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Cult of Defeat: Narratives of Failure in Mexico's Historical Novel

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Cult of Defeat: Narratives of Failure in Mexico's Historical Novel

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents: Cecily, Brian, and Suzanne Price;

and to my sweet wife, Janine.

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Cult of Defeat: Narratives of Failure in Mexico's Historical Novel

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Failure haunts Mexico's historical imagination. Mexican intellectuals express a negative view of their country's history—especially vis-à-vis its nineteenth-century founding—and this negativity spills over into contemporary political and social discourse. To be sure, they have much to lament about the nineteenth century: multiple foreign invasions, rampant political instability and cronyism, excessive foreign debt, heavy-handed military leaders, and lest we forget, the loss of half the national territory. My dissertation analyzes narratives of failure in five historical novels, written between 1982 and 2005: Jorge Ibargüengoitia's *Los pasos de López* (1982), Rosa Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos* (1995), Ignacio Solares' *La invasión* (2005), Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio* (1987), and Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria* (1999).

I define narratives of failure as discursive strategies that highlight—and often poeticize—perceived cultural, political, and social shortcomings. They are historical arguments that attempt to explain, justify, embellish, expose, or reinterpret contemporary problems as the atavistic result of prior shortcomings. They mediate between lofty aspirations and unsatisfied goals. They seek to ameliorate the psychological trauma

resulting from loss. And despite apparent pessimism, these narratives tend to be fiercely nationalistic. It might be said that the transmission of failure narratives from one generation of intellectuals to the next has concretized their existence. Once in place, narratives of failure inform debates about nationhood, democracy, stability, and autonomy. Inertia propels these ideas forward. Despite the prevalence of these narratives in most genres, nowhere does failure manifest itself more clearly than in historical novels that recreate the nineteenth century. Furthermore these narratives are intimately tied up with the nation's guiding fictions. As authors employ narratives of failure, they reinterpret the nation's foundational moments. At times this serves to challenge official stories and dogmas or to liberate enduring symbols for reinterpretation. Narratives of failure challenge citizens to rethink their nation, their history, and themselves.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Towards a Theory of Failure

> El mexicano venera al Cristo sangrante y humillado, golpeado por los soldados, condenado por los jueces, porque ve en él la imagen transfigurada de su propio destino. – Octavio Paz
>
> Failure is, in a sense, the highway to success, inasmuch as every discovery of what is false leads us to seek earnestly after what is true, and every fresh experience points out some form of error which we shall afterwards carefully avoid. – John Keats
>
> La derrota tiene una dignidad que la victoria no conoce. – Jorge Luis Borges

A mural covers the expanse of Chapultepec Castle's main cupola. Along the perimeter of the cupola, phantom horses and riders heralded by tattered stars and stripes trampled helpless Mexicans. Smoke rising from the blazing city walls ascends in the form of an imperial eagle. In the center of the mural, a doe-eyed boy, wrapped in the Mexican flag, falls headlong from heaven. Tears stream from his eyes as he witnesses the invading forces wrest sovereignty from his beloved homeland.

The historical precedent for this mural, the 1846-1848 U.S.-Mexico War, has engrained itself into Mexican popular mythology. In May of 1847, American troops entered the capitol and set up camp in the main plaza. At this time Chapultepec Castle, overlooking the city from the top of an ancient Aztec forest, served as the military college. Legend has it that the college, bereft of arms and training, held off the invading Anglos as long as they could. When hope seemed lost, three of the cadets climbed to the top tower, draped the national flag on their shoulders, and jumped. Monuments adorn the grounds of Chapultepec today as a testimony against foreign—and most especially, United States—intervention.

The historical veracity of this tale casts doubt on certain elements of the story: the exact number of children, their ages, whether they donned the flag, or if the event actually happened. Its similarity to Cervantes' historical drama *Numancia* also calls into question its fictionality. But the story continues to hold a permanent place in the Mexican imagination despite questionable historical grounds. Why is this story so important? Why has the suicide of three military cadets come to symbolize an integral part of Mexican nationalism?

These questions are similar to ones posed by José Vasconcelos, an early twentieth-century Mexican intellectual. Concerned that his nation had become enamored with fallen heroes, he chided: "Si nuestro héroe máximo es un derrotado, un mártir, más bien que un Rolando, no es extraño que todo nuestro Panteón Nacional se haya formado también con una serie de mártires: los mártires de Chapultepec, los mártires de Tacubaya; el martirio de Cuauhtémoc; como si la milicia tuviera por objeto preparar a sus hijos para que sean víctimas, lo que es oficio de santidad, no de milicia" (*Breve historia de México* 279). Vasconcelos terms this fascination with failure a cult of defeat, and asks, "¿Hasta qué punto la circunstancia de que nos hemos dedicado a adorar fracasados influye en el temperamento nacional pesimista y en la insistencia con que hablamos de 'morir por la patria', cuando lo que necesitan las patrias es que nadie muera, sino que todos vivan en plenitud y libertad?" (279). We might ask if what Vasconcelos proposes is valid. Do Mexican authors and intellectuals demonstrate a fascination for or, to use Vasconcelos's term, worship failure?

Several Mexican intellectuals seem to think so. Prior to the 2006 presidential elections, Jorge Volpi lamented that "La idea de que todos los anhelos despertados en 2000 se han echado por la borda, de que resulta imposible luchar en contra de la inercia histórica que nos liga al fracaso… ha acentuado nuestro recelo a cualquier iniciativa

oficial, distanciando a los ciudadanos de las instituciones y obligándolos a actuar por su cuenta" ("La desaparición de México" 21). Carlos Fuentes writes that, as the son of a Mexican diplomat growing up in Washington D.C., "At home, my father made me read Mexican history, study Mexican geography, and understand the names, the dreams and defeats of Mexico." He observes that "the history of Mexico was a history of crushing defeats, whereas I lived in a world, that of my D.C. public school, which celebrated victories, one victory after another… Sometimes the names of United States victories were the same as the names of Mexico's defeats and humiliations: Monterrey. Veracruz. Chapultepec" (*Myself with Others* 4-5). And Mexico's renown chronicler Carlos Monsiváis has proposed that "los momentos estelares de la historia mexicana tienden a ser fracasos" (*Proceso* 14). Indeed, if we study essays on Mexican identity, analyze murals from the 1920s, listen to popular *rancheras* and *corridos*, read editorials from leading newspapers, and delve into the historical archive, it becomes apparent that failure permeates the nation's guiding fictions.

Nowhere does this fascination with failure become more evident than in fictional reconstructions of Mexico's past, particularly the nineteenth century. In what follows, I argue that narratives of failure constitute the primary motif of Mexican historical novels. I define narratives of failure as discursive strategies that highlight, reinterpret, and even poeticize perceived cultural, political, and social shortcomings. Writers resort to narratives of failure for many reasons: to revise history, to explain failed utopian ideals, to undermine opposing political ideologies, to promote platforms of social change, to consecrate messianic missions with martyrdom, or to express pessimism about the future. Failure narratives often mediate between lofty aspirations and unsatisfied goals. They seek to ameliorate the psychological trauma resulting from loss. At times loss itself becomes a matter of national pride. Additionally, these narratives can be fiercely

nationalistic. These narratives are intimately tied up with the nation's guiding fictions. As authors employ narratives of failure, they reinterpret the nation's foundational moments. At times this serves to challenge official stories and dogmas or to liberate enduring symbols for reinterpretation. Narratives of failure challenge citizens to rethink their nation, their history, and themselves.

When do narratives of failure typically show up in a nation's political and cultural discourse? And why do authors use them? If we could plot the high and low points of a nation's history on a graph, it would look like a rolling wave with troughs and peaks occurring at fairly regular intervals. Troughs are characterized by economic problems, social disarray, civil war, foreign invasions, authoritarian control, reduction of democratic rights, et cetera. Peaks represent moments of growth, prosperity, success, democracy, confidence in government, and general wellbeing. Narratives of failure surface in the troughs. They look backwards, past the peaks, to other troughs in search of answers for present dilemmas. The rationale is that something must have occurred in the past that led the nation to its current state of malaise. Since the peak is a time of prosperity, when everything is going well, the problem must logically lie with before, in prior troughs. Because peaks and troughs are cyclical, narratives of failure are cyclical. When nations experience highs, narratives of failure tend to disappear. As they descend into troughs, intellectuals begin to ask questions and to look for answers.

An example from nineteenth-century Mexican historiography might help to illustrate this ebb and flow. Lucas Alamán was the leading conservative through the first half of the century. I discuss his work more thoroughly in Chapter One, but sufficed to say here that he had a fundamental role in promoting conservative Hispanism through historiography. In 1853, the year he died, Alamán published his multi-volume *La historia de Méjico*. The year is significant because the country had been mired in political turmoil

for more than thirty years. The situation had reached its lowest point and the government struggled with its incapacity to maintain social order. Liberals and conservatives alike agreed that what was needed to restore order was the strong hand of a dictator. They unanimously turned to Antonio López de Santa Anna, who had occupied the presidential seat ten times already. They gave him unlimited powers and bestowed upon him the title of "His Most Serene Highness." In *La historia de Méjico*, Alamán argues that the turmoil that beset Mexico in 1853 was the direct result of the 1810 independence movement led by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. He argues that Hidalgo established a precedent of political violence, mixed with a healthy dose of racial hatred and covered in a blasphemous veil of false religiosity. Because Hidalgo offered such an inauspicious example, he continues, regional *caudillos* followed suit and the military pronouncements became the standard operating procedure for political transition. Alamán also decries Hidalgo's anti-Hispanic attitudes as xenophobic, narrow-minded, and destructive. Unfortunately, he failed to recognize—or chose to ignore—that the man he supported for the presidency in 1853 pronounced against more governments than any other general in Mexican history. But that aside, Alamán's argument reflects a common trend in narratives of failure. At a low point in history, he delved into the past to find a scapegoat for the present's maladies. This pattern is repeated time and time again in Mexican historiography. While I am not as well-versed in the historiographic traditions of other Latin American countries, I would suggest that similar trends can be found in most, if not all, of Latin America's historical imagination.

Literary authors follow a similar pattern to their historian counterparts. The literature of the Mexican Revolution, for example, offers some clear examples of literary narratives of failure. The Mexican Revolution began in 1910 and, by 1917 most of the violence had ended. As the northern armies began to consolidate governmental power in

Mexico City in the 1920s and 1930s, authors criticized non-democratic presidential transitions and unfulfilled promises of land distribution and equality. Lázaro Cárdenas was elected in 1934 and the heyday of Mexican social reform began. Cárdenas distributed more than 60% of all the land that would be given to the people in the post-war era. He improved relationships with labor unions, established social welfare programs, and improved education throughout the nation. Around 1940, the literature of the Mexican Revolution dried up. The authors and Mexican society were content with Cárdenas' work and achievements. The 1946 elections upset this contentment, however. Miguel Alemán came to power, and shortly thereafter altered the socially conscious course Cárdenas had set. Disillusionment and discontent grew quickly, and by 1953 a second wave of disgruntled literature about the Revolution hit the stands. Production of literature of the Revolution would continue until 1987, and it is universally critical of the government's social policy. More importantly, however, it attempts to find the causes of twentieth-century political corruption and perfidy in the Revolution. Examples of this second wave of historically reflective literature can be seen in Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* (1955), Carlos Fuentes' *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), Elena Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963), Ángeles Mastretta's *Arráncame la vida* (1988), and Ignacio Solares' *Madero, el otro* (1987).

One of the challenges confronting an analysis of narratives of failure is our natural aversion to admitting failure. Recognizing failure requires individuals to come to grips with their inability to control their world, to govern the terms of their existence, to secure their rights and liberties, and to defend what they identify as their own. It requires humility, but not necessarily self-abasement. Failure is an inherent aspect of human existence. According to Judeo-Christian theology, for example, humanity is the product of an initial failure that is atavistically, and according to some theologies genetically,

propagated. The story of humanity's fall from divine grace and subsequent ejection from the paradisiacal garden is at once the explanation of our frailties and a narrative of failure, maybe *the* narrative of failure, because it attempts to explain man's current fallen state in terms of a predecessor's mistake. The transmission, acceptance, and assimilation of this narrative leads to the development of a series of social and political relationships. One example of the contemporary ramifications of this narrative is the treatment women have endured for millennia. Consequently, the uncomfortable nature of failure has created a black hole of criticism and theorization.

United States historiography offers an illustrative contrast to these narratives. Narratives of success characterize the United States approach to historiography. Exceptionalism permeates the United States' sense of nationhood, history, and destiny. Fuentes' recollection of his schoolboy days is instructive on this point. He remembers the contrast between his North American public school, "which celebrated victories, one victory after another," and his readings of Mexican history, which seemed to him "a history of crushing defeats." This is not to say, however, that the United States has not suffered loss and humiliation. Rather I believe that the narrative structures that underpin this nation's sense of nationhood tend to exclude, explain, or erase failure in favor of an epic tale of victory. But we should ask if narratives of failure are simply an alternate means of framing national histories? As opposed to the model of American exceptionalism, Spanish Americans have traditionally cast doubts upon their current situation by reflecting upon history's missteps. Cañizares-Esguerra explains this negativism as a holdover from the colonial legacy (*Puritan Conquistadors* 233). But what if narratives of failure, instead of lamenting the past, open dialogue with it in order to understand the future. The axiom that "the past is the present" seems applicable to the

Spanish American case if, in fact, present problems are viewed as the outgrowth of past failures.

I pause at this moment to head off a potential criticism. As a North American literary scholar—and maybe more specifically, as a Texas native—specializing in Latin American fiction, I recognize that speaking about Mexico's narratives of failure might be misinterpreted as the exaltation of metropolitan or imperial discourse at the expense of peripheral nations. Allow me to dispel this notion. My dissertation consists of a series of readings of Mexican authors and intellectuals and *their* interpretations of *their* history. My intent is to highlight one strategy they employ in telling their national story. Essentially I am discussing a mode of storytelling. Benedict Anderson has argued that nations are founded on the fictional qualities of imagination. According to him, nations owe their existence to the fiction that transforms heterogeneous groups into homologous imagined communities. Edmund Morgan reminds us in *Inventing the People* that "The success of government... requires the acceptance of fictions, requires the willing suspension of disbelief, requires us to believe that the emperor is clothed even though we can see that he is not" (13). The same can be said for national narratives. They require make-believe. They ask us to accept certain fictions about who we are and what we are. "Because fictions are necessary," argues Morgan, "because we cannot live without them, we often take pains to prevent their collapse by moving the facts to fit the fiction, by making our world conform more closely to what we want it to be" (14). To this end, then, my research attempts to highlight strategies that Mexican authors use to interpret their own national history, and through them, their contemporary political and cultural state of affairs.

