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Storytelling as Methodology: Colombia's Social Studies Textbooks after La Constitución de 1991

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Storytelling as Methodology: Colombia's Social Studies Textbooks after La Constitución de 1991¹

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Abstract

This article posits the concept-metaphor of “storytelling as methodology” for reading a Colombian social studies textbook after the country ratified a new constitution in 1991. It examines temporal interplay and the interplay between visual and written texts in the textbook in order to analyze US imperialism, race/difference, and the discourse of progress. At the same time, the article draws on the theoretical perspectives of Gayatri Spivak in its attempt to perform transnational academic work within the limits of translation.

Keywords: Colombia, storytelling, methodology, textbooks, visual culture, history, race, US imperialism, Gayatri Spivak

Cuentacuentos como Metodología: Los Libros de Texto de Ciencias Sociales de Colombia Después de la Constitución de 1991¹

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Resumen

Este artículo se plantea el concepto-metáfora de la "cuentacuentos como metodología" para leer un libro de texto de Ciencias Sociales de Colombia después La Constitución de 1991. Examina la interacción temporal y la interacción entre los textos y las imágenes de apoyo en el libro de texto para analizar el imperialismo estadounidense, raza/diferencia, y el discurso del progreso. Al mismo tiempo, el artículo se basa en las perspectivas teóricas de Gayatri Spivak en su intento de hacer un trabajo académico transnacional dentro de los límites de la traducción.

Palabras clave: Colombia, cuentacuentos, metodología, libros de texto, cultura visual, historia, raza, imperialismo estadounidense, Gayatri Spivak

La vida no es la que uno vivió, sino la que uno recuerda, y cómo la recuerda para contarla.
--Gabriel Garcíá Márquez, *Vivir para Contarla*

What matters in life is not what happens to you but what you remember and how you remember it.
-- Gabriel Garcíá Márquez, *Living to tell the Tale*

How to Read this Article

From here, go directly to examine each visual. According to Howells & Negreivos (2012), reading a visual text without the written (con)text is a method of visual literacy versus visual memory. Try it! While readers will bring their own assumptions to visual texts, this approach assumes some separation among written text, visual text, and other contextual information (Feres, 2009). So, first, explore what stories are told in the visual texts. While the (con)text of visuals is important and explored later in the article, these reprinted visuals also have their own forms (Evans & Hall, 1999): a painting, drawings, photographs, and collage. Visual texts also have sub-genres: the painting is a portrait; the drawings are political cartoons.

In addition to the visual texts, this article is written in English and Spanish, and not translated back and forth. For the most part the data is in Spanish and my analysis is in English. With this, linguistically different readers are positioned in different kinds of relationships with the written texts and with data and analysis. This is an experiment in thinking about translation: “We transfer content because we must, knowing it cannot be done, in translations as in all communications...” (Spivak, 2012, p. 265). Drawing on Spivak’s (2012) “Translating into English” (pp. 256-274), “The Burden of English” (pp. 35-56), “How to Read a ‘Culturally Different’ Book” (pp. 73-96), and “Translation as Culture” (pp. 241-255), I am inviting readers (and myself) to experience the space between “knowing about something and learning to do something” (Spivak, 2012, p. 140). By calling attention to the “implied reader” (p. 37), I am wanting readers to experience the double-bind: the “seduction of a text that seems to be addressed” to you (p. 274), and how that text (visual, written, Spanish, English, data, analysis) can and cannot be read, comparatively and contingently, within, across, and against the other texts, contexts, and subtexts. As a way of learning the

limits of knowing and working against too easy consumption, readers may experience discomfort. However, because “translation is not just the stringing together of the most accurate synonyms by the most proximate syntax” (Spivak, 2012, p. 256), this kind of experiment may remind us that Colombia’s texts, contexts, and subtexts are still being translated, primarily for a US-European academic audience.

Induction

Ten years ago, this study began differently, as discourse and visual analyses of the text and images in Colombia’s Milenio Social Studies textbook series (1997), widely used across grade levels six through eight. I collected the textbooks in 2003-04 as part of a year-long ethnographic study of local responses to globalizing trends in Colombia. That ethnographic study, conducted a decade after Colombia ratified La Constitución de 1991, examined institutional, curricular, and student responses to neoliberalism, privatization, US imperialism, and civic education policy/law at a prestigious regional university (Daza, 2006a, 2006b). Bridging the professional and personal, I also analyzed the challenges of doing transnational qualitative research in Colombia, especially as a North/West-based researcher (Daza, 2008; 2009). A dominant North/West analytical framework often positions non-North/West regions as “sources of raw materials for analysis,” whereas a de- or- post-colonial framework may see the regions’ production as “a basis for conceptualization and theory formation” (Slater, 2011, p. 454). To avoid mining the South for the consumption of the North/West is in large part to go against the grain of academic knowledge production. Often easier said than done, these textbooks are no longer in circulation and another decade has passed.

This post-colonial analysis of the textbooks offers a basis for conceptualization and theory formation. Specifically, it offers insight into a glocalized² imaginary of coloniality and imperialism³ present in social studies textbooks and therefore nationalism. Social studies textbooks themselves are often viewed as official narratives of nationalism—“the product of a collective imagination constructed through rememoration” (Spivak, 2012, p. 288). According to Spivak (2012), the rememoration project that constructs nationalism can be undone by a “comparativst imagination” (p. 288) and an aesthetic education can retrain the magination to think comparatively. The

task is “to prepare the readerly imagination to receive the literary and thus go beyond the self-identity of nationalism toward the complex textuality of the international” (Spivak, 2012, p. 281). In response to the failure of even liberationist nationalisms to question seamless identity that transcendentalizes the (glocal, post-colonial) nation as a unique (and better) experience, this analysis offers storytelling as a methodological framework for textbook analysis and pedagogy.

These textbooks as a particular kind of “storyteller” (Silko, 1981)—as “storytelling” a “nation thing,” rather than “mere nationalism” (Spivak, 2012)—repositions official storylines in social studies textbooks as a contested “site of memory” (Morrison, 1995), and asks how the past is remembered, imagined, and retold in visual and written texts of textbooks. According to Benjamin (1955/1968), “The story-teller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale.” (p. 87, cited in Scott, 2011, p. 204). Storytelling is improvisation. It often reorganizes space and time. In Silko’s *Storyteller*, the middle might be a beginning and in García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, time is both linear and cyclical.⁴ While an analysis of the storytellers cited here—Leslie Marmon Silko, Toni Morrison, and Gabriel García Márquez—is another paper, it is from their work that storytelling as a methodology for textbook analysis emerged. What these master storytellers do, especially in their stories of storytellers, is beyond what I can do in an academic article. However, from them, I position myself as storyteller of a textbook that is also a storyteller.

