CYBORG ART, EARTH AND HUMIDITY

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Abstract

In his work *All Art is Ecological*, Timothy Morton (2021) asks: How much is art crucial to our coexistence with the non-human? This question leads us to intertwine Morton's thought with the symbiotic perspective of cyborg art in which organs, machines and animals follow parallel paths of co-evolution. The main purpose of this article then lies in tracing a path from such symbiosis to artistic practices that question our hierarchies about the value of some forms of life over others. To do so, it is explored here how Moon Ribas' works are choreographies that focus on the movement of the Earth. Then, a wet ecocriticism will be carried out, inspired by the Quimera Rosa collective and the conversation between Haraway and Baptiste in the city of Bogotá.

Keywords: cyborg; artificial organs; symbiosis; ecomimesis; ecocriticism

Arte ciborgue, Terra e umidade

Resumo

Na sua obra *All Art is Ecological*, Timothy Morton (2021) questiona: até que ponto a arte é crucial para a nossa coexistência com o não-humano? Esta questão leva-nos a entrelaçar o pensamento de Morton com a perspetiva simbiótica da arte ciborgue, na qual órgãos, máquinas e animais seguem trajectórias paralelas de co-evolução. O principal objetivo deste artigo consiste, então, em traçar um percurso desde essa simbiose até as práticas artísticas que questionam as nossas hierarquias sobre o valor de algumas formas de vida em detrimento de outras. Para isso, será explorado aqui o modo como as obras de Moon Ribas são coreografias que se centram no movimento da Terra. A seguir, levar-se-á a cabo a uma ecocrítica húmida, inspirada no coletivo Quimera Rosa e na conversa entre Haraway e Baptiste na cidade de Bogotá.

Palavras-chave: ciborgue; órgãos artificiais; simbiose; ecomimética; ecocrítica

Arte cíborg, tierra y humedad

Resumen

En su obra All Art is Ecological, Timothy Morton (2021) se pregunta: ¿en qué medida el arte es crucial para nuestra coexistencia con lo no-humano? Este interrogante nos lleva a entrelazar el pensamiento de Morton con la perspectiva simbiótica del arte cíborg, en la que los órganos, las máquinas y los animales siguen trayectos paralelos de coevolución. El propósito principal de este artículo radica, entonces, en trazar un recorrido que va desde dicha simbiosis hasta las prácticas artísticas que cuestionan nuestras jerarquías sobre el valor de algunas formas de vida sobre otras. Para ello, se explora acá cómo las obras de Moon Ribas son coreografías que se centran en el movimiento de la Tierra. Posteriormente, se llevará a cabo una ecocrítica húmeda, inspirada en el colectivo Quimera Rosa y en la conversación entre Haraway y Baptiste en la ciudad de Bogotá.

Palabras clave: cíborg; órganos artificiales; simbiosis; ecomímesis; ecocrítica

At the beginning of his book *Ecological Thinking*, Timothy Morton (2018, p. 17) asks: what kind of art would an ecologically conscious person like? However, the most interesting part of Morton's proposal is not in determining how artistic practices awaken such consciousness, since the scope of ecological beings is limitless. Thus, ecological consciousness can rarely function without the claim to think of nature as a totality and, along with this, without establishing that the human species is a universal category. But both presuppositions of ecological consciousness are quite problematic, because, on the one hand, communities of biologists continue to debate how to understand the unity and diversity of the organic and, on the other hand, it is not clear to what extent the human being can be experienced as a species. That said, the most relevant question raised by Morton is found in *All Art is Ecological* (2021). There Morton asks the following question: to what extent is art crucial or vital to our coexistence with the non-human? This question makes it possible to link Morton's thinking with cyborg art, understood as the creation and design of artificial organs that add new meaning and broaden the range of perception of the environment. This link is due to the fact that cyborg art makes it possible to move from the point of view of natural selection - marked by competition between species and indifference to the role of technical objects in adaptation- to the symbiotic perspective in which organs, machines and non-human animals follow divergent paths of evolution, but ultimately parallel paths of mutual dependence.

In this order of ideas, the purpose of this article is to trace a path that goes from symbiosis in cyborg art to the categories of Earth and humidity, due to these categories highlight how this cyborg art creates performative works that question our hierarchies about the value of some forms of life over others.

