HOPE IS THE NEW PUNK: POLITICS OF STORYTELLING, QUEERNESS AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN BECKY CHAMBERS' *THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL ANGRY PLANET*

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With the coining of Henry A. Giroux's concept of 'educated hope', hopefulness has been defined by postcolonial and decolonial scholars as a survival strategy against vertical systems of power, and arguably, as a source of agency (2014, 38). Nevertheless, hope is not the only emotion or affect that has been theorized to be a political form of resistance. In 2016, Judith Butler explored the notion of 'radical vulnerability', arguing that it was vital for marginalized communities (that category referring to those who have been historically kept at the margins) to exercise it as a way to contest the cisheteropatriarchal and capitalist system. This article examines if these emotions and affects truly constitute an act of agency, and how they are intertwined with each other as well as with storytelling, because literature has been employed by 'the other' as a tactic to build places of contestation and subversion (Lorde, 2017, Walker, 1994). Moreover, this analysis will prove that the transformative capacities of storytelling are vital to the margins in a way that is unique to them and that is simultaneously connected with the ideas of community and vulnerability, due to their subaltern positioning. In order to do so, I will focus on the literary genre of

'hopepunk' (quote) and its socio-political implications, as well as the capacity of literature to help to imagine and create better realities through a sense of community and solidarity. In particular, I will focus on Becky Chamber's The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet, (2015) a USA science fiction novel that deals with the intersection of queerness and hope, as well as the interaction between both in relation to Giroux and Butler's theorization.

Keywords: hope; science fiction; vulnerability; queerness; storytelling.

1.   Introduction

Despite the fact that hopefulness has been commonly seen as mere optimism by the general public, some postcolonial scholars have coined certain terms, such as Henry A. Giroux's 'educated hope' (2004, 38) or Duncan-Andrade's notion of 'critical hope' (2009, 182) that challenge this preconceived conception and tend to highlight the political nature of hope and its usage as a survival strategy against vertical systems of power, and arguably, as a source of agency. Nevertheless, hope is not the only emotion or affect that has been theorized to be a political form of resistance. In 2016, Judith Butler explored the notion of 'radical vulnerability', arguing that it was vital for marginalized communities (that category referring to those who have been historically kept at the margins) to exercise it as a way to contest the cisheteropatriarchal and capitalist system (2016, 2).

This article examines if these emotions and affects truly constitute an act of agency, and how they are intertwined with each other as well as with storytelling, as literature has been employed by 'the other' as a tactic to build places of contestation and subversion (Lorde 2017, 8; Walker 1994, 405). In order to do so, I will be exploring the diverse definitions of hope and its connection with the socio-political, as well as focusing on storytelling and the capacity of literature to help to imagine and create better realities through a sense of community and solidarity. To explore their intersection, I will be examining the literary genre of 'hopepunk' and its transformative nature in relationship to the margins. Although it has been predominately absent from academia, 'hopepunk' has been

defined in social media and pop culture magazines as a narrative genre that weaponizes hope to imagine more equal realities (Romano 2018). Moreover, as this article focuses on the LGBT+ when discussing the margins, I will also be questioning the notion of 'found or chosen families' as structures of solidarity, intimacy and vulnerability that are born specifically in queer spaces.

To fully examine the connections between these factors, I will be taking Becky Chamber's *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* as a case study. This is a USA science fiction novel that deals with the intersection of queerness and hope, as well as the interaction between both in relation to Giroux and Butler's theorization. Moreover, it discusses the importance of explicitly sharing found family narratives, as well as the transformative elements that are present both in hope and storytelling and are inherently political.

2. What is and is not Hope

Many postcolonial scholars, such as Sara Ahmed (2004, 182) and Stetsenko (2019, 727), have attempted to define and delimit our understanding of hope, and they have often found themselves in contradiction with vague and abstract ideas of 'apolitical' optimism, as well as mere idealism. Yet, this paper is concerned with hope as a deliberate practice of resistance, while claiming that it must be ultimately viewed as a collective and transformative effort to exercise active agency, even (or perhaps especially) in a capitalist and cisheteronormative framework.

