particularly “to find a *model* able to deal with a maximum number of narrative texts, especially including postmodernist metafictional literature which had previously been characterized in merely anti-mimetic terms (no plot, no character, no setting, etc.)” (Fludernik, 2012, 358; emphasis added). In this sense, unnatural narratives are “a distinctive and important subset of experimental literature” (Alber, Nielsen, and Richardson, 2012, 351) that, through the notion of model, posits a narratological paradigm whose epistemological ground is the violation of the excluded middle (Alber, 2016), founded upon set theory, which equally supports the notion of model (Alfaro-Vargas, 2016a, 2016b and 2017b).

The unnatural models would clearly have the same structure as any set into the proposal of set theory. That is, in the case of unnatural narratives, we could develop a story world or a possible world where there co-exists different elements coming from different onto-epistemologies. The most important here would be the assumption of the empty set as a structuring element stemmed from the axiom of foundation, which permits justifying any kind of set so long as the entire set consists of a series of elements whose constant is the empty set, which is an ur-set

that functions as an axiomatic premise and as a conclusion of such axiom (a *petitio principii*) (see Alfaro-Vargas, 2016a, 2016b and 2017b). In other words, we can elaborate a set constituted by elements from the natural world and from the unnatural repertoire, even though the final product has in its components some elements that are impossible to mix, because of the already known violation of the excluded middle. Unnatural narratives are, then, defined as a realm, in which “ p and non- p are simultaneously true” (Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson, 2013, 105). That is, the application of this unnatural approach implies the elaboration of story worlds or possible worlds characterized by the co-existence of several ontologies, without being important their epistemological value. For instance, into the Costa Rican literature, the novel *Los peces de Cooper* (Ortega-Rodríguez y Viquez-Jiménez, 2015) presents an alternative world, in which is possible to produce electricity through the implementation of a technology that permits the manipulation of superconductivity to an ambient temperature, which is impossible in our physical world.

However, when unnatural narratives break down with the principle of the excluded middle (A is A or non- A), they are only able to do that by utilizing this principle itself. Namely, the reasoning behind the elimination of the excluded middle by unnatural theorists supposes that the excluded middle was reasoning in the following way: the excluded middle is valid or the excluded middle is non-valid; then, unnatural narratives affirm that the excluded middle is non-valid; nonetheless, this mental operation is not more than the affirmation of the excluded middle itself. Therefore, unnatural narratives, a deluge of irrationality, are the product of an inherent contradiction that annihilates their proposal as a whole, and for these motives it is the emotional that unnatural narratives emphasize, since it is impossible to rationally support this narratological paradigm.

In this perspective, unnatural narratives promote a narration that “violates the limits of narratorial communication, but also of real world discourse” (Nielsen, 2011, 78), which implies a rupture of the referential process (destroying the unity of Being and language) and of the practical character of communication, producing

linguistic commodities that are only a formal artifact, which denies reality as *totality*. The unnatural theorists believe in the possibility of eliminating the relationship between language and reality; however, they only connive at the survival of the bourgeoisie. For this reason, “[this kind of] narrative is an ideological instrument” (Phelan, 2016, 417) understood this in a Marxian way, which requires a “new” way of reading; *i.e.*, something like the Zen² way of reading that needs a reader disposed to accept both “the strangeness of unnatural narratives and the *feelings* of discomfort, fear, worry, and panic that they might evoke in her or him” (Alber, 2013, 454; emphasis added). Ultimately, unnatural narratives and their ideological function call forth an emphasis on the emotional as an ideological deformation of reality.

Particularly, the introduction of some elements such as metafiction, metalepsis, etc., is a means to relate the formal aspects of unnatural narratives to the emotional reaction that is hoped as long as the reading process is oriented towards the irrational.³ Indeed, it is essential that we comprehend unnatural narratives are only a form whose soul (matter, content) is out of them. Unnatural narratives are an artifice, enabling a make-believe game⁴ that offers a new kind of “verosimilization” ingenuously founded upon the impossible. These narratives uniquely hide the context of emergence, which is now marked by a deep economic crisis since 1970s.

In the middle of unnatural narratives, we can find their anti-mimetism that is established *qua* an anti-cognitive estrangement in order to reinforce their ideological effect. The absence of verosimilarity or the elaborations of a merely formal verosimilarity (without referentiality in both cases) not only define unnatural narratives as a merely formal device, but also as an ideological and plutocratic weapon in times of crisis. This anti-mimetism presupposes the wrong idea that it is

² The use of the word “Zen” partakes in the post-postmodern romanticism included in unnatural narratives, which is another manifestation of their irrationality.