Symbiosis or cybernetic coexistence: the liberation of the prosthesis art

According to Morton (2019, pp. 97-98), if we are to think the living from symbiotic communities we must extend and, even, breach the logical law of non-contradiction. This is because this law dictates that a being cannot be and not be at the same time -A and not-A cannot co-exist-. Therefore, under this logical law, symbiosis is basically impossible, since the limits between organisms should be rigid and it would be unthinkable to conceive, for example, that the human being is an ecosystem of non-human beings or to explain, following Margulis (2002, pp. 16-19), how plants, animals and bacteria co-evolve. Accordingly, addressing the current relationship between cyborg art and Morton's ecological thinking implies showing how such art transcends the law of non-contradiction, in that it has the power to include technical artifacts, specifically prostheses, among organic beings, thus creating a symbiosis or cybernetic coexistence.[1]

The term "cyborg" is an acronym for cybernetics organism and first appeared in the article *Cyborg and Space* (Clynes and Kline, 1960). This article explores how human beings could adapt to an environment to which they are not naturally accustomed: outer space. In this regard, *Cyborg and Space* argues that the hostility of outer space will not be overcome by replicating terrestrial conditions on other planets, since adaptation is not conceived as a slow, cumulative process of Darwinian evolution. Rather, the cyborg participates in its own evolution, because it undergoes a symbiosis with artificial organs that are incorporated into its organism's self-regulation or homeostasis (Clynes and Kline, 1960, p. 29).[2]

To demonstrate this participatory evolution from symbiosis with artificial organs, Clynes and Kline compare the space traveler to non-human animals. On the one hand, the space traveler is described as a fish that longs to live outside the aquatic environment. However, instead of encapsulating his environment in a glass container that could break, he chooses to transform himself physiologically through the design and implantation of artificial organs that allow him to breathe. On the other hand, in *Cyborg and Space* (Clynes and Kline, 1960, p. 27), the symbiotic model is based on a laboratory mouse that has a

1 Hay cierto acuerdo sobre la existencia de tres olas de la cibernética. La primera ola se define como una disciplina que estudia la comunicación y el control de la información que intercambian los animales y las máquinas; la segunda ola se clasifica como una epistemología dedicada a estudiar cómo el observador está involucrado en la producción de conocimiento; la tercera ola está concentrada en las implicaciones de la vida artificial. (There is some agreement on the existence of three waves of cybernetics. The first wave is defined as a discipline that studies the communication and control of information exchanged between animals and machines; the second wave is classified as an epistemology dedicated to studying how the observer is involved in the production of knowledge; the third wave is focused on the implications of artificial life.) (Kline, 2009, p. 334).

2 The notion of homeostasis comes from the Greek *hómoios* and *stasis*. It was coined by the physiologist Claude Bernard and refers to a space where the self-regulating functions of the organism are carried out. Subsequently, this notion is further elaborated in the text *The Wisdom of the Body*, in which Walter Cannon (1963, p. 24) defines it as the ability of the organism to restore its internal equilibrium after unstable moments. Hence, the constant temperature of the blood or the metabolic rate are recurrent cases to exemplify how organisms maintain their self-organization or homeostasis.

prosthesis implanted in its tail. This prosthesis is known as Rose's osmotic pump[3] and is responsible for injecting the mouse with chemicals that maintain its metabolic balance without the animal being aware of it. Extrapolating this prosthesis to the context of the space traveler, the idea arises that the cyborg could adapt to the extraterrestrial environment thanks to the osmotic pump, which would inject it with drugs to protect it from the effects of radiation, as well as inject it with substances to help it stabilize its blood pressure or stay awake and alert.

Following this line of argument of participatory evolution, cyborg art starts from the creation of an artificial organ that allows to capture a stimulus from the environment that the biological senses are unable to perceive. In this quest for sensory stimulation, cyborg art transforms the status of machines. Specifically, cyborg art liberates the status of prostheses by taking them beyond regenerative medicine. In cyborg art, the notion of prosthesis is ambivalent because its artificial organs are not conceived to make up for deficiencies or to perform biological repairs. Rather, these artificial organs function as a kind of prosthesis that amplifies sensory perception. These prostheses, which become artificial organs, are endowed with a kind of voice and ears that enable them to receive signals from the environment and transmit them to the inside of the organism. To that extent, the cyborg organs consider any communicative pattern, signal or frequency that is part of the environment.

However, in order for the artificial organs to achieve this degree of sensibility in cyborg art, the artist must act as a prosthetic maker who focuses on the technique of sensory substitution. This technique holds that every sensory phenomenon exists in waveform and thus it is possible to translate one sense into another with relative ease (Mills, 2011, pp. 90-101).

Under this axiom of sensory substitution, the father of cybernetics, Norbert Wiener, invented the Hearing Glove prosthesis. This prosthesis converts sound into tactile signals by stimulating the fingers of deaf people with electromagnetic vibrations, i.e., each finger becomes a receptor channel for vibratory messages, considering both the intensity and frequency of the sound waves that the skin can perceive directly.

Some gloves with printed alphabets (Talking Glove) had already been invented prior to the Hearing Glove. However, the reasons that prompted Wiener to focus on tactile communication instead of alphabetic representations of sound are well-founded. On the one hand, Hearing Glove fabrication is based on the classic architecture of the senses, in which touch is subordinate to vision and hearing. On the other hand, hands are closely linked to language and are the protagonists of narratives about the origin of the technique, while the challenge of understanding how the truly human is achieved by using instruments is still ongoing (Mumford, 2010, p. 12). In short, the fascinating thing about the Hearing Glove is that it is a prosthesis that generates an innovative form of sensory stimulation, called "listening with the fingers".

