

<https://doi.org/10.47633/v8kwtd85>

Narratives from the Pineapple Republic. On national self-understanding and sustainability paradoxes in Costa Rica as detected in Adrián Jiménez Brais' play PIÑA

Narrativas de la república de la piña. Sobre el autoconocimiento nacional y las paradojas de la sostenibilidad en Costa Rica según la obra PIÑA de Adrián Jiménez Brais

Narrativas da república do abacaxi. Sobre o autoconhecimento nacional e os paradoxos da sustentabilidade na Costa Rica na peça PIÑA, de Adrián Jiménez Brais

Susanne Schlünder

Institute of Romance and Latin Studies, Osnabrück University. Osnabrück, Germany

<https://ror.org/04qmmjx98>

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4914-1864>

susanne.schlunder@uni-osnabrueck.de

Received 17-01-2025 | Revised 15-03-2025 | Accepted 01-05-2025



The articles published in Revista Académica Arjé of the National Technical University, Costa Rica, are shared under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en>

Abstract

The following article analyzes the play PIÑA (2023) by Costa Rican author Adrián Jiménez Brais. Based on an understanding of literature as a repository of social knowledge, where urgent narratives, discourses and issues are made visible and negotiated, this study focuses on the function of storytelling in the play. The play deconstructs Costa Rican narratives that pertain to the core of national self-understanding and identity formation, and that promote current agricultural extractivism, producing sustainability paradoxes. By working out these narratives and situating them in cultural history, the literary analysis aims to show, in line with Dillon and Craig, to what extent the play places “narrative evidence” alongside scientific evidence.

Keywords: Agrarian extractivism, Drama, Green exceptionalism, Narrative analysis, Pineapple, Sustainable development, Work and peace.

Resumen

El siguiente artículo analiza la obra PIÑA (2023) del autor costarricense Adrián Jiménez Brais. Basándonos en la comprensión de la literatura como un archivo de saberes sociales, donde se visibilizan y negocian narrativas, discursos y temas urgentes, nos centramos en la función de esta “narración dramática”. Según nuestro enfoque la obra deconstruye narrativas costarricenses que forman parte del núcleo de la autoimagen e identidad nacional y demuestra que estas narrativas promueven el extractivismo agrario actual y producen paradojas de sostenibilidad. Al destacar estas narrativas y situarlas en su contexto histórico-cultural, el análisis literario busca aclarar, en línea con el enfoque de Dillon y Craig, hasta qué punto la obra logra producir una “evidencia narrativa” en sintonía con la evidencia científica.

Palabras clave: Análisis de narrativas, Desarrollo sostenible a la tica, Drama, Excepcionalismo verde, Extractivismo agrario, Piña, Trabajo y paz



The articles published in Revista Académica Arjé of the National Technical University, Costa Rica, are shared under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en>

Resumo

Este artigo analisa a peça PIÑA (2023), do autor costa-riquenho Adrián Jiménez Brais. Com base na compreensão da literatura como um repositório de saber social, no qual narrativas, discursos e questões urgentes são visibilizados e negociados, o estudo concentra-se na função da narrativa na peça. PIÑA desconstrói narrativas costarriquenhas relacionadas ao cerne do autoconhecimento nacional e da formação identitária, que sustentam o atual extrativismo agrário e produzem paradoxos da sustentabilidade. Ao elaborar essas narrativas e situá-las na história cultural, a análise literária busca demonstrar, em consonância com Dillon e Craig, até que ponto a peça coloca a “evidência narrativa” ao lado da evidência científica.

Palavras-chave: Abacaxi, Análise narrativa, Desenvolvimento sustentável, Dramaturgia, Excepcionalismo verde, Extrativismo agrário

Introduction

No olvides la palabra mágica: es desarrollo sostenible.
(Anacristina Rossi, La loca de Gandoca, p. 86)

In literary and cultural studies, humans can be defined as homo narrans who understand and organize the world through storytelling: “Wherever socially significant matters are discussed, storytelling is involved”¹, crossing the boundaries between everyday and scientific cultures, as the Germanist Koschorke notes (2012, p. 18f.). Narratives are regarded as cultural forms of expression and results of collective negotiations in the construction of reality and meaning (Erl & Roggendorf, 2002) and as “the glue that binds people together in networks, giving them a sense of history, common ground and future” (Lejano et al., 2013, p. 2). This societal impact is accompanied by its diverse dissemination in the press, social networks, political pronouncements, and cultural artefacts, prompting interdisciplinary political,

1 Orig.: “Wo immer sozial Bedeutsames verhandelt wird, ist das Erzählen im Spiel [...]” (author’s translation).



sociological, and cultural investigations. Accordingly, narrative analysis can facilitate a productive exchange between political science, sociology, environmental studies and cultural studies across their respective disciplinary boundaries, opening up transdisciplinary perspectives. Narratives seem particularly relevant in the context of environmental conflicts and global issues such as pandemics, species extinction or climate change in the Anthropocene (Dillon & Craig, 2023; Dürbeck, 2018; Jones & Song, 2014). Their analysis provides insights not only into cultural patterns of meaning-making and underlying world models and their transformation, but also into the influence of narratives in public debates and policy-making processes (Jones et al. 2022; Shanahan et al., 2011).

The following contribution seeks to analyze the play *PIÑA* (2023) by Adrián Jiménez Brais – one of the few literary texts to address this issue –² and is based on an understanding of literature as a repository of social knowledge, where urgent narratives, discourses and issues are made visible and negotiated. By fictionally playing out the consequences of actions, literary texts can challenge existing orders and values and propose alternatives (Bachtin, 1979; Eco, 1982; Iser, 1976).

