



INTIMATE
VIEWS
FROM THE
CHILDHOOD
HOME AND
THE RUST OF
ITS BARS

Stories of Rootedness in Uprooting

(pensamiento)

(pensamiento), (palabra)... Y obra

ISSN: 2011-804X - e-ISSN: 2462-8441

César Augusto Cadavid-Valderrama*  

Rosa María Suñé Domènech**  

Received: March 31, 2025

Accepted: November 4, 2024

Published: January 1, 2025

To cite this article:

Cadavid-Valderrama, C. A. & Suñé Domènech, R. M. (2025). Intimate Views from the Childhood Home and the Rust of Its Bars: Stories of Rootedness in Uprooting. *(Pensamiento), (Palabra)... Y Obra*, (33), e22306. <https://doi.org/10.17227/ppo.num33-22306>

* Magíster en ciencias de la educación, Universidad de San Buenaventura. ccadavidvalderrama@gmail.com

** Doctora en Humanidades, Universidad de San Buenaventura. maria.sune@udea.edu.co

Abstract

This article explores the relationship between gaze, memory, and rootedness through the analysis of photographs of the childhood home in Tarazá, Antioquia, and its connection to the experience of uprootedness in Medellín. Based on the *Mode of Enacting Populating the Gaze* within research-creation, concrete actions have been developed, such as the photographic capture of the house, the identification of regimes of inclusion and exclusion within the gaze, the writing of a letter from the voice of the house's rusted bars, and the reflection on how these gestures resignify rootedness and uprootedness. This article examines how our personal and collective trajectories shape our perception of the world, mold our identity, and influence how we see the present and the future. It argues that the gaze is more than an act of seeing; it is a way of interpreting and inhabiting the world—an intentional gesture that selects, connects, and excludes, shaping memory itself. Through research-creation centered on the childhood home, this study reveals that looking and walking are foundational gestures of identity, traces of a rootedness that endures despite distance. How does our gaze transform the past and the present? In what ways does it allow us to reconnect with our roots and resignify who we are? This reflection invites an exploration of the complexities of uprootedness and an interrogation of the gaze as a site of encounter with the past and a means of reconfiguring identity in the present.

Keywords: gaze; walk; rootedness; house; uprooting; rust

Olhares íntimos da casa da infância e o óxido de suas grades: relatos de enraizamento na desagregação

Resumo

Este artigo investiga a relação entre o olhar, a memória e o enraizamento por meio da análise de fotografias da casa de infância em Tarazá, Antioquia, e sua conexão com a experiência de desenraizamento em Medellín. A partir do Modo de Fazer Habitar o Olhar dentro da pesquisa-criação, foram desenvolvidas ações concretas, como a captura fotográfica da casa, a identificação dos regimes de inclusão e exclusão no olhar, a escrita de uma carta a partir da voz do óxido das grades da casa e a reflexão sobre como esses gestos ressignificam o enraizamento e o desenraizamento. Este artigo examina como nossas trajetórias pessoais e coletivas moldam nossa percepção do mundo, configuram nossa identidade e influenciam a forma como olhamos para o presente e o futuro. Argumenta-se que o olhar é mais do que um ato de ver; é uma forma de interpretar e habitar o mundo—um gesto intencional que seleciona, conecta e exclui, moldando a própria memória. Por meio da pesquisa-criação centrada na casa de infância, este estudo revela que olhar e caminhar são gestos fundacionais de identidade, traços de um enraizamento que persiste apesar da distância. Como nosso olhar transforma o passado e o presente? De que maneira ele nos permite reconectar com nossas raízes e ressignificar quem somos? Esta reflexão convida a explorar as complexidades do desenraizamento e a interrogar o olhar como um lugar de encontro com o passado e de reconfiguração da identidade no presente.

Palavras-chave: olhar; andar; enraizamento; casa; desenraizamento; ferrugem

Miradas íntimas desde la casa de la infancia y el óxido de sus rejas: Relatos de arraigo en el desarraigo

Resumen

Este artículo indaga en la relación entre la mirada, la memoria y el arraigo a través del análisis de la fotografía de la casa de la infancia en Tarazá, Antioquia, y su vínculo con el desarraigo experimentado en Medellín. A partir del *Modo de Hacer Poblar la Mirada* desde la investigación-creación, se han desarrollado acciones concretas como la captura fotográfica de la casa, la identificación de los regímenes de inclusión y exclusión de la mirada, la escritura de una carta desde la voz del óxido de las rejas de la casa y la reflexión sobre cómo estos gestos resignifican el arraigo y el desarraigo. Este artículo aborda cómo nuestras trayectorias personales y colectivas configuran nuestra percepción del mundo, moldean nuestra identidad y nuestra manera de mirar el presente y el futuro. Se sostiene, entonces, que la mirada, más que un acto de ver, es una forma de interpretar y habitar el mundo, pues no es un acto inocente, sino un gesto que selecciona, une y excluye, moldeando la memoria. De este modo, a partir de la investigación-creación en torno a la casa la infancia, se revela que mirar y caminar son gestos fundacionales de identidad, trazos de un arraigo que persiste aún en la distancia. ¿Cómo transforma nuestra mirada el pasado y el presente? ¿De qué manera nos permite reencontrarnos con nuestras raíces y resignificar quiénes somos? Esta reflexión invita a sumergirse en la complejidad del desarraigo y en interrogar la mirada como un lugar de encuentro con el pasado y de resignificación de nuestra identidad en el presente.