Storytelling as methodology brings memory, imagination, fiction, and truth together, to de-transcendentalize the singularity of each. Storytelling as a methodology of reading connects through boundaries of what happened, is happening, and will happen. The equivalence⁵ inherent in storytelling keeps difference unique⁶; to stop believing “in one thing and not in other things” is an aspect of storytelling⁷ that may free the future from its pasts within and beyond the literary text (Spivak, 2012, p. 297).

In so far that social studies textbooks work as/in nationalism’s interest to reclaim a past (Spivak, 2012, p. 280), storytelling as methodology moves textbook analysis from debates between fact and fiction, or even simply different points of view (Lindaman & Ward, 2004; DeRose, 2007), to a way of re-conceptualizing the present as a “field of the historical possibility” (Spivak, 2012, p. 442), displacing “the distinction between power and

knowledge which marks the Colonial” (Gallegos, 1998, p. 234). In this way, storytelling as methodology and pedagogy can be a decolonizing tool. As Scott (2011) explains, the work of the “quintessential storyteller...decenters history not simply because it grants agency and so historical visibility to those who have been hidden from history or left on its margins, but...[because] stories, sometimes even those recounted by the powerful, reveal complexities of human experience that challenge the categories with which we are accustomed to thinking about the world,” (pp. 203, 207). According to Spivak (2012), training to suspend the self in another’s text is training for ethical impulse.

For this article, I specifically focus on Milenio 8, the series’ third book, to analyze US imperialism, race/ethnicity differences, and the discourse of progress in Colombia. In particular, I analyze the interplay in the temporal organization of the textbook and among the written and visual texts. The aim is to (1) de-transcendentalize the Social Studies textbook as mere nationalism, and (2) prepare the readerly imagination to receive the literary. So, textbooks as storytellers are not simply official narratives of nation-think but contested sites of memory and imagination. To read the textbook as a storyteller is to see the pre-figuration of history and change without the narrowness of believing in one thing and not in other things (Spivak, 2012, p. 377). Like the post-colonial and the glocal (see note 2), interplaying between time, and the written and visual, is the contaminated place of both and neither nor time, text and visual—an attempt to “work a comparativism based on equivalence” (Spivak, p. 284, see note 5). The remainder of the article is organized into three main sections: Contexts; Analyses, and Implications.

(Con)texts

...time was not passing...it was turning in a circle...

— Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

...tiempo no pasaba...daba vueltas en redondo...

-- Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien años de soledad*

The three sub-sections below situate the textbook analysis. First, I briefly describe the Colombia context. Second, I situate textbook analysis in

general. Third, I outline storytelling as methodological framework for analyzing post-colonial, glocal texts.

Glocality of Colombia

Colombia, equivalent to other places and peoples in its complexities, is not easily described and remains one of the most understudied countries in the world (Bushnell, 1993; Palacios & Safford, 2002). Colombians concocted the global imaginary—by Colombian artists/celebrities such as Fernando Botero, Gabriel Garcia Marcus, and Shakira; US-centric news; Hollywood films such as *Romancing the Stone* and *Behind Enemy Lines: Colombia* (perhaps unfortunately); and sometimes thoughtful academic studies such as Alcalá (2006), Appelbaum (2003), and Taussig (2012). But in many ways, Colombia escapes imperial “desires for ‘pure,’ uncontaminated, and simple definitions of the native by the settler” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005, p. 86). “To escape definition, to be complicated, to develop and change...” is, according to Tuhiwai Smith (2005), decolonizing—“self-defining and self-naming” (p. 86).

Still, relevant to the textbook analysis below, it is important to note that Colombia has a long colonial-imperial, and now neoliberal, legacy (Daza, 2006b; see also Bucheli, 2005; Chossudovsky, 1997; Pearce, 1990; Randall, 1992; Willoughby, 2002; World Bank, 1996, 2002, 2003; World Bank & Currie, 1950). Even while the US was one of the first countries to recognize Colombia’s independence from Spain in 1820, Colombia remains in part an extension of US neoliberal imperialism in South America. As the US’ closest ally and largest recipient of military aid in the region, some argue it is not surprising that Colombia has had long-running violent conflicts, governmental corruption, high homicide rates, socioeconomic inequity, underemployment, and narco-capitalism that have had an enormous impact on its youth. Primarily, working under a neoliberal development model, Colombia is not part of “the socio-economic, political, and cultural transformations,” described by Escobar (2010) as possible alternative modernizations, post-liberalism, or post-development, “that have been taking place in South America during the past ten years, particularly in Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia” (Escobar, 2010, p. 1). However, how internal relations and external forces come together to shape a place is a matter of

perspective; in Colombia, resistance formations have taken many forms across the socio-political spectrum.

Recently, the country has entered a period of stability and economic growth, giving rise to tourism and foreign investment. Some credit aggressive neoliberal economic policies and military intervention (e.g., Plan Colombia) endorsed by the US, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, not all welcome these interventions or measuring Colombia's stability by foreign investments / interventions. Political and economic stability is also the result of Colombia's 1991 Constitution (Cárdenas, Junguito, & Pachón, 2006). The Constitution of 1991 intended to reconstitute the country as more ethical, more inclusive, and more equitable (Arocha, 1998). It resulted in changes to educational curriculum policy and law at all institutional levels, including a constitutionally mandated emphasis on civic education that was being implemented, in varying degrees, through curriculum, such as these textbooks, by the late 1990s. It is important to note that grassroots (student) activism brought constitutional reform to a national vote, called the 'seventh ballot' (Daza, 2007), which led to unprecedented collaboration among Colombia's different factions and constituency groups during the Constitutional Assembly that formed the 1991 Constitution.

