

Reclaiming Rage as Utopian Force: Exploring a Latin American Ecodystopia

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Abstract

Long dismissed as irrational and destructive, rage emerges in the context of contemporary social and environmental crises as a vehicle of resistance and a catalyst for transformation. This paper explores the role of rage as a collective utopian force in Michel Nieva's *La infancia del mundo* (2023), focusing on the character of the dengue child. Initially marginalized, silenced, and reduced to a discarded being, the dengue child represents a figure of social exclusion and systemic violence. The narrative traces the character's journey from passivity and vulnerability to self-determined agency and a radical redefinition of their identity. In contrast to the dominant forms of violence that uphold power structures, the dengue child's rage manifests as a counter-hegemonic force — an anarchic and collective rebellion against established norms. This paper emphasizes that, far from being destructive, rage holds the potential to reconfigure societal and environmental relations by offering a critique of the technocapitalist order and opening the door to alternative political imaginaries.

Keywords

Ecodystopia, Anarchic rage, Power structures, Social exclusion, Collective resistance, Political critique, Ecological crisis

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Introduction

In recent decades, literary imaginaries have increasingly focused on the future and the possible end of the world, establishing these themes as central concerns within contemporary narrative production. Speculative narratives have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to expand across diverse formats—from literature to cinema, video games to television series, as well as interactive and augmented reality experiences. This transmedial expansion (Jenkins 2008) is often presented as a promise of immersive engagement and the construction of complex narrative worlds.

However, while this trend reflects a compelling and necessary development in contemporary cultural production, it is not devoid of contradictions. On the one hand, speculative fiction presents itself as a tool of aesthetic renewal and of democratized access to narrative. On the other, it runs the risk of becoming an imaginative strategy aligned with neoliberal logics, where the literary work is subsumed into a broader commercial apparatus.

This paper is situated within the broader difficulty of imagining futures beyond the frameworks imposed by late capitalism. As Mark Fisher argues in *Capitalist Realism* (2018), our cultural moment is defined by a flattened temporality and a pervasive sense of futurelessness — a condition that paradoxically reinforces the neoliberal status quo. Echoing Fredric Jameson, Fisher famously claims that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. In response to this imaginative impasse, the present study seeks to engage with narratives that attempt to envision the collapse of both capitalism and the world as we know it, in order to collectively reimagine alternative modes of existence.

From this perspective, speculative fiction—particularly in its recon-

structive and community-oriented forms—emerges as a privileged site for the elaboration of alternative future imaginaries. As Didi-Huberman (2009) suggests, turning to the resources of desire and lived experience can displace the pessimism of dominant visual regimes, offering alternative cognitive configurations. Literature, in this context, can play a crucial role in reawakening critical consciousness through the activation of collective and plural processes of reconstruction.

Within this speculative horizon, the ecodystopian mode¹ occupies a central position. As Malvestio (2022) argues, ecodystopias combine features of both dystopia—extrapolating present sociopolitical and ecological crises into a deteriorated future²—and post-apocalyptic fiction, which imagines life after systemic collapse. These narratives magnify the environmental consequences of our current world, often from a pivotal moment of rupture, and speculate on the forms of survival and resistance that might follow.

Crucially, ecodystopias are not only spaces of loss and collapse, but also narrative laboratories for imagining transformation. While they depict the worsening of current ecological and sociopolitical conditions, they often contain—embedded within their ruins—a utopian impulse that gestures toward alternative modes of existence. It is precisely this latent, forward-looking energy that Ruth Levitas (2013) seeks to capture by redefining utopia as *utopianism*: not a static endpoint, but a critical method for interrogating the present and shaping future possibilities. This methodological shift foregrounds desire, process, and speculation over prescriptive blueprints, allowing us to discern faint yet persistent traces of hope even in the most desolate imaginaries.

Fredric Jameson (2009) expands on this idea, viewing utopianism as a means of reactivating our dormant political and social imagination. For Jameson, its value lies not in prescriptive models, but in reasserting collective life and social bonds in opposition to individualism and market logic. Similarly, Tom Moylan (2021) calls for a grounded utopianism that, while rooted in historical and local struggles, can serve as a shared horizon of resistance against ecological and capitalist collapse.

¹ I use the term *mode* instead of *genre*, drawing on Remo Ceserani's definition in *Guida allo studio della letteratura* (1999), where a *literary mode* is understood as a set of thematic, stylistic, and tonal features that express a particular way of representing reality, often cutting across genres and historical periods.

² See Claeys 2017.

