

**Meridiano cero. Globalización,  
prácticas culturales y nuevas  
territorializaciones simbólicas**

(Meridian Zero. Globalization, Cultural  
Practices, and New Symbolic Territorializations)

Nattie Golubov and Rodrigo Parrini, eds.

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Mexico City, 2016, 278 pp.



This book deals with the reification and commercialization of culture, the symbolic representation of the center and periphery, the tension between gentrification and the appropriation of public spaces, and the history of health tourism, reaching all the way to self-help circles and books, forms of male subjectivation through risk and conflict in car races, the spatial-temporal experiences of video-games, and cultural practices determined by the migratory experience. Nattie Golubov and Rodrigo Parrini present us this entire range of topics in *Meridiano cero. Globalización, prácticas culturales y nuevas territorializaciones simbólicas* (Meridian Zero. Globalization, Cultural Practices, and New Symbolic Territorializations).

“The zero meridian is the imaginary axis that traverses the planet Earth from North to South and divides it into segments of space and time,” the back cover of the book tells us. And the axis that traverses each of its chapters is marked by tension between the global and the local, the spatial and the temporal. Using the warp and woof of a piece of cloth as a metaphor, Golubov and Parrini present their work pointing to culture as the fabric of meanings, materialities, and practices that leave their mark on subjects. In addition, they say that culture is at the center of the work’s reflection, present as though it were a battlefield, in

addition to being an integrating element that offers explanations and interpretations, making social and symbolic worlds intelligible. Culture, territorialization, subjectivities, technology, everyday life, global, local, and symbolization are some of the categories they reflect on and that can be found in the warp of the social, the economic, and the political.

In that sense, some of the texts compiled here emphasize one matter more than another; but none of them, even perhaps unintentionally, escapes economic, social, and political determining factors, and above all, the present time and the way in which individual and collective relationships manifest themselves today in late capitalism. In the sphere of culture, with all its tensions and contradictions, it seems impossible—and this is shown by the texts in this book—to speak of de-globalization. However, a form of symbolic territorialization is added today, as can be observed in the chapter “Iconología del desastre latinoamericano: de *Blade Runner* a *Elysium*” (Iconology of the Latin American Disaster: from *Blade Runner* to *Elysium*), by Nelson Arteaga Botello, and the chapter “Odisea del (otro) espacio. Experiencias espacio-temporales de videojugadores en Bogotá, Colombia” (Odyssey of the [Other] Space. Spatial-temporal Experiences of Videogamers in Bogota, Colombia), by Nina Cabra.

Arteaga's article was especially interesting to me because it invites reflection not only about symbolic territorialization, but about its ideological construction and the way in which an increasingly close, tangible dystopian world is represented. Based on his analysis, it is possible to study a large number of cinematographic cultural products whose ideological mechanism is to divide humanity around culturally constructed differences and in which diversity and multi-culturality are synonymous with chaos.

Everyday life and different forms of subjectivation are present in this book; I would underline the chapters that emphasize these processes: "Identidades fragmentadas, identidades narradas. Autoempleo y subjetividad en el turismo de salud" (Fragmented Identities, Narrated Identities. Self-employment and Subjectivity in Health Tourism), by Daniela Oliver Ruvalcaba; "Círculos de mujeres: el cuerpo femenino como espacio de significado espiritual" (Women's Circles: The Female Body as a Space for Spiritual Meaning), by María del Rosario Ramírez Morales; "Cuando amar es sufrir: manejo emocional en el grupo Mujeres que Aman Demasiado Anónimas (MADA)" (When Loving Is Suffering: Managing Emotions in the Group Women Who Love Too Much Anonymous [MADA]), by Johana Pardo González; "El libro, mi confidente" (Books, My Confidants), by María Alicia Peredo Merlo; and "Cultura juvenil: conflicto y riesgos en las carreras ilegales de autos y motos" (Youth Culture: Conflict and Risk in Illegal Car and Motorcycle Races), by Leila Sollberger Jeolás.

These chapters reflect on female and male subjectivity. It is important to underline that these analyses arrive at similar conclusions in that these processes of subjectivation reinforce the idea of individualization, of the construction of the female and male identities, in turn based on the reinforcement of the dominant hetero-normative ideologies like the naturalization of what is feminine, the myth of romantic love, and the exaltation of male values like bravery, aggressiveness, strength, and risk.