The play, premiered in 2019 by a group of students from the Escuela de Artes Dramáticas at the University of Costa Rica (Jiménez Brais, 2019), aims to be explicitly political and, in a sense, draws on the literary tradition of the so-called “banana novel.” Classics such as *Mamita Yunai* by Carlos Luis Fallas or Carmen Lyra’s story “*Bananos y hombres*,” central to Costa Rican school literature, highlight the exploitation of people and nature in the first half of the 20th century under a US-dominated plantation economy. This tradition is constantly renewed, as shown by works such as Manuel Aguilar Vargas’s *Los papeles de Silvio Victor* (2007) or Evin González Bonilla’s *Más allá del Siglo: entre bananos y machetes* (2020). Given the prolific production of literary texts dealing with banana plantations, the lack of relevant texts on extractive pineapple cultivation is all the more surprising given the

2 The publication itself is a sign of the fruitful cooperation between Osnabrück and Costa Rican students and scientists in the context of a DAAD-funded project on ‘Livelihoods and Biodiversity in Costa Rica’ (2020–2024). I would like to express my special thanks to Sandra González Beck, who got in touch with Adrián Brais, and to the author for allowing us to use his manuscript, and finally to Dr Mijail Mondol (UCR/UNA/UNED) and Dr Gabriel Baltodano (UNA), who established contact with the editorial team of *Repertorio Americano*.



symbolic significance it has acquired; in addition to serious environmental issues, we are talking about growing economic dependencies, the displacement of local farmers, as well as escalating migration conflicts and the exploitation of cheap labor, particularly in Costa Rica's northern region bordering Nicaragua, which is characterized by intensive pineapple production.

PIÑA by Adrian Jiménez Brais addresses this situation by imagining the consequences of pineapple-based agriculture in northern Costa Rica in a dystopian future at the beginning of the 22nd century. The drama, according to this approach, engages in storytelling by processing specifically Costa Rican environmental narratives, their interactions and interconnections, while specifically reflecting the conditions of the Plantationocene. Defined as the “control over nature, population, and space, together with associated temporalities and historical trajectories [...]” (Chao et al., 2024, p. 5; Wolford, 2021), the Plantationocene concept refers to the plantation system with its techniques of over-exploitation of nature and subaltern, mostly indigenous and African labor; a system that “[...] became an epicenter of confluence between early capitalism and racism, becoming part of the Anthropocene's genealogy” (Kaltmeier et al., 2024, p. 23). In the same way that the colonial plantation machine is seen as one of the foundations of the modern, mechanized, energy-hungry industrial system (Haraway, 2015), *PIÑA* can be considered as part of a recently defined Anthropocene literature (Probst et al., 2022). The narratives that unfold in the play, which are also central to the global sustainability paradigm, are not always explicit; therefore, the analysis aims to show how they are implicitly conveyed through scene descriptions, dialogue, character development, and appropriate stage design. Another thesis is that the narratives go to the heart of Costa Rican national self-understanding and identity formation, and thus have a decisive influence on public discourse and political action. Relevant social and environmental studies have shown that government policies, by referring to the prevailing concept of sustainability, conceal, among other things, the disastrous consequences of pineapple extractivism (León Araya, 2021; Monge Hernández, 2014).

Against this background, the following article outlines the central Costa Rican environmental narratives, including their historical dimensions, and then shows how they are addressed and deconstructed in *PIÑA*. The article concludes with a



consideration of the functions of the play in relation to the story-listening approach outlined by Dillon and Craig (2023).

Development

The essence of Costa Rican identity: Of Paradise Abundance, Simple Farmers, Work and Peace

*Costa Rica, a paradise is waiting for you.
Costa Ricans are unique, doing things differently makes us proud!*
(Esencial Costa Rica)

Esencial Costa Rica is a website sponsored by government agencies and entities, including the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, and the Costa Rican Tourism Institute. Accordingly, the website is significant when it comes to the official public image and dominant forms of national self-representation. It is aimed at local companies who wish to apply for licenses to promote the marca país, as well as tourists, students, digital nomads, businesses and investors who want to get to know the essence of the country and its people:

Our Nation Brand is our Costa Rican way of welcoming everyone to our land through our values and tico essence. Nation branding is the strategy to position and capitalize on a country's image in the international market. It aims to grow the nation's positive reputation through tourism, foreign direct investments, and exports. (Esencial Costa Rica)³

The combination of economic texts and breathtaking photographs of volcanoes, flora and fauna, paired with interior views of state-of-the-art laboratories, serves multiple functions for Costa Rica's external representation: The ecological and geological characteristics of the isthmus are presented as the essence of a unique

³ The website cited here in its English version, which counts "sostenibilidad", "excelencia", "innovación", "progreso social" and "vinculación costarricense" among the five central Costa Rican values, has recently undergone a relaunch and offers material for its own cultural-semiotic analysis of the officially disseminated national self-image.

