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Article [EN]

Cocacolonización en América Latina: Un análisis del tema de Coca-Cola en el cine latinoamericano

Coca-Colonization in Latin America: An Interpretation of the Coca-Cola Motif in Latin American Cinema

Zhen Xu

Bachelor of Arts
Salem State University, U.S.; Nanjing Normal University, China
Email: z_xu1@salemstate.edu; **ORCID**: 0000-0002-4926-1573

[ES] Resumen: Se trató del término Cocacolonización inicialmente en Europa después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Indica la expansión comercial y la infiltración cultural de los Estados Unidos en todo el mundo, representada por la marca principal Coca-Cola. También implica la omnipresencia de los conceptos ideológicos estadounidenses durante la Guerra Fría. A través del comercio exterior de Coca-Cola, Estados Unidos ha intervenido en otros países de una manera diferente al colonialismo convencional, esta invasión cultural y dominación indirecta ejemplifica el poscolonialismo. Cocacolonización demuestra una influencia más complicada e intensa en la historia latinoamericana contemporánea en todos los aspectos sociales, económicos, políticos y culturales. Una prueba es la mención frecuente de Coca-Cola en el cine latinoamericano. Este trabajo selecciona siete películas latinoamericanas representativas, dibujando un panorama inclusivo de los países latinoamericanos afectados desde la Guerra Fría. Explora la función de Coca-Cola como un tema en la narración colectiva latinoamericana y sus connotaciones en contextos diversos. Al señalar las imágenes de Coca-Cola, echa un vistazo a la evolución de Cocacolonización en América Latina y las relaciones dinámicas entre Estados Unidos y América Latina durante las últimas décadas.

Palabras clave: Cocacolonización, poscolonialismo, relaciones entre Estados Unidos y América Latina, estudios latinoamericanos, cine latinoamericano

[EN] Abstract: "Coca-colonization" was first proposed in Europe after World War II. It indicates United States' worldwide commerce expansion and cultural infiltration represented by the major brand Coca-Cola. The term also implies the pervasiveness of U.S. ideological concepts during the Cold War. Through Coca-Cola's overseas trade, the U.S. has intervened in other countries in a way different from what is conventionally known as colonialism. Coca-colonialization's feature of cultural invasion and indirect domination exemplifies postcolonialism, a cultural critique method broached in the late 1970s. Coca-colonization demonstrates a more complicated and intense influence on contemporary Latin American history in all social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. One proof is the frequent mention of Coca-Cola in Latin American cinema. The thesis selects seven representative Latin American films, picturing an inclusive panorama of affected Latin American countries since the Cold War. It interprets and explores Coca-Cola's function as a motif in Latin America's collective narration and its connotations in various contexts. Pinpointing the Coca-Cola images, the thesis offers a glimpse of the evolution of Coca-colonization in Latin America and the dynamic U.S.-Latin American relations during the past decades.

Keywords: Coca-colonization, postcolonialism, U.S.-Latin American relations, Latin American studies, Latin American cinema

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1. Introduction

The portmanteau "Coca-colonialization" ingeniously combines "colonization" with the typical American soft drink "Coca-Cola," one of the most famous multinational products of the United States. The term was allegedly invented by the French Communist press at the beginning of the Cold War era, in protest of the increasing number of Coca-Cola bottlers in France, which might have threatened the local drinks industry and expanded the American pop culture.

For Latin American countries, Coca-colonization is more of a "frontal attack." As the former Mexican President Porfirio Díaz mocked, Mexico, representing Latin America, is "so far from God, and so close to the United States." Latin American countries suffer more directly and complexly from Coca-colonization due to limited independence as "new-born" countries neighboring the United States. Coca-Cola epitomizes, besides its commercial and cultural impacts, the U.S.' exploitation of both resources and labor from Latin America in the globalization process. More profoundly, it alludes to U.S.' ideological propaganda and its hitherto political interference, which became even more intense during the Cold War. Though having obtained sovereignty, Latin American countries rely greatly upon the U.S in various aspects, including their economy, politics, and culture. In other words, the U.S.' power over Latin America demonstrates manifest characteristics of postcolonial intervention. Coca-colonization, as an illustration of postcolonialism in Latin America, vividly reflects U.S.-Latin American relations in the past few decades.

The thesis locates the images and scenes from seven Hispanic Latin American films where appears the Coca-Cola logo to explore the significance of the Coca-Cola motif in the collective Latin American narration and its embodiment in different films and contexts. Derived from the interpretation of a single motif yet oriented to general U.S.-Latin American relations, the thesis integrates cinema, literary texts, historical facts, and theory to study Coca-colonization and postcolonialism.

2. Research Idea and Methodology

2.1 Research Materials

As the thesis uses visual objects as the springboard, the primary research materials are images and scenes from the seven following films: *I Am Cuba* (1964), *It's Raining on Santiago* (1975, hereinafter *Santiago*), *Night Over Chile* (1977, hereinafter *Night*), *Maria Full of Grace* (2004, hereinafter *Maria*), *Backyard* (2009), *No* (2012), and *Once Upon a Time in Venezuela* (2020, hereinafter *Venezuela*). All these films are Latin American countries' productions except *Santiago*, which is a French and Bulgarian coproduction but depicts the 1973 Chilean coup d'état only a few years after the event. It is worth including the film for the coup is crucial to Chile and representative of the political turbulence in Latin America during the Cold War.

