

Jimmy Wales

Huntsville, Estados Unidos de América, 1966
Cofundador de Wikipedia

Jimmy Wales, que trató de cercar el vacío que anida en todo lo importante, escogió hacerse el retrato en The London Library, en Londres.

Huntsville, USA, 1966
Co-founder of Wikipedia

Jimmy Wales, who attempted to fence the void that resides in everything important, chose to have his portrait taken at The London Library in London.

London Library. Londres,
Reino Unido, 2015

London Library. London, UK, 2015

No adie sabe qué cosa es –qué extraño artefacto, construcción, cúmulo de saberes– una biblioteca. Tampoco dónde se esconde el saber, ni se ha podido constatar si, como afirmaba en su relato Jorge Luis Borges, «La Biblioteca es una esfera cuyo centro cabal es cualquier hexágono, cuya circunferencia es inaccesible». ¿Dónde se encuentra ese centro cabal?

Quizás existe un vacío en el centro de todo lo importante, y algunos, tal vez incluso de manera un tanto precoz, dediquen su vida a completarlo. Este es el caso de un niño al que, a los tres años, le regalaron una enciclopedia. Aquel obsequio inocente sembró la semilla de una pasión que definiría su vida: la pasión por el saber. El niño, al que podemos imaginar avisado, curioso, ávido de conocimiento, pasaba largo tiempo husmeando entre las entradas de aquel fascinante templo de saber. Al principio, solía detenerse en los mapas, ilustraciones y las finas capas de celofán que descubrían partes desconocidas del cuerpo humano.

Luego, conforme pasaron los años, aprendió a leer y aquella fascinación inicial se vio truncada por la inquietud, porque el niño –que lo hemos imaginado avisado, curioso, ávido de conocimiento– se dio cuenta de que en aquellas preciadas páginas no estaba todo: ahí faltaban datos. De nuevo, el vacío. Así, el niño ideó un sistema rudimentario para ir completando la ausencia y trataba de buscar información en otros lados, en otros libros, la contrastaba y la iba añadiendo mediante notas adhesivas que subsanaban los errores de la enciclopedia.

El destino de Wikipedia parecía abocado al caos y, sin embargo, seguimos aquí, a hombros de este gigante, como en aquella frase atribuida a Bernardo de Chartres que dice que «somos como enanos a los hombros de gigantes. Podemos ver más, y más lejos que ellos, no por la agudeza de nuestra vista ni por la altura de nuestro cuerpo, sino porque somos levantados por su gran altura». Cada uno encuentra su manera de enfrentarse al vacío. Afortunadamente, Wales dio forma a la suya en beneficio nuestro y quizás por eso hoy sabemos un poco más acerca de nuestro mundo, podemos, incluso, ayudar a tejer todas estas redes que logran que el saber sea un poco más accesible.

No tenemos manera de averiguar si lo que deseaba

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thing important, and some, perhaps even from rather

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Wikipedia y el niño, que ahora ya es adulto, Jimmy

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Stephen Hawking

Oxford, Reino Unido, 1942-2018
Científico

Stephen Hawking escogió hacerse su retrato, que resultó ser su última fotografía en vida, en el Centre for Mathematical Sciences de Cambridge. Pero en la foto todo buen observador se dará cuenta de otra cosa. Poco antes de que tuviera lugar el disparo, el cielo encapotado se abrió y apareció, en el margen izquierdo de la fotografía, la Luna. De manera que podríamos decir que este es un retrato de Stephen Hawking mirando la Luna.

Oxford, UK, 1942-2018
Cientist

Stephen Hawking chose the Centre for Mathematical Sciences in Cambridge as the site of his portrait (which turned out to be the last photo taken of him in life). However, the careful observer will notice something else in the shot. Just before it was taken, the overcast sky opened up and the moon appeared in the left-hand corner of the frame. So we might say that this is a portrait of Stephen Hawking looking at the moon.

C uando a los 21 años fue diagnosticado de esclerosis lateral amiotrófica (ELA), Stephen Hawking afirmó que «La raza humana es tan insignificante en comparación con el Universo que estar discapacitado no tiene mucha importancia cósmica». Los médicos le dieron un año o dos de vida, a lo sumo, y vivió 55 más en una prórroga, también cósmica, que lo convirtió en astrofísico, cosmólogo, divulgador científico, ícono de la cultura popular y uno de los científicos contemporáneos más reconocidos.

Autor de la teoría del Big Bang y teórico de los agujeros negros, puso edad al Universo: nada más y nada menos que 13.700 millones de años y antes de eso no existía nada porque tampoco existía el tiempo. En 1988, su libro Breve historia del tiempo: del Big Bang a los agujeros negros se convirtió en un récord mundial Guinness al permanecer en la lista de libros más vendidos del Sunday Times durante cuatro años y medio. Aún así, como el libro versaba sobre conceptos poco accesibles para los no científicos, a Hawking le gustaba bromear diciendo que era el libro menos leído y más comprado de la historia. Por eso, en 2005, publicó una versión más accesible del original llamada Brevisima historia del tiempo.

Nunca ganó el Nobel –como la mayoría de nosotros– y escribió cinco libros para niños con su hija Lucy en los que un niño llamado George aprende sobre el Universo al viajar por él. Era británico, pero tenía acento americano. El sintetizador de voz que le permitía hablar era un DECTalk DT C01, un viejo equipo de 1986 que no quería actualizar porque aseguraba que era la voz que más le gustaba y que con ella, bromeaba, tenía más éxito con las mujeres. Sin ser actor, salió en la televisión y el cine.

Si la Edad Moderna empezó, simbólicamente, cuando Petrarcha ascendió al Mont Ventoux en 1336 y vio su reflejo interior en la tierra que se extendía sin límites frente a él, las investigaciones de Hawking, sus exploraciones y preguntas, nos llevan de vuelta a los griegos y a su relación con el cosmos, a Copérnico y las esferas celestes, a Galileo fascinado con su telescopio.

Nos llevan a todos los que, ávidos de conocimiento y saber, le dieron una vuelta al mundo tratando de acercar ese misterio que el cielo y el tiempo representan.

W hen, at the age of 21, he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Stephen Hawking said: "The human race is so puny compared to the universe that being disabled is not of much cosmic significance". The doctors gave him a year or two at most, but Hawking survived for another 55 in a reprieve – also cosmic – that enabled him to become an astrophysicist, cosmologist, science populariser, icon of popular culture and one of the best-known of all contemporary scientists.

Author of the Big Bang theory and theorist of black holes, Hawking gave the universe an age: no less than 13.7 billion years, before which nothing existed, since time did not exist either.

In 1988, his book A Brief History of Time: From Big Bang to Black Holes entered the Guinness book of records when it stayed on the Sunday Times bestseller list for four and a half years. Even so, as his book dealt with concepts that were not easily accessible to non-scientists, Hawking liked to joke that it was the least read and most bought book in history. That is why, in 2005, he published a more accessible version of his work, titled A Briefer History of Time.

He never won the Nobel Prize (like most of us) and he wrote five children's books with his daughter Lucy in which a boy called George learns about the universe as he travels in space.

Hawking was British, but he spoke with an American accent. The voice synthesiser that enabled him to speak was a DECTalk DT C01, an old device from 1986 that he didn't want to update because he claimed it was the voice he liked best and with it, he joked, he had most success with women. Although he was not an actor, he appeared regularly on television and in films.

If the Modern Age began, symbolically, in 1336, when Petrarch ascended Mont Ventoux and saw his inner reflection in the earth that stretched boundlessly before him, Hawking's investigations, his explorations and his questions take us back to the Greeks and their relationship with the Cosmos, to Copernicus and the celestial spheres, to Galileo, enthralled by his telescope, they take us back to all those who, thirsty for wisdom and knowledge, turned the world upside-down in their attempt to illuminate the mystery of time and the heavens.