This paper draws on this theoretical framework to examine *La infancia del mundo* (2023) by Michel Nieva, exploring how the text articulates rage as a utopian force—a generative impulse that unsettles dominant orders and opens space for alternative futures.

The Infected Horizon

In a world teetering on the brink of ecological collapse and political violence, a powerful force often dismissed as destructive — rage — emerges as a transformative catalyst for change. In the midst of capitalist exploitation and environmental decay, *La infancia del mundo* (2023) by Michel Nieva challenges us to rethink the potential of rage. Rather than seeing it as a source of division, Nieva presents rage as a vital space of resistance, renewal, and utopian possibility. This exploration of rage offers a radical vision of hope, urging us to confront the crises of our time with the urgency and imagination necessary to reshape the future. Through this lens, the novel invites us to harness our deepest emotions, turning fury into a force for collective action and ecological justice.

Published by Anagrama and already translated into English and French, this third novel by Argentine author Michel Nieva builds on his earlier works, *¿Sueñan los gauchoides con ñandúes eléctricos?* (2013) and *Ascenso y apogeo del Imperio Argentino* (2018). Alongside his fiction, Nieva's critical essays *Tecnología y barbarie* and *Ciencia ficción capitalista* (both 2024) are essential for understanding his narrative project.

La infancia del mundo critiques techno-capitalism, corporate power, and virofinance through a gaucho-punk ecodystopia. Nieva merges the cyberpunk genre with gauchesque cultural memory³, displacing future imaginaries into a present deeply rooted in extractivist histories.

The narrative opens with the geographic reconfiguration of the Argentine territory as envisioned by Nieva in the year 2272, clearly depicted

³ Michel Nieva's idiolect uniquely blends the *gauchesque*—a genre rooted in 19th-century Argentine literature that mythologizes the rural outlaw figure of the gaucho—with cyberpunk's dystopian, high-tech urban futures. This fusion is possible in Argentina due to the enduring symbolic role of the gaucho as both a national icon and a figure of resistance, which allows Nieva to reframe historical narratives of marginality, violence, and state control within speculative, tech-infused scenarios. The result is a powerful critique of contemporary neoliberalism and environmental collapse through a distinctly local, yet globally resonant, literary lens.

through two maps in the book (on pages 13 and 77), marking the division between the two sections of the novel: *En el Caribe Pampeano* and *En el Caribe Antártico*. In this scenario, Patagonia has been transformed into an archipelago due to the melting of glaciers and the rising sea levels. The historic Pampean city of Victorica, the narrative's focal point, is now a strategic port in interoceanic maritime trade. However, alongside apparent prosperity, this transformation also brings urban disorder, widespread violence, and radical forms of inequality.

De un día para el otro, La Pampa pasó de ser un árido y moribundo desierto en el confín de la Tierra, resecaado por siglos de monocultivo de girasol y de soja, a la única vía, junto al Canal de Panamá, de navegación interoceánica de todo el continente. Está inesperada metamorfosis insufló a la economía regional de constantes y succulentos ingresos por tarifas portuarias, además de que le dio acceso a noveles y paradisíacas playas que atrajeron a veraneantes del mundo entero. Sin embargo, los mejores balnearios [...] eran propiedad exclusiva de hoteles privados y de mansiones de veraneantes extranjeros.⁴ (Nieva 2023: 21-22, from now on IM)

This passage clearly illustrates how the geographic reconfiguration of Argentina, while ostensibly framed as an improvement in living conditions, ultimately serves to reinforce the power of large private capital. Rather than promoting equity, it contributes to the further marginalization of subaltern classes and exacerbates existing social inequalities. Within this context, virofinance occupies a central role in the economic policies of Victorica. Here, figures such as the billionaire Noah Nuclopio orchestrate a necropolitical strategy by deliberately engineering epidemics in laboratory settings, profiting from the management and eventual eradication of the very diseases they have helped to create. Moreover, Nuclopio, a satirical

⁴ From one day to the next, La Pampa went from being an arid and dying desert on the edge of the Earth, dried up by centuries of sunflower and soybean monoculture, to the only route, along with the Panama Canal, for interoceanic navigation across the entire continent. This unexpected metamorphosis breathed new life into the regional economy with steady and substantial income from port fees, as well as providing access to new and idyllic beaches that attracted holidaymakers from all over the world. However, the best resorts [...] were exclusively owned by private hotels and the mansions of foreign holidaymakers. (my translation)

alter ego of Elon Musk, promotes extraplanetary geoengineering as salvation while replicating the same colonial and extractive logics on new frontiers. Through his investments, entire ecosystems are reconstructed on other planets — echoing Musk's SpaceX ambitions. These projects, Nieva (2024) suggests, commodify nature while erasing indigenous claims to land.

