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When Times Flow Together: Anticolonial Temporalities and Geological Intimacies in Matías Rendón's *Pluma de agua y fuego*

Cuando los tiempos fluyen juntos: Temporalidades anticoloniales e intimidades geológicas en *Pluma de agua y fuego* de Matías Rendón

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Abstract. This paper analyzes how Ana Matías Rendón's *Pluma de agua y fuego* explores survival and resistance through Indigenous epistemologies and Afro-Indigenous alliances. As a Mixe and Afrodescendant author from the people never conquered, Matías Rendón crafts a narrative that moves between the 1629 Mexico City flood and the 1692 Indigenous uprising, challenging linear understandings of colonial apocalypse. Through a dialogue with Kathryn Yusoff's work on geological intimacies, this analysis explores how the story's protagonists, Atlacatluitl and Khira, embody temporal sovereignty, ways of understanding time that recognize the inseparability of human bodies, ancestral knowledge, and geological processes. Their alliance demonstrates how anticolonial resistance emerges through maintaining alternative temporal frameworks despite centuries of colonial attempts at erasure. The narrative's movement through multiple catastrophes reveals how colonized communities have preserved ways of knowing that refuse both the finality of apocalypse and colonial temporal impositions. At a moment when climate discourse often presents apocalypse as a future event, Matías Rendón's work reminds us that understanding environmental crisis requires recognizing the multiple ends of worlds that colonialism has already enacted, and the temporal sovereignties that have enabled survival.

Keywords: Indigenous epistemologies, colonial apocalypse, temporal sovereignty, anticolonial resistance, Afro-Indigenous alliances.

Resumen. Este artículo analiza cómo *Pluma de agua y fuego* de Ana Matías Rendón explora la supervivencia y resistencia mediante epistemologías indígenas y alianzas afro-indígenas. Como autora mixe y afrodescendiente del pueblo jamás conquistado, Matías Rendón construye una narrativa que se mueve entre la inundación de la Ciudad de México de 1629 y el levantamiento indígena de 1692, cuestionando interpretaciones lineales del apocalipsis colonial. En diálogo con el trabajo de Kathryn Yusoff sobre intimidades geológicas, este análisis muestra cómo los protagonistas, Atlacatluitl y Khira, encarnan la soberanía temporal, formas de entender el tiempo que recono-

cen la inseparabilidad de los cuerpos humanos, saberes ancestrales y procesos geológicos. Su alianza demuestra cómo la resistencia anticolonial emerge al mantener marcos temporales alternativos pese a siglos de intentos coloniales por borrarlos. El movimiento narrativo mediante múltiples catástrofes revela cómo las comunidades colonizadas han preservado saberes que rechazan tanto la finalidad del apocalipsis como las imposiciones temporales coloniales. En un momento en que el discurso climático presenta el apocalipsis como un evento futuro, el trabajo de Matías Rendón recuerda que comprender la crisis ambiental requiere reconocer los múltiples fines de mundos que el colonialismo ya ha provocado, y las soberanías temporales que han permitido la supervivencia.

Palabras clave: Epistemologías indígenas, apocalipsis colonial, soberanía temporal, resistencia anticolonial, alianzas afro-indígenas.

In the mountains of Oaxaca, the Mixe people are known as the never conquered, a testament to their successful resistance against Aztec, Spanish, and Mexican State attempts at domination. This resistance was not merely physical but epistemological, involving the preservation of ways of knowing and understanding time itself that defied colonial logic. In *Pluma de agua y fuego* (2020) Ana Matías Rendón, who identifies primarily as Mixe and secondarily as Afrodescendant, explicitly rejecting Mexican identity as a continuation of colonialism, draws upon this history of resistance to craft a narrative that challenges not just colonial power but colonial temporality itself.

Born in 1977, as she describes it herself, in the middle of a lost road between Mexico and Oaxaca, Matías Rendón holds a degree in Philosophy with a specialization in Literature and a Master's in Latin American Studies. Her work examines Mixe conceptions of time and space both through academic studies like *El registro del espacio-tiempo mixe y su (re)inicio* (2021), where she analyzes how the Mixe people understand time as a spiral, and creative pieces, such as *Tiempos invisibles* (2020), a collection of short stories that includes the one analyzed here.