Ferran Adrià

L'Hospitalet de Llobregat,
España, 1962
Chef

Ferran Adrià escogió hacerse el retrato en la Cala Montjoi, Roses, desde donde, armado de intuición y perseverancia, revolucionó la cocina mundial desde elBulli.

L'Hospitalet de Llobregat,
Spain, 1962
Chef

Ferran Adrià chose to be portrayed at Cala Montjoi, the cove in Roses where, armed with intuition and perseverance, he revolutionised world cuisine at elBulli.

Si te mueves mucho no sales bien en la foto, suelen decir a modo de consejo los que tratan de hacernos un retrato. Si te mueves sales borroso, o movido, y puede ser que los demás no te reconozcan del todo porque estamos acostumbrados a lo estático como forma de entender el mundo -las categorías, las palabras, las definiciones, los retratos. Pero Ferran Adrià se mueve mucho, por lo que este retrato y este texto están en movimiento, por fuerza tienen que estarlo.

Imaginemos aquí que esta fotografía comprende al niño que nace entre fábricas textiles en L'Hospitalet y que entiende la forma y el límite de su cartografía personal a base de no dar por sentado lo que tiene, cuestionando el camino que transita hasta convertirlo siempre en otra cosa, en un paso más.

Sigamos imaginando que esta foto, entre todas sus capas, contiene al chico que no pisó la universidad y, armado de intuición, revolucionó la cocina mundial desde elBulli, un restaurante en una cala de Girona. Elegido durante cinco años el mejor del planeta, en la cima del éxito cambió de rumbo hasta convertirlo en un rupturista laboratorio de ideas en el que intenta responder a esa gran pregunta de qué es cocinar.

Siendo tan importante saber lo que somos como lo que no somos, así podríamos decir que Ferran Adrià no es un cocinero, ni un chef. Esas no son las etiquetas que se acercan a describirlo, son solo algunas de ellas, pero son borrosas.

Ferran Adrià no tiene coche, pero se mueve continuamente e intenta descifrar el universo, especialmente el suyo propio, garabateando notas que improvisa en libretas, servilletas de papel, bolsas. Lo que tenga a mano. Cuenta Brett Littman, el que fue director del Drawing Center de Nueva York, donde Adrià expuso gráficos que sintetizaban su saber culinario, que lo descubrió dibujando repetidamente en una servilleta tres palabras: «¿Why? ¿Why? ¿Why?». La pregunta y el movimiento, qué mejor metáfora para acercarnos a Adrià.

Let us imagine now that this photograph contains the child born among the textile factories in L'Hospitalet and who understands the form and boundaries of his personal cartography based on not taking what he has got for granted, questioning the path he follows until it always becomes something else, one step beyond.

Now let us continue to imagine that this photo, in all its layers, contains the boy who never went to university but, armed by his own intuition, revolutionised world cuisine from elBulli, the restaurant in a cove in Girona.

Voted the best on the planet for five consecutive years, at the height of success he changed course to turn elBulli into an ideas lab focused on rupture, where he seeks to answer the great question of what it is to cook.

It is as important to know what we are as what we are not, so we might well say that Ferran Adrià is not a cook, nor a chef, these are not labels that fully describe him; they are just some of them, but they are blurred.

If you move too much, you won't look good in the photo, as those trying to take our portrait will often say by way of advice. If you move, your picture will be blurred or out of focus, and others may not quite recognise, because we are used to the stationary as a way of understanding the world - categories, words, definitions, portraits.

But

Ferran Adrià moves a lot and that is why this

portrait and this text are in motion – that is the

way it has to be!

The British historian and writer Tony Judt confessed in an article titled "In Love with Trains" that as a child being had always felt stressful to him: "where I was there was something to do, someone to please, a duty to completed." Becoming, on the other hand, was relief. Perhaps the same thing is true of Ferran Adrià, even though he neither owns a car nor drives: it is through this conquest, understood as the challenge of being what one is, that he finds truth. It is movement that gives him the keys to be, to journey through the years.

Rosario Quispe

Jujuy, Argentina, 1968
Líder de comunidad indígena

Rosario Quispe escogió hacerse su retrato en un lugar sin el que ella no se entendería, ni ella ni su lucha, por ello aquí está, en Salinas Grandes, Jujuy, Argentina.

Jujuy, Argentina, 1968
Indigenous community leader

Rosario Quispe chose to have her portrait taken in a place without which we could understand neither herself nor her struggle, which is why she is in Salinas Grandes, Jujuy, Argentina.

Salinas Grandes.
Jujuy, Argentina, 2017

Salinas Grandes.
Jujuy, Argentina, 2017

En los sueños empiezan las responsabilidades. Perseverar significa mantenerse firme y constante en una manera de ser o de obrar, significa señalar aquello a lo que es imposible renunciar. Las warmi de Quispe nacieron en 1995 como un grupo de tejedoras. Y el de Rosario Quispe era el de muchos de nosotros: «Soñábamos con un futuro mejor», cuenta esta mujer que pasó su infancia con sus abuelos en Puesto del Marqués, en la Puna argentina, muy cerca de la frontera con Bolivia, y de ellos aprendió los valores que guían su vida hoy: «Si no tenemos eso, hija, –recuerda que le repetían– si los perdemos, no tendremos ni para comer».

Cuando se casó, se mudó a un pueblo cercano, Abra Pampa, y en 1995, cuando cerró la mina en la que trabajaba su marido, la familia de Rosario Quispe se quedó sin medios para subsistir. Meses después murió su madre y de la traumática experiencia de no tener ni ambulancias para llevarla al hospital –Jujuy está a 220 kilómetros de ahí– surgió una resolución que no la ha abandonado hasta el día de hoy: la firme decisión de trabajar para desarrollar su región. Fue ese mismo año, en 1995, cuando fundó, en Abra Pampa, Jujuy, la Asociación Warmi Sayajsunqo (que en quechua significa «mujer perseverante») para defender a las comunidades de la zona y que no tuvieran que marcharse lejos para subsistir. Para poder hacer de la Puna un lugar habitable en el futuro.

En los sueños empiezan las responsabilidades y Rosario Quispe, rodeada de mujeres con las que tejía los complejos hilos de un tapiz, de su realidad, construye oportunidades. ¡Qué más puede decirse de alguien! Que tenía un sueño y ahora camina sobre él.

Perseverar significa mantenerse firme y constante en una manera de ser o de obrar, significa señalar aquello a lo que es imposible renunciar. Las warmi de Quispe nacieron en 1995 como un grupo de tejedoras. Un reducido grupo de mujeres empezó a reunirse en una habitación de casa de Rosario. Llevaban a sus hijos pequeños porque no tenían con quien dejarlos y ahí, entre esas cuatro paredes, mientras tejían, compartían el tiempo y la vida, sus alegrías y extrañas, pero también aquel sueño que empezaba y terminaba en un futuro mejor. Fue muy importante sentir eso: que no estaban solas. Al cabo de unos meses ya eran 320 socias y hoy la asociación está integrada por más de 3.000 familias, habitantes de la Puna y los valles interandinos y conformada por las 90 comunidades originarias.

On marrying, she moved to a nearby town, Abra Pampa, but in 1995, when the mine where her husband worked closed, Rosario Quispe's family was left with no means of subsistence. Her mother died a few months later, and the traumatic experience of there not even being an ambulance to take her to hospital – Jujuy is 220 kilometres away – led Rosario to a resolution that she continues to pursue to this day: the firm decision to work for the development of her region. That same year, 1995, she founded the Warmi Sayajsunqo Association (in Quechua, “Warmi Sayajsunqo” means “persevering women”) in Abra Pampa, Jujuy, to support local communities so that they would not have to move far away just to subsist. To make the Puna a habitable place in the future.

In dreams begin responsibilities. Lou Reed sang it and Delmore Schwartz took it as his theme in a short story of the same title. Many realities begin there, in dreams. And Rosario Quispe's dream is one many of us share: “We dreamed of a better future”, says this woman who was brought up by her grandparents in Puesto del Marqués, in the Argentine Puna, very close to the border with Bolivia. From them, Rosario learned the values that guide her life today: “If we don't have them, child,” she remembers them saying again and again, “if we lose them, we won't even have anything to eat”.

