COOKING POTATO STORIES

ANA NÚÑEZ RODRÍGUEZ

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Text, images and editing: Ana Núñez Rodríguez
www.ananunezrodriguez.com
nunez.rodriguez.ana@gamil.com

Design and editing: Laura Oliveros - De-espejar
www.deespejar.cargo.site/
hola@lauraoliveros.com

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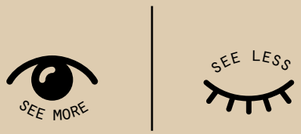

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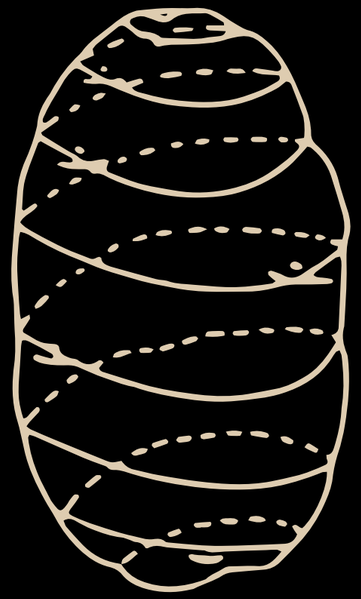
RESEARCH QUESTION

What do local narratives about the potato in Colombia and Galicia say about the construction of national identity? What role can new narratives about the potato play in creating expanded social imaginaries? How can translocal stories and food cultures be connected through the roots and routes of the potato, as an inroad to address forgotten colonial legacies and the wider context of political, social, and emotional relationships?



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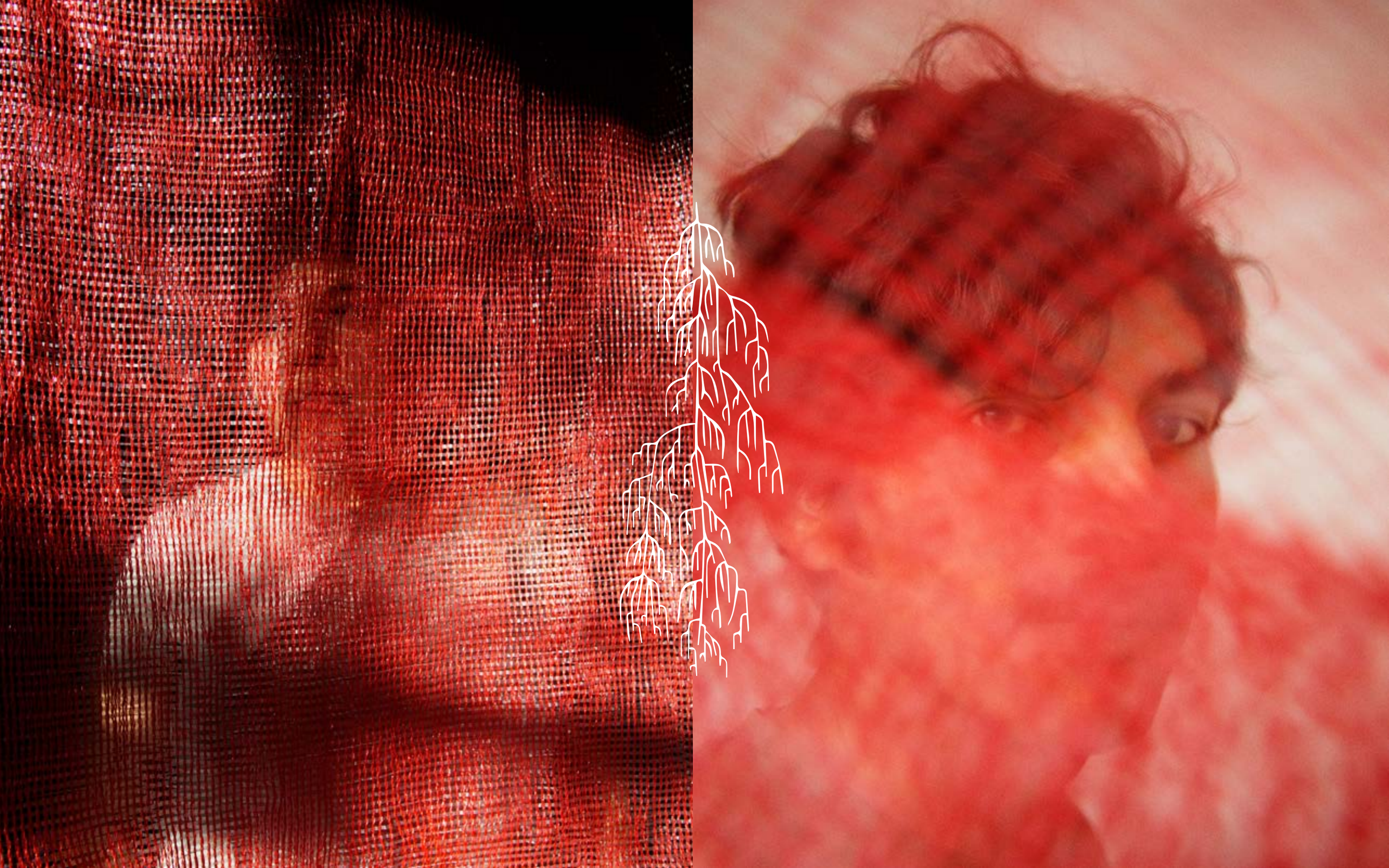
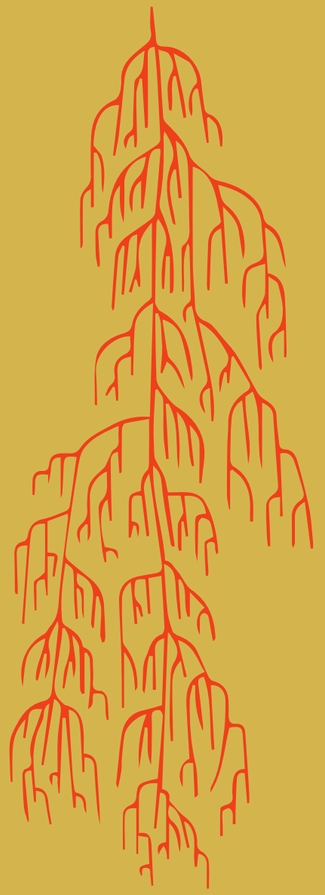


MAKE HOVER TO DISCOVER



“When you say ‘potato’ the response is often an autobiography; potatoes provide a way for us to speak about ourselves”

Earle, 2019, 105.

Ours are from here

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Introduction

“Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above the ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilizations, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet I have never lost the sense of something that lives and endures beneath the eternal flux. What we see is the blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains.”

Jung, 1965, 4.

Pick up a potato and look it in the eyes. What can you tell me? Perhaps that it is a plant native to Latin America that was taken to Europe by the conquerors, and perhaps also that it is now one of the basic foodstuffs of your country. But could you give me more details of that long trip? How did this tuber go from being the seed that ruled Andean society to being governed worldwide?

The potato is a plant native to Latin America that was carried back to Europe by the conquerors. After its introduction, it took a couple of centuries more before this tuber made it from the botanical gardens to the farmers’ fields[7]. The history of the potato is marked by many obstacles to its adaptation

7. De Jong, H. (2016). “Impact of the potato on society.” *American journal of potato research*, 93(5), 415-429.

and acceptance as a food crop: a long process of transformation, throughout which, many conflicts, beliefs and traditions stood in its way. Ultimately, these difficulties did not prevent the potato from taking root in the world food scene, adapting to each adoptive place and resignification according to the expectations of each different society[8]. Attending to this long journey and process of adaptation reveals some ways that plants have served us in manifestations of our power over nature and other people[9]. Here, this will serve to open a conversation about identity, politics, and some of the difficulties that must be overcome when adapting to new contexts and the forms of power that inhere within.