Why Study (Colombian) Social Studies Textbooks

The connection between history instruction and the modern nation-state is an intimate one. The quintessential tools for instilling the lessons of the past in the minds of children are school textbooks, perhaps the most widely read and influential of any works of history. They are also amongst the most contested. (Amrith, 2009, p. 83)

Textbooks are "the results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles, and compromises;" they reflect what counts as legitimate knowledge, but also "complex power relations and struggles" (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991, pp. 1-2). Part of a massive for-profit industry (Carmody, 2012; Spring, 2009), textbooks are politicized as cultural productions marketed to governmental and school officials, often to meet curriculum standards covered on high-stakes tests. Available studies often point to the limitations of textbooks to capture the complexity and open-

endedness of historical narratives (Amrith, 2009), but state sanctioned textbooks are rich sources of data to examine who a country thinks it is; its relationship to the world; who it thinks its citizens should be and what they should know; and how it perceives difference and others (Marsden, 2001). According to Rivera Reyes (1994), in Colombia, “ethnocentric judgments conveyed in textbooks about the nature of society, such as the legitimization of ‘wild, lower races’ existing in opposition to ‘civilized, higher races’, have helped speed the process of homogeneity in Colombian culture, without taking into account the cultural and biological diversity of the country’s population” (p. 398). While access to textbooks remains limited, they are one of the primary sources of official knowledge in Colombia.

A mix of internal and external forces, including policy-based lending supported by the US and the World Bank and La Constitución de 1991, formed Colombia’s curriculum policy of the 1990s. The Constitution of 1991 and subsequent educational policy and law required shifts in Colombia’s official curriculum, including courses in civic education and ethics. Arguably, an exceptionalist (US-style of) nationalism, (neo)liberal democracy, and a discourse of progress supporting “free”-market capitalism is advanced. Social Studies textbooks had to conceptualize history as an interrelational and interdisciplinary process; develop una conciencia historica y democratica; inculcate personas comprometidas con Colombia y con el mundo; and fortalezcan su identidad colombiana aprendan a valorar el patrimonio historica y cultura del pais (Milenio, p. 288 & back cover).

How the past becomes, and is displaced, as reflections of the present unrolled into the future is the subject of this article. Here, “present” is both 1997-2004, when the texts were in use, and now (2012) when not only am I writing about them, but the students who read them in their classes are living and acting in the world. To put this in perspective, the inculcated student-citizenry of these texts is today between 20-30 years old. This article explores different interpretive practices (e.g. How to Read this Article) and especially storytelling as methodology to produce ways of reading, analyzing, and teaching textbooks that may open up historical narratives as more performative than constative. Echoing Spivak (2012), texts contain the seeds of their own de(con)struction; performativity is “a contamination of the outlines of historiography by its own place in history, so that...new historiography continues endlessly to read the archives against the grain” (p. 434), like storytelling. Whereas the constative is made to stand still, as

“agency is nestled in the permission [of another’s desire] to be figurative” (p. 437), “Imaginative de-transcendentalization,” according to Spivak (2012), “has to be taught, persistently, because of the private-public hold of nation-think” (p. 276; see also endnote 4).

Interplay of Time and Written and Visual Texts

In addition to expository writing, textbooks include visuals (photos, cartoons, graphs, and graphics). Anything visible is a potential object of study; a visual’s worthiness does not depend on its inherent qualities, but on its place within a cultural context. Its genre, location, reception, intention, and deployment also produce its meanings. Not unlike the study of material culture, visual cultural analysis assumes that visual cultural productions are cultural documents that provide insight about people, places, and events (Curzon, 2003) and may be reconstituted across different (con)texts (Barber, 2010). The location, visibility, circulation and genre of texts shape their interpretation (Fairclough, 1992; Hall, 2001/1997; Van Dijk, 2001/1993). According to Voithofer (2005), interpretation strategies and possible meanings emerge from the ongoing “interplay between the text, author, and reader” (p. 3). Similarly, I argue that (1) the interplay between the written and visual texts; (2) the interplay between the visual texts themselves; and (3) the temporal interplay of some texts being placed outside of a linearly history offer performative possibilities. Overall, the textbook series presents a linear historical narrative, but this linear narrative is also interrupted by a-historicized visuals and visuals that reference other times.

Repositioning the textbook as a storyteller is to foreground the performativity of such interplay, which is part and parcel of the storytelling genre. So, while social studies textbooks are “rememorization” and “counter-rememorization” projects turning cultural memory into history, “the literary imagination can impact on de-transcendentalized nationalism” by comparatively training “the readerly imagination to receive the literary and thus go beyond the self-identity of nationalism...” (Spivak, 2012, p. 281). This is the possibility of neither a-historical nor nostalgic history and of difference neither romanticized nor denied. Following Curzon (2003), visual culture is not “a mirror that reflects national identity, but rather a complex venue for its interpretation – a site through which populations come into consciousness as members of a particular community” (1). Performativity in

the textbook as storyteller flies in the face of colonization, imperialism, and nationalism that deprive, as well as over-code, by enclosing and consolidating the past; this is reproductive heteronormativity at work (Spivak, 2012; see note 4). Decolonizing, if it can happen at all, cannot be limited to changes in content and its transmission, but requires the formation of new storytellers who may remember the past and tell it differently.

Analyses

He allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves.

— Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*

The analyses below focus on the interplay of time and written and visual texts in *Milenio 8*. Covering the “evolución de la humanidad en el siglo XIX” and “Geografía Humana” (p. 5), the book is organized into five temas: Conceptos básicos de History y Geografía; Revolución Industrial y Capitalism; Neocolonialismo e imperialism; América, siglo XIX; and Colombia, siglo XIX. Here, post-colonial is also the time period. The textbook captures the coloniality and imperialism of (1) US imperialism, (2) race/ difference, and (3) the discourse of progress in Colombia.

US Imperialism

While imperialism is presented more as mere (depoliticized) facts in the written text, the interplay between the written and visual texts, and the questions that serve as captions for the visuals, opens up a contested site of memory—a performative space where imagination and facts work together to produce post-colonial narratives of history. “Cual ha sido la consecuencia más grave de la influencia norteamericana en Colombia?” (p. 277 is the caption for the visual of Theodore Roosevelt below (Figure 1). Curiously, the *Milenio 8* textbook concludes here.