On marrying, she moved to a nearby town, Abra Pampa, but in 1995, when the mine where her husband worked closed, Rosario Quispe's family was left with no means of subsistence. Her mother died a few months later, and the traumatic experience of there not even being an ambulance to take her to hospital – Jujuy is 220 kilometres away – led Rosario to a resolution that she continues to pursue to this day: the firm decision to work for the development of her region. That same year, 1995, she founded the Warmi Sayajsunqo Association (in Quechua, “Warmi Sayajsunqo” means “persevering women”) in Abra Pampa, Jujuy, to support local communities so that they would not have to move far away just to subsist. To make the Puna a habitable place in the future.

To persevere is to remain strong and constant in a way of being or working, to identify what is impossible to renounce. Rosario Quispe's Warmi women started out in 1995 as a group of weavers. A small group of women began to meet at her house. They brought their young children with them because they had no one to look after them, and there, within those four walls, as they weaved, they shared their time and their lives, what made them happy and what they missed, but also a dream that began and ended in a better future. It was very important to feel that they were not alone. After just a few months the Association already had 320 members, and today it represents more than 3,000 families from 90 indigenous communities, inhabitants of the Puna and the inter-Andean valleys.

Today, Warmi Sayajsungo and Rosario, key drivers of social change in Jujuy, continue to work to meet new challenges and promote quality employment in their community. This social entrepreneur, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005, organised a credit system to enable isolated communities to survive without having to migrate to the cities in search of a livelihood and also founded the first university in the Puna.

In dreams begin responsibilities. Rosario Quispe, surrounded by women with whom she wove the complex threads of a tapestry, of their reality, builds opportunities. What more can we say of anyone? That she had a dream and that the dream is coming true.

Pedro Opeka

San Martín, Argentina, 1948
Misionero

Pedro Opeka decidió ser retratado en Akamasoa, a las afueras de Antananarivo, Madagascar.

San Martín, Argentina, 1948
Missionary

Pedro Opeka decided to be portrayed in Akamasoa, in the outskirts of Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Akamasoa. Antananarivo,
Madagascar, 2019

Akamasoa. Antananarivo,
Madagascar, 2019

No adie pensaría que una ciudad puede ser también un basurero. Y sin embargo, de él, de un basurero de las afueras de Antananarivo –y en el basurero había restos de comida, envases de plástico, desechos electrónicos, neumáticos, hierros oxidados, ropas inservibles y ajadas– Pedro Opeka supo intuir las formas, extraerlas del vacío y el aire como si fuera un dotado alfarero, y de ahí nació, de los escombros, una ciudad llamada Akamasoa, que en malgache, la lengua de Madagascar, significa buen amigo.

El sacerdote argentino y misionero católico Pedro Opeka llegó hace más de 50 años a Madagascar y se quedó «mudo», relata él, ante tanta pobreza, en especial al ver a miles de familias viviendo en un gigantesco vertedero a las afueras de Antananarivo. Gracias al esfuerzo de este incansable misionero, y al de todos los que forman parte de Akamasoa, este proyecto faraónico, muchos de los niños que él conoció entre la basura se han convertido en profesores, médicos, arquitectos. Años después, miles de casas, escuelas, pequeñas empresas y hasta un hospital se levantan donde antes solo había basura y desperdicios.

En uno de los relatos del libro *Manual para mujeres de la limpieza*, la escritora Lucia Berlin logra que un personaje diga: «Él era como el vertedero de Berkeley» y que esa frase nos transmita que un vertedero puede ser algo bueno, luminoso, aunque eso contravenga la mayor parte de ideas que tenemos respecto a los basureros. Quizás ignoremos los hilos secretos que unen a Lucia Berlin con Pedro Opeka, quizás simplemente no existan, o tal vez lo que los une es la intuición de que en un vertedero puede anidar la oportunidad, la esperanza.

Opeka convirtió un lugar de exclusión, sufrimiento y muerte en un lugar donde existe la esperanza, en el que los niños han recuperado su dignidad y recuerdan que la pobreza no es un destino ineludible. Por esta incansable misión fue nominado al Premio Nobel de la Paz. Y también porque continuamente sus acciones se dedican a explicar qué significa la palabra empatía, qué significa la palabra amigo.

No one would think that a city could also be a rubbish dump. And yet, from it, from a

rubbish dump in the outskirts of Antananarivo – and in that rubbish dump were food waste, plastic containers, electronic waste, tyres, rusty iron, useless, worn-out clothes – Pedro

Opeka was able to see shapes, to extract them from the void and the air like a skilled potter. And from all this waste and rubble emerged a

city called Akamasoa, which in Malagasy, the language of Madagascar, means “good friend”.

The Argentinian Catholic priest and missionary Pedro Opeka arrived in Madagascar more than 50 years ago and was “struck dumb”, he says, by the poverty he saw,

especially the thousands of families who lived in a huge rubbish dump on the outskirts of Antananarivo. Thanks to the efforts of this tireless missionary, and of all those who form part of the Pharaonic project that is Akamasoa, many of the children he encountered among the rubbish have since become teachers, doctors and architects. Years later, thousands of houses, schools, small businesses and even a hospital stand where once there was only rubbish and waste.

In one of her short stories in *A Manual for Cleaning Women*, the writer Lucia Berlin has her narrator say of one character that “He was like the Berkeley dump”, transmitting the idea that a rubbish dump can be something good, filled with light, even if such a possibility contradicts most of our ideas about such sites. Perhaps we are unaware of the secret thread that links Lucia Berlin to Pedro Opeka, perhaps these links simply do not exist, or perhaps what links them is the feeling that a dump can also be home to opportunity, to hope.

Opeka turned a place of exclusion, suffering and death into a place where hope exists, where children have regained their dignity and are reassured that poverty is not an inescapable fate. For this tireless mission he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Also because all his actions are constantly devoted to explaining what the word empathy means, what the word friend means.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Enugu, Nigeria, 1977
Escritora

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie escogió hacerse el retrato en el Freedom Park de Lagos, la ciudad donde vive. Antes, este parque era una antigua cárcel, Her Majesty's Broad Street Prison. Ahora es el recuerdo vivo de lo que no puede volver a ser.

Enugu, Nigeria, 1977
Writer

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie chose to have her portrait taken in Freedom Park in Lagos, the city where she lives. The park once housed a prison, Her Majesty's Broad Street Prison. It is now a constant reminder of what must never happen again.

Freedom Park. Lagos, Nigeria, 2017

Freedom Park. Lagos, Nigeria, 2017

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie empezó muy pronto a escribir: a los siete ya se atrevía con sus primeros relatos. Pero aún más precoz fue con la lectura y, con tan solo cuatro años, devoraba libros que, en su mayoría, procedían del Reino Unido o Estados Unidos. A través de sus páginas se adentraba en mundos exóticos radicalmente alejados de Nsukka, aquella ciudad del norte de Nigeria en la que vivía con su familia. Casualmente, o no, vivían en la misma casa en la que, años atrás, había habitado su admirado escritor y Premio Nobel de Literatura Chinua Achebe.

Pero volvamos a las páginas que subyugaban a esa precoz lectora. En ellas, niños y niñas pecos hacían muñecos de nieve y comían manzanas, mientras que la cháchara de los adultos versaba inevitablemente sobre la llegada del buen tiempo. Esos niños a los que ella leía y formaban parte de su imaginación fueron los que luego habitaron esas primeras historias que escribió, de manera que sus personajes, de insondables ojos azules, vivían pendientes de las galletitas del té y de las inclemencias del tiempo en los escarpados acantilados de Cornualles.

Sin embargo, en Nsukka la temperatura media anual es de 25 grados y de manzanas o galletitas del té, ni rastro. De lo que podemos inferir que, a pesar de vivir en la antigua casa de Chinua Achebe, antes de descubrir la literatura nigeriana, Chimamanda pensaba que la literatura debía de habitar por fuerza en otra parte, en las antípodas de su país natal.