CRITICAL HISTORY OF FAILURE

Narratives of failure enjoy a long history in Spanish America. As early as the Conquest, failure has informed the way the continent has been narrated. Comparativist historian Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has argued that, "Unlike in the United States, where colonial and national narratives have been conveniently severed, in Latin America, the trope of colonial legacies burdening the present continues to frame the way historians imagine the past" (*Puritan Conquistadors* 233). The focus of this dissertation will not allow us to delve into the whole of Spanish American intellectual history. But I would suggest that a close reading of the guiding fictions espoused by nineteenth-century politicians and intellectuals like Bolívar, Sarmiento, Lizardi, Rodó, and Martí reveals narratives that weave failure into the Spanish American tapestry. Essays on national identity like Argentine Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's *Radiografía de la pampa*, Puerto Rican José Luis González's *El país de cuatro pisos*, and others articulate similar concerns about the inherent qualities of their citizens that predestine the nation to failure. Spanish American historical novels evince a similar quality, and here I would refer interested readers to García Márquez's *El general en su laberinto* (1989), Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (1949) and *El arpa y la sombra* (1979), and Jose Pablo Feinmann's play, *Cuestiones con Che Guevara* (1999).

A limited number of literary analyses exist on failure. Beatriz Pastor's *The Armature of Conquest* (1992) represents one of the first attempts to describe failure as a dialogic process wherein authors wrestle with their environment and lose. Pastor proposes that early colonial chronicles exemplified a narrative discourse of success that framed events in such a way that explorers would be heralded for their bravery, fidelity to the crown, and their piety. She remarks that even Hernán Cortés's "mistakes and

disobedience were transformed and presented as necessary to the masterfully conceived plan for the successful conquest of the Aztec empire" (Pastor 116). But later chronicles evince a different discourse, one that "would be grounded in failure and [that] would proclaim the value of misfortune and the merit of suffering" (116).

Pastor identifies three major themes in colonial narratives of failure: one, "the impotence of the people and their defeat at the hands of nature" (117); two, the presence of physical and mental suffering; and three, "the insistence on the value of suffering, the presentation of failure as a different kind of service as deserving of recognition and reward as success" (117) Pastor perceives in these narrative discourses of failure a conscientious effort on the part of their authors to turn failure to their advantage. Accepting defeat in their field, they attempt to leverage that loss against potential failure in the court. What catches our attention here is the strategic employment of failure narratives as a rhetorical device to fend off negative consequences. For the conquistadors, failure was a tool as important in their reports as their armor was in the field. The successful deployment of failure narratives meant their continued funding and dignity in the court and in society.

Carlos Alonso's *The Burden of Modernity* (1998) never speaks directly to the notion of failure, but his deconstructive analyses of Spanish American authors grappling with concepts of modernity and coming up short bespeaks a truncated modernization. John Ochoa has addressed the subject in his book, *The Uses of Failure in Mexican Literature and Identity* (2005). Ochoa sets three goals for himself: first, he tries to define failure "as an unusual means toward self-knowledge"; second, he seeks to highlight texts that "contain the *precise moment* of failure, and not necessarily its long aftermath or its reconstruction in hindsight"; and third, he aspires to demonstrate that "monumental figures, with high places in collective memory, have become memorialized

unapologetically and even proudly *as failures*" (6-14). *The Uses of Failure* adds a theoretical twist to its predecessors by positing failure as a positive epistemological event, a heuristic moment: "a transitional, possibly destructive, moment that precipitates new knowledge" (5). He argues that failure is a stabilizing critical tool, and that failures generally reveal more about self than do triumphs. Ochoa argues that failure, like de Man's *dédoublement*, destroys self-aggrandizing myths and reveals innately human foibles. Instead of focusing on historical novels or other recreations of the past, he reads foundational texts at the moment when their authors "are surprised by their own failure" (7).

Critical texts like these call attention to the presence of failure in Spanish American literature, but do little to elaborate a theory of failure. While Ochoa's introductory chapter offers intriguing possibilities for the uses of failure in literature, his analyses fall short of integrating his theories into a broader debate on Mexican culture. Understanding failure and its potential uses in Mexican literature requires us to think more deeply about how failure functions at a level of national discourse. In order to do so, we need to draw on work that has been done in other fields. Literary theory, to this point, has been unable to provide the tools necessary constructing a solid theoretical base for dealing with failure. Throughout this dissertation I combine critical theory with close readings of historical fiction and its context to develop a more critical way to think about failure.

MEXICO'S HISTORICAL NOVEL

My dissertation analyzes five historical novels, written between 1982 and 2005: Jorge Ibargüengoitia's *Los pasos de López* (1982), Rosa Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos*

(1995), Ignacio Solares' *La invasión* (2005), Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio* (1987), and Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria* (1999). Unlike Ochoa, whose work attempts to analyze documents at the moment when their authors experience failure, I have chosen to focus on historical reconstructions of Mexico's past because I am not as interested in the ways authors spontaneously react to failure, but rather in their conscientious manipulation of it. This is not to say, however, that Mexico's historical novelists are not caught in their own moments of failure. As we will see in my analysis of Jorge Ibargüengoitia's *Los pasos de López*, the author is caught in a society that, after years of development and success, experienced a devastating economic and political crisis. We can certainly read *Los pasos de López* as a reaction to the author's context. But in order to fully engage his context, Ibargüengoitia had to dialogue with the history that preceded him. He, as do many of the authors in my selection, built upon narratives of failure espoused by conservative historians like Lucas Alamán, José Vasconcelos, and Enrique Krauze, or liberal ones like José María Luis Mora and Justo Sierra. Similar readings can and will be provided for the other novels in my corpus. Failure narratives for the Mexican historical novelist, then, are not simply a gut reaction, but a tool that they conscientiously utilize as they comment on their contemporary problems.

I am intrigued by Mexican authors' decision to frame their history as a series of failures. What implications does this have for contemporary historical, political, and cultural debates? Does this method imply a new paradigm for reading historical fiction? What level of participation do authors who employ narratives of failure expect from readers? How do these narratives inform, influence, direct, and reflect a broader national discussion of identity and nationhood? How do contemporary Mexican historians and fiction writers use failure narratives in their writing? Are they pessimistic, satirical, or self-pitying to such a degree that they undermine possibilities for individual and national

self-realization? Or do they find, as Ochoa suggests, uses for narrating failure by developing, perhaps, a positive counter-discourse to offset the potentially harmful effects of negative narratives?

I have chosen the historical novel to answer these questions because the novelistic genre allows authors to bridge gaps, fill in missing details, and offer interpretations that traditional historiography does not and cannot present without relying heavily on speculation, and thereby breaking the rules of its discipline. Hayden White has written that the most difficult task for today's historians may be "to aid in the assimilation of history to a higher kind of intellectual inquiry which, because it is founded on an awareness of the *similarities* between art and science, rather than their differences, can be properly designated as neither" (*Tropics of Discourse* 29). Historical novels bridge this gap between seemingly opposed disciplines by drawing upon the empirical knowledge of historiography and the creative art of fiction. The resulting hybrid provides enriched and exciting possibilities for historical and cultural interpretation. Before discussing these texts, a word is in order about the nature of historical novels.

Traditional historical novels foster a cohesive picture of nationality based on realistic representations of the past. Their authors demonstrate an epic style of writing. Protagonists are fictional characters who, at times, coincide with history's major historical actors. But any interaction between novelistic characters and historical figures is limited to what Brian McHale refers to as the "dark areas" of history, or those moments that exist outside the official historical record. Traditional historical novels are conscious of their textuality, and seek to eliminate anachronisms.

But the postmodern historical novel tends towards breaking with tradition, demystifying national heroes, and reorganizing canonical knowledge. Seymour Menton notes that these novels are characterized by metafictional reference to their own creative

process, intertextuality, carnivalesque attacks on authority figures, prominence of major historical actors as protagonists, and Bahktinian concepts of heteroglossia and parody. In Mexico, postmodern historical novels emphasize sardonic humor, reveal intimate details about characters' personal lives, conflate individual and collective conscience, and demonstrate a brooding sense of disillusionment with history's shortcomings.

Menton's definition is useful, but by no means free from problematic assertions. First among them is his overly subjective organization of the new historical novel canon. Menton is quick to dismiss novels like Gabriel García Márquez's *El general en su laberinto*, for example, "because of its re-creation of a very specific historical period with relatively few characters, and its conscious avoidance of exuberant experimentation." He quickly adds to this judgment, "Nonetheless, it is clearly a superior historical novel, which, along with many others… has enriched this genre in the past more or less fifteen years" (*Latin America's New Historical Novel* 14-15). I fail to understand why this novel is excluded when, in many ways it fits Menton's taxonomy: its protagonist is a major historical figure, Simón Bolívar; it demonumentalizes the heroism associated with Latin American independence; and it evinces a keen interest in Bolívar's physical ailments and corporeal functions, all in line with Bahktin's writings on the carnavalesque. Second, Menton insists that the historical event cannot coincide with the author's life experience. He argues that, "in order to analyze the recent proliferation of the Latin American historical novel, the category must be reserved for those novels whose action take place completely (in some cases, predominantly) in the *past*—arbitrarily defined here as a past not directly experienced by the author" (15-16). In other words, according to Menton's definition, a historical novel about the Vietnam conflict cannot be written by someone born before April 30, 1975. This definition proves difficult for Menton because he bends his own steadfast rules to include novels "in which the narrator(s) or characters are

anchored in the present or recent past, but whose principal theme is the re-creation of the life and times of a clearly distant historical character" (17). Juan José Barrientos counters Menton by suggesting that the author's life experience should not constitute the determining criterion, but rather the impact the event has on society. He writes, "a mí me parece que lo histórico se relaciona menos con el pasado que con la memoria y que por eso hay hechos en el presente que nos parecen históricos, es decir, dignos de recordarse" (*Ficción-historia* 22). Accordingly, Barrientos proposes that, if an event is worthy of being remembered, it is material for a historical novel (22-23).

Menton and Barrientos represent polar ends of a single definition. On one hand, Menton pushes for extreme distance from the historical event. On the other, Barrientos argues for extreme proximity. Both propositions are weakened by their the insistence on temporal placement. I argue that the determining factor of whether a text is a historical novel depends upon the relationship between historical archive and the event. History is created by documents. In some cases, such Del Paso's *Noticias del imperio*, there is a veritable mountain of archival documents from which the author takes the structure for his novel. But we might also entertain the notion that a novel wherein the crux of the narrative rests upon the absence of an archive would also constitute a historical novel. An example of this in cinema would be Oliver Stone's *JFK*, wherein the protagonist struggles to reconstruct the events of John F. Kennedy's assassination by dismantling the official story and seeking for additional archival information to replace those that are kept under lock and key. We might also consider a story like Puerto Rican writer Luis López Nieves's "Seva" historical precisely because the protagonist searches for the remnants of a civilization—an archive—that has been erased. Because fiction's relationship to historical archives is central to understanding historical novels, we need to address these

topics from a theoretical perspective. Michel Foucault, Roberto González Echevarría, and Linda Hutcheon will provide the groundwork we require before moving to the texts.

MICHEL FOUCAULT AND THE ARCHIVE OF POSITIVITY

Michel Foucault describes a transition in the function of history as it relates to archival information. Foucault suggests that the function of history, in the traditional sense, was the compilation of historical data, the sacralization of a documentary past, and the creation of monumental figures. History, as presently constituted, is a tool that society uses to create meaning from myriad amounts of information. He writes:

> To be brief then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to "memorize" the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often nonverbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7, original italics)

History no longer simply deciphers traces of information left in the past. It takes what has been deciphered and organizes the information into relevant, meaning-based totalities. Foucault explains that this organizational operation is a function of the archive. The archive is "the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events." The archive preserves information, groups it, highlights certain statements and suppresses others. The archive is not an endless warehouse; it is the flood gate that meters what is said, how it is said, and in what context it is said. "Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own

duration.". It is, in short, "the system of [information's] enunciability," or the process whereby certain information is preserved for repetition while other pieces are subsumed (129).

According to Foucault, the archive dictates the positivity of information. After 1867, the Mexican historical archive has been controlled by liberals to the exclusion of the conservative viewpoint. This is a point of frustration for conservative intellectuals like Enrique Krauze. More than simply telling a story, the archive determines the way we perceive historical events and actors. Hidalgo's image has been buffed and polished until the blemishes recorded by every major historian of the nineteenth century have all but vanished. Why? Because the powers at work behind the archive, and therefore behind the power of enunciability, have conscientiously given him a facelift in order to supply a national hero. This concept of archive is intimately tied into Edmund Morgan's theory of national fictions. Morgan argues that fictions glue society together, and that societies are more likely to transform their structures to fit the fiction than they are to transform the fiction to fit their reality.

GONZÁLEZ ECHEVARRÍA AND THE ARCHIVE OF POWER

Like Foucault, Roberto González Echevarría views the archive as an inherent part of the power structures that govern knowledge. He argues that Latin American literature is tied up with anthropological investigations into its own foundational myths. "Anthropology is a way through which Western culture indirectly affixes its own cultural identity," he argues, because it "translates into the language of the West the cultures of others through a kind of annihilation of the self" (*Myth and Archive* 13). He continues: "In the same way that the nineteenth-century novel turned Latin America into the object

of scientific study, the modern Latin American novel transforms Latin American history into an originary myth in order to see itself as other" (*Myth and Archive* 14). A central part of this scientific study is an investigation of the archive that "keeps, culls, retains, accumulates, and classifies" these myths (*Myth and Archive* 18). He defines the archive in the following manner:

> What is characteristic of the Archive is: (1) the presence not only of history but of previous mediating elements through which it was narrated, be it the legal document of colonial times or the scientific ones of the nineteenth century; (2) the existence of an inner historian who reads the texts, interprets and writes them; and finally (3) the presence of an unfinished manuscript that the inner historian is trying to complete. (*Myth and Archive* 22)

Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria* exemplifies this point. In addition to his nods to the classics of Mexican historiography, Serna inserts more than ninety documents into the text itself. Many of them are presented as counterpoints to the general's claims, emphasizing the legalistic attribute González Echevarría attributes to archival documents. There are multiple "inner narrators" in the text, most notably Antonio López de Santa Anna, Manuel María Giménez, Ángel López de Santa Anna, and a mysterious extradiegetic compiler who arranges the documents. The novel evinces incompleteness. Narrative coherence is continually interrupted by the aforementioned insertions, leaving readers with a sense that this is not a finished product.