However, before discussing what hope is, we need to explore some of the elements it tends to be misinterpreted as, whether the confusion is an accidental one or a deliberate attempt of whitewashing the essence of hope. When discussing Roland Barthes (1972, 133), Ducan-Andrade describes 'mythical hope' as "a false narrative of equal opportunity emptied of its historical and political contingencies" (2009, 183), establishing that hopefulness needs to be understood as a force that operates in an oppressive world that serves vertical structures of power. His view is quite similar to West's denounce of the notion of 'hope in a tightrope' (2008, 12), where a particular and isolated element is seen to subvert socioeconomic and historic disparities, in line with neoliberal ideals

of 'meritocracy' and individualism. Yet, he explains that a "single event cannot, by itself, provide the healing and long-term sustenance required to maintain hope amid conditions of suffering" (Ducan-Andrade 2009, 183).

Therefore, hopefulness can be understood as a concrete affect, always situated in a political context, which implies a connection with what has made to be 'the margins' (Spivak 1988, 25). This hope does not conform to capitalist and neoliberal tactics of erasing difference and using unlike examples of 'success' to gloss over systemic hardship. It is rather situated in line with the collective struggle, at the core of the subaltern, the other, since it refuses to ignore the social and the political. In Ducan-Andrade's words, "critical hope audaciously defies the dominant ideology of defense, entitlement, and preservation of privileged bodies at the expense of the policing, disposal, and dispossession of marginalized "others"" (2009, 190). Consequently, hope can be defined as a tool of social transformation, one in need of awareness of material circumstances to act as an expression of agency. Since this questioning is a collective one, it is inherently linked with ideas of community and solidarity, if it intends to survive.

Challenging the status quo implies a desire to dismantle the hegemonic hierarchies that position certain bodies as lesser, which can only be accomplished by the use of solidarity and community as strategies of unity. Seeing each other as human in a capitalist system that profits from dehumanization is an act of resistance and resilience, and one that is necessary to not only being able to imagine a better future but also to act upon it together. As a result, hope has a certain element of empathy and unity ingrained in itself. This hope that focuses on the collective (Solnit 2005, 12) can be described as a form of 'trust' (2005, 45), 'courage' (Lear 2006, 107) and even an 'ontological necessity' (Van Heertum 2006, 45).

Once we have established that hope is political, we will explore further its connection with the margins and its compromise with concrete and immediate action. Hopefulness has been described as a commitment to action and to the building of a better future (Giroux 2004, 40), as an "inspiration for collective action to build collective power to achieve collective transformation, rooted in grief and rage but pointed towards vision and dreams" (Solnit

2005, 11). Once again, it comes from despair and inequality, and it implies a commitment to social transformation through direct change. It is a promise to the future and to ourselves, a reaffirmation that we deserve better, that we (and I use this plural to refer to the margins) can create a better, kinder world while facing and naming the inequalities of the present that are a consequence of the cisheteropatriarchy, white supremacy and late capitalism.

This is in line with West's previously mentioned notion of 'critical hope', which has been defined as something that "demands a committed and active struggle" against "the evidence in order to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia, and personal despair the evidence in order to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia, and personal despair"' (2004, 296). This political understanding of hope has social justice and resistance at its center, and reinforces the idea that imagining and fighting for a better future is connected with solidarity and mutual support.

The last theoretical definition that I would like to highlight is Giroux's 'educated hope'. He believes that "we must see hope as part of a broader politics that acknowledges those social, economic, spiritual, and cultural conditions in the present that make certain kinds of agency and democratic politics possible" (2004, 38). As it "offers alternatives to an age of profound pessimism, reclaims an ethic of compassion and justice, and struggles for those institutions in which equality, freedom, and justice flourish as part of the ongoing struggle for a global democracy" (2004, 39), hope uses emotion as a transformative vehicle. This kind of hopefulness is not empty optimism or a feel-good narrative, as it demands action and awareness. As I have mentioned previously, this form of hope is an exercise of agency and resilience that is preoccupied with marginalized groups, rather than individuals. Having hope and acting upon it in a time of change and fear is, at is core, a political and subversive act.

Now that we have explored the meaning of hope, I would like to connect its ability to transform what is deemed possible with the role and power of storytelling. To do so, the next section of this paper will be mainly concerned with the literary genre of hopepunk and its relationship with more traditional narratives, as well as the connection between storytelling and marginalized groups.