Se enfrentó, desde muy pronto, a la incommensurable fuerza de la historia única, a la falta de referentes.

Ese es el tema que vertebraba una TED talk que apareció en 2009, que en la actualidad acumula más de doce millones de visionados y vertebraba gran parte de un pensamiento. En ella, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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revela una historia llena de peligros: la de esa verdad única con la que categorizamos y encarcelamos el mundo.

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie dejó Nigeria a los 19 años para irse a estudiar a Estados Unidos. Fue ahí, con la perspectiva que ofrece la distancia, como encontró su voz. Fue lejos y regresó a su casa para escribir desde el origen. Feminismo, inmigración, sexism, estos son, entre otros, los temas que aparecen en sus obras: La flor púrpura, su primera novela, Medio sol amarillo, cuyo título hace referencia al diseño de la bandera de la efímera nación de Biafra, su asombroso libro de relatos Algo alrededor de tu cuello y Americanah. Estos últimos años, ya convertida en un ícono del feminismo moderno, ha publicado ensayos como Todos deberíamos ser feministas y Querida Ijeawele. Cómo educar en el feminismo.

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La obra de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pone una verdad incómoda sobre la mesa: el problema de los estereotipos no es únicamente que sean falsos sino que son incompletos y, desgraciadamente, son esas creencias mutiladas las que siguen gobernando el relato que trazamos del mundo y, lo que es peor, el mundo.

Soon, though she was confronted by the tremendous force of the single story, of the lack of varied points of reference.

This is the theme of a TED Talk that she gave in 2009, and has now had more than twelve million views.

The talk reveals much of her thinking. In her TED Talk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveals a story full of dangers: that of the single truth we used to categorise and imprison the world.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie left Nigeria at the age of 19 to study in the United States. It was there, with the perspective offered by distance, that she found her voice. She went far away and returned home to write from her origins. Feminism, immigration, sexism; these are, among others, the themes that appear in her works: Purple Hibiscus, her first novel; Half a Yellow Sun, whose title refers to the design of the flag of the ephemeral nation of Biafra; The Thing Around Your Neck, her extraordinary book of short stories; and Americanah. In recent years, now an icon of modern feminism, she has published essays such as We Should All Be Feminists and Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto In Fifteen Suggestions.

In her work, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie places an uncomfortable truth on the table: the problem with stereotypes is not only that they are false but that they are incomplete and, unfortunately, these half-truths continue to govern the narrative that we form of the world and, what is worse, the world itself.

Gretchen Cara Daily

Washington D.C., Estados Unidos de América, 1964
Bióloga

Gretchen Cara Daily escogió hacerse el retrato frente al árbol de La Ceiba, en Sabalito, Costa Rica, país con el que mantiene un estrecho vínculo. Los habitantes del pueblo de Sabalito dicen que este árbol simboliza todo lo que la naturaleza brinda a la humanidad, que es un portal que mira hacia el pasado y lo enlaza con el presente y el futuro. Quizás un árbol, este árbol, cualquier árbol, pueda despertar en nosotros la más profunda comprensión de cuán íntimamente dependemos de la naturaleza.

Washington D.C., USA, 1964
Biologist

Gretchen Cara Daily chose to have her portrait taken standing before "La Ceiba", a unique tree in the village of Sabalito, Costa Rica, a country with which she has close ties. The people of Sabalito say that this tree symbolises all that nature provides for humanity, that it is a portal that looks into the past and links it to the present and the future. A tree, this tree, any tree, can perhaps awaken in us the deepest understanding of how intimately we depend on nature.

Ceiba, Sabalito. Costa Rica, 2019

La bióloga estadounidense Gretchen Cara Daily cuenta que, años atrás, trabajando en Costa Rica, país al que la une un estrecho vínculo, solía hacer un experimento. Cuando caía la noche llevaba a sus invitados selva adentro y ahí, rodeados de la más completa oscuridad, encendía unas lámparas especiales con luz ultravioleta a fin de atraer a todo tipo de insectos. Al instante, acudían hacia la luz cientos de criaturas de distintas formas, colores imposibles e indeterminadas procedencias. Boquiabiertos, los invitados disfrutaban de aquel espectáculo que ahora ya no surte el mismo efecto. A pesar de que Gretchen Cara Daily sigue realizando el mismo experimento, acuden a la luz poquísimo insectos: sólo los más pequeños. Y el cambio no es debido a timidez, recato o pereza de las nuevas generaciones de insectos, no. Se debe a la pérdida de biodiversidad.

Las principales investigaciones de Gretchen Cara Daily

que, years ago, while working in Costa Rica,

a country with which she has close ties, she used

to do an experiment. When night fell, she would

take her guests into the jungle and there, in

complete darkness, she turned on special lamps

that gave off ultraviolet light to attract insects of

all kinds. Immediately, hundreds of creatures of

different shapes, impossible colours and indeter-

minate origins would flock around this light.

Open-mouthed, her guests enjoyed a show that no

longer reaches such heights of success. Although

Gretchen continues to perform the same exper-

iment, very few insects come to the light: only

the smallest ones. And the change is not due to

shyness, modesty or laziness among the new gener-

ations of insects. Not at all. It is due to the loss of

biodiversity.

The main research fields of Gretchen Cara Daily, a biologist, biogeographer and professor of Environmental Science in the Department of Biology at Stanford University, where she is also Director of the Center for Conservation Biology, include biogeography, conservation biology and ecology. Her environmental activism earned her the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award in the category of Ecology and Conservation Biology, which she shared with fellow ecologist Georgina Mace. Her visionary ecologism led her to predict and anticipate the disasters that are currently damaging our planet and is based on something apparently simple: appreciating nature. Although it is true that we face a total climate emergency, she has placed her energetic mindset, rooted in an optimism that completely rejects alarmist assumptions, at the service of developing key tools to implement policies that combat species loss based on scientific knowledge. The state of the planet is tragic, but the time for lamentation and alarmism is over: now is the time for action.

Gretchen Cara Daily is a living example of a new attitude

that sees concern as only the first step. That now it is

the time to move, to get into action. That we are at a

point when we can do things differently. Her position

champions hope in the face of alarm, and that is

visionary.

Gretchen Cara Daily es el vivo ejemplo de una nueva

actitud que asume que la preocupación es solo un

primer paso. Que ahora toca mover ficha, ocuparse.

Que estamos en un tiempo en el que podemos hacer las

cosas de una manera diferente. Su posición encarna la

esperanza frente a la alarma y eso sí que es visionario.

Ceiba, Sabalito. Costa Rica, 2019

Nada al-Ahdal

Zabid, Yemen, 2002
Activista por los derechos humanos

Nada al-Ahdal, vestida de novia en representación de la infancia perdida, escogió hacerse el retrato en Amán, Jordania, ciudad que la acogió después de tener que huir de Yemen.

Zabid, Yemen, 2002
Human rights activist

Dressed as a bride to represent lost childhood, Nada al-Ahdal chose to have her portrait taken in Amman, Jordan, the city where she found shelter after being forced to flee from Yemen.

A Nada al-Ahdal, yemení nacida en 2003, cuando cumplió diez años sus padres intentaron casarla con un familiar que vivía en el extranjero. El precio de la transacción fue fijado en 2.000 dólares, pero no se realizó gracias a la intermediación de su tío, Abdel Salam al-Ahdal. En 2013, con tal solo diez años, Nada publicó un vídeo de dos minutos y medio en YouTube en el que, desde el asiento de un coche, denunciaba lo ocurrido: que sus padres la habían intentado casar por dinero. Sabía lo que era el matrimonio infantil por sus consecuencias: su tía, obligada a casarse a los 14, se había suicidado escapando de su violento marido. De manera que a lo largo de esos dos minutos y medio hablaba del miedo, del miedo al futuro que le esperaba si sus padres conseguían su propósito y la casaban en un segundo intento. Mencionaba la infancia, los sueños rotos, la educación. Prefería morir antes que ser vendida a un hombre mayor que ella. El vídeo se hizo viral y fue una llamada de atención sobre el matrimonio infantil, fuertemente arraigado en las tradiciones y costumbres de tantos países del mundo.