Her position as both an academic and creative writer, combined with her dual identity as Mixe and Afrodescendant, allows her to explore and share these Indigenous and African temporal frameworks through multiple genres while maintaining their epistemological integrity. Significantly, while Matías Rendón writes from her position as a Mixe author, she strategically sets her narrative in Mexico City within an Aztec historical context. This choice reflects the complex reality of continued colonialism in Mexico, where Aztec culture has become the most widely recognized Indigenous reference point, particularly after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. By placing her characters within this more familiar setting, the cathedral built over Ehécatl's temple, the floods of Mexico City, Matías Rendón makes her critique of colonial temporality accessible to a broader audience while simultaneously demonstrating how different Indigenous and African ways of understanding time persist despite colonial pressure to conform to a single narrative of Mexican identity.

Pluma de agua y fuego follows a young Aztec *macehual* or common laborer and Beatriz, a young mulatta girl, both enslaved in a colonial household in Mexico City. The narrative spans three pivotal moments: the great flood of 1629, the reconstruction period of 1634, and the Indigenous rebellion of 1692. Enslaved in the Palacio del Virrey, the *macehual* forms an alliance with the mulatta, and together they plan their escape upon learning that she will be sold. Following signs of what might be seen as "the end of times," they flee through Mexico City's canals, guided by Indigenous and African temporal frameworks that exist beyond colonial control.

Through her main protagonists, the *macehual* and the mulatta, Matías Rendón presents what Kathryn Yusoff (2018) has identified as the geologic catastrophe of racialized colonialism, a process that has already ended countless worlds long before the Anthropocene entered contemporary climate discourse. As Yusoff argues in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018) and further develops in *Geologic Life: Inhuman Intimacies and the Geophysics of Race* (2024), the current discourse around environmental apocalypse often erases how colonialism has functioned as an apocalyptic force for Indigenous and Black communities for centuries, enacting a thousand epidemics, genocides, and extinctions. Through her analysis of the intimate relationship between geological processes and racial formation, Yusoff (2018) demonstrates how colonial extractive practices have not only devastated environments but have also attempted to impose rigid categories of human and nonhuman that deny Indigenous and Black ways of understanding time, matter, and being. Yet, as Matías Rendón's narrative demonstrates, these communities have developed temporal frameworks that could survive apocalypse, maintaining ways of understanding time that resist both colonial linearity and its attempted segregation of human and geological temporalities.

The multiple events and temporalities through which the narrative moves, 1629, 1634, 1693, flow together as interconnected moments within a broader tempo-

ral framework. Drawing from both Mixe concepts of *It-Naaxwiin*, where all times coexist, and African understandings of *Sasa/Zamani* time where past and present overlap, in Bantu cultures, the story reveals ends and beginnings as continuous processes of resistance and renewal. In *Geologic Life*, Yusoff examines how colonial temporalities have attempted to separate human time from geological time, creating artificial boundaries between bodies and earth. Yet Indigenous and Black ways of understanding time have always recognized these intimate connections (2024).

For the Mixe people, resistance to conquest also emerges through temporal sovereignty, the right to understand and organize the concept and fluidity of time according to their own epistemological frameworks that recognize the deep relationships between human and geological temporalities. By weaving this tradition with African temporal concepts through her characters' alliance, Matías Rendón creates an anticolonial temporality that embraces what Yusoff describes as the inherent entanglements between human bodies and geological processes (2024). As climate crisis discourse increasingly warns of impending catastrophe, Matías Rendón's work reminds us that for many communities, the apocalypse began with colonialism's reorganization of both social and geological relations. Their survival flows from maintaining ways of understanding the intimate connections between human time, earth time, and the bodies that exist within these temporal frameworks.

This paper examines how Matías Rendón's fusion of Mixe and African temporalities in *Pluma de agua y fuego* reveals deep connections between human and geological time, offering crucial insights for understanding both historical resistance to colonialism and contemporary environmental crisis. Through close analysis of how the narrative structure embodies spiral time, and how the alliance between the *macehual* and the mulatta manifests Indigenous and African temporal frameworks, I argue that Matías Rendón's work illuminates how temporal sovereignty, the ability to maintain alternative ways of understanding and organizing time, emerges from recognizing the intimate relationships between bodies and earth. Drawing from Yusoff's work, I explore how communities that have already faced their "end of the world" maintain ways of knowing that embrace the inseparability of human and geological existence. At a moment when climate discourse often presents apocalypse as a future event, *Pluma de agua y fuego* reveals how any understanding of environmental crisis must recognize both the thousand ends of the world that colonialism has already enacted and the enduring temporal frameworks that acknowledge the deep entanglements between human time and earth time. These frameworks, maintained through centuries of resistance, offer vital perspectives for understanding how communities have survived apocalypse by refusing the separation of human and geological temporalities that colonial powers attempted to impose.