First, this question is not asking *if* there has been a North American influence in Colombia or *if* there have been consequences from it. That North America has influenced Colombia and that there have been

consequences from it are implied in asking which has been the most serious. Second, the last page of the last chapter of the textbook ends with the beginning of the 20th century (1914) and the above question. This temporal interplay invites readers to think both about the past (19th century) and the future: the 20th century in the textbook series and beyond. Third, ending the book with this portrait and so little contextualization of it, here and throughout the book's written text, creates a vacuum of absence that is itself performative. The sovereign presence of a White man, whose dress and positioning compose him as owning-class, perched on the staircase, one arm extended over the railhead and the other hand in the pocket of his waistcoat, perhaps the keeper of a pocket watch, and symbolically the chain of time. That the visual text requires little context or written text is itself performative.



Figure 1.

Throughout the textbook series, many of the visual texts are not directly discussed or referenced in the written text where they are embedded. However, the captions of the visuals often pose a question that asks readers to connect to, or reflect on, the written text. Although readers do not learn from the text that Roosevelt served as the US president from 1901 to 1909,

we do learn through the textbook that during that time, Panama, supported by the US, separated from Colombia. Subsequently, the US built and controlled the Panama Canal until 1999. A lucrative commercial site, the canal also became a strategic military zone during WWII. The following is included in the written text of Milenio 8 above the visual:

Francia había adquirido los derechos para la construcción de un canal interoceánico por el Istmo de Panamá....

Sin embargo, ante la imposibilidad de culminar las obras, la compañía francesa cedió los derechos a los norteamericanos, quienes se apresuran a celebra un contrato con Colombia....los puntos acordados eran muy desventajosos para Colombia, y por esta razón el senado no lo aprobó.

Los Estados Unidos, al ver que por la vía de los tratados no lograba nada, apoyo los movimientos separatistas de Panamá, que culminaron con su independencia el 3 de noviembre de 1903. (p. 277)

We also learn about the canal in “La expansión imperialista” section of Chapter 4:

El desarrollo de la industria y el capitalismo comercial, dentro de los Estados Unidos, creo la necesidad de expansión territorial para ampliar sus fronteras económicas....

...la United Fruit monopolizó la producción y exportación del banano, a la vez que logro influenciar a Panamá para su separación de Colombia. ...en general, intervino mediante ocupaciones militares, influencias políticas y dominios económicos...

In Colombia’s story: the independence of Panamá is the result of US imperial expansion and influence in the region. US nation-building (e.g. democratization and liberation) is a guise of capitalism, militarization, and imperialism. The question of imperialism is clearly significant in the field of post-colonial studies in education since it helps educators understand the historical context of knowledge production and how past colonial practices,

as Chrisman and Williams (1994) argue, are interconnected to the present. This is relevant for Social Studies where learning about global knowledge often has been about the North/West “taking possession of the world” (Willinsky, 1999, p. 71).

With storytelling as methodology, performative analytical space can be traced in the interplay between the written and visual texts; the interplay between the visuals themselves; and the way the textbook interrupts its own linear historical narrative. Perhaps indicating the significance of US imperialism in Colombia, Milenio 8 begins and ends with visual texts of Theodore Roosevelt. The visual of Roosevelt near the start of the textbook (p. 19; see Figure 2 below) is not directly mentioned in the written text, either.

With the visual text of the 1904 political cartoon in Figure 2, the Milenio 8 textbook begins the 19th century at the end of the century.



Figure 2.

Here, the written text defines imperialism as an activity of some European States, while the visual text clearly implicates the United States. Terminology is introduced in this section of the book’s first chapter and Figure 2 appears under the description of the concept “El imperialism” as follows:

A partir del desarrollo del capitalismo, algunos Estados europeos, durante el siglo XIX, vieron la necesidad de expandir sus territorios, con el fin de ampliar sus mercados y conseguir materias primas para su industria.

Con esta propósito, invadieron otros países y crearon nuevas colonias. Para justificar tal apropiación territorial, hicieron creer que lo hacían con el ideal de llevar la “civilización”, encubriendo así sus razones de tipo económico y político.

Por tanto, el imperialismo es la acción política de un Estado, al extender su poder y su influencia sobre otros territorios y culturas. Es una consecuencia del capitalismo...

While the visual is not titled or credited in the textbook, for this visual, information is available on the internet⁸. William Allen Rogers’s 1904 political cartoon alludes to Jonathon Swift’s (1726) satirical novel *Gulliver’s Travels* and reflect Roosevelt’s Caribbean policy encapsulated by the adage “Speak softly but carry a big stick.” The caption for this cartoon like other visuals in the series is a question: “¿Como se manifiesta el imperialismo de los Estados Unidos en la caricatura?” So, US imperialism is examined in the visuals and through their captions. Due to its various influences, it may be that US imperialism is rarely defined, or directly named in any textbooks. Yet, the Colombian textbook as a storyteller still tells the story of US imperialism in powerful ways. The indefinite spaces of such interplay can unveil the edges of the past from which the present unrolls (See Spivak, 2012, especially Chapter 19).

Figure 2 visualizes the figurative policy of the US. Roosevelt, wearing an American flag handkerchief, carries a big stick; it is labeled “big stick” in the cartoon. He is pulling a string of boats, the first labeled “Receiver,” the last at the front of the visual is named “Debt Collector,” and second to last is called “The Sherriff.” As printed in the textbook, these words are difficult to read in the visual. The cartoon works as satire then and now; it is poignant over a century later. Although the written text where this visual is embedded limits imperialism to some European states in the 19th Century, about a third of the way through the textbook, the written text finally states in the last paragraph of a section entitled “otros países colonialists” that “las políticas

imperialistas no fueron exclusivas de los países europeos: en American, los Estados Unidos ha sido un país imperialista, el cual logro desplazar la influencia inglesa y ha ejercido un neocolonialismo en Latinoamérica” (Milenio, p. 90).

The textbook’s approach to US imperialism seems more implicit and less critical in the written text (mere facts) and more explicit, immediate, and critical in the visual text and captions. In line with Morrison (1995), the crucial distinction may not be “...the difference between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence, but truth cannot” (p. 93). Gaps between the written and the visual texts in this textbook may be performative because they invite the imagination to go beyond any one texts’ constative desires. Morrison (1995), writing about her approach to storytelling, says she moves from the imagination to text: “So...if I’m trying to fill in the blanks...to part the veil...so frequently drawn...then the approach that’s most productive and most trustworthy for me is the recollection that moves from the image to the text” (Morrison, 1995, pp. 93-94).