³For instance, Bell and Alber state that metalepsis implies “represented transgressions of world boundaries as one manifestation of the unnatural” (2012, 166).

⁴ As Zipfel has signaled, “fictionality is a concept that designates phenomena that in some way deals with fictional worlds, that the way these fictional worlds are dealt with involves a game of make-believe, and that this game is embedded in an institutional practice” (2014, 104-105).

likely to propose a linguistic construct without referentiality, which is impossible, since the referentiality is always present in one of two ways.

The referentiality may be *positive* when it is directly linked to a thing, person, or process. On the other hand, it may be *negative*⁵ when, in a linguistic construct, the language is utilized as a device that would allow hiding the relationship between the words and the world. As Gaskin has set out, “*all* language is referential” (2013, 290), so language that admits of the creation of “man-made worlds” is also referential: “poetic language *is* a way of getting at reality” (Gaskin, 2013, 290). It is impossible not to know the world; only it is likely to negate it, but this negation is no more than a dialectical process that has to be sublated (*aufgehoben*): Being is both positive and negative, dialectically speaking.

Although unnatural narratives have had an ample development in the last years, they are uniquely an entanglement of pseudo-theoretical and a-logical flimsiness insofar as the violation of the excluded middle, the equivocal verosimilization, the reduction of texts to a merely formal device, the supposed annihilation of referentiality, and the anti-mimetism are all elements of these narratives that make it impossible to accept them. It is difficult to fathom the rapid development experienced by unnatural narratives in Europe and the Anglo Saxon world, when the only thing unnatural narratives involve is irrationality. Due to their irrational characterization, unnatural narratives are to be sublated (*aufgehoben*). Under no circumstances must we, Latin Americans and third-world people, accept this narratological paradigm that is only a manifestation of neocolonialism in times of crisis. Unnatural narratives are a reflection of the bourgeois values.

In sum, however, the unnatural theorists believe that unnatural narratives are a form of narratology that is characterized by an anti-mimetic model, which has into its components a series of narrative techniques such as metalepsis, metafiction, etc., allowing these narratives to pose unnatural scenarios, possible worlds, and story worlds. Nonetheless, this thesis has its anti-thesis, as we shall see.

⁵ Negativity is also a part of Being.

UNNATURAL NARRATIVES AND THE EMOTIONAL

As we have seen, unnatural narratives are founded upon the violation of the excluded middle, in a process that negates not only the referentiality of language, but the mimesis of poetic language as well. In this sense, such is the ideological aim of unnatural narratives that the reading process is focused on the production of emotional reactions. So that we may apprehend the functionality of the emotional into unnatural narratives, we shall speak of *the politics of the impossible*.

The politics of the impossible is an underlying structure that is tautological and that is linked to the notion of set theory, whose active principle is the empty set (\emptyset), and so long as it is non-referential, it allows emphasizing and creating a series of elements (belonging to a determinate set) that privilege “the emotional in detriment of the rational” (Alfaro-Vargas, 2016a, 210). The politics of the impossible, ergo, is understood in relation to unnatural narratives as follows:

Unnatural narratives make an effort so as to propose an irrational scheme (without the unity of Being and language, violating the principle of the excluded middle) founded on a logical-axiomatic structure (set theory) that pretends to imaginatively open (by means of models) the possibility of creating alternative onto-epistemological frameworks, called possible worlds, which are supposedly non-referential forms whose pretended immediate “content” is *impossible* (Alfaro-Vargas, 2016b, 209; translation mine).

It is plain that unnatural narratives set up the impossible as a means to create abstracted (“abstraídos” in Spanish) models that would be able to break away from their linkage to the concrete; that is, unnatural narratives define themselves as discontinuity because of this separation from the real concrete. Likewise, these narratives establish models that are the product of a separation of the dialectical categories of the abstract (“abstracto” in Spanish) and the concrete.⁶ For this, it is necessary that the difference between the abstracted and the abstract

⁶ That is, “The epistemological and scientific value of the concept of model is practically null and void, because its ground and its purpose are founded upon the nothingness of the empty set (\emptyset), as a structural axis, that categorically negates in itself the concrete content, its reality, and plunges the models into a self-referential process with respect to itself and into a non-referential one in relation to some possible object” (Alfaro-Vargas, 2017b, 159; translation mine).

be assumed in order that we are able to comprehend the underlying process of unnatural narratives.