González Echevarría expands upon this definition when he proposes that the archive:

> …is not so much an accumulation of texts as the process whereby texts are written; a process of repeated combinations, of shufflings and reshufflings ruled by heterogeneity and difference. It is not strictly linear, as both continuity and discontinuity are held together in an uneasy allegiance. This fictional archive, of course, is a turning inside out of the Archive in its political manifestation, a turn that unveils the inner workings of the accumulation of power; accumulation and power are a rhetorical effect in the archive of archives. (*Myth and Archive* 24)

Additionally, the archive is, "first of all, a repository for the legal documents wherein the origins of Latin American history are contained, as well as a specifically Hispanic institution created at the same time as the New World was being settled" (*Myth and Archive* 29). "Power, secrecy and law stand at the origin of the Archive," he argues, and "it was, in its most concrete form, the structure that actually housed the dispensers of the law, its readers, the magistrates; it was the building that encrypted the power to command" (*Myth and Archive* 31).

González Echevarría views the self-reflective nature of Latin American writing as a natural product of the region's relationship to the archive: "self-reflexivity is a way of disassembling the mediation through which Latin America is narrated, a mediation that constitutes a pre-text of the novel itself" (*Myth and Archive* 28-29). He demonstrates that this modality shows that "the act of writing is caught up in a deeply rooted mythic struggle that constantly denies it the authority to generate and contain knowledge about the other without, at the same time, generating a perilous sort of knowledge about itself and about one's morality and capacity to know oneself" (*Myth and Archive* 29).

LINDA HUTCHEON AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION

González Echevarría's appreciation of the self-reflexive elements of archival fiction are insightful. Metafiction is "fiction about fiction – that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity" (Hutcheon *Narcissistic Narrative* 1). In essence, metafiction is self-conscious narrative critique. By methodically examining itself, metafiction questions common sense literary ontology by highlighting the arbitrary conventionality of common sense reading. John Brushwood identifies metafiction as the distinguishing characteristic of Mexican fiction after the

1968 Tlatelolco massacre. I would further propose that this can be attributed to authors beginning to openly question the master narratives underpinning their society. The literary manifestation of this query was self-reflective and self-representational. By "laying bare" literary structure and artificiality, metafiction performs an analogous operation on a nation's guiding fictions. Some critics, like Raymond L. Williams, have attempted to circumscribe metafiction into the postmodern aesthetic (*The Postmodern Novel in Latin America* 25-31). Periodizing metafiction in this way makes little sense. Metafiction is a linguistic modality that supersedes chronological restrictions (Spires *Beyond the Metafictional Mode* 7). In 1980 Linda Hutcheon evades categorizing metafiction as a postmodern phenomenon on the basis that doing so would negate its potential for application to the broad spectrum of contemporary literature. In 1988, however, she engages the specific question of historicizing the "postmodern" debate by coining the term "historiographic metafiction," a modality of historical writing that:

> …refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses to view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 93)

Metafiction is a prime vehicle for many authors to question not only the validity of literary conventions but also cultural processes that govern discourse at the local, national, and global levels. Hutcheon believes historiographic metafiction is the means by which the traditional archive that governs positivity is rearranged by literature. In her view, historiographic novels upset the *status quo* by presenting new paradigms of historical documentation and cultural perception. Hutcheon consequently recuperates one aspect of metafiction for a specific use within the "postmodern" without subscribing to critical fads.

Accordingly, the archive is not simply a repository for information, but is a system of organization and censorship, of inclusion and exclusion. The defining characteristic of archive is its ability to privilege certain parcels of information while suppressing others. This sifting process is intimately caught up in power structures. Historical fiction challenges the established hierarchy of information within the archive by inventing documents, reordering existing documents, and altering our perceptions of the information in the archive. Chapter One shows how Ibargüengoitia's narrator attempts to rectify history by clearing up portions of the historical narrative that legend has blurred. Ibargüengoitia introduces new testimony that contradicts the official history, and thus challenges the archive's control over historical narrative. In Chapter Two we see that Rosa Beltrán sidesteps traditional historiography and recuperates the missing female voices of Mexico's first empire. The narrator of Ignacio Solares' *La invasión*, the subject of Chapter Three, pens a chronicle of his experiences highlighting the popular groundswell resistance against the American invasion. Chapter Four studies Del Paso's reorganization of Mexico's national pantheon of heroes and villains. While I do not dedicate significant time to the archive he consults—a topic that other critics have adequately analyzed—the novel is a monument to the archival efforts of the late nineteenth century. And Chapter Five analyzes how Enrique Serna invents at least ninety apocryphal documents and inserts them into *El seductor de la patria*.

THE HISTORICAL NOVEL AND NEOLIBERALISM

Up to this point I have discussed some of the formal characteristics of the postmodern historical novel, as well as the theoretical underpinnings of archival theory. The postmodern historical novel breaks archival monopolies on positivity and truth

claims by reorganizing the contents, the form, and the means of expression employed by the archive. But this formalist approach to defining postmodern historical fiction leaves some questions unanswered. Why do historical novels surge in the 1980s and 1990s? What socio-political factors contribute to the creative process? How do these novels dialogue with the historical context of their creation? Moreover, traditional historical novels tend to foster a cohesive picture of nationality by enshrining heroes and weaving epic myths. The postmodern aesthetic tends to destabilize the foundations upon which nationhood and master narratives stand. So what does it mean to write about the nation at a time when the very meaning of the term is under serious scrutiny?

Studies on the historical novel came to head in the 1990s. Seymour Menton asserts that the "single most important factor" for the late-century upsurge in historical novels "has been the awareness since the late 1970s of the approaching Quincentennial of the discovery of America" (*Latin America's New Historical Novel* 27). He continues, observing that the importance of the anniversary "is not limited to remembering Columbus and the discovery of the New World. It has also generated a greater awareness of the historical bonds shared by the Spanish American countries, as well as a questioning of the continent's official history" (28). The Quincentennial enflamed passions in Mexico City and prompted street rallies and protests on October 12, 1992. Following Menton's logic, we might also surmise that the impending centennial celebrations for the Mexican Revolution and bicentennial celebration for Independence have prompted new publications. The function of cultural memory to which Menton alludes is certainly important, but it is not the most important factor. Cultural memory and reinterpretation are important because they offer a critical perspective about social and political change.

It is my contention that studies in Latin America's historical novel are currently at a low ebb, but shortly will return to critical prominence. There are two primary reasons for this. The first is market related. Publishing houses in Latin America are commissioning historical novels at an unprecedented rate. In the last few years, Joaquín Mortiz and Planeta have commissioned historical novels to feed a growing demand. Planeta Mexicana has even inaugurated a series entitled "Grandes protagonistas de la historia mexicana." Pedro Ángel Palou's most recent novel, *Zapata* (2006), about the life of Emiliano Zapata, is one such commission. The why behind this increase demand, I believe, leads to the second factor that will spur historical novel studies again. We are approaching the bicentennial of Latin American independence. 2010 will mark two hundred years since the first revolutionary leaders challenged Spanish colonial rule. In Mexico there will the added historical weight of the centennial of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, hailed by many as the nation's advent into modernity. As this watershed year of celebration approaches, Latin America is becoming increasingly more interested in its historical legacy. People want to know who laid the foundations of their society. In Mexico we have seen the recent publication of Serna's *El seductor de la patria*, Silvia Martínez del Campo's *Vicente Guerrero* (2005), Paaco Ignacio Taibo II's *Pancho Villa* (2006), and Pablo Soler Frost's *I767* (2004). This surge in historical novels offers an excellent opportunity for Mexican authors to reinterpret their history, and to question the grounds upon which contemporary society stands.

I argue that these historical reconstructions acquire deeper meaning when understood as part of broader contemporary debates about globalization, neoliberalism, and the existence of "the nation". After the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mexican politicians began implementing neoliberal economic reforms, culminating in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The short-term

effects were positive like increased investor confidence and restored of low-inflation growth. But the reforms also led to macroeconomic imbalances and political instability. These paved the way for the 1994 political and economic crisis. Subsequent administrations have led the nation towards economic recovery while continuing to hold fast to neoliberalism. The most prominent supporters of these doctrines have been Vincent Fox and Felipe Calderón; both are members of the conservative National Action Party (PAN). The novels that form the corpus of this dissertation appear at a time when Mexican authors are actively rethinking their society and criticizing the neoliberal reforms espoused by conservative administrations. As such, many of the characters that take center stage in the novels are conservative figures: Iturbide, Maximilian, and Santa Anna. Throughout this dissertation ties will be made to the political and historical context in which the novels were written to demonstrate that the historical novel, more than a reinterpretation or re-decoration of the past, is a conscientious criticism of the present.

COMMON THREADS

A number of common threads unite these chapters. First, because these novels are written in the last quarter of the twentieth century, they are inevitably influenced by Mexico's great historical playwright, Rodolfo Usigli. This is especially true in the cases of Jorge Ibargüengoitia and Fernando del Paso. Ibargüengoitia, who was one of Usigli's students, enjoyed a much closer—and more problematic—relationship with the *maestro* than any other author in this dissertation; his is a case of direct influence. Del Paso, to my knowledge was never personally associated with Usigli, but his novel most certainly dialogues with Usigli's work. We might be able to talk about an Usiglian conception of history in other writers, but it would much less direct. It might be possible to argue that

Usigli set the stage, so to speak, for thinking about history among Mexican writers that is then recuperated by later generations through Ibargüengoitia. I will discuss Usigli's aesthetics in Chapters 1 and 4, but would suggest that a significant study of his theoretical work has yet to be done on a broad scale for Mexico's historical novel.

Second, all the novels suggest that their main protagonists are actors in some way or another. Ibargüengoitia's novel may make the least explicit reference to theatricality. Beltrán places heavy emphasis on costumes and ceremony in *La corte de los ilusos*. She portrays the first empire as cheap soap opera rendition of the French court. Serna and Solares perform similar operations with Santa Anna's character. Solares goes so far as to say that Santa Anna's defining characteristic is that of a "farsante." Similarly, *Noticias del imperio* shows Maximilian planning out elaborate ceremonies and outfits for the Palatine guards without taking thought for the practical matters of government. Similar criticisms have been made of contemporary Mexican government. The most auspicious example of late is the new José Vasconcelos National Library. Many academics look disdainfully upon the new edifice, arguing that it represents another government plan to launder money for friends and business associates.

And finally, a current of psychoanalysis that relates specifically to how characters and nations deal with trauma runs throughout these chapters. Chapter 3 offers an overview of contemporary theories about trauma, but the theories can also be applied to other chapters.

ORGANIZATION

This dissertation is organized in the following manner: Chapter One examines theatrical motifs in Jorge Ibargüengoitia's *Los pasos de López*, a novel that criticizes

Mexico's first significant attempt to free itself from Spanish colonial rule in 1810. Ibargüengoitia portrays the revolutionary leaders as amateur actors befuddled by a confusing revolutionary script. Chapter Two studies the consummation of Mexican independence as portrayed in Rosa Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos*. But rather than focusing on Agustín de Iturbide and the political intrigues of Mexico's first empire, Beltrán recreates the voices of the royal family's women. Chapter Three analyzes Ignacio Solares' appreciation of the traumatic effects of the U.S.-Mexico War. Solares proposes that Mexico, by virtue of its weakness and internal divisions, brought the war upon itself. Through remembering and confessing, *La invasión* suggests that healing is possible. Chapter Four examines Fernando del Paso's project of cultural redefinition. In *Noticias del imperio*, Del Paso invites readers to incorporate Maximilian of Austria into Mexico's pantheon of heroes and villains. To this end, he demonumentalizes Benito Juárez and humanizes Maximilian. Chapter Five analyzes Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria*, a novelized novelized biography of Antonio López de Santa Anna. Serna structures his novel around competing narrative voices that struggle for control of the story. The novel is a manual for disentangling authorship and bias in historical and political discourse.

Chapter One: A Mexican Comedy of Errors in Jorge Ibargüengoitia's *Los pasos de López*

> El mayor crimen de la historia es revestir de oropeles sucesos que han sido la causa del atraso, la decadencia de la nación. Y esto es lo que hemos hacho con la leyenda de la Independencia; erigir en culto y religión lo que fue yerro funesto y comienzo de todas nuestras desventuras. – José Vasconcelos
>
> We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be. – Kurt Vonnegut

Jorge Ibargüengoitia (Guanajuato, 1928-Barcelona, 1983) began as a playwright and ended as a playwright. Well, almost. From the beginnings of his literary career to his final novel, *Los pasos de López* (1982), Ibargüengoitia's love for theater determines the path of his writing. In *Los pasos de López* Ibargüengoitia transforms a pious historical drama, *La conspiración vendida* (1960), into an irreverent farce. This is not to say, however, that Ibargüengoitia takes his subjects lightly. On the contrary, the work becomes a critique of the political and economic problems caused by the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) that pervade the early 1980s. Ibargüengoitia's ability to laugh at the preposterousness of characters, events, and ideas allows him to ask serious questions about the story that supports fundamental issues of national political identity. Ibargüengoitia transforms the epic heroism of Hidalgo and the conspirators of Querétaro into a serious spoof of their foibles and vices. To do so, he incorporates theatrical motifs into the novel's structure and theme. This chapter examines the theatrical aspects of *Los pasos de López* and argues that, for the author, the 1810 insurgency was a poorly written script performed by bungling amateur actors.