Palabras clave: mirada; caminar; arraigo; casa; desarraigo; óxido

Introduction to steps that see: Narratives of rootedness and uprootedness woven into our journey across the land

Walking in Colombia is more than just getting from one place to another; it is a way of tracing stories of seeking and transition. Each step, whether through the countryside or the city, weaves narratives of aspirations, losses, rootedness, and uprootedness. The landscapes we traverse —the mountains of Antioquia marked by displacement, the forests of Chocó that offer refuge, the Llanos plains bearing witness to migrations, and the Caribbean beaches as sites of new quests— invite us to reflect on how we move through and perceive the world. For me, walking is a meaningful act. In every journey, I observe the life around me: the whisper of the wind, the sway of the leaves. These moments of connection with both natural and urban spaces lead me to question how movement —both my own and others’— shapes our perceptions and emotions. In this way, walking has led me to explore perception not merely as the act of seeing, but as a way of interpreting and inhabiting the world. Zambrano (1986) states that “it is in the unfolding of time, more than in its mere passing, that it reveals itself and becomes felt, where Chronos opens up” (p. 16). Walking, then, becomes a way of fully experiencing time and space, allowing us to reflect on our existence and the ways we relate to the world.

For this reason, the gaze —understood not merely as the act of seeing but as a way of interpreting and being in the world— becomes the central idea of this reflection. This article focuses on how to approach these life journeys and intimate ways of seeing from a Latin American perspective in order to reflect on our own history, lived experiences, and systems of values. It invites us to consider how our gaze —intrinsicly linked to our personal and collective trajectories— has been shaped to observe the world; how these trajectories influence and are influenced by our representational systems and values, and even by the position of power that has situated Latin America within the notion of the Global South. How can we untangle the complex narratives of rootedness and uprootedness woven into every step we take on our land? In what ways do our memories and experiences shape our gaze toward the present and the future? How do our personal and collective trajectories in Latin America continue to shape our identity and our perception of the world?



After years of being away, these questions lead me to consider that every journey I undertake takes me physically farther from the town of my childhood, while at the same time drawing me inward through reflection and memory, allowing me to see with greater intimacy. My transition from the municipality of Tarazá, in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia to the city of Medellín, represented not only a geographical shift but also a transformation in how I perceive and understand my surroundings. In this sense, every step I take connects me to my childhood home—a place full of meaning and memories, now cared for by my brother and me. However, the urgency and rhythm of city life have created a sense of uprootedness from that place, even though the memories of our mother there remain vivid. Heidegger (1956) suggests that “we do not dwell because we have built, but rather we build and have built insofar as we dwell” (p. 3), emphasizing the importance of dwelling as a creative and reflective act.

In this sense, through this text I return and re-inhabit the house of my childhood from my present perspective, through an intimate lens. Within this framework, the house where I spent the early years of my life in my hometown becomes a powerful symbol of the tension between the visible and the invisible, the remembered and the forgotten. Now nearly unfamiliar to me and located in a town where few familiar faces remain, this house embodies uprootedness and loss, reflecting the complexity of our relationships with the spaces we once called home. Drawing on Heidegger’s (1956) notion of the “The Way to Thinking” (p. 8), I reflect on its connection to my exploration of the gaze. Heidegger presents thinking as a journey intertwined with the space we inhabit, revealing multiple possible paths. Thus, the act of looking is not passive, but a way of dwelling in the world—where observer and observed are in constant dialogue, turning the gaze into a narrative that brings experience into presence.

This analysis of the gaze, in the context of my personal experience and my family’s history, is directly connected to narratives of uprootedness and reconnection, of loss and memory—narratives deeply embedded in Latin American history. Through this lens, the gaze is explored as a means of recounting and transforming our experiences, linking the personal with the collective. As Zambrano (1986) reminds us, “it is in the unfolding of time, more than in its mere passing, more than in its steps, where it reveals itself and is felt, where Chronos gives of himself” (p. 16). For

me, allowing the gaze to move through time and space has become a way of inhabiting them more fully—not to fix meanings, but to open questions about what we see, what we omit, and what constitutes us. In this process, engaging with various authors allowed me to establish a dialogue between experience and thought, between the lived and the conceptual. I unfolded ideas, stretched meanings, and revealed the folds in my gaze. This reflective movement does not aim to close off meaning, but rather to open it—generating new questions about seeing, dwelling, remembering, and rooting.