The reification of culture, gentrification, and the appropriation of space are three themes present here. The chapters "Pacto por México, reorganización capitalista y cultura: ¿hacia la implementación nacional de las industrias creativas?" (The Pact for Mexico, Capitalist Reorganization, and Culture: Toward the Nation-

al Implementation of the Creative Industries?), by Alma Rosa Alva de la Selva, Irma Portos Pérez, Enrique Quibrera Matienzo, and Florence Toussaint Alcaraz; "La revitalización del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México frente a la memoria de un barrio comercial. El caso de La Merced" (Revitalizing Mexico City's Historic Center in the Memory of a Commercial Neighborhood. The Case of La Merced), by Montserrat Núñez Ortiz; and "Creadores y territorios musicales en la Ciudad de México. Redes de colaboración y procesos creativos" (Mexico City's Musical Creators and Territories. Networks for Collaboration and Creative Processes), by Luis Alberto Hernández de la Cruz all center on these issues.

The commercialization of culture and the so-called "creative industries" as government policy, about which we have heard little or nothing; the tension between gentrification and the resistance to it, but at the same time that resistance is in conflict—and therefore creates tension—with the need to modernize, as another form of resistance to the commercialization of culture, of creative processes: the book reflects on all of this and on other forms of cooperating and producing culture through collaborative networks.

As we can see, *Meridiano cero. Globalización, prácticas culturales y nuevas territorializaciones simbólicas* offers us a large number of reflections, perhaps all quite different from each other, but that have three elements in common that make its reading indispensable: culture, new forms of subjectivation, and new forms of territorialization. In addition, it is necessary to reflect on these processes in light of the historical, political, and economic determining factors that make them possible. What is interesting about this work is that it constantly presents the tensions and internal contradictions not only of the objects (subjects) of study, but between them and today's late capitalism, which is debating between globalization and de-globalization, which at one time presupposed complete de-territorialization, and which now transcends to the symbolic, virtual plane. This makes this work fundamental reading for anyone interested in understanding the tensions between the local and the global; the different forms of territorialization, some virtual, some symbolic, and others more ideological; and new and diverse forms of subjectivation constructed as forms of resistance and

even subsistence in everyday life (for example, through women's groups and self-help groups and books).

I should mention that the richness of *Meridiano cero. Globalización, prácticas culturales y nuevas territorializaciones simbólicas* lies in the fact that the majority of the chapters mentioned use language that is not particularly formal or academic. The reader can infer diverse ways of getting at the heart of the phenomena studied here through qualitative methodologies like in-depth interviews and participatory observation. Some chapters even utilize a tone that is rather unusual in academic texts, like narration and the use of the first person to refer to research results, momentarily putting the author at the center of the piece. This makes it quite easy reading with no ill effects for the rigor of the research.

Finally, a central point that this work demonstrates is that culture, and therefore the elements associated with it, such as identity and subjectivation processes, are not static. They change with time and —and why not say it?— from one space to another. What is more, they change in accordance with the historical, political, and economic determining factors within which that change occurs. This is very clear in two articles: “La revitalización del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México frente a la memoria de un barrio comercial. El caso de la merced” (Revitalizing Mexico City's His-

toric Center in the Memory of a Commercial Neighborhood. The Case of La Merced), by Montserrat Núñez Ortiz; and “Las prácticas culturales de los mexicanoamericanos de Mission District, San Francisco, California, en torno al Día de Muertos” (Cultural Practices of Mexican-Americans on the Day of the Dead in the Mission District, San Francisco, California), by Paola Virginia Suárez Ávila.

Both these articles allude to the gentrification of traditional spaces and the way in which this process affects traditional inhabitants of certain big city neighborhoods and places in two different latitudes. But specifically, Suárez Ávila's article portrays a very interesting phenomenon that she defines as “the construction of new identities, determined by the migrant experience and not a national or ethnic identity.” This leads us to reflect on the fact that, one way or another, we all can become migrants. And it makes me think of our situation today, when we have millions of returnees in Mexico about whom we have thought very little regarding the construction of their identity based on their migratory experience or on their experience as return migrants. ■■

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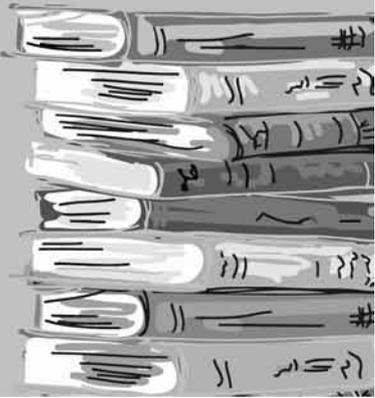
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Vol. 48, núm. 190, julio-sept. 2017

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¿ficción o realidad?*

Jairo Parada

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de desarrollo local*

Jordy Micheli y Rubén Oliver

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de desarrollo regional en Brasil*

María del Mar Miralles, José Luis Miralles y Julio Daza

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entre 2002 y 2012. La deuda pública*

Marisa Bordón

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industrial: el caso de Argentina 2003-2015*

Pablo Lavarello

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México-Japón*

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