

## **Poetry, youth and social transformation**

BUSTAMANTE-CORREA, Ana\*†

*Universidad de Antioquia*

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### **Abstract**

In this text the way that literature enables the social transformation by the youth of the city of Medellin, where the script allows the construction of subjectivities and analyzes pluralities. An analysis from the categories "youth" and "literature" and the relationship between them that allows this transformation is done. In summary, this paper is understood the concept of youth as he bears pluralities and diversities. Also sees literature as a vehicle for social transformation and mechanism through which young venture to participate in other words, literature as a particular way to participate politically in public for art and transform the dominant position and stigmatizing society has regarding youth.

**Literature, political subjectivity, youth, social transformation, poetry, story, ethical and aesthetic sensitivity, Medellin (Antioquia, Colombia), Sociology of literature**

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\* Correspondence to Author (email: aniscree@hotmail.com)

† Researcher contributing first author.

## Introduction

This text realizes the research I did in my thesis for the years 2013 and 2014 to qualify for the title of sociologist at the University of Antioquia. My primary interest was to conduct an investigation where literature and especially poetry and short stories were the apex for construction of the category of political subjectivity in the youth of the city of Medellin. However, for this article, my interest is based on poetry as language enables a closer link between the author and the reader and is a vehicle for social transformation.

First I prepare to make an approach to the category of youth, and to identify the role of poetry in shaping political subjectivity in young, understanding political subjectivity as the subject, in this case young, put in the center of its reflexivity social imaginary and in this sense, it focuses what is common to all. (Diaz, Salamanca, & Carmona, 2012).

Following this line, poetry is the tool and the vehicle through which young venture to think their singularities and take a critical view of their daily lives, their relationships with others and their world. That is why from poetry, young people are part of a particular way of experiencing the world, part of your emotions and feelings, and in turn, generate alternatives to actively participate in society.

This text is divided into three main parts: in the first place and manner of approach, I make an outline of how violence has permeated the social life of the city, where young people have been involved. In a second time I will speak of youth as a category of analysis and the way young people relate to poetry, and finally, in a third time, I will discuss how poetry allows social transformation by young poets of the city Medellin.

## Poetry, youth and social transformation

"I love angels flamethrower poets –bellos inventing new worlds from the word and laugh and give the wine its proverbial fair and importance."

Gioconda Belli

Medellin is a city of about 2'499.080 inhabitants and the second largest city in Colombia, highlighted as financial, commercial and industrial center. However, it has been marked for decades by violence, drug trafficking and groups outside the law operating in their streets.

In the 90 groups of gunmen working for drug traffickers soon spread throughout the city, especially in the districts where the young people who were its main members, soon enrolled in conflict dynamics. Likewise urban violence has been a problem that has become a constitutive and structuring dynamics of society, where mafia cartels, the killers and the whole drug business, have left important traces in the medellinense society. Thus, armed groups have made Medellin a city where crime is part of normal panorama of the city, where violence is normal, where the danger is normal.

From the 90 literature in the city he began to show the reality of the conflict and to reflect how young people thought their reality this particular product. Violence is shown as a pattern in the social life of the inhabitants of the city of Medellin, particularly young people, as they have been directly involved in the conflict, in the sense that it has been in the people's communes where conflict It has been made visible in a more constant than in the rest of the city way, and that's where most of the young offenders belong.

It is therefore in the art, and specifically in the literature that the conflict has been reflected in a clearer way and latent through other disciplines, since although use of fiction do, events and characteristics of a society crossed narrated by violence, that is, the social context that frames the literary work is portrayed. From the 90s mainly literary works began to show not only the lives of the medellinense society but also the way young people see the world about their experiences and emotions, mainly talking about the novel and the poetry. Therefore, socio-cultural, economic and political factors that were generated at this time facilitated new forms of social relations of young people to society, family, state, religion, economics, among others.

From here, young people are part of a particular conception of the world as a result of his approach to art, which is mediated by different forms of socialization, where the social features of the context in which they live are registered and form discursive world view about their emotions, experiences, feelings and needs.

Thus, from the composition of poems it is implied a need for social transformation. That is why my interest lies in exploring how poetry is construction of political subjectivity, where the young "is a member of the group to which it belongs, and his writing makes his spokesman; at the same time, the writer has a lucid, conscious or not, it does translate into literary, critically, axiology "(Ortega, 2005).