3.   Storytelling and Hopepunk

Storytelling is a form of creating and reclaiming symbolic spaces where marginalized narratives can be finally voiced in order to subvert and challenge the systems of inequality we have been forced to inhabit. Sharing our history and our stories is a way of "exploring difference" (Berger 2019, 18) and "new realms in the knowledge domain" (Indira 2020, 4) that have been deliberately absent from a cisheteronormative and racist literary canon. Since storytelling "intersects with wider institutionalizations of gendered meanings" (Hemmings 2011a, 4) and "the ways in which we constitute, depict and repeat narratives about theorical concepts matter" (Ilmonen 2020, 364), it can be viewed as a tool of social revolution and systemic transformation.

Solnit believes that "from the places that you have been instructed to ignore or rendered unable to see come the stories that change the world, and it is here that culture has the power to shape politics" (2005, 47), which reinforces the idea that subaltern narratives are concerned with politics of visibility, equity and justice. Once again, discussing the difference between margins and center implies an urgent necessity of subverting multi-layered and intertwined structures of oppression where "to speak as a subject who has been made into the other, not white not man, not straight, not human is to challenge that norm" (Lorde 2017, VIII). The narratives of the margins (and this plural is a deliberate one, as we must state clearly that the marginal encompasses diverse realities that can intersect between each other) are innately subversive because our own existence is too.

Another characteristic of storytelling is that it creates spaces where senses of community, solidarity and a sense of 'collective identity' (2019, 16) can be fostered. Therefore, sharing marginalized stories not only fills in the gaps of canonical literature and idealized history, but also in those social gaps that seek to keep marginalized groups isolated. As Ramaro states, "since the voices of the vulnerable do not generally form part of mainstream discourse, narratives which construct their life truths are a formidable conduit to understand the complex interplay between their social situations and dominant development paradigms" (2020, 4). Consequently, we can claim that the practice of storytelling shares the socially

transformative quality of hope, and we might explore the intersection of the two by examining the genre of hopepunk.

This term was coined by Alexandra Rowland (2017, 1), who defended the need, particularly for marginalized people, to write and have access to narratives that contemplated other possible realities by using hope as a rebellious strategy. Again, these stories do not seek to project an image of false optimism or security, but rather a possibility of social justice that must be accomplished by concrete measures and collective struggles. As developed by Rowland,

> hopepunk isn't ever about submission or acceptance: It's about standing up and fighting for what you believe in. It's about standing up for other people. It's about DEMANDING a better, lkinder world, and truly believing that we can get there if we care about each other as hard as we possibly can, with every drop of power in our little hearts. (Romano 2018).

Once more, we can see how "hope becomes a discourse of critique and social transformation" (Giroux 2004, 38) and how the imagining of different futures seems to be connected with a sense of subversion and possibility as well with the politics of cares and the structures of support that belong to the margins.

Hopepunk also embraces the presence and use of emotion as 'our political as well as our life resources' (Lorde 2017, IX), rather than reinforcing the belief that subjectivity delegitimizes political and social fights or that vulnerability and sentimentality are incompatible with concrete and effective change. Rowland continues by defending that "going to political protests is hopepunk. Calling your senators is hopepunk. But crying is also hopepunk, because crying means you still have feelings, and feelings are how you know you're alive. The 1% doesn't want you to have feelings, they just want you to feel resigned. Feeling resigned is not hopepunk" (2017). Here, the personal, the emotional and the political appear to be intrinsically connected to emotion and storytelling, as well as to the notion of educated and critical hope.

However, that is not to say that all that is written by 'the other' is hopepunk, or that it must be necessarily created exclusively by marginalized communities. The idea of hopepunk is older than its coining; it is, arguably, as old as the practice of storytelling itself. And yet, I believe that because of its links to notions of justice and

lasting change, it includes a political struggle that has been and still is being carried out in the margins. It embodies the idea of literature being able to change the world, to transform the foundation of our history. Even if it does not explicitly refer to hopepunk, I would like to refer to a quote by Ursula K Le Guin at the 65th National Book Award that reflects this commitment and faith in the transformations that can be born from literature and storytelling: "We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words" (Le Guin 2020).

In conclusion, sharing and crafting stories, especially those from the margins, implies challenging certain social, historical and political structures that rely on certain narratives being unquestioned in order to maintain and ensure organized oppression. Moreover, storytelling is a vital element to ensure community strengthening and the creation and protection of safe spaces where affective connections can flourish. Finally, we must also remember that both hope and storytelling are radical strategies that use narratives and discourse to transform our perception and reality of what is possible.