3 The osmotic pump was invented by Dr. Rose as a solution to the challenge of continuously administering medications to patients over extended periods of time (Halacy, 1965, p. 123).

In cyborg art, a paradigmatic example of sensory substitution is the work of Neil Harbisson, creator of a cybernetic organ that functions simultaneously as an eye and an ear, as it perceives the sound of colors through bone conduction. The first prototype of Neil Harbisson's artificial organ is known as the Eyeborg, and it provided a sonochromatic sense. Harbisson, together with computer engineer Adam Montandon, developed this prototype in 2003, which was limited to transmitting six basic colors divided into six distinct musical notes (Pearlman, 2005, p. 85). In 2010, Harbisson went an extra step by collaborating with Matias Lizana on the design of another prototype cybernetic organ: in the form of an antenna and inspired by the anatomy of insects. This antenna is composed of a color sensor, a digital camera and a chip. Implanted in the skull, the antenna is not simply a technological device for momentary use but becomes an integral part of Harbisson's body. This argument was crucial for the British authorities to allow him to include the photo with the antenna in his passport. Since then, Harbisson has been legally recognized as the first cyborg.

In a TED talk, Harbisson (2012) relates that at first, he memorized the names of colors and the sounds associated with musical notes to perceive the sonochromatic stimulus. After seven years, Harbisson came to feel the symbiosis with the cybernetic organ was complete when he began to dream about the colors. In this dreamlike state, he was no longer dependent on the antenna software because it was his own brain generating the sounds. At this conference, Harbisson commented on how his visits to museums were transformed into musical experiences because he could hear the paintings. During these tours, he noticed classical painting was silent and there are colors that are pleasing to the eye, but unpleasant to the ear.

To understand more fully why Harbisson's antenna is a cyborg organ, we should review some of the cybernetic theories about art. For now, however, it is worth noting that it is undeniable that the sonochromatic sense reorganizes the sensory experience. Therefore, it is important to establish that cyborg art connects with Morton's (2021) ecological thinking in that both warn that an aesthetic endeavor is to re-think the relationships between the whole and the parts.

Indeed, Morton claims his work is about the coming ecology, the ecology of the future, in which it makes sense to dispense with the concept of nature as a category of totality and replace it with a loop model[4] (2007, p. 6). Similarly, cyborg art leads us to redefine the perspective on the organic unity composition inherited from the Greeks. Since the pre-Socratic philosophers, the organic unity was conceived as a type of closed unity that depended on an internal power of order. This organic unity referred to a totality, whose parts were irreplaceable, since any modification would necessarily lead to the destruction of the whole. Indeed, cyborg art constantly alters the organic unity by adding to the body and mind new artificial organs that communicate with the environment. Cyborg art thus proposes that organic unity is an aesthetic category insofar as it functions to reorganize sensory experience. Moreover, in cyborg art organic unity is an aesthetic category that proposes the artificiality of organs is no longer found in their raw material being circuits, wires or chips, rather than cells, biological fluids and tissues. The artificiality of organs is to be found in that they cause a constant integration and disintegration of the organic unity, which gives free rein to endlessly redesign it on the basis of communicative patterns. Putting it this way, we can conclude cyborg art is not reduced to an unfortunate case

4 According to Morton (2019, pp. 23-24), there are a variety of ecological loops: there are positive feedback loops that increase the power of the system in which they operate and negative feedback loops that decrease the intensity of the positive ones. Examples of these feedback loops are thermostats and Lovelock's Gaia theory. There are also involuntary loops, synchronization loops and, finally, the dark ecology loop, which is a strange loop because it combines two levels that seem completely different. Among the dark loops is the Anthropocene, because it brings together the geological scale and the human scale and terrestrial magnitude thinking that is not universalistic.

of the creation of artificial organs in which engineering consumes biological diversity. On the contrary, in this art a qualitative form of biotechnological design is posited, as the artist selects the frequencies, patterns and patterns for the artificial organs and the environment to communicate and initiate a symbiotic relationship.

Earth: the dance of what is alive

Post-Darwinian biology seeks to persuade us that evolutionary problems can be understood as problems of design, since it assumes that natural selection is in charge of granting functions to organs, in a similar way to how the functions of an artifact are the work of the technician's intention (Lewens, 2004, p. 91). However, cyborg art contradicts this similarity between natural selection and the designer because it abandons the idea that artifacts are valuable for the technical function they fulfill. Cyborg art announces that it is impossible to understand the function of artificial organs unless it is made explicit how that organ originated, how many prototypes and shape changes it has had, and in what knots of hybridization its designer or artist is involved. With this, cyborg art dictates that it is most appropriate to examine the function of an artificial organ by looking at its metamorphoses.

The following is a brief review of the metamorphoses of artist Moon Ribas' cyborg organ, as this organ functions from its relationship with the Earth. Therefore, cyborg art coincides with Morton's (2007, p. 11) thesis on the need for an ecology without nature that constantly examines how art represents the environment, since our notion of Earth, landscape or natural place is determined by the effect that art exerts on our space perception.

