NETFLIX AND *NARCO*-POP CULTURE

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Abstract. The aim of this paper is to analyse how, *Narcos: Mexico,* is remediating the past, re-creating and shaping cultural memory, posing as an unofficial history teacher for young audiences, and secondly, to show how the myth creation process described by Roland Barthes (1991[1976]), applies to the personification of the drug trafficker as a Bad Bunny figure. This myth is used as a marketing effort in order to monetise original stories, a by-product of our hypermodern capitalistic society.

Keywords: Bad Bunny, cultural memory, hypermodernity, narcoculture, myth, mediation, remediation

Netflix ja narko-popkultuur

Abstrakt. Selle artikli eesmärgiks on analüüsida, kuidas film „Narcos: Mexico" esitab minevikku uues vormis (remediating), taasloob ja kujundab kultuurimälu mõjudes nooremale sihtgrupile mitteametliku ajalooõpetajana. Teiseks eesmärgiks on näidata, kuidas Ronald Barthes'i (1991[1976]) kirjeldatud müüdiloomeprotsess kehtib narkokaubitseja kujutamisel Bad Bunny figuurina. Seda müüti kasutatakse kui turundusvõtet, et teenida kasumit originaallugude levitamise pealt, mis on ühtlasi hüpermodernse kapitalistliku ühiskonna kõrvalsaadus.

Märksõnad: Bad Bunny, kultuurimälu, hüpermodernsus, narkokultuur, müüt, vahendamine, taasvahendamine

Netflix y la Narcocultura Pop

Resumen. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar cómo Narcos: México, está remediando el pasado, recreando y moldeando la memoria cultural, haciéndose pasar por un profesor de historia no oficial para el público joven, y en segundo lugar, mostrar cómo el proceso de creación de mitos descrito por Roland Barthes (1991[1976]), se aplica a la personificación del

narcotraficante como figura de Bad Bunny. Este mito se utiliza como un esfuerzo de marketing para monetizar historias originales, un subproducto de nuestra sociedad capitalista hipermoderna.

Palabras clave: Bad Bunny, memoria cultural, hipermodernidad, narcocultura, mito, mediación, remediación

Introduction

In recent years, subscription content platforms have taken an almost indispensable place in the lives of many people worldwide. More importantly, these platforms are creators and replicators of cultural products — or cultural texts as we will see later — which are part of today's pop culture[1]. Data on the global subscription video on demand (SVOD)[2] market shows that revenue more than tripled between 2016 and 2020. Further rapid growth is predicted to continue in the future (Fig. 1). The most popular platform worldwide in recent years has been Netflix, and from 2013 to 2021, it maintained its year-over-year subscription growth (Fig. 2).
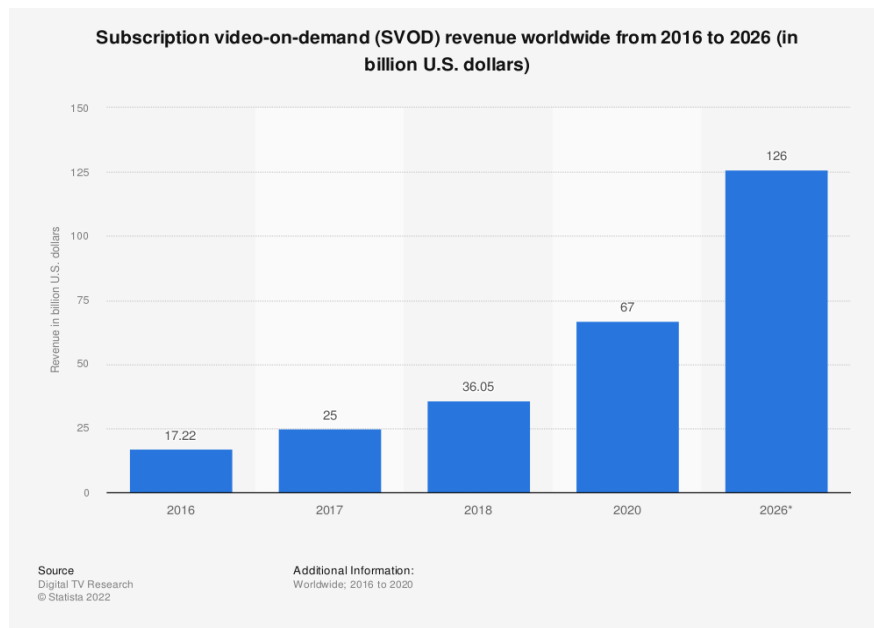