Likewise, the interplay between visuals themselves provides possibilities not directly offered in the written text. For example, two very different visuals of Roosevelt bookend the 19th Century as covered in Milenio 8. In Figure 2, offered at the beginning of the textbook, Roosevelt is a buffoon and in Figure 1 at the end of the textbook he appears as a stately official. Overall, the interplay between time and written and visual texts, parts the veil.

Storytelling reads the textbooks as “work that wants” contradictions, rather than only fulfilling particular wants (see Spivak, 2012, p. 487-488). At the same time, it tells how the effects of colonialism and imperialism can stimulate nationalism—nation building can be resistance and a path to independence—it also shows the coloniality and imperality of power embedded in nation building and that US nation building is an imperial project. Unfortunately, even liberation nation building cannot be free from the coloniality and imperality of reproductive heteronormativity. For example, from the section “Efectos del colonialismo,” national organization is a de-colonial force:

El imperialismo o colonialismo impuso, para los territorios y culturas dominados, regímenes autoritarios... Estimulo la agitación

y organización nacionalistas, que llevaron al rechazo general de esta forma de dominación.

Entre los componentes característicos del colonialismo están: la dominación política, la explotación económica y el menosprecio hacia las culturas nativas.

Las fuerzas anticolonialistas (nacionalistas) se inspiraron en teorías nacidas en los países colonizadores (como Francia), reclamaban derechos basados en el individuo, la libertad y la libre determinación de los pueblos.

El colonialismo ha sido el principal transmisor de las ideas de la cultura occidental que han incidido sobre la humanidad. El costo de este proceso fue muy alto para los colonias: pérdida de libertad, cambios bruscos de forma de vida, explotación del trabajo y negación de la dignidad humana. (p. 91)

Still, in a pull-out activity box, readers are asked to think about this written text defining imperialism as European expansion in African, Asian and Oceania, not US imperialism in Colombia: “¿que opinas de la expansión europea sobre los territorios de África, Asia y Oceanía?”. (p. 91)

Indeed, further along in the textbook, the implications of colonization in Colombia are considered national building blocks for Colombia:

“en el aspecto económico, la colonización implicó:

- Creación de la pequeña propiedad.
- Aumento de la capacidad adquisitiva del campesino.
- Unificación geográfica del occidente colombiano.
- Ampliación de las vías de comunicación
- Y fortalecimiento de la producción cafetera, la cual se convierte en la base de la economía nacional

Dentro de la estructura social, el impacto de la colonización se sintió a través de:

- La tendencia de la sociedad ser mas igualitaria y progresista

- El núcleo familiar aumento por la necesidad la mono de obra para cultivar la tierra
- La población permaneció ajeno a los conflictos armados del país
- Los colonos se preocuparon por comunicar entre si los nuevos asentamientos
- La población presento un gran aumento (p. 215)

At the same time, the written and visual text of Milenio 8 asks readers to consider the motivations and implications of the US to construct its own national identity on the backs of colonization and imperialization in other places, such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines (see Figure 3).



La caricatura representa la actitud de dominio de los Estados Unidos frente a filipinos, puertorriqueños y cubanos.

Figure 3.

In the textbook, this cartoon is part of the visual text (p. 150) describing the unit section “Formación y desarrollo de los Estados Unidos” (p. 142-151). In it, the US as Uncle Sam with a star badge is pictured towering over caricatures representing Filipinos/Philippines, Puertorriqueños/Puerto Rico, and Cubanos/Cuba. Here, the written text also states that the US objectives of economic expansion “se hicieron realidad con la adquisición de Puerto Rico, las islas Marianas y las Filipinas” (p. 150). Indeed, Puerto Rico

remains a territory of the US. Both the visual and written texts tell the story of US nation building through its colonial-imperialism. A critique of US imperialism in Colombia is provided through the visual texts of Roosevelt, and their captions. In the written text, though, colonialism pre-figures nation-building in Colombia.

What is not offered in the written text, despite the fact that it is the one textbook in the series named to cover Human Geography, is a way to understand how difference is being put to work, not only in Figure 3 above, but in the textbook and throughout the history it tells. Each country in Figure 3 is represented by a male caricature; the “Filipino” is dressed in a grass skirt and hatless; the “Cubano,” with one suspender strap and one bite out of his sandwich, waves a flag and looks up wide-eyed at Uncle Sam; a tag hanging off the suit of the “Puertorriqueño,” a suit strikingly similar to Uncle Sam’s, suggests a recently bought-and-sold item. This visual portrays and betrays how imperial entanglements are not free from the politics of difference (see Coloma, 2012; Subreenduth, 2013). Visual texts are not innocent windows for viewing bodies in composition; they gaze on their subjects and their subjects stare back at readers. Differences of race, gender, sex, religion, ethnolinguistics, dis/ability, and so on operate throughout the textbook. I turn to difference in Milenio 8, particularly race, in the next sub-section.

Difference

According to the Ministerio Educación Nacional de Colombia (1995), textbooks will be evaluated on whether illustrations and written information are free from any form of segregation of human groups (Milenio, p. 288; *emphasis mine*). Segregación may also be translated as discrimination or rejection. How does this criterion pre-figure a social studies textbook’s approach to human geography? In large part, the written text appears to depoliticize difference and bodies’ relationship to place. Although the written text states that “La Geografía humana estudia las condiciones de la organización económica, política y social de los diversos grupos humanos y la relación directa con su medio,” it provides limited text about the relationship between humans and their environment. Perhaps trying to stay “free” of the politics of difference, the written text introducing the section “Objeto de estudio de la Geografía humana” provides a sanitized and biological approach to human diversity, largely (ironically) disconnected

from place despite being named Geography. At most, it takes a cultural approach to difference.

I begin with the section introducing Human Geography at the beginning of the textbook. In “¿Existen Las Razas?”, a highlighted textbox, the written text states:

Los hombres pertenecen a una misma especie...la gran variedad de caracteres somáticos ha dividido esa especie en razas cuyos rasgos se transmiten y perpetúan por medio de la herencia genética...muchos caracteres físicos no son similares en todos los individuos que prestamente pertenecen a una misma raza...integrantes de un mismo pueblo no eran homogéneos con respecto a los grupos sanguíneos...el grupo sanguíneo es un atributo genético considerado inmutable.... ‘lo cierto es que no se puede decir donde acaba una raza y donde empieza la otra’ (Milenio, p. 21, citing Espacios Y Sociedades, p. 45).