The Spanish adjectives “abstraído” (abstracted) and “abstracto” (abstract) refer to things completely different. The notion of “abstracto” (abstract) implies a separation from the real concrete, but at the same time it is linked to the concrete by means of praxis: the abstract is the apprehension of the real concrete by means of concepts. On the contrary, the abstracted (“lo abstraído”) is a discourse whose relation to the concrete does not exist; *i.e.*, there is no relation between the language carrying the abstracted discourse and the real concrete; there is no referentiality (or in other words it exists a negative referentiality); hence, there is neither subject nor object, but only an irrational discourse. Unnatural narratives, therefore, are an abstracted discourse or even better a pseudo-theory.

There being only an abstracted discourse in unnatural narratives, it is evident that it does not exist any kind of rationality in this narratological “fad”; then, it only remains an emotional substratum that, inasmuch as all the rational (referential) elements have disappeared, is the perfect soil for cultivating an emotional and neoliberal ideology.

Incidentally, such emotionalization is a phenomenon present so in unnatural narratives as in science fiction.⁷ In other words, current science fiction, in general terms, is defined by the technocratic *novum*, which is characterized as posits the following definition:

Within *the technocratic novum*, it is given a process of non-cognitive estrangement, which is supported by some flimsy notions that are presented as scientific ideas related to the effect of spectacularity, which seeks to amaze the reader/spectator, avoiding both any way of social and economic critique of the establishment and the evasion of it. (...). Furthermore, it is represented in this *novum*, along with the technology of science fiction, some mystical, irrational, and unreal elements, which permit (...) increasing the effect of spectacularity, but also the non-cognitive element as a way of evasion, of escapism, as a process of alienation (in some cases with the

⁷ The main difference between unnatural narratives and science fiction (that is connected to the technocratic *novum*) is that the latter has a pedagogical aim; *i.e.*, the implementation of the technocratic *novum* into the phenomenon of science fiction has as a purpose to educate people in math and science (Luukkala, 2014; Alfaro-Vargas, 2014a).

help of an emphasis on the emotional in detriment of the rational) (Alfaro-Vargas, 2015, 15; translation mine).

Both unnatural narratives and science fiction demonstrate a phenomenological slant⁸ that helps to press both phenomena toward an emotionality (or emotionalization) *qua Erlebnis* (the lived-experience). In this case, the lived-experience is represented by consumerism of both unnatural commodities and the consuming emotion experienced, e.g., by the Zen reader/spectator. The Zen reader/spectator is thus incapable of going beyond the formal device produced within the imperatives of unnatural narratives and/or the science fiction of the technocratic *novum*; the Zen reader/spectator is uniquely able to swallow the ideological content⁹ of such commodities, by means of feeling, never by thinking. The Zen reader/spectator can only contemplate the *forms* that would create for him or her, a new possible world, an alternative ontology. The political action is far from him and her. There is, then, no praxis.

Unnatural narratives in relation to the emotional function as a stimulant of endorphins. In this way, this narratological paradigm, understood as a neoliberal policy, leads the Zen reader/spectator to experience a series of emotions that stimulate the production of neurotransmitters, which permit the Zen reader/spectator to relax and, especially, to forget his/her material conditions of existence, the exploitation that they suffer daily. That is, unnatural narratives are a form of bio-power, a space that involves “the merging of the biological with the political” (Cohen, 2016, 88). Thus, within the saturation point given by the excess of experienced emotions, the Zen reader/spectator is easy prey for his/her own endorphins that act as a synthetic drug, producing addiction and, in this case, irrationalism. By virtue of such endorphins, Zen readers/spectators experiencing their emotions as a mere corporeality are lead to the realm of an alienated individuality, in which they, as workers, are disconnected from the social reality, focusing Zen readers/spectators upon their “individual failings rather than the social reality of their collective exploitation under capitalism” (Cohen, 2016, 103).

⁸ As Ryan points out, there is “a turn (...) to a phenomenological approach focused on the act of imagination required of the reader, spectator, or player” (2014, 43).

⁹ The ideological content here corresponds with the form (in) itself.