WEAVING TIMES: TEMPORAL SOVEREIGNTY AS RESISTANCE

In *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Kathryn Yusoff argues that the current discourse around climate crisis and the Anthropocene fundamentally misunderstands the concept of apocalypse by framing it as a future event. For Indigenous and Black communities, she contends, apocalypse is not coming, it arrived with colonialism and has been ongoing for centuries (2018). Through this theoretical lens, Ana Matías Rendón's narrative in *Pluma de agua y fuego* emerges as a powerful illustration of the ongoing catastrophe of colonial power, where events such as the great flood of 1629, the colonial reconstructions of 1634, and the Indigenous rebellion of 1692 are not isolated incidents, but manifestations of colonial violence inscribed into the very geology of conquered spaces.

Matías Rendón's work further challenges conventional views of time by reimagining it not as a linear progression but as a spiral, moving counterclockwise, and from top to bottom (2021, p.74). This conceptualization drawing from Mixe understandings of *It-Naaxwiin,* Totality/Universe, and African temporal models including *Sasa* and *Zamani*, echo what Yusoff propose as insurgent geology as a way to rethink and resist dominant narratives about colonial knowledge systems and their role in shaping human and non-human histories (2024, pp. 53, 54). Both Matías Rendon's uses of time and Yusoff's insurgent geology, challenge the colonial anthropocentric and extractive logics. Unlike Western frameworks that often portray catastrophe as a single, future event moving along a straight line, Matías Rendón's spiral temporality permits the coexistence and interaction of multiple catastrophes, resistances, and cycles of renewal. This reconfiguration of time is key to the narrative structure and political message of her story, allowing it to more faithfully reflect the complexities of historical and ongoing experiences of colonial violence upon subalternized bodies.

The short story unfolds within the framework of the Gregorian calendar, marking 1629 as its present. The opening words, «La luz producía la región oscura» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p. 9), serve as both a premoni-

tion of impending disaster and an invocation of Mixe cosmology, wherein light heralds a cyclical interplay of darkness and death within an understanding that death initiates a new journey (Matías Rendón, 2021, pp. 75, 76). In this context, the *macehual* finds himself attempting to escape from the cathedral while hearing the voices of his ancestors reverberating from the building's underground chambers: «El canto de los muertos, el lenguaje del jade resistiendo y los golpes que me llamaban: las gesticulaciones sagradas. El llanto lastimero de mis antepasados ascendía en espiral por la tierra del Mictlán, envolviéndome. La música del caracol rojo [...]» (Matías Rendón, 2020, pp. 9, 10).

The land of Mictlan is considered in the Aztec and Nahautl cosmology as the place where the dead go for their afterlife, and the red sea snail was the symbol of Ehécatl, the deity of the wind and communication. Thus, the words of the *macehual* illustrate the layered nature of colonial apocalypse described by Yusoff, as these ancestral voices symbolize the bodies that died in the past apocalypse of the Spanish invasion and are a defiance against the overarching colonial narrative of replacement and erasure.

As the *macehual* walks through the cathedral, he feels a strange vertigo, an unsettling sensation of being caught in a space where the weight of time does not flow forward but presses down upon him in overlapping layers. The cathedral, a symbol of colonial permanence, holds within it the echoes of what it has buried: the temple of Ehécatl, the Indigenous ancestors, and the whispers of resistance that have never truly gone silent. These presences, for the *macehual,* are not just memories but an active force, a living breathing element of the space.

Through the Mixe concept of *It-Naaxwiin*, space-time is not a linear path but a spiral, one where the past, present, and future twist and fold into one another (Matías Rendón, 2021, pp. 73, 74). In this framework, ancestors are not mere ghosts in the Western sense, this is, faded and disconnected from the present, but entities that speak, guide, and act upon the lives of the living. Their voices resonate from the red sea snail all along the *macehual*'s disorienting journey, pulling him beneath the colonial structure, both physically and temporally, to a place where suppressed histories continue to pulse with life.

This sense of ancestral presence aligns with Kathryn Yusoff's idea of the "ghosts of other geologies" (2024, p. 3) Just as the *macehual* feels the temple of Ehécatl beneath the cathedral and the ancestral voices pressing against his being, Yusoff describes how the earth itself bears witness to hidden histories. These geologies are not neutral or passive; they are haunted by the violence of colonial extraction and labor, by lives uprooted and worlds restructured (Yusoff, 2024, p. 3). The land holds these histories like an open wound, resisting the linear narratives imposed by colonialism. For the *macehual*, the colonial vertigo he experiences in the cathedral reflects this clash of temporalities. The Western concept of time, which locks the past behind and envisions the future as a straight road ahead, falters here. Instead, through the lens of *It-Naaxwiin*, time loops and convulses. The ancestors do not belong to a distant past but are present with him now, shaping his path and offering him the power to reach beneath colonial structures, to touch what has been buried and to reclaim its significance.