Fig. 1. Subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) revenue worldwide from 2016 to 2026 (Statista 2022a)
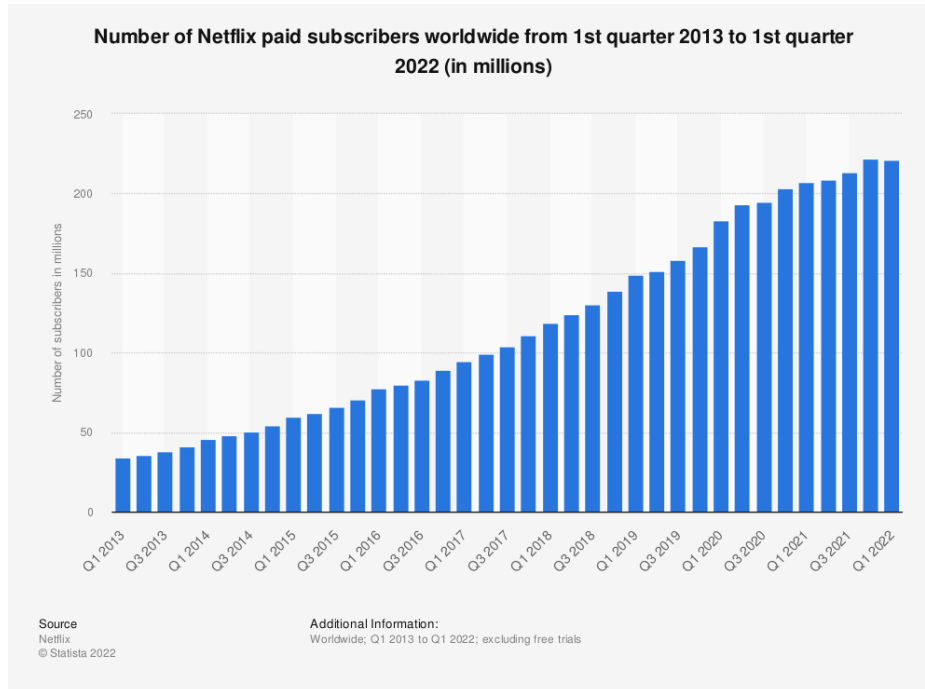
Fig. 2. Number of Netflix paid subscribers worldwide from 3rd quarter 2011 to 1st quarter 2022. (Statista 2022b)

One of the — relatively speaking — most recent changes within Netflix has been the production of original content in different countries. This content has managed to transcend borders and be streamed worldwide. This phenomenon can be seen with productions like *Dark* (Germany), *Money Heist* (Spain), *The Squid Game* (South Korea), and *Narcos: Mexico,* which has become one of the most-watched original Mexican pieces on the platform. Thanks to this type of productions, people from other countries can get a little closer to other cultures and societies. For example, those who do not live in Mexico, nor are Mexican, can watch *Narcos: Mexico*, and approach the social phenomenon of drug trafficking in the country through entertainment. Therefore, the meaning they give to the content will be different from someone who has grown up in the country and interacts with this every day.

Additionally, to talk about a phenomenon as complex as drug trafficking, we have to understand that Mexico is a country full of contradictions and contrasts. Where you can find one of the richest men in the world living in its capital, while at the same time there are people living in extreme poverty. It is true that this is not a characteristic exclusive to Mexico. Yet, its geographical location — connecting North with Central and South America, has placed the country in a position where these contrasts are strongly appreciated. The country is largely known as violent, which is due to many factors, but most of them related to drug cartels and the social dynamics produced around these criminal activities. There is a narco environment, we can even talk about a 'narcoculture'. Regarding this term, América Becerra Romero (2018) maintains:

a social phenomenon that exists in different Latin American countries, especially Colombia and Mexico, although its development has been different within each nation due to its own socio-cultural features and the way in which drug trafficking has intervened in them. It has had a strong presence in Mexico since the 1970s, with the increase and diversification of the production of films, music, television series and documentaries related to drug use and trafficking, but also due to the media coverage that had the lifestyle of drug traffickers, their language, consumption, clothing, accessories, among other aspects. (Becerra Romero 2018: 2)