This work is rooted in the tension between personal and social identity, and the historical and cultural influences that come to bear on its, and their, formation. In light of my own experience of moving between Latin America and Europe, I examine the role of the potato in Galicia and Colombia, respectively, as a means to explore the idea of how a given society comes to imagine itself and its world, as well as others. I reflect on how we build our personal and social imaginaries on the basis of the repertoire of images and ideas that is present in our consciousness, inspiring reactions and determining our values, judgments, opinions and behaviors[10]. The potato packs a universe of symbolic information on identity, domination and social differentiation[11] that I put to use here to reflect on the effects of colonization on our subjectivities, knowledge production and critical thinking.

I explore the role of the potato in the cultural identities of Galicia and Colombia and seek ways to reinterpret and resignify its presence and identity among us. I trial recipes that use this global food source as a way to connect with the collective consciousness through its solid ordinariness, its ability to root us into the ground[12]. Transatlantic recipes that mix the “here” and the “there.” Using ingredients such as heritage, history, the imaginary, tradition, and autobiography, with these recipes I will call into question the ideologies, power and subjectivities behind existing narratives, bringing different aspects of the potato’s history to the fore contributing to build a new social memory about it.

In A collection of Blossoms, I argue for the need to countenance and include new narratives around the potato (here specifically in Colombia and Galicia) as a contribution to an ongoing decolonization of thought. To do so, I have compiled a series of “fieldnotes,” a harvest of stories hosting different voices and resources to build a polyphonic tale. In Tell me what you eat and I will tell you

8. Bonnett Vélez, D. (2019). “‘Resurgencia’ y recolonización de la papa. Del mundo andino al escenario alimentario mundial, siglos XVI-XX.” *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, 46(1), 27-57.
9. Bartolomé García, T et. alt. (2014). *Historias de Plantas I: Historia de la Patata. La agricultura y Ganadería Extremeñas.* 191.
10. Lamas, Santiago. (2004). *Galicia borrosa*. Ediciós do Castro.
11. Saldarriaga, Gregorio. (2016). “Comer y ser. La alimentación como política de la diferenciación social en la América española, siglos XVI y XVII.” Varia Historia 32.58 3-77.
12. Earle, Rebecca. 2019. Potato. Bloomsbury Academic. 101.

who you are, long path to acceptance, and how, despite initial prejudices and the class dynamics, the potato was established and has had a huge impact on societies worldwide.

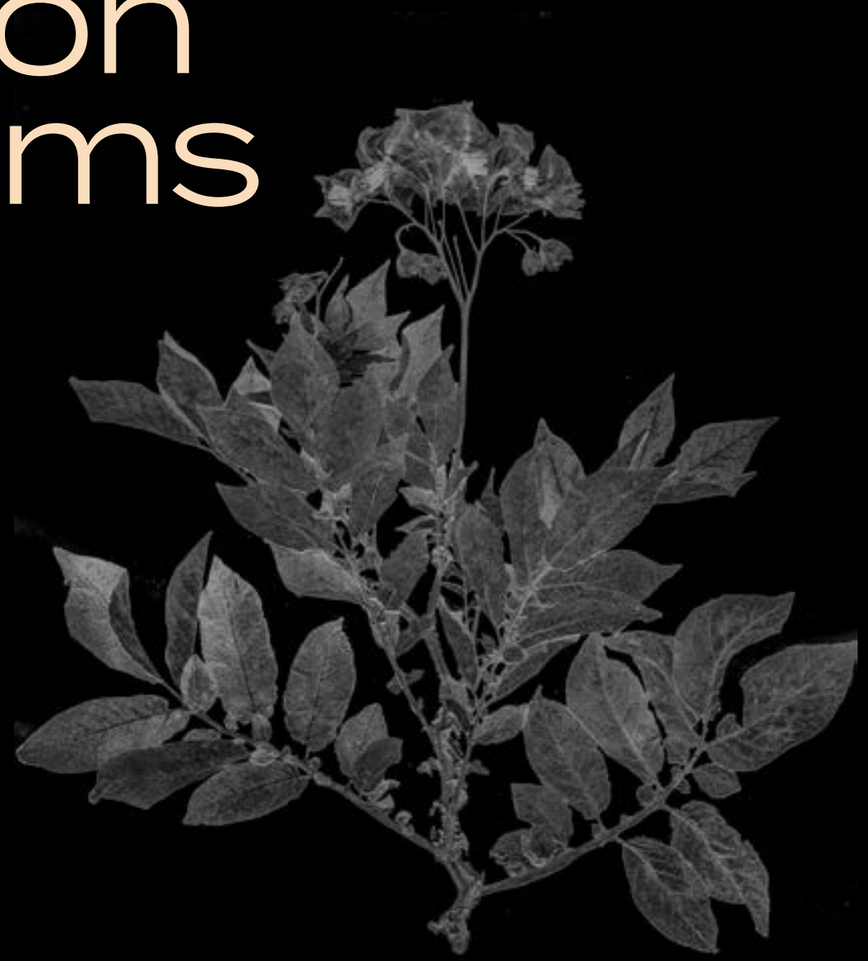
In Papa & Pataca, I reflect on how narratives are implemented in our psyche: how they influence the construction of social imaginaries, and how we see ourselves and others. To conclude, I reflect on how photography can be a tool for producing critical knowledge when used to confront ongoing legacies of colonialism, reconfiguring relationships with one's self, family and kin, as well as between colonizers, communities and the natural world[13].

They did not use fork

13. Pedri-Spade, Celeste. "'But they were never only the master's tools': The Use of Photography in De-colonial Praxis." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 13.2 (2017): 106-113.

Breaking the peace of the mountains

A Collection of Blossoms



“Whenever we enter the land, sooner or later we pick up the scent of our histories.”

Moon, 1999, 273.

The literal meaning of “anthology,” from the Greek *anthologia*, is “a collection of blossoms.” A good title for this compilation of fieldnotes about the difficulties, prejudices, conflicts, beliefs and traditions that stood in the way of the potato’s passage from Latin America to Europe, nonetheless. In a figurative way, “to blossom” means to develop and flourish, and the ultimate goal of these fieldnotes is to cultivate alternative relations with the potato, unfolding different aspects of the potato’s history that call into question the ideologies, power and subjectivities that ground the existing narratives.

MAKE HOVER  TO DISCOVER

Each society develops its own peculiar ways of seeing itself, of telling itself its history[14]. In the end, we all make sense of our lives through the combination of personal narratives that we build throughout our lives in relation to wider, cultural ones. It is through these that we make sense of our past, explain the present and anticipate the future[15]. In all cultures there are certain narratives that dominate others; in fact, we all inhabit a continuous fight between narratives. Here, in A *Collection of Blossoms*, I will present my own tangle of narratives, based on research and experience of particular regions: historical, social and personal. Here, by "region" I don't necessarily mean a politically or geographically defined space, but rather a specific space of common stories and experiences. A state of mind, rather than somewhere on a map[16], finding our place in a story where the plots of these fieldnotes intersect.

Since narratives are the first ways in which human experience becomes significant, and the identity narrative is not based on the existence of unique symbolic, cultural, landscape, idiomatic or material elements, but on a peculiar combination and selection of these elements that may exist isolated or in other combinations[17], I have deliberately chosen to include a wide variety of fieldnotes from "here" and "there." These blossoms are the product of my research.