Los pasos de López participates in a long-running debate about how the revolution of 1810 was carried out, what ideas underpinned its violence, and what it accomplished. At the forefront of this debate are interpretations of Miguel Hidalgo. This chapter seeks to frame Ibargüengoitia's work as an irreverent, yet constructive, voice within this historical tradition. As such this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides a brief historical sketch of the events leading up to the *Grito de Dolores*. The second section examines the historical debate between conservative and liberal factions over Hidalgo. The third section discusses how Ibargüengoitia enters into this debate with the play *La conspiración vendida* and later *Los pasos de López* as well as the distinct approaches Ibargüengoitia employs in both works to address the same topic. The fourth section studies the theatrical elements of *Los pasos de López*. To conclude, I address Ibargüengoitia's broader criticism of the insurgency's script, direction, and audience.

HIDALGO'S REVOLUTION

In 1808, Charles IV of Spain agreed to let Napoleon Bonaparte march an army of conquest across Spanish territory en route to Portugal. Napoleon's stated purpose was to take over Spain's neighbor without disturbing Castille's peace. That Charles IV believed this only attests to his naiveté and his incompetence. The Little Corsican made short work of Spanish forces, imprisoned the royal family including Charles and his son Ferdinand VII, and proceeded to occupy the entire Iberian Peninsula. With the king and his heir in prison, Napoleon appointed his dipsomaniac brother, Joseph, to rule France's latest territorial acquisition. But Joseph's rule was no more stellar than had been Charles' and, within two years, the nation clamored for independence. Spain's liberal faction transferred the Parliament, known as the *cortes*, to Cádiz in 1810 in opposition to the

French occupation. The *cortes* were viewed by many as an authentic government in exile. Two years later, the parliament drafted the Constitution of 1812, a liberal charter that proposed that national sovereignty resided in the people, that the people would be represented by the *cortes*, that representatives would be elected without distinction between social classes, that the government would be a constitutional monarchy, and that the privileges afforded to nobility would be annulled. Freedom of the press was guaranteed and the Inquisition abolished. The following year, with the help of British intervention, Ferdinand VII signed the Treaty of Valençay, regaining his freedom and the Spanish throne. In 1814 he organized a coup d'état against the constitutionalist government, reorganized the monarchy, and began to centralize power.

In the meantime, American Creoles were not blind to Europe's political upheavals. For centuries they had been denied access to seats of power by the colonial regime in both church and governmental hierarchies. With the empire in disarray, the Creoles saw their opening and moved. The first Spanish American rebellions came from the South: Colombia, Argentina, and Chile. In Mexico, a small revolt in Valladolid (present-day Morelia) was brutally quashed in 1809. By 1810, another plan was hatching in Querétaro under the direction of Captain Ignacio Allende and Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. With the help of the local colonial administrator, Miguel Domínguez, and his wife, Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, Allende rallied support for independence from military and ecclesiastical ranks, and met under the guise of a literary *tertulia* to hammer out their plans.

Historians differ on who was the first conspirator. The nineteenth-century liberal essayist José María Luis Mora believes it was Hidalgo, who had been a friend of Manuel Iturriaga, one of the Valladolid conspirators. The twentieth-century historian Leslie Byrd Simpson, on the other hand, credits Allende with the impetus to initiate the revolt.

Regardless of who should carry this honor, Hidalgo appears to have quickly occupied the central role in the conspiracy. Consequently, most interpretations of the revolution are intimately tied to the personality of this man. As we will see shortly, the conservative faction that interprets Mexico's ills as a product of the independence process denounces Hidalgo as a bloodthirsty degenerate, populist, and demagogue. Liberals who view the revolution as the genesis of a free and independent nation, on the other hand, exalt him as founding a father, statesman, and idealist. Hidalgo lies somewhere between these two interpretations. Leslie Byrd Simpson explains, "In Mexico the figure of Hidalgo has of late years been deified in school texts and mural paintings until he has little resemblance to the puzzled and sanguinary enthusiast who emerges in the documents of the time. The best thing we can do is recognize two Hidalgos, the symbolic figure and the man" (186).

Hidalgo was a nonconformist. He chafed at colonial restrictions on local wine and silk industries. He opposed preferential treatment of European-born clergy for high-ranking ecclesiastical positions. He allegedly contracted numerous gambling debts, fathered a sizeable posterity among female parishioners, and dabbled in heretical reading. Simpson avers that the priest fed his "talent for conspiracy" with revolutionary texts. "The Rights of Man, the Social Contract, and the rest of the intoxicating doctrines of the French Revolution became woven into his mind into a beautiful fabric of the perfect republic, from which the gachupines should be excluded" (186). Enrique Krauze expands this notion, suggesting that Hidalgo's intellectual formation stems from the older tradition of French Enlightenment thinkers (*Siglo de caudillos* 54-55).

Hidalgo's political thought becomes evident when we consider the proclamations he made once the revolution began. Alan Riding observes that Hidalgo "was unusual in his concern for the Indians," but "he was also an impatient and energetic political thinker" (*Distant Neighbors* 32). His political thought was the product of Jesuit

instruction, and focused on the wellbeing of the marginalized members of New Spanish society. With the revolution in full swing, Hidalgo set in motion a number of sweeping social changes aimed at improving the living conditions for the indigenous population. On October 19, 1810 Hidalgo abolished slavery in Valladolid. He issued another proclamation from Guadalajara on December 6, 1810. The first article of his proclamation from insurgent headquarters reads: "Que todos los dueños de esclavos deberán darles la libertad, dentro del término de diez días, so pena de muerte, la que se les aplicará por transgresión de este artículo." He later repealed the oppressive taxes that had been levied against the indigenous by the colonial regime: "Que cese para lo sucesivo la contribución de tributos, respecto de las castas que lo pagaban y toda exacción que a los indios se les exija." Creole critics, as we will see shortly, reviled Hidalgo for a lack of broad-sweeping political ideals and concern for a Creole agenda. But Hidalgo cared little for Creole politics. As a result, his political thought has been marginalized by the Creole elites who would eventually become the target of many indigenous aggressions during the revolution.

Plans were set to take up arms on December 9, 1810, but a series of betrayals led to the discovery of the conspiracy and prompted an early declaration. The conspiracy's scribe, Mariano Galván, turned over information about the plans in exchange for a mid-level managerial position in a tobacco processing plant. Querétaro's parish priest revealed his participation in the conspiracy to Father Gil, a royalist priest, on his deathbed. Captain Juan Aldama of the local cavalry division, fearing imprisonment and failure, shared his knowledge with colonial authorities in Querétaro and participated in the apprehension of Miguel Domínguez and his wife. With the administrator and his wife in jail, warrants were issued for the remaining conspirators: Allende and Hidalgo. These two, however, had been warned by Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez that the secret was out. In the early hours

of September 16, 1810, Hidalgo entered the chapel located in Dolores and issued the call to arms today referred to as the *grito de Dolores*. Simpson writes that Hidalgo's pronouncement was coupled with a lack of military preparation and "apparently little concept for the terrible responsibility he was assuming" (187).

Hidalgo's talent for organizing the indigenous population enabled the rapid formation of a popular militia. Hidalgo's army was initially comprised of the local indigenous population. Different historical texts cite different numbers. José María Luis Mora estimates that the number of troops reached 14,000 (*Méjico y sus revoluciones* 33). Alan Riding places the count somewhere around 20,000 (*Distant Neighbors* 32-33). Leslie Byrd Simpson argues that the mob had grown to include some 50,000 recruits (*Many Mexicos* 187). Whatever the actual count, Hidalgo's army was virtually unstoppable.

Riding rightly observes "The rebellion took on a racial ferocity as Spanish homes and towns were burned and prisoners summarily executed" (32-33). From September 1810 to January 1811, Hidalgo's revolutionary army rolled across the central plains taking what provisions they could find from local populations, sacking European and American *haciendas* without regard to potential loyalties, and massacring any Spaniard who offered the slightest resistance. Simpson, along with many Mexican historians and writers, considers this violence Hidalgo's enduring contribution to national politics. His final evaluation of the priest, as can be expected, condemns Hidalgo "for the rancor and envy which he shared with most Creoles against the Spaniards" and finds it "difficult to avoid the conclusion that his leadership of the insurrection was calamitous, not only in its immediate consequences, but in the legacy of bloody violence which he left behind" (191-192).

The violence espoused by the revolutionary army may be most succinctly represented by the battle of the Alhóndiga in Guanajuato. Guanajuato was, at the time, one of the wealthiest cities in the viceroyalty of New Spain. Spanish royalists, aware of the approaching insurgents, sent their families to neighboring towns and remained to defend the city. Hidalgo sent word to the Spaniards calling for their surrender. He also made a special arrangement for the local colonial intendant, Juan Antonio Riaño y Bárcena, to leave on peaceful terms. The Spaniards refused the offer, and fired shots at the mob. After a brief skirmish near the outer walls of the city, the royalists pulled back into the fortress-like granary storage known as the Alhóndiga. Hidalgo's forces set fire to the outer doors in an attempt to gain access to the inner courtyard. Realizing their cause was lost, the Spaniards raised the white flag, but to no avail. The insurgent army rushed the fortification and murdered all the occupants. The Alhóndiga massacre would foreshadow future brutality. From Querétaro, Hidalgo's forces marched uncontested to the gates of Mexico City and then, unexpectedly, made an about-face and returned.

Hidalgo's decision to turn back remains one of the great mysteries of Mexican history. Theories abound, but answers do not. Most critics generally argue that exhaustion, lack of supplies, and waning enthusiasm led to crippling desertions. Ibargüengoitia suggests that losses suffered during the final major battle demoralized the troops. Enrique Serna, whose novel *El seductor de la patria* we will study later, offers this intriguing meditation via his main character, Antonio López de Santa Anna:

> A las puertas de México, diezmadas las defensas de la ciudad y con todo a su favor para tomar la plaza, Hidalgo dio marcha atrás por razones que han intrigado a muchos historiadores. ¿Temió ser el responsable de una matanza colectiva sin parangón en la historia universal? Nadie lo sabe, pero tengo por seguro que si hubiera tomado el poder no le llamarían ahora padre de la patria, ni su retrato estaría colgado en el despacho presidencial, pues en este país se premia a las víctimas y se catiga a los vencedores. (36)

The insurgency was destroyed in a few months. Dogged by the royalist General Callejas, Hidalgo's forces dispersed and the insurgency leaders were captured, tried, and executed.

POLEMICAL INTERPRETATIONS: ALAMÁN, MORA, SIERRA, VASCONCELOS

While armed hostilities lasted a brief four months, the battle for interpretive power continues to rage among intellectuals. I quote extensively from these thinkers because they express the deep-seated love and hatred that Hidalgo has engendered in Mexico's intellectual classes.

One of the first major analyses of the revolution was written by the conservative historian and statesman Lucas Alamán. Alamán's energy and production is nearly unmatched in Mexico. He founded the Mexican conservative party, advised numerous presidential administrations, worked for the promotion of economic development in the mid-nineteenth century, and penned voluminous tomes on history and politics. Charles A. Hale observes that "History was Alamán's principle weapon and the cornerstone of what could be called conservative political philosophy in Mexico" ("Lucas Alamán, Mexican Conservative" 128). Alamán's historical justification for conservative political values reaches back to colonial roots and justifies Hernán Cortés and the Conquest. His principle goal in writing history was "to combat popular disrespect for Mexico's Spanish heritage and the idea that independence constituted a necessary break from it" (129). Alamán was raised by aristocratic Creole parents in the prosperous mining town of Guanajuato. At seventeen he witnessed the massacre at the Alhóndiga first-hand. Hale relates that Alamán was deeply affected by the death of Juan Antonio Riaño y Bárcena, a close family friend and the colonial intendant, during the battle (131). This event, colored by en education steeped in the writings of Edmund Burke, led Alamán to look disdainfully on

revolutions, especially when the accompanying violence is carried out under the banner of religion.

Alamán decries Hidalgo's revolution as the unholy union of violence and religion. Alamán notes that the original proclamation included elements referring to government and the king, but the popular reduction of Hidalgo's rallying cry focuses solely on affirming the Virgin and condemning the Spaniards. "¡Reunión monstruosa de la religión con el asesinato y el saqueo: grito de muerte y de desolación, que habiéndolo oído mil y mil veces en los primeros días de mi juventud, después de tantos años resuena todavía en mis oídos con un eco pavoroso!" (*Historia* 244).

His distaste for the 1810 insurgency is epitomized by his consternation that Congress selected as Mexico's Independence Day one that had unleashed so much primal fury and bloodshed:

> A esta alteración de la verdad de la historia se debe sin duda, el que la república mexicana haya escogido para su fiesta nacional el aniversario de un día que vio cometer tantos crímenes, y que date el principio de su existencia como nación de una revolución que proclamando una superchería, empleó para su ejecución unos medios que reprueba la religión, la moral fundada en ella, la buena fe base de la sociedad, y las leyes que establecen las relaciones necesarias de los individuos en toda asociación política. El congreso consagrando, con la solemnidad de la función del 16 de Septiembre, la infracción de estos principios, ha presentado a la nación como modelo plausible, lo que no debe ser sino objeto de horror y de reprobación, y ofreciendo como heroicidad el ejemplar de esta revolución, ha abierto la puerta y estimulado a que se sigan tantas y tantas de la misma naturaleza, que con ellas se ha llegado al punto de extinguir toda idea de honor, de probidad y de obediencia, haciendo imposible la existencia de ningún gobierno, ni el ejercicio de ninguna autoridad. (*Historia* 242-243)

Alamán later proposed September 27th as a more suitable Independence Day because it memorializes Iturbide's arrival in Mexico City in 1821 (Hale 129).

In short, Alamán views the revolution as the beginning of Mexico's woes. The revolution's violence set the precedent for future violence in political transitions. It is worth noting that Alamán publishes his history in the 1850s at a time when internal strife

and pronouncements had reached a fevered pitch. Presidential transitions were not carried out by the voice of the people, but by the strength of arms. Alamán traces this recourse to violence directly to Hidalgo's actions. Furthermore, Alamán asserts that Hidalgo stirred indigenous masses up against benevolent colonizers. In so doing, he destroys the foundations for good government and healthy society: "los medios que empleó para ganar esta popularidad, destruyeron en sus cimientos el edificio social, sofocaron todo principio de moral y de justicia, y han sido el orígen de todos los males que la nación lamenta, que todos dimanan de aquella envenenada fuente" (*Historia* 244).