In this way, the concept of rootedness is not merely something that can be observed externally in a person, but rather an ontological notion that invites us to explore a range of questions and intimate experiences related to what we might call the foundations of our human condition. Thus, we might describe living in a state of rootedness as occurring when we find protection and care, fostering a sense of care for oneself and for the surrounding environment. Nevertheless, it seems that the history of philosophical thought has paid relatively little attention to this issue, often choosing to debate broader abstract concepts rather than focusing on the lived experience of intimacy and rootedness.

In this regard, Esquirol (2015), through his proposal for a philosophy of proximity, emerges as a thought-provoking contemporary thinker for reflecting on care, closeness, everyday life, and what surrounds us—all aspects intrinsically tied to the concept of rootedness. As Esquirol notes, throughout the history of Western thought, metaphysicians have paid little attention to non-specialists. If they were asked to reflect on the phrase “The roof lets the storm pass and shelters those who take refuge beneath it,” they might exclaim: “And what does that have to do with metaphysics?” In their pursuit of the permanent, they have ignored the idea of shelter (Esquirol, 2015, p. 47). Following this line of thought, we could affirm that daily routine and the search for continuity represent rootedness—the intimate, the close, and the familiar—providing a sense of ontological security. In contrast, separation and discontinuity would be characteristics of uprootedness.

In this sense, the letter from the voice of the rusted bars, addressed to my brother and me, expresses a poetic and sentimental voice that calls for rootedness and resistance to forgetting. This narrative element allows the rust’s voice to emerge and engage in dialogue with memories and

emotions, prompting me to ask: How is our gaze formed, and what implications does this have for our perception of the past and present, and for our experience of rootedness and uprootedness? I must clarify that the treatment of this photograph and the letter is not merely an aesthetic exercise, but rather a meaningful exploration of how our gaze is shaped by our experiences and contexts. My research focuses on understanding how the gaze is formed and conditioned, and how it can be questioned and transformed. Through this study, I propose a critical reflection on our visual practices and their impact on our relationship with the world, inviting a deeper and more inclusive engagement with our surroundings.

Populating the Gaze: A Methodological Pathway Through Research-Creation

In my doctoral research, from which this reflective article stems, I focused on the gaze, starting from the premise — emphasized by Benítez (2019)— that it is a learned process shaped by historical, sociocultural, and subjective dimensions. These dimensions influence the way we see and interact with the world, operating through frameworks of inclusion and exclusion that define what is considered worthy —or unworthy— of being seen. The methodological path of this research is grounded in research-creation, understood as a mode of existence expressed through the activation of thought in motion. Manning (2019) argues that every act of creation triggers shifts in thought, not as external outcomes, but as an intrinsic part of the creative process itself. This approach differs from traditional methods by not separating my experience as a researcher from the phenomenon under study, allowing full immersion in the question, in intuition, and in how the world is perceived. As Gómez (2023) states, in the arts, problems are also posed but are explored in an embodied way —meaning the creative process demands the invention of its own *hows*, since it is the ways of doing that account for the issue being addressed. This methodological approach gives value to the transformations experienced during the process. As Daza (2009) notes, in research-creation, what is essential is not only the final product, but also the events that take place throughout the process of creation —the traces left in the researcher and the ways these traces become intertwined with the world they inhabit.

From this perspective, I developed a mode of doing I called *Populating the Gaze* —a process composed of

three successive and interwoven stages that enabled me to explore the regions of my own gaze: the historical, the sociocultural, and the subjective. I start from the idea that the act of seeing is not passive, but rather a situated and political practice. Nicastro (2006) clearly explains that there are details in the world we do not actively seek, yet they find us, emerge, and challenge us. Thus, each gaze is also an encounter —a configuration shaped by a specific time and a particular body. As Moreno (2018) suggests, the body becomes the central site of artistic discourse: the space where experience and presence are inscribed, and where the visible and invisible intersect.

The first moment, titled *The Eye-lens: what is seen and what escapes*, was marked by photographing my childhood home in Tarazá. Beyond a mere visual record, the act of photographing involved a series of perceptual operations: looking, selecting, framing, and —above all— leaving things out. Through this exercise, I came to understand that the image is never neutral; everything that appears is conditioned by multiple layers of meaning. Di Bastiano (2017) notes that what unfolds in front of the camera reveals both the technical and symbolic conditions of its production, since every image carries with it an intention and a context. As I reviewed my photographs, I became aware of the regimes of inclusion and exclusion at play in my gaze. Following Nicastro (2006), while I directed my eyes toward certain objects, others seemed to move toward me —emerging as if they were demanding to be seen. In the image, the house and its structure were included as signs of rootedness; in contrast, the rust on the bars was relegated— excluded as a symbol of abandonment and the passage of time.

That same rust, however, demanded to be seen. This gave rise to the second stage, titled *Letters of manifestation: when objects speak*, in which I carried out a poetic and performative gesture —writing a letter in its voice. Choosing that element and allowing it to speak was a gesture aligned with Manning's (2019) notion of research-creation as a way to activate thought toward other possible worlds. Through this symbolic shift, the rust ceased to be mere residue and became an interlocutor —a fracture in the structure of my gaze. Writing from its perspective brought forth the discourses and emotions that shape my subjectivity: abandonment, guilt, nostalgia, and the desire to return. In this inversion —where the excluded gains agency— my normative gaze, the one that organizes



the visible through rational logic, became destabilized. The letter became a way of embodying experience, resonating with Moreno's (2018) view of the body as a discursive territory, a space where memories and affections are inscribed.