La posibilidad de recrear en otros planetas valiosísimos y ya perdidos ecosistemas autóctonos de la Tierra, pero sin la inconveniencia económica y política de lidiar con sus habitantes originarios. Así la flora y la fauna nativas y sus fascinantes paisajes no solo adquirirían el estatuto de mercancía en estado puro, recurso ilimitado capaz de reproducirse y extraerse infinitamente, sino que además se sorteaba el obstáculo tedioso de las poblaciones aborígenes y su insoportable sentimentalismo por la tierra [...] Esta nueva tecnología, que permitía la replicación de largos procesos geológicos de millones de años en poco menos de días o semanas, disparaba un radical nuevo entendimiento sobre qué es un lugar [...] Ciertamente, no una irrepetible excepcionalidad para nostálgicos [...] un lugar, no es más que precisas fórmulas geológicas que permiten calcarla a gran escala en cualquier lugar del cosmos.⁵ (IM: 134)

Nieva offers an ironic view of “place,” presenting it as something that can be reproduced through simple geological formulas. This stands in stark contrast to an ecological understanding of territory as a dynamic and relational web that includes human and non-human actors, material processes, and symbolic imaginaries. From this perspective, territory is not replicable; it emerges from situated and entangled relationships that cannot simply

⁵ The possibility of recreating on other planets the Earth's invaluable and now lost native ecosystems, but without the economic and political inconvenience of dealing with their original inhabitants. Thus, native flora and fauna and their fascinating landscapes not only acquired the status of pure commodities, unlimited resources capable of being reproduced and extracted infinitely, but also circumvented the tedious obstacle of indigenous populations and their unbearable sentimentality for the land [...] This new technology, which allowed the replication of long geological processes lasting millions of years in just a few days or weeks, triggered a radical new understanding of what a place is [...] Certainly, not a unique exception for nostalgics [...] a place is nothing more than precise geological formulas that allow it to be replicated on a large scale anywhere in the cosmos. (my translation)

be transplanted elsewhere. The erasure of this complexity — reducing territory to a neutral, extractable surface — is what enables the repetition of colonial violence in new guises. The virus thus becomes a potent metaphor for this recursive logic: like colonial domination, it mutates, adapts, and returns. In this sense, the cyclical nature of violence in Latin America is not a mere repetition of the past, but its reactivation.

This critique is further elaborated through a narrative device central to the novel's speculative world-building: the videogame *Cristianos vs. Indios*, which simulates the nineteenth-century wars for control over the Argentine pampas and, in its fourth edition—*La Conquista del Desierto Espacial* (*Cristianos vs. Indios 4*)—extends the same colonial logic into an extraplanetary frontier. The metaverse in which the game unfolds, accessible exclusively through this videogame series, adds a metafictional layer that intensifies the critique of colonial violence and its enduring temporalities.

The character of El Dulce—Noah Nuclopio's childlike counterpart—becomes emblematic in this context. His access to the game through a pirated version foregrounds Nieva's use of counter-technological strategies to parody the elitist aesthetic of Global North science fiction, while simultaneously interrogating a pervasive techno-fetishism that portrays technology as a universal remedy. In practice, however, this technological promise materializes as precarious, distorted, and fundamentally inaccessible for marginalized populations.

The incorporation of the videogame within the narrative serves to destabilize historical coordinates not only spatially—by immersing the characters in a metaverse that reproduces a historicized past—but also temporally, as it alters the reader's perception of the boundaries between diegetic reality and ludic fiction: «Y ya no se pudo separar nunca más el tiempo, ni los siglos de las horas, ni las horas de los días, que sucumbieron al enjambre cósmico de la previda»⁶ (IM: 112).

This narrative shift produces a disarticulation of the conventional divisions between past, present, and future, thereby opening a space for the exploration of alternative temporalities. The structure of the novel itself is built around a continuous engagement with the concept of *infancy*, articulated across multiple registers. In *La infancia del mundo*, the notion of infancy as an opening to the future—a latent force and a space of becoming—is developed

⁶ «And it was no longer possible to separate time, nor the centuries from the hours, nor the hours from the days, which succumbed to the cosmic swarm of the foreseen» (my translation).

along two principal axes. On the one hand, there is the “infancy of the world”, embodied by the figure of the *Gran Anarca*, a primordial and untamable force that eludes commodification and evokes a chaotic, early state of the Earth. On the other hand, there is “human infancy” or childhood, represented by the character of El Dulce, whose transformation over the course of the narrative culminates in his becoming Noah Nuclopio, a symbol of radical capitalism. Alongside these two forms, the figure of the dengue child, the protagonist, emerges as a liminal presence who, by the end of the narrative, appears to reconcile with the wild and untameable dimension of the Earth itself, ultimately revealing himself as a living manifestation of the *Gran Anarca*.