While Alamán and his conservative faction fume about the corrupt cleric and his dark-skinned hoards pillaging the nation, liberal historians attempt to turn popular conceptions of the insurgency towards a favorable interpretation. The later version of this ideological perspective generally portrays Hidalgo as a Renaissance man: an excellent theologian, an industrious entrepreneur, a generous benefactor, and a fatherly leader. Justo Sierra, writing some fifty years after Alamán, may most fully embody this philosophy.

It should be noted, however, that Sierra was not the first liberal to address the importance of Hidalgo's role in the revolution. José María Luis Mora, a contemporary of Alamán, and the nation's first prominent liberal, commented on Hidalgo long before Sierra. In his 1836 treatise entitled *Méjico y sus revoluciones*, Mora recognizes the necessity of a revolution to throw off the Spanish yoke, but reserves little romantic nostalgia for the man responsible. Mora opens his history of the insurgency with the following: "La revolución que estalló en septiembre de 1810 ha sido tan necesaria para la consecuencia de la independencia, como perniciosa y destructora del país" (*Méjico y sus revoluciones* 1). Lamenting Mexico's state following Independence as the product of Hidalgo's destructive enthusiasm, Mora offers the following description of the priest:

> El cura Hidalgo era hombre de una edad avanzada, pero de constitución robusta, había hecho estudios en Valladolid de Mechoacan [sic] con grandes créditos de famoso escolástico... En efecto este hombre ni era de talentos profundos para combinar un plan de operaciones, adaptando los medios al fin que se proponía, ni tenía un juicio sólido y recto para pesar los hombres y las cosas, ni un corazón generoso para perdonar los errores y preocupaciones de los que debían auxiliarlo en su empresa o estaban destinados a contrariarlo; ligero hasta lo sumo, abandonó enteramente a lo que diesen de sí las circunstancias, sin extender su vista ni sus designios más allá de lo que tenía que hacer el día siguiente; jamás se tomó el trabajo, y acaso ni aun lo reputó necesario, de calcular el resultado de sus operaciones, ni estableció regla ninguna fija que las sistemase. (*Méjico y sus revoluciones* 8)

Mora denigrates Hidalgo, praises Allende, and denounces the insurgency's bloodlust. But he ultimately recognizes that, as inadequate as the insurgency's leadership may have been, the revolution's final realization was a great achievement. In many ways, Mora shares Alamán's sentiment towards the revolution's father. Years later, the most influential liberal intellectual of his time, Justo Sierra, transforms the revolutionary father into "nuestro padre" (*Evolución* 150).

Sierra embodies late nineteenth-century intellectual positivism. Son of a prominent Yucatán lawyer, he was a poet, essayist, educator, and statesman. He promoted an aggressive educational reform and revolutionized Mexico's political and educational institutions. Upon the death of Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, he took the lead as the nation's most influential intellectual force. Sierra was intimately involved in Porfirio Díaz's administration and was the primary mouthpiece for the regime's philosophy.

Between 1900 and 1902, Sierra published *Evolución política del pueblo mexicano*, a work whose title clearly denotes its positivist bent. *Evolución política* explains the Díaz regime as the logical consequence of a long series of political evolutions. The first step of these transformations is, of course, Hidalgo's revolution. In Sierra's narrative, Hidalgo is a magnet to whom "Los conjurados militares se agruparon

instintivamente" (*Evolución* 150). Interestingly enough, Sierra does not attempt to cover up Hidalgo's faults; rather he shifts the blame to less concrete factors against which Hidalgo reacted. Sierra frames these forces in traditional Romantic terms against which man has little chance. This is to say, he characterizes the revolution as a turbulent storm, an uncontrollable mass of passion and fury. The imagery Sierra espouses will continue to dominate descriptions of Mexican social upheavals through the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), and its posterior literary representations. Hidalgo emerges as the only man able to rein in Mexico's latent violence. "Desde el momento en que Hidalgo tomó parte en la conspiración de Querétaro," writes Sierra, "lo dominó todo con su gran voluntad y su conciencia; su conducta como jefe de insurrección, digna a veces de justísima censura humana, se la dictaron las circunstancias; su propósito se lo dictó el amor a una patria que no existía sino en ese amor" (*Evolución* 150). Here Sierra credits Hidalgo with the first real conceptualization of Mexico as an independent national entity, which he designates "patria". The documents left behind by Hidalgo, however, do not reflect this burgeoning nationalism. If anything, Hidalgo envisions—as do his South American counterparts—a liberated America, but does not go so far as to portray an independent Mexico. It might be more appropriate to grant this honor to Agustín de Iturbide, who will be discussed in the following chapter. Returning to Sierra's representation of Hidalgo, however, we can attribute this nationalist flourish to Sierra's overall interpretive historical project.

The massacres, pillaging, and violence that swept through the Bajío were not Hidalgo's fault, according to Sierra. Hidalgo attempted to rein in:

> ...aquellas masas indisciplinables, que como sucede con todas las multitudes humanas, comprimidas de generación en generación, se dilataba repentinamente, al cesar la presión, en efervescencias salvajes; la libertad, para aquellos grupos, no era un derecho, era una embriaguez; no era una actitud normal, era una explosión de odio y de alegría; aquélla era indisciplinable, incontenible; tenía el aspecto de una fuerza de la naturaleza en toda su violencia: tromba, huracán, inundación. (*Evolución* 152)

In addition to his inability to control the Indian masses drunken with revenge, Hidaldo, in Sierra's view, was unable to provide proper post-war planning because time constraints impeded the elaboration of a plan: "Hidalgo no había tenido tiempo de organizar plan ninguno: sus disposiciones se referían a asuntos del momento y las ideas generales que contenía podían resumirse así: 'acabar con el elemento español en la Nueva España, para que ésta, dueña de sí misma, pudiera conservarse intacta para Fernando VII, rey legítimo…'" (*Evolución* 152). There is little doubt that this reasoning responds to Mora's early affirmation that Hidalgo was a man of little political thought. Instead, Sierra attempts to argue that this was not a time for philosophizing, but for action. Additionally, Sierra argues that Hidalgo never thought Fernando VII would be released from prison and therefore declared independence in his name; for Hidalgo, Fernando was a lame duck whose only purpose was to legitimate their call to independence (*Evolución* 152).

Sierra's argumentation is undermined by logical inconsistencies and a patent anti-populist sentiment. The Hidalgo who controls all aspects of the insurgency with "su gran voluntad y conciencia" is unable to maintain order among "aquellas masas indisciplinables." By attributing the violence to the mob, Sierra diverts attention from the heroic picture he fashions for Hidalgo. In essence, the people become the villains, and Hidalgo is portrayed as the faithful captain trying to steer a clear course through a violent bloody storm. This anti-indigenous sentiment prevails in all the Creole historians, but is most acidic in Sierra's account. Ironically, the man who enshrines Hidalgo as Mexico's father feels compelled to denigrate the most fundamental element of the priest's work. Sierra alters the perception of Hidalgo's project by transforming a pro-indigenous movement into a pro-Creole revolution. No doubt that the historical Hidalgo would have objected. We will see that this notion is propagated in Ibargüengoitia's novel as well.

The pendulum swings back to the right with the advent of José Vasconcelos' history of Mexico. Vasconcelos argues that all of Mexico's maladies stem from British and American intervention in domestic affairs, including Hidalgo. More than anything, Hidalgo was a tool of the British government, and a short-lived one at that. Because Vasconcelos enjoys the luxury of writing about independence from a distance, he employs a continental perspective that Alamán does not. When discussing Hidalgo and Morelos in comparison to the South American liberators, Vasconcelos dismisses the two priests, alleging that if mention is ever made of them, it is only out of "cortesía continental, a la zaga de los grandes libertadores continentales" (*Breve historia* 243). This, however, does not keep him from getting his own shots in against the two. Vasconcelos actually spends very little time on Hidalgo. In his estimation, Hidalgo was a local phenomenon whose influence did not extend beyond his region. While post-1910 revolutionary historians have painted him as a great motivator, few people were significantly enticed by his calls.

Latin American independence, Vasconcelos argues, is generally the product of a civilized process. Mexico, on the other hand, is fashioned by the hand of barbarism: "El quince de septiembre de 1810, en México se produjo el levantamiento de Hidalgo. Nació nuestro país de un grito… de un golpe de fuerza, de una acción arbitraria, y no de una Junta, un Congreso, una discusión, un acuerdo de ciudadano. Nació como imposición, y de una imposición hemos seguido viviendo" (*Breve historia* 260). Vasconcelos conveniently overlooks the ideological strife that characterizes the majority of Spanish American Independence movement. If it is true that their processes were democratic in character, it is equally true that bitter personal rivalries, partisan inflexibility, and military coups were common tools in these processes.

Since Vasconcelos, the post-revolutionary state has put its weight behind promoting Hidalgo's image. Essentially, this means the state has been able to float Hidalgo's image on both sides of the line, regardless of its evolving ideological leanings. The original post-revolutionary system favored modern economic policies (i.e. agrarian reform, land redistribution, and labor unions) and used Hidalgo's image to bolster its increasing interest in social policy. Hidalgo became the figurehead of a government backed by the ever nondescript "people." The Muralist movements from the 1920s onward have depicted a venerable old man of the cloth, directing masses of liberty-starved Indians to freedom. Diego Rivera and Juan O'Gorman's murals in the Palacio Nacional and Chapultepec castle, respectively, underscore this exaltation. What is so interesting about the coincidences in Rivera and O'Gorman's murals is that they are separated by 40 years. O'Gorman comes considerably later, and yet retains the romantic notion of Hidalgo. His mural is also interesting because Hidalgo is depicted twice: once in priestly garb and again in battle dress. As we will see later in the chapter, Ibargüengoitia also points out the change in clothing as Hidalgo's character in the novel, named Periñón, transitions from spiritual to military leader. Miguel Alemán's election in 1946 marked a transition towards reactionary conservatism. Relations with labor were cut and ties with foreign capital were forged. And still Hidalgo's image survived the course change.

Enrique Krauze, popular historian and editor-in-chief of the literary magazine *Letras libres*, has penned a trilogy of historical biographies that, in many ways, shapes contemporary Mexico's concept of their past. Chafing against the dominance of the liberal perspective in nineteenth-century historiography, Krauze reconfigures the national pantheon, placing conservative figures next to their liberal contemporaries. His version of Hidalgo's biography, for example, leans more towards Alamán and Vasconcelos than

towards Mora and Sierra. His closing statement summarizes this bias: "por más entrañable que sea como sustento de dignidad en el pueblo mexicano, el mito –el grito– de fundación ha sido también un llamado justificatorio a la crueldad, un llamado a la intolerancia, de irracionalidad en la historia mexicana: la terrible convicción, puesta en práctica una y otra vez, de que la violencia, sólo la violencia, redime" (*Siglo de caudillos* 67). Krauze's interpretation is not the last, either. Hidalgo continues to occupy a central place in the Mexican historical imagination. Evidence of this can be found in Pablo Soler Frost's most recent novel, *1767*. The novel's title alludes to the year Charles V expelled the Jesuit order from all Spanish territories. After recounting the atrocities suffered by the order, the novel closes by attributing the 1810 insurgency to Hidalgo's sense of indignation at the expulsion of the Jesuit priest during his childhood. For Soler Frost, independence was an act of individual vengeance.

This brief overview of the historical interpretations of Miguel Hidalgo reveals that Mexican intellectuals agree, for the most part, that the revolution got off to a lackluster start. Violence, intellectual vacuity, self-interest, and a patent lack of concern for the future characterize not only their evaluations of the priest but of his fight. Even Sierra, who labels Hidalgo "nuestro padre," is hard pressed to explain satisfactorily the man's excesses. Yet despite abundance of critical comments made against Hidalgo, the legendary hero overrides the historical man.

Where does Jorge Ibargüengoitia fit into this discussion? Does he side with conservative detractors or lift his voice with liberal enthusiasts? Clues to these answers lie in Ibargüengoitia's biography. Sifting through literary history allows us to draw conclusions about his views on the insurgency that can then be more fully appreciated in *Los pasos de López*.

IBARGÜENGOITIA AND USIGLI

Jorge Ibargüengoitia's readers owe a debt of gratitude to a broken-down truck. He had originally studied engineering but, by his own admission, dropped out during his third year and went to work on the family farm in Guanajuato. For three years he ran the day-to-day operations, but felt dissatisfied with farm life. During this period, Salvador Novo visited the farm promoting a play that evening in town. Having spent a frustrating day working on a worn-out clunker, Ibargüengoitia acquiesced. He relates that the experienced impacted him deeply. Returning to work on Monday, the truck's diesel motor again protested, and Ibargüengoitia had enough. "Es posible que si el motor diesel no se hubiera descompuesto otra vez el siguiente lunes, yo hubiera tenido tiempo de regar el trigo, hubiera seguido en el rancho y ahora sería agricultor y, ¿por qué no?, millonario. Pero el motor diesel se descompuso el lunes, yo dije: '¡basta de rancho!', y en ese instante dejé de ser agricultor" (qtd. in Leñero 8). Weeks later Jorge Ibargüengoitia enrolled in a Dramatic Theory and Composition class at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) taught by the leading Mexican playwright of the day, Rodolfo Usigli. Ibargüengoitia quickly distinguished himself as Usigli's prize pupil.

He would later speak of his teacher and his theater career in the following terms: "Rodolfo Usigli fue mi maestro, a él debo en parte ser escritor y por su culpa, en parte, fui escritor de teatro diez años" (qtd. in Leñero 9). The recrimination implicit in this statement attests to the rocky relationship between teacher and student. Usigli was critical of Ibargüengoitia's colloquial dialogues, emphasis on blasé domestic affairs, and lack of sobriety. Ibargüengoitia was turned off by Usigli's monumental posturing, heavy-handed epic style, and self-serving criticisms. Despite being the master's protégé, Ibargüengoitia never enjoyed Usigli's full approval, something Vicente Leñero suggests he ardently

desired. In later years, having distanced himself from the role of playwright and adopting that of theater critic, Ibargüengoitia lambasted Usigli. But his criticisms appear to be less professional than personal. Leñero relates that "las impugnaciones del discípulo no fueron motivadas por la vulnerabilidad de la obra sino por la actitud que había mostrado Usigli a su llegada a México al ser entrevistado por Elena Poniatowska" (79). Ibargüengoitia felt slighted because the master had recognized every one of his classmates except him, whom Usigli has designated numerous times as his star student. Nevertheless, while he rejected Usigli's style, Ibargüengoitia adopted many of his theoretical notions, particularly in reference to history.