The Zen reader/spectator established by Alber (2013), however, appears to be represented as a post-postmodern and neoliberal space of interpretative freedom, where the personality can find the conditions for its development. Nonetheless, the Zen reader/spectator is a fascist construct that obligates the individual to accept the story world or the fictional world without hesitating. The Zen reader/spectator is only an emotional receptacle of the impositions brought forth by unnatural narratives. Thus, the process of reading is a process of neoliberal socialization that deals with the establishment of a philosophical and social anthropology (its chronotope) that responds to the imperatives of the current bourgeoisie. The Zen reader/spectator seeks to create a “citizen” without the human rational capacity of thinking; that is, it seeks both to create or socialize a human being without its main characteristic (to think – *denken*) and to reduce him/her to a simple speaking animal that feels. Otherwise, human being is socialized by unnatural narratives as a degraded creature, whose human capacities are blocked: it cannot do or think anything, except *feeling*.

For example, in the Costa Rican literature, a tale of very low literary quality titled “Un joven demonio entre las sombras” (A young demon among shadows) written by Iván Molina Jiménez¹⁰ shows an unnatural world, in which two hired assassins, who work for a transnational company, have the mission of killing a union member that is communist and that is opposed to the project of such a company. The hired assassins are Europeans, Adèle is French and Kruger, German, who were hired to eliminate an obstacle for the interests of the company that wants to exploit a metal mine in Tanzania (Africa). Both assassins have some kind of weapon that shoots bullets directed by a satellite (this is the unique unnatural element present in this tale), with which they kill the union member. This tale affirms the right to assassinate people that interfere with the objectives of a transnational company, the tale sees as something ethically good to protect capital

¹⁰ The literature of Iván Molina Jiménez has been analyzed by Alfaro-Vargas (2013 and 2014b). In reality, the literary production of Molina Jiménez chime in with a penny-dreadful literature. The quality of Molina-Jiménez’s literature is so low; his literature, sold as science fiction, lacks scientific knowledge and an appropriate diegetic development.

at any cost, even sacrificing a human life: Molina Jiménez's tale is an example of the manifestation of fascism into unnatural narratives. Thus, here the chronotope of this unnatural tale is an anthropological synthesis that defines human being as a mere object of capital, that is, human being is understood as a thing, as something completely alienated.

Let us see another example. In *Transformers: The Last Knight* (Bay, 2017), we may find some characteristics of unnaturalness; that is, the coexistence of diegetic elements that conflates both the story of the King Arthur and that of Transformers, mixing magic and scientific fantasy. These diegetic elements, which mix two genres,¹¹ allow for the attracting of several classes of different consumers: those who love the fantastic genre, those who love science fiction, and those who love such mixture and the special effects. In this way, there is a great variety of spectators/consumers for this kind of commodity, which permits improving the effectivization of surplus value in one single commodity with several types of consumers.

However, all this variety of spectators/consumers are confronted by a plot, in which the present context of the United States is negated by the ideological state apparatuses. In consequence, we have in *Transformers* a diegetic world (an alternative world) with a U.S. society, in which it does not exist any of the following social parameters: there is no economic crisis, there is no class struggle, there is no racism, there is no fascism, there is no manipulation of people through mass media, etc., except a world menaced by aliens seasoned with special effects.

The main point of *Transformers*, what it wants to convey us, is to frighten its public. Still, in the effort for elaborating an anti-mimetic world, *Transformers* may not avoid introducing a mimetic fear; in other words, the fear provoked by Russia and its President Putin, when in a little scene of the movie is Putin named in a manner that seems to remind us of the idea of that Russia is not a "friend" of the United States and its allies. On the other hand, this "anti-mimetic" fear presented in *Transformers* leads to hide all that is necessary to leave out of the public view. In

¹¹ The postmodern aesthetics is characterized by "the production of works that participate in multiple genres and styles within a single work" (Booker, 2007, xiv).

addition, it is important that we be able to recognize that these sorts of movies generally solve its plot through an emotional force, which permits changing the dystopic situation suffered by the protagonists, as in *Transformers*.

The whole panorama in this kind of anti-mimetic diegesis has been exemplified with *Transformers*, which represents some type of hokum. The most important point here, with these kinds of movies, is to generate conversation¹² (commentaries) about the story that is but a merely formal device, meanwhile the real world remains under thousands of unproductive and nonsensical commentaries, evading in this case the U.S. economic reality that seems disastrous and without escape. Unnatural narratives are pure escapism.

This escapism is synthetized in the politics of the impossible, which implies that the anti-mimetic strategy of unnaturalness is not so anti-mimetic. What really happens is, as we have noted above, that the mimesis (its referentiality) is given by negation, since unnatural narratives are an ideological artifact necessary for the interests of the current first-world capitalism beaten by a profound crisis initiated in 1970s. Escapism is always a way of dominant groups to maintain their privileges.