The foregoing places the phenomenon geographically and relates it to artistic expressions or cultural products. However, how can we define it, in a way that is relevant to what we will analyse in this paper. Anajilda Mondaca (2012) in her Doctoral dissertation, *Narcocorridos, city and daily life: spaces of expression of drug culture in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico,* defines narcoculture as:
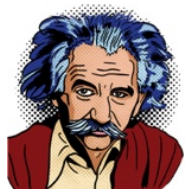
a cultural process that incorporates a broad symbology, a set of visions of the world under certain rules and norms of behavior, insofar as they are understood values that surround this activity and are shared by broad sectors of society, beyond whether or not they are involved in the business of illegal drug trafficking. (Mondaca 2012: 66)

Going back to the documentary research carried out by Becerra Romero (2018), she concludes that 'narcoculture' has three elements that are used most frequently to define it:

1. As *a set of symbolic elements* that have meanings both for those who produce and spread them, and for those who consume and appropriate them.
2. *As a generator of life expectancies* [...] The symbolic elements contained in it create social representations and imaginaries about drug trafficking, which come to configure a world of life with its own styles, values and behavior patterns, and seduce a large number of people by turning into desires that range from the consumption and appropriation of symbolic content, to the incorporation into drug trafficking activities.
3. *As a mechanism for legitimizing drug trafficking*. [...] *narcoculture* constitutes the mechanism through which it is incorporated into the daily life of society, so that people get used to it and end up considering it as another economic activity, which allows different social groups to get ahead. (Becerra Romero 2018: 9-11)

While the focus of this paper is not the social and political issues of the country, all of these factors contribute to creating the arena in which Netflix content was created and decoded. As well as we can see with Becerra Romero's (2018) research, 'narcoculture' goes beyond drug trafficking, it is a result of cultural dynamics that contains social and symbolic elements. And as such, in it we see endless meaning making processes.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how *Narcos: Mexico* is remediating the past, re-creating and shaping cultural memory, posing as an unofficial history teacher for young audiences, and secondly how the myth creation process described by Roland Barthes (1991), applies to personification of the drug trafficker as a Bad Bunny figure. This myth is used as a marketing effort

in order to monetise with original stories, a by-product of our hypermodern, capitalistic society.

1. Cultural memory and mediality: Made of violent and painful events

Whenever we think about memory, we tend to do it on a personal (individual) level, if we can recall our actions or even thoughts. We may also think about our personal memories, those flashbacks that take us to our past. Thus, when we refer to memory, it is necessary to mention the remembering act, as memory cannot be defined without that. Besides, personal memory cannot be analysed in isolation. Culture is constantly shaping an individual's memories, knowledge, and values. Therefore, it makes sense that we can also share memories as 'cultural memory'. This chapter will be focused on the definition of 'cultural memory' and its relation to media. Firstly, this examines why there is cultural memory and how it works, making special emphasis on the work of the Tartu-Moscow School (TMS) scholars; giving this study a semiotic perspective. Secondly, this sketches out the relation between 'cultural memory and mediality in order to delimit the topic of interest.

To understand 'cultural memory', one should start with the concept of culture. For Juri Lotman, 'text' was the basic unit of culture. Marek Tamm gives an overview of Lotman's understanding of culture (Tamm 2015: 130-131) saying that it includes not only a certain combination of semiotic systems (languages) but also the sum of all historically existent messages (texts). Thus, central to Lotman's cultural theory is the notion of culture as a text or a sum of texts: "The semiotic universe may be regarded as the totality of individual texts and isolated languages as they relate to each other." (Lotman 2005: 208). The text is often seen only as a written message yet, according to TMS scholars, it can be created with different sign systems. It is not limited to words or natural languages.

Since the text is the basic unit of culture and, as mentioned above, one of its functions is related to memory, it sometimes seems difficult to draw a line between culture and cultural memory. Also, to have a memory is not the same as being part of the cultural memory. Memory becomes cultural when it is shared by the community, that is, when it is collective and mediated through shared texts. More importantly, cultural memory is not a static selective archive; it is a continuous process that goes on through time and space.

The view on culture as memory underlies the semiotic theory of Tartu-Moscow School, as is evident from *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures* (Lotman et. al. 1998[1973]). Culture is the mechanism that stores information about society:

> If we regard the collective as a more complexly organized individual, culture may be understood by analogy with the individual mechanism of memory, as a certain collective mechanism for the storage and processing of information. The semiotic structure of culture and the semiotic structure of memory are functionally uniform phenomena situated on different levels. (Lotman et. al. 1998: 68)

The textuality of cultural memory brings about the question of the role of various media in cultural memory. According to Ann Rigney (2004), cultural memory is a process of communication through media. On this, Astrid Erll argues that: "Cultural memory is constituted by a host of different media, operating within various symbolic systems: religious texts, historical painting, historiography, monuments [...] each of these media has its specific way of remembering and will leave its trace on the memory" (Erll 2008: 389).