Instead of delving into film analysis, the thesis mainly applies the images from films as a basic medium. Though involving related plots of the films, it will not discuss and analyze the films in depth. The selected research materials are all documentaries, mockumentaries, or dramas based on historical events or true stories, depicting an authentic picture of Latin America. In the geographical sense, the film producers encompass North American, Caribbean, and South American countries. Chronologically, they are from the 1960s to 2020's release. Latin America experienced vicissitudes, both extreme turmoil and indisputable accomplishment in the past half century. All the selected films are exceptional, memorable, phenomenal, or award-winning works, creating a comprehensive and representative portrait of Latin America from the Cold War hitherto. The thesis does not select advertisements, documentaries or TV series that directly and intensively discuss Coca-Cola and related issues. It employs Coca-Cola's occurrence and image as a genuine silhouette profile to study Coca-Cola as a motif in films and Coca-colonization in Latin America.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation: Coca-colonization, Neo-Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Coca-colonization leads to a more extensive concept: postcolonialism, an interdiscip-linary identity field of contemporary cultural study which discusses the trace left by colonization and cultural interaction between the colonizer and the colonized outside of the western-centered perspective (Stam 2000: 292). Postcolomialism emerged after World War II, gradually developing into a systematic theory, marked by Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* publishing in 1978. The theory was originated from the "Orient" and predominantly developed by the "oriental" scholars such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak. However, on the other hand, Latin America, being a paradigm of postcolonialism, requires more postcolonial analysis of its history and culture. Many Latin American countries got rid of the European colonizers and almost immediately fell into the hands of the U.S. As Anne McClintock asserts, "'postcolonial' Latin America has been

invaded by the United States over a hundred times this century alone" (McClintock 1992: 89). The term "Latin America" per se reveals a postcolonial sense. The French first brought it up in the nineteenth century, out of inappropriate motive to bring back the old colonial glory. It ironically indicates the confrontation of the former and the new colonizers: the "Latin" colonizers, namely the French and the Spaniards as an alliance, versus the "Anglo American" colonizer, the United States (Echevarría Gonzálezn 2012: 7). Moreover, the Balkanization of Latin American countries' history, i.e., the fragmentation feature of Latin American regimes under the exterior power and interference, renders the differences between the study of one country and that of Latin America as an ensemble. Latin American countries share similarities such as in historical background, but each possesses its own distinctive uniqueness. Sorting films in the continental scope instead of only one country creates a broader image of Latin America and U.S.-Latin American relations.

Considering the terminology, the thesis picks a predetermined stance of postcolonialism to study Latin American narration. An alternative to postcolonialism can be neo-colonialism, which refers to the change of colonial approache. When the colonizer leaves the colony, direct rule converts into indirect rule such as the remaining dominance in commerce and culture (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 146). Coca-colonization, as an emblematic cultural colonization, is a sign of neo-colonization for sure. However, aside from certain overlapping of these two terms, postcolonialism is a vaster concept. It contains the colonized countires' narration of their reaction and significance in the colonial discourse. Regarding the relevance and contrast between the two terms, the thesis studies the means of Coca-colonization and further emphasizes a Latin American perspective in this process.

2.3 Coca-Cola as a Spotlight

Terms like "Coca-colonization" are not rare in reference to U.S. cultural pervasion. Similar expressions range from formal ones such as Westernization and Americanization to more vivid and specified ones such as Disneyfication, McGlobalization (McDonald's plus globalization), Walmarting, etc. Nevertheless, Coca-colonization is undoubtedly the most characteristic of these terms. It identifies the colonial essence of the U.S. cultural expansion. Coca-Cola, among these commodities, is America's stellar icon and "flagship" of capitalism (Pendergrast 1993: 13). Accordingly, "Coca-Cola" is the second most known word after "OK" (Standage 2005: 188). Coca-Cola "makes a cameo appearance" in numerous films as "the most widely placed product" in the cinematic history (Pendergrast 2013: 478). The Coca-Cola logo is iconic enough for audience to recognize thanks to the visualized nature of films and images. Therefore, it is representative to use Coca-Cola and its image to start the research.

3. Findings

The thesis analyses Cola-colonization in the order of life, politics, and further interpretation. Each section combines scene from films with supplementary facts and theories. To begin with, as the most common U.S. commodity, Coca-Cola is right connected with the American Dream, yet the dream can also be a nightmare.

3.1 Coca-Cola in Life

3.1.1 The American Dream: A Brighter Future or a Broken Illusion?

3.1.1.1 Laughter: Vision of Youth, Joy, and Liberty

The United States identifies itself as the liberal state ideology of "democracy, liberty, free enterprise capitalism" (Young 60). The globalization of the U.S. goods, exemplified by Coca-Cola, embodies the American Dream and its fancy vision. People worldwide yearning for a better life associate the American dream with prosperity and freedom (Young 130). Therefore, in the first place, Coca-Cola is often connected to youth and liberty with a promising and positive implication, visualizing the joyous laughter of teenagers. For instance, in *I am Cuba*, the two siblings take an instant gulp of Coca-Cola after they get two bottles from a local grocer in the town center (Figure 1[2]). The girl holds the bottle and looks slightly up wearing a content smile with the Coca-Cola logo on the bottle in the corner of the frame (Figure 2). Having got the drink in hands, they head towards a jukebox, play on the tune and sway to the music (Turner 1995: 80). It is the song that the girl sings all the way to the town center with a brisk melody and verses depicting the bright future and the big city. Coca-Cola and its logo infuse naturally into the integral joyous atmosphere though they do not take a

[2] All rights reserved to the films.

significant part in the frame. "They're drinking the image, not the product," declares Pendergrast (Pendergrast 2013: 471). In *I am Cuba*, Coca-Cola is a necessity that makes up a jolly afternoon in the teens' bright and promising vision.