THE EMOTIONAL AND THE NEOLIBERAL IN UNNATURAL NARRATIVES

It is evident that “Emotion socialization may be embedded in practices aimed at guiding children toward culturally defined competencies” (Cole and Tan, 2015, 501). That is, some phenomena as unnatural narratives may support patterns of socialization that are necessary here and now; thence, “culture influences emotion process” (Cole and Tan, 2015, 500), which signifies that insofar as movies and literature are mass media, unnatural narratives have a strong influence on several aspects of everyday life, “such as aggression, stereotyping, helping, sexual behaviors, education, social networking, and identity development” (Prot et al., 2015, 290); whence, they influence the behavior in terms of

¹² In this sense, an unnatural movie or story “is an attempt to create within the psyche of the reader the seeming particularity of a conception of a cosmological reality or a possible world of endless conjecture” (Trifonas, 2017, 181).

consumerism and of political action. Still, in the conditions of the current fascist capitalism, unnatural narratives in the same way as science fiction are “used as a medium for the indoctrination of an unsuspecting public” (May, 2017, x).

Nevertheless, the emotionalization of culture is a process rooted in neoliberalism “that began to rear its head during 1970s” (Walonen, 2016, 2) so as to resolve the falling in global profit rates¹³ that have marked the beginning of the actual systemic crisis (Harman, 2009; Skidelsky and Wigström, 2010; Harvey, 2010; Quiggin, 2010). In other words, capitalism is broken; for this reason, they were implemented several measures to face this crisis such as the development of a financial system, the expansion of post-postmodernism, the neoliberal policies, the creation of Web 1.0 and 2.0, and among other things unnatural narratives, which were born in coincidence with the crisis of 2007-2008 (see Nielsen, 2016).

With the falling in the profit rates, it is not only capitalism that is in danger of disappearing, but also the bourgeoisie itself. Next, it seems to be clear that in this context the bourgeoisie will do whatever to survive. During the last decades, the first-world capitalism (the United States and the European Union) has killed people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, etc.;¹⁴ it has implemented the “free” market policies to seize the surplus value generated by the Third World; it has been eliminating the access to information; it has been creating mass-media policies to manipulate and misinform the great masses; but it has been sponsoring, for instance, some cultural movements such as postmodernism, post-postmodernism, the LGBTIQ movement, feminism, the science fiction of the technocratic *novum*, and unnatural narratives as well.

Thus, unnatural narratives respond to the requirements of this context so long as “what counts as fiction is what dominant institutions call fiction” (Stock, 2016, 211) and what counts as fiction today is that kind of fiction that helps the bourgeoisie to survive;¹⁵ *i.e.*, all those cultural practices that promote escapism

¹³ See (Harvey, 2010; Harman, 2009)

¹⁴ To this respect, for example, see: (“Estados Unidos ha matado a más de 20 millones de personas,” Resumen Latinoamericano, 2016)

¹⁵ Likewise, Duménil and Lévy states that the bourgeoisie manipulates “the social trends inherent in the dynamics of productive forces and relations of production in directions compatible with the

through the politics of the impossible are part of this bourgeois strategy: “The neoliberal world system still operates in an imperialist manner” (Walonen, 2016, 7), or, as Marx and Engels set out, “The ruling ideas in an epoch are solely always the ideas of ruling class” (*Die herrschenden Ideen einer Zeit waren stets nur die Ideen der herrschenden Klasse*) (1977, 480).

Besides, the politics of the impossible involves “the prevalence of emotions not only in the public sphere, but also in self-understanding and in the expression of personal identity” (García-Martínez and González, 2016, 15). However, unnatural narratives as a politics of the impossible are a phenomenon connected with the production of exchange value. In other words, the commodities derived from unnatural narratives have an use value, which is made up of the emotional (what we are buying, when we consume unnatural commodities, is uniquely something for feeling) but these commodities also have an exchange value; that is, unnatural commodities allow of the circulation/reproduction of capital in a process where “The neoliberal regime presupposes emotions as a resource for increasing its productivity and performance” (Han, 2014, 71; translation mine). Otherwise, there is a narrow connection between the emotional as use value and exchange value. Both the use value and the exchange value of unnatural commodities act as a space for the reproduction of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class.