A good part of our cultural memory in Mexico is made up of violent events related to drug trafficking, which can be traced back to the 1980s. However, going back to the third season of *Narcos: Mexico*, it is set in the 1990s, in Mexico. I will focus on episode 4; *GDL*, which is the acronym for the city of Guadalajara, located on the west side of the country, it is one of the most populated cities. On May 24, 1993, at the city's international airport, a shootout took place, or as we know it thanks to the media, 'a crossfire' between two cartels; the one from Tijuana (*The Arellano Félix brothers*) and the one from Sinaloa (*El Chapo Guzmán / Güero Palma*), and because of this, Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo and his driver were assassinated at the scene.

The image of the dead cardinal in his car was circulated by the media, including international media, and it was impossible to believe that a cardinal, in a highly Catholic country, had been assassinated by drug traffickers. The official narrative was that he had been mistaken for *El Chapo Guzmán* and that is why the hit men hired by the Tijuana cartel blasted him. And this same narrative is replicated in the Netflix series.

As stated above, cultural memory is made by cultural texts; it is dynamic and relies on the role of media as a meaning creator allowing dynamism in the process of shaping cultural memory to create meaning. On top of that, it is also about how the past will be remembered; its process is based on reconstruction. Thus, the past is reconstructed by a third actor who is turning the experience or the information about the event into a point of reference not only for his contemporaries but also to those born after them, e.g.: "metaphor for the fashioning of narratives about the past when those with direct experience of events die off. Sites of memory inevitably become sites of second-order memory" (Winter 2008: 62). Then these places or sites of memory are, according to Brockmeier, "where people remember the memories of others and in this way re-appropriate a particular tradition" (Brockmeier 2010: 12). In addition, one event can generate a discourse about itself and be represented through various media and, of course, there are many narratives coexisting at the same time, which is why concepts like remediation and resemiotization are

relevant for understanding how cultural memory is created and rooted in society.

In the same way Lotman and Boris Uspensky (1978: 215) explain, "[…] text is not reality but material for its reconstruction", we can understand that fragments of reality make it into each text. Thus, these texts do not only mediate reality, but through the process of mediation, they shape the way reality is remembered. Mediation is a way to interact with reality, as Denis McQuail explains:

> [Mediation] it refers to the relaying of second-hand (or third party) versions of events and conditions which we cannot directly observe ourselves. Secondly, it refers to the efforts of other actors and institutions in society to contact us for their own purposes. This applies to politicians and governments, advertisers […] it refers to the indifferent way in which we form our perceptions of groups of cultures to which we do not belong. (McQuail 2010[1983]: 203)

Hence, media can be seen as an instrument that helps humans to connect themselves with external objects or subjects. Also, it can be a carrier of several discourses in society. All of this is part of the process of the modelling of reality.

This is also why, Peeter Torop argues that studies in semiotics of culture lead to the semiotics of mediation that "is based on comparative analysis of mediation processes, on typology of forms of mediation and on the subsequent complementary analysis of culture" (Torop 2012: 286). He argues that there is an implicit and explicit mediation and that studying the correlation of these forms is the essence of the semiotics of mediation:

> For the essence of mediation stems from the different levels of conventionality that are created by the metalanguages, textual collections, discourses and media in the process of communication. Semiotics of media begins with semiotic mediation or with the conventionality of words in the signification of a given world, and ends with the culture of mediation where one and the same cultural language or one and the same text operates as a means of dialogue with oneself, as a means of communication with others, as part of a textual system or discourse, or as a transmedial phenomenon. (Torop 2012: 294)

Moreover, according to Rigney, memory sites are the result of a "selection process that has privileged some "figures of memory" above others" (Rigney 2008: 345). Besides, the acts of remembrance take place in different media and genres. That is why, for Rigney, "it is only through the mediation of cultural practices that figures of memory can acquire shape, meaning, and high profile within particular communities" (Ibid, 345).