4.   Queerness, 'Found Family' and Affective Care

Throughout this paper, I have been referring to 'the margins' in more general and abstract terms, but now I would like to shift the focus towards the queer or LGBT+ community specifically, as the analysis of Becky Chamber's *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* will be mainly concerned with this marginalized group in particular. Nevertheless, that is not to say or imply that queer individuals only suffer systemic discrimination due to their gender identity and sexual orientation, nor that we can examine forms of historical persecution as if they were isolated variables that are not deeply intertwined. The exploration of the margins and the processes of the creation of the 'other' must be grounded on ideas of intersectionality where the personal and the political are questioned "in ways attentive to racial and imperial hierarchies" (McElhinny 2010, 313), as well as issues of class, gender and ability.

Earlier in this text, I have referred to emotions of vulnerability and empathy when discussing the implications and effects of storytelling, as well as their relevance in a capitalist framework. In this section, I will be discussing "not what emotions are, but what work emotions do" (Ahmed 2004, 4) when engaging with "feminist care ethics" (Marvin 2018, 3) and "kin work" (Marvin 2018, 11). When examining LGBT+ spaces and communities, we ought to take into account "queer intimacies alongside a queering of intimacy" (Siegfried 2019, 23) in order to be able to understand fully how queerness impacts cisheteronormative roles and expectations.

These safe spaces are constructed upon the base of solidarity and mutual aid and care, as they are "not based in a shared identity or on a presumption about how the other feels, but on also feeling the desire for transformation out of the experience of discomfort, and against the odds" (Hemmings 2012b, 158) so as to offer genuine support and strengthen emotional bonds. What is unique about these forms of kinship and empathy is that they are highlighting "the importance of feeling for others as a way of transforming ourselves and the world, and thus renders affect as a way of moving across ontology and epistemology" (Hemmings 2012b, 148), therefore presenting the same transformative and collective quality of hope and storytelling. This notion is also present in Berlant's *Intimacy*, who believes that "intimacy builds worlds; it creates spaces and usurps places meant for other kinds of relation" (1998, 282), those relations being "relations that exist outside of normative expectations, such as outside the nuclear family formation or the heterosexual couple" (Siegfried 2019, 26).

For this reason, we can claim that queer relationship and intimacy are successful at both challenging the idea of biological and romantic bonds being perceived as deeper and more profound and that family ties are both necessarily sanguineous in nature and irreplaceable in character. In other words, we are discussing the fact that "a queer paradigm challenges the historic hegemony of normativity in the study of human relationships" (Hammack 2018, 4), as well as "the establishment of norms that not only describe but also historically prescribe relational forms denigrates diversity by delegitimizing that which is non normative and establishing hierarchies among forms of intimacy" (2018, 2).

One of the ways in which queer relationships (again, I am not referring to romantic bonds) destabilize those preconceived notions is by creating and caring for 'chosen' or 'found families', which are "family structure[s] defined by identity and community connection" (Hammack 2018, 3). Hammack affirms that "sexual minorities use a kinship discourse ("families we choose") in response to rejection from their families of origin" (2018, 26), which would imply that these structures are a form of resilience and resistance that is defined by practices of vulnerability and community care. Found families are based upon affective care and work, and use emotions as a form of fostering unity and the sense of community that is not provided (or is chosen over) 'traditional' family structures and relationships.

Once again, the presence and active practice of these emotions can be understood as an exercise of agency, as well as a "political action aimed at imagining, enacting, and sustaining a different social world" (Siegfried 2019, 24). As we anticipated beforehand, queerness solidifies the connection between the political, the emotional and the transformative that is already present in narrating hopeful stories. Queer narratives, and particularly those which feature and explore found families "can build affective solidarity as it emerges between experience and bodies that offer radical, ethical and political possibilities for change" (Pullen and Vachhani 2018, 3). Moreover, we need to address the fact that the LGBT+ community has been systematically deprived of canonical stories that portray queerness in a way that imply that non cisheterosexual individuals and communities can find places of belonging, and can aspire to do more than just surviving. Queerness is "not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future" (Esteban Muñoz 2009, 1), as well as 'an insistence or potentiality or concrete possibility for another world' that affects not only the community itself but also how we conceive and prioritize relationships and emotional labor.