The first cyborg performance by choreographer and dancer Moon Ribas dates back to 2008; it consisted of feeling in her body the speed at which people walked in different cities. Moon Ribas used a device equipped with vibrating sensors in her hand, which she called Speedborg. Later, this device, which indicated to Ribas how fast or slow the steps of the people in front of her were, was transformed into a pair of earrings that allowed her to perceive the movements that occurred behind her back, giving the artist a kind of retroception (Figures 1 and 2).

Figura 1: *Moon Ribas with the retroceptive sense earrings.*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

Figura 2: *Moon Ribas with the retroceptive sense earrings*
Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

Once this experiment with the Speedborg was over, Moon Ribas devoted herself to devising a cybernetic organ that would be independent of the movement of human beings. So, in 2013, the artist implanted cybernetic devices connected to seismographs online in her feet. With these implants, Moon Ribas (2020, p. 277) began to sense earth movements in real time and called this input a seismic sense. From this sense, Moon Ribas composed the choreographic work *Waiting the Earthquakes*. In this piece there is a duet between the Earth and the artist, as the dancer's body interprets for the audience the vibrations that her sensors pick up from the seismographs. Thus, in *Waiting the Earthquakes*, the stillness of Moon Ribas's body or her paused position represents the subtle movements of the Earth, while the abrupt and unexpected gestures in her dance indicate that in some corner of the planet the tectonic plates have been shaken with stronger force.

Moon Ribas (2021, p. 195) qualifies the performance *Waiting the Earthquakes* as a durational work, insofar as it has neither beginning nor end, it can last ten minutes or even hours. In this choreography, the perception of the cyborg artist becomes a particular dance, because the Earth is presented as the author of the choreographies. In other words, in cyborg art the human being ceases to be the artist par excellence, giving way to non-human actors as artistic creators. On the other hand, Ribas' seismic sense makes it clear that the movement patterns of the natural world are not only of concern to scientists, but also to artists. Indeed, in *Choreography: a pattern language*, Klien (2007) argues that the work of choreographers is to perceive these patterns of nature, with the purpose of transferring or translating them into the realm of dance to expand the range of artistic sensibility (pp. 1081-1082).

Another work that emerged from the cyborg sense was *Seismic Percussion*. In this performance, Moon Ribas interprets earthquakes by means of a bass drum. The listener then picks up the increase in seismic activity as the sound of the drum becomes more powerful and rapid. For her first percussion performances, Moon Ribas chose the seismic movement of Mexico City between the years 1966 and 2016. However, nowadays the cyborg artist is also inspired by a point of view external to the Earth, as the seismic percussion performances include the moon-quakes or seismic movements of the moon. In this work, Moon Ribas (2020, p. 279) imagines the possibility of exploring outer space without leaving Earth aboard a spaceship. Specifically, Moon refers to a class of senses astronauts (senstronauts). This kind of statements bring the Catalan artist closer to Morton's (2019, p. 151) dark ecology, due to the fact that for this ecology it is essential for us to be aware of our terrestrial scale, even if we go to other planets.

After seven years with the seismic sense, Moon Ribas decided to remove the implant from her feet and undertake further explorations of the Earth's movement through a Seismic-sensitive garment (Figures 3, 4 and 5). This suit positions cyborg art within embodied practices that seek to expand narratives of the living on Earth from

biophysical data collected by sensors. But, moreover, this seismic suit reminds us that cyborg art does not always need an implant, to put technology under the skin, to perform.

Figura 3. *Performance of Moon Ribas with seismic-sensitive garment*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

Figura 4. *Performance of Moon Ribas with seismic-sensitive garment*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

Figura 5. *Performance of Moon Ribas with seismic-sensitive garment*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

Although cyborg artists are controversial when performing live implants, it is worth clarifying that there is a big difference between cyborg art and the Carnal Art devised by the French artist Orlan, famous for her performances in which she exhibits the surgeries that modify her body. Carnal art is defined as a practice that inherits the classic form of self-portraiture but materialized through the technological advances of contemporary medicine. For this reason, in "*Anger, Art and Medicine: Working with Orlan*", Armstrong (2002) asserts that the works of the French artist constitute a provocation to the medical institution (pp. 174-175). A clear example of this is the transformation of Orlan's face by means of horn-like implants in her forehead, as such implants revive discussions of phrenology, that is, the discipline that used skull patterns to diagnose intelligence and personality traits. Indeed, carnal art transcends the traditional categories of the beautiful and the grotesque that classical art used to judge human anatomy. In contrast, the goal of the implant in cyborg art is not to challenge exclusively the medical institution, but rather to incorporate an artificial organ capable of revealing environmental stimuli that remain hidden from the biological senses. Therefore, the aesthetic categories that guide this art are not limited to beauty and the grotesque but include the imperceptible.