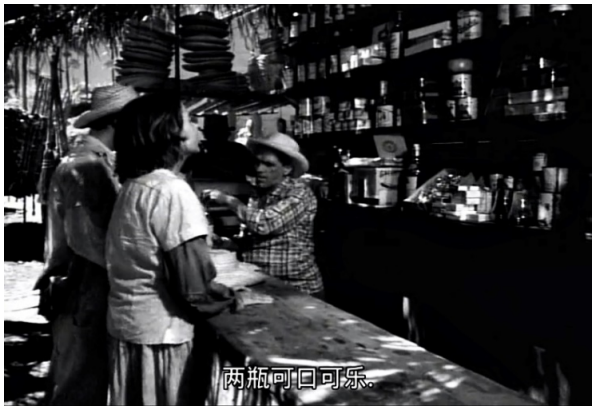

Figure 1. "Give me two Coca-Colas."
Source: *I Am Cuba*, 1964

Figure 2.
Source: *I Am Cuba*, 1964

A similar implication of youth and joy appears in *No*. The film is set in the 1988 Chilean plebiscite when "the entire opposition agreed to confront Augusto Pinochet's military regime in the plebiscite by voting 'no'" and "created the Party Agreement" (Kellum 1989: 205). The protagonist of *No* is a director who produces commercial advertisements. He is displaying a commercial to his customer company, a soft drink brand called "Free" (Figure 3) when invited to join in the campaign. "Free" is an English word, while Chile is a Spanish-speaking country. Choosing an English word as the brand casts a light on the U.S.' cultural influence on Chile. The red-and-white color and ribbon-like front of the brand also obviously imitate the Coca-Cola logo. The overall tone of the commercial is full of joy, freedom, and entertainment. Actors in it are mainly youngsters, dancing, playing rock and roll, drinking soft drinks, and cheering (Figure 4). The director also includes a clown with an exaggerating or even ridiculous grin holding a bottle of the soft drink (Figure 5). This scene from the commercial later appears in the director's political propaganda when the background music plays the theme song "Chile, the happiness is coming" ("Chile, la alegría ya viene"). As the director states, he wants the propaganda videos to be pregnant with the future of liberty and remind the audience of pleasant memories.

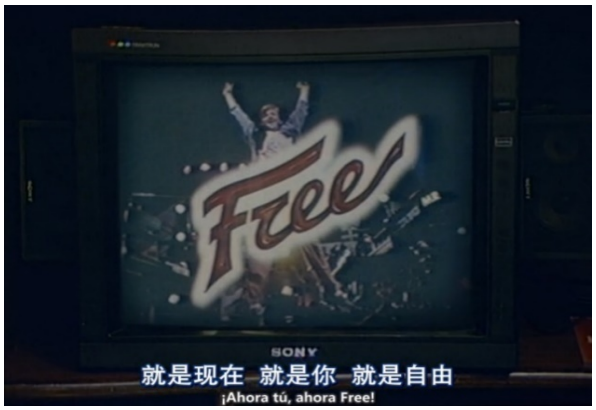

Figure 3. "Now you, now free!"
Source: *No*, 2012

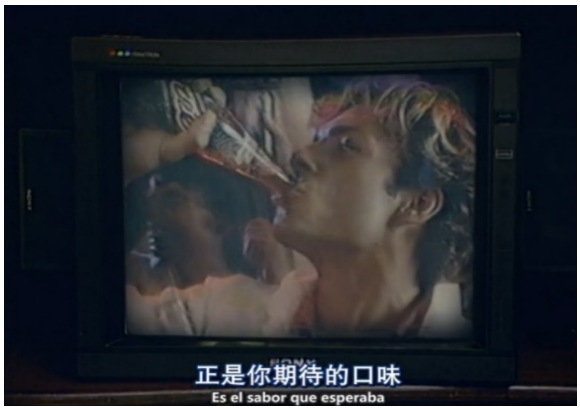

Figure 4. "It is the favor you wish"
Source: *No*, 2012

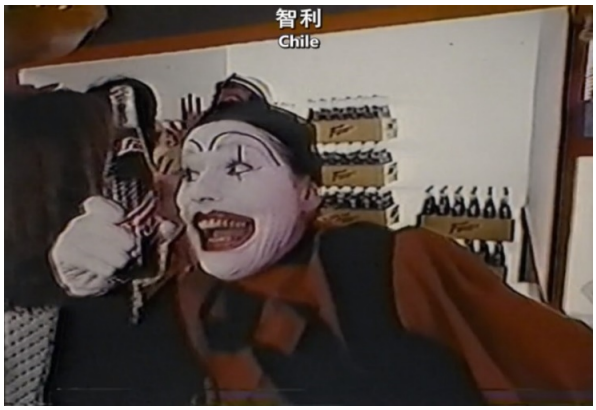

Figure 5. "Chile"
Source: *No*, 2012

"[People] who long for the good life north of the border, drink more Coca-Cola per head than any other people on earth" (Young 2003: 130). This statement is no doubt a true portrait of the young generation, especially the Latin American youngsters, who drink Coca-Cola and relate it to the American Dream, a brighter future, and a wealthier life.

3.1.1.2 Tears: Victims of Capitalism, Materialism, and Globalization

Besides its appearance as a popular soft drink bringing enjoyment and expectation, Coca-Cola, on the other hand, alludes to the exploitation of capitalistic production, as is poignantly shown in *I Am Cuba*. The siblings ask why their father dose not join them to the town, whose answer implies that the happiness only belongs to the young generation. While the teens enjoy the drink and their youth, the father furiously burns the sugarcane field and commits suicide. The landowner has deprived the land and sold it to the United Fruit Company, claiming to the father that "the lands and his house are not his anymore." In fact, what the teens use to buy the drink is the last *peso* of their father, which makes the contrast of emotions more ironic and distressing. This reveals a gap between the two generations, between the innocent but ignorant teenagers and the desperate father. The teens show concern for their father but also fantasize about an affluent future associated with Coca-Cola. These antithetical feelings are deliberately arranged together to stress the inevitable tragedy. The actors' lines also criticize the landowners who care only about money but little about the tenant farmers and the natural resources of the land. In this case, Coca-Cola relates to the cruelty of the landowners and capitalism. It represents the capitalized industry that ruthlessly replaces the existing ways of production, bringing modernity to Latin America, but evaporating the old beings. One Coca-Cola director said in 1959 that "I sometimes shudder at the thought of all those poor people paying a nickel for a Coke when they probably ought to be spending it on a loaf of bread" (Pendergrast 2013: 486), which is what the teens do in *I Am Cuba*. The enjoyment brought by the soda drink may be no more than bubbles of vision that cannot save people from real-life suffering.