In short, queer communities and 'found families' make use of affective resources such as vulnerability and empathy in order to resist their subaltern position. Moreover, these emotional practices help us to redefine the established hierarchies of intimacy, as well as transforming our socio-political reality alongside with hope and storytelling. The imagining of a better world must include queer and gender-non conforming individuals to truly defy the systems of

power it intended to subvert, and that includes listening, creating and amplifying queer stories while recognizing that they have intrinsic value outside exclusively LGBT+ spaces. Therefore, hopepunk narratives need to include these practices and realities, both to contribute to the representation and humanization of the margins and to further the challenging of cisheteronormative expectations.

5.   Hopepunk and Found Families: Becky Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* as a Case Study

After defining and exploring the importance of hope, storytelling and found families, it seems reasonable to examine how their intersection is constructed in a particular textual example. In this case, I have chosen to explore Becky Chamber's *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* as a case study. This space opera was firstly published through a Kickstarter campaign in 2014 and due to the outstanding public reaction was then later picked up by the American publisher Hodder & Stoughton.

The main reasoning behind choosing to discuss this novel is not only that science fiction, alongside with fantasy narratives, tends to represent quite accurately the transformative quality of language and literature, but also due to the fact that this novel is quite explicit and revolutionary when dealing with hierarchies of affects and intimacy. Moreover, as it will be discussed in this section, that *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, and perhaps Chamber's complete literary production, can be regarded as representative of hopepunk.

This novel appears to be concerned with a wormhole-building ship and its crew, who accept a dangerous governmental offer to travel to a distant planet in exchange for the promise of financial security. However, as the story unfolds, the narrative focus shifts towards the relationships between characters as well as their inner conflicts, relying heavily on the crew's own perception of themselves as a chosen family. Earlier in the novel, in page 39, we can find an abstract that challenges explicitly the conception of biological family, and establishes the ship Wayfarer as an affective community.

> The point of a family, he'd always thought, was to enjoy the experience of bringing something new into the universe, passing on your knowledge, and seeing part of yourself live on. He had come to realize that his life in the sky filled that need. He had a crew that relied on him, and a ship that continued to grow, and tunnels that would last for generations. To him, that was enough. The point of a family, he'd always thought, was to enjoy the experience of bringing something new into the universe, passing on your knowledge, and seeing part of yourself live on. He had come to realize that his life in the sky filled that need. He had a crew that relied on him, and a ship that continued to grow, and tunnels that would last for generations. To him, that was enough (2014, 39).

As we have seen when dealing with found families in the previous section, the politics of intimacy and vulnerability soon become a pivotal element in the story's narrative, as the novel prioritizes the extend and scope of the character's bonds and commitment with one another and the affects and emotions that are deemed as necessary and of the utmost importance in the ship. However, the system of care that Chambers' characters have built is not limited to their physical home, since their empathy and solidarity are usually extended to others in an attempt to create safe spaces and genuine connection.

> "You were comforting her. That's all it was. You just wanted to her to know that someone cared."
> "Nobody should be alone," Sissix said. "Being alone and untouched…there's no punishment worse than that. And she's done nothing wrong. She's just different." (2014, 98)

This exchange takes place at the first third of the novel. Sissix, one of the crewmembers, encounters a neurodivergent individual of her species that appears to have some kind of mental illness that interferes with her ability to socialize with 'normality'. As a result, she appears to be completely isolated and without any external support, so Sissix results to hugging the woman and giving her one of her feathers. Both of these practices are constructed as deeply meaningful and emotional in Sissix's cultural framework, as her species seem to value physical touch as the higher form of care and closeness. The feather giving is also said to hold social significance, as one of Sissix's shipmates narrates later on that she was offered one after consoling and caring for her friend after a family member passed away.

These patterns are repeated multiple times within the story, as the protagonists try to ensure that the emotional support they provide expands outside their inner circle in an attempt to combat the process of othering and socioeconomic isolation that many characters suffer. Nevertheless, these exchanges of kindness and support are not isolated incidents, as they have a transformative motivation at their core: they do not seek to be the exception in a system that deliberately attempts to fragments and dehumanize the margins, but to establish one that uses emotions as a political and philosophical weapon. To cite Audre Lord, "without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression" (Lorde 1984, 2). These practices of vulnerability and empathy are revolutionary because they focus on the collective, rather than on individual change and behavior, ensuring unity and mutuality in and between marginalized groups.