Yusoff's ghosts of other geologies echo this dynamic. They, too, disrupt colonial frameworks by revealing the layers of history embedded in the material world. The rocks, the soil, and the very foundation of the cathedral are not silent. They speak of extraction, displacement, and the resistance of those who labored, suffered and died under colonial systems. For the *macehual*, these echoes are not abstract; they are tangible, grounding him in the power of what lies beneath.

In this interplay between *It-Naaxwiin* and Yusoff's geologies, we see a shared act of excavation, not just of physical layers, like the temple of Ehécatl, which still lies below the cathedral, but of temporal and spiritual ones. The *macehual*'s steps are guided by more than memory; they are shaped by a spiral time where past and present coalesce, where ancestors walk with the living. In this way, the cathedral becomes not a monument to colonial triumph but a space of possibility, where the buried and suppressed rise to disrupt the order imposed upon them.

After leaving the cathedral looming behind him, the *macehual* finds himself disoriented in the middle of the plaza where a Black enslaved woman guides him towards the Palacio del Virrey. Their meeting becomes more than a moment of solidarity, it represents the first convergence of two distinct yet intertwined ancestral ways of knowing, the Indigenous and the African. This Black enslaved woman is the other main character's mother, the mulatta, and guiding the *macehual* to the Palacio del Virrey, she is not only protecting him from being seen outside of the master's house without authorization, but it will also lead to the mulatta's scape, as the Black woman tells the *macehual* that their mutual master plans to sell her daughter.

Although colonialism attempted to exploit the convergence of Indigenous and Black epistemologies for its own benefit, in Ana Matías Rendón's short story the adversities faced by the characters form the backdrop against which the confluence and agency of their two worlds are revealed. In the initial paragraphs of the short story, the *macehual* vividly describes the violence that

precedes the formation of the colonial world and how it is organized around the destruction of the social forms of those who are subalternized. Then, from the voices emerging from the destroyed temple upon which the cathedral was built, to the devastation wrought by smallpox on the *macehual*'s people, and the revelation about the master's perverse satisfaction in realizing that the mulatta girl he owns is now of childbearing age and can be sold at a higher price, all these moments highlight the brutality of colonial domination. However, the narrative is far from merely recounting the misfortunes suffered by Afrodescendant individuals and Indigenous peoples.

Yusoff's work speaks directly to this layered violence stating the intimate connections between the geophysical and the racialized contexts, demonstrating how colonialism imposed not just physical violence but epistemological ruptures, reordering both landscape and life to suit its needs. The land itself, much like the bodies of Black and Indigenous peoples, became a site of exploitation, a resource to be consumed. The ruins of the Montezuma Palace beneath the Palacio del Virrey, as the temple of Ehécatl beneath Mexico City's cathedral, are also a visceral remainder of this transformation. Montezuma was the last great Aztec emperor, and building the Spanish Viceroy Palace upon it renders it as an actual geologic trace of a world overwritten by colonial power.

After fleeing the suffocating grip of the cathedral and be guided back by the Black woman to the Palacio del Virrey, the *macehual* finds himself within the master's house. He moves with quiet precision, completing the tasks demanded of him. The day's labor culminates in a ritual of imposed learning: the recitation of the *Pater Noster*. The words hang in the air like foreign invaders, and the *macehual*'s refusal to pronounce them correctly speaks louder than defiance. His stubbornness, described as «como las piedras del río, como la Palabra de sus Antiguos Señores» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p.11), is a silent rebellion. For Matías Rendón, this act of linguistic resistance becomes a metaphor for refusing, in a sense, to move away from home, a phrase that encapsulates the *macehual*'s rootedness in his ancestral land and worldview. The colonial structures that seek to sever these ties find no purchase in his unrelenting spirit.

Just as the *macehual* resists linguistic erasure, Yusoff exposes how the extraction of land, minerals, and labor has always been racialized, embedding colonial violence into the very fabric of the Earth. The master's house is not just a site of forced labor but an extension of the extractive economy that fractures indigenous existence. The *Pater Noster*, an imposed linguistic and religious structure, mirrors the way geological knowledge and ownership were weaponized against indigenous and Black bodies. To refuse the word is to refuse extraction, to resist being made into a resource for colonial consumption.