In other words, the notion of infancy—as a space of potential and an opening toward the future—takes on multiple configurations in *La infancia del mundo*, shaping divergent temporal trajectories that both reflect and at times subvert dominant logics. The arc of the character El Dulce paradigmatically embodies the continuity of colonial violence: his development traverses and intertwines the artificial space-time of the videogame and the diegetic reality, culminating in the final section of the novel, which corresponds to the game level that envisions an extraplanetary conquest. In fact, El Dulce, a young bully from the marginalized outskirts of Victorica, transforms into Noah Nuclopio, a billionaire executive of a powerful multinational corporation.

In stark contrast to this trajectory, the infancy of the dengue child and that of the planet follow a path that eludes capitalist logics of accumulation. Their evolution unfolds outside—and in defiance of—any attempt at domination or rationalization. The dengue child, as a liminal and indeterminate figure, evolves according to an atemporal logic, ultimately achieving a cyclical reconciliation—in an act of radical and symbolic identification—with the *Gran Anarca*.

The *Gran Anarca* represents that which escapes commodification: an irreducible remainder, a core of resistant alterity, the vital element that opposes the assimilation of life into the market. Within this figure lies the possibility of imagining alternative worlds, structured around the chaotic and subversive energy of utopian thought. This underlying tension permeates the entire novel, crystallizing in a recurring question posed to children (El Dulce and the dengue child), which attempts to establish a bridge between human and planetary infancy: «¿Quieres que hablemos de La Gran Anarca?»⁷ (IM: 35). This question haunts the character of El Dulce—who,

⁷ «Do you want to talk about La Gran Anarca?» (my translation).

absorbed in his own world and the virtual reality of the video game, is unable to confront it—until it finally receives a decisive and affirmative response from the dengue child figure: «—¿Quieres que hablemos de La Gran Anarca? —Sí- respondió sin dudar la niña dengue. —La Gran Anarca. La Gran Anarca eres tú»⁸ (IM: 154).

In conclusion, *La infancia del mundo* presents a reality in which techno-capitalism functions as a viral agent, capable of infecting the Argentine territory and extending across multiple temporal and spatial axes, intertwining past, present, and future, reality and simulation, global and planetary scales⁹. Opposed to this infectious logic is a utopian and anarchic force—embodied by the dengue child—who, in a seemingly paradoxical twist, emerges from the very same virus (dengue) designed to generate profit for a privileged elite. Yet this anarchic rage, generated from within the system, reconnects with the Earth's untamed and chaotic origins, asserting itself as a subversive force with the potential to destabilize the system's foundations.

Anarchic Rage from the Global South

As previously highlighted, one of the central figures in *La infancia del mundo* is the mutant character of the dengue child. This figure exists at the margins of humanity, if not relegated to the status of discarded waste, as exemplified by the judgment of the community: «Nadie quería al niño dengue»¹⁰ (IM: 15). Michel Nieva¹¹ constructs this character in a specific historical moment: the Covid-19 pandemic, a virus that originated in a highly technologized setting, like China, and initially affected the countries considered economically and scientifically more advanced.

In parallel with the global spread of Covid-19, there was a quiet resurgence of the dengue virus, which struck particularly hard in many regions

⁸ «'Do you want to talk about La Gran Anarca?' 'Yes,' replied the dengue girl without hesitation. 'La Gran Anarca. You are La Gran Anarca'» (my translation).

⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009) distinguishes between global time—tied to modern politics and capitalism—and planetary time, aligned with geological and climatic processes. The climate crisis has intensified tensions between these scales, confronting humanity with non-human temporalities and making time itself a historical force.

¹⁰ «Nobody wanted the dengue boy» (my translation).

¹¹ See the interview given by Michel Nieva on July 6, 2024: <https://youtu.be/035jEHLpxLk?si=-Mm8eTd6kKiZmA46>.

of the Global South. Unlike Covid-19—which prompted an immediate international response, with significant investments in research and rapid vaccine distribution—dengue was largely ignored. As Nieva himself observes, in many areas of Latin America, individuals exhibiting symptoms compatible with dengue were not even subjected to diagnostic testing. This systematic strategy of relegating the dengue epidemic to the margins of public discourse, highlighting how medical and health visibility is often subordinated to economic and geopolitical criteria. In this context, dengue did not represent an urgent concern or a profitable opportunity for the global technocapitalist system, and as such, it was neglected.