Costa Rica; the latter stands out as a demilitarized, prosperous democracy that differs from other Central American countries; it has access to technological advances and boasts a highly educated and hardworking population. In its marketing intent, which touches on both nature and labor, the website establishes a national brand that portrays the country as an idyllic place par excellence and as a reliable business partner. This narrative is based on what is known as “excepcionalismo verde” (Gutiérrez Arguedas & Granados Chaverri, 2020), a socio-ecological narrative that speaks of a paradisiacal, peaceful, politically and economically stable country, unique not only in Central America, where it is good to live and work and where investment promises rich dividends. This illustrates the prevalence of the rhetoric of green exceptionalism and how it is actively marketed. Green exceptionalism, which currently emphasizes the country's remarkable biodiversity and environmental sustainability awareness, draws on historically rooted collective ideas, as a way to look at Costa Rican nation-building discourses of the late 19th century reveals. These ideas were primarily literalized from the 1880s onwards by the El Olimpo generation of writers, which includes Carlos Gagini, Ricardo Fernández Guardia, Manuel González Zeledón and Aquileo J. Echeverría as the founding fathers of national literature (Cubillo Paniagua, 2021). Despite different individual approaches reflected in polemics about the value of genuinely Costa Rican cultural products or an orientation towards Europe (Mondol López, 2021, p. 38), the texts of *El Olimpo* consistently establish national identity by resorting to the topos of uniqueness: Unique is nature, stylized as paradise and already understood as an economic resource and national capital;⁴ but also unique are the inhabitants, who with the exception of the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, are presented as a homogeneous community of white Creoles.⁵ The Generación del Olimpo was recruited primarily from the politically and economically powerful coffee elite. Their attempt to establish the fledgling nation-state as a cohesive political, territorial and linguistic unit and to identify it with the white upper class represents a political-economic endeavour:

4 Recent analyses, building on notable works by Amoretti Hurtado (2002), Jiménez Matarrita (2005), and others, are offered in an as yet unpublished master's thesis by Azucena Russian Storz (2024, University of Osnabrück).

5 A detailed examination of the whiteness myth is offered by Soto Quirós (2008).



Durante las tres últimas décadas del siglo XIX, el poder político y económico de nuestro país [Costa Rica] estaba concentrado en una clase social ligada al cultivo y a la exportación de café. A partir de la consolidación y dominio de dicha oligarquía cafetalera, la construcción del Estado-nación surgió como un proyecto económico-político, el cual dio lugar a la formación de un conjunto de representaciones que permitieron a la comunidad costarricense imaginarse bajo una misma unidad política, geográfica y cultural. (Mondol López, 2021, p. 18)⁶

The Creole oligarchy of coffee growers and exporters aimed to consolidate the autonomous and sovereign nation-state in terms of foreign policy; domestically, it sought to consolidate its own hegemony and legitimize the alignment of export-oriented, economically liberal interests with those of the nation-state (Quesada Soto, 2008, p. 14).

A systematic glorification of the mythical freedom fighter Juan Santamaría, who sacrificed his life in the fight against the American filibusters led by William Walker in 1856, only began with the nation-building discourses of the last third of the 19th century. This has to do with the fact that his figure was particularly suited to being instrumentalized for the purposes of the coffee oligarchy.

[...] la intención de promover a Santamaría como el héroe consensual o el héroe de todo el pueblo costarricense ("héroe nacional") tiene por objetivo legitimar el acenso del liberalismo al poder medio de la reciente aceptación que tiene un héroe de extracción "popular" rescatado y promovido por nuevos actores políticos dominantes: los liberales.
(Méndez Alfaro, 2007, p. 106)⁷

6 "Throughout the final three decades of the 19th century, political and economic power in our country [Costa Rica] was concentrated within a social class tied to coffee cultivation and export. With the consolidation and dominance of this coffee oligarchy, the construction of the nation-state arose as an economic and political project, fostering a set of representations that enabled the Costa Rican community to envision itself as a unified political, geographical, and cultural entity" (author's translation).

7 "The effort to establish Santamaría as a universally accepted hero – a 'national hero' – seeks to legitimize liberalism's ascent to power by capitalizing on the recent embrace of a hero with 'popular'

The glorification of the *labriego sencillo*, who represents the sovereignty of the land without any claim to power, is based on a narrative that conveys to the population a specific interpretation of social relations reminiscent of European medieval feudal systems: If the population identifies with the “campesino, trabajador, noble y sencillo” (Mondol López, 2021, p. 25), renounces personal power and the pursuit of capital, and dedicates its labor to the coffee-producing and exporting oligarchy, the elite cafetalera will in return guarantee national sovereignty, work, peace and prosperity. The narrative of the simple and hardworking folk hero Santamaría, who defends the homeland against invaders at the cost of his own life, establishes a relationship that links sacrifice, work and peace, claiming the absence of class struggle in a patriarchal society (Amoretti Hurtado, 2002, p. 133). It functions as a core ideology in the discourse of national identity, invoked in the last line of the national anthem - “¡vivan siempre el trabajo y la paz!” - from the early 20th century, emphasizing peace as a product of labor. In line with the discourses of national identity of the late 19th century, whose echoes can still be heard today, the sujeto nacional is modelled as a reminiscence of the “simple peasant” Santamaría. The ideal citizen is thus endowed with a work ethic rooted in reliability, thoroughness and diligence, coupled with a natural inclination towards simplicity and harmony, and a strong desire for peace. The importance attached to the national education system can be related in two ways: In the early stages of national identity formation, it serves to implement the discourses and associated models and ideals;⁸ from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, its function is to train the country’s specialized workforce and thus - according to the narrative - to promote social progress that includes all social groups equally. An overlay with the core ideology of work/peace is evident in this context with the identity narrative “more teachers than soldiers” (Jiménez Matarrita, 2005, p. 86), which refers to the abolition of the army in 1949 and the investment of the saved military expenditure in education. In conclusion, this demonstrates the complex overlap of various beliefs and narratives. Looking at the discourses and policies that have promoted the cultivation of pineapple monocultures since the late 1980s, we

origins, one who has been recovered and promoted by newly dominant political forces: the liberals” (author’s translation).