Moreover, Yusoff's concept of "inhuman intimacies", referring to the interconnected relationships between race, materiality, and geophysical realities that emerge from colonial histories and practices (2024, p. 48), resonates with the *macehual*'s condition. He exists within an enforced proximity to power, forced into an intimacy with colonial structures that seek to transform him. His body, like the land itself, has been disciplined and reshaped, yet he remains like river stones unyielding. Thus, the *macehual*'s resistance is not only linguistic but geologic. His refusal to symbolically move away from home is a refusal to be uprooted, to be displaced like the minerals stripped from the earth. He stands as a remnant, a survivor of centuries of extraction, embodying a defiance that reverberates across both land and language.

In parallel, the mulatta, too, charts her path of defiance. When planning her escape with the *macehual*, she chooses to rename herself, reclaiming the African name of her mother, Khira, and with it, the histories and identities embedded within her maternal lineage. Her mother's first suggestion of Isabel as her daughter's name is met with a firm resolution: «No, madre, me pondré tu nombre, el nombre que te dieron tus ancestros» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p. 20).

This choice becomes a great act of resistance, weaving the mulatta's identity into a tapestry of ancestral memory and defiance, in accordance with the *Sasa/Zamani* understanding of time. Yusoff's idea of "geologic life" (2024, p.1) helps illuminate this act of renaming as more than a personal choice, it is a layered form of resistance, shaped by the histories of displacement and survival that have been inscribed onto Black and Indigenous bodies. Just as minerals carry traces of deep time, the mulatta's name bears the weight of generations, defying the colonial erasure that seeks to sever her lineage. Her name is not merely spoken; it is unearthed, a reclamation of a history that colonialism sought to bury. Language, for both the *macehual* and the mulatta, transforms into a vessel of survival, a living link between territory and identity. Through these characters, Matías Rendón breathes life into ancestral epistemologies, portraying how they endure and adapt despite displacement.

Later in the text, the *macehual* dreams. He is carried back to the forest, to a time before displacement, before the violent arrival of the lords of Castile. In this dreamscape, his grandfather emerges, gifting him a necklace of small shells, a tangible link to his ancestors and their cosmology. This vision is not a mere memory but a rupture in time, a return to the rhythms and cycles of his Indigenous world. The dream reclaims the sacredness of

his heritage, pulling the *macehual* back into the spiritual and temporal continuum that colonialism seeks to erase.

In the dream sequence, we see how the apocalyptic nature of colonialism that Yusoff theorizes manifests through multiple, overlapping ends. The *macehual*'s world has already ended many times over: through the violent displacement of his people, the theft of their lands, and the imposition of colonial rule. Yet these apocalypses are not singular; they coexist with acts of persistence and transformation. The dream's invocation of the Aztec rites of passage, the *pilquixtia*, speaks to this resilience. Once, as a child nearing adulthood, the *macehual* would have consumed pulque, the sacred drink sent by Ehécatl, the wind deity, and become intoxicated in a ritual marking both death and rebirth. The sacred cycles of the Aztec universe persist in his dream which is not only a dream in the Western sense, but a disruption of the linear timeline of colonial history: the small shells necklace will be there when he wakes up.

Fire also appears in the dream as both destruction and renewal. During *Izcalli*, the month dedicated to the fire deity Ixcozauhqui-Xiuhtecuhtli, fire was central to rites of passage and transitions between life stages (Díaz Barriga, 2013, p. 202). The dream overlays this imagery with the necklace of shells, an iconography resonant with Plate 28 of the Codex Borbonicus, where age categories and military ranks intertwine. The necklace becomes a symbol of transformation, anchoring the *macehual*'s identity in a continuum of resilience and regeneration. Even within the master's house, he remains connected to this greater whole, embodying the persistence of his collective memory. The *macehual*'s dream, then, is not an escape but an assertion of geologic continuity, an insistence that his world, though fractured, endures beneath the surface, waiting to rise again.

The intersection of Yusoff's idea of "missing earths", those lands, histories, and ways of knowing that have been erased or rendered invisible by colonialism (2024, p. 1), and the *macehual*'s layered experience of apocalypse in Matías Rendón's narrative highlights the deep entanglement between geological and spiritual displacement under colonial rule. In this sense, the *macehual*'s world exists, from the Western point of view, only as a negative inscription, an Indigenous earth that persists beneath and behind the colonial geographical imagination. His dreams, infused with Aztec cosmology and ritual memory, particularly the *pilquixtia* rites with their sacred consumption of *pulque*, embody what Yusoff describes as planetary fractures, the deep and often violent ruptures in the Earth's narrative (2024, p. 1).