With the above in mind, the Cardinal's murder has been mediated and remedied throughout the history of Mexico. And it has become a *lieux de mémoire* for Mexicans. Its symbolism has transcended generations. Although we know that in recent years, the Church as an institution has been questioned and has lost the faith of many. However, in those years, it was highly respected among Mexicans, the cardinal is a representative of God on earth, how was it possible that some criminals had killed him? A shooting in broad daylight at

one of the country's most important airports? This was just the beginning of a series of violent events that we Mexicans have witnessed through the media and now through pop culture.

Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* proposes that they "are places, indeed, in the three senses of the word, symbolic and functional, but simultaneously in different degrees. Even a place of purely material appearance, as a deposit of archives, is only a place of memory if the imagination confers on it a symbolic aura." (Nora 2008: 33). Thus, as previously stated in this chapter, cultural memory depends on certain materialisation, a media, or as Nora argues, a *lieu de mémoire* to stay alive. In addition, he considers the relation between place and time as one of the most important features that distinguishes them: "[…] the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial […] in order to capture a maximum amount of meaning in the fewest of signs" (Ibid, 34).

The interaction between media and cultural memory was taken to a different level by Laura Basu (2008) when she provides a reconceptualisation of Nora's term *lieux de mémoire*, in which media is no longer seen as a symptom of memory loss, but rather as resources that can provide a certain order to memory. Basu emphasises that her interest is not to contradict Nora's work, but "to examine in more detail how exactly a memory site may form and evolve over time, and in particular how it may produce, organize and transmit meaning, in terms of the mediatization that are so essential to its existence" (Basu 2008: 140). She proposes the concept of memory dispositif to analyse more complex mediations, arguing: "The term "dispositif", often translated as "apparatus", usually refers to a constellation of heterogeneous elements within a system" (Ibid, 141). The latter makes sense if one wants to analyse not a medium in isolation but rather as different kinds of media interacting within a process.

Basu (Ibid, 141) claims that thinking about a memory site as a dispositif allows us to move beyond looking at individual texts or media as they relate to cultural memory and to see a site of memory as being made up of a conglomeration of heterogeneous media texts, the specific relationships between which determining the nature and functions of the memory site at a given time.

Likewise, Rigney talks about written texts as 'sites of memory' and monuments, as they "have a fixed character which allows them to play a role in recalling some person or event of yore and in bearing witness to them" (Rigney 2004: 383). Yet different from other kinds of memorials, texts are not located in a particular site, "hence they may be recycled among various groups of readers living in different parts of the globe and at different historical moments. In this sense, texts are 'portable' monuments, which can be carried over into new situations" (Ibid, 383). According to Rigney, when the literary practice is located in the cultural memory framework, it becomes apparent that

"the complex processes involved in the circulation of stories and the evolution of collective remembrance: both the convergence of remembrance on particular sites and the gradual erosion of those sites" (Rigney 2008: 352).

In this way, cultural memory must be seen as something 'alive' and in constant motion and not only as a static archive. On this, Rigney (2005: 25) suggests that cultural memory must be seen "as something dynamic, as a result of recursive acts of remembrance, rather than as something like an unchanging and pre-given inheritance". Even further, Erll (2011: 11) proposes, "as the incessant wandering of carriers, media, contents, forms, and practices of memory, their continual 'travels' and ongoing transformations through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders." For her, memory travels as it has the mobility, "to be kept in motion, in order to 'stay alive', to have an impact both on individual minds and social formations" (Ibid, 12).

This 'living' part of memory arises thanks to the journeys of the texts, from one medium to another, from one context to another, the ones more durable than others, are those that become, in Rigney's (2004) terms, 'portable monuments'. The same thing happened with the death of the Cardinal when it was broadcast by many newscasts and now, taken up by Netflix to add that touch of truth, that only the context of the time could give to this series. As a result, the way in which the discourse is created cannot be seen only as a structure of meaning; statements grouped to communicate something. The discourse must be seen also as "a practice as material affordance" (Iedema 2003: 50). For that reason, the material expression allows for realising the social, cultural, and historical structures, as well as the investments and circumstances in which we live.

Consequently, *Narcos: Mexico* is not only a process of mediation, but also that of remediation, created by several chains of semiotic production. To continue, it is necessary to make some notes about the remediation. Firstly, it must be specified, as it was already mentioned, that for this study remediation does not focus on the implications of changing technologies from one semiotic artifact into another, but rather on how these material representations (texts) are chained to another and how the meaning making process can be affected from one text to another. This process goes beyond acts of repetition, as there is always a selection of certain abstracts or elements from one text to another, creating a new text, and meanings. Thus, there has to exist a selective reconstruction of the discourse of the event. After all, the whole process of cultural memory is based on selection.