### **To understand the concept of youth**

Speaking of youth and try to define that category under a unifying concept premise would be wrong, since it is not univocal and standardized category, as is constructed culturally.

In this way he exposes the author Rosana Reguillo "mutability of criteria setting limits and behavior of the youth, is necessarily linked to the socio-historical contexts, due to the balance of power in a given society" (Reguillo, 2003. p.104). In the same vein, it should be mentioned that young people based on a construction of meanings, making positions, ability to reflexivity, and creating dynamic alternative in social relations that enable a particular way of living their lives and identify with their environment . Similarly, experience plays an important role in the construction of subjectivities, since from it, and talking specifically literary creation itself adds something to the world. It is then necessary to understand young people as subjects with individual positions and experiences with regard to conflict and violence, stigmatizing disaggregating the idea that youth is negatively related to the conflict in the country.

"The concept is difficult to anchor into concrete realities that give identity from well-defined categories that do not fall into stereotypes beforehand. We can therefore not subject us to unique and definitive definitions "(Taguenca, 2009, p. 161). To Taguenca, the concept of youth does not have an exact and permanent definition, however, is continually changing and evolving based on the plural identities of young people. The author strengthens the argument that young people are a power of what will be in the future, ie young people become adults and therefore its present condition of youth is a kind of denial, since according to him , this is to be young adulthood future. However, what is really important here is not the field of the future of young and adult, but the present in which young, where identity is constructed from the present, in other words, is "institutionalized instrumental rationality built to young adult modeling in transit "(Taguenca, 2009, p. 163).

To Reguillo (2000), youth should not be assumed or limited in its conception, as it is not possible to think young people in a generalized manner, placing them in an unambiguous and simple category, without stopping to think that there are different circumstances and peculiarities fueling what being young. For the author, despite the plurality in the youth and all the diversity that encloses the word youth, there is a point in common in young people, is that "all are children of modernity and the crisis disenchantment "(Reguillo, 2000, p. 103).

Particularly talking about the case of Medellin, as evidenced in his text Alonso Salazar were not born pa 'seed (Salazar, 2003), youth in the city is the product of numerous peculiarities whose epicenter violence. Youths have had a direct or indirect connection with the conflict and the different representations of violence in the city. One can say that in this sense, youth is a widespread category, because it is crossed by the same phenomenon. However, what varies is how you perceive the violence and the position of young people regarding this.

"The political life of young people in the country has been crossed by violence, it involves the speed of the spirit of the times and absorbed into their circles of producing breeding conditions and the circumstances of war, displacement and death." (Botero Gómez, 2008, p. 53)

For Jimenez (2006), pigeonhole youth by age or psychobiological would be equally wrong, since it would be setting aside a symbolic and sociocultural complexity involved in the concept of youth, and that cannot be understood through a criterion such as the demographic age as youth itself, contains many more meanings and diversity of positions.

According to the author, in the case of Colombia, the concept of youth recently had its origin, generated by the interrelations in different scenarios. He sees young people as a "non-adult beings" who have been marginalized as a social group, and the evidence in the analysis of the work of the Colombian writer Andres Caicedo, which he calls "antiadulta".

For the analysis of the category of youth, the author proposes an inclusive and criticism youth as a social group, which makes visible the context in which the subjects interact vision. Jimenez (2006) notes that the social context to analyze complementarities and convergences when talking about juvenile subjectivities. Therefore, the youth has a "ambiguous, unstable and euphemistic" meaning, which has suffered an obvious manipulation in the imaginary of modernity. From here the author then proposes the following comparison:

The age of majority is assimilated into adulthood of humanity. Adulthood is an achievement of the people and even of people who deliberately purge his guilt of disposal. It is the adulthood of history and societies. The modern age is an adult. Adulthood means to become free and equal to others, emancipated from any guardianship or servitude through the rational use of the will to speak for himself in public. "(Jimenez, 2006, p. 20)

In this sense, being an adult means practicing the reason, which is where the authority rests, namely that an adult has already been cleared of any guardian decided by him in his youth. Therefore, youth means not being subject and be tied to the will of others; in other words, it means dependence and irrationality and, according to Jimenez (2006) "is now inferred as a threat of rebellion, revolution or reform" (p. 21).

The youth must then be understood as a culturally diverse population and expressed in many and different social, cultural, political and economic and must account for existing diversity and heterogeneity in the youth population. In the case of Medellin, sociologist Juan Mauricio Garcia argues that the city "is not enough adequate inclusion that allows the young to exploit and promote all their creative and transformative capacities for building a society with better living conditions, however has stigmatized him "(Garcia, 2008, p. 35).