The third stage, *Folding and unfolding: Thought in Tension*, involved a theoretical reflection on the process. It was not merely an interpretation of lived experience, but rather an effort to unfold, as Manning (2019) suggests, the possible worlds that open up through each creative gesture. Mapping a critical cartography of my ways of seeing required a dialogue between experience and theory, between the experiential and the conceptual. Benítez (2019) argues that the gaze is not a fixed territory, but rather a fold in constant tension. Thus, rather than arriving at a closed conclusion, this journey led me to recognize the displacements and fractures in the way I see.

The shaping of the gaze by the gods and colonization

Galeano (2013) introduces us to the concept of the gaze not merely as a physical ability, but as a sacred gift imparted by the gods. When he writes "And then the gods who gave birth to the world [...] explained to them [...] what it meant to look" (p. 1), Galeano presents looking as a

spiritual and existential lesson. The gaze becomes a means of discovering the essence of our surroundings and the beings that inhabit them. In this sense, we are invited to understand it as a bridge that connects individuals and worlds, fostering comprehension and empathy that go beyond visible boundaries.

This divine teaching of the gaze, which enables human beings to "look into others and see what their hearts feel" (Galeano, 2013, p. 1), suggests a mode of interaction grounded in mutual recognition and the appreciation of each person's inner diversity. This concept of the gaze —imbued with the ability to perceive beyond appearances— raises a critical question about historical encounters, particularly those between the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and European colonizers. What might have happened if this empathetic way of seeing had been preserved or even shared during colonization? The possibility that the gaze could have served as a tool for mutual understanding and respect —rather than for control and subjugation— invites reflection on the missed opportunities for intercultural connection and recognition.

However, historical reality shows that, despite the inherent nobility of this divine gift of the gaze, the interaction between the two peoples veered toward domination



and subjugation. The ability to “look inside the other” (Galeano, 2013, p. 1) was overshadowed by the intentions of conquest, where the gaze was employed to evaluate, categorize, and ultimately dominate and subdue. This compels us to question how the practices and intentions behind the gaze can be shaped by cultural context, goals, and power dynamics. Could history have taken a different course if the gods’ teaching about the gaze had been truly understood and embraced by both peoples at the time of their encounter?

The arrival of European colonizers in what is now called the Americas radically transformed the perceptions and the gaze of Indigenous peoples. In this regard, Esquirol (2015) invites us to reflect on the era of European cartographers and explorers, describing how these men contemplated “a virgin landscape” (p. 19), full of possibilities and mysteries. However, this initial gaze of wonder and curiosity quickly turned into one of possession and exploitation. The metaphor of the cartographer illustrates how the gaze, within the context of colonization, shifted from a tool of discovery to an instrument of domination.

European explorers —and later, the conquistadors— saw themselves on the brink of a new world, ready to be classified and taken. The logic of conquest, grounded in

the evaluation and exploitation of resources, distorted their initial perception of wonder and awe. This process of seeing, discovering, and ultimately dominating raises questions about the nature of exploration and conquest. Were they truly able to appreciate the sophistication and depth of pre-Columbian cultures, or had their gaze already been shaped by a framework that led them to categorize and subjugate what they saw?

Esquirol (2015) suggests that beyond the initial sense of wonder, the logic of conquest ultimately prevailed, transforming the gaze of discovery into an instrument of domination, where the *virgin* became synonymous with the *conquerable*. This shift reveals a power dynamic embedded in the act of looking, particularly when it aligns with an intent to dominate. Could history have unfolded differently if the colonizers’ gaze had remained grounded in awe and respect, rather than shifting toward greed and a desire for control?

For his part, León Portilla (2003) immerses us in the pre-Columbian world, precisely at the moment when Moctezuma Xocoyotzin and his people face overwhelming uncertainty. The description of the Spaniards as “towers or small hills floating above the sea” (p. 30) not only captures the magnitude of the unknown looming over them, but

also highlights the tension between the anticipation of the divine and the harshness of human reality. This dichotomy between what they expected and what they encountered reveals the complexity of vision and interpretation, where what is seen does not always match what it really is. Moctezuma's anxiety, fueled by omens and the expectation of gods, reflects a connection to the spiritual and the cosmogonical—a world in which the act of seeing is imbued with meaning and premonition.

However, the arrival of the Spaniards marked a turning point not only in the history of what is now Mexico, but also in how the Indigenous peoples would come to perceive both others and themselves from that moment onward. The conquistadors' gaze, far from seeking connection or mutual understanding, was imbued with intentions of domination and possession. This transformation of the gaze—from a means of shared discovery and learning to an instrument of conquest and exploitation—raises important questions about how this encounter shaped both peoples' worldviews. To what extent did the clash between these ways of seeing—one expecting deities, the other pursuing riches—reshape the trajectory of Mexico's history and culture?