Vector-borne diseases, such as dengue or Ebola, endemic in much of the tropical and subtropical regions of the Global South, do not constitute a profitable market for the international pharmaceutical industry. As a result, research and the development of vaccines or effective therapies have not received the same push reserved for diseases considered a priority in the Global North. The case of dengue is particularly significant: despite its growing spread and the serious health and social consequences it entails, the medical response was fragmented, late, and insufficient. In many parts of Latin America, the situation remained critical until the arrival of winter, which temporarily interrupted the life cycle of the mosquitoes carrying the virus, without, however, leading to structural measures or effective prevention strategies.

Nieva's decision to construct his protagonist as a monstrous, mutant creature—half human, half mosquito, a carrier of an invisible yet potentially lethal virus—assumes emblematic significance. This figure, over the course of the narrative, transforms into a vehicle of resistance and utopian possibility, even though it begins as an antihero: marginalized, bullied, and constantly belittled by both his mother and peers.

Nieva carefully sketches the portrait of the dengue child in the early pages of the novel, particularly focusing on how the character perceives himself through the judgmental gaze of others. Initially, he defines himself as a male subject¹², constantly subjected to control and evaluation by

¹² A note on pronoun usage: throughout the text, the pronominal references to the dengue child shift in accordance with the character's evolving gender identity. Initially, the analysis focuses on "he/his," reflecting the character's first gender presentation. In the conclusion, however, the pronouns will shift to "she/her" to acknowledge the character's final reconfiguration. These changes are intentional and aim to trace the character's fluid gender trajectory.

others. Notably, the verb “juzgaba” (to judge) appears frequently, reflecting the oppressive nature of a normative, stigmatizing gaze. The dengue child grows up without familial ties or significant social relationships; his inner life, in the first chapters, is dominated by a dense web of obsessive thoughts about his identity, his origins, and the legitimacy of his existence.

This condition of alienation is formally translated in the writing through the persistent use of repetition, particularly evident when it takes the form of a sort of invective-poetry directed at the protagonist’s monstrous body.

Donde la madre hubiera querido piecitos gordos con deditos enternecedores de bebé, el niño dengue tenía patas bicolores y penosamente delgadas, finas como cuatro agujas.

Donde la madre hubiera querido la pancita, el niño dengue tenía un abdomen áspero, duro y traslúcido, en el que se vislumbraba un manojito de tripas verdosas y malolientes.

Donde la madre hubiera querido bracitos, brotaban alas, y sus nervaduras, como várices de viejo podrido, y donde la madre hubiera querido sus risitas y encantadores gimoteos, solo había un zumbido constante y enloquecedor, que quemaba los nervios hasta del ser más tranquilo.¹³ (IM: 19)

Repetition thus becomes a sign of a mind trapped in the loop of its marginalization, but also the starting point for a subsequent process of identity and narrative transformation.

Michel Nieva’s decision to construct his protagonist as a figure socially perceived as waste, a discarded remnant of humanity, is situated within what Gisela Heffes (2013) and Marco Armiero (2021) define as a “politics of disposal”. This politics invites a rethinking of dynamics of exclusion and power from a bio-ecocritical perspective, interrogating the ways in which

¹³ Where the mother would have wanted chubby little feet with adorable baby toes, the dengue boy had two-coloured legs that were painfully thin, as thin as four needles.

Where the mother would have wanted a little tummy, the dengue boy had a rough, hard, translucent abdomen, through which a bundle of greenish, foul-smelling intestines could be glimpsed.

Where the mother would have wanted little arms, wings sprouted, their veins like the varicose veins of a rotten old man, and where the mother would have wanted his giggles and charming whimpers, there was only a constant, maddening buzzing that burned the nerves of even the calmest being. (my translation)

marginalized bodies are systematically expelled from the social body.

Within this framework, the initial condition of the dengue child— isolated, stigmatized, silenced—is marked by a passivity that, however, serves a dual narrative function: on one hand, it allows the reader to empathize with the victim of widespread and systematic violence; on the other, it prepares the ground for a future rupture, a subjective and political transformation that will challenge the normative hierarchies from which the character was initially oppressed.

The dengue child is often considered repulsive and frightening: «¡Horror siniestro de las más amargas verdades!»¹⁴ (IM: 18). According to Cecilia Macón (2024), among all the affects, disgust stands out for its performative power: it is not merely a subjective reaction, but an act that produces concrete effects, contributing to the simultaneous construction of both the subject who feels repulsion and the object who is its recipient. To label something as “repulsive” means, in other words, to establish moral and identity boundaries, determining who belongs to the community and who is excluded from it.