On the other hand, Moon Ribas' relationship with the Earth situates us in Bioaesthetics, conceived as the study of the sensibility forms of living beings. To explain this Bioaesthetics, it is worth remembering the cyborg artist has expressed on several occasions her hybridizations with technology have not led her to experience a greater affinity with robots or machines but have made her bond with the Earth and with other animals closer, because she has gained a deeper understanding of their perception modes. This statement by Moon Ribas confronts us with genuinely posthuman[5] questions, such as the connection between speciesism and representational art, since it is reasonable to believe that once cyborg art disassociates itself from the sensorium of humans, then artistic practices that privilege representation are questioned (Wolfe, 2021, p. 325). It also prompts us to consider the question posed by Morton (2007, p. 26) about the imminent link between ecological catastrophe and the emergence of virtual reality, insofar as both deal with an immersive experience in which the terrestrial point of reference has been lost.

To end this section on dance from the Earth's heartbeat, and to give way to the category of humidity, I would like to explain what is the work *Fenomen* in which Moon Ribas as participated with Quim Girón, contemporary circus artist, since 2022. In this piece, thermal phenomena are introduced inside the stage and a dance is composed with ice in all its states (liquid, solid and gaseous). Fenomen is a cyborg artwork that, once again, feeds back on Morton's (2021) thoughts, since his reflections on the work *Ice Watch* give us tools to deepen our appreciation of *Fenomen*. Morton (2021) assures us that these works starring ice indicate the ecological loops that art can expose, because the encounter with ice is a way to initiate a dialogue with the non-human, in the sense that it makes evident the great number of temporal formats of the different organic and inorganic beings with whom we coexist. Furthermore, ice is a temporal structure in which the future is appreciated, not a predictable future, but an unpredictable one. In other words, these performances with ice expose what Morton calls futurality.

Humidity: rhetoric and fictions about nature

Under the term *ecomímesis*, Morton (2007, pp. 32-38) investigates situated rhetorical strategies, those strategies that shape the here and now of narratives devoted to evoking environment, setting, or atmosphere. Morton lists several rhetorical uses of *ecomímesis*: geographia (rhetoric of land), topographia (rhetoric of place), chronographia (rhetoric of time), hydrographia (rhetoric of water), anemographia (rhetoric of air), dendrographia

5 It should be recalled that posthumanism advocates the decentralization of the human being, challenging the notion of a subject endowed with an universal reason that guides him or her towards scientific progress and moral improvement. Such decentralization is achieved through the search for conceptual figurations or characters that represent an alternative to the dominant view of the subject. Among these figurations is the hybrid cyborg, as well as feminist, queer and migrant identities, for in them is manifested a nomadic subjectivity, a dynamic and non-unitary entity that is formed in intermediate spaces that flow and question binary oppositions (Braidotti, 2015, pp. 195-196).

(rhetoric of trees). To this enumeration of Morton, we will add here the *ecomímesis* dedicated to the rhetorical uses of humidity, which I suppose to be inscribed in the hydrographia *ecomímesis*. To accomplish this task of expanding *ecomímesis*, the artistic practices of the Quimera Rosa collective will be approached and the ecocriticism developed in the conversation between Donna Haraway and Brigitte Baptiste in Bogota will be made explicit.

The Quimera Rosa collective is known worldwide for carrying out, in 2017, a performance entitled *Trans*Plant*. In this performance, a human body was given an intravenous injection of chlorophyll in order to become hybrid with plants and subvert the notion of anthropocentric identity. As can be seen in the video[6] that compiles the performative act, the chlorophyll was obtained after two years of intense research and experimentation. This collective reflects the tensions between art and science, not only because in their practices they overflow the rigidity of the methods of the biomedical sciences and their eagerness to patent the living, but also because they are practices of self-experimentation that have nothing individual about them. As the performance progresses, we discover the main hypothesis about the effects of chlorophyll is that the eyes and skin will become photosensitive for two months. In 2021, *Trans*Plant* became an installation/laboratory at the Center for Contemporary Culture in Barcelona. This installation showed the speculative and fictional dimension of the performance, as it exhibited the past and possible future of this transdisciplinary piece based on texts, scientific excerpts, videos and fanzines (Figures 6, 7 and 8).

Figura 6: *Fanzine of Trans*Plant exhibition*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

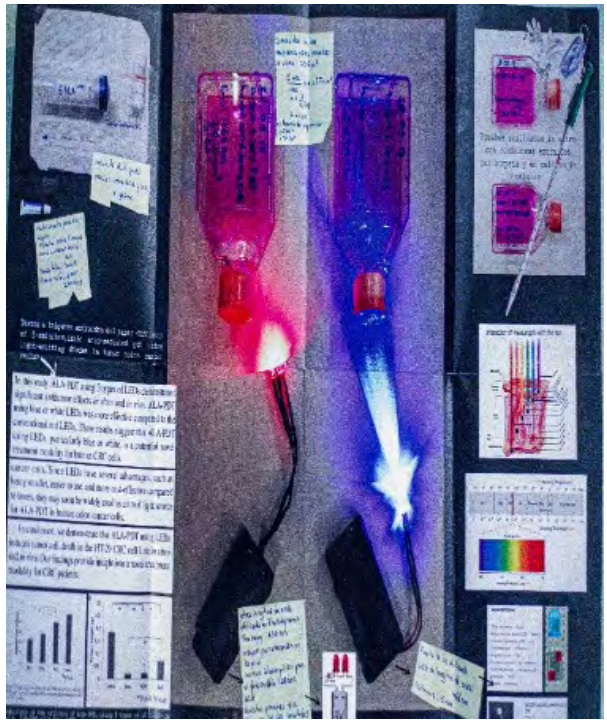

Figura 7. *Fanzine of Trans*Plant exhibition*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