Usigli's concept of historical fiction privileges the fictional over the historical. According to his theory, "el primer elemento que debe regir es la imaginación, no la historia. La historia no puede llenar otra función que la de un simple acento de color, de ambiente o de época. En otras palabras, sólo la imaginación permite tratar teatralmente un tema histórico" (qtd. in Quackenbush 12). Usigli's most concise explanation of historical theater is found in the prologue he wrote for *Corona de sombra*. In this brief essay, Usigli explains that his play "tiene un decidido carácter antihistórico" (*Corona de sombra* 51). Mexican history, he writes, "parece no ser hasta ahora más que una zambullida en el pasado y carecer de todo sentido de actualidad. En México se cree que la historia es ayer, cuando en realidad la historia es hoy y es siempre" (*Corona de sombra* 63). To resolve this shortcoming, Usigli propses breaking with official chronologies: "Pasando por sobre la cifra, la fecha y la ficha, he cometido diversas arbitrariedades e incurrido en anacronismos deliberados que responden todos a un objeto" (63). He recognizes, for example, that characters in his play, set in 1866, make reference to Pius IX's doctrine of papal infallibility. The doctrine, however, was not canonized until 1870. Usigli argues that the chronological order is less important than the thematic reality.

Papal infallibility is, in addition to the doctrine of immaculate conception, Pius IX's legacy. It is "la línea maestra de la vida de Pío IX" (63). Critics can hardly reproach him this minor anachronism because the idea, which has long outlived the man, would certainly have been germinating in 1866. Anachronism, then, plays a fundamental role in Usigli's concept of history. Again, he remarks that "el poder que me protege es precisamente la historia, que desatiendo en el detalle, pero que interpreto en la trayectoria del tiempo" (74). Many of the points Usigli suggests foreshadow what Brian McHale will identify forty years later as postmodernist (*Postmodernist Fiction* 88-93).

Ibargüengoitia experienced little success as a playwright. Luis de Tavira writes: "Su relación con el teatro fue traumática" ("Un atentado a la solemnidad" 469). Few of his plays, excellent though they may have been, ever made it to the stage. Moreover, Ibargüengoitia did not get along well with the theater crowd. Writing about himself in third person, Ibargüengoitia notes that "Hace diecisiete años descubrió, aunque puede escribir obras de teatro con relativa facilidad, su carácter no se presta para tratar con gente de teatro: ni entiende lo que ellos dicen ni ellos comprenden lo que él les quiere decir. Por eso dejó el teatro por la novela y no se ha arrepentido ni un instante de haber hecho el cambio" (qtd. in Tavira 470). He began a much more prosperous career in prose fiction in 1963 with *Los relámpagos de agosto*. In switching to prose, Ibargüengoitia did not forsake his theatrical beginnings or his teacher's penchant for "antihistorical" writing. Again Tavira asserts that "el dramaturgo y el novelista son el mismo creador. En Ibargüengoitia, tanto su obra dramática como narrativa, confluyen en una sola ficción en la que se atrapa una dimensión de la realidad" (470-471). Indeed, Ibargüengoitia's two most recognized novels originated as historical plays. *El atentado* (1962), a historical farce about the assassination of Álvaro Obregón, sets the stage for Ibargüengoitia's first novel *Los relámpagos de agosto*, which deals with the post-Revolutionary centralization

of state power. The play shared first place in the Casa de Las Américas award, and was published in 1963, culminating research that had begun on the assassination in 1958. Similarly, *La conspiración vendida* (1960), which retells the events of September 15, 1810, appeared with a distinctively different flavor twenty-two years later in *Los pasos de López*.

LA CONSPIRACIÓN VENDIDA AND *LOS PASOS DE LÓPEZ*

Los pasos de López began as a commissioned dramatic work entitled *La conspiración vendida*. 1960 found Ibargüengoitia in financial straits. By his own admission, he went to the Departamento de Teatro de Bellas Artes intending to ask for a loan. Salvador Novo, the flamboyant satirist and poet who had invited him to his first play, had recently returned after a long absence and informed him that the President had opened a competition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution and the 150th anniversary of Independence. Novo commissioned him on the spot for a play on either of the two subjects. Ibargüengoitia set off with an advance and returned two weeks later with the finished piece only to find that the president had changed his mind. The second half of the money was never paid (Leñero 69). But the story does not end there. Ibargüengoitia relates the modicum of satisfaction he received later on:

> Pero el destino me deparó una venganza sensacional. En septiembre apareció una convocatoria para un concurso de obras de teatro organizado por el DDF. Premio Ciudad de México, se llamaba. Veinticinco mil pesos de entonces que sería como diez veces eso ahora. Yo mandé *La conspiración vendida* con el seudónimo "Federico Barón Gropius", y gané el premio. El mismo día que supe la noticia, encontré a Gorostiza, que había presidido el jurado que me premió, en el foyer de un teatro.
>
> —Yo soy el autor de *La conspiración vendida*—le dije.

> Casi se desmayó. Evidentemente habían premiado la obra creyendo que había sido escrita por otra persona con más méritos o mayores influencias. Ni modo. (Leñero 70)

The sobriety of *La conspiración vendida*'s tone is directly attributable to the financial potential of Novo's commission. Howard Quackenbush views the work as sterile, purged of human interest, and dumbed down for official reasons: "Hay poco espacio para desarrollar la caracterización, así como para diseñar los conflictos o apuros humanos que pudieran trascender las limitaciones de los hechos históricos" (*El "López" de Jorge Ibargüengoitia* 17). As Leñero reminds us, it is not advisable to violate the historical canons when one writes on the state's tab (69). The financial incentives of commissions and contests seems to dictate the tone of this dramatic work.

Leñero may overstate the subject when we writes that "Pese a su ortodoxia, *La conspiración vendida* nada tiene de propagandística" (70). Hidalgo continues to loom as a martyr, thrust into the frontline against his will. "A nadie le es dado escoger su momento," he explains to Allende. He continues, "Por supuesto es preferible ser el último rebelde que el primero, pero a nosotros no nos queda más que ser los iniciadores, o bien vasallos fidelísimos del rey de España" (239). Characters view him as their last hope. Allende, realizing that the conspiracy has been discovered, states, "No nos queda más que Dolores y el padre Hidalgo" (297). Despite some heroic posturing, Ibargüengoitia does not take liberties with epic monologues. In this regard Leñero drives home an important point. Ibargüengoitia, he writes, "Sabe conservar la distancia, sobre todo en lo que respecta a Hidalgo, para dejar que sean los acontecimientos los que rijan la historia" (70). Leñero's observation that the events, not Hidalgo, drive the story becomes an important motif in Ibargüengoitia's appreciation of the insurgency. Hidalgo occupies center stage as the play's hero, but he does not obtain epic, supernatural proportions. Keeping the focus on Hidalgo while divesting him of excessive epic stature enables Ibargüengoitia to

mediate between the commission's external pressure—ideological and financial—and his own commitment to history.

Sobriety is not a term typically associated with Ibargüengoitia. Much to the author's chagrin, he has been traditionally labeled a humorist. His stories are hilarious ("La mujer que no" or "La ley de Herodes", for example) and his novels admit an ironic, playful view of history and literary creation. But Ibargüengoitia rejected this label specifically because he understood how much it would diminish the impact of what he wrote. Rather than serious works that investigate the profundity of the Mexican soul and nation-building process, his novels are regarded as light reading. As a result, Ibargüengoitia continually rejected this categorization. In an interview he defended this position, saying, "Hacer reir no me preocupa en lo más mínimo…. Yo no me burlo, no me río. Me parecería ridículo hacer un personaje con el único objeto de burlarse de él. En cualquier momento, me interesa presentarlo, presentar un aparato que en la novela tenga relación con la realidad, según yo la veo" (García Flores 408).

A better term than humor would be irreverence. Ibargüengoitia's attacks sacralized notions of a history replete with failure. Literary critic Evodio Escalante put it this way: "Para él la escritura es como el ácido; no pretende edificar, sino corromper, volver polvo cuanto toca. La intelectualidad de clase media, en *La ley de Herodes*, la forma tropical de la dictadura en la novela *Maten al león*; el movimiento independista de Miguel Hidalgo en *Los pasos de López*" (499). In the final summation, it is not (or should not) be Ibargüengoitia's jokes or sarcasm that remain, but the profound sense that this author refuses to accept sacralized textbook history. He challenges the heroic portrait that Porfirian and Revolutionary governments have made of Hidalgo and his fellow conspirators. By breezing over the ugly aspects of the insurgency (i.e., sackings, rapes, murders, pillaging, disorder, and chaos), official historians have lionized Hidalgo.

Ibargüengoitia's parody of these events brackets the myth and asks readers to consider other dimensions of the story.

Rebecca Biron's analysis of parody in *Los relámpagos de agosto* can be applied to the dual gesture of demonumentalizing national figures and developing national identity present in *Los pasos de López*. Understanding historical fiction as a performative act, Biron argues that Ibargüengoitia's novel "[performs] national identity not as that which serves a people's psychological need for cohesion in order to function as a political entity, but rather as the people's shared desire for laughter, self-criticism and the pleasure of perpetual cynicism" ("Joking Around with Mexican History" 626). The narratives of failure expressed in *Los pasos de López* unify Mexicans as they "found community in shared laughter" (627). "Readers of these texts achieve their *mexicanidad* through complicity with the joke which links parody, history, and national identity" (627). In *Los relámpagos de agosto*, Ibargüengoitia parodies a revolutionary general's memoirs and the Revolution itself by laying the ineptitude of the conspirators. Biron suggests that being able to laugh—and here we might remark that this laugh is self-effacing and dark—draws Mexicans together. It is this communal sense of anti-heroic history that underpins many of the narratives of failure.

Los pasos de López can be considered a Bahktinian dialogic parody of Mexican independence. But we can also argue that Ibargüengoitia's irreverence is derived from a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in Mexican culture: *el relajo*. Jorge Portilla's *Fenomenología del relajo* is perhaps one of the most important documents produced by the post-World War II group of Mexican philosophers known as the *Grupo Hiperión*. This group boasted the membership of important mid-century thinkers like Emilio Uranga, Ricardo Guerra, Salvador Reyes Nevares, Joaquín Sánchez Macgregor, Fausto Vega, Luis Villoro, Leopoldo Zea, and, of course, Jorge Portilla. Portilla's contributions

were shortened by his untimely death in 1963, but *Fenomenología del relajo* continues to present an intriguing philosophical approach to what is perceived as Mexico's devil-may-care irreverence. Portilla argues that *el relajo* is a spontaneous reaction that seeks to undermine the appropriation or incorporation of a given value. It is a prolonged interruption that nullifies the impact of serious topics. *El relajo* is a communal response. Biron proposes that identity is constructed communally through laughter. But Portilla proposes that it is not laughter that creates community, but rather the show of irreverence toward authority and traditional value. Biron's reading, then, is more closely associated with Bahktin's argumentation. I challenge this notion. I associate Ibargüengoitia's irreverence with a strictly Mexican perspective. *Los pasos de López* does create a sense of community, but not because it makes readers laugh. Again I would remind readers that Ibargüengoitia cares little for making people laugh. Rather, the novel creates a sense of community through irreverence, by questioning authority and impeding the assimilation of traditional historical interpretations of Mexico's founding generation.

I return briefly to the questions posed earlier. Where does Jorge Ibargüengoitia fit into the ideological debate on Hidalgo that has polarized Mexican historians? Does he side with conservatives or liberals, or does he find a middle ground? What does his interpretation of the revolution say about his historical context? Tavira proposes that "Ibargüengoitia reescribía sus obras como novelas" (471). For reasons apparent by now, I partially disagree with this argument. Ibargüengoitia does take the original material present in his theatrical works and rewrites them. However, these are not simply rewrites. In *La conspiración vendida* Ibargüengoitia is reluctant to offer anything outside the official canon. In this regard, he echoes the reverential hymns intoned by Sierra. I have argued that this posture results from the coincidental encounter between his financial problems and a State-sponsored commission. Years later he will give the same story a

remarkably different twist. In *Los pasos de López*, Ibargüengoitia demonumentalizes Hidalgo and the entire conspiracy. In many ways he sides with Alamán and Vasconcelos in presenting a fairly negative portrait of Hidalgo.

Here I would suggest that, just as *La conspiración vendida* was inspired by Ibargüengoitia's financial strains and a specific historical context (to whit, the anniversary of the revolution), *Los pasos de López* reflects the time in which it was written. The late 1970s and early 1980s were a time of considerable turmoil in Mexico. Since the 1940s, Mexico's economic "miracle" had produced significant growth in the manufacturing, petroleum exports, and technology. The peso was stronger than it had ever been, and Mexico seemed stable. Throughout the 1960s, Mexico continued to pin its economy on petroleum. This would lead to problems in the 1970s as the oil crisis cut into the nation's economic profits. In order to maintain its growth rate, Mexico took out massive loans and transitioned from net exportation of raw materials to net importation. In 1982, the Mexican economy crashed, and with it, much of the hope that had been built in the preceding decades. But economics were not the only problem. During this time the PRI, which since 1946 had threatened and employed violence to quell social disturbances, became increasingly and more openly violent. Carlos Monsiváis records the PRI's increasing decadence in *Entrada libre*. He chronicles oppressive violence in Juchitán, organizational ineptitude in San Juanito, and inability to respond to the devastating earthquake that rocked Mexico City in 1985. *Entrada libre* recounts how Mexico's society bands together, despite the ineffectual flailing of its government. This is the context in which *Los pasos de López* comes to light. On one level, Ibargüengoitia's novel criticizes official history. On another, it becomes a biting criticism of the generator of that history, and the social debacle that has been created by the country's governing system.