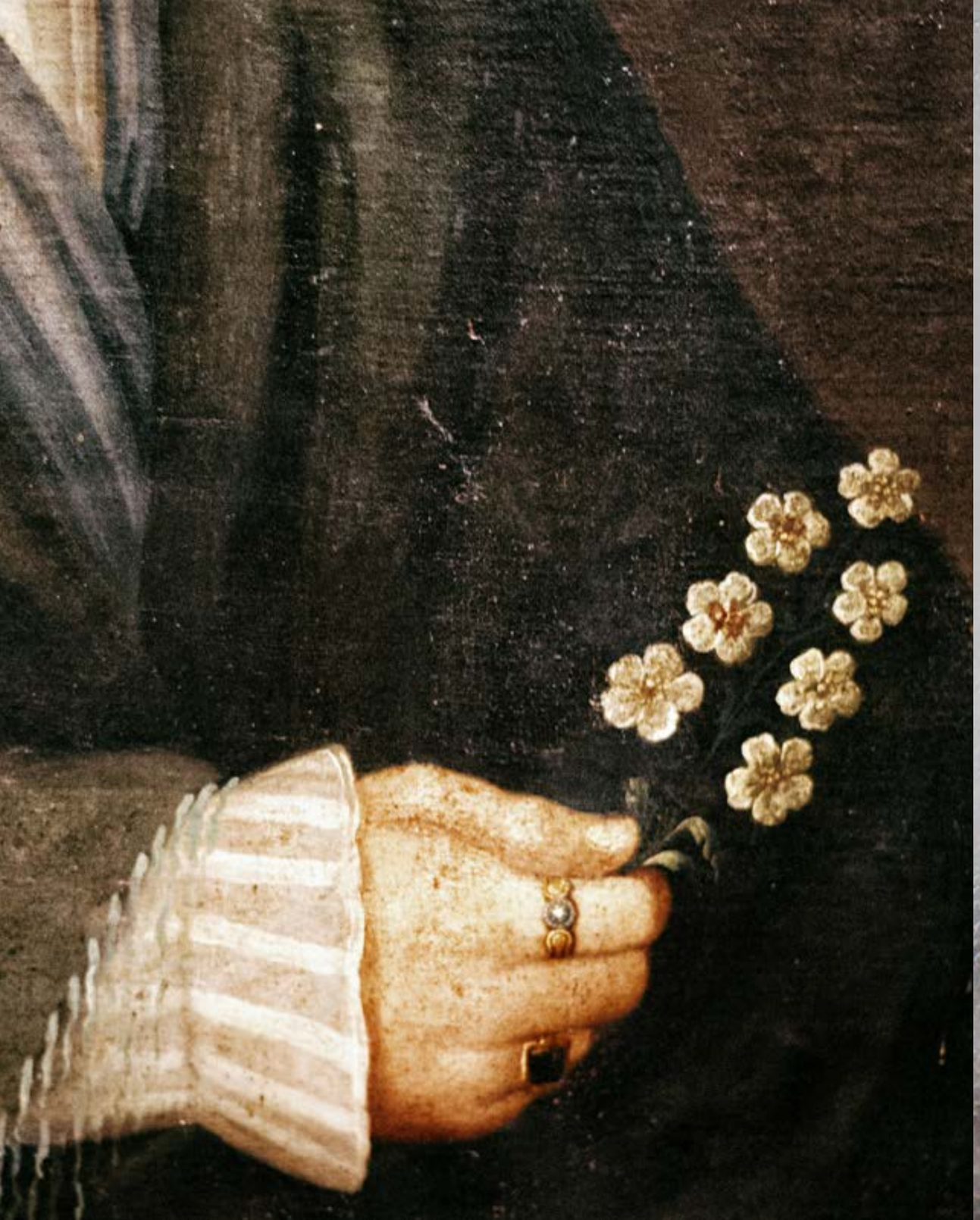
Collecting material on different sociocultural practices around the potato, I have drawn on very varied resources, from alterations of traditional recipes, giving space to other guests to write, to material taken from audiovisual documentaries, Galician literature, botanical definitions, oral traditions, conversations, and the exchange of stories. I have found that mixing up all of these fieldnotes from different cultures has got me closer to my own mixed experience. In practice, this has made for a writing method that has allowed me to configure this alternative story of the potato in polyphonic and polymorphic ways. The result is a rhizomatic organization of elements that does not follow lines of hierarchical subordination. It has neither beginning nor end, but a growing-and-overflowing-between that connects and constitutes multiplicities.

In addition to a mixture of *kinds* of fieldnotes, the collection is also characterized by a mixture of times that seeks to realize a certain timelessness, in keeping with the indigenous Latin American conception of history as nonlinear, with the past-future contained in the present. There is no "post" or "pre" in this vision of history that moves in cycles and spirals, setting a course while still returning to the same point[18].

Introducing these texts, I address some of the themes and processes that are involved in adapting to a new context, such

14. Mastnak, T., Elyachar, J., & Boellstorff, T. 2014. "Botanical Decolonization: Rethinking Native Plants." Environment and Planning D: *Society and Space*, 32(2), 363-380.
15. Lamas, Santiago. 2004. *Galicia borrosa*. Ediciós do Castro.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

18. Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2010). "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores."



as forced displacement, adaptability and resilience. The potato has powerful symbolic resonances that demonstrate how colonial heritage is present in our everyday lives; in our modes of knowing and producing knowledge, perspectives, images and patterns[19]. Through narrating this alternative history of the potato, I reflect on the persistence of cultural elements that survive colonialism, living on in books, cultural patterns, "common sense," self-understanding, and many other aspects of modern experience[20].

In Latin America towards the end of the 1970s, a current of thought concerned with the collective (re)construction of history emerged on the margins of institutional academia, and was widely disseminated during the 1980s. Originally known as "popular history," or "the collective recovery of history," and often involving oral history practices, this strand of thought called into question the specialized character of historical knowledge production and the conventional procedures that comprised it, proposing other ways of "making history" from multiple perspectives, including those of women, workers, and young people, to show what different actors made of the events[21]. The compilation of fieldnotes in this anthology seeks to follow this alternative approach to knowledge production, giving voice to farmers, family members, artists, friends, migrants, etc., towards a (re)constructed history of potato.

19. Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality and modernity/rationality." *Cultural Studies* 21.2-3 (2007): 168-178.
20. Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 240-270.
21. Cuevas Marín, Pilar. (2013). "La (re) construcción colectiva de la historia: Una contribución al pensamiento crítico latinoamericano."