Because of this, I believe that *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* can be said to represent the essence of hopepunk narratives. It "relies fundamentally on the mobilization of vulnerability" (Butler 2016, 15) as a tool to imagine and construct a better world. Emotions and affective care and support become forms of concrete action to directly challenge capitalist, racist and cisheteronormative systems that create the material conditions of marginalization, while ensuring the construction of collective spaces and community building.

However, when discussing found family narratives, it is relevant to highlight that not the entirety of the Wayfarer's characters identify as or are canonically part of the LGBT+ community. While Rosemary and Sissix are both openly queer, as they have a romantic relationship, this is not the case for the rest of the crew. Nevertheless, they do reproduce the structure and practices of a chosen family from their subaltern positioning. For example, Ashby Santoso, the ship captain, is in an interspecies relationship, which are deemed both immoral and illegal, as well as carrying discriminatory consequences at a professional, political and social level. "An Aeluon could lose her family and friends over an alien relationship. She could lose her job, especially when on a government contract" (Chambers 2014, 89).

We also have the example of Artis Corbin, the ship 'algaeist' who is revealed to be a clone of a family member at the end of the narration. His new legal status implies a loss of freedom and humanity, as he suffers a process of otherization that nearly costs him his life.

> "If we do nothing, he'll be sent to a Quelin penal colony. They're labor camps, mostly, from what I've learned. Apparently most of the teracite ore in the GC is mined by Quelin prisoners."
> "Now there's a happy thought," Jenks said. "Nice to know what my circuit panels are made from."
> "How can they do that?" Dr. Chef said. "Corbin's a GC citizen."
> "No, he's not," Rosemary said. "Since cloning is illegal in most GC territories, cloned individuals don't get natural born rights.
> They have to go through the same application process that non-GC species do, even if they've lived in the GC all their lives" (Chambers 2014, 225).

Lastly, we could also examine the positioning of Lovelace, the ships' AI. As an artificial being, she is not legally or socially considered as human. She has no control over her own labor, mind or residence, and she is seen as a technological device rather than as a conscious being by the larger population. As a result, even if not all of the characters are positioned as queer, they still endorse the politics of home and belonging through intimacy and care.

Again, from the beginning of the novel the cisheteronormative model of family is challenged, and treated as one of many options of social organization, rather than as the hegemonic model. When discussing Sissix's origins and culture, she explains that "young Aandrisks were cared for by community elders, not their biological parents" (2014, 98), as well as distinguishing between 'hatch' and 'feather family'. The latter would be the equivalent of a found family, as it prioritizes emotional bonds over legal or biological ones.

> "A feather family is friends and lovers, right?"
> "Right. People you emotionally depend on."
> "But feather families change often, right?"
> "Not often, necessarily. Often by your standards, I guess. People change feather families whenever they need to, and people need different things at different times in their lives (2014, 194).

The emphasis relies on the affective relationships, as it creates transformative and new spaces that can accommodate those who inhabit the margins. And even when romantic or sexual attraction takes place in those communities, the focus does not shift from platonic intimacy and vulnerability. "Well, I am attracted to you. You're a wonderful person, and a very good friend. I'm not sure when I started feeling more than that for you. Which isn't a problem, by the way, if your answer is no. I do like being your friend, and I'll be happy if that's all we are" (2014, 214).

In Becky Chambers' narrative, romantic relationships are not prioritized over platonic ones, and emotional systems of support are viewed and constructed as the most relevant practice of any community. At the end of the novel, there is a conversation between Sissix and Ashby, in which he expresses guilt for not being able to fulfill his friends' life as much as a romantic partner may be able to do. The following text is the exchange in question:

> "There has always been a part of me that feels guilty that I can't be the kind of family you need."
> Sissix nuzzled his cheek. "You are the family I need, Ashby. I wouldn't have chosen you otherwise." (2014, 255).

Sissix directly uses the term 'chosen family' and reinforces the community that is the Wayfarer ship. Therefore, there is a somewhat circular structure, in which Ashby is the first and last character to discuss the status of the crew as family, reaching a positive conclusion both times.