Following the dream, the *macehual* finds himself awakening in the Palacio del Virrey where the kitchen serves as a powerful entry point into a complex meditation on colonial violence, environmental upheaval, and Indigenous cosmology. The protagonist recalls his forcible removal from the forest in the wake of the 1629 flood, when «las aguas evadieron los lindes de sus canales» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p.12) and «el Néctar de la Tierra se desprendía alentado por las marejadas del Señor del Viento» (p.12).

This decisive moment marks both a physical displacement and a deep disruption of Indigenous relationships with the land, as the Spaniards compelled Native peoples to undertake the grueling task of rebuilding the colonial city. While the story's initial scene occurs in 1629, with the *macehual* in the cathedral, it simultaneously inhabits 1634, revealing the protagonist's four years of unrelenting labor «en la construcción de los puentes, en el desagüe de los canales y en la reconstrucción de los edificios» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p. 14).

The haunting detail of working «sin levantar el rostro por miedo al látigo del amo» (p.14), underscores the brutal conditions of colonial forced labor while highlighting the intimate connection between environmental exploitation and human subjugation, and echoes Yusoff's analysis of how colonial powers transformed both landscapes and bodies through what she terms "inhuman categorizations", using forced labor to maintain colonial geological prerogatives (2024, p. 2). The *macehual*'s reflections, in 1634, according to Western contemporary timeline, reveal a significant internal turbulence, expressed through the metaphor of an all-consuming fire: «Es como un furor que se forma a través de mí. Un fuego que amenaza con incendiarme» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p. 14).

His apocalyptic vision of rising waters consuming the city's foundations while he burns creates a powerful dialectic between destruction and self-immolation. The image of Tláloc, the Aztec and Nahuatl deity of water and rain, scaling the walls while «serpientes de agua se tragan la catedral» (p.14), evokes both historical memory and prophetic revelation, suggesting the potential for Indigenous cosmological forces to overcome colonial structures. His declaration, «Debo quemar el templo para que las aguas me apaguen» (p. 14), also speaks to a complex interplay of resistance, sacrifice, and spiritual transformation. This moment can be understood through Yusoff's concept of "ghost geologies" (2024, p. 9), where the trauma and violence of colonization resurface through Tlaloc's symbolic actions. The waters, like geological forces, represent what Yusoff describes as "geotrauma", the deep, lasting scars left by colonial exploitation that continue to impact both the land and its people. In this way, Indigenous cosmologies offer an alternative form of geological agency, providing a space

for these forces to reemerge and address the colonial legacy (2024, p. 11).

The narrative's sophisticated temporal architecture becomes evident as it moves from the *macehual*'s emotional turmoil back to 1629, when the master contemplates selling the mulatta. During this crucial moment, as the mulatta and *macehual* secretly plan their escape, the appearance of an «anciano macehual como espectro» (Matías Rendón, 2020, p. 16), introduces another temporal layer. This spectral intervention leads the protagonist into a complex temporal journey where he finds himself witnessing the *Corpus Christi* procession of 1692, which also evokes celebrations predating the 1629 flood. This temporal displacement enables a second powerful dream sequence that functions simultaneously as memory and prophecy.

The second dream sequence presents a devastating vision of the flood, «Madres cargando a sus hijos, levantándolos en brazos para que fueran salvados; abuelos aferrados a las vigas de lo que alguna vez fueron los castillos de sus casas, paredes de adobe flotando entre la basura» (p. 17). The image of «aguas teñidas de salitre, negadas a olvidarse del pasado» (p. 17), suggests both geological memory and historical trauma, while the Spaniards in their canoes, faces turned toward the rising sun, symbolize colonial power's attempt to maintain control even amid catastrophes.

The narrative reaches a metaphysical crescendo as the cathedral bells transport the *macehual* to its crypts, where he now encounters the voice of Tonatiuh, the deity of the Fifth Sun, struggling to emerge and herald an approaching cataclysm. Then, the commanding presence of Huehueteotl, the deity of fire, appears demanding «quemar el templo, matar al enemigo» (p. 18), transforms the dream into both a premonition of the 1692 uprising and a personal prophecy of the *macehual*'s destined role in igniting the revolutionary flame that will destroy everything.

The text then skillfully returns to 1629, where Spanish colonizers debate the flood's origin, attributing it variously to Indigenous curses, divine punishment, or engineering failure, revealing the colonial power structure's inability to comprehend events outside its epistemological framework. This moment is punctuated by the appearance of the *macehual*'s grandfather voice interrupting the Spaniards' conversation, by calling his grandson by his true but previously ignored name: Atlacatluitl, navigator of the water of light. Then, the grandparent presents him with the young warrior's white feather. The sequence concludes with the *macehual*'s awakening among startled servants at his soaked clothes, a condition physically manifesting his temporal journey through the 1629 flood, creating a powerful fusion of physical and temporal experience.