8 “El sistema escolar juega un importante papel en la difusión de esas señas de identidad nacional [...]” (Jiménez Matarrita, 2005, p. 86)



see reflections of the narratives and ideologies described above in the prehistory of the current extractivism that Jiménez Brais brings to the stage. Neoliberalism, closely associated with the figure of Costa Rican President Arias Sánchez, renews not only the promise of prosperity, but also the aforementioned conditional relationship. Arias, a member of the Costa Rican oligarchy, set the stage for a massive expansion of pineapple monocultures in the 1990s and advocated policies that presented the collateral damage of this expansion as a condition sine qua non for social progress – progress that did not primarily benefit the general population. From our perspective, the economic policies of the president – who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for his mediating role in officially ending armed internal conflicts in Central America – reflect the ideologeme *trabajo/paz*, which, under the government of José María Figueres Olsen, is linked to the narrative of *desarrollo sostenible a la tica* (León Araya, 2021; Monge Hernández, 2014). In line with the concept of sustainability, following the Brundtland Report, which identifies sustainability as development oriented towards economic growth,⁹ the narrative of *desarrollo sostenible a la tica* revives the promise of social progress and prosperity. By suggesting the conservation of natural resources for future generations, it indirectly appeals to a sense of a unique Costa Rican paradise that must be protected in the national interest. This narrative links the notion of *exceptionalismo verde* to the core ideology of *trabajo/paz*, offering the broader population a message similar to that formulated by the coffee elite a century earlier: The abandonment of particular interests, and thus of conflict, in favor of social redistribution and the acceptance of neoliberal agrarian extractivism now promises not only national sovereignty, employment and social progress, but also the protection of nature. Given the entanglement of political and economic interests at national and global levels, as well as the environmental damage caused regionally, environmental sociology has identified neocolonial tendencies in Costa Rican pineapple cultivation as an expression of a (bio)coloniality of power (Monge Hernández, 2014).

The national and international perception of the country is perfectly aligned with the narrative of a typical Costa Rican sustainability model, attributing to the country a pioneering role in environmental and climate protection, while recognizing

9 An insight into the mechanisms of the sustainability ideology is offered by Schmieder 2018.



Costa Rica for its renewable energy goals and its efforts to establish biodiversity corridors and a payment system for ecosystem services. In this context it may seem paradoxical that the country is not only the world leader in pineapple exports, but also in pesticide use per unit of food produced (Morataya Montenegro & Bautista Solís, 2020, p. 94). These paradoxes can be explained in relation to the concept of sustainability, since “what began as a radical critique of the prevailing growth economy has been transformed into a global resource and development management as part of the ecological modernization of capitalism, thanks in part to the use of the concept of sustainability” (Schmieder, 2018, p. 186, author's translation).¹⁰ In Costa Rica, this is exemplified by the country's reforestation efforts, particularly in the context of the relationship between pineapple cultivation and forestry: Reforestation and the establishment of biological corridors since the 1980s paradoxically coincide with the deforestation and destruction of supposedly protected forests due to the expansion of pineapple cultivation (see Gutiérrez Arguedas & Granados Chaverri, 2020, p. 11; MINAE et al. 2018). This paradox can be traced back to the commodification of natural resources under the prevailing sustainability paradigm: To the extent that an intact and protected ecosystem is valued as a resource, there is an equivalence between original and reforested forest. As long as the intention is to replace the former with the latter, there is nothing to prevent “sustainable” deforestation in a zero-sum context.

This is how sustainable development and agrarian extractivism operate together in Costa Rica through the creation of a common sense that allows contradictory and even opposing practices to take place at the same time, under a veneer of coherence. By presenting the problem of development as the combination between sustained economic growth and the conservation of nature, sustainable development displaces the discussion away from what is being destroyed, and towards what is being produced. (León Araya, 2021, p. 112)

10 Orig.: “Was als radikale Kritik an der herrschenden Wachstumsökonomie begann, hat sich unter anderem dank des Einsatzes des Nachhaltigkeitsbegriffs in ein globales Ressourcen- und Entwicklungsmanagement als Teil der ökologischen Modernisierung des Kapitalismus gewandelt”.



Against this background, the following analysis aims to show that Adrián Jiménez Brais succeeds in uncovering those narratives and mechanisms that are obscured by the nation brand promoted on *Esencial Costa Rica*.

PIÑA – Productions of the pineapple republic in plantagocene

The play *PIÑA*, premiered in 2019, invites the audience to imagine Costa Rica in the 22nd century, divided into zones of intensive agriculture, as a dystopian place par excellence. Inspired by a Greek tragedy with a turning point and a catastrophe at the end, the play, in five acts, confronts the spectator with a country covered by geodesic domes, dominated exclusively by intensive and high-tech agriculture, and whose atmosphere is polluted by misty clouds of fertilizers and pesticides.

The parable-like plot culminating in a final catastrophe, the allegorical cast of characters, and the concise dialogue marked by repetitive formulas and exclamations in *PIÑA* refer to Georg Kaiser's expressionist trilogy *Gas* (1917-1920) (see Córdoba Rojas, 2019; Kaiser, 1928).¹¹ Thematically, Jiménez Brais adopts the German author's critique of a technicist ideology that propagates new technologies as the driving force of supposed economic and social progress. The climax of this critique is *PIÑA*'s destructive end, which, with the extinction of the human species, destroys the discourses of growth and progress and presents the destruction of global hierarchical economic networks as both a condition and a consequence of an ecological "reset" (*PIÑA*, p. 413). The sole survivor in the post-human space that then emerges, is the dramatic figure introduced as "*multiespecie*": Composed of mosses, lichens and orchids, it represents a rhizomatic and non-hierarchical organism that then assumes agency.