The encounter of the father in *I Am Cuba* encapsulates the enormity of capitalistic invasion. The United Fruit Company, whose predecessor is the Banana Company, is one of the most known cases of U.S. exploitation in Latin America. Founded at the end of the 19th century, it expropriated natural resources and abused human rights for decades under the disguise of a company's trade. The Coca-Cola Company and the United Fruit Company have a tighter connection, for instance, in Venezuela, where the franchise of Coca-Cola bottling is directly transferred from the United Fruit Company to the plants. The common criticism of the United Fruit Company in literature is also a footnote of the crime it has committed. The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda mentioned Coca-Cola several times in his poem collection *General Song*. One pertinent reference is from the poem exactly titled "La United Fruit Co." (Neruda 1976: 182) in which the verses satirize that: "When the trumpet sounded/everything was prepared on earth/and Jehovah gave the world/to Coca-Cola Inc." The atrocity and avarice of the Coca-Cola Company are escalated to a religious level in Neruda's poem. In Colombian author García Márquez's novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, he repeats that over 3,000 workers are murdered by the company and "thrown into the sea like rejected bananas" (Rabassa 2014: 157). The appalling massacre of the United Fruit Company's workers and other incredible incidents in the novel are sometimes thoughtlessly labeled as "magical realism" by western critics. However, according to the author, this is what historically happened in Colombia. Such western-centric interpretation of Latin American literature and history is unconscious of the misery in the rest of the world or even intentionally denies the atrocities.

The U.S. plants in Latin America, either the United Fruit Company or the Coca-Cola bottlers, might have boosted the local economy and benefited the companies, the franchises, or even the local government. This, however, does not offset its exploitation and environmental degradation. The tears of the victims, most of whom are ordinary people like the tenant peasant in *I Am Cuba*, are concealed behind the economic growth and the American dream hallucinated by the popular soft drink.

3.1.1.3 In the Same Chain: The American Continent as a Whole

The United Fruit Company amalgamated with several American companies in the 1970s and was gradually ousted by successors in the world market. Another crucial trade between the U.S. and Latin America, which is even more of the dark side, is drug trafficking or smuggling. Though Coca-Cola is seemingly irrelevant to the illegal commerce, it did have a short history related to cocaine. The brand got the name from the language of the indigenous Peruvian and by the end of the 19th century Peru was the world's "leading exporter of both coca leaf and crude cocaine." Soon after, Coca-Cola got rid of cocaine in their product in the anti-cocaine trend (Elmore 2015, "Coca Leaf Extract").

As the world's largest drug consuming country, the U.S. has been importing a vast number of drugs and marijuana from Latin America since the last century. In 1972, the U.S. declared the Drug Wars against the drug industry and trafficking. With the increasing strictness of the border patrol, it became harder to smuggle drugs into the U.S. This was when drug mules emerged as carriers of small quantities of drugs inside of their bodies and came across the border into the U.S. The film *Maria* narrates the story of some drug mules, who are still young girls. As the poster of the film says, it is "based on 1,000 true stories." Most drug mules swallow capsules and extract them out from their stomachs when they arrive in the U.S.; for females, the place for hiding the drug can even be their vaginas.

The two selected scenes where the Coca-Cola logos appear are respectively in Colombia and the U.S. (New York City). The Coca-Cola logos in both scenes are minutiae in the background setting and merely flash by the camera. The logo in the scene from Colombia is on the plastic case for restoring a set of empty soft drink bottles in a decrepit bar where the drug dealers recruit drug mules and assign them missions (Figure 6). Another one in New York is a Coca-Cola can surrounded by some wastes on a night table (Figure 7). The young lady in the scene, also a drug mule, is feeling sick and about to blackout because a capsule hidden in her stomach has disintegrated, a fatal accident to drug mules. This is also her last act in the film, as she is soon killed by the drug dealers. These two scenes unfold the difference between the pack of Coca-Cola drink in Colombia and in the U.S. and the divergence in life as well. The girl describes New York as a place "demasiado perfecto" ("way too perfect"), yet she dies in this city. The contradiction between her involvement in the illegal business and her kindness and tenderness by nature makes her death more mournful. The glamorous red of the Coca-Cola can in the messy scene is an irony and symbolizes blood and crime.

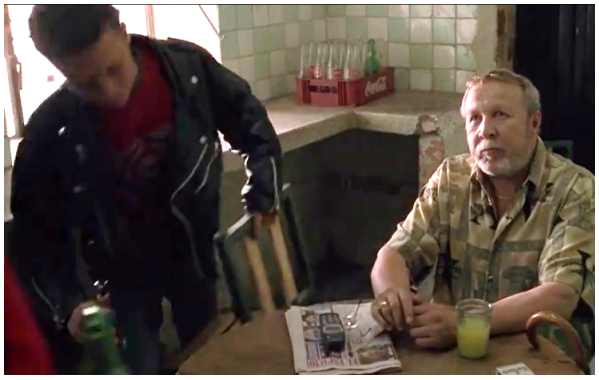

Figure 6.
Source: *Maria Full of Grace*, 2004

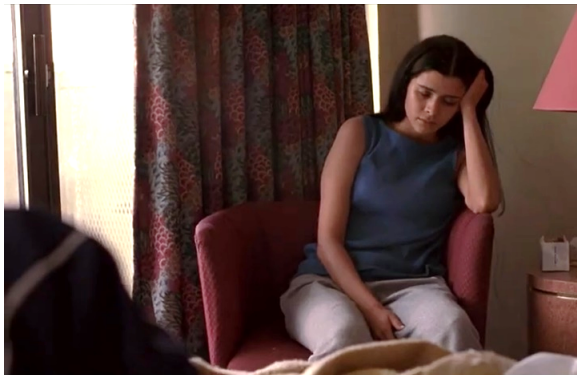

Figure 7.
Source: *Maria Full of Grace*, 2004

"Without demand, there will be no production of drugs," claims Thomas Bruneau in *Latin American Research Review*. The U.S.' policy of the war on drugs, which has been carried out from the late 20th century, did not fix the root cause of the problem. It could not control American's appetite for drugs but drove away most of the drug industry into Mexico and Central American countries such as Colombia and Honduras. The misguided and prolonged war on drugs has fostered negative results such as social and political insecurity and migration problems. Opposite to the majority's assumption that the U.S. and its residents are victims of drug imports and the influx of immigrants, in fact, the drug industry is also a bane of the chaos in Latin America. The production and trafficking of drugs is a pillar industry in many Latin American

countries, especially in Central America. The drug industry creates enormous profits in a short amount of time, but that is also why it is an unhealthy approach of development and contributes to grave economic problems and public security crisis. Though it seems that both the U.S. and Latin America have been fighting long to eradicate drugs, the drug supply chain is still unbreakable. Despite both sides' attempts, the huge profits lurking behind drugs makes it an almost impossible task. The capital flows and immigration waves attest that the U.S. and Latin America are not only in the same drug supply chain, but also the chain of globalization especially the Americas as a whole. North America and Latin America are not two counterparts. There is no such thing as one gaining and the other losing.