By combining theatrical devices with historical record, Ibargüengoitia offers a thought-provoking work that challenges official dogmas about Mexico's founding generation and contemporary society. *Los pasos de López* marks a stark contrast from the sober tone of *La conspiración vendida*. It is irreverent, jocose, and critical. The warning Ibargüengoitia gives as a forward to *El atentado* can easily be applied to his vision of Independence: "si alguna semejanza hay entre esta obra y algún hecho de nuestra historia, no se trata de un accidente, sino de una vergüenza nacional" (*El atentado* 8). In *Estas ruinas que ves* (1975), the narrador tells of a historian fallen from grace because "don Benjamín considera que la Independencia se debe a un juego de salón que acabó en desastre nacional" (*Estas ruinas* 19). *Los pasos de López* synthesizes these ideas by portraying the insurgents as bungling actors, befuddled by a poorly written script. Hereafter I read key passages of the novel as a series of smaller, interwoven theatrical pieces that contribute to a larger drama. Specifically I highlight the narrator's military test, the local administrator's apparent life of luxury, the conspirators' literary gathering, and Diego's attempt to cover the conspiracy once it is revealed. We see that the historical actors lack the ability to stick to the script, improvise, or take directions. At the same time, we as readers are expected to draw parallels between the conspirators' incompetence and the government that, in the 1980s, is unable to created a viable and stable society.

THEATRICAL MOTIFS IN *LOS PASOS DE LÓPEZ*

Before analyzing the text, we should first examine the alterations Ibargüengoitia makes to the historical record. First, the action takes place in the Mexican Bajío—the area just northwest of Mexico City—in the town of Cuévano. Cuévano is also the setting

for Ibargüengoitia's 1975 novel, *Estas ruinas que ves*. Cuévano's historical equivalent is Guanajuato. In renaming this area, however, he does not feel the need to do so for other prominent Mexican sites, like the military fort at Perote and Mexico City. Second, the actors' names have changed. The following graph illustrates the relationship between the some of the historical figures and fictional characters.

History	***Los pasos de López***
Cities:	
Querétaro	Cañada
Guanajuato	Cuévano
Dolores	Ajetreo
Valladolid (Morelia)	Huetámaro
Characters:	
Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla	Domingo Periñón
Ignacio José Allende	Captain Ontananza
Miguel Domínguez	Diego Aquino
Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez	Carmen Aquino
Juan Aldama	Captain Aldaco
Mariano Galván	Manrique
Bishop Manuel Abad y Queipo	Bishop Begonia
Intendant Juan Antonio Riaño y Bárcena	Intendant Pablo Berreteaga
Mayor Juan Ochoa	Mayor Ochoa
Father Gil	Father Pinole
General Félix María Calleja	General Cuartana
Drum Major Ignacio Garrido	Drum Major Alfaro

As with Perote and Mexico City, Ibargüengoitia does not change all the names. He names Ferdinand VII and José de Iturrigaray, viceroy of New Spain from 1803 to 1808. This name changing allows Ibargüengoitia to manipulate the historical record according to his whims and aesthetic project. It is a gesture that wrests the interpretive power from official sources and places them squarely in the hands of the author.

Third, the narrator corrects the official history. When relating his midnight ride to inform Hidalgo that the conspiracy had been discovered, Chandón writes: "El episodio que sigue es tan conocido que no vale la pena contarlo. Voy a referirme a él brevemente nomás para no perder el hilo del relato y precisar algunos puntos que la leyenda ha borroneado" (117). The narrator's decision to "precisar algunos puntos que la leyenda ha borroneado" coincides with Ibargüengoitia's objective to reinterpret history. Both the implicit and explicit authors intend to clarify the official story. Some of those points include the speed of Chandón's ride ("Fui al paso que daba mi yegua"), the absence of a fraternal embrace between revolutionaries upon his arrival ("A mi llegada a Ajetreo no hubo abrazo, porque Periñón no estaba"), the liberation of prisoners ("No hallábamos dónde encerrarlos [a los españoles]. Por fin se nos ocurrió llevarlos a la cárcel. Hubo que soltar a los presos"), the famous *grito* ("Ni él gritó '¡vamos a matar españoles!' ni matamos a ninguno aquella noche"), and the amount of action taken by the revolutionaries the first night ("Periñón abrió una barrica del vino que él mismo hacía y nos dio a probar. Estaba agrio. Después dispuso guardias y nos fuimos a dormir") (117-119). These details deconstruct the mythical legend. Chandón's account of the midnight ride epitomizes this demonumentalization. Instead of tearing across the plains on a dashing stallion tearing with shocking news, the narrator pokes along at the pace set by his mare.

Ibargüengoitia's assault on the legend makes explicit the novel's demonumentalization of official history through metafictional self-reflection. John Brushwood asserts that metafiction is the principle characteristic of the Mexican novel in the latter half of the twentieth century. According to his estimates, more or less half of all novels written in Mexico between the 1960s and the 1980s are metafictional, though he provides no explicit explanation for this surge in narrative self-reflexivity (*La novela mexicana* 17-56). He does draw a crucial link, however, between the Tlatelolco massacre and changes in Mexican narrative in the seventies and eighties. For Brushwood, Tlatelolco symbolizes an end of innocence. He suggests that, during the late forties and fifties, national discourse emphasized the country's emergence into mainstream world society. However, this façade covered burgeoning social unrest. Strikes among railroad workers in 1959, teachers in 1960, and medical professionals in 1965 exacerbated existing tensions between polity and public (*Narrative Innovation and Political Change in Mexico* 62). He proposes four new characteristics that arise in the Mexican novel during this period: self-conscious and self-referential narrative, unstable identity of the protagonist, the Tlatelolco massacre as theme, and Mexico City as an overwhelming presence in narrative landscape. He notes that society flounders in an ontological limbo. Stability is a fleeting dream and truth is an illusion. Consequently, the literature produced during this period suffers the same instability and begins to probe its own creation. He states that:

> En consecuencia, podemos afirmar que la novela mexicana desde 1967 hasta 1983 se desarrolla siguiendo dos ejes de tensión: uno de contexto, entre la amenaza de una realidad que cambia muy rápidamente y la tendencia de asir lo conocido; otro de expresión, entre la narración como puro placer (o como juego) y la narrativa como significante de una realidad extratextual y reconocible. (*México en su novela* 33)

Brushwood is correct in asserting that social changes set the stage for narrative changes in the 1960s. But he fails to explain why metafiction becomes such a prominent modality of writing. When we speak of political and social change in Mexico before, during, and after 1968, we must take into account decades of disillusionment with revolutionary promises that never came to fruition. In this regard, the postmodern debate makes its most important contribution to a discussion of historical novels in its failing confidence in master narratives of nationhood. Is it any coincidence that, at a time when the weaknesses of Mexico's—and the world's—guiding narrative of progress comes to light, an upsurge in self-reflective writing surfaces? If metafiction truly seeks to expose the process by which fictional narratives are created, and if the process by which social and cultural narratives are constructed is similar to that of fictional narratives, then we can propose that one of the ultimate projects of metafictional writing is to invite the reader to question both the literary conventions that establish a power struggle between author and reader, and the subservient relationship between citizen and archive.

To this end, Matías Chandón narrates the novel thirty years after the events in order to "precisar algunos puntos que la leyenda ha borroneado" (*Los pasos de López* 117). He begins relating his arrival at Cañada from the military outpost at Perote. He travels to Cañada to apply for a position as the "comandante de batería y jefe de artificieros" for the new provincial battalion (11). En route he meets Domingo Periñón, the priest from Ajetreo. That night he lodges with the local administrator, Diego Aquino, who will evaluate his performance. He is invited to meet some of the notable citizens of Cañada. Though Chandón is unaware of it, these citizens comprise the main body of the city's conspirators. Their meeting becomes an interrogation wherein Chandón improvises answers to pointed questions in order to seek approval and win confidence.

When Diego asks Chandón about a court martial for an insubordinate *criollo*, Chandón picks up quickly on the way questions are supposed to be answered in Cañada. The case dealt with an officer who had spoken out against the crown, saying that Mexico could govern itself just as effectively as Spain. Asked what defense he had offered, Chandón replies, "Dije que estaba borracho cuando había dicho la frase ofensiva" (25). The conspirators and Chandón agree that it was not a good defense, but for different reasons. Chandón laments that the officer was found guilty; the conspirators wanted something more akin to their cause. Diego comes to the rescue, however, and reminds the group that "lo que importa no es el resultado, sino que el teniente haya salido en defensa de un oficial independentista" (25). The narrator admits to his readers that, until that moment, he had never thought of the officer or his ideas as "independentistas," but that thanks to this clue, "logré capotear la siguiente pregunta" (25). The next question dealt with his conviction to the cause: "¿Defendió a Serrano porque está de acuerdo con lo que él dijo o porque él estaba borracho cuando lo dijo?" (26). Understanding the game his is now playing, Chandón responds that he defended the officer because he agreed with him *and* because he was drunk.

The next question deals with the promotion of a Spaniard over an equally qualified *criollo*. Chandón confesses to readers that the question was more complicated than that:

> El español era Topete, a quien en el canton conocíamos como "Eligio", para no tener que decirle Eligio de Puta. Para evitar que Eligio fuera mi superior inmediato ya había recurrido a todos los medios y el último había sido alegar que había otro con mayor derecho a ascender, Meléndez, un pobre diablo. No me había pasado por la cabeza considerar que uno fuera español y el otro mexicano, pero, claro, esto no lo dije aquella noche, porque *ya iba aprendiendo*. (26, my emphasis)

He then offers a response full of false *criollo* indignation that is sure to score points. He affirms having protested on the principle of equality, "pero en realidad a un oficial nacido

en el país le cuesta mucho trabajo ascender: cada vez que una oportunidad se presenta aparece un español recién llegado... o bien se le da preferencia a un gachupín radicado" (26). Chandón peppers his complaint with "lo que entonces decían todos los días todos los oficiales criollos que había en todos los cuarteles" (26). These examples demonstrate that Chandón is able to improvise when the circumstances call for it. In this regard he resembles picaresque characters like Lazarillo de Tormes. He survives on account of his astuteness. The same cannot be said for his fellow conspirators.

Having passed the first, unofficial examination, Chandón advances to the second phase. Diego asks him to head out early for the testing grounds so that the royalists will not think there is any partiality, which of course there is. The examination consists of a series of skill tests to determine who of the candidates is the most qualified. There are three applicants: Chandón; Pablo Berreteaga, son of a local colonial intendant; and Pepe Caramelo, another Spaniard described as having "un dedo de frente", who is there to lend an air of legitimacy to Berreteaga's probable victory. Berreteaga boasts of his knowledge of military artillery tactics and frequently referred to having read a multi-volume work on it. He asks Chandón if he had read "el libro sobre las fortificaciones del marqués de Santa Cruz" (29), affirming that he had. Ibargüengoitia makes reference to Pablo Berreteaga in *Estas ruinas que ves*. Speaking of the battle at Cuévano (the Alhóndiga in Mexican history) in the third appendix, he notes that:

> El encargado de dirigir las obras fue Pablo Berreteaga, sobrino del intendente, que tenía fama de haber leído los nueve libros del Marqués de Santa Cruz, el experto en fortalezas. De acuerdo con las recomendaciones de este autor, Pablito mandó construir un sistema de fosos, parapetos y troneras, que no sirvieron más que para enfurecer más a los atacantes, que en poco rato entraron en la troje y acabaron con los que estaban dentro, preparados para resistir un sitio de meses—dicen que tenía hasta criadas que echaran las tortillas e hicieran las camas. (*Estas ruinas que ves* 266-267)

The test goes poorly for Chandón and well for his Spanish opponent. Berreteaga bests him in hand-to-hand combat with a blow to the kidney. As luck would have it, he draws a skittish animal for the horseback riding test: “Era un caballo que le tenía miedo a las zanjas y se negaba a cruzarlas por angostas o superficiales que fueran” (*Los pasos de López* 31). He receives an incomplete for not finishing the course. For the map reading test he draws a more suitable mount, but gets lost. Despite his poor performance, Diego and the *criollo* conspirators involved in evaluation seem intent on having Chandón. Diego preps him for the oral interview, slips him the answers to the written test, does not slight him when he makes up answers on the oral examination, and turns a blind eye when Chandón orders indigenous artillerymen to fill Berreteaga’s cannon with adobe, which drastically alters the distance and trajectory of the projectile. When all is said and done, Chandón is awarded the post, much to the dismay of the Spaniards. Later, when Diego asks him if he knew why he received the commission, Chandón naively responds, “Porque ustedes, los del jurado me hicieron el favor de pensar que mis resultados eran mejores que los de los otros aspirantes” (49). Diego corrects him: “Allí es donde te equivocas. Tus resultados no fueron necesariamente mejores que lo de los otros aspirantes. [...] Ganaste el puesto de comandante de la batería y jefe de artificieros por una sola razón: eres de los nuestros. [...] Aunque hubieras cometido el doble de errores en el examen, hubieras ganado la prueba, porque así lo habíamos decidido” (49). The military test is a farce. It is a contrived performance to lend credibility to the candidate they had already chosen. The cheating attests to the conspirators’ willingness to accept less than qualified individuals into their cabal, preferring loyalty to independence ideals than to skill.

But Chandón’s examination is not the only charade in the novel. Diego and Carmen Aquino appear to lead a life of luxury. They reside in a mansion on the hill

overlooking Cañada. Rumors abound about the sumptuous life they lead. One of the local priests, Father Pinole, has never been inside their home “pero conocía su vida y milagros, que expuso: aquellos eran los meses en que los Aquino pasaban en la casa de La Loma, que era un palacio, allí estaba la mesa mejor servida del Plan de Abajo” (12). He continues: “Los que se sienten en ella... beben vinos que uno ni se imagina que existen. Dicen que hay noches en que llegan de visita señoritas decentes y bailan danzas modernas” (12). The house is described as the most elegant on in the area, with more rooms than the administrators know what to do with (14).