In this category of youth highlights certain social and economic difficulties, and the lack of educational, employment, and social opportunities for the state, which resulted in a rising tide of youth crime as a form of recognition in society "which excludes them from opportunities that would guarantee them a better life" (Garcia, 2008, p.36).

According Reguillo Rosanna (2003) in the literature is possible to recognize two types of young actors:

- Those who can be conceptualized as "incorporated" and have been analyzed through its membership or from school or religious sphere; or, from the cultural consumption.
- The "alternative" or "dissidents" whose cultural practices have produced abundant pages that have been analyzed from its non-incorporation into the dominant culture schemes. (P. 106)

The author talks about the emergence of the category of youth as a social subject. Young people need to identify with the same and different from others, especially adults, as thus create concepts to explain their reality.

Following this line, Reguillo (2003) argues that the claim is that equal the difference is experienced. According to the author, "to the late eighties and early nineties, you can recognize the emergence of a new type of speech understanding about young people" (p. 109), which indicates that thanks to the different cyclical and social not only in Colombia but also in the world events, youth and population group has been more and becoming object of study of different branches of the social sciences and humanities.

### **Poetry as a vehicle for personal and social transformation**

Through the centuries, writing was the tool with which society has passed from generation to generation, because as Edgar Morin (1992) says, "the individual-subject can become aware of itself through the instrument objectification that is language "(p. 9). The need for communication has been present in humans for thousands of years and with the invention of writing, this need found a vehicle to transmit messages from society to society, from generation to generation. That is why the importance of literature lies precisely in its task of describing social relations in his literary works, whether fictional or not.

The literature was considered in ancient Greece not only as a fine art, but also as one of the purest forms of art, which is interpreted through the senses and a system of internalized symbols that are particular in every person. In this sense, Hegel says that "it is no longer art but thinking about it, the ultimate expression of the spirit" (Neira, 2011). And that art is thought-provoking and critical thinking of many aspects of life, and is itself a transfiguration of beauty, an approach to the status of deity, a pure expression of the soul. The Colombian writer Jose Maria Vargas Vila in the preface to his novel Ibis, edition 1900, wrote:

### Art is the simple expression of beauty

The beautiful is the realization of the dream; unreal made tangible; the Ideal taking shape in harmony color, and in the perfection of line, and in the eurythmia lucid and vibrant style.

It is also the Ideal subjective and rhythmic; what He is guessing and is revealed in the limbo of vision; the evocation of Silence and the Dreaming; the breath of the Mystery Symbol.

The poetic production can be said that there is a story that directly through the relationship between youth and politics and that "young people have been enrolled in the national political history, geo-referenced in various contexts and social issues with implications for the construction of public world ". (Botero, 2008, p. 46). Thus, young people are as individuals with the capacity to transform the world around them from their poetic creations. Indeed, "a subject is not isolated from the circumstances, the conditions of the context, time or zeitgeist in which he lives; in turn, this creates and recreates its limited power "(Botero, 2008, p. 43). That is why the literary creations of the youth of the city, often tend to explicitly demonstrate a vision of Medellin and a relationship with the conflict albeit indirectly. In this sense:

The field of subjectivity is, overall, how we venture on this planet and how political current conditions allow us to move collectively to confront the problems of coexistence; Also, the position we take toward the conflict over natural resources, exacerbations and xenophobia, systematic destruction of life and strategic ecosystems. (Child, 2008)

Poetry is a personal position taken with respect to reality and allows others to identify with the feelings of the poet, as it is loaded with softer language of the soul.

Likewise, "poetry and literature in general, part of his texts vitality of society in which language they are written" (Eliot, 1992, p.16). Its importance and role lie in the union that allows in young thanks to the peculiarities of registered language in it, since it has a symbolic value that cannot have for other sectors of society, however, can be understood as a vehicle of feeling, it's here

Where better emotion and feeling are expressed, then, it is the common language of the people; ie in the language common to all classes: structure, rhythm, sound, idioms of a language express the personality of the people who speak it. " (Eliot, 1992, p. 16)

In this respect the social function of poetry lies in allowing the permanence of language and communication between generations and societies. That is, it brings people governed under the same language swap the characteristics of that period.

The writer is necessarily immersed in a community is the sum and representing many voices of their particular era. Fischer (1972), the literary work is a mediation between the time it was written and the reader, providing concrete elements for the understanding of reality in which it was written, the writer being a member of society.