The symbolic significance of the white feather presented to the *macehual* by his grandfather resonates deeply within the complex system of pre-Hispanic Indigenous military and social hierarchies. According with Alejandro Díaz Barriga, the detailed imagery of Plate 28 in the Codex Borbonicus, shows how age categories were intimately woven into military rankings through a sophisticated progression of symbolic markers. The codex depicts a revelatory procession from the *telpochcalli*, the warriors house, where experienced warriors, distinguished by their valiant men in war headdresses and elite *bezote* jewelry, lead younger warriors who have earned the right to wear a single white feather through their battlefield achievements and capture of enemies. This procession continues with boys who have completed the *Izcalli* rituals, their status marked by blue earspools and shell necklaces, as the one given to the *macehual* before in the text, while unadorned children complete the hierarchical display (Díaz Barriga, 2013, p. 208).

The protagonist's journey through these symbolic markers takes on profound significance when viewed through the lens of spiritual and social transformation. His progression from wearing the shell necklace to receiving the white feather represents not merely a change in status but a fundamental metamorphosis within the Aztec military hierarchy. The shell necklace, serving as an emblem of spiritual preparation and ritualistic initiation, creates the foundation for the transformative power of the white feather, marking the *macehual*'s extraordinary evolution from a common worker to a *cuāuhpilli* or eagle warrior, a transformation laden with both spiritual and societal implications.

The white feather emerges then as a potent symbol of spiritual elevation and consciousness transformation. In Aztec cosmology, the eagle warrior embodied humanity's highest aspirations, representing the transcendence of ordinary consciousness and the achievement of elevated spiritual awareness. This transformation required a metaphorical journey into the womb of Coatlicue, the earth mother in Aztec and Nahuatl cosmology, necessitating a spiritual passage through the realm of the dead. This understanding recasts the ancestral voices echoing from the cathedral and the protagonist's prophetic dreams not as mere supernatural occurrences but as integral elements of a deeper initiatory process. Through these experiences, the *macehual* traverses the boundary between the mundane and sacred realms, fully embracing his destiny as a *cuāuhpilli*.

Particularly significant is the democratic nature of the *cuāuhpilli* rank within Aztec warrior society.

Unlike other military positions restricted to nobility, this elevated status remained uniquely accessible to commoners, allowing even *macehuales* to ascend to its honored position through merit and divine calling (Hassig, 1988, p.45). Thus, the white feather transcends its role as a mere military insignia to become a powerful symbol of spiritual awakening, social mobility, and divine purpose. It embodies the protagonist's transformation from a common laborer into a figure of spiritual significance and revolutionary potential, marking his emergence as a warrior-prophet destined to challenge the colonial order through both physical and spiritual means.

The *macehual*'s awakening as Atlacatluitl, his true name, as his grandfather called him, marks a substantial transformation that transcends mere personal change, positioning him as a prophetic warrior destined to bridge two momentous cataclysms: the devastating flood of 1629 and the revolutionary fire of 1692. His metamorphosis carries cosmic significance, as he becomes the chosen vessel through whom a new era will emerge. In this prophesied future, his union with Khira, the solar seer, promises not just change but regeneration, a world reborn through the purifying forces of destruction and chaos. This elevation transforms Atlacatluitl from a common laborer into a figure of mythic proportions, one whose destiny intertwines with both divine forces and historical imperatives.

The 1692 uprising, which Atlacatluitl is destined to catalyze, stands as a crucial moment in colonial history. Scholar Silvia Prada distinguishes it as uniquely significant, the sole major rebellion before the Independence movement that emerged from genuine political consciousness and popular resistance. The revolt arose from the crushing weight of viceregal reforms that systematically oppressed Indigenous communities and brutally persecuted escaped slaves. Indigenous workers faced unconscionable exploitation, forced into exhausting public works projects from dawn to dusk for mere pittances compared to fair market wages Simultaneously, enslaved Black individuals and those arbitrarily labeled as vagrants faced cruel deportation to remote territories such as Texas, a practice that deliberately shattered family bonds and community ties (Prada, 2000, p. 137).

The Spanish prohibition of *pulque* within city limits added spiritual injury to material exploitation. For Indigenous peoples, *pulque* transcended its physical form, it was a sacred medium, a tangible connection to their deities and ancestral traditions, embodying millennia of spiritual practice and divine communion. The colonial authorities' dismissal of its sacred significance and subsequent ban represented more than mere regulatory control; it constituted a deliberate assault on Indigenous spiritual and cultural identity, severing a vital connection to ancestral wisdom and divine presence.