El matrimonio infantil, definido como una unión formal o informal antes de los 18 años, es una cruda realidad para niños y niñas, aunque a estas últimas las afecta de manera desproporcionada. Las cifras hablan por sí solas para entender la dimensión del problema: cada dos segundos una niña contrae matrimonio forzado. Se estima que cada año, 12 millones de niñas en todo el mundo, o lo que es lo mismo, 34.500 al día, se casan sin haber cumplido los 18 años.

Nada al-Ahdal huyó de su familia y de su país de origen después de denunciar la realidad a la que son sometidas miles de niñas. Se enfrentó a varios medios de comunicación yemeníes que ponían en entredicho su historia y la acusaban de falsear los hechos. Pero la historia de Nada conmocionó a organizaciones y medios internacionales y, en la actualidad, vive en Londres y desde ahí, convertida en activista, lucha a través de su propia fundación para convencer al mundo de que el matrimonio infantil no es un problema familiar sino global.

Lucha, tomando como ejemplo su propia vida, para salvar a miles de niñas yemeníes de un destino que las aboca al matrimonio precoz. Para devolverles la infancia, los sueños. En definitiva: para que nadie les robe el futuro.

N ada al-Ahdal was born in Yemen in 2003. When she was ten, her parents tried to marry her off to a relative who lived abroad. The price of this transaction was set at 2,000 dollars, but it never came to fruition thanks to the intervention of Nada's uncle, Abdel Salam al-Ahdal. In 2013, at the age of just ten years, Nada posted a two-and-a-half minute video on YouTube in which, from the seat of a car, she denounced what was happening: that her parents were trying to marry her off for money. She knew what child marriage was like, having witnessed the consequences: her aunt, forced to marry at 14, had committed suicide trying to get away from her violent husband. So, in those two and a half minutes, Nada spoke of her fear, fear for the future that awaited her if her parents were successful in their purpose and married her off at this second attempt. She talked about childhood, broken dreams, education. She said she would rather die than be sold to a man older than her. The video went viral and was a wake-up call about child marriage, which is deeply rooted in the traditions and customs of many countries around the world.

Child marriage, defined as a formal or informal union before the age of 18, is a terrible reality for many boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately affected. To understand the scale of the problem, the numbers speak for themselves: a girl is forcibly married every two seconds. Each year, an estimated 12 million girls worldwide – 34,500 a day – are married before the age of 18.

Nada al-Ahdal fled her family and her country of origin after exposing the reality to which thousands of girls are subjected. She confronted several Yemeni media that questioned her story and accused her of misrepresenting the facts. But Nada's story shocked international organisations and media, and she now lives in London, where she has become an activist and fights through her own foundation to convince the world that child marriage is not a family issue but a global problem. Using her own life as an example, she fights to save thousands of Yemeni girls from a fate that condemns them to early marriage. To give them back their childhood, their dreams. In short: so that no one can steal their future.

Woody Allen

Nueva York, Estados Unidos de América,
1935
Director de cine

Ante la pregunta «¿Cuál es tu lugar en el mundo?», Woody Allen dudó entre París y Nueva York. Fue esta última, sin embargo, la que terminó por decantar esta balanza en la que pesaban su pasión por Europa y su apego por la que es, llamándolo de forma grandilocuente, la ciudad de su vida: Nueva York. De entre toda la ciudad, Allen decidió hacerse la foto en el Metropolitan Museum y el azar quiso que el rincón finalmente fuera este, frente a *El triunfo de Marius*, un lienzo de Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Este cuadro pertenece a una serie de diez lienzos pintados para decorar la sala principal de Ca' Dolfin, un palacio de Venecia. Si el espectador se fija, a la izquierda del lienzo aparece un autorretrato de Tiepolo que, orgulloso de su gesta, decidió incluirse en el cuadro. Así que en cierto modo este es un retrato con un autorretrato de fondo.

Metropolitan Museum. Nueva York,
Estados Unidos de América, 2015

New York, USA, 1935
Film director

Asked "What is your place in the world?", Woody Allen found it difficult to decide between Paris and New York. Finally, however, the balance was tipped for the latter in this battle for his affections between his passion for Europe and his love for what is, to put it rather grandiloquently, the city of his life: New York. From the whole city, Allen decided to have his photo taken at the Metropolitan Museum and, as chance would have it, the spot where he finally chose to stand was before *The Triumph of Marius*, a painting by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. The work belongs to a series of ten pieces painted to decorate the main room in Ca' Dolfin, a palace in Venice. The observant spectator will note that, proud of his achievement, Tiepolo included his self-portrait along the left-hand side of the canvas. So, in a sense, this is a portrait with a self-portrait in the background.

Metropolitan Museum. New York, USA, 2015

En todo espectáculo de magia conviven en el espectador dos deseos antagónicos. Por un lado, el natural anhelo de descubrir el truco, de estar atento a los detalles para desenmascarar el fraude y, por otro, el deseo contrario, que se cifra en que no haya truco, que exista ese orden paralelo a la vida, la magia, donde las cosas suceden de otro modo.

Hablamos aquí de magia porque, en cierta manera, este hombre, que antes se llamaba Allan Stewart y admiraba tanto al clarinetista Woody Herman que tomó prestado su nombre artístico, es un prestidigitador. Un mago. Por dar otras pistas, además de tocar el clarinete pasó 37 años psicoanalizándose. Es director de cine, artista, músico, guionista. Pero en la actualidad sigue sin tener ordenador y trabaja con una vieja máquina de escribir que le costó 40 dólares.

Como es extremadamente crítico consigo mismo y por esa razón nunca dejaría de cambiar cosas, no ve sus películas una vez las termina. Y hace bien porque si empezara ahora le llevaría un buen rato repasar su prolífica carrera: 53 películas.

Carismático, neurótico, ingenioso, controvertido, genial, maníaco, Woody Allen tiene en su haber títulos como *Annie Hall*, *Hannah y sus hermanas*, *La rosa púrpura del Cairo*, *Manhattan* o *Match Point*.

Algunos de sus diálogos se han convertido en parte de

two opposing wishes. On the one hand, the natural desire to discover the trick, to watch the details carefully in order to unmask the deceit; and, on the other, the opposing desire, for there to be no trick, for that parallel order to life,

magic, where things happen in a different way, to really exist.

We speak here of magic because, in a way, this man,

formerly known as Allan Stewart who admired the clarinetist Woody Herman so much that he borrowed

the musician's stage name, is a conjurer. A magician.

If we need more clues, besides playing the clarinet, he

spent 37 years in psychoanalysis. He is a film director, artist, musician, scriptwriter. But even today he still

doesn't own a computer, and writes on an old typewriter that cost him 40 dollars.

He is extremely self-critical and left to himself would never stop changing things, which is why he doesn't

watch his films once they are finished. Good thing too,

because if he started now it would take him a long time

to go through his prolific production: 53 films.

Charismatic, neurotic, obsessive, witty, controversial, brilliant, Woody Allen has gifted us such classic movies as *Annie Hall*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, *Manhattan* and *Match Point*.

every magic show, the spectator battles with

two opposing wishes. On the one hand, the natural desire to discover the trick, to watch the details carefully in order to unmask the deceit;

and, on the other, the opposing desire, for there to be no trick, for that parallel order to life,

magic, where things happen in a different way,

to really exist.