A literary text then reflects a social reality while that originates in the collective imagination a sort of awareness of not only the social but also political phenomena. Therefore, talk about a writer and decouple the political sphere would be wrong because it raises public opinion and its role lies in communicating and reporting, whether through fiction, social events and / or particular political positions.

Such is the case of the writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, whose work was closely related to participation in politics, as well as their fictional texts, they ventured to write to newspapers and political exposure of life social of the time, and were heavily censored and even exiled by this fact.

Writing enables life while allowing the individual to express their feelings in a privately first, which enters a communication and redefines himself as a social being as it is also identified with feelings of others. Similarly, personal growth occurs where raw creativity as release mechanism. For example, it is easy for the reader to identify with the words he reads a poem, while they may be in the place of the writer and feel his words as if he himself had written. Something very similar happens when you write poetry, especially because the writer is hinting letters, aspects of his human soul, easily identified by those who read. Indeed, writing becomes a means by which young people can rethink aspects of their lives and somehow free. Thus, poetry can also be understood as a mechanism of catharsis.

It is true that for a poet, poetry becomes the center of his life, in his present condition engine, and is present in all areas of his life. When immersed in the world of writing, it is clear that the change involves immersion in the subject such ventures and personal transformation is evident. In that sense, poetry is not only modifies the thought but also set a new stage for understanding the world, also providing some sensitivity not only aesthetic but also ethics and a clear interest in transforming from it. It is here that poetry has given young people a political subjectivity Medellin in their desire for social transformation, and has also been introduced as a way to participate politically in public.

It's beautiful to mention that poetry has also sparked a desire to break with normality, with hegemonic schemes in place in society, and in this sense it is common in those who are immersed in the world of poetry, the conviction that this modified their lives in a special way because it gave them an ethical sensitivity and a different way of looking at other human beings.

In Medellin there are young people who found in poetry a way to portray their lives and their surroundings. Young people from the written word express their dissatisfaction with society, but also recognize and take responsibility and its commitment to social transformation through art. While, though his motivation is only the share their poetic creations, this is in itself a political event in which shows a clear position as to how these young people relate, since generates a reaction in the viewer in their creation.

Young poets are the voices of their particular way of feeling the world, seeing art as transformation mechanism not only personal but also social. It is for this reason that many of the youth of the city leading into the land of poetry, promote the participation of other young people not only through the poetic task, but what has happened is also open to the creation of different spaces and stages to enable social transformation from art in general. Thus poetry gives an ability to imagine and create, while it gives the young to think certain elements of society.

Through poetry youth gain elements to have a position and a clear conception about the social.

Also, there are the voices of many other young people who think like they do in the city and have decided to create organized groups, theater groups, troupes, musical groups, etc., to generate some impact in the community and advocate for building a society based on equality and recognition of the other, to the time when you try to change this negative figure is for young people, to potentiate the premise that the young man is also a social actor and not merely a being there and then turned it into adulthood.

### Conclusions

Art (especially speaking of poetry), provides tools to make a critique of what is the social and imaginary taken into account when thinking of each of the actors reading. Young poets clearly understand the importance of playing roles in society, to collaborate with the construction of a more inclusive way, and in turn, raise the importance of taking spaces for artistic representations where the young man is the spokesman and the protagonist of their own social reality.

Poetry can be translated as a way to participate politically in public, because through it, young transcribe his reality and in turn transform. That is, they contribute to the world and not only live or suffer. In this sense they are consolidated as political subjects on the premise that "politics is engaged in construction, care and housing of a world" (Estrada, 2007, p.149) and not just the simple experience of this. Poetry necessarily part of the real world and that this is all known, and although is written under the label of fiction, the writer draws from real life to make sense of their creation. In this sense, poetry has an advantage over other forms of writing because it allows the emotional plane carrying further.

Young propose other ways of living society through language and are positioned as

subjects with transformative capabilities that use art and poetry primarily to create new spaces for participation, in which different positions that are unified under the same view of the world, of life, of reality and society: poetry.

The role of poetry is as important when talking about a specific social context, and that through the exercise of writing a narrative of reality that comes more easily to those members of society that other disciplines are given. Similarly, poetry plays a crucial role since decal reality through the senses, emotions, feelings. For this reason, and in accordance with the position of Sartre, the writer is the conscience of society, whose function is to report, describe and convey. Thus the figure of the writer does the job.

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