In this logic, what is perceived as excremental—impure, degraded, irreducible to order—acts as a disturbing element that disrupts the symbolic coherence of the collective, undermining the project of a homogeneous, rational, and cohesive community. Abjection¹⁵ thus becomes a breaking point that exposes the contradictions of the system, revealing the latent tensions that run through it. Disgust, therefore, functions as a political and cultural device that not only reflects but also reinforces the dynamics of marginalization.

In Nieva’s narrative, this dynamic is powerfully manifest in an emblematic episode in which the dengue child is publicly ridiculed and humiliated by a group of peers led by the character of El Dulce. It is precisely in this moment, laden with symbolic and performative violence, that the

¹⁴ «Sinister horror of the bitterest truths!» (my translation).

¹⁵ For a deeper understanding of this concept, see *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (2024) by Julia Kristeva. The author defines abjection as a profound psychological and cultural reaction to what disturbs identity, system, and order—what is cast off, yet not fully separate. The abject provokes both repulsion and fascination, lying at the boundary between subject and object, life and death. Kristeva emphasizes its contradictory nature: the abject is something we reject to maintain our sense of self, but it also irresistibly draws us in, revealing the fragility of our constructed boundaries. It is not simply filth or impurity, but a disturbing reminder of our own materiality and the instability of symbolic structures.

narrative undergoes a radical turn, foreshadowing a process of subjective reclamation that will transform humiliation into revolt.

Lo cierto es que el niño dengue, contrariamente a la reacción que siempre mostraba ante los atropellos padecidos por su condición mestiza, no se angustió ni deseó estar muerto ni sus antenitas peludas temblaron de rabia o de dolor. El truculento canto en ronda (con importantes aciertos poéticos, hay que admitir) de los varoncitos liderados por el Dulce no arredró ni una gota de su temple [...] Porque cuando el niño dengue puso en la mira de sus omatidios al Dulce, quien, aún con los pantalones bajos, lo señalaba y se burlaba, ya no vio siquiera a un antagonista, siquiera a un par, siquiera un humano [...] Arrastrado por el vértigo de esta nueva e incontenible necesidad una brusca revelación cruzó las peludas antenas del niño dengue, de forma más clara y lúcida que nunca pese a la indistinta vocinglería que lo envolvía. El niño dengue, no sin cierta incongruencia, razonó: no soy un niño, sino una niña. La niña dengue.¹⁶ (IM: 24)

This key moment in the text marks a pivotal point in the trajectory of the dengue child character, who undergoes a dual transformation: from a state of passivity and vulnerability to a reclamation of agency, and from a perception of himself as male to a self-determined female subjectivity. In a context of systemic violence and public humiliation, the character does not succumb but instead experiences an inner shift that radically overturns the situation. The revelation of their gender coincides with the assertion of a new active subjective position.

The change is not framed as an impulsive reaction to the violence endured, but as a conscious and affirmative act that redefines the charac-

¹⁶ The truth is that the dengue boy, contrary to the reaction he always showed to the abuses suffered because of his mixed-race status, did not become distressed or wish he were dead, nor did his hairy antennae tremble with rage or pain. The gruesome chant (with significant poetic merit, it must be admitted) of the boys led by Dulce did not shake his composure in the slightest [...] Because when the dengue boy set his sights on Dulce, who, even with his trousers down, pointed at him and mocked him, he no longer saw an antagonist, or even a peer, or even a human being [...] Carried away by the vertigo of this new and irrepressible need, a sudden revelation crossed the hairy antennae of the dengue boy, more clearly and lucidly than ever, despite the indistinct clamour that surrounded him. The dengue boy, not without a certain incongruity, reasoned: I am not a boy, but a girl. The dengue girl. (my translation)

ter's place in the world. It is not merely a transformation, but a deliberate disidentification with a previously assumed self-image cultivated in the silence of marginalization.

This dual shift—from object of mockery to subject with vision, from boy to girl—marks a profound narrative turning point, giving rise to a path of resistance and redefinition. The emergence of gender subjectivity is inseparable from an affective and political awakening¹⁷: it changes not only the body but also the character's relationship with their time, space, and the power structures that had until then constrained their existence.

The anarchic rage that emanates from the dengue girl is deeply connected to the *Gran Anarca*, a primordial and chaotic entity. This rage is not aimed at restoring a lost equilibrium, nor is it a strategy to gain power within dominant logics. Rather, this rage manifests as a dissident force that breaks the imposed coordinates of identity and obedience. The connection with the *Gran Anarca* suggests an ontological kinship: both express an undisciplined and generative power, capable of overturning the established order and opening up an alternative space. In this sense, the rage of the dengue girl is not a symptom to be contained, but an affective and political resource, a utopian spark of deep communal revolution.