The pursuit of the American dream or simply a better quality of life, should not be limited to a geographical concept, but should be recognized as a common quest across the continent and the shared interest of all human beings. However, the American dream can sometimes be taken in a superficial way, pointing only to materialism and consumerism. Essayists such as José Enrique Rodó and Samuel Ramos have suggested long since the beginning of the 20th century that they concern over Latin America's future more about the U.S.' "materialism and commercialism" than the "imperial policies" and the European influence (Echevarría González 2012: 48). This preoccupation turns out reasonable even after one century. As a symbol of globalization, the dispute about Coca-Cola is an epitome of the dispute about globalization. While proponents believe that globalization is "the best way to improve the fortunes of rich and poor countries alike," opponents argue that it is "merely a new form of imperialism" (Standage 2005: 188).

According to Reinhold Wagnleitner, American materialism and modernization believe that social and political conflicts will be abolished by merely "accept[ing] and imitat[ing] the blessings of U.S. capitalism," i.e., "the pursuit of happiness as the pursuit of consumption" (Wolf 1994: 48). *The Economist* magazine carried out a research program in 1997 which found out that "consumption of Coca-Cola correlated closely with greater wealth, quality of life, and social and political freedom" (Standage 2005: 188). However, the truth is it is not Coca-Cola that makes people "wealthier, happier, or freer," but follows as a by-product of U.S. modernization and consumerism. Coca-Cola is always associated with the beautiful American dream. However, it implies the heavy price people pay to realize the dream, or in some cases they pay for it in vain.

3.1.2 Facts of Coca-Colonization in Latin America

The Coca-Cola Company pictures a strategic vision in which it aims to "enrich the workplace, preserve the environment, and improve the quality of life in the communities where they operate" (Thomas 2009: 33). Despite Coca-Cola's positive contributions as "a force of good in the world" (Pendergrast 2013: 483), its transgressing cannot be covered up. Coca-colonization is not only emblematic of the U.S.' cultural expansion, but also reflects facts and details of how they have changed life in Latin America, including ways of product and local culture.

Firstly, Coca-Cola plants have been detrimental to the environment for uncomplying with the International Environmental Standards. In Nejapa of El Salvador, Coca-Cola plants pollute water during both the process of production and bottle washing, which causes extra payment on the villagers for clean drinking water. The interviewee complains that the Coca-Cola company, same as other giants, "comes here merely to take over the resource" and leaves the waste products in situ (Thomas 2009: 181). In Mexico, the same thing happens to the local water resources. The Coca-Cola plants "sit on top of the best water source" and "legally withdraw 500 million liters [of water] a year" (Thomas 2009: 277). Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano also satirizes what the Coca-Cola Company does as "a reflected modernization" in *The Open Veins of Latin America*. "The only triumph proudly displayed as a U.S. contribution to the progress" (Thomas 2009: 196) is the installation of the soft drink plants in 1969. Even in this case, the plants are "deliberately" equipped with archaic and low-production machinery. Latin American countries import the "second-hand technology" for the price of what is brand-new and pay for the "astronomical industrial licensing fees" (Belfrage 1997: 246-247). The establishment of Coca-Cola plants does not necessarily contribute to economic development yet renders irreversible harm to the local environment and economy.

Coca-Cola's crimes are not only limited to natural resources, but also of human rights violation, which is known as the infamous "Killer Coke." In Colombia, the murder of the trade unionists is probably the most well-known Coca-Cola crisis, as recorded in a 2009's documentary *The Coca-Cola Case*. Workers are wrongly imprisoned and tortured due to Coca-Cola Company's false accusations. Some of them received death threats multiple times. Hundreds of workers are pressured to resign their union contracts and have no choice but to work years without security. The Coca-Cola industry is also criticized for involving child labor in their supply chain. In El Salvador, allegedly over 30,000 children are laborers in the sugarcane field for the sugar production in Coca-Cola's supply chain, divested of their time and right of education

(Thomas 133). Remedies and supervisions have been put into practice afterwards, yet the effect and credibility are still doubtful.

In a broader scope, Coca-Cola's influence extents to local lifeways and cultures. The horrendous amount of Coca-Cola consumption in Mexico, in proportional to Coca-Cola's large investment in advertising, leads to the alarming obesity rate as well as a host of other illnesses. "Cuba Libre," ("Free Cuba") a mix of Coca-Cola and rum, came into being during the America-Spanish War, a decolonization war that led Cuba to a postcolonial status. Interestingly, Coca-Cola and rum are a common pair of metaphor of the relations between the U.S. and Latin America. The rhetorical expression can be found in the Caribbean Island country Trinidad and Tobago, where the U.S. took part in the decolonial war against the British but later turned out to be nothing better and continued the colonial system. The similar cocktail recipe also exists in Peru, which is a mixture of Coca-Cola and its national spirit Pisco. More unexpectedly, Coca-Cola invades the Mayan culture for it has become part of their religious rituals. The indigenous people have taken Coca-Cola as an indispensable element in their life equally important the water and land (Thomas 2009: 280).

Though it seems unfair and lengthy to enumerate Coca-Cola's misdeeds without mentioning too much of its benefits, a safe conclusion to reach is that Coca-Cola has altered in large measure the means of production, daily life, and culture in Latin America, which is an inevitable consequence of cultural expansion.

3.1.3 Postcolonial Analysis: Bhabha's Ambivalence and Hybridity

The thesis by far mainly focuses on the U.S. exploitation in Latin America germane to Coca-Cola, while Postcolonialism offers another angle to interpret the Latin American narration in the course of Coca-colonization.