Narcos: Mexico is telling a story, the texts not only talked about the life story of the drug lords, but also mentioned several social problems in the country, mostly the ones closely linked to drug trafficking as a sociocultural and political phenomenon. Thus, the narrative of these texts placed the case into a violent social context. Besides, these texts are multimodal; the resources for the meaning making process are more diverse than those used by the written press. The audience is able to hear the voices and see the gestures

thanks to the actors, while also being able to see some of the places where the events took place.

Hence, the role of remediation in the creation of the cultural memory of *Narcos: Mexico* is to connect the processes of mediation, in order to create a chain of semiotic activities. In other words, there are semiotic means interacting simultaneously during the mediatisation of the murder of Cardinal Posadas, and this interaction happens thanks to the diverse material activity and the collection of texts about the case. As Rigney (2008) points out, how these materials become themselves objects of recollection. They are connected in different levels, internally through footage and photographs, which are placed from one context to another; then, the next level is the relation between the texts (a collection of the previous ones), how they refer to each other, to create new texts; following by the implicit remediation, in which, as a result of the previous chains of remediation, other texts emerged, trying to commemorate what happened to the Cardinal, to demand justice. All of them create the discourse as a structure of meaning and as a practice with material affordance, of the event shaping the cultural memory. As the memory functions as a dispositif of heterogeneous texts, that have a dialogue between them. For example, a source text can be a 'stabilizer', according to Rigney's typology, yet for other texts they can be an 'object of recollection', or a 'catalyst', depending on the moment and context of the remediation and of course the contents of the source text.

Our cultural memory has travelled from newscasts, newspapers to Netflix shows. The new generations investigate the events that occurred in the 90s as a result of watching *Narcos: Mexico*. Netflix has become a history teacher for younger audiences. Moreover, it is in charge of circulating and keeping texts alive, such as the death of the Cardinal, and thus being part of the process of cultural memory of Mexicans.

2. The myth of the Narco Jr. by Netflix

The first thing that comes to our minds when someone mentions 'mythologies' is ancient Greece, or one of the first civilizations that inhabited the world. However, thanks to Roland Barthes' proposal (1991) we know today that we have created different myths that give meaning to our daily lives, and not only that, it is about modelling our reality with the resources we have at hand. Not to mention, that the creation of myths is one more example of how the meaning making process is continuous and endless. In this chapter we will analyse how Barthes' theory (1991) can be applied to the character of 'Kitty' Páez, played by Bad Bunny in the third season of *Narcos: México,* in particular during chapter 5: *Boots on the ground,* In other words, how the myth of the *Narco Jr*[3]. is created in the Netflix series using a key figure in pop culture, Bad Bunny.

Bad Bunny happens to be a Puerto Rican singer, producer and actor. He has been Spotify's most-streamed artist for two years in a row, and his *El Último Tour Del Mundo* was the best-selling post-pandemic tour. He is one of the most influential artists in the world, particularly among the young, and was part of the cast of *Narcos: Mexico*, personifying *Narco Jr.* Arturo 'Kitty' Páez:

> [He] is not a child of the criminal underworld, but rather the product of a stable and supportive middle-class family. As such, his songs do not represent chronicles, but rather fantasies of the underclass. This is very common within many popular music genres, in which exaggeration reigns among young people seeking to represent themselves as heroic protagonists of what is in reality a banal and stifling day-to-day existence [...] Some say Bad Bunny's lyrics are misogynistic and violent. Undoubtedly his songs often fall into some of the more trite scripts of popular music: sex, drugs, money, fame. But they are not actual chronicles of violence; instead they use metaphors of violence to talk about other usual themes of popular music: love, indifference, betrayal and spite (Bonilla 2018).

The choice of casting Bad Bunny is not innocent, clearly there are marketing and media interests behind this decision. Choosing him guarantees many views, and both Bad Bunny and 'Kitty' Páez can be seen as representations of the myth of the popular singer and drug trafficker; becoming one. Paraphrasing Barthes (1991), in myth we find the tridimensional pattern: the signifier, the signified and the sign. However, myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before: it is a second-order semiological system. A system in which a sign — the associative total of a concept and an image — in the first system becomes a mere signifier in the second. The materials of mythical speech — the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc., — are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by the myth. Which wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign.