The confrontation between these two worldviews—one of a people looking to the sky in search of divine signs, and the other of a people looking to the land in search of riches—offers fertile ground for reflecting on the consequences of the conquest. This historical moment not only transformed how both peoples saw the world but also redefined power relations, identity, and culture in the New World. The gaze, then, becomes a metaphor for the encounter between cultures—one that can teach or possess, connect or divide. León Portilla's (2003) reflection invites us to consider how past events inform our understanding of the present (p. 30), urging us to ask: How do we continue to see the other in the contemporary world—with a gaze of teaching and understanding, or one of possession and domination?

The reflection on the gaze and colonization, far from being merely academic, resonates deeply with my personal experience as a Colombian researcher, offering parallels with the history of colonization in my own country. The colonization of Colombia, like that of Mexico, was marked

by encounters that radically transformed cultural identities as well as social, physical, and spiritual landscapes. By studying this process through the gaze—understood not only as a means of acquiring knowledge but also as a space where symbolic and material battles are waged—we can begin to unravel how these power dynamics have continued to shape intercultural relations to this day.

Today, globalization—like colonization before it—shapes the way we perceive and inhabit the world. Through digital networks and land exploitation, it imposes new forms of conquest that foster uprootedness and devastation. My own displacement from Tarazá to Medellín illustrates how the promise of prosperity is bound up with these power dynamics. In Colombia, natural wealth becomes loot in the hands of global powers, while our biodiversity is endangered. This gaze of control and exploitation still persists, now disguised as progress. The question becomes inevitable: how can we transform our way of seeing so that, instead of dominating, we protect and connect with the world? Learning from the past enables us to envision a future guided by a gaze that reconciles rather than divides, that understands rather than subjugates.

The Journey of the Personal Gaze: From Tarazá to Medellín

In 2006, I left behind the small and welcoming town of Tarazá a place where every corner and every person were familiar to move to the bustling city of Medellín. This decision, made by my mother in the hope of offering my brother and me better educational and job opportunities, marked the beginning of a journey of adaptation and discovery. It brought about not only a new sense of rootedness but also the experience of uprootedness. In Tarazá, the environment was familiar and close, with a small, friendly school I could reach either on foot or by motorbike. Life was simple, and my family was nearby, providing a strong sense of belonging, security, and rooted identity.

The transition to Medellín represented a drastic change not only in geographical terms but also in cultural and social terms. In the city, I faced the immensity of a large and dynamic school—INEM José Félix de Restrepo—where the daily routine involved switching classrooms for

each subject, something entirely unfamiliar to me. The first day of classes was especially disorienting, and my unfamiliarity with the environment led me to exit through the wrong gate, waiting for a school bus that never arrived. This initial shock made me acutely aware of how our perceptions and ways of seeing the world are deeply shaped by our surroundings and lived experiences.

The process of adapting to urban life was not easy. Unlike in Tarazá —where my house was located behind the town hall and everything was easily accessible— in Medellín, I had to learn how to use public transportation, which was both complex and challenging. Distances were greater, and the transportation systems were more complicated, so I was constantly disoriented. Moreover, the social dynamics at school were completely different: my classmates dressed differently, belonged to various urban subcultures —such as reggaeton and rock music fans— and some even smoked marijuana, a reality I had never encountered in Tarazá.

The move from Tarazá to Medellín not only changed my physical environment but also transformed how I saw and understood the world. In the small town, I was used to the familiarity and closeness of a known environment, where every face and place held personal and intimate meaning. Daily routines were simple, and social interactions were direct and genuine, free from the complexities of urban life. However, in Medellín, my view had to quickly adapt to a much larger and more complex environment, full of unfamiliar people and situations.

Life in Tarazá was more peaceful —though there were occasional shootings— and time seemed to pass at a slower pace. Nature and the local community were constant elements in my life, shaping a perspective that valued simplicity and connection with the surroundings. The physical and emotional closeness to my family and friends in the town gave me a sense of safety and belonging that was reflected in how I viewed and understood the world. Each step I took in Tarazá was a bond that connected me to my home and my community, strengthening a perception shaped by memories and personal meaning.

In contrast, life in Medellín unfolded at a much faster pace, within an urban environment that challenged my

perception and understanding of the world. The need to adapt to new social and cultural dynamics —along with the pressure of an unfamiliar setting— transformed my perspective into a tool for survival and adaptation. The diversity of experiences and people I encountered in the city broadened my outlook, forcing me to go beyond the familiar and confront new realities. This transformation in how I perceived and understood the world became a central part of my personal and academic development, to the point that it became the core of my research.

The constant need to adapt to new situations in Medellín also influenced my perception of time and space. While in Tarazá the days were predictable and the places familiar, in the city each day brought new challenges and opportunities for learning and growth. My perspective, which had once focused on familiarity and closeness, had to expand to encompass the complexity and diversity of urban life. This led me to integrate the lessons learned in the town with the new experiences I had in the city. All of this ultimately led me to question my way of seeing.