Another textbox within asks “... ¿por qué no se pueden agrupar las poblaciones humanas en razas?” The main written text further reiterates the point that pure races do not exist, but takes a cultural approach:

Las diferencias que se presentan entre los grupos humanos se deban a varios factores: el mestizaje, la influencia del medio geográfico, los hábitos alimentarios, las migraciones, el tipo orgánico y el fisiológico y los tipos de trabajos realizados, entre otros. En consecuencia, no existen razas puras.

Whereas biological and cultural approaches to race could minimize it, race actually becomes the focus of the written and visual texts in the section on Human Geography. In this way, the textbook presents the “paradox [that] confronts anyone who tries to understand the phenomena of ‘race’ and racism” (Donald & Rattansi, 1993, p. 1). On the one hand, as the textbook’s written text clearly points out, physical and biological differences do not substantiate difference defined as race. “On the other hand,” as Donald and Rattansi (1993) put it, “...racism still remains widespread....Reiterating that ‘there’s no such thing as “race”’ [only says] that there *shouldn’t* be a problem. It cannot deal with the problems that do exist, because it fails to see them for what they are” (p. 1).



Figure 4.

The caption for this visual text—“La humanidad reúne diversos grupos y comunidades con características particulares.”—is immediately followed by this question: “A qué se llama proceso de aculturación?” (p. 22). The caption shifts this racialized visual text to culture. Conflating race and culture can make it difficult to examine how hierarchical racial logics work on and through, people, places, and institutions (e.g. education) to produce privilege and oppression. While culture is not static or itself a-political, culture without its relationship to power, politics, and place treats difference as superficial, as tourism, as exoticism, and so on. In Colombia, for example, rural, youth, women, indigenous, and Afro-Colombians are disproportionately impacted by the fact that about one percent of the population owns more than half of the land; land (re)form is hotly debated; and how land is (re)settled, used, and “owned,” and by whom, is complicated, especially given the internal displacement of approximately 4 million people and entire communities, as a result of years of civil war (United Nations Development Program Colombia, 2011).

Yet, the interconnection between people and land lost in biological and cultural explanations of race is not absent in the visual text. If race, not as a biology or culture, but as logic of deficit (of racism), has not re-mapped the

world, why, then, even include a visual text like Figure 4? In contrast to the four darker faces (of others) with closed-lips, not dressed in a bright primary color, a blonde girl-child rises up and out of the cloud-center. The smiling girl is dressed in red, perhaps regalia coming from a part of Russia. What is offered to readers in this visual text, if not the possibility, reminder, memory, and imagination of pure races, of raced peoples who live in different parts of the world? In this way, the visual also foreshadows the geographies presented in the rest of the textbook. The light-skinned, rosy-cheeked girl in the center of these aged and darker-skinned faces situates race as deficit logic able to privilege, center and marginalize. Despite the written text, Figure 4 is Spivak's reproductive heteronormativity; a warning about the threat of the other to the (unique and better) birth of the nation and its pursuit of happiness. And this brings my analysis to the discourse of progress in the textbook.

Progress

Strikingly, images in the textbook present a racialized hierarchy between "civilized," light-skinned peoples and "uncivilized" dark-skinned peoples, reliant on a discourse of progress—from supposedly under and undeveloped to developing and developed civilizations. According to Martusewicz, Edmondson, and Lupinacci (2012), "progress as a discourse conveys the idea that certain changes are inevitable and good." (p. 72). The consequences of progress as a discourse include the rejection of older ways simply because they are older; the loss of knowledge as such ways are forgotten; and "an acceptance of destructive change on the assumption that it's unavoidable" (p. 73). Negative effects (e.g. the enclosure of land and natural resources; poverty; discrimination) are minimalized as necessary for progress. In line with Spivak (2012), this is not unconnected to the private-public hold in the relentless pursuit of happiness embedded in reproductive heteronormativity. As such, a globalized imaginary is trained to conceive problems and solutions of progress within the same discourse, perpetuating it.

An example is at the end of Milenio 8's Chapter 4: America, siglo IXI. In an "apply what you have learned" section, one of the activities asks students to examine the two visual texts below (Figure 5) and write a letter to one Indigenous group:

Observa las fotografías y escribe una carta para un grupo indígena, resaltando en ella la situación de discriminación y pobreza que han vivido desde la conquista; planteales alternativas para la solución de sus problemas, sobre la base de los Derechos Humanos. (p. 206)

What is meant by the capitalization of “Human Rights?” Human rights as in The Declaration of Human Rights was passed after World World II. This is another example of temporal interplay in the textbook. The twentieth century (e.g. space exploration, computers, and Human Rights) is included throughout Milenio 8, supposedly covering the 19th Century. While these inclusions pre-figure progress as a national and glocal imperative and postcolonial desire, the temporal interplay helps make the discourse of progress visible.

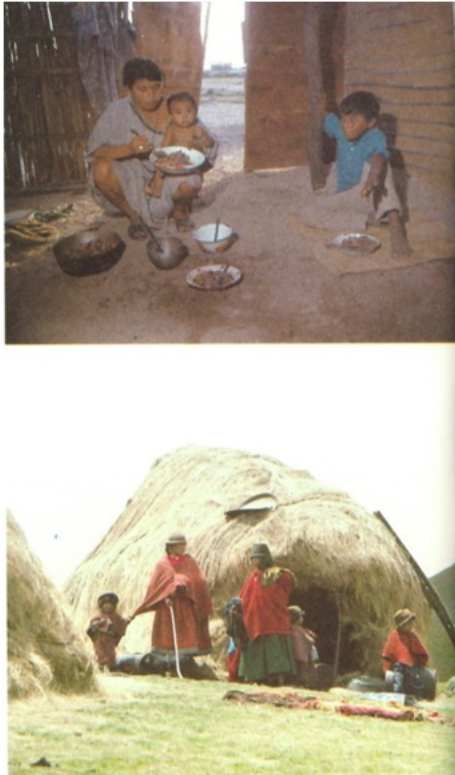


Figure 5.