It is really hard to choose just one line by this man who

has given us films that are really something else – magic tricks in which he holds up a mirror to our times and our insecurities. He has created brilliant scenes and situations revolving around sex, life, death, break-ups, the meaning of life and so on. It is difficult to choose one

moment but, of course, how could we fail to mention this line from *Annie Hall*: "There's an old joke... two elderly women are at a Catskill mountain resort, and one of 'em says, 'Boy, the food at this place is really terrible.' The other one says, 'Yeah, I know; and such small portions.' Well, that's essentially how I feel about life – full of loneliness, and misery, and suffering, and unhappiness, and it's all over much too quickly."

Muhammad Yunus

Chittagong, Bangladés, 1940
Premio Nobel de la Paz

Muhammad Yunus escogió el Yunus Center, la planta 16 del Banco Grameen, en Daca, Bangladés. El retrato tuvo lugar en la sala de reuniones y antes del disparo Yunus solo pidió poder descalzarse.

Chittagong, Bangladesh, 1940
Nobel Peace Prize

Muhammad Yunus chose the Yunus Centre, on the 16th floor of the Grameen Bank in Dhaka, Bangladesh as the site of his portrait. The sitting took place in the meeting room and before the shot Yunus asked only to take off his shoes.

Yunus Centre. Daca, Bangladés,
2019

Yunus Centre. Dhaka, Bangladesh,
2019

Muhammad Yunus nació en 1940 en un país cuyo nombre ya no existe, Pakistán Oriental, aún bajo soberanía británica, y pasó su infancia en la ciudad portuaria de Chittagong, hoy convertida en un importante puerto marítimo donde cada año más de medio centenar de cargueros son despiezados hasta morir frente a la costa. Graduado en Ciencias Económicas, dejó su país para irse a Estados Unidos gracias a una beca Fulbright y, de vuelta, en 1971, después de la guerra de liberación que ya le otorgó su nombre actual, Bangladesh, se volcó en un problema que nunca había dejado de inquietarlo: la ferocidad de esa pobreza que asolaba su país.

Conocido como el banquero de los pobres, Muhammad Yunus ha sido galardonado por su labor en numerosas ocasiones. De hecho, en octubre de 2006, Yunus y el Banco Grameen fueron galardonados con el Premio Nobel de la Paz por su lucha en pro de una economía justa para las clases más desfavorecidas.

Corría el año 1976 cuando, en una visita a la aldea de Jobra, estuvo hablando con artesanos y pequeños empresarios que le hicieron partícipe de las enormes dificultades que tenían para salir adelante: ningún banco, dada la falta de garantías de devolución, confiaba en ellos a la hora de prestarles dinero. Yunus constató la obviedad: los organismos financieros no se atrevían a conceder créditos, aunque se tratara de cantidades irrisorias, sin garantías. De manera que él mismo se convirtió en banco, en prestamista, y a su cuenta y riesgo dejó 27 dólares a 42 familias de la aldea de Jobra. Sin saberlo, acababa de alumbrar un concepto revolucionario: los microcréditos. Porque esas 42 familias le devolvieron el dinero y lo hicieron a tiempo. Armado de esa evidencia, volvió a distintos bancos de Daca y Chittagong que, de nuevo, miraron hacia otro lado. No le quedaba otra opción que crear él mismo el banco.

Guiado por dos premisas, la primera, que el crédito es un derecho humano, y la segunda, que los propios pobres son los que saben cómo mejorar su situación, Muhammad Yunus fundó el Banco Grameen, que en bengalí significa «el banco de los pueblos» y que se puso en funcionamiento el 1983. En la actualidad, el banco funciona con más de 22.000 empleados que trabajan en las calles de casi 38.000 de las 68.000 aldeas y pueblos de Bangladesh y concede préstamos a 2,3 millones de personas de los que el 94% son mujeres.

After graduating in Economics, Muhammad left his country for the United States on a Fulbright scholarship. On his return in 1971, after the war of liberation that saw his homeland take on its current name, Bangladesh, he turned his attention to a problem that had never ceased to trouble him: the ferocious poverty that devastated his country.

It was in 1976 that, on a visit to the village of Jobra, he began talking to craftspeople and small business leaders who told him of the enormous difficulties they had to make ends meet: due to the lack of repayment guarantees, no bank would trust them with a loan.

It was then that Yunus understood the obvious: financial institutions did not dare to grant loans, even for small amounts, without guarantees. So he became a banker, a money lender, himself, and at his own risk lent 27 dollars to 42 families in the village of Jobra. Without realising it, he had just given birth to a revolutionary concept: microcredits. Because those 42 families paid him back, and they paid him back on time. Armed with this evidence, he went back to several banks in Dhaka and Chittagong, which again turned down his approaches. He had no choice but to set up a bank himself.

Muhammad Yunus was born in 1940 in a country or province whose name no longer exists, East Bengal, then still under British sovereignty. He spent his childhood in the port city of Chittagong, now a major seaport where every year fifty cargo ships and more are dismantled, finding their last resting place off the coast.

After graduating in Economics, Muhammad left his country for the United States on a Fulbright scholarship. On his return in 1971, after the war of liberation that saw his homeland take on its current name, Bangladesh, he turned his attention to a problem that had never ceased to trouble him: the ferocious poverty that devastated his country.

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Guided by two premises – firstly, that credit is a human right; and secondly, that the poor are those who best know how to improve their situation – Muhammad Yunus founded the Grameen Bank, which means “the people’s bank” in Bengali, launching in 1983. Today, the bank has more than 22,000 employees working on the streets of nearly 38,000 of the 68,000 towns and villages in Bangladesh, granting loans to 2.3 million people, 94% of whom are women.

Known as the banker to the poor, Muhammad Yunus has received numerous awards for his work. Indeed, in October 2006, Yunus and the Grameen Bank were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to provide a fair economic playing ground for the least favoured.

Gao Xingjian

Ganzhou, China, 1940
Premio Nobel de Literatura

París es sinónimo de libertad para Gao Xingjian. Quizás por ello decidió hacerse el retrato en el recinto del Palais-Royal, con la Comédie Française a sus espaldas.

Ganzhou, China, 1940
Nobel Prize for Literature

To Gao Xingjian, Paris is synonymous with freedom. Perhaps that is why he decided to have his portrait taken in the grounds of the Palais-Royal, with the Comédie Française behind him.

Palais-Royal. París, Francia, 2016

Palais-Royal. Paris, France, 2016

Gao Xingjian es un hombre de muchas vidas. La primera de ellas empieza, como la de todos, con su nacimiento, en 1940, en la ciudad de Gangzhou. La convulsa China que lo vio nacer fue el detonante de que tuviera que abandonar esa primera vida, pero vayamos por partes. Tras estudiar francés en Pekín, trabajó como traductor y guionista. El estreno de sus primeras obras de teatro hizo saltar la alarma entre las autoridades chinas, que lo acusaron de contaminación cultural. Sin darse por vencido, Xingjian empezó a escribir en secreto en esta época que bautizaría como «el terror rojo». Sin embargo, en 1986, su obra fue definitivamente prohibida en su país.

Ante la prohibición, este artista tan increíblemente polifacético –escritor de novela, poeta, director de teatro y dramaturgo, autor de ópera, crítico de arte y literatura, director de cine, artista plástico–, decidió exiliarse en París, donde reside desde 1987 y donde empezó su segunda vida. Para Gao Xingjian, Francia –París especialmente– es sinónimo de libertad, la libertad que obtuvo en sacrificio de aquella primera vida que dejó atrás.

Elaborar el dolor y el sufrimiento, sublimarlo para convertirlo en belleza es quizás la máxima que podría definir su obra, que transforma el dolor en algo inteligible y lo eleva a la categoría de arte: «Nunca dejé de escribir, incluso en los momentos más difíciles de mi vida. Escribo para mí, para aliviar mi sufrimiento». Además, acostumbra a decir que sus pinturas empiezan donde sus palabras no llegan.

Gao Xingjian experimentó otra vida, la tercera, que empieza con una llamada en el año 2000 que le da la noticia de que ha ganado el Premio Nobel de Literatura.

Fue el primer escritor en lengua china en obtenerlo.

«Abrí la puerta a un montón de gente y de ahí en adelante fue como estar atrapado en una tormenta».