As explained by Barthes (1991), in myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to the other: a linguistic system, which is a signification. He, also says, that we cannot say too often that semiology can have its unity only at the level of forms, not contents; because its field is limited, with only one operation: reading or deciphering. Which he calls language-object, and this is where myth gains the order to build its own system. However, myth itself has a second language, a metalanguage, in which one speaks about the first. Consequently, a semiotician will only need to know its total term, or global sign, as this term lends itself to myth.

The Narco Jr. played by a popular urban/pop singer, is a good example of a mythical concept: the two individuals becoming one. Both powerful and wealthy, well-known, admired[4] by some, hated by others. In short, each of them, is the sum of diverse signs. As a consequence, together they create new ones, even, a global sign — the character in the series, Kitty Páez and Bad Bunny — the urban drug trafficker. And, finally, a new signification, through which the receivers of the myth, in this case the public, assimilate the hegemonic discourse, that prevails in our society:

> On the plane of language, that is, as the final term of the first system, I shall call the signifier: *meaning* (*my name is lion, a Negro is giving the French salute*); on the plane of myth, I shall call it: *form*. In the case of the signified, no ambiguity is possible: we shall retain the name *concept*. The third term is the correlation of the first two: in the linguistic system, it is the *sign*; but it is not possible to use this word again without ambiguity, since in myth (and this is the chief peculiarity of the latter), the signifier is already formed by the *signs* of the language. I shall call the third term of myth the *signification*. This word is here all the better justified since myth has in fact a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us. (Barthes 1991: 115)

Bad Bunny is not known for being an actor, people recognise him as a singer. He has an extensive fan base, which sees him playing a 'thug — a man who is violent and a criminal' linked to drug trafficking, and this activity is idealised by his fans. He transfers the meaning of himself, what he represents, to the character, and that is how the audience that follows him and watches the show interprets it. Having an artist like Bad Bunny adds a kind of coolness to the character or at least a kind of update to the figure of the drug trafficker in particular, attacking the macho culture closely linked to drug lords — powerful and violent surrounded by many women as their partners:
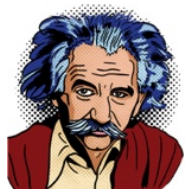
> The word *macho* translates to male, but the stereotype of how a man should act is continually discussed within Latin countries. If a man defies the norms of how he should act, he is seen as an outsider and is typically shunned by his community. Seeing a Latino artist like Bad Bunny is rare within the community, which is why his image makes such an impact. He isn't afraid to be vulnerable within his lyrics, embracing femininity and discussing topics that are taboo within Latin countries: LGBTQ+ and feminist rights. (Gómez, 2022)

Although, it is part of a fiction, the line with reality is blurred, because it is inspired by a person who existed and committed crimes. For someone who watches *Narcos: Mexico* and doesn't know who 'Kitty' Páez is, but does know who Bad Bunny is, the latter will weigh more than the former when creating meaning about the character. The foregoing perpetuates, as we have already mentioned, the idealisation of drug traffickers/lords in pop culture.

Conclusions

To conclude, Netflix uses this myth — Bad Bunny as a Narco Jr. — as a marketing effort to attract young audiences and continue to monetise with original stories. At the end of the day, Netflix is a business that is sustained by user subscriptions, as well as views of its content.

Then again, Netflix markets products in and for a hypermodern capitalist society, one of the cruellest forms of capitalism, as Gilles Lipovetsky (2006[2004]) proposes we went from postmodernity to a hypermodernity.

Where hyper-consumerism is king, or anything that has the prefix hyper and regulates our actions:

> Hypercapitalism, hyperclass, hyperpower, hyperterrorism, hyperindividualism, hypermarket, hypertext - is there anything that isn't 'hyper'? Is there anything now that does not reveal a modernity raised to the nth power? The climate of epilogue is being followed by the awareness of a headlong rush forwards, of unbridled modernization comprised of galloping commercialization, economic deregulation, and technical and scientific developments being unleashed with effects that are heavy with threats as well as promises. (Lipovetsky 2006: 55)

Lipovetsky (2006) continues to establish the impact of these developments and mercantile relations on society, and on individuals, highlighting the contradictions with which we live:

> The frenzied escalation of 'more, always more' has now infiltrated every sphere of collective life. Even individual behaviour is caught up in the machinery of excess: witness the mania for consumption, the practice of drug-taking in athletics, the vogue for extreme sports, the phenomenon of serial killers, bulimia and anorexia, obesity, compulsions and addictions. Two opposite trends can be discerned. On the one hand, more than ever, individuals are taking care of their bodies, are obsessed by health and hygiene, and obey medical guide-lines. On the other hand, individual pathologies are proliferating, together with the consumption characteristic of anomie, and anarchic behaviour. (Lipovetsky 2006: 58)