Homi Bhabha adapted ambivalence and hybridity, two terms respectively from psychology and horticulture, into the colonial discourse. He introduces the idea that the colonizer is not the authority and the center in the colonial system. This thought may be disputable, as to a certain extent, it "negates and neglects the imbalance and inequality" between the colonizer and the colonized (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 109). Yet still, as the core idea of Bhabha's postcolonial theory, they "turn the tables on the imperialism" and "decenter" the authority (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 10). Ambivalence describes the "simultaneous attraction and repulsion" of the colonizer to the colonized. The colonial process is "both exploitative and nurturing" (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 10). While the colonizer intends to "produce compliant 'mimic[ing]'" of itself, the outcome is usually a "mockery" instead of a "mimicry." This theory is also feasible in terms of Coca-colonization. As reflected in the film *No*, the soft drink brand "Free" is apparently an imitation, or using Bhabha's word, a mockery of Coca-Cola. The design of the logo with the red-and-white color and ribbon-like front is a replica of the trademark of Coca-Cola. On the other hand, advertising and advocating a local drink is anti-monopoly and promotes the domestic drinks industry. It is one of the Chile's most prevalent beverage brands in the 1980s to the 1990s against giants such as the Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo.

The colonizer is also hybridized during the colonial progress. The "new trans-culture" that comes into being in this process is named hybridity (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 11). It further suggests that colonization "generates the seeds of the destruction" of the colonizer because is "a mutual construction of the subjectivities" of both the colonizer and the colonized (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 108). In accordance with the soft drink brand "Free" shown in the film, Latin American soft drink companies such as the "Big Cola" in Peru, have also become multinational brands, sharing the profit of the soft drink market in the real world. The fact that Coca-Cola borrows the word "coca" from the language of Peru while the Peruvian company uses the "big" in English for its brand is a perfect illustration for hybridity. The cocktail "Cuba Libre" is also an example of hybridity, as it has become one of the world-famous drinks. Cocktail per se, meaning a mixture of drinks, is an embodied metaphor of the cultural hybridity. "Cuba Libre" exemplifies how the American culture mingled into Cuban culture and produces a new trans-culture. Similar expressions such as "coconut milk in a Coca-Cola bottle" (Stam 2018: 39) suggest the hybridized relations between Latin American culture and the U.S. culture. Leslie Bethell, the editor of *The Cambridge History of Latin America* also records an experimental construction poem in the 1950s, which begins with "beba Coca-Cola" ("drink Coca-Cola") and ends with "cloaca" ("sewer"). The poem uses the cognation between Spanish and English and the recombination of words to lampoon the U.S.' cultural influence and to express the "anti-advertising and anti-imperialist" thoughts (Bethell 1998: 278, 355). All these details are instances of using the "language" of the colonizer to defeat it from a postcolonial perspective.

As Bhabha argues against the binary idea of the colonizer and the colonized, things become more complicated in regard of Latin America colonial history. From a macroscopical perspective, it must include at least three characters: the

former European colonizer, the colonized, and the new colonizer, which is the U.S. in the sense of Coca-colonization. The cultural interaction between the three is an even more dynamic interaction and continuous acculturation.

3.2 Coca-Cola in Politics

3.2.1 Democracy of the North but Dictatorship of the South?

Coca-Cola is not only a symbol of the American dream and American culture permeating into daily life, but also more profoundly and obscurely alludes to the U.S. political impact.

To some extent, Coca-Cola has a positive implication of the American ideas of democracy and liberty. In *No*, Coca-Cola and relevant conceptions appear several times throughout the film. When the director releases his first version of the propaganda video, a colleague comments that this piece looks like a Coca-Cola commercial, which is a possible banter of the director's pro-American inclination (Figure 8). He suggests that the tone of the video is too pleasant and superficial, ignoring the suffering and sacrifice of the Chilean people during Pinochet's dictatorship era. The director complements the victims' voice in later episodes but insists on keeping the promising and vigorous keynote, which turns out to work well as it finally helps to defeat Pinochet's government. The film also includes international reactions of English-speaking interviewees, implying the U.S.' democratic support and empathy, which reflects the emergence of "international observers" during the plebiscite (Kellum 1989: 206). Through the frequent mention of the soft drink, the political propaganda exerts an implicit logical train between the drink, political democracy, and a bright and happy future for Chile.

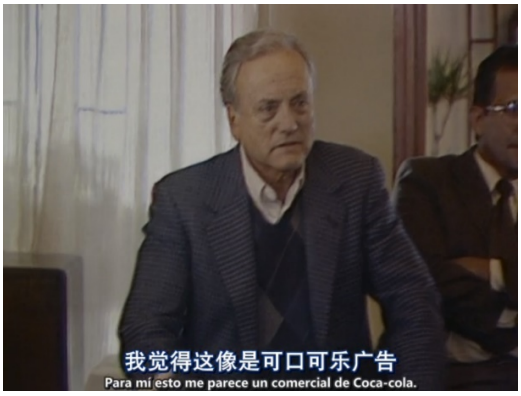

Figure 8. "It seems to me a commercial of Coca-Cola."
Source: *No*, 2012

However, flashing back to fifteen years ago, as shown in semi-fictional films (or docudramas) *Santiago* and *Night*, Coca-Cola images suggest the U.S. interference in the 1973 Chilean coup. In *No*, an empty Coca-Cola bottle is placed on an office desk when the military and politicians are orchestrating the coup (Figure 9). A soft drink bottle is ironically inappropriate and frivolous in such a serious and conspiratorial scene. Though without explicit mention or explanation of the symbolic meaning of the empty bottle, it could be a subtle implication of the U.S.' acquiesce of the military coup, or more directly, the U.S.' support of the coup.

Figure 9.
Source: *It's Raining on Santiago*, 1975

In *Night*, when the protagonist jumps out of the window and flees, there appears a Coca-Cola poster on the wall, together with the poster of "olapon," a popular shampoo brand back then and other graffiti (Figure 10). Some of the graffiti read "parar el golpe" ("stop the hit"), "no pasaran" ("do not pass"), and a crossed-out "UP." The neighborhood is messy and desolate, with graffiti of violent languages coexisting with everyday items' commercials, reflecting the disturbing environment during the Chilean coup. The coup overthrew the first democratically elected socialist president, Salvador Allende and dragged Chile into decades of dictatorship, which involved approximately 30,000 dissenters' imprisonment, torture, exile, and execution. The protagonist of *Night* is also prisoned after the coup.