Este sabio humilde, poco amigo de las multitudes, llegó

incluso a caer enfermo después de verse desbordado por una agenda que parecía no tener fin. Empezaba, como decíamos, su tercera vida, la de ahora.

«Solo eres libre cuando no tienes nada que perder», dijo en una ocasión. Él perdió mucho, de hecho, una vida entera. A cambio, a este espectador escéptico y lúcido que no tiene pretensión de explicar el mundo pero lo hace, se le otorgaron dos más y las que quedan aún por venir.

Gao Xingjian is a man of many lives. The first of them began, like everyone's, with his birth, in 1940, in the city of Gangzhou. The turmoil in the China of his birth forced him to leave that first life, but let's take it one step at a time. After studying French in Beijing, he worked as a translator and scriptwriter. The presentation of his first plays set off alarm bells among the Chinese authorities, who accused him of cultural contamination.

Undeterred, Xingjian began to write in secret during what he called a period of “red terror”. However, his work was finally banned in his country in 1986.

In response to the ban, this incredibly multi-faceted artist – novelist, poet, theatre director and playwright, opera creator, art and literature critic, film director, visual artist – Gao Xingjian decided to go into exile in Paris, where he has lived since 1987 and where his second life began. For Gao Xingjian, France – and Paris particularly – is synonymous with freedom, the freedom he gained by sacrificing that first life he left behind.

Working with hurt and suffering, sublimating it and turning it into beauty is perhaps the best way of describing his work, which transforms pain into something intelligible, elevating it to the category of art: “I never stopped writing, even in the most difficult moments of my life. I write for myself, to alleviate my suffering.” He also says that his paintings begin where his words cannot reach.

Gao Xingjian began another life, his third, when he received a phone call in 2000 telling him that he had won the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was the first Chinese-language writer to receive the award. “I opened the door to a whole bunch of people, and from then on, it was like being caught up in a storm.” This wise but humble man, rather allergic to crowds, even fell ill after being overwhelmed by a seemingly endless agenda of events. As we said, this was the start of his third life, the present one.

“You are only free when you have nothing to lose,” he once said. He lost a lot, in fact, a whole life.

In exchange, this sceptical, lucid spectator who says he does not attempt to explain the world but does so nevertheless, was granted two more, not to mention those yet to come.

Steven Pinker

Montreal, Canadá, 1954
Psicólogo cognitivo

Steven Pinker decidió ser retratado en la entrada del edificio William James, de la Universidad de Harvard, donde imparte clases y realiza parte de sus investigaciones.

Montreal, Canada, 1954
Cognitive psychologist

Steven Pinker chose to be photographed at the entrance to the William James Building at Harvard University, where he teaches and pursues part of his research work.

William James Hall. Harvard,
Estados Unidos de América, 2019

William James Hall. Harvard,
USA, 2019

Hay un dicho que cuenta que para ser feliz hay que tener buena salud y mala memoria.

Porque 2016 fue declarado el peor año de la historia hasta que 2017 reclamó ese título. Y ocurrió lo mismo con 2018. Y suma y sigue. Por no hablar de 2020.

En definitiva, el mundo está perdiendo el norte. Y vivimos en el peor de los mundos posibles. Y hay mil razones para ser pesimistas.

Y no levantamos cabeza.
(Merece la pena recordar, además, que el hombre es un lobo para el hombre).

Y si no es el cambio climático serán los robots. O las pandemias.

O las injusticias.

No podemos negar que el alarmismo tiene sus adeptos, siempre los ha tenido, pero nada es tan responsable de la nostalgia como la mala memoria. Lo dice Steven Pinker, uno de los pensadores más influyentes del mundo, especialista en el binomio mente-lenguaje, que se dedica, entre otros menesteres, a refutar la idea de que el mundo está perdiendo el norte y carga contra los apóstoles del apocalipsis.

A menudo, quizás maliciosamente, se le otorga la etiqueta de optimista. Como si el optimismo fuera una fuente de descrédito. Aunque Pinker no se ha pronunciado respecto a ello –y sospechamos que a él le importan más bien poco las etiquetas–, él prefiere definirse como posibilista serio.

Contra la nostalgia, Pinker propone datos. Contra el dato concreto y alarmista, él propone tendencias.

Si medimos la trayectoria del bienestar a lo largo del tiempo usando un criterio constante, si comparamos los datos más recientes del presente con los mismos medidos de hace treinta años, los datos acaban con la nostalgia. Estamos mucho mejor que nuestros antepasados y Pinker no se ampara en ninguna fe ciega ni en las falsas promesas de mitos huecos. El progreso no es una cuestión subjetiva: puede medirse. Existe.

In short, the world is losing its way.

And we live in the worst of all possible worlds.
And there are a thousand reasons to be pessimistic.

And we cannot get back on our feet.
(We should remember, too, that man is a wolf to man).

And if it is not climate change, it will be robots.
Or pandemics.

Or injustices.

We cannot deny that alarmism has its disciples, it always has, but nothing causes nostalgia like a bad memory. So says Steven Pinker, one of the world's most influential thinkers, an expert in how the mind creates language. Among other things, Pinker is dedicated to refuting the idea that the world is losing its way and combatting the negativity of the apostles of the apocalypse.

Often, perhaps maliciously, he is labelled as an optimist. As if optimism were a source of discredit. Although Pinker has never come out either way on this point – and we suspect that he cares little about labels – he prefers to define himself as a serious possibilist.

There is a saying that goes that to be happy you have

to have good health and a bad memory.

Because 2016 was declared the worst year in history until 2017 took that title. And the same occurred in 2018. And so it goes on and on. Not to mention 2020.

In short, the world is losing its way.

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Vivian Gornick

Nueva York, Estados Unidos, 1935
Escritora

New York, USA, 1935
Writer

Vivian Gornick decidió que su retrato fuera frente a su casa, donde vive y escribe –acaso sea lo mismo– y lo hace siempre pendiente, desde la ventana, de esa ciudad de la que está enamorada, Nueva York.

Vivian Gornick chose to have her portrait taken outside the house where she lives and writes – though perhaps they are one and the same thing – all the while looking out of the window at the city she loves, New York.

Corre el año 1943 y, en una pequeña escuela del Bronx, en Nueva York, a una niña de ocho años le hacen un regalo. La niña se llama Vivian Gornick y la profesora, señalándola entre sus compañeros, exclama: «Esta niña va a ser escritora».

De vuelta a casa, se lo repite para sus adentros una y otra vez y algunos regalos son proféticos, llegan justo en el momento adecuado y encienden la luz a un modo de vivir. Por eso, cuando la niña llega al modesto bloque de apartamentos que habitará hasta los veintiún años –una casa donde Marx, el socialismo y la clase obrera internacional eran artículos de fe–, se lo comunica a su madre, que la mira con seriedad y la reprende: «Nunca olvides de dónde vienes».

«De dónde vienes» es una expresión común y quizás no es la respuesta que esa niña deseaba, porque se trata más bien de una advertencia que apunta hacia las raíces y el hogar. Sea como fuere, en el caso de Vivian Gornick son estas dos fuerzas –la promesa de ser escritora y la advertencia de no alejarse demasiado de las raíces– las que hilan su particular visión del mundo.

Periodista, escritora y activista feminista estadounidense, considerada una de las mejores memorialistas de los últimos cincuenta años, Gornick es, sobre cualquier otra cosa, una observadora nata de la realidad. Es a lo cotidiano, a lo transitado una y otra vez, a donde regresa para, desde la distancia, ser capaz de desentrañar la madeja de aquello que se nos pasa por alto debido a la cercanía.