As Cecilia Macón (2024) observes, Michel Nieva does not offer a moral narrative: the protagonist's rage is neither didactic nor pedagogical but acts as a critical device highlighting the extreme vulnerability of the planet. Its emotional force accompanies and amplifies the portrayal of an irreversible bio-environmental crisis, prompting the reader to confront the possibility of extinction and the inherent destructiveness of the technocapitalist order.

However, Cecilia Macón's arguments become less convincing when considering the rage of the dengue girl from alternative theoretical perspectives. In his text *La politica della rabbia. Per una balistica filosofica* (2021), Franco Palazzi offers a philosophical-political re-examination of rage that overturns its traditional negative connotation. Far from being a mere impulsive, destructive, or blind reaction, rage is understood as an epistemic and political force capable of bringing structural injustices to light and

¹⁷ To further explore this issue and situate it within the broader context of anger as a discourse advanced by numerous feminist movements in Latin America, the reading of *Ya para siempre enrabradas* (2022) by Cristina Rivera Garza is recommended. This may offer a deeper understanding of how the gender shift of the dengue child, in connection with the theme of anger, emerges as a potential opening or possibility.

triggering transformative dynamics. Palazzi (2021) defines it as a situated knowledge, rooted in the bodies and historical experiences of oppression, capable of denouncing and exposing the contradictions of the present. From this perspective, rage gains political dignity, freeing it from the mechanisms of pathologization or moral neutralization, and elevating it as an affirmative and potentially revolutionary energy. Thus, it is not rage itself that is destructive, but the social and political conditions that generate it: injustice, exclusion, marginalization.

In *La infancia del mundo*, the rage of the dengue girl manifests through acts of extreme reactive violence. The entire text is permeated by multiple forms of violence: the playful and symbolic violence of the video game *Cristianos vs. Indios*, the educational and disciplinary violence exerted on El Dulce, the economic and political violence imposed by the elites on the most vulnerable classes, and, finally, the systemic violence of virofinance led by Noah Nuclopio. However, it is crucial to distinguish between the various forms of violence represented in the text. While many of these – such as those exercised by economic elites or financial systems – align with logic of dominance and control, the rage of the dengue-girl emerges as a counter-hegemonic violence. It does not reproduce oppressive dynamics but rather takes the form of a radical, community-based rebellion from below, an anarchic force that challenges the established order and overturns its symbolic and material hierarchies.

Mientras tanto, los mosquitos continuaban su pernicioso avance de caos y descontrol. Eran imparables. Eran cientos. Eran miles. Pero eran una. Una nube. Una nube zumbante y precipitada e inútil y acaso descontrolada o palpitante o venenosa como el amor, que había llegado a salvar a la madre envenenada, y haría cagar fuego a los turistas que hasta hacía un momento disfrutaban de un espectáculo único que nadie más podía disfrutar, porque en el futuro en el que transcurre esta historia solamente la gente con guita conocía y gozaba de lo que el planeta ya había perdido. Del frío blanco y del invierno hermoso que ahora se tenían con el color fétido de la inmunda mamífera sangre derramada.

¡Salve, nube dengue!¹⁸ (IM: 126)

¹⁸ Meanwhile, the mosquitoes continued their pernicious advance of chaos and disorder. They were unstoppable. There were hundreds of them. There were thousands of them. But they were one. A cloud. A buzzing, rushing, useless, perhaps uncontrolled or pulsating or poisonous cloud, like love, which had come

In support of this interpretation, Peter Gelderloos, in his essay *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (2007), offers a radical critique of the assumption that nonviolence is always the most just or effective strategy in political struggles. According to the author, this belief – often accepted uncritically – not only limits the scope of action for movements but ultimately strengthens the very power structures they seek to dismantle. Gelderloos (2007) demonstrates how nonviolence, presented as ethically superior, is frequently used to delegitimize more radical forms of dissent, particularly those coming from subaltern social groups who do not always have the privilege of choosing peaceful modes of resistance. When nonviolence becomes a normative ideology, it takes on a disciplining role: it limits conflict and transforms it into forms that are manageable and compatible with the established order, reducing protest to mere symbolic performance. In this sense, rather than threatening the system, it ends up protecting it.