In short, I believe that Chambers' *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet* represents the transformative spirit of hopepunk as well as the ideological commitment of the notions of educated and radical hope. Throughout the act of storytelling, the novel highlights the importance of narrating the stories of the margins in order to create affective systems that foster true intimacy, vulnerability and empathy. The Wayfarer's crew constructs a chosen family structure because of and throughout their subalternity, and they systematically ensure that the emotional resilience and care that possibilities and maintains said structure in the first place is extended to other (and the other) so as to challenge and resist a racist and capitalist system as well as its cisheteropatriarchal expectations and hegemonic models.

In *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, hope is able to flourish and act as a form of resistance because there is a constant effort of opposing vertical and intertwined systems of oppression that offers the possibility of a different reality. The affective communities of the novel are the representation of the different futures than can be build based upon queer legacies, and their survival is a promise to the margins. Thus, hopefulness, storytelling and affective labor are all notions committed to serve the subaltern, while actively fighting for the destruction of the power structures that endorse that historical and social marginality. In Becky Chambers' novel, love, intimacy and vulnerability are political, and serve to create a world where they are no longer the exception.

6. Conclusion

This paper has dealt with the definition of hope and its political implications. From Barthes' notion of 'mythical hope' to Giroux's understanding of 'educated hope', we have examined hope as intrinsically connected to the collective and the political, thus being an active form of agency and political commitment. Moreover, we have defended that hopefulness relies on concrete social action to create possibilities of imagining new realities and transforming our future. It "just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed" (Solnit 2005, 25), as we are in need of "doing the work of imagining this future and committing to transforming the status quo instead of adapting to it" (Stetsenko 2019, 2).

One of the multiple strategies of social transformation that we can use as an example is sharing repressed narratives that use hope as a political tool. In particular, this article has examined hopepunk as a case study of the use of storytelling to challenge and subvert cisheteronormative, patriarchal, capitalist and racist practices that have systematically oppressed and silenced the margins. As Solnit states, "we need stories that don't gloss over the ugly damage out there but that don't portrait as all there is either" (2005, 115). Storytelling creates an opportunity to ensure that systemic violence is addressed and openly discussed, while ensuring that marginalized communities are not dehumanized and reduced to their suffering. The stories and communities of the margins ought to be voiced,

while taking into account the emotions and affects that helped to construct and preserve them. Moreover, this analysis has proven that the transformative capacities of storytelling are vital to the marginalized in a way that is unique to them and that is simultaneously connected with the ideas of community and vulnerability, due to their subaltern positioning.

Specifically, we have also explored affective tactics of support and community building in the margins, and particularly in queer spaces. We have established that vulnerability and empathy are forms of conscious resilience that are used to protect and care for 'the other' while challenging hegemonic systems that benefit from the isolation and despair of the margins. In particular, we analyzed Becky Chambers' *The Long Way To a Small Angry Planet* and its representation of affective communities in regards to the margins, storytelling and the genre of hopepunk. The novel broadcasts a spaceship crew that have established a found family based on radical intimacy, empathy and vulnerability and that use those same emotions as a political weapon to fight for and to establish a better reality.

Consequently, Chambers' text broadcasts how affects can be used to destabilize the status quo, as well as its pivotal role to sustain and strengthen marginalized communities. Throughout the use of hopepunk, she highlights the transformative quality that is present both in storytelling and in hopefulness, and reinforces the notion that the abolition of our oppressive socioeconomic system must have the margins at its core. Power inequalities cannot be divorced from storytelling and the narrative of the margins, as the stories that are allowed to be voiced contribute to help and shape our reality and ontological possibilities. Therefore, this idea includes the capacity to have and enact hope.

In conclusion, this article has explored the notion that both storytelling and hopefulness are exercises of active agency and political resistance, as well as the fact that they are both necessarily linked to marginalized communities and social transformation. Furthermore, I have also defended that empathy and vulnerability, along with other affects, are political and transformative in nature, as well as key elements in the abolition of vertical structures of power. The imagining and the narration of better realities must include 'othered' communities and their emotional strategies of

survival, in order to create meaningful and lasting change. Hopefully, this analysis can be extended to more marginalized communities and narrations, so as to ensure a more in depth and intersectional approach, as well as the use of more novels (whether science fiction or not) as case studies to examine the representation of found families and emotional resilience in hopepunk as a genre. It would be particularly useful to compare how the genre of hopepunk helps to create different futures in relation to class and racial struggles, as well as to how explore how those realities are constructed by authors of different marginalized identities, since those were not covered in depth within this paper.

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