Si la gran ilusión de nuestra cultura es que somos lo que confesamos ser, la obra de Gornick rezuma justamente eso: autenticidad. Si un escritor es alguien que oye voces a través de las voces y con ellas va trazando el mapa de su vida, Gornick lo hace a menudo mientras pasea por esta ciudad suya, Nueva York. Y las voces que recoge y recorren su obra se detienen en eso que es más importante para ella, los apegos y los vínculos, el amor en todas sus formas y contradicciones que nos condiciona y persigue desde el preciso momento en que alguien, ya sea en 1943 o en 2022, nos hace el regalo de darnos una pista sobre eso que marcará nuestras vidas.

T he year is 1943 and, in a small school in the Bronx, New York, an eight-year-old girl receives a gift.

The girl's name is Vivian Gornick and the teacher exclaims to the whole class that "This girl is going to be a writer".

On her way home, she repeats this to herself over and over again, and some gifts are prophetic, coming at just the right time and illuminating the path to a new life.

So, when the girl arrives at the modest apartment block where she will live until she is twenty-one – in a home

where Marx, socialism and the international working class are articles of faith – she tells her mother, who looks at her keenly and scolds her: "Never forget where you come from".

"Where you come from" is a common expression and was perhaps not the reply the girl wanted, as it is more of a warning, reminding one of one's roots, one's home. In Vivian Gornick's case, however, it was these two forces – the promise of becoming a writer and the warning not to stray too far from her roots – that together wove her personal vision of the world.

Reed Brody

Nueva York, Estados Unidos, 1953
Abogado

Reed Brody escogió hacerse el retrato en la portería de los apartamentos de Brooklyn en los que había vivido a lo largo de su infancia, unos apartamentos a los que no había vuelto hasta el día del retrato. Además de como «cazador de dictadores», a Reed Brody se lo conoce también por ser el hombre de la bufanda roja. No importa en qué situación se encuentre que, fíjense, siempre la lleva al cuello. En este retrato también. Solo es cuestión de mirar detenidamente, de acercarse un poco más y –como ocurre con la mayoría de cosas de la vida– de repente aparece.

Nueva York. Estados Unidos de América, 2018

New York, USA, 1953
Lawyer

Reed Brody chose to have his portrait taken at the entrance to the Brooklyn apartment block where he lived throughout his childhood, and where he had not returned until the day of the shoot. As well as a "dictator hunter", Reed Brody is also known as the man with the red scarf. No matter what situation he finds himself in, he always wears one around his neck. In this portrait too. It's just a matter of looking closely, of getting a little closer, and – as with most things in life – it suddenly appears.

New York. USA, 2018

Pequenos gestos fundan una vida. Permanecen. Son anécdotas que adquieren relevancia a lo largo del tiempo. Y así, probablemente –aunque no tenemos los datos–, Reed Brody sea una de las personas más jóvenes que ha escrito una constitución. Con 12 años, junto a su hermano pequeño, Clifford, escribió la Constitución de la República Libre de Brodania, un país que, por decreto, no se relacionaría con reyes ni dictadores, sino con estados de igual a igual y sobre las bases de la democracia. Este episodio podría haberse quedado en divertimento, pero fundó una vida que se enraíza en la lucha en favor de la democracia, la del abogado estadounidense Reed Brody, que lleva toda la vida demostrando que es posible hacerlo.

Sí bien es cierto que los libros de autoayuda cuentan que para cambiar el mundo es necesario empezar por uno mismo, Brody empezó a lo grande, por las dos cosas a la vez, no en vano procede de una generación, la de los años setenta, que quería cambiar el mundo, y lleva toda la vida demostrando que es posible hacerlo. Por algo lo apodian, aunque a él no le guste el título, «el cazador de dictadores».

Nacido en un Brooklyn que poco tiene que ver con el de ahora, fue ahí donde creció siendo plenamente consciente de las desigualdades. Se matriculó en Derecho y empezó a trabajar en la Fiscalía de Nueva York. Pronto, sin embargo, se embarcaría en un viaje que le cambiaría la vida: en 1984 se marchó a Nicaragua donde, después de ser testigo de las atrocidades que cometía la Contra, movimiento armado opuesto al gobierno sandinista, sintió la responsabilidad moral de contarlo. Así fue como dejó su trabajo y, con tan solo 31 años, escribió un detallado informe que acreditaba el sadismo de la Contra. Gracias a estas páginas que fueron portada de The New York Times, Estados Unidos dejó de financiar a este grupo.

Porque los dictadores se cazan, pero se necesita tiempo y, sobre todo, paciencia. Pero este abogado, sobre cuyo trabajo se han realizado ya cinco documentales, persigue un sueño que tiene que ver con restaurar aquello que es inquebrantable y profundamente bello, aquello que anida en el corazón del hombre más allá de las circunstancias y que se llama dignidad.

Más tarde, Brody trabajó en la ONU y en la creación del Tribunal Penal Internacional, hasta que en 1998 entró en Human Rights Watch, una ONG de referencia en el campo de los derechos humanos de la que ha sido portavoz. Su cruzada por la justicia y los derechos humanos lo ha llevado a El Salvador, Guatemala, Tíbet, Haití, Timor Oriental o la República Democrática del Congo.

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Born in a Brooklyn that bears little resemblance to the Brooklyn of today, he grew up becoming increasingly aware of inequalities. He went to law school and began his working life at the New York City District Attorney's Office. Soon, however, he embarked on a journey that would change his life: in 1984 he visited Nicaragua where, after witnessing the atrocities committed by the Contras, armed groups fighting the Sandinista government, he felt a moral duty to speak out. Accordingly, he resigned from his job and, at the age of just 31, wrote a detailed report documenting the sadistic actions of the Contras. Thanks to this work, which was published on the front page of The New York Times, the United States stopped funding the groups.

Because dictators must be hunted down, but it takes time and, above all, patience. However, this lawyer, whose work has already been the subject of five documentaries, pursues a dream of restoring that which is unshakeable and profoundly beautiful, that which nestles in the heart of man whatever the circumstances, and which is called dignity.

Lives are made up of small gestures. Such gestures stay with us. They are anecdotes that acquire relevance over time. So, Reed Brody is probably – although we are not in possession of the full facts – one of the youngest people to have written a constitution. At the age of 12, with his younger brother, Clifford, he wrote the Constitution of the Free Republic of Brodania, a country that, by decree, would have no relations with kings or dictators, but only with states as equals and on the basis of democracy. This story might have stayed as just an innocent pastime, but was the seed of a life rooted in the struggle for democracy, that of the American lawyer Reed Brody, who has spent years as an activist in the field of human rights.

Cuenta que «Si matas a alguien, vas a la cárcel. Si matas a 40 personas, te encierran en un psiquiátrico. Si matas a 40.000 personas, te exilias cómodamente en otro país con una buena cuenta corriente. Esto es lo que queremos cambiar». Justicia, nada más y nada menos, eso es lo que pide, por lo que lucha.

Algunas de sus victorias más icónicas son Augusto Pinochet, Jean-Claude Duvalier o Hissène Habré y confía en que pronto el gambiano Yahya Jammeh se añada a la lista de dictadores a los que ha conseguido llevar ante la justicia.

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Reed later worked at the UN and helped to establish the International Criminal Court, and in 1998 joined Human Rights Watch, a prominent NGO in the field of human rights for which he acted as a spokesperson. His crusade for justice and human rights has taken him to El Salvador, Guatemala, Tibet, Haiti, East Timor and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While it is true that, according to self-help books if you want to change the world you have to start with yourself, Brody started in a really big way, both at the same time. Not in vain does he come from a generation – that of the seventies – that wanted to change the world and he has shown throughout his life that it is possible to do just that. That is why he is known, although he does not like the nickname, as the “dictator hunter”.

He says, “If you kill someone, you go to jail. If you kill 40 people, you are sent to a mental institution. If you kill 40,000 people, you go into comfortable exile in another country with an overflowing bank account. This is what we want to change.” Justice, nothing more and nothing less, is what he wants, what he fights for. Some of his most outstanding victories were over Augusto Pinochet, Jean-Claude Duvalier and Hissène Habré, and he hopes that the Gambian Yahya Jammeh will soon be added to the list of dictators he has managed to bring to justice.

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