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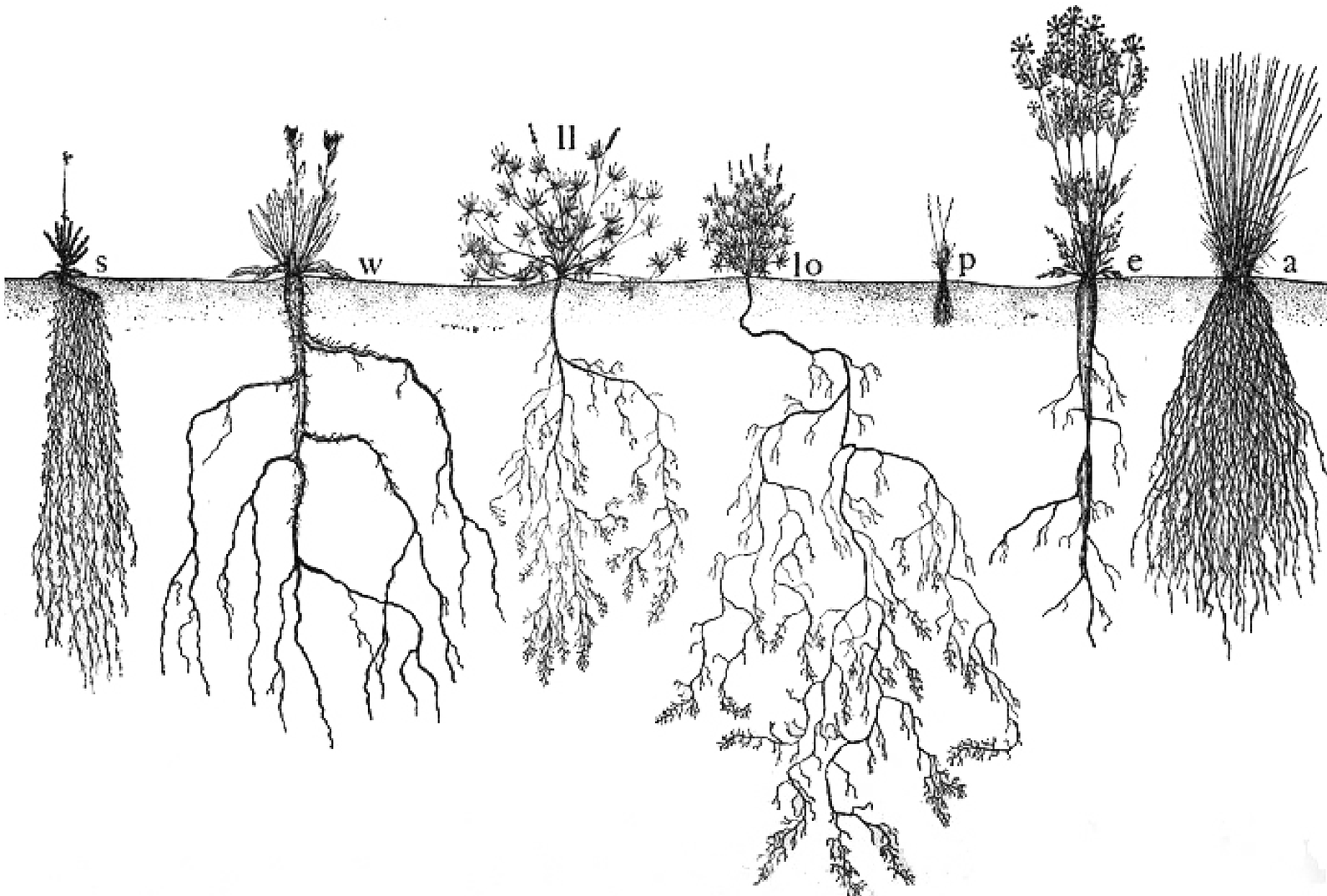
Root Patriotism



COOKING POTATO / PATATA / PATACA / PAPA STORIES

Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are

"The food should not only be good to eat but also, *good to think*"

Lévi-Strauss, 1929.

"Food is essential to life and therefore it is fundamentally political in many ways"

Ichijo & Ranta, 2016.

When I began this research on the potato, wondering at its long journey and considering the global impact it has had, I rather imagined that it had been regarded as buried treasure at the time of its expropriation, as a thing of great value. I was surprised, then, to discover that several generations had had to pass before the potato went from botanical rarity to global food source, due to the many prejudices, beliefs and traditions that stood in its way.

The potato was essential to the balance of Andean society as it guaranteed the food sovereignty of its people by providing large amounts of nutrients. It earned its crown as the star food crop for several reasons: In the first place, its great resilience and adaptability to hostile conditions made its cultivation possible in a wide range of environments. It has a high nutritional value, producing more nutritious food, more quickly, on less land, and in harsher climates than any other major food crop[25]. Even so, it did not captivate the Spaniards, and when the potato arrived in Europe it was solely regarded as a decorative plant. It was not consumed because it did not appear in the Bible; in fact, its growing underground made the edible part of the potato plant the devil's root, if anything, whose apparently testicular form was attributed with morally reprehensible aphrodisiacal qualities. It was even accused of being the cause of the great plague that was then ravaging Europe. Moreover, this aversion to its food-use served a function of social differentiation. It was the bread of the Indians, and as the conquerors themselves said: "You will become like them if you eat their food."[26]

25. De Jong, H. (2016). "Impact of the Potato on Society." *American Journal of Potato Research*, 93(5), 415-429.
26. Earle, Rebecca. 2012 *The Body of the Conquistador: Food Race and the Colonial Experience.*

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Underground beauty

MAKE HOVER TO DISCOVER

Buds grow

This story of initial ignorance, resulting from a failure to gather in existing knowledge around the potato, illustrates the consequences of pursuing the colonial agenda into dimensions other than power, like those of knowledge and thinking. Looking at what Quijano[27] understands by the coloniality of knowledge—that is, the repression of forms of knowledge production other than the white, European and "scientific", reifying this perspective while excluding and denying the intellectual legacies of indigenous peoples—I must immediately call myself into question. As a white European woman, am I reproducing this pattern? How am I able to open up the door of decoloniality with, and within, my own work? What are the implications of my perspective? How should I position myself within this discourse? Quijano[28] argues that decoloniality is needed to clear the way for new forms of intercultural communication; for there to be an interchange of experiences and meanings that may prove to be the basis of another rationality, one which may legitimately pretend to some universality. Moreover, since the liberation of intercultural relations from the prison of coloniality also implies the freedom of all people to choose, individually or collectively, what forms such relations will take, then rather than universality, decoloniality takes us to the kingdom of pluri-versality[29]. There is undoubtedly a need for greater knowledge production from non-colonizer perspectives, and, equally, for greater visibility for the critical thinking of indigenous communities. In addition to these, critical intercultural thinking can also serve as an essential component in the path towards decoloniality, helping to break the polarizing legacy of colonialism and to bet on other patterns of knowledge production. If my own experiences of moving between Latin America and Europe might be said to comprise exchanges of meaning between "here" and "there," then it is my hope that in presenting sites of critical thinking "other" than the academic and institutional might contribute towards a decoloniality of thinking and the liberation of knowledge production.

27. Quijano, Aníbal.(2000). "Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America." *International Sociology* 15.2 : 215-232.
28. Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality and modernity/rationality." *Cultural studies* 21.2-3 (2007): 168-178.

29. Mignolo, Walter D., and Wanda Nanibush. "Thinking and Engaging with the Decolonial: A Conversation between Walter D. Mignolo and Wanda Nanibush." *Afterall* 45 (2018): 24-29.

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Paradoxes of carrying knowledge


London Printed by
Adam Islip Ioice Norton
and Richard Whitakers
Anno 1633.

Each potato has several buds, the small sprouts that are its eyes. Look again. Do you know where it comes from? We know every living being has ancestors, an evolutionary path that it is possible to follow that connects with the past and explains the present. Do you know which the first potato was, under the earth? Let me tell you a secret: all potato roads lead to the Andean Mountains. If we trace the genealogy of any of our potatoes, eventually their common descent brings us there. We often look for origins because we think it might strengthen our own identity. We peel and peel the potato, in search of the core, but even if we peel it all we won't get there. The essence is in its layered nature, after all.

At the beginning of this text, I mentioned that the potato is a native plant from Latin America. But "native" does not designate a condition that is original and authentic: rather, the native is the creation of the colonial state. Colonized, the native is pinned down, localized, thrown out of "civilization" as an outcast; confined to custom, and then defined as its product[32]. But the colonial condition hides multiple paradoxes. Take the potato. On the one hand, "the native" figured historically as another differentiating tool to separate the colonizer and the colonized. On the other hand, the potato has been appropriated by different cultures around the world, including the Galician, as their own. "Ours are from here": even while we are unconsciously eating our collective past, the use of sentences like this is a common reaffirmation of how strong the relationship is between food and local and national identity. The potato has integrated, transformed into a signal of identity in Galicia, a sort of *rooted patriotism*. So how did the potato come to be a symbol of Galician pride?