After the manifestation of systemic crisis in 2007-2008, the emergence of post-postmodernism has been marked by the necessity of intensifying the circulation of commodities (Nealon, 2012). In this context, post-postmodernism is defined as “the emergent logic of something else: not necessarily something ‘new’, but a different, more intense mode of production/consumption” (Nealon, 2012, 51-52). If the 1970 crisis produced, along the last five decades, the falling of profit rates, then post-postmodernism is an attempt to improve the effectivization of the surplus value through the intensification of circulation/reproduction of capital. Furthermore, in the cultural field, post-postmodernism has pointed out toward the

survival of their own hegemony” (2013, 194). Also, it is clear that “The bourgeoisie naturally represents the world, in which it rules, as the best world” (*Die Bourgeoisie stellt sich die Welt, worin sie herrscht, natürlich als die beste Welt vor*) (Marx and Engels, 1977, 488).

conversion of humanities into “merely ideological approaches to knowledge” (Nealon, 2012, 191). In the middle of this post-postmodern ideological manipulation, the academy has accentuated a process of legitimation whose objective is to build a construct of pseudo-concepts so that many commodities have a discursive ground, which would permit to reinforce their production/consumption by means of notions such as the linguistic turn, the narrative turn, or the complexity turn; all of them defined in non-referential terms.¹⁶

On the other hand, the relationship between post-postmodernism and unnatural narratives is given in terms of the politics of the impossible: “one might directly focus on literature’s powers of the *false*, its post-postmodern abilities, to create other, virtual [unnatural] worlds” (Nealon, 2012,158; emphasis added). That means unnatural narratives create the theoretical ground to churn out unnatural commodities of low quality that will be rapidly consumed. In this manner, due to their low quality, unnatural commodities do not require a superhuman effort to be consumed: to see a movie as *Transformers: The Last Knight*, we only need to be seated in front of a screen or to read a novel like *El mapa del tiempo* (Palma, 2008), from the Spanish “science fiction”, it only requires that you know how to read; the rest is part of being a Zen reader/spectator that “has consequently no choice but to construct a world image in which the text [or movie] is true” (Ryan, 2014, 34). Then, the Zen reader/spectator is too passive insofar as it is a product of the ideological, post-postmodern manipulation suffered by her or him.

The relation between post-postmodernism and unnatural narratives makes it clear that these narratives are both an ideological manipulation and an economic strategy. As a result, unnatural narratives collaborate in the bourgeois attempt for rescuing capitalism from the systemic crisis above mentioned, and in sociological terms these narratives are part of a neoliberal process of socialization implying the massification-manipulation of the majority of the population, which suffer a commodification of their feelings. Unnatural narratives “commoditize the most intimate of human relations and the production of identity and personhood”

¹⁶ Clearly, “neoliberalism blurs the distinction between political legitimation and economic value” (Konings, 2018, 123).

(Gledhill, 2007, 340). As a consequence of all this, the proletariat disappears into a “multitude” (Friedman, 2007): this scheme is purely and sordidly phenomenological. Unnatural narratives are only a lived-experience that interprets the world, but that it cannot change it.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the development of unnatural narratives belongs to the ideological imperatives of neo-liberalism through their emphasis on the emotional. Also, the politics of the impossible allows unnatural narratives to focus upon the creation of virtual, unnatural worlds as a means to hide our current reality from the view of masses.

Unnatural narratives function as a strategy of escapism, whose aim is to exacerbate the emotional realm in detriment of the rational, which involves the attempt of intensifying the circulation/reproduction of capital so that the bourgeoisie is able to survive as a ruling class.

Besides, it is evident that unnatural narratives are a merely formal device whose content is found *out of* their formalism. That is, the content of unnatural narratives is their ideological and economic functionality, which articulates the use value and the exchange value of unnatural commodities.

Unnatural narratives are, in fact, a neoliberal, plutocratic, post-postmodern, and capitalist strategy, disguised as narratological approach, of social control and an attempt of collaborating in the improvement of the effectivization of surplus value (that is, it is a means to accelerate and ameliorate the circulation-reproduction of capital).

However, it is essential that we be able to deal with, in our third-world context, the patterns of consumerism and of manipulation stimulated by unnatural narratives. What we need in our context is methodologies capable of explaining how a text or a movie are a form and content, not only a form. That is, we need to develop strategies that permit apprehending and transforming our real-concrete conditions. It is imperative that we be able of putting an end to the atavistic habit of

accepting all the European and U.S. “ideas” without hesitating for a while. Not only is it necessary that we think about what is hidden behind each new “academic fad” in, for example, the European philosophy or whatever, but also it is essential that we think about why they want us to accept and promote such a kind of idea without reflecting on the material conditions that are implicit in such ideas. By now unnatural narratives have begun to fizzle out.

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