The Photograph of the childhood home

It was only in 2023 that I became interested in capturing these reflections, which emerged from a research process where I needed a photograph of the place I came from in order to reflect on the different layers of my perspective. Not of the town itself, but of the house where I spent my childhood in Tarazá. Taken in June of that year, the photograph became an emotional and visual bridge between my past and my present. Captured during a video call with the current tenant, it shows a weathered façade, where rusted bars and peeling paint tell a story of resilience and change. Although modest, the house conveys a deep sense of history and permanence, evoking memories of my childhood and the moments shared with my family. To look at it is to recognize oneself in what endures and what transforms —in the traces of what was once home and in the certainty that, despite the distance, rootedness remains alive in both memory and gaze. It reminds us that we do not merely inhabit spaces —they also inhabit us and become rooted within us.



Figure 1. *Traces of Time*

Note. The figure shows my childhood home located in the municipality of Tarazá, Antioquia. This is a photograph taken by the author.



This photograph not only captures a physical structure but also embodies a space filled with memories and profound meaning. The open door and the window with bars suggest an invitation to step into a world of memories and family life, while the worn staircase and the surrounding vegetation add layers of vitality and nature to the scene. The television antenna on the roof and the architectural details offers a contrast between the modern and the traditional, highlighting the home's connection to the outside world and its rootedness in a deeper history.

As I look at this photograph, I realize how the visible and invisible elements of the house reflect my own process of growth and transformation. The structure of the house and the window opening to the world evoke memories of my childhood —the laughter and dreams that once filled that space. They remind me of moments shared with family and friends, of stories told and experiences lived within those walls. Though modest, the house radiates a sense of history and permanence, offering emotional refuge and serving as an anchor for my memories. My emotional connection to these elements helps keep the memory of my childhood alive and sustains the roots that tie me to Tarazá. These elements —those I have included in my inclusion framework— connect me to a past that remains a fundamental part of my identity.

On the other hand, I excluded the rusted bars —once a form of protection— which now reflect my physical absence and disconnection from this place. The rust symbolizes the passage of time and distance, a melancholic reminder of the unceasing changes and the life chapters we leave behind. This dichotomy between the visible and the invisible, the remembered and the forgotten, highlights the complexity of our relationship with places we once called home.

Below, I present a table detailing the visible and invisible elements I have identified in the photograph.

Table 1. *Situated regimes in the house of Tarazá*

Situated regimes in the house of Tarazá	
Regime of Inclusion	Regime of Exclusion
	
<p>In my regime of inclusion, I choose my childhood home in Tarazá, as it brings back fond memories and stands as a cornerstone of my identity. The structure and the window that look out to the world remind me of laughter, dreams, and echoes of my childhood —especially my longing to reconnect with those days.</p>	<p>I place the rusted bars within the regime of exclusion, marked by the passage of time and the distance that now separates us. Although these bars once reflected part of my growth and offered protection, their current state of decay symbolizes my absence and physical disconnection from the place I once called home. Their condition serves as a somber reminder of the ceaseless changes and the chapters of life we inevitably leave behind.</p>
<p>Guiding Concept: Refuge: Resistance to Forgetting and Abandonment</p>	

Source: author's own elaboration.

This table illustrates how the elements I have chosen to include or exclude in my gaze reflect both my emotional connection to the past and my perception of the passage of time and the changes that have taken place. The structure of the house and the window symbolize permanence and openness to the world, while the rusted bars and peeling paint represent the distance and uprootedness I feel from my place of origin. This relationship between the visible and the absent in the image aligns with what Barthes (2009) calls the photographic *punctum*: that which, beyond the photographer's intention, wounds us, touches us in an intimate and personal way. In this case, what persists in the photograph —the structure of the house and its open window— feels like a warm and familiar presence, while what has been relegated —the rusted bars and deteriorating paint— becomes a trace of a distance that is not only spatial but also emotional. Likewise, Sontag (2016) argues that photography does not merely capture a moment, but transforms it into a form of mourning —a way of confronting the passage of time. Thus, in my image of the house in Tarazá, the tension between permanence and loss becomes a metaphor for my own relationship with rootedness and memory —a reminder that the gaze not only documents, but also constructs and redefines our experience of the world.

The process of adapting to Medellín brought about a significant sense of uprootedness. The contrast between the rural environment of Tarazá and urban life in Medellín affected not only my daily routine but also my worldview and social interactions. In Tarazá, life was simple and close-knit, with a strong sense of

community and belonging. In contrast, as I previously mentioned, the complexity and fast pace of the city posed constant challenges that tested my ability to adapt and remain resilient. In Medellín's urban environment, the neighborhood children I played with lived realities very different from those I had known in Tarazá. Many of them spent most of the day alone, as their parents worked long hours to support their families. In contrast, I was accompanied by my brother and a cousin and cared for by a domestic worker, since my mother continued working back in the town to support us in the city. This difference in value systems and family dynamics further emphasized the gap between my previous life and my new urban reality.