32. Mamdani, Mahmood. 2012. *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*. Harvard University Press.

Recipe for Tortilla Criolla

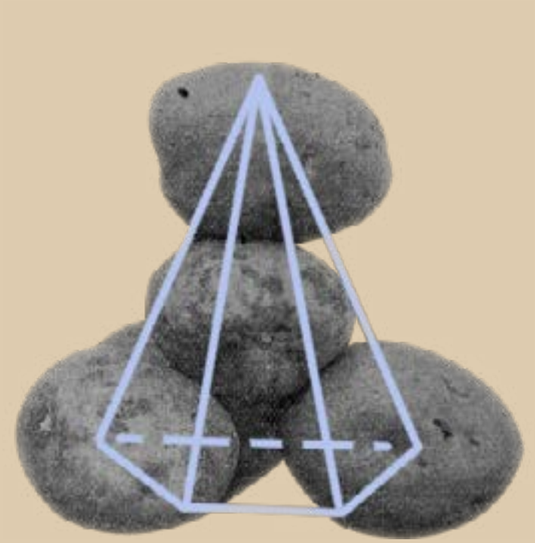
table

Sharing

Os comedores de patacas

The historian Pegerto Saavedra calls the potato the "sleeping plant," due to the long period of lethargy that it underwent until it began to grow and be consumed regularly in Europe. In Galicia, there is no record of its cultivation up until the 1730s. Its establishment as a crop, that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, was mainly the work of peasants, who made up the great bulk of the Galician population in that period. Before the potato, the basis of Galician cuisine was the chestnut, originating from trees brought there by the Romans. Until quite recently, traditional dishes like *caldo* and *brona*[36] were still prepared with chestnuts, and even now, potatoes are actually called chestnuts in certain areas, and by some of the older people.

The introduction of the potato to Galicia helped to overcome the serious famine of 1769 which arose when the cultivated land in the region couldn't yield enough to feed an ever-increasing population, and then there was a plague that hit the chestnut trees. Food, in the sense of both produce and cuisine, is a crucial component of people's sense of collective belonging[37]. It was precisely the potato's adaptability to the existing food culture that helped to keep historic nationalism alive, and overcame the initial prejudices against its cultivation. The potato thus became a vehicle for the experience



of nationhood, reminding people of who they were, and are. Via its easy replacement of the chestnut, it, too, took over its contribution to sustaining the relationship between the individual and the collective in the construction and reproduction of nation.

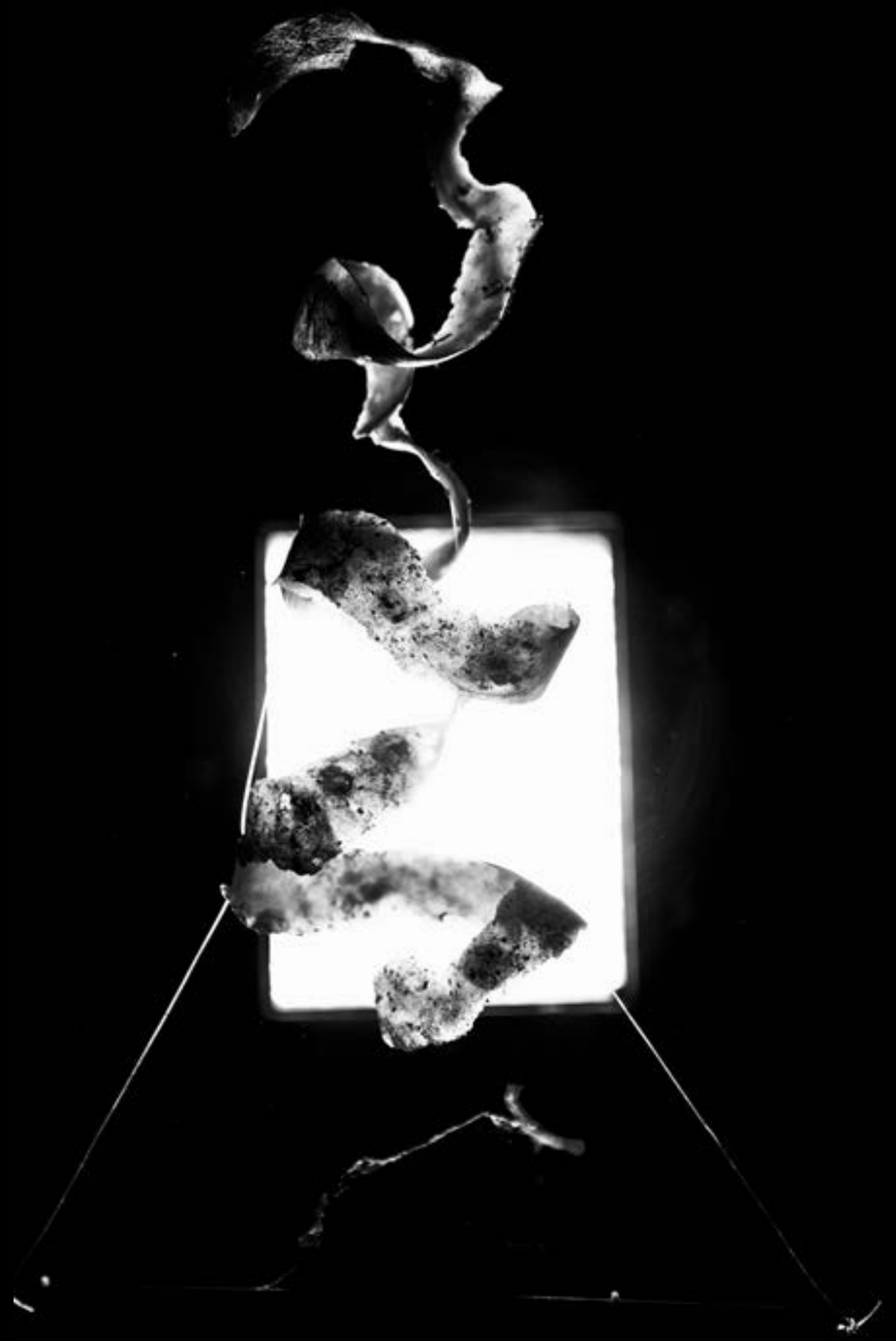
Food, then, is related to identity formation. In the case of Galicia, there is a spiritual connection to the land that has conditioned the role played by the potato in this process there. The geographer Rubén Lois González for example, has described the Galicians as a society obsessed with the earth. This is likely because Galicia always had a larger rural population than most parts of Spain and there was, therefore, greater pressure on land use. As such, in addition to the presence of everyday nationalism in commonplace activities such as cooking and eating[38], it is also expressed there through the self-consumption cultivation goods.

Thus, the potato transformed the landscape and modified the entire agricultural complex, causing profound local change in Galicia, But, since the food culture didn't change much, this transformation, in fact, reinforced the foundations of Galician identity. This is how the potato ended up a symbol of our national identity, and, as the writer Manuel Rivas said, how, in the Galician imagination, the cultivation of potatoes became something totemic.