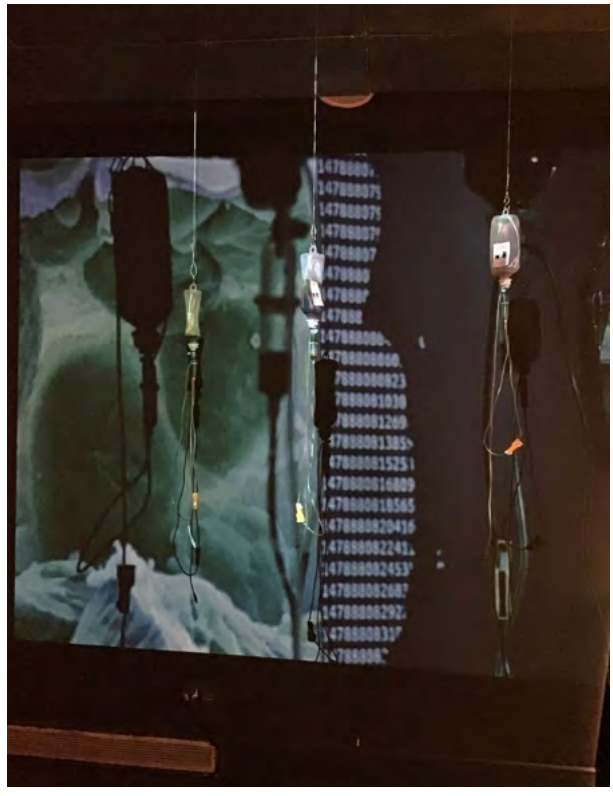

Figura 8. *Installation inside Trans*Plant exhibition*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

6 https://vimeo.com/582241060.

At present, the Quimera Rosa collective is located at the Hangar Institute. There they develop their artistic creations in a space known as WetLab (Figures 9 and 10).

Figura 9. *WetLab in Hangar*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

Figura 10. *WetLab instruments in Hangar*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

This is a space where biohacking is practiced. These practices consist of democratizing the knowledge of science, mainly the knowledge of biology, and using DIY techniques to create instruments and materials (Gayozzo, 2021, p. 7). Last October I had the opportunity to participate in a residency with this collective. This residency, under the concept of the wetland, incited to think and become with the microbial world. Among the activities of the residency, the cultivation of bacteria and fungi from samples of biological material such as saliva, the creation of crystals using salts, the manufacture of oils from seeds and the exercise of the Atlas Cuir -the invention of a fictional being that can only be observed through a microscope- stand out (Figures 11 and 12).