Uprootedness manifested not only in my daily routine but also in a profound sense of disconnection and loss of identity. My childhood home in Tarazá, though physically distant, remained an emotional anchor. However, the fear of returning due to the armed conflict in the region added complexity to my relationship with my place of origin. The urgency and demands of life in Medellín, combined with my uprootedness from my hometown, created a constant tension between past and present —between the safety of home and the uncertainty of the city.

Despite these challenges, the memories of my childhood home and my mother remained vivid, providing me with a sense of continuity and rootedness. This emotional connection to my past allowed me to navigate the challenges of urban life and find a balance between my roots and my new reality. The photograph of my childhood home became a symbol of this connection —a reminder of my origins and an anchor to my past, despite the distance and constant changes. The house is more than just a building; it was the place where I first understood the meaning of home and refuge.

A Letter from the Rust

In line with the reflections presented above, and as part of *Mode of Enacting Populating the Gaze*, I undertook the task of speaking from the perspective of the rust in order to craft an intimate narrative. I chose the form of a letter, since —like the rust on the bars of this house— a letter is a poetic expression of time, abandonment, and longing. The rust bears witness to the passage of time, not only in physical terms but also in the lives and memories of those of us who once inhabited that space. Its presence on the bars is a constant reminder of what once was and of what has since changed.

The letter, addressed to the children of the Beloved Beatriz —my mother— is a call from the past, an echo of the days when joy, love, and music filled every corner of the house. The rust reflects on the uprootedness of these children —my brother and I— their distance and their fear and expresses a deep longing to see them return to their roots, to the house that was once the center of their world.



Table 2. *Apparition letter from the rusted bars*

My Remembered Children of the Beloved Beatriz, amid the whispering of these bars, now cloaked in rust, allow me to tell you the sorrow that clings to these iron grates, once witness to your innocent laughter. Time has left its mark, and in every corner of this house, nostalgia winds itself around me and grips memory tight.

I remember the days when your laughter painted these green and white walls. We were accomplices in your games, in the mischief that defined your childhood. But now, amid the silence broken only by the moaning wind, those laughs seem a distant echo, lost in the haze of forgetting.

I am a silent witness, longing for the joyful melodies your mother, Beatriz, once sang. Her light footsteps, the scent of vallenato music filling every corner —now all of it fades like a dream slipping away.

Your mother, with a love that defied time, chose this house hoping to see you grow, to make it a refuge for your dreams. Yet absence now hangs like a shadow that will not lift, and the music of childhood has become a melancholic symphony.

I know you have sent others to tend to these walls, to maintain the image of home. But, my dear ones, true care lies not in appearances. It lives in your return, in the embrace of these walls that once witnessed your becoming. As I cling to the past and to the bars I call home, I long for the day —like the sun that hides and returns— when your presence will renew the bonds time has tried to tear apart.

In hope of your return,
The Rust on the bars

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The letter personifies rust, transforming it into a nostalgic narrator who remembers joyful days and laments the absence of its former inhabitants: “My remembered children of Beloved Beatriz, among the whispers of these bars, rusted by me, allow me to tell you about the sorrow that overwhelms these bars that once bore witness to your innocent laughter” (Letter from the Rust). This opening establishes a melancholic and reflective tone, highlighting the emotional connection that rust —now part of the house— maintains with those who once lived there.

The letter continues by recalling joyful moments, laughter, and songs that once filled the house, contrasting those memories with the current silence and abandonment:

I remember the days when your laughter filled these green and white walls with color [...] But today, amidst the silence broken only by the lament of the wind, that laughter feels like a distant echo, lost in the fog of forgetfulness. (Letter from the Rust)

This poetic description not only evokes nostalgia but also underscores the change and transformation brought about by the passage of time. In the final lines, the rust expresses its longing for the return of the children, suggesting that genuine care for one's home goes beyond mere physical appearance:

I know you have sent others to watch over these walls [...] but, my dear ones, true care goes beyond physical appearance. It lies in the return, in the embrace of these walls that once served as the stage for your growth.

This call to return and reconnect with one's home underscores the importance of confronting the past and reconciling oneself to it.

Footsteps and weathered roots: Memory and rootedness in the Tarazá home

In this research, the photograph and the letter from the rusted bars of my childhood home in Tarazá have been more than mere tools; they have served as bridges between memory and the present, between home and uprootedness. The image of the house, worn by time, together with the poetic voice of the rust, have woven a narrative in which the physical and the emotional intertwine, revealing how the gaze is shaped by our past and present experiences. That house, which was once a lively refuge under the care of my mother, Beloved Beatriz,

now stands as a testimony to abandonment and distance. The letter from the rusted bars, addressed to my brother and me, evokes nostalgia and a longing for reconnection, reminding us of the bonds that endure despite time and absence. Thus, the gaze becomes an act of selection and questioning: what we choose to include and what we leave out of our perception defines what we recognize as our own and what we neglect or forget. In this sense, following Foucault (1991) *In the concern for truth*, to problematize is not merely to question the world, but to unravel the conditions under which certain truths have been imposed —inviting us to see beyond what is apparent.

