



# MAPPING UTOPIAS: THE MAP OF POPSTOCK! OF CARLOS VELÁZQUEZ



## WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN MAPS AND UTOPIAS?

Utopias are not possible without a place. At the same time that words create new imaginaries, in the XVI century the cartographic eye that captured the New World was the discourse into which Utopia was performed, as Pastor says: "Is the imaginary cartographies of utopian America, every reinscription of myths and fictitious objectives has a specific symbolic function and refers us to the broadest process that the map represents: the transformation of America into the utopian locus. The illustrations and captions are not descriptive. They are figurative and indicate the specific function of these images in the configuration of utopian America" (38). Nevertheless, these maps became ways of controlling and oppressing the new domains of the imperial nations at the same time that they were the locations of the Seven Cities of Cibala, El Dorado or Aztlan.



## POPSTOCK AS UTOPIA? ALL I SEE IS CHAOS AND A WRESTLER

PopStock! ironizes every map and even any utopian conception. How then this map could be read as a Utopia? What PopStock! tells us about Utopias is that these places are not places where mythical categories are waiting to be found, but places that are real and could be transformed and depicted ludacally. The PopStock!'s Utopia then is a laugh that places together even the most remote cities together. This irony depicts at the same time the centripetal and centrifugal movement that Fernando Ainsa described as new ways of searching Utopia in Latin American Modernity. The centripetal movement goes from the outside to the inside. This stands for the Latin American literary hero, who searches outside of his world for a place where he belongs, for a place that tells identity even if such a place does not exist (139). The centrifugal movement goes the other way around, from the inside to the outside. This movement scatters the hero's identity in many parts, that at the same time are still the hero. (147). From this perspective, PopStock! deconstructs the cartographic and utopic impulse by creating and establishing a new order. Specifically, this map deconstructs three main cartographic discourses: 1) the map of Mexico Tenochtitlan; 2) the map of the Seven Cities of Cibola; 3) The new modern and "precise" map of Mexico



## WHAT IS POPSTOCK? WHY SHOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN IT?

PopStock!, is the land where the stories of Carlos Velázquez' La Biblia Vaquera (2011) are set. Velázquez's stories unfold in a fictional space that depicts the Mexican North, from the States of Durango to the borderland. The cities depicted by Velázquez' in PopStock! are an eclectically combination. San Pedroosvelt, Moncloyork, and Monterrey are some of the sites in which we see unfold a complex representation of social life in Northern Mexico. These cities' diverse fictional residents include a wrestler and the drug dealer of a famous corrido singer. Their one common theme and connection is the eponymous "Biblia Vaquera," a figure that is itself a shape-shifter, simultaneously object, space, and character.

PopStock! mimics the cartographic official discourse of the Mexican North by placing together a group of cities that are not even close in an original map. This is a clear irony and an impossible, but still this is a Utopia, where the laugh provoked by the irony and senseless distribution of the map everyland has a place and a meaning.

Finally, this map reelaborates that same laugh that shatters in our way we represent things and words. Maps are also nurture of Heterotopias and Utopias: new and old ways of ordering the world.

1) PopStock! shares that perspective who tried to impossibly capture the city of Tenochtitlan. Nevertheless while Cortez' map is "[...] a fitting image for sixteenth-century Europe, whose high culture espoused a scientific rationalism, holding man as the measure of all things." (Mundy, xiv)., Velazquez' map defies any convention of mapping. Cortez' map fears emptiness, there is not a single space of freedom, all is named all is assigned. PopStock! is a multitude, closer to things than to objects, that is why it seems chaotic, but rather than disordered this map is full of multiple possibilities.

2) Every Utopian impulse after the establishment of the New Spain became a "[...] political tools, if no weapons, to appropriate someone else's land." (Lugo, 30). Nevertheless these dreams soon ended. After many efforts of mapping Utopias, these becae lost and forgotten in the Mexican North. Using this same strategy, of mapping Utopias in the Mexican North, PopStock! realigns this lost paradise, because since the beginning it was lost.

3) The relationship between the cities that are depicted in PopStock! and their real model is a clear parody. This map does not congregates cities because of their economic, politic, social not even geographic boundaries, their connection is arbitrary. While some cities are depicted as real as possible other cities are monstrosities from a unique model: San Pedro. The multiple ways into which San Pedro is transformed implies a free transformation of this city, who becomes a shapeshifter, modified by words in different languages. More than a cartography of places, this map is a cartography of possibilities, transformations and divergence: a new Utopia.