The rest of the characters refer allegorically to capitalism, technocracy and bureaucracy through their names, which indicate their property, profession or role, such as "*Patrón*", "*Ingeniera*" or "*Administradora*." The "*Representante del Gobierno del Tricentenario*" can easily be read as a reference to the political context in which

11 For further implications of the piece regarding the connection between factory and plantation, which arise from the intertextual reference to Georg Kaiser's *Gas Trilogy*, see Schlünder (2025).

the play was created: it alludes to the presidency of Carlos Alvarado Quesada (2018-22), which called itself the “*Gobierno del Bicentenario*” and, contrary to its electoral promises, significantly increased the influence of the private sector, earning its term the label of *contrarrevolución neoliberal* (Molina Jiménez & Díaz Arias, 2021). The cast is completed by a small circle of environmental activists led by “*La Señora*” and two collective characters: a group of workers who form the “*Cuerpo de Peones*” and a group of multinational businessmen represented by four “*Señores negros*.” The cast, initially recognizable as a confrontation between two antagonistic groups of actors, thus establishes the central conflict structure. It is composed of the activists and the altruistic and ecologically-minded plantation owner on the one side, and the representatives of science, government and global capital on the other.

A lengthy introduction sets the scene, depicting a country following a bio-engineering ideology that, under the guise of progress, pursues unbridled extractivism and economic growth, promising to compensate for environmental damage through technological innovation.

[Avanzado el siglo XXII, Costa Rica] se ha vuelto una plataforma tecnológica agrícola que alberga poderosas agroindustrias. La idea de desarrollo gira en torno al avance biotecnológico, la inteligencia artificial, las redes y la maquinaria. (Jiménez Brais, 2023, p. 407)¹²

The environmental problems of the twentieth century, such as territorial fragmentation, privatisation of public goods, pollution and water scarcity, have multiplied, and apparent environmental successes have been reversed: “los índices de contaminación ambiental han aumentado desproporcionalmente” (PIÑA, p. 407), “dejando atrás la marca del primer país carbono-neutral, año 2021, para ser ahora una región profundamente contaminada: agua privada, sequía constante” (PIÑA, p. 408). The setting, in the district of Cutris in the canton of San Carlos in the province of Alajuela, is one of 80 agricultural sites in a Costa Rica divided into

12 “Well into the 22nd century, Costa Rica has become an agricultural technology platform hosting powerful agroindustries. The idea of development revolves around biotechnological advancements, artificial intelligence, networks, and machinery.” (author's translation). In the following, cited as PIÑA.

monoculture zones. The “ecosistema tecnológico piñero” (PIÑA, p. 407) installed there has a climate that is both polluted and unstable, requiring constant technical intervention.

En el aire flotan lámparas iluminadoras de los campos y filtros recolectores de la bruma de polinizadores, herbicidas y fertilizantes. También sobresale un sistema satelital de sonido e Internet que conecta el gran domo central con todos los extensos campos. Y finalmente, instaladas a los laterales, varias pantallas reguladoras de temperatura ya que las condiciones del ecosistema y el clima han cambiado muchísimo y es imposible no mantenerlo regulado. (PIÑA, p. 408)¹³

Jiménez Brais recalls the role of Costa Rican laboratories in the development of the Hawaiian-derived MD2 variety, which enabled the massive expansion of pineapple cultivation in the 1970s and 1980s (León Araya, 2021, p. 106), by presenting the production site as a geodesic dome that serves simultaneously as a control and command center, laboratory, and packing station. In addition, the multi-functionality of the “domo” points to characteristic features of the plantation regime that involve the discipline and control of people and plants.

[The plantation, S.S.] simplifies the number of players and sets up situations for the vast proliferation of some and the removal of others. [...] The plantation was precisely the conjuncture between ecological simplifications, the discipline of plants in particular, and the discipline of humans to work in those. (Haraway & Tsing, 2019, pp. 5–6)

In summary, the introduction is characterized by recurring semantic structures that, on the one hand, promise technologies marked by progress and growth, but which, on the other hand, are linked to dependencies and control measures that affect both people and ecosystems. The promises of progress can be read as a distant echo of

13 “Lamps illuminating the fields and filters collecting mist containing pollinators, herbicides, and fertilizers float in the air. A satellite system provides sound and internet connectivity, linking the large central dome to the vast fields. Finally, temperature regulation screens are installed along the sides, as the ecosystem and climate have changed so drastically that constant regulation is essential.” (author’s translation)

the *trabajo/paz* narrative already propagated by the *élite cafetalera*. Meanwhile, the dependencies of the plantation – following the logic of the coffee oligarchy's narrative – point to the labour, submission and renunciation of class struggle required.

A detailed description of the scene and a corporate video of the “Pinea Fruit Corporation” shown at the beginning of the performance, which recalls the United Fruit Company and the emblematic work *Mamita Yunai* (1941/1966) by Carlos Luis Fallas, consolidate the semantics cited. It is combined with Costa Rican exceptionalism, which is hinted at by the ironic reference to the country's carbon neutrality in the 20th century. The video praises the unique quality of its genetically optimized pineapples - “nuestras piñas son únicas en el mundo” (PIÑA, p. 409). The exclusivity of the fruit, “perfectamente ovalada, jugosa y madura,” which is among “el top 10 de los productos más trendy de exportación” (PIÑA, p. 409), comes from the “equipo élite de investigadores e ingenieras” (PIÑA, p. 409) as “vanguardia biotecnológica” (PIÑA, p. 410), and finally by the pineapple-producing company itself, “única en su clase” (PIÑA, p. 408), “reconocida con diferentes galardones por sus altos estándares de calidad, competitividad y seguridad laboral” (PIÑA, p. 410). When the text praises the pineapple itself as a premium product, it not only ironically refers to the discourse of “green exceptionalism,” but also elevates those who produce and distribute it. This semantics is reflected in the statements of the “Administradora,” which echo those of the “Ingeniera,” who represents a Promethean, biotechnological discourse. By linking progress and growth to the logic of the global market, their statements resemble a pastiche of neoliberal agricultural discourses:

ADMINISTRADORA: Aquí cada uno llega hasta lo máximo. Intensamente [...] Por eso trabajamos más que nadie en la tierra. Hacemos evolucionar la agricultura y la tecnología. Creamos un modelo altamente productivo para este país. [...] ¡Han sido alcanzados casi los últimos logros de la evolución agroeconómica y tecnológica de este país! [...] ¡Piña! [...] No podemos detenernos ni una hora. Trabajamos para nosotros... Por Costa Rica. Somos un ejemplo en la plataforma. No hay pobreza... No existe huelga. Somos

una comunidad que funciona sin interrupción. ¡La piña nunca faltará! (PIÑA, pp. 411–412)¹⁴

The already implied conditional relationship between productivity, unconditional obedience/submission and prosperity is explicitly articulated after an incident that results in fatal contamination. In line with “the necrobiopolitics of the plantation as an assemblage of human and non-human lives whose fates and futures are thoroughly, if often unevenly and violently, entangled” (Chao, Welford et al., 2023, p. 6), the “Administradora” orders the resumption of work: “¡Corran! ¡Vayan hacia delante! ¡Hagan avanzar el país! [...] Usen su cuerpo, usen su prótesis.” (PIÑA, p. 426) Insofar as the iterative battle cry “¡Piña!” functions as both command and promise, it becomes relevant, along with the underlying narratives, to the divided workforce. As “modificaciones robóticas-inteligentes” (PIÑA, p. 407) with “disciplina ejemplar” (PIÑA, p. 416), Jiménez Brais presents the “Cuerpo de peones” as an ironic reincarnation of the labriego sencillo. While some of the workers mourn the loss of colleagues and family members and demand compensation, the majority recall the national ideologem *trabajo/paz* and join the imperative of agricultural production:

PÉON: (Ariba en la tribuna) ¡Nada de piña... exigimos que se nos indemnice como se debe y se nos proponga un nuevo plan!

PÉON: Exigimos respeto por la muerte de nuestros seres queridos.

PÉON: Necesitamos trabajar. Esta miseria sólo la podemos salvar nosotros con nuestro trabajo. Necesitamos avanzar. ¡Recuperemos la producción! (Piña, p. 426)¹⁵

14 “ADMINISTRATOR: Here, everyone achieves their full potential. Intensely [...] That's why we work harder than anyone else on the land. We're driving the evolution of agriculture and technology. We've created a highly productive model for this country. [...] We've nearly reached the pinnacle of agroeconomic and technological advancement! [...] Pineapple! [...] We cannot stop for a single moment. We work for ourselves... For Costa Rica. We are a showcase on this platform. There is no poverty... There are no strikes. We are a community that operates seamlessly. Pineapple will always be plentiful!” (author's translation)

15 “PEON: (From the platform) No more talk of pineapple... we demand fair compensation and a new plan! PEON: We demand respect for those we've lost. PEON: We need to work. Only through our labor can we escape this misery. We need to progress. Let's get production back on track!” (author's translation)

With slogans such as “¡Más tecnología! ¡Inversión y capital!” and the concern that “Se escasea nuestra piña en el mercado mundial. (PIÑA, p. 418), the workers call for the reopening of the “domo” and become the mouthpiece of the “Grupo de Empresarios.” This group, made up of four “Señores Negros” - three men and one woman, representing the global West, East and South - reflect the production logic of a globalized agricultural industry. As the non-individualized, anonymous and interchangeable characters appear only virtually, their lack of stage presence contrasts with that of the local protagonists, symbolizing existing power asymmetries: power seems to correlate with maximum absence and elusiveness. The play presents their meeting as a satirical teleconference in which the connected businessmen play buzzword bingo and outdo each other with empty phrases, lamenting losses and reducing the location to its function as an agricultural supplier.

SEÑOR NEGRO 1 (costarricense): [...] Esta comunidad depende de la piña. Nada más sabe hacer, no está capacitada para algo más. Nosotros le hemos dado esta posibilidad de supervivencia. (PIÑA, p. 424)¹⁶

Like his partners from the USA, Argentina and China, the Costa Rican businessman overlooks the human losses and environmental damage and, following the production imperative, pushes for the resumption of pineapple cultivation, legitimised by the previously presented narratives: “SEÑOR NEGRO 3 (Argentine woman): Al pueblo lo que necesita. ¡Trabajo!” (PIÑA, p. 424). The local factory owner disagrees, questioning the narrative of progress and the promises of the *trabajo/paz* ideology and technocratic discourses: „PATRÓN: ¡La misma medida es la naturaleza! Porque sobre estas tierras no se verá más una corona. Reinará aquí una especie distinta a la nuestra.” (PIÑA, p. 424).¹⁷ The use of nature as a standard and the reference to

16 “MR. BLACK 1 (Costa Rican): [...] This community depends on pineapple. They know nothing else, they are not qualified for anything more. We have given them this possibility of survival.” (author’s translation)

17 “MR. BLACK 3 (Argentine woman): Give the people what they need. Work!” (PIÑA, p. 424). “BOSS: Nature demands the same measure! Because no crown will be seen on these lands anymore. A different species than ours will reign here.” (PIÑA, p. 424) (author’s translation)

another species taking power foreshadow the end of the play. The factory owner is attacked by his own workers, most of whom favor a return to the previous conditions of cultivation, and threatened with expropriation by the government representative. In this hopeless situation, he provokes a deadly accident that wipes out humanity to prevent ecocide and create the conditions for an ecological new beginning. Together with mankind, whose remains are grotesquely fed into new ecological cycles - "SEÑORA: ¡Somos compost!" (PIÑA, p. 428) - the neoliberal business practices and the growth ideology on which they are based are destroyed in an act of radical degrowth. This clears the way for an ecological "Re-set" (PIÑA, p. 413) managed by a now proliferating "*multiespecie*" whose rhizomatic constitution stands for a new ontology.