Asking students to explain Indigenous discrimination and poverty to Indigenous groups and propose alternatives based on Human Rights fails to interrogate the coloniality and imperialism and the reproductive heteronormativity embedded in the discourse of liberal, democratic (Human Rights-based) society—an ethics for others—“that such societies can flourish in one part of the world at the expense of another and within one globalized state at the expense of the disenfranchised and that capitalist globalization has exacerbated this” (Spivak, 2012, pp. 102-103). In other words, the logics underlying Human Rights as human progress also underlie discrimination and poverty. Rather, the classic “blame the victims” scenario in this activity rests on a wild assumption that if only Indigenous peoples had taken a Human Rights approach they some how would not have suffered/suffer de-humanization, colonization and discrimination. Because a discourse of progress operates, people (maybe families in their homes) appear here from a colonial gaze, out of time and place. That they appear on the page without captions and as an activity further de-humanizes the people. To be the object of another’s historical narrative is to be stuck in the private-public hold of nation-think, not agents. Comparing figures 4 and 5 asks in which children is the birth of the nation born in to? What the temporal interplay of storytelling as a methodology opens here is the need for rights-based cultures to be able to hear, see, think, and be outside of their own storylines. Spivak (2008) explains it as follows:

Responsibility-based cultures are long delegitimized and unprepared for the public sphere; rights-based cultures are increasingly committed to corporatism in philanthropy. The former need supplementation for entry into democratic reflexes just as the latter need supplementation into the call of the other....Otherwise Human Rights feed (on) class apartheid. (p. 14)



Figure 6.

In these textbooks, twentieth century technologies such as space exploration and computers circulate throughout the series, outside of their time period, in both visual and written texts. As seen in the Figure 6 above, the US space shuttle, a program now decommissioned, is taking off and looms above people mostly engaged in working with their hands. The progress (futures) pre-figured in the textbooks have already become the past in the readers' present (late 1990s, early 2000s), reinforcing the inevitability of progress and the rewards of the pursuit of happiness (Spivak, 2012, p. 130), especially as readers are also asked to “consideras que la distribución de la riqueza tiene relación directa con el ejercicio del trabajo” (p. 10). What kind of progress is embedded in this question and the visual's caption: “the 19th Century revolutionized the world?” The temporal interplay in this visual takes the past as a “field of the historical possibility” (Spivak, 2012, p. 442)—permissible narratives unrolling the present—and pre-figures a future of national (post-colonial) desire. This is the power of storytelling and its

gaze described by Silko (1981) “they see no life; When they look they see only objects; The world is a dead thing for them” (p. 133).

Herein is the double-bind of progress: posited as inevitable (not a choice) and also as a choice (past, primitive and local *versus* future, modern and global). Because of imperial formations, including race/ism, progress is something denied to race-class-gender-compromised people and nations (Spivak, 2012). Therefore, in liberation nation-building, progress cannot be ignored. Progress and nation-building/strengthening are desirable opportunities from which collective, social and political, infrastructures may be built (see the other articles in this issue). However, freedom from oppression to the pursuit of happiness is not an end in itself. The end might better be to understand that “an achieved juridico-legal, socio-political ‘freedom of choice,’ [that is any achieved progress], might allow the individual [and the state] to realize that th[ese] concept-metaphor[s] ha[ve] been, in the narrative of modernity, deeply imbricated with capitalism disguised as a pursuit of happiness” (Spivak, 2012, p. 130).

Implications

But sometimes what we call ‘memory’ and what we call ‘imagination’ are not so easily distinguished.

— (Leslie Marmon Silko, 1981/2012, p. 220)

These curricular texts are post-colonial texts, “both the crisis of the uncompleted struggle for ‘decolonisation’ and the crisis of the ‘post-independence’ state are deeply inscribed” (Hall, 1996, p. 244; *italics original*). Analyses of education often fail to take into account the global context of nations, differences, peoples, and curricula (Subedi, 2010; Subedi & Daza, 2008), which “...helps explain the continued dominance of metropolitan languages in former colonies; the textbooks, curricula, and technologies in use; the types of reforms adopted and their frequent failure” (Arrove, 1980, p. 50). More recently, Coloma (*in press* 2013) has called for Empire as an alternative analytical frame. Here, postcolonial does not simply describe times of then or now and places of here or there, but how to move from “nation-centered grand narratives” to “decentred, diasporic or ‘global’” (Hall, 1996, p. 247) re-readings, re-writings, and engagements with colonization as worldwide, albeit often disparate and context-specific, transnational and transcultural processes.

Temporal interplay and the interplay among visual and written texts provide a space for performative interpretive practices. This study pulls back the veil (Morrison, 1995) of salient narratives of nationalism, race/difference, civic education, development and progress. It shows that decolonizing and de-transcendentalizing imperial formations cannot happen through content alone. As Subreenduth (this issue) also shows, curriculum policy practice has an impact on curricular and textbook content. Textbooks do deliver content and the content of curriculum can be more ethical and inclusive. While content should not be dismissed, storytelling as methodology offers a way of reading the past and “training ...the imagination in epistemological performance through the rearrangement of desires” (Spivak, 2012, p. 125). As Silko (1981) tells us through her story of a storyteller in “The Storyteller’s Escape” (pp. 247-253), storytelling requires the presence of other storytellers, who live to tell a tale. Storytellers and storytelling improvise the world.

Notes

¹ The use of Spanish in this article will not be italicized or translated, as this is a bilingual publication and a bilingual article. For more information, see the section How to Read This Article.

² The term “glocal” (Robertson, 1995) indicates the local and global in the post-colonial; it is a way of theorizing contamination, so that context-specificities and externalities are simultaneous and symbiotic, albeit not necessarily even or equal. While stark differences between colonizing and colonized cultures remain, and places are postcolonial in different ways, post-colonial itself is a way of conceptualizing the long-term effects of colonization (e.g. 'transculturation') on both colonizing and colonized cultures that are irreversible in the sense of any return to a "pure set of uncontaminated origins," which, in Hall's (1996) view, never existed in a purely binary way, anyhow (pp. 246-247). Indeed, as Hall (1996) argues, “it is precisely this ‘double inscription’, breaking down the clearly demarcated inside/outside of the colonial system on which the histories of imperialism have thrived for so long, which the concept of ‘post-colonial’ has done so much to bring to the fore” (p. 247).