Within this crucible of systemic exploitation, forced displacement, and spiritual warfare, the 1692 uprising emerged as an inevitable conflagration, the embodiment of long-suppressed fury and resistance. Atlacatluitl's role transcends then that of a mere participant; he becomes the prophesied catalyst, charged with summoning the cleansing fire that would challenge colonial dominion. The convergence of Atlacatluitl's transformation and Yusoff's understanding of geotrauma reveals how environmental liberation is inseparable from the freedom of Black and Indigenous peoples. His alliance with Khira, the solar seer, becomes fundamental to healing this geotrauma, as their union represents the fusion of Indigenous and Black resistance with cosmic forces of renewal. This partnership transcends mere political alliance, it can be read through Yusoff's framework as an instance of the spiritual and material entanglements she sees as necessary for repairing damage wrought by colonialism on both ecosystems and communities (2024).

When sacred power confronts profane authority in Atlacatluitl and Khira's prophesied union, it mirrors Yusoff's understanding that environmental healing is inherently tied to the restoration of Indigenous, Black, and Brown relationships with the earth. Their combined power, Atlacatluitl's connection to water and fire, and Khira's solar energies, represents the kind of transformation that Yusoff suggests is necessary to overcome centuries of geological trauma. The accumulated suffering that ignites into revolutionary action through their alliance demonstrates that healing geotrauma requires not just individual resistance but the coming together of different forms of sacred power and knowledge.

The emergence of a new era from the ashes of colonial oppression, catalyzed by the union of Atlacatluitl and Khira, manifests Yusoff's vision of environmental renewal centered on Indigenous and Black freedom. Their prophesied role forges a new geological reality where healing environmental trauma intertwines with restoring sacred relationships to the earth. This convergence of earthly struggle and cosmic destiny, embodied in their alliance, demonstrates Yusoff's core argument that livable environmental conditions emerge only through two essential elements: the liberation of communities whose oppression has been fundamentally linked to environmental exploitation, and the restoration of sacred connections to the earth that colonial powers attempted to destroy.

CONCLUSION

Through *Pluma de agua y fuego*, Ana Matías Rendón, writing from her dual position as a member of the Mixe community, known as the never conquered for their ongoing resistance against Aztec, Spanish, and Mexican State domination, and as an Afrodescendant, weaves together Mixe and African temporal frameworks to illuminate how communities have maintained ways of understanding time that resist colonial attempts to impose linear, extractive temporalities. Her unique perspective, emerging from peoples who have preserved their temporal and epistemological sovereignty through centuries of resistance against multiple forms of colonialism, enriches the narrative's exploration of how Indigenous and African ways of knowing time create possibilities for survival even within apocalyptic conditions. By placing this narrative in conversation with Yusoff's work on geological intimacies and racial formation, we see how temporal sovereignty emerges not just as an abstract concept but as a lived practice of resistance, deeply connected to the earth herself.

The story's movement through multiple catastrophes, from the flood of 1629 to the uprising of 1692, reveals how communities have maintained alternative temporal frameworks that recognize the intimate connections between human bodies, geological processes, and ancestral knowledge. These frameworks, as both Matías Rendón and Yusoff suggest, refuse the separation between human and geological time that colonial powers attempted to enforce. Matías Rendón's heritage as part of the communities that have successfully maintained their temporal sovereignties through centuries of colonial pressure, from historical Spanish colonialism to contemporary Mexican State violence, infuses her narrative with a profound understanding of how these alternative frameworks enable communities to understand apocalypse not as a singular future event, but as an ongoing process that we have already survived through maintaining their own ways of knowing time.

Finally, *Pluma de agua y fuego* reminds us that any discussion of environmental crisis must recognize how colonial powers have attempted to impose not just physical violence but temporal violence, trying to erase ways of understanding time that recognize the deep entanglements between human and geological existence. Yet through characters like Atlacatluitl and Khira, and through her own position as both Mixe and Afrodescendant, Matías Rendón shows how communities have maintained temporal frameworks that enable both survival and resistance. Atlacatluitl and Khira's story suggests that addressing current environmental challenges requires not just new technologies or policies, but recognition of and support for these alternative temporal sovereignties that have already survived countless ends of the world, sovereignties that, like the Mixe and African diasporic communities themselves, remain unvanquished despite centuries of ongoing colonial pressure in its multiple forms.

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