36. A type of bread.
37. Fischler, Claude, 1988. "Food, Self and Identity." *Social Science Information* 27:275-293.

38. Ichijo, A., & Ranta, R. (2016). *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: from Everyday to Global Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan

Atlas, genome and farming tools



The perfect migrant

Native, invasive and other definitions

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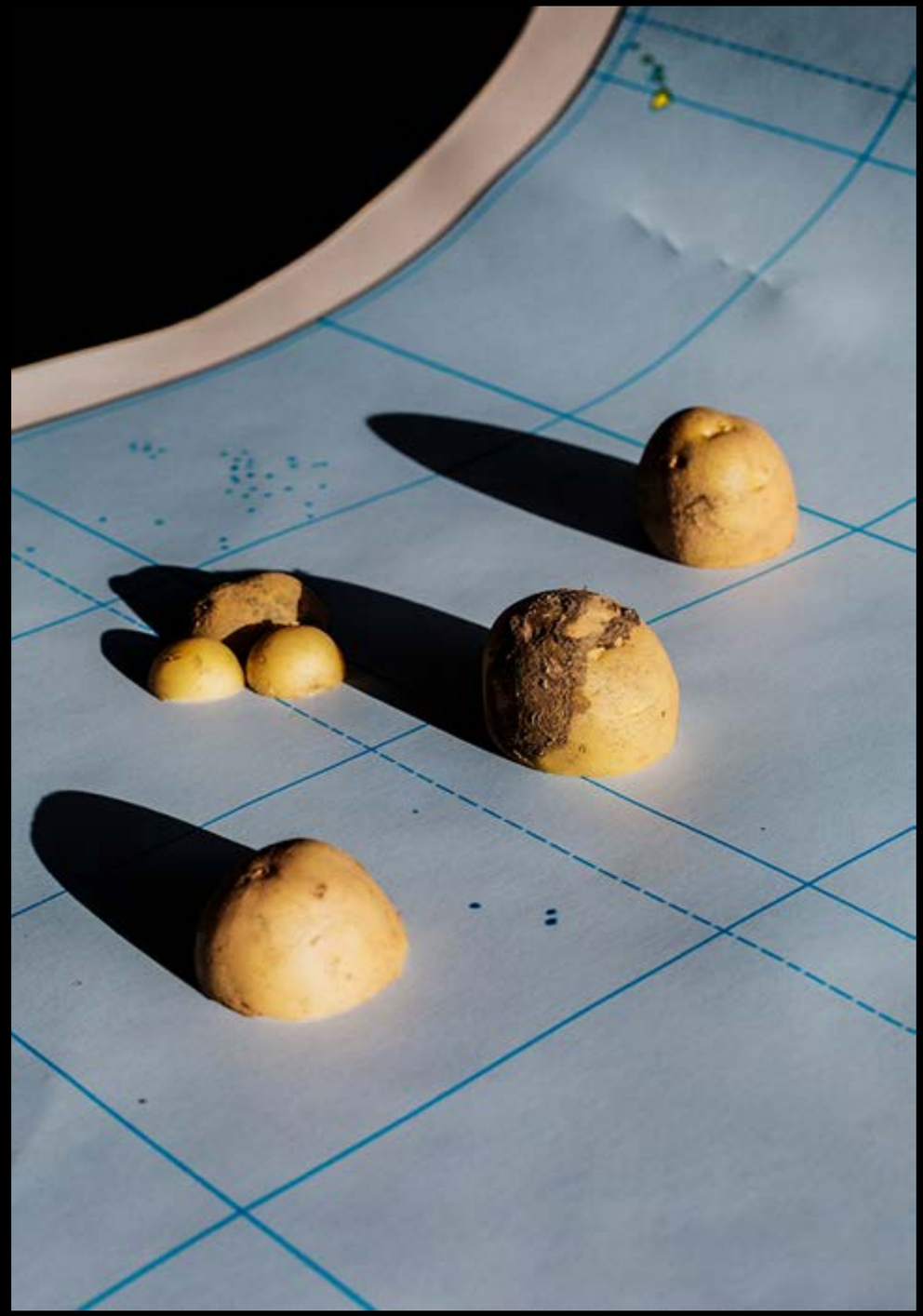
The conquerors had their first encounter with the potato in the Colombian Andes. A group of explorers led by Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada were crossing a flower-filled valley when suddenly, one of the natives buried his hands under the flowers and took out two potatoes that he offered as a gesture of hospitality. The Spaniard did not show much enthusiasm for the tubers, describing them as sandy soil testicles with little culinary appeal[41]. This indifference to the potato, plant and fruit, and concomitant lack of awareness of the impact of the crop on Inca society, is evident in its relative absence from the records kept by the European chroniclers of that period. Their main objective was to find the mines, to exploit them, and return to Europe loaded with gold. They still hadn't understood that that little tuber was the real treasure of those lands.

If we pay attention to how Spanish settlers thought about food, we gain a clearer understanding of how they thought about the most fundamental characteristics of the colonial experience[42] according to a hierarchical order of things, wherein food was also a political weapon; a token of social positioning in the world. There were groups of foods that were suitable for Spaniards, and different ones for indigenous people. "Groups," not just "foods," as within Europe there were already divisions of consumption on the basis of existing social hierarchies. What then happened was that "New World" natives assumed the role of the peasantry,[43] the lowest social stratum of the "Old World." European farmers were the first to appreciate the potential of the potato as a food crop, and, in a context of scarcity and hunger, disseminated it to various parts of nineteenth-century Europe in search of additional means to feed a growing world population.[44] The potato was reborn in Europe as a democratic foodstuff, the "bread" of the poor, forming a substrate of rhizomatic connections between natives and farmers, thus challenging the hierarchical subordination of things and people in both "worlds."

41. Based on the chronicles of the conqueror Pedro Cieza de León (1520-1554)
42. Earle, Rebecca. 2012 .The Body of the Conquistador: Food Race and the Colonial Experience.

43. Saldarriaga, C. (2016). "Comer y ser. La alimentación como política de la diferenciación en la América española, siglos XVI y XVII." *Varia Historia*, 32(58), 53-77.
44. De Jong, H. (2016). "Impact of the Potato on Society." *American Journal of Potato Research*, 93(5), 415-429.



Pontevedra, cradle of Columbus

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Crossing an ocean

Materialistic determinism insists that people's moral, cultural, intellectual, and vocational choices are determined by material factors: we are what we are because something material, outside or inside of us, makes us so[46]. Trying for a moment to embrace this thought, I wonder, has the potato influenced who we are?

Several studies have been conducted from this perspective. For the American biologist Jared Diamond, for example the potato is a cornerstone of his theory about key differences and inequalities in the world today. In his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Diamond argues that these imbalances originated not from innate differences between groups of human beings, but from differences in their environments. Cereals are not easier to grow or grow faster than tubers, for example, but the fact that they are collected and stored differently caused major changes in the civilizations that chose to cultivate them as a staple crop. Wheat, for example, is harvested once or twice a year, producing lots of dry grain. Once collected, cereals can be stored for long periods of time and are easily transported. This means they are also easy to steal. Thus, Diamond argues, societies that cultivated cereals were under extra pressure to protect their crops, which accelerated the emergence of ruling classes. So, groups that cultivate tubers typically have less complex, and less hierarchical, social structures

than those that cultivate cereals[47]. Against this, in their book *The Creation of Inequality*, the archaeologists Kent Flannery and Joyce Marcus present evidence that hierarchy and inequality predate plant domestication. Since many foraging societies developed complex class structures in the absence of agriculture, they argue, inequality results from social and political processes, and is not an intrinsically agricultural process.