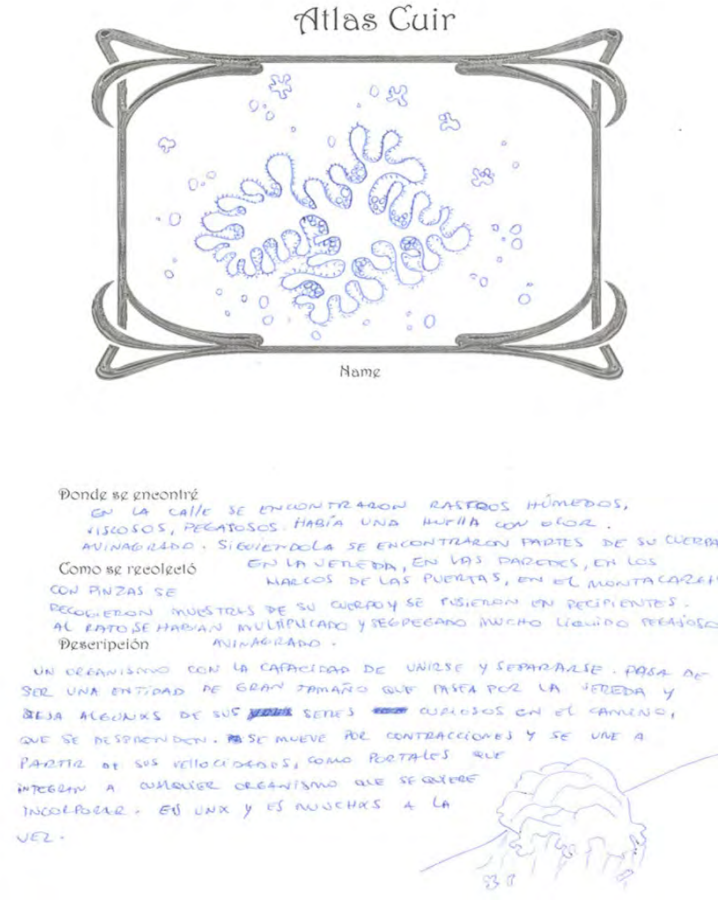

Figura 11. *Cuir Atlas*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

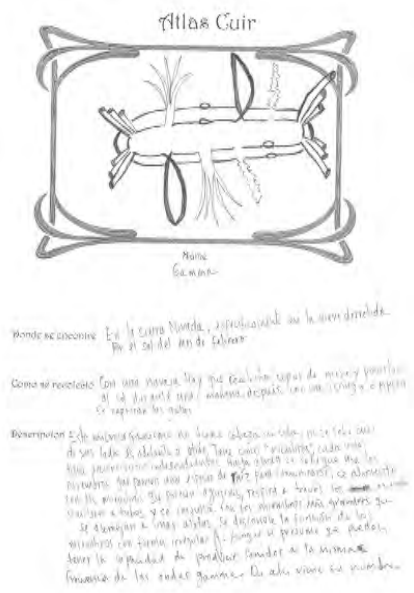

Figura 12. *Cuir Atlas*

Fuente: Photograph taken by Tatiana Afanador López and reproduced with permission.

The WetLab contributes to understand how interdisciplinarity in bioart is found in using the means of biotechnological research in an artistic key, since the laboratory is conceived as an atelier (López del Rincón, 2016, pp. 25-29). One of the main teachings of the WetLab, and in that mean of the aesthetic category of humidity, is to begin to perceive on multiple scales.[7]

Another reference to reflect on the rhetorical uses of humidity is Donna Haraway's visit to Bogota city in 2019, and her conversation with Brigitte Baptiste. In this dialogue, extractivist techniques such as fracking were denounced and the meaning of a bear or a high moor being subjects of law was debated. But as the conversation progressed, the thesis that the pedagogical task of biologists is to make cracks in the categories that aspire to identify nature with purity and the latter with the feminine gained prominence. Both Haraway and Baptiste oppose such identification and prefer to point to the feminine metaphor in which nature is characterized by the lust and humidity of the jungle. Specifically, it is mentioned that the pedagogical task of biologists is embedded in an eros. For example, Haraway narrates that she relates biology to humidity since she felt sexual arousal when learning and teaching other women about the functioning of mitochondria. For her

7 The results of the Humedal residency directed by Ce Quimera and Gaia Leandra can be viewed at https://humedalwetlab.hotglue.me.

part, Baptiste adds that queer biology teaches from a perspective of enjoying the natural world, of building an erotic and vibrant bond with it. Thus, this conversation between Haraway and Baptiste is inscribed in the aesthetic dimension of ecocriticism, understood by Morton (2007, p. 24) as environmental literature dedicated to demystifying nature or, at least, to puncturing the utopian image of nature, since it is historically constructed, while biology is a narrative knowledge.

Indeed, Baptiste argues that there is an ecological imaginary whereby biology resembles a catalog that attempts to simplify the multiple networks among species by classifying them and assigning them Latin names. This catalog biology also denies the continuous interweaving of forces that produce the diversity of ecosystems. So this exercise of classifying, naming and cataloging is unsatisfactory. This is because, for example, there are more than 65,000 species recorded in Colombia and, therefore, it is impossible for any biologist to have a detailed knowledge of each of these species. In addition, this catalog biology fails because it has been demonstrated that there are transsexual plant species such as the Palma de Cera and, in Putumayo jungle, there are people who identify themselves as descendants of the lianas of certain trees.

On the other hand, Haraway challenges this catalog biology by proposing an implausible but real future in which one can imagine what would be the arts that would teach us to live on a wounded planet Earth. Haraway (2019a) develops an exercise in science fiction or feminist speculation in which she thinks about what a future governed by the motto: "Generate kinship and not babies" would be like. This fictional exercise asks us to imagine a compost girl named Camille who is born to become with other terrestrial beings, i.e., this girl has the right and the duty to choose a symbiote animal. So, the compost children see their lineages as humus and not as *homo* or *anthropos*.