Gelderloos (2007) – much like our utopian reading of the dengue girl's rage – does not advocate for the glorification of violence, but rather for a claim to the strategic autonomy of movements: the ability to choose the most appropriate methods of struggle, based on concrete material conditions. Resistance cannot be constrained by abstract moralistic criteria, which risk serving the maintenance of power rather than the pursuit of justice.

A significant example from the same Global South that gives rise to a work like *La infancia del mundo* is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its uprising in 2024. Originating in Chiapas, southeastern Mexico, the EZLN is an indigenous and revolutionary movement that declared war on the Mexican state on January 1, 1994, coinciding with the implementation of NAFTA. The movement fought for the dignity, autonomy, and defence of indigenous peoples. From its inception, the EZLN embodied a radically alternative form of insurrection: not oriented toward seizing power, but toward creating other worlds based on collective, communal, and self-managed processes. Thirty years after that moment, the Zapatista experience remains one

to save the poisoned mother and would make the tourists shit fire, who until a moment ago had been enjoying a unique spectacle that no one else could enjoy, because in the future in which this story takes place, only people with money knew and enjoyed what the planet had already lost. From the white cold and the beautiful winter that now had the foul colour of filthy mammalian blood spilled.

Hello, dengue cloud! (my translation)

of the most significant expressions of anti-capitalist resistance and radical political imagination in the Latin American context.

What makes the EZLN particularly relevant in the context of reflecting on the rage in *La infancia del mundo*—and specifically the anarchic rage expressed by the dengue girl—is its ability to transform a sentiment of exclusion and systemic violence into an autonomous, creative, and transformative political practice. Zapatista rage has never been reduced to an impulsive or destructive reaction¹⁹; instead, it has been a constitutive force that gave rise to a new political, ethical, and aesthetic horizon founded on justice, plurality, and self-determination. Like the rage of the protagonist in *La infancia del mundo*, the rage of the Zapatista communities is rooted in a history of marginalization and colonial violence, but it transforms this history into organizational power.

Conclusions

In *La infancia del mundo* (2023) by Michel Nieva, the protagonist's rage serves as a powerful and transformative force that goes beyond mere emotional reaction or personal catharsis. Rather than conforming to the codes of political respectability or self-restraint, the dengue girl channels her anger into a constitutive, radical energy that redefines her relationship with both the world and her identity. This transformation is rooted in the experience of systemic exclusion, which fuels a rage that is not only justified but also politically and epistemologically significant. As Palazzi (2021) notes, this kind of rage is often dismissed as pathological or destructive; however, in the context of the protagonist's journey, it emerges as a force capable of deconstructing the hegemonic symbolic order and challenging the oppressive structures that seek to suppress it.

This emotional upheaval, far from being a blind or indiscriminate reaction, is intimately connected to the protagonist's agency and her capacity to reimagine and reshape the world around her. The collective rage of the dengue girl offers a radical alternative to the capitalist order, one that questions the very foundations of power, identity, and social value. By rejecting the prescribed frameworks of nonviolence that often dilute resistance into

¹⁹ In particular, I refer to a statement by the Zapatista Army on 9 May 2014: <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2014/05/09/el-dolor-y-la-rabia/> and an article published 10 years later by Raúl Romero: <https://kaosenlared.net/mexico-ezln-30-anos-de-rabia-digna/>.

politically manageable forms of dissent, Nieva opens up a space for forms of struggle that are more disruptive, more authentic in their opposition to the prevailing norms. This is not to say that violence is glorified, but rather that the rejection of the status quo and the assertion of alternative possibilities must sometimes transcend conventional ethical boundaries if true change is to occur.

In this sense, the dengue girl's rage is emblematic not of a mere desire for personal redemption, but of the emergence of a new, collective vision. She becomes a symbol of a broader, more expansive resistance that seeks to liberate not only the individual but also the collective from the constraints of marginalization and oppression. The creative destruction of these constraints, encapsulated in the phrase «destrozándolo todo como solo los comienzos destrozan»²⁰ (IM: 158), points to the necessity of radical rupture as a means of forging new worlds—worlds in which dissent is not just a reaction, but a vital and visionary force capable of remaking the very structures that sought to exclude and degrade.

Through the dengue girl, Nieva ultimately suggests that rage, when channeled through a process of self-awareness and collective imagination, can become a transformative tool for social and political change. This transformation is not merely theoretical but points to the lived realities of those who exist on the margins, offering a critical reimagining of what it means to resist and what it takes to build a new world from the ruins of the old. The protagonist's journey underscores the importance of recognizing and embracing the subversive potential of emotions often deemed negative, as they can serve as the catalysts for the necessary upheavals that challenge the power structures that define and limit human existence.

²⁰ «destroying everything as only beginnings destroy» (my translation).

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