The cultivation of potatoes increased the amount of food that European farmers could generate, notably in areas where until then cereal agriculture was not viable, causing the world population to triple between 1700 and 1900.[48] The historian William H. McNeill has argued that the potato led to empire: "By feeding rapidly growing populations, it permitted a handful of European nations to assert dominion over most of the world between that period". Adam Smith supported this theory by stating that the improvement in labor productivity, the increase in population and migration to other latitudes were possible thanks to the potato. The potato, in other words, fueled the rise of the West, helping in feeding workers for industrialization. Gwynn Guilford goes even further arguing in her article "The empire of the spud" that the global dominance of white people is thanks to the potato.
Cereal or no cereal, is that the question?

46. McCaw, Justin. 2015. *Materialistic Determinism and Cultural Materialism.*

47. Earle, Rebecca. 2019. *Potato*. Bloomsbury Academic.
48. Information based on a study led by Nancy Qian, professor of economics at Yale University and Nathan Nunn, economist at Harvard.

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Ana and her cachelos

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Eating is a cultural practice that involves a series of negotiations, constructions, deconstructions and impositions[51]. As Pierre Bourdieu claims, in his book *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, "taste is not pure". Bourdieu argues that everyday tastes are not arbitrary but, rather, based on power and social status. Certain key characteristics of the potato—being Andean, being food for the poor and for Indians, being a tuber that is born under the earth, believing it wild and, more recently, its relationship with fatness—have contributed negatively to its reputation. Nonetheless, with the passage of time, the rich nutritional value of the tuber has been perceived and assimilated into the diets of various cultures[52]. The potato has helped to feed rapidly growing populations all around the world, demonstrating its adaptive qualities at the cultural level as well as the territorial, as we have observed. Emerging onto the world food scene, it changed; adopting and adapting its identity to different places, resignifying itself according to the expectations of each society[53]. The potato's planetary journey has turned it into an incredibly successful global food. It's grown practically everywhere in the world, and people practically everywhere consider it to be "one of *our* foods."

Now, looking again into the eyes of a potato, you may well wonder: who conquered who?

51. Saldarriaga, G. (2016). "Comer y ser. La alimentación como política de la diferenciación en la América española, siglos XVI y XVII." *Varia Historia*, 32(58), 53-77.
52. Bonnett Vélez, D. (2019). "'Resurgencia' y recolonización de la papa. Del mundo andino al escenario alimentario mundial, siglos XVI-XX." *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, 46(1), 27-57.
53. Ibid.

Potatoes on Mars

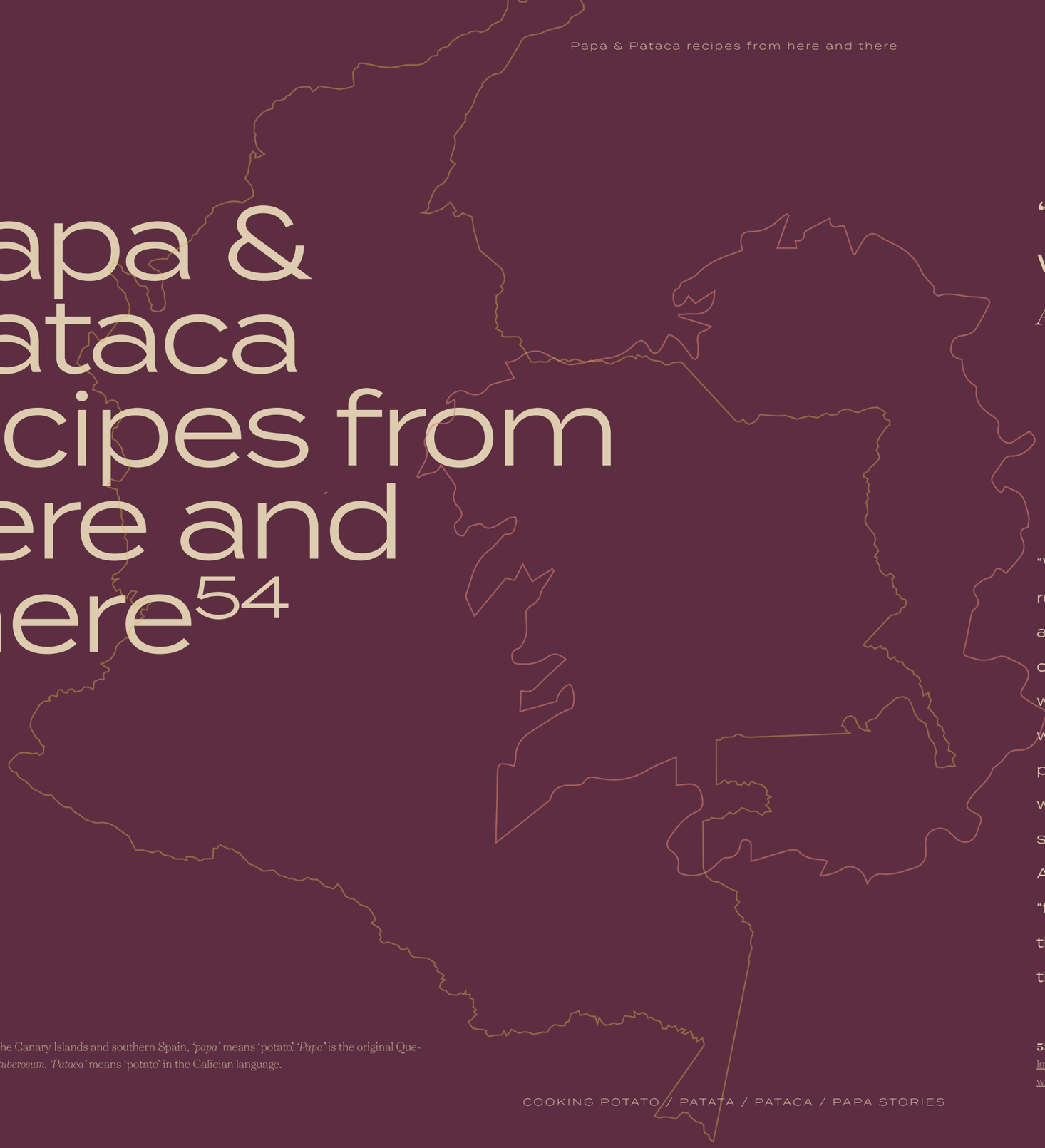
CLICK TO READ THE STORY

SEE LESS

commonalities

SEE MORE

Papa & Pataca recipes from here and there[54]



> “The history of a place is the work of the imagination”
>
> *Álvaro Cunqueiro*

“We are the stories we tell each other.” So claims Diana Orero, specialist in identity narrative, who also insists that “we are moved by stories, not by ideas.” There are three types of stories, she argues: The ones we tell ourselves about the world, the ones we tell ourselves about others, and the ones we tell ourselves about ourselves. They don’t change reality per se, but the perception of reality; by changing perception, we change; and by changing ourselves, reality changes in some way[55].

A Galician farmer who strongly believes the potatoes are “from here”; a group of researchers bent on demonstrating that Columbus was Galician; my own adaptation of the traditional Spanish tortilla, with Colombian potatoes; the discovery

54. In South America, the Canary Islands and southern Spain, *‘papa’* means ‘potato’. *‘Papa’* is the original Quechua word for *Solanum tuberosum*. *‘Pataca’* means ‘potato’ in the Galician language.