The Camille's symbiosis is with monarch butterflies. At age five, Camille's skin had yellow and black stripes like the caterpillar of those butterflies. At fifteen, Camille's skin had the bright patterns of adult butterflies. Finally, at the age of majority, Camille underwent a body modification in order to continue her symbiosis. This modification consisted in implanting butterfly-like antennae on her chin; Camille's implant was a tentacular beard that allowed her to acquire the ability to taste the world as flying insects do. In other words, this implant gave Camille the possibility to feel the same sensory pleasures experienced by butterflies.[8]

Another practice to generate kinship between Camille and the monarch butterflies was to tell her stories of healing and renewal between the species. One of this compost girl's favorite stories was *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. The protagonist of this story is a princess who defends insects from a toxic forest. The princess's friendship with these insects is an essential example to teach Camille the power of a healing child. Inspired by these stories, Camille takes a step further in her symbiosis and decides to make the same migratory journey of the monarch butterflies from the United States to Mexico. Camille made a journey to the communities of Michoacán and there she discovered that she had never questioned the colonial categories of nature that were part of her symbiosis with the butterflies. In dwelling on this migratory experience of Camille, we discover that it is there that Haraway makes an explicit reference to the jungle. Haraway (2019a, p. 321) comments that there is a decolonial approach to the rehabilitation of the wounded Earth and the configuration of multispecies worlds, for the word "jungle" does not have the same colonial connotation that the word nature does.

In this trajectory of fictional narratives, it is easy to get lost in speculations about the future. However, it should be remembered that, by referring to the conversation between Haraway and Baptiste, the aim is to show that ecocriticism, according to Morton, is an exercise in which art shapes and, at the same time, dissolves the fantasies we have about nature. To contribute to this humid ecocriticism, I would like to contrast a drawing drawn from a jungles of Putumayo (Colombia) story with a painting of a cyborg woman by Lynn Randolph (Haraway, 2019b, p. 114).

In the text *La curación como técnica. Basado en entrevistas de sabedores de la Amazonía* (Santos, 2019), there is a drawing of a young apprentice healer or traditional healer called *He Guu of the Makuna* ethnic group. In this drawing, a healing ritual is contemplated in which the wisdom-keepers of the jungle community use a crown of feathers as sacred material, because they have the belief that feathers give light and illuminate thought or can lead to illness if the purposes for which the combination of

8 Cyborg art proposes a wet technology when, like Camille, artificial organs are designed based on other species. A case of this wet technology is Manel de Aguas, who has developed fins modeled on the physiognomy and anatomy of fish, to feel the atmospheric pressure through sounds.

feathers was constructed are not respected. *He Guu*'s drawing (pp. 57-59) seeks to show that healing is a technique because an order must be followed in the ritual, and it is necessary to use specific elements such as charcoal or tobacco. But, above all, the drawing wants to transmit that the task of the healer consists of decoding patterns in the flights of the birds, patterns of the jungle, patterns of the rays and of the plumage of the crowns. Thus, this crown of feathers is similar to a computer window, because each plumage keeps many data that are used in the healing knowledge.

There is an echo in this drawing, where the ritual with the feather crown is portrayed, and the pictorial vision of a cyborg woman created by Lynn Randolph. Just as the apprentice healer wears a crown of feathers, the cyborg woman wears the skin of a feline on her head. This animal is interpreted as an interface linked to the artificial organ that cyborg has implanted in its body and also connects to the large computer screen that, in the back, displays sidereal, electronic and geological landscapes. Consequently, looking at the drawing, located in the Colombian Amazon jungle, and the painting, located in a future of cybernetic hybrids, we notice that humidity is an effective category to show how cyborg art addresses the struggles for the meanings of nature. Specifically, humidity is a useful aesthetic strategy to demystify the ecological discourse that identifies nature with the purity of the jungle as if it were alien to the development of techniques and devices specific to that environment. Therefore, it must be recognized, as Morton (2007, p. 14) does, that the term nature is slippery. On this account, the most appropriate sense to refer to nature is Pandora's box, that is, a world that encapsulates an infinite series of fantastic objects represented in the arts.

Conclusions

By arguing that symbiosis contributes to understanding how humans and non-humans influence each other in aesthetic ways, it breaks the taboo of defining the environment as a kind of container that holds organisms. Moreover, cyborg art starts from the premise that cybernetic organisms are not passive beings subject to the external forces of an unperturbed environment. Consequently, this cyborg art leaves behind the Darwinian narrative of natural selection and offers the vision of a participatory evolution in which art is liberated from prosthetics. In addition, in cyborg art symbiosis is useful to create as many channels of communication between the artificial organ and the environment as possible, since each channel is equivalent to a new sense.

Of course, cyborg art is ecological insofar as it includes the environment in all its forms. However, the aim of this text was to expose how, in cyborg art, Earth and humidity make a cut in artistic practices that involve the living. Therefore, we emphasized that Moon Ribas's works are choreographies that focus on the spatio-temporal movement of biological systems and the forces of the physical world, rather than the primacy of the human creator. And, along with this, we defended the coherence of carrying out a wet ecocriticism, inspired by the Quimera Rosa collective and the conversation between Haraway and Baptiste, in order to explain why aesthetic experience is based on perception at different scales (macro and microscopic), where none has priority over the others.

In short, we could not label like simplistic those who try to show that there is a remarkable confusion about the artistic representation of the living, insofar as the porosity of the boundaries between the organic and the inorganic is being explored and reimagined. For now, suffice it to say that, in cyborg art and in Morton's thought, it becomes clear that the logic of current and future coexistence depends on being able to appreciate that ambiguity in an aesthetic based in ecological beings.

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