Figure 10.
Source: *Night Over Chile*, 1977

These three films together draw a complete line spanning nearly twenty years of Chile's contemporary political history, from the election of President Allende in 1970 to the end of Pinochet's regime in 1988. Combining the three scenes, the Coca-Cola motif as U.S.' political clout is more complicated, beyond the binary definition of positive or negative. However, all scenes undoubtedly refer to U.S.' overpowering influence on Latin American politics. Besides, considering the producers of the films, U.S.-Latin American relations were closely linked to capitalist or non-capitalist stance in that period. Though political context and international environment were complex, documentary films and humanitarian acts transcended national boundaries and ideologies, as *Santiago* is a coproduction of France and Bulgaria, respectively being capitalist country and communist country.

In a broader sense, Chile exemplifies various Latin American countries that have been politically intervened by the U.S. Democracy is a long-time pursuit of Latin America and the terminal after decades of dictatorship. Although being the promoter and symbol of democratic ideas, U.S.' intervention proves to be the other side of democracy and often brings turmoil and calamity in Latin America.

3.2.2 U.S. Intervention in Latin America

Beyond daily life and culture, the most distinctive feature of Coca-colonization and postcolonialism in Latin America is U.S. military and political intervention, which makes the Coca-Cola motif also a U.S. political symbol.

By the 1830s, most Latin American countries achieved sovereignty and stepped into postcolonial status. However, independence means no more than "a minor move from direct to indirect rule" since "the major world powers did not change substantially" (Young 2003: 3). After World War II, the ideological counterpart between the United States and the Soviet Union turned Latin America into a battlefront in the Cold War. The U.S.' military force intervened, in some instances, successively invaded most Latin American countries: Guatemala in 1954, Cuba's Bay of Pigs in 1961, Dominican Republic from 1965 to 1966, Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990, etc. During the 1960s to 1980s, most Latin American countries went through dictatorship and military government. The U.S.-backed Operation Condor from 1975 to 1985 directly or covertly supported many of the military coups, which involved numerous murders, massacres, and other human rights abuse. The major plot of *No* and *Santiago* is about the 1973 Chilean coup led by General Pinochet, which was later confirmed by the U.S. government to be directly backed by the U.S. military force. The foremost reason of U.S.' support of the coup is President Allende's political inclination of socialism, and his pertinent economic policy of nationalization which threatened the U.S. interests, such as that of the copper mine.

As Standage concludes, Coca-Cola's overseas profits correlate with U.S.' expanding political influence (Standage 2005: 184). Though Coca-Cola's former president Don Keough claimed that Coca-Cola does not "enter politics" but "simply provide[s] a moment of pleasure to consumers around the world without concern for the form or type of

government under which they live" (Pendergrast 2013: 481). This means, however, as a matter of fact, Coca-Cola does not mind either doing business with a dictatorship such as Chile during Pinochet's regime. The Coca-Cola Company is also reported to be involved in paramilitary actions in Colombia. Coca-Cola executives who have swayed U.S.-Latin American political relations include Vicente Fox, the chief executive of Mexico's Coca-Cola Company and the former Mexican president, during whose tenure from 2000 to 2006 the Coca-Cola profits proliferated; and Roberto Goizueta, one of Coca-Cola's most influential executives, who has been friends with George H. W. Bush and impacted his political decisions (Pendergrast 2013: 481).

U.S. intervention in Latin America gradually appeased after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century. However, in another way, it became more "indirect and multilateral" (McPherson 2016: 197-199) without the ideological disguise. As the only remaining superpower, the U.S. can "invade the rest of world not with soldiers and bombs but with its culture, companies, and brands" (Young 2003: 188). In the post-Cold War era, Coca-Cola is still an invisible and amicable weapon of U.S.' cultural and political invasion, continuing to be a typical example among other the U.S. products and brands.

3.3 Coca-Cola and further beyond

3.3.1 Deconstruction: A Vanishing and Outdated Symbol?

The implication of Coca-Cola images from *Backyard* and *Venezuela* are not as clear as in the former films regarding life, culture, and politics. It is ambiguous and unspecified as the logo itself even appears blurred and broken. The Coca-Cola images in the scenes from these two films are both in a dilapidated condition, as if they have already converted into a vestige of history and time. In one scene from *Backyard*, there stand the sundered and rust pieces of the Coca-Cola brand in a desolate desert zone, upon which reads a tiny "drink" and a huge "Coca-Cola" with only the letters "la" still recognizable (Figure 11). Similarly, in *Venezuela*, while other decorations on the hull are apparently intact, the sticker of the Coca-Cola logo has already faded and is quite hard to decipher if not looked at carefully (Figure 12). On the other hand, even the logos are partial or difficult to read, audience can still tell them at first sight, which befits Coca-Cola's fame as the most recognized symbol.