From this perspective, the image of the house and its rusted bars is not merely a visual record; it is a metaphor for the tension between permanence and loss. As Barthes (2009) suggests, every photograph has a *punctum* —a detail that wounds us, that touches us intimately. In my case, what endures in the image —the structure, the open window— evokes a sense of rootedness, while what time has worn away —the rust on the bars, the faded paint— speaks of uprootedness, of a distance that is not only geographical but also emotional.

The transition from Tarazá to Medellín marked not only a physical displacement but also a transformation in the way I perceive the world. Approaching the study of the gaze through authors such as Galeano (2013), León Portilla (2003), and Esquirol (2015) has broadened this understanding. Galeano conceives the gaze as a form of learning guided by spiritual entities —a bridge between worlds; León Portilla shows how the arrival of Europeans radically disrupted the perception of Indigenous peoples; and Esquirol reminds us that the conquistadors, upon arriving in the Americas, saw themselves standing at the threshold of a new world, full of promise and mystery. This path has also been an inward journey. Esquirol (2015) suggests that the home is not merely a physical refuge, but a condition for the possibility of departure —a notion that resonates deeply in my research. Even at a distance, home remains a place of emotional and spiritual return. The voice of the rust in the letter reaffirms the importance of keeping the memory and our connection to our origins alive —a reminder that our roots, though exposed to time and weather, remain firm.

Thus, this reflection on the gaze leads us to ask: what role does it play in our sense of rootedness in a constantly changing world? Murakami (2022) emphasizes the

importance of having “a place we can return to” (p. 312) —a space that transcends the material and offers refuge in moments of uncertainty. Dostoyevsky (2017), for his part, observes how physical surroundings shape the human spirit, showing that spaces not only contain us but also transform us. The house in Tarazá, even in its worn condition, remains a symbolic refuge —a space of emotional resilience against the passage of time.

From a philosophical perspective, this essay is situated within the concern with inquiry —of questioning our existence and the way we inhabit the world. Weil (2014) reminds us that “to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul” (p. 49). This is not merely a longing for belonging, but an active construction of meaning. Heidegger (2014), in *Being and time*, suggests that dwelling is more than occupying space —it is a way of being in the world. In this sense, the rust on the bars of the house in Tarazá speaks to us —silent but persistent— of the urgency of rootedness, of memory as an anchor in the flow of time. Thus, the question remains open: how can we, through the gaze, build a sense of rootedness that not only connects us to a place but allows us to truly inhabit it —even from afar?

Referencias

- Barthes, R. (2009). *La cámara lúcida: Reflections on Photography*. Paidós.
- Benítez, R. (2019). La imagen del otro. Poder y sentidos en torno a la mirada. *Paisajes multiversos*. (pp. 69-83). Ítaca. [*The image of the other: Power and meanings around the Gaze*]. [*In Multiverse Landscapes*]
- Dostoyevski, F. (2017). *Crimen y castigo*. [*Crime and Punishment*]. Ediciones Artemisa.
- Esquirol Calaf, J. M. (2015). *La resistencia íntima. Ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad*. [*The Intimate Resistance: Essay on a Philosophy of Proximity*]. Acanalado.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *El interés por la verdad. Saber y verdad*. [*The concern for truth: knowledge and truth*]. La Piqueta.
- Galeano, E. (2013). *La historia de las miradas*. [*The History of Gazes*] Libro-Disco.
- Gómez Moreno, P. P. (2023). Modos de hacer en lugar de métodos en la investigación-creación. [*Ways of Doing Instead of Methods in Research-Creation*] *Calle 14 revista de investigación en el campo del arte*, [*Journal of research in the field of Art*] 18(33),10-13. <https://doi.org/10.14483/21450706.19936>.

- Heidegger, M. (1956). *Building Dwelling Thinking*. <https://www.fadu.edu.uy/estetica-diseno-ii/files/2013/05/Heidegger-Constructuir-Habitar-Pensar1.pdf>
- Heidegger, M. (2014). *El ser y el tiempo*. [*Being and Time*] Translation by José Gaos. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- León Portilla, M. (1971). *Visión de los vencidos*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. [*The broken Spears: The Aztec account of the conquest of Mexico*]
- Manning, E. (2019). Proposiciones para la Investigación-Creación. [*Propositions for Research-Creation*] *Corpo Grafías Estudios críticos de y desde los cuerpos*, [*Corpo Grafías: Critical Studies of and from the Body*.] 6(6),79-87. <https://doi.org/10.14483/25909398.14229>.
- Murakami, H. (2022). *Kafka en la orilla*. [*Kafka on the Shore*] Tusquets.
- Sontag, S. (2016). *Sobre la fotografía*. [*On Photography*.] Debolsillo.
- Weil, S. (2014). *Echar raíces*. [*Rootedness: The most important need of the human Soul*] Trotta.
- Zambrano, M. (1986). *Claros del bosque*. [*Clearings in the forest*] Biblioteca de Bolsillo.