Conclusions

Final thoughts: narrative and scientific evidence

The conclusion of the piece is reminiscent of the radio play Kosmokolos: Global Climate Tragi-Comedy by Bruno Latour, first published in 2011 and translated into English, which is relevant to us in two ways: on the one hand, the text evokes discussions about the Anthropocene and the responsibility assigned to humans, which is also a theme in PIÑA.

The Chorus: It's weird: the very moment they're saying that the human is over, they're making him play the lead role. Yes, what a funny role they're making us play on stage in the theatre, the Globe theatre. (Latour, 2011, p. 55)

On the other hand, the work of the French philosopher and sociologist of technology offers meta-reflections beyond the level of the plot that support the line of argument pursued here. Latour stages a world in which, despite new evidence-based insights, presentations and publications, science fails to be heard in the prevailing environmental crisis. This calls into question the role of science in terms of its effectiveness as a mediator and its influence on environmental attitudes. Kosmokolos



thus addresses the problem of the apparent limitations of communicating scientific evidence and demonstrates the potential of literary texts. The piece thus touches on a perspective that Dillon and Craig emphasize in their approach to story listening, which they describe as the “theory and practice of gathering narrative evidence to inform decision-making, especially in relation to public reasoning, as part of a pluralistic evidence base” (Dillon & Craig, 2021, p. 2). In their analysis of the functions of narrative, particularly in relation to climate change, they aim to harness the cognitive value of stories and their potential for integration and meaning making in communication efforts. They make clear that story listening is not post-truth and requires a rigorous framework for “narrative evidence” to complement scientific evidence.

The drama *PIÑA* by Adrián Jiménez Brais, which vividly illustrates central Costa Rican narratives in its staging and dialogue as well as in the design and constellation of its characters, is in line with the findings of current research on pineapple extractivism in Costa Rica. Thus, we may assume that, in the sense of Craig and Dillon, it places “narrative evidence” alongside scientific evidence. It anticipates a future in which current policies identified as problematic from a scientific perspective, which focus on economic growth and the commodification of nature under neoliberalism, will have led to unsustainable living and environmental conditions. The play reflects on the prototypical discourses of what León Araya describes as the “neoliberal agrarian transformation of Costa Rica,” culminating in the “creating a pineapple republic” (León Araya, 2021, pp. 106, 105). By doing so, *PIÑA* encourages reflection on the influence of traditional narratives and ideologies such as *labriego sencillo* and *trabajo/paz*, *excepcionalismo verde* and *desarrollo sostenible a la tica*, and the conditionalities embedded in them.

References

- Aguilar Vargas, M. (2007). *Los Papeles de Silvio Víctor*. Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Amoretti Hurtado, M. (2002). *Magón: la irresistible seducción del discurso*. Editorial de Costa Rica.



The articles published in Revista Académica Arjé of the National Technical University, Costa Rica, are shared under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.en>

- Bachtin, M. M. (1979). *Die Ästhetik des Wortes*. R. Grüber (ed.). Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp.
- Jiménez Brais, A. (2019). *Representación de la obra PIÑA* [video]. Escuela de Artes Dramáticas, Universidad de Costa Rica. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=je_u1QIRcmc
- Jiménez Brais, A. (2023). PIÑA. *Repertorio Americano*, 33, 407–428. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240806004738/https://www.revistas.una.ac.cr/index.php/repertorio/article/view/19323>
- Chao, S., Wolford, W., Ofstehage, A., Guttal, S., Gonçalves, E., & Ayala, F. (2024). The Plantationocene as analytical concept: a forum for dialogue and reflection. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 51(3), 541–563. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2023.2228212>
- Córdoba Rojas, D. (2019). “Piña”: una puesta en escena que busca concientizar sobre el cultivo de esta fruta. *Noticias Universidad de Costa Rica*. <https://www.ucr.ac.cr/noticias/2019/5/10/pina-una-puesta-en-escena-que-busca-concientizar-sobre-el-cultivo-de-esta-fruta.html>
- Cubillo Paniagua, R. (2022). Emergence and consolidation of the Olympus generation: the founders of the so-called Costa Rican literature (1880-1920). *Noticias Universidad de Costa Rica*. <https://www.ucr.ac.cr/noticias/2021/10/22/surgimiento-y-consolidacion-de-la-generacion-del-olimpico-los-fundadores-de-la-llamada-literatura-costarricense-1880-1920.html>
- Dillon, S., & Craig, C. (2023). Storylistening: How narrative evidence can improve public reasoning about climate change. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 14(2), e812. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.812>
- Dürbeck, G. (2018). Narrative des Anthropozän – Systematisierung eines interdisziplinären Diskurses. *Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*, 3(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.2478/kwg-2018-0001>
- Eco, U. (1982). *Lector in fabula*. Lumen.