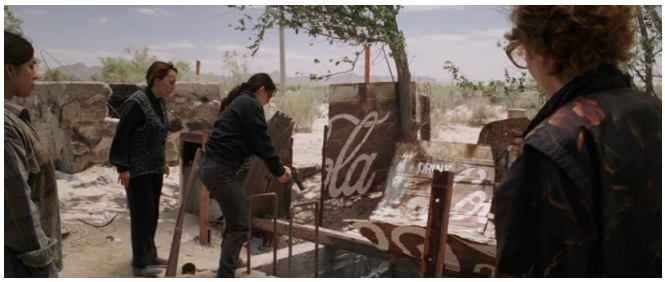

Figure 11.
Source: *Backyard*, 2009

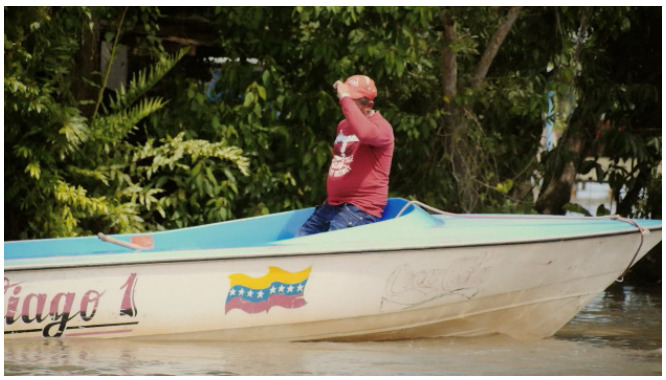

Figure 12.
Source: *Once Upon a Time in Venezuela*, 2020

These two images of the Coca-Cola logo are intricate to interpret even with the related plots. In *Backyard*, the Coca-Cola image appears at the possible crime scene. The characters in the frame are a policewoman and women from a charity group investigating the sexual crimes in the city of Juárez. The brand at the place which was likely to be a recreational venue is now abandoned. In *Venezuela*, a man belonging to a community living on the water sits blankly in the floating boat. U.S. cultural expansion is also verified through the adorning of the villagers' clothing, upon which are predominately more English slogans rather than Spanish. Dwelling on a village stuck in water contamination, the residents still seek their political rights and yearn for a change of their life. This scene appears right after the interviewers talk about bribery in the presidential election. The opacity of the elections is a major theme of the film, which is largely because of the villagers' political ignorance and lack of education. This village almost forgotten by the outside world is a microcosm of Venezuela's turbulence in economy and politics in the recent years. The selected scene generates a dystopian and absurd atmosphere with the Coca-Cola logo integrating into it.

The Coca-Cola images may not be deliberately arranged in these scenes and plots. At least, the filmmakers do not provide clear implication through these images. This makes the appearance of the Coca-Cola logo more of an authentic reflection of where the scenes are shot, and furthermore, where the films are set. Moreover, the Coca-Cola logo is submerged in other symbols. In the scene of *Venezuela*, the man wears an Adidas cap, another well-known symbol representing multinational products and globalization. The Coca-Cola logo seems not that preponderantly popular and representative as reflected in these two scenes, but the U.S. influence does not diminish. The logos appear in a ramshackle condition are a figurative deconstruction. This intrigues the audience to ponder what the next stage of post-colonization will be while it is the next stage of colonization.

3.3.2 Postcolonial Analysis: Spivak's Postcolonial Feminism

Females, mistakenly believed to be inferior to males in the conventional cognition, are the same case with the colonized compared to the colonizer. Patriarchy and imperialism are paralleled considering the power relations (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 93). From another perspective, it means oppression over women multiplies and exacerbates in postcolonial regions, which leads to the debate on whether gender or colonialism is more influential to women's suffering.

As depicted in *Backyard*, most female workers, like the heroine, escape from the poverty of their birthplace to Juárez for more job opportunities, regardless of the notorious sexual crimes and the merely passable working conditions. Similarly, in *Maria*, drug mules are usually young women who are desperate for money and a better life at the risk of their lives. The crime in Juárez might be one of the most grievous instances of violence against women since the 1990s and has lasted till today. It involves the extreme sexual violence that thousands of women have been murdered or gone missing. With a rapid jump cut, the film director intentionally combines the two scenes where exhibit the appalling number of the wage of workwomen and the "price" of a woman's corpse. The companies in search for a lower cost, which is already not even one dollar per hour, intend to move their plants to where the wage is cheaper. Simultaneously, the dead body of a woman, in calculation for the bail, is 1,200 dollars. This reveals the terrible living conditions for women in Juárez and all over the world, especially those in under-developed areas. The title of the film, *Backyard*, means that Mexico, and Juárez abutting the U.S., is a backyard and the subaltern of American industry, policy, and culture. Many companies settle in Juárez as the cost of human labor is much lower. A large amount of female workers swarm into the city as women are even cheaper to hire. The negligence of the policy and inefficiency of the police makes it a lawless land for sexual crimes. What the women encounter in Juárez is the double repression from the capital and the male.

On the other hand, women from various backgrounds establish a collective and determined goal to solve the Juárez crime despite the adverse environment of the potential crime scene and repressive environment of the society against women. It is also the women who sympathize with each other and help one another in the face of all kinds of plights in *Maria*. As postcolonial feminism suggests, feminism in Third World distinguishes from that of First World and requires extra efforts to solve the pertinent issue of inequality (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 94). Merely having no one to count on, Third World women have been forming a union among themselves and trying to save themselves. As depicted in *Backyard*, the solid bond between the women contrasts with the broken brand of Coca-Cola. It symbolizes the triumph of justice and the women's resistance against the control and oppression of capital and gender.

4. Conclusion

Coca-Cola has "entered the lives of more people than any other product or ideology, including the Christian religion" (Pendergrast 2013: 478). Coca-Cola's expansion regarding all respects, namely, Coca-colonization, is frequently ascended

to the level of beliefs to enunciate its enormous impact. It epitomizes both the "universalistic altruism" and the "national egotism" of the U.S. (Wolf 1994: 48). As the thesis picks the postcolonial stance, it also verifies and interprets the position and reaction of Latin America in Coca-colonization. The films and Coca-Cola images illustrate Latin American countries' active reactions to the mire left by colonization and the predicament of self-identifying in modern society.

The ubiquity of the Coca-Cola image in Latin American cinema, in the first place, is because it is a most quotidian product in life. It also essentially demonstrates the U.S.' ubiquitous power. As conveyed by the films, some countries encounter more of an economic impact, while others experience more in politics, culture, etc. All Latin American countries are more or less under the influence of the United States and Coca-colonization. The timeline of the thesis, covering from the Cold War era to the Post-Cold War era, verifies that the U.S.-Latin American relations are "more of the same" (Domínguez 1999: 33). The U.S. "ideological objectives in its policy" and "patterns of defense of its economic interests" are not appreciably disparate before, during, and after the Cold War. What is reflected by the films, though not all-sided, already proves McPherson's conclusion about the U.S. intervention in Latin America that the U.S. "did what it did because it could" (McPherson 2016: 201). As long as "the major world powers do not change substantially," Coca-colonization will continue its conquest.

However, in the long run, the major world powers have been and will be in the process of change. The connotations of the Coca-Cola motif continually grow richer, alluding to the dynamic U.S.-Latin American relations and generating more liberty to interpret (or not to interpret) its meanings. After all, postcolonial is not about "static ideas or practices," but about "a changing world." It is about a world that "has been changed by struggle and its practitioners intend to change [it] further" into "a more just and equitable" place for people all around the world (Young 2003: 7). The rumination never ceases regarding the next step of postcolonialism and Coca-colonization and Latin America's own solution in this changing world.

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