

Rebelliousness is a lizard lying under the Sun

A lizard lies under the Sun, warming up, waiting for something to happen. The expression “you are like a lizard lying under the Sun” is used in Mexico for those who just stay there, taking their time, tanning while apparently doing nothing, as if something should be done. Time goes by for those lizards. Their thoughts can be left to wander, to daydream: what to do once they are warm, memories of that time when things seemed different, or of that other time when the world almost came to an end, of the injustice that surrounds them, of the possible ways to make things better. “We contemplate uncomfortably the world we inherited.”

The members of *Lagartijas Tiradas al Sol* (literally, *Lizards Lying under the Sun*) were born in the early 80's. As they say in *En el mismo barco* (*On the same boat*): “we grew up with television, Nintendo, the computer and our parents' disappointments.” Even before they were born, Mexico was already in an economic crisis, coming out of it only to fall into a new one once again. Their childhood experiences were filled with promises: modernity, universal peace, liberty and equal rights, and globalization. A better world. It never came.

Disaster is everywhere, says Luisa in her personal blog: “México está en el hoyo.” Crisis after crisis the feeling grew that no particular disaster was really taking place, but instead, everything started to take the form of disaster. How can we change the world, overcome injustice, change things, be heroic, make history, if there is no enemy, no promise to fulfill, no reason to fight? How can we change things if our individual experiences are homogeneous, fragmentary, devaluated? Moreover, can representation still produce an individual, significant experience? Can we re-articulate history in terms of this experience?

J.- Is it here...?

I.- No

J.- Isn't it here?

I.- I mean, this is the place, but there is nothing of what you're saying

J.- But they told me this is where they were

I.- Not really

J.- But were they here?

I.- You can see they aren't

Asalto al agua transparente (*Assault to the transparent water*) is the story of a woman from the province coming to Mexico City interwoven with the story of the Aztecs leaving Aztlan on a 200-year search for a promised land, which turned out to be an unproductive islet. The Aztecs would have to drain the water from the lakes and devise ways to make the islet productive in order to survive. Thus would begin a struggle between the inhabitants of the future Mexico City and its continuous floods, draining water apart to the point in which there is no river left, the lakes are dry and the city is almost out of potable water.

A history and a story, both rarely told: that of a city found and then conquered by the Spaniards, magnificent at the expense of draining its resources; and that of a woman, thinking she would find prosperity in one of the harshest cities for

newcomers. The complex experience of living here, of draining our natural resources to survive, is told not from the nostalgia of a lost paradise (as it never really was one), but more as a child's game: through a series of clichéd gestures, a set design full of the imagery commonly used in the erection of Mexican-ness, costumes typical of lower-middle class. History becomes experience as we follow Janet, the lonely woman arriving to the city, together with those of Cortes, the Malinche, and Montezuma. Thus, by going back to oblivious events in history, the *Lagartijas* render the complex and contradictory experience of living in this harsh, yet powerful city, intolerable, unbearable, polluted and waterless, flooded over and over again, though newcomers find it hard to leave, and 72% of its younger inhabitants consider themselves happy.

History is no longer an iconic representation like the pictures of the heroic Aztecs, the mighty Cortes, the treacherous Malinche, or even the ever-loving Virgin of Guadalupe: it has become ours; it has become our everyday story. We have access to the affective dimension of history; we too have been wondered, frightened, flooded and thirsty in this city.

The lizard lies under the Sun letting time go by, forgetting and then isolating and suspending certain moments; not to produce a history of the past with them to explain its effects on the present, but rather to set an irreconcilable tension between that past moment and another in the present, real or even made up. A lizard dares to lie under the Sun when reality is just not enough: "I tell many lies, I cannot stop lying and I don't want to, when I talk to someone I really like to think I can lie to them. I really like people to believe me, I tell lies to improve life and I only lie to those whom I love; I want a good story even if it's false, I really like it when my friends say: 'Wow'."

Fiction for the *Lagartijas* is not so much a parallel world opposing reality: fiction is composed of parts of life; representation isn't produced as a closed entity, but rather full of cracks that allow reality to squirm its way through them. Narratives are produced from personal experience and situations taken from reality. Fiction comes as a reorganization of the sensitive; thus, a topic like the Mexican conquest or the end of the world, is stripped down to its most primary sensitive elements. Their representations aim towards those residuals of experience, to those evanescent instants where a bit of life can be suspended. *

When asked to make a work on and the Mayan prophesy of the end of the world in 2012, Gabino went back to tell the story of his relationship and further abandonment by his ex-girlfriend Catalina. The work, entitled *Catalina*, relates the recent AH1N1 swine flu epidemic crisis in Mexico, the closest we have got to an end-of-the-world experience, with the most unbearable pain Gabino has felt, even worse than the death of his mother, he claims: the moment when Catalina left him.

* It is worth to also note here the close collaborations of the troupe with film director Nicolás Pereda in the creation and production of his films. Most of them, built on only an outline of situations which are later improvised by the actors, leading to long inactive moments, odd silences, unexpected dialogues and gestures that let life overflow representation. Appliances and pipes never seem to work, time seems to change but the characters seem to stay always the same. In his films, as with the theatrical work of *Lagartijas*, traces of experience emerge from the cracks of representation.

In the same way as they did with *Asalto*, events aren't made into a linear story based on a certain causality, but rather just accounted for as unique, isolated moments, dots that the audience will have to connect. Thus, through a series of emails, SMS, and letters that Gabino and Catalina sent each other, the feeling of abandonment, the wound is being exposed and perhaps then turned into a scar, the ultimate evidence of experience. During the swine flu crisis, Gabino decides to travel to Buenos Aires where Catalina is now living and studying. Through a video he made we get to know her, even like her, up until the moment when she starts reading the letters and emails to us out loud. It is one thing for us to be read the letters; it is another to listen to its author reading as a first person. And for those moments when Gabino cannot cry, there is always some VapoRub that can be rubbed under the eyes to make them weep (a typical resource of TV actors). Maybe then, through lied, represented tears can one start to forget.

Honesty emerges from openly told lies. History is stripped down into its tensions and affections. Songs have to be played twice for them to be felt right. Experience emerges from the outlines of a narrative. Perhaps then we are able to appropriate history, to approach our little bit of discomfort in the world. It is worth to try it. Over and over.

Edwin Culp
Mexico City, 2010