Based on Lipovetsky's ideas (2006), in the hypermodern age we live in a culture that promotes the pursuit of fleeting pleasures. A cult for the present:

> A whole hedonistic and psychological culture is born that encourages the immediate satisfaction of needs, stimulates the urgency of pleasures, flatters the expansion of oneself, puts the paradise of well-being, comfort and leisure on a pedestal. Consume with impatience, travel, have fun, give up nothing: after the policies of the radiant future, consumption has come as the promise of a euphoric present. (Lipovetsky 2006: 64)

The fixation on the ephemeral has guided us towards mass consumption in which everything has an expiration date and we are in a constant collective search for what must come next:

> At the center of the reorganization of the regime of social time is the passage from productive capitalism to an economy of consumption and mass communication, the replacement of a rigorous and disciplinary society by a «fashion-society», restructured from top to bottom by techniques of the ephemeral, renewal and permanent seduction. From industrial objects to free time, from sports to games, from advertising to information, from hygiene to education, from beauty to food, the accelerated expiration of products appears everywhere […] (Lipovetsky 2006: 63)

For Lipovetsky's (2006) proposal we could add Guy Debord's (1994[1967]) who claims that we live in a 'society of the spectacle', which appears at once as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification. As a part of society, it is that sector where all attention and all consciousness converges, it

is the locus of illusion and false consciousness: "The spectacle is not a collection of image; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (Debord 1994: 2).

> In all its specific manifestations – news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment – the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life. It is the omnipresent celebration of a choice already made in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice. In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system. It further ensures the permanent presence of that justification, for it governs almost all time spent outside the production process itself [...] The language of the spectacle is composed of signs of the dominant organization of production — signs which are at the same time the ultimate end-products of that organization. (Debord 1994: 2-3)

Furthermore, Bauman (2007) states that a society of consumers stands for a peculiar set of existential conditions under which the probability is high that most men and women will embrace the consumerist rather than any other culture. In other words, the consumers will stand for the kind of society that promotes, encourages, or enforces the choice of a consumerist lifestyle and life strategy, and they will dislike all alternative cultural options; following the precepts, is the approved choice and a condition of membership.

It has been shown that, over the creation of mythical concepts, such as 'the cool drug trafficker', we can see the goals intended to be achieved in a consumer society: to have money, power, be known by many, have beautiful women at your disposal. In other words, own what you can in a short time, everything that can give you pleasure. Through the idealisation of drug traffickers as cool, and connecting with young Latin audiences through a pop ideal. Netflix has contributed to the notion of the drug trafficker as a celebrity, and it has made the history and cultural memory of Mexico a source of entertainment worldwide.

This is largely because Netflix produces hypermodern products, which are part of a contradictory era. Where people look to have a good time while watching a show about criminals, death, and drug trafficking. We turn on Netflix to blank our minds. We look for an escape. Something that does not make us think or reflect, something that entertains us. Perhaps fictional content with sparks of drama for instance, but we do this without thinking that what we call fiction is the daily reality for many.

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Notes

1 The concept can designate culture as it stems from the experience of people in everyday life, as well as the commercially successful products of mass communication, etc. (Hall 2002 [1981])

2 Also termed the video streaming industry, refers to services that charge users a monthly subscription fee for streaming of content housed on their platforms. e.g., Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, offer unlimited access to their content libraries for a monthly subscription fee. Movies and TV series can be streamed to various supported connected devices. The SVoD market does not include ad-supported services, pay-per-view offerings or services that require a pay-TV subscription (e.g., HBO Go) (Statista, 2021).

3 Young men from wealthy families in Tijuana who were linked to the Arellano Félix cartel. They trafficked drugs to the United States and were hit men for the cartel.

4 Although this is not the case with 'Kitty' Páez, it has been noted how people dress their children as drug lords on Halloween. Although for them it is a joke, in some sense it is also a reflection of admiration for those figures of power in Latin America. For further reading:
Frisk, Adam 2015. Child dressed in Pablo Escobar Halloween costume spurs backlash, *Global News*. Retrieved from: https://globalnews.ca/news/2306856/child-dressed-in-pablo-escobar-halloween-costume-spurs-backlash/, 29.05.22.

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