³ Given the legacy of Spanish colonialism and US imperialism in Colombia, Slater's (2011) distinction between coloniality and imperialism is useful. ‘Coloniality of power, is subalternization and reorganization of places, peoples, and knowledges as a direct result of colonialism, which still exists in various forms today. Whereas “‘imperiality’ refers to the perceived right, privilege and sentiment of ...expansion [that] can be discursively sustained through reliance on a direct appeal to a deeply anchored sense of imperial privilege” that extends to the imperialized society, which, for example, is expected to be ingratiate for being “introduced to an ostensibly superior way of life, expressed in terms of ‘civilization’, ‘progress’ or ‘democracy’” (Slater, 2011, pp. 1-2). Both coloniality and imperialism of power train the imaginary and operate discursively and materially.

⁴ The dis/placement of time may counter the discourse of progress and the pursuit of happiness embedded “in the reproductive heteronormativity that supports nationalisms” (Spivak, 2012, p. 288). We can only grasp these as possibilities—we can only “think ourselves into the falling-due of the future by way of it”—by temporizing as pre-figured through the assumptions of reproductive heteronormativity that re-codes one’s birth as unique (and better) (Spivak, 2012, pp. 278-288). “Although nationalism is the condition and effect of the public sphere,” nationalisms are not able to work with the founding logic of the public spear (of equivalence; see note 5 below) because it is secured by the private conviction of special birth (Spivak, 2012, p. 281). In other words, one is not born into nation-think, it is born into you. The un/derived private shift is both historical and logical. Nation-think as nationalism is *not* “collectivities bound by birth that allowed strangers in gingerly;” for, as Spivak (2012) notes, these existed before nations (p. 279). There is no nation before nationalism (see also Hobsbawm, 1990). So, how does reproductive heteronormativity become a source of legitimacy pre-figuring nation-think? With the use of the term “heteronormativity,” Spivak (2012) refers to “‘hetero’ the antonym of ‘auto’” (p. 123); so, this is normativity of the other (of two), another, or different “as a source of legitimacy” (p. 279). So, it is about the reproduction of normativities of what/who is other(ed); from reproductive heteronormativity permissible narratives pre-figure sexism, nationalism, feminism, and so on. With the concept “reproductive heteronormativity,” Spivak does not mean births of heterosexual couples and reproductive heterosexual norms specifically, although “language, daughter, nation, marriage” are pre-figured by what she does mean by reproductive heteronormativity. As Spivak (2012) puts it, reproductive heteronormativity” is “upstream from straight/queer/trans” (p. 123). It is the “private-public hold on nation-think” that requires persistent de-transcendentalizing (p. 276). Nation-think works at the level of the private sphere to *conjure* comfort in the becoming of a nation thing (Spivak, 2012, p. 279). Without nation-think, there is nothing but the comfort (e.g., “the love of mother tongue, the love of my little corner of ground....comfort felt in one’s corner of the sidewalk, a patch of ground, or a church door”); comfort itself does not conjure a positive affect; “its working is simply a thereness” (p. 280). Here, loss of this comfort is “a feeling of helplessness, loss of orientation, dependency, but not nation thing;” Spivak says something like religion in collectivity “could mobilize a certain kind of violence—but not nationalism” (p. 280). So, nationalism operates in the public sphere but it is mobilized (pre-figured) by recoding this kind of pre-affect comfort of the private sphere, where “the possibility of this private is not derived from a sense of the public,” but rather “an underived private, imbricated with a comfort where human-animal is indeterminate for all of us” (p. 280)—an equivalence. “Nationalism is a *recoding* of this underived private as the antonym of the public sphere. When you begin to think nationalism [nation-think], this underived private has been recoded, reterritorialized as the antonym of the public” (Spivak, 2012, p. 280; *emphasis mine*). Again, in nation-think, an underived private is now derived (traced) as the opposite of the public. In our present “mostly Hegalian historical story of the public sphere,” nation-think keeps the underived pre-affect private as “only situated in a teleology” (p. 280). Nationalism reclaims the past in the interest of controlling the workings of its own public sphere, which requires the necessary, and often unacknowledged, sense of being unique (better) and this in turn requires being born that way—underived pre-affect private is recoded as unique without equivalence. From this, child-bearers are contiguous to nation-thing; metonymized as “the birth canal, woman is the most primitive instrument of nationalism” (p. 2801). To sum up, although

nationalism is the condition and effect of the public sphere, it rests on the recoding of the underived private (comfort, there-ness, pre-affect) to a derived private as the antonym of the public—the private-public hold. The (loss of) possibility of equivalence for unlimited uniques (a private that is not the antonym of public) is what gets stuck in the private-public hold. Reproductive heteronormativity is the reproduction of this private-public hold that flattens underived-pre-affect-private-equivalence under one imperial formation. “And it doesn’t matter what you call that empire;” it is through reproductive heteronormativity that nation-think—“the private conviction of special birth”—is born into us and pre-figures nationalisms of all kinds (p. 279).

⁵ Equivalence is not equalization; “it is not removal of difference, it is not cutting the unfamiliar down to the familiar” (pp. 284, 285). Not an easy intuition to develop, this flat ontology is not a flattening into imperial formations whatever they may be called; instead, “what comparativism based on equivalence attempts to undermine is the possessiveness, the exclusiveness, the isolationist expansionism of mere nationalism” (Spivak, 2012, pp. 284–285). For instance, every mother tongue language is equivalent—not the same, not necessarily familiar; equivalence is “learning to acknowledge that other things can occupy the unique place” (p. 284). According to Spivak (2012), the principle of inventive equivalence—not removing difference and not simply making the strange familiar—“should be at the core of the comparativist impulse” (p. 284).

⁶ Spivak (2012) provides an example in her retelling of oral storytelling: “...the main thing about the oral-formulatic is equivalence” (pp. 282–283).

⁷ For an example of this storytelling in fiction, García Márquez writes history as fiction as truth and truth as deluded memory. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, for example, we can see the performative power of storytelling, when García Márquez’ fiction of a real event (e.g. banana worker’s strike against the United Fruit Company) told by one of his storytellers as hallucination becomes the truth not told in textbooks, both textbooks in and outside of the novel: “one would have thought that he was telling a hallucinated version,” he writes, “because it was radically opposed to the false one that historians had created and consecrated in their schoolbooks” (p. 348).

⁸ See the visual as part of The Granger Collection:

<http://www.granger.com/results.asp?image=0004384&screenwidth=1366>.

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