55. Extract from this interview: Sanchís, Ima (2020) “Somos las historias que contamos”. https://www.lavanguardia.com/lacontra/20200220/473665707204/somos-las-historias-que-nos-contamos.html?fbclid=IwAR2CSkT9sw43CluVBdzz_q4084jl-7E38jlHDdTTm97H1pzLQ3f4v9xLHQM

and the central role of the potato in traditional Andean society, and the conquerors' refusal to use it as a food crop; the commonalities shared between humans and potatoes; the sharing of potato recipes with a Colombian farmer, and the development of a research project on the possible cultivation of potatoes on Mars. All of these are stories about what the potato can tell us; about us, and the complex processes by which we construe, understand and make sense of ourselves, individually and as collectivities. The potato that embodies, and is embodied in, these stories, is revealed to be viscerally, painfully, poignantly, and triumphantly planted in our memories and histories[56], as meanings are constructed by the different traditions and social practices of cooking, cultivating, celebrating, storytelling.

Through this playful confrontation of different voices and the collision of perspectives herein, I invite you to immerse yourself in the complex system of meanings and narratives around the potato. This harvesting of stories is, itself, evidence of how narratives can give or take away power, and how the ideologies and subjectivities behind narratives are embedded in historical memory and encapsulated in local ideas; even while it also seeks to construct new meanings out of these encounters. If we are to be moved by stories, then let's choose the ones by which we want to be moved!

56. Ries, Nancy. "Potato ontology: surviving postsocialism in Russia." *Cultural Anthropology* 24.2 (2009): 181-212.

CLICK TO READ THE STORY

Recipe for Papas Gallegas Chorreadas

An attachment to an invisible soil

SEE LESS

Each of us creates its own identity through a continuous process of construction, a dynamic configuration and reconfiguration in which the collection of particular stories, and the voices of diverse subjects, are revealed to be crucial[58]. Stories are an important element of how we as individuals make sense of the world around them and integrate new ideas into our imaginaries. These imaginaries condition the relationship between the psyche and the social, acting in and within us. They hold the fantasies, strong emotions and intense belief systems that configure our own worlds. The imaginary, or more precisely, *each* imaginary, is a real and complex set of mental images that is socially produced, largely independent of the scientific criteria of truth, from relatively conscious inheritances, creations and transfers; making use of aesthetic, literary, moral, political, scientific productions, as well as other forms of collective memory and social practice that are thus caused to survive and be transmitted[59]. Each set, or imaginary, works in different ways at different times, and can transform into multiplicities of rhythms. So, what happens if we try to transform these sets of stories? Can new narratives break down the logic behind the mental images of which they are comprised?

The mental images that make up an imaginary can arguably be changed more easily than the mental attitudes that make up “a mentality.” While the image can be rationalized, and so pass into the realm of ideas and ideologies, a mental attitude is rooted in sensibilities—and these resist change[60]. Here a bridge has been built with potatoes, allowing us to move from Galicia to Colombia, to encounter some different perspectives, to challenge some social imaginaries, and establish some common ground.

<A rope runs through the backyard of a house in a neighborhood in the south east of Bogotá. It is a clothesline, where various items of clothing are drying in the sun. The sunlight strikes a white shirt with epaulets made of potato skin. The wind moves the shirt, as if the ghost of the person that normally inhabits it—a robust, conquering man, whose shiny shoulders proclaim his feat—were present>.

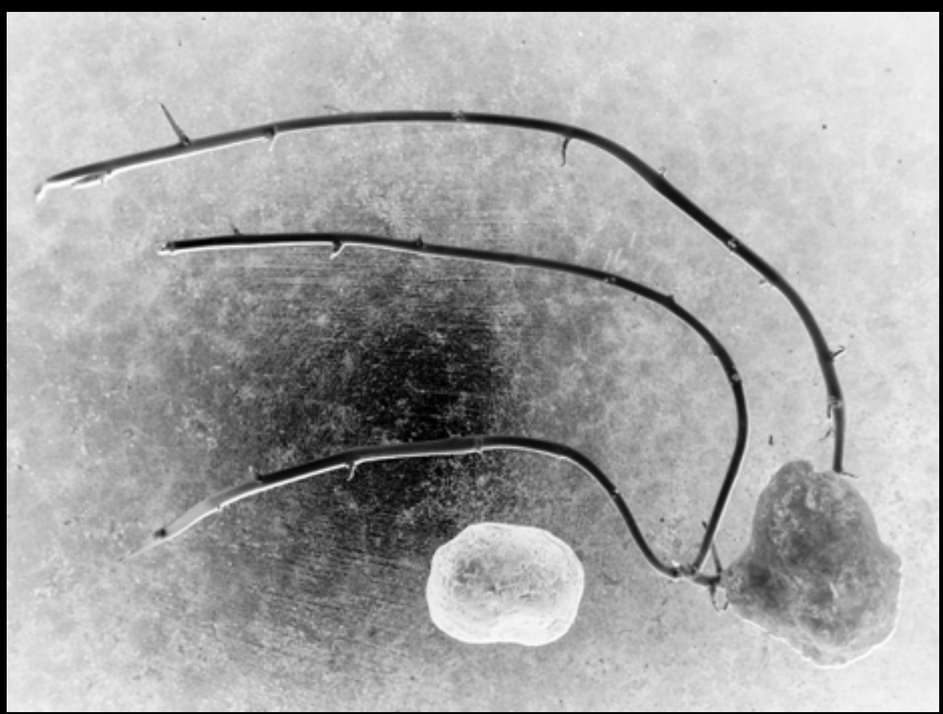
This is the description of one of the images that belong to my visual proposal. These images are products of my imagination, where imagining is understood as a way of thinking, playing with the idea that narrations are retrieved, built, or invented. The term imagination is sometimes used to connote fantasies, withdrawal from reality, or counter-factual conclusions; but, actually, imagination is the creative process of producing new images” and generating new relations through time and space[61].

58. Agudelo, P. A. (2011). “(Des) hilvanar el sentido/los juegos de Penélope.” *Uni-pluriversidad*, 11(3), 93-110.
59. Introduction to “L’imaginaire contemporain”, *Sciences Humaines Magazine*, No.90, 1999, p19.

60. Escobar Villegas, Juan Camilo. (2000). *Lo imaginario. Entre las ciencias sociales y la historia*. Medellín: Fondo Editorial Universidad Eafit.
61. Wenger, E. (1998). “Communities of practice: Learning as a social system.” *Systems Thinker, 9*(5), 2-3.

CLICK TO READ THE STORY

The act of peeling potatoes



This photographic series is based on the idea that the imaginary is always symbolic and it has the ability to invent and imagine meanings. Thinking on photography as a mechanism through which we can live with different symbolic-cultural and even contradictory schemes. On the one hand, I have specially constructed pictures with materials taken from the symbolic background to generate an impact on the mentalities and behaviors because of the ability of the imaginary to penetrate our individual and collective practices and sensibilities. On the other, playing with the symbolic enhances a sense of belonging of feelings and thoughts that allow each viewer to trace their own route through the story.

These images correspond to a visual representation of my own tangle of potato narratives, in both their historical and cultural aspects, as well the more personal and situational. The aim is to set off, in the audience, a search for narratives of their own. To this end, this group of images has been intentionally configured in a scattered way, leaving gaps to be filled by the viewer, facilitating the design of their own story. Our imaginaries are always a hybrid between the social and the personal, a real and complex set of images that appear to cause different senses.

In this way, I aim use photography to open new dialogue, and generate new relationships between members of Galician and Colombian society; to promote alternative knowledge movement between Latin America and Europe that allows us to connect to personal and collective imagination. Pictured here are the ingredients of some knowledge recipes I have prepared, some new potato narratives that call into question how we see ourselves and others. They are a means to find ourselves, face-to-face with the political, social, emotional and historical relationships we have with our roots, that persist in conditioning our personal and cultural imaginaries.

What can a potato tell me about myself? Next time you pick up a potato and look it in the eyes, I hope you might be able to answer.

You have to pull it up by the roots.

A Pataca

CLICK TO READ THE STORY

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