- Erl, A. & Roggendorf, S. (2002). Kulturgeschichtliche Narratologie: Die Historisierung und Kontextualisierung kultureller Narrative. In A. Nünning, & V. Nünning (Eds.). *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* (pp. 73–113). Wissenschaftlicher Verlag
- Esencial Costa Rica. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2024, from <https://www.esencialcostarica.com>
- González Bonilla, E. (2020). *Más allá del Siglo: Entre bananos y machetes* (Las Hermanas Argueta, Ed.). Editorial EVA.
- Gutiérrez Arguedas, A., & Granados Chaverri, C. (2020). Nacionalismo, Frontera y Excepcionalismo Verde en Costa Rica. *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* (46), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.15517/AECA.V46I0.43807>
- Haraway, D., & Tsing, A. (2019). Reflections on the Plantationocene. A conversation with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing moderated by Gregg Mitman. *Edge Effects*, 1–19. https://web.archive.org/web/20250218074517/https://edgeeffects.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PlantationoceneReflections_Haraway_Tsing.pdf
- Iser, W. (1976). *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*. Fink.
- Jiménez Matarrita, A. (2005). *El imposible país de los filósofos*. Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Jones, M. D., McBeth, M. K., & Shanahan, E. A. (2022). A Brief introduction to the Narrative Policy Framework. In M. D. Jones, M. K. McBeth, & E. A. Shanahan (Eds.), *Narratives and the Policy Process: Applications of the Narrative Policy Framework* (pp. 1–12), Montana State University Library. <https://doi.org/10.15788/npf1>
- Jones, M. D., & Song, G. (2014). Making Sense of Climate Change. How Story Frames Shape Cognition. *Political Psychology*, 35(4), 447–476. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12057>
- Kaltmeier, O., Rohland, E., Cham, G., Lima, S. H., Acker, A., Romero, L. E. Á., Becerra, J. A. C., Acosta, V. G., McDermott, A. G., Gutiérrez, R., Duarte, R. H., Ibarra, C., Sandoval, M. F. L., Bohne, S. M., Pádua, J. A., Rashkin, E., Scott, H. V., Taks,

- J., Wendt, H., & Zarrilli, A. G. (2024). The Anthropocene as Multiple Crisis: Latin American Perspectives on Land Use. In O. Kaltmeier, M. F. López Sandoval, J. A. Pádua, & A. G. Zarrilli (Eds.), *Land Use – Handbook of the Anthropocene in Latin America I* (pp. 15–44). Bielefeld University Press. <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783839470114-003/html>
- Koschorke, A. (2012). *Wahrheit und Erfindung: Grundzüge einer Allgemeinen Erzähltheorie*. S. Fischer Verlag.
- Latour, B., Ait-Touati, F., & Latour, C. (2011). *Kosmokolos. Global Climate Tragi-Comedy* (J. Rose, Trans., Version 4). <https://web.archive.org/web/20240622055409/http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/downloads/KOSMOK-JULIE-ROSE-GB.pdf>
- Lejano, R., Ingram, M., & Ingram, H. (2013). *The Power of Narrative in Environmental Networks*. MIT Press.
- León Araya, A. (2021). Agrarian extractivism and sustainable development. The politics of pineapple expansion in Costa Rica. In B. M. McKay, A. Alonso-Fradejas, & A. Ezquerro-Cañete (Eds.), *Agrarian Extractivism in Latin America* (pp. 99–116). University of Calgary. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367822958-6>
- Méndez Alfaro, R. Á. (2007). *Imágenes del poder. Juan Santamaría y el ascenso de la nación en Costa Rica (1860-1915)*. Editorial UNED.
- MINAE – SINAC – CONAGEBIO – FONAFIFO. (2018). *Sexto Informe Nacional al Convenio de Diversidad Biológica de Costa Rica*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230806102405/https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/nr-06/cr-nr-06-p2-es.pdf>
- Molina Jiménez, I., & Díaz Arias, D. (2021). *El gobierno de Carlos Alvarado y la contrarrevolución neoliberal en Costa Rica*. CIHAC.
- Mondol López, M. (2021). *Literatura, identidades y sociedad costarricense. Desde el siglo XXI hasta los inicios de la literatura nacional*. EUNED.
- Monge Hernández, C. (2015). Desarrollo sostenible a la tica: geopolítica y ambiente en la Administración Figueres Olsen (1994-1998). *Revista Rupturas*, 5(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.22458/rr.v5i1.712>

- Morataya-Montenegro, R., & Bautista-Solís, P. (2020). Water Governance and Adaptation to Drought in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. In E. de Oliveira Vieira, S. Sandoval-Solis, V. de Albuquerque Pedrosa, & J. P. Ortiz-Partida (Eds.), *Integrated Water Resource Management: Cases from Africa, Asia, Australia, Latin America and USA* (pp. 85–100). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16565-9_8
- Probst, S., Dürbeck, G., & Schaub, C. (2022). Was heißt es, von ‚anthropozäner Literatur‘ zu sprechen? Einleitung. In G. Dürbeck, S. Probst, & C. Schaub (Eds.), *Anthropozäne Literatur* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–24). Springer Berlin Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-63899-6_1
- Quesada Soto, Á. (2008). *Breve historia de la literatura costarricense*. Ed. Costa Rica.
- Schlünder, S. (2024). Estéticas de contaminación en el plantacioceno: Adrián Jiménez Brais, PIÑA (2019/2023). In R. Bolte, H. Doetsch, B. Loy & S. Schlünder (Ed.), *Existencias contaminadas* (pp. 273–290). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111339290-016>
- Schmieder, F. (2018). »Eingebaute Verantwortungslosigkeit« Über Systembedingungen mangelnder Nachhaltigkeit. In A. Henkel, N. Lüdtke, N. Buschmann, & L. Hochmann (Eds.), *Reflexive Responsibilisierung: Verantwortung für nachhaltige Entwicklung* (pp. 181–194). Transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839440667-010>
- Shanahan, E. A., McBeth, M. K., & Hathaway, P. L. (2011). Narrative Policy Framework. The Influence of Media Policy Narratives on Public Opinion. *Politics & Policy*, 39(3), 373–400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2011.00295.x>
- Soto Quirós, R. (2008). Imaginando una nación de raza blanca en Costa Rica: 1821–1914. *Amérique Latine Histoire et Mémoire. Les Cahiers ALHIM*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.4000/alhim.2930>
- Wolford, W. (2021). The Plantationocene: A lusotropical contribution to the theory. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 111(6), 1622–1639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2020.1850231>