But somehow they do not seem to fit there. As Diego guides Chandón to his room, he gets lost. Chandón recounts that “el corregidor andaba desorientado y no hallaba para dónde jalar. Habíamos llegado a una bifurcación del pasillo y el mozo que iba adelante se había perdido de vista. Diego hizo que me detuviera y se adelantó a explorar: miró por un lado, miró por el otro, vio al mozo” and figured out where they were (15). When Chandón asks about a portrait in his room, “Diego miró el cuadro como si nunca lo hubiera visto, después se encogió de hombros,” and vaguely responds, “Algún pariente” (15-16). Diego’s propensity for getting lost is characteristic of his incompetence and his inability to keep his bearings in the revolution.

When the local bishop stops in for a visit, the Aquinos inexplicably ask Chandón to occupy the administrator’s house in town. He accepts, but does not understand why he is forced to leave with so many rooms in the mansion. Arriving at the smaller house, he finds a terrible contrast with the Casa de La Loma: “Encontré una mesa con una pata coja, una silla desvencijada, el asiento del sofá empezaba a despanzurrarse. En el ropero vi las pantuflas de Diego, muy usadas, y una bata que olía a heliotropo. La cama era enorme y las fundas tenían holanes. Al levantar las cobijas vi unas sábanas, que estaban limpísimas, tenía una remienda” (42-43). The next day he asks one of the conspirators

about the house and receives the shocking revelation that neither house is theirs. “La corregiduría es del gobierno y la usa quien tenga el puesto, y la casa de La Loma es del Marqués de la Hedionda, que es amigo de ellos y se la presta durante el verano” (43).

The Aquinos’ wealth is nonexistent, and the lifestyle they lead is a façade. When Chandón meets with Carmen on the veranda, she looks out on the city. “Mire las casas de la gente pobre. Qué bonitas son, ¿verdad? Son muy sencillas pero están muy arregladitas. Si usted se fija, en ninguna falta una macetita de flores” (16). Chandón offers a different version of the neighboring area: “Había montones de estiércol, humaredas, hombres dormidos, mujeres cargando rastrojos, niños jugando en el lodo, perros ladrando” (16). It is this area that causes Carmen to exclaim, “¡Qué dignidad hay en la pobreza!” (16). The irony, of course, is that the poor people about which she pontificates have more than she. The Aquinos lives in a posh mansion, but their accommodations are only temporary and granted at the behest of the Spanish nobility.

In addition to the theatricality of the military test and the Aquino’s living arrangement, *Los pasos de López* includes a number of dramas within its text. The conspirators meet under the guise of a literary gathering in the Casa del Reloj, and there make plans for the impending struggle. When Chandón is admitted for the first time to the literary gathering at the Casa del Reloj, the conspirators are practicing a comedy, *La precaución inútil*. The play’s title alludes to Pierre de Beaumarchais’s *The Barber of Seville* (1775). The play’s subtitle was “The Useless Precaution,” and is the name of the musical piece that Rosina supposedly is learning. It also refers to a common motif in 17th-century literature, that of the old man who attempts to keep a young woman safe from younger suitors by incarcerating her in a luxurious castle, as in Cervantes’ “El celoso extremeño.” Paisiello wrote a comedic opera based on the play, called *The Barber of Seville*, years before Rossini was commissioned to create his own. Concerned that his

new work would incur the wrath of Paisiello and his followers, Rossini and librettist Sternini baptized the work three times: *Almaviva*, Lindoro's real name; *The Useless Precaution,* taking the subtitle from Beaumarchais' original work; and finally *The Barber of Seville*. Since Rossini's play debuted in 1816, we can assume that they are reading an adaptation of Beaumarchais' play. Chandón relates that:

> Carmelita hacía el papel de Rosina, una muchacha tonta, bella, huérfana, heredera y rica, el presbítero Concha era don Baldomero, el villano, un viejo tramposo, avaro y libidinoso, que quería casarse con ella—sin que ella se diera cuenta—, Ontananza era Lindoro, el galán, un noble que para cortejar a Rosina se disfrazaba de aldeano, Periñón era López, criado de Lindoro y el personaje más interesante de la comedia, él enredaba y desenredaba la acción, resolvía todos los problemas y al final recibía todos los castigos. (40)

The cast represent the main actors in the conspiracy of Cañada, with the obvious absence of Diego; we assume that he pretends to direct the play, out of sight and—for all intents and purposes—out of mind. The role each character assumes reveals something about their nature: Carmelita flirts with Chandón and Ontananza; Ontananza plays the secretive lover; Concha is the old man whose deathbed confession jeopardizes the happy ending; and Periñón moves the action forward and eventually receives all the punishment in the form of excommunication, capture, execution, and years of criticism from both sides of the ideological spectrum about his conduct. But these parallels are subtly undermined by ironic twists: Carmelita never consummates her flirtations. Ontananza's desire is, we may deduce, as frustrated as Chandón's; Concha is not a womanizer, but an ancient priest who faints without warning; and Periñón is enshrined in the pantheon of national heroes. We also learn that "el señor Borunda, el doctor Acevedo y el capitán Adarviles representaban personajes secundarios—e infames" (40). In Adarviles' case, the final epithet is especially applicable because he will later betray the conspiracy.

The performance planned for Carmelita's birthday ends in disaster. Father Concha, the play's villain, succumbs to one of his habitual fainting spell and misses an

important line where he confesses his guilt. As a result, “don Baldomero no confesó su culpa, [y] no hubo manera de que los jueces pusieran en libertad a López, que era el presunto responsable de todos los delitos que se habían cometido en los tres actos de la comedia” (79). Concha’s failure to speak at the appropriate moment jeopardizes the outcome of the play. Chaos ensues. “El desenlace fue grotesco: el elenco cantó: ‘Toda precaución es inútil’ y el telón cayó con Periñón encadenado y Juanito en libertad, cuando debió haber sido al revés” (79). The failed performance of *La precaución inútil* foreshadows the debacle that follows. In both instances, instead of following the play’s general idea, the cast is carried along as events develop contrary to the script’s original intent. In the play, Father Concha’s inability to speak ruins the play: his inability to keep quiet jeopardizes the conspiracy. Periñón, the hero, will not be exonerated, but captured and punished. Thus, when the cast closes the play singing “All precautions are futile,” a sense of dark irony falls upon the impending revolution. The revolution’s finale will also contradict the Junta’s plans. The safeguards they had set in place are useless. Their plan to bribe the royalist drum major for control of an important city is a dismal failure. They are incapable of maintaining their group’s integrity: Concha, the scribe Manrique, and Captain Adarviles all betray them.

Improvisation is the art of spontaneous creation within a scene. It is not, however, unrestricted creation. It obeys logical rules. The conspirators are unable to adjust to changing circumstances. Instead of working with the situation, the players continue moving forward along predefined roles. When they do deviate from their scripted roles, their missteps cause irreparable damage. Instead of taking control of the situation while maintaining fidelity to the original script, the actors allow themselves to be carried along with the current. The actors no longer control the play’s outcome but are controlled by it. Chandón stands out as the only conspirator capable of improvising, as we have seen

earlier. He realizes quickly that certain answers will curry favor with or alienate his potential employers. Other members of the conspiracy are not as astute. As a general rule, the conspirators attempt to follow the script. However, when things go wrong, they ad lib badly. As a result, events rarely work out well. In fact, they generally wind up as disasters, even when the insurgents win. Chandón will later liken this sense of helplessness to "el remolino que nos levantó" (84). Similar imagery is used in Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo* (1915). Luis Leal points out that Demetrio Macías' farewell to his wife occurs on a cliff looking out over the horizon. In the distance, a tornado approaches. As he makes his determination to leave, he kicks a pebble that rolls down the hill dragging others with it. He notes that the Revolution is like the rolling rock. The image of the double vortex, the tornado and the pebble, underlines the absorbing nature of the fight. Ibargüengoitia's use of this phrase reflects this Revolutionary motif in *Los relámpagos de agosto* as well as Sierra's belated Romantic imagery. It also foreshadows impending problems.

Take for example the battle of Cuévano, Ibargüengoitia's analogue for Guanajuato. The revolutionary army finds little resistance as they enter the city, until they come to the fortress-like Requinta (Alhóndiga). Spanish royalists barricade themselves within the walls, intent on waiting out a long-term siege. The insurgents overrun the fortifications and, having won the battle, massacre men, women, and children. Chandón attempts to salvage his honor when he writes that:

> Desde la fecha muchos nos han acusado a los jefes insurgentes de sanguinarios. ¿Qué por qué no evitamos la matanza de la Requinta? Porque no pudimos. Tratamos de detener a la gente pero no nos obedecieron. No era un ejército, era un gentío, habían tenido muchas bajas, la resistencia había sido tenaz. Cuando los españoles estaban afuera entraron en la Requinta, mataron a todos los que estaban adentro. ¿Qué fue culpa de los jefes? En parte. Pero también fue, en parte, culpa de los que resistieron y en parte, de los que mataron. Yo no maté a nadie, anduve de un lado para otro tratando de dominar a mi gente. (*Los paoss de López* 133)

Chandón's frustration emphasizes the uncontrolled nature of the revolution. Ibargüengoitia describes the mob in terms similar to Sierra's narrative. Chandón, who to this point had maintained a fairly good hold on his troops in military operations, is unable to keep order. Improvisation again becomes the guiding principle. Conservative historians like Lucas Alamán and José Vasconcelos frame their descriptions of Hidalgo's revolution as a chaotic, improvised mess. Alamán remembers that Bishop Abad y Queipo likened Hidalgo's silk worm farm to the revolution: "no seguía órden ninguno, y que echaban la hoja como venia del árbol y los gusanos la comian como querian: ¡la revolucion, me decia con este motivo el obispo, de quien originalmente sé esta anécdota, fue como la cria de los gusanos de seda, y tales fueron los resultados!" (*Historia* 227).

The final theatrical flop I discuss in this chapter is Diego Aquino's attempt to protect the conspiracy once its existence comes to light. His plan is simple:

> Yo soy el corregidor. Viene Pinole a decirme que Juanito antes de morir, dijo algo de estar mezclado en una conspiración. ¿Qué hago? Consulto con los notables. El primero, el alcalde, que es la autoridad más alta en Cañada después de un servidor. "Óyeme, Ochoa", le digo, "me llegó este chisme, ¿has oído tú algo de eso?" Que no. Allí se acaba la historia. Que sí, que ya oyó decir que hay una conspiración en Cañada. Muy bien. Vamos a investigar. Yo dirijo la investigación y, por supuesto no encuentro nada. Yo hago como que cumplo con mi deber, averiguamos si Pinole ha sido indiscreto y acabamos con cualquier sospecha que haya sobre nosotros. (*Los pasos de López* 100)

This plan sounds so convincing that even Carmen accepts it (100). The only problem with Diego's plan is that Captain Adarvilles, fearing capture for his role in the conspiracy, betrays the Junta to the local authorities two hours before Diego can do anything. When Diego shows up at the mayor's house to carry out his cover up, the officials have already set their trap. Diego is woefully unable to act, and his plan disintegrates. Ochoa and Manubrio, a former prosecutor with an interest in inquisitorial law, manage to extract every detail from Diego.

Diego arrives at the mayor's house ready to carry out his cover up. When he begins his lines, Ochoa and Manubrio go on the offensive. Diego's evasive answers give ample opportunity for the royalists to act. Diego's hope that they will let the matter go quickly falls apart. They reason that "Si Juanito pertenecía… a una organización secreta, ¿quiénes podrían ser los otros miembros? Llegaron a la conclusión de que algunos de ellos, cuando menos, tenían que vivir en Cañada, puesto que rara vez Juanito salía de viaje" (103). They then inquire about the literary gathering at the Casa del Reloj. The inquisitors wonder why the meetings were always conducted behind closed doors. Chandón laments that "Ésta era una pregunta difícil. A ninguno de los que estábamos en la Junta se nos había ocurrido buscarle una respuesta inocente: las puertas se cerraban porque las reuniones eran secretas. Diego, por supuesto, no supo qué contestar" (104). It seems odd that, with plans for a revolution afoot, the conspirators could not think of a decent cover story for their secret meetings. The colonial authorities decide to visit the Casa del Reloj to investigate. Diego inadvertently leads the authorities to heart of the conspiracy. Once there, the situation deteriorates. Diego's weakness compounds the problem. The mayor and Manubrio begin making orders veiled as suggestions. To avoid a confrontation, Diego acquiesces. The authorities discover the secret armory as well as the box full of Junta documents. Just as they are about to confiscate them, Diego seizes the box and claims the right, as administrator of Cañada, to revise them and make a report. This is the one positive act he makes. But there is no doubt that the authorities are aware of the conspiracy and begin to act against it. Diego proves himself to be a weak leader, a terrible actor, and a threat to the insurgency.

These scenes illustrate the theatrical consciousness of Ibargüengoitia in elaborating *Los pasos de López* and in reworking Mexican history. The fifteenth chapter includes a scripted conversation between Diego, Carmen, Adarvilles, Ochoa, and

Manubrio, complete with stage directions (114-116). What remains to be seen is how Ibargüengoitia applies this motif to a broader analysis of the Independence period. To do so, the following section focuses on the insurgency's script (ideological content and plan of government), direction, and audience.

SCRIPT, DIRECTORS, AND AUDIENCE

All plays must start with a script. Ibargüengoitia implies that the insurgents' script was faulty from the beginning. For starters, there was no consensus about what the final product should be. Diego Aquino opts for the unlikely, not to mention antithetical, goal of bringing Fernando VII to Mexico to reign (50-51). The deposed Spanish monarch was ousted from the royal throne and imprisoned. Early Spanish American reformers, both liberals and conservatives, from Mexico to Argentina entertained the idea of bringing Fernando to the Americas. Matías Chandón is dumbfounded by Diego's plan. It seems entirely incongruous with the principles of liberty to declare independence from an empire to then invite the empire's ousted ruler to set up shop in newly freed lands. Ibargüengoitia writes from a decidedly liberal perspective on this account, rejecting, as do many Mexicans, the legacy of conservative monarchism in Mexican nineteeth-century politics. We will examine this further Chapter Five, when discussing Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio*. But we can safely assume that Ferdinand would not have looked kindly upon the offer. Once reinstated to the throne, he began a ruthless campaign to recapture lost American territories. The strengthened imperial grip on Mexico explains in part why Independence is not achieved until 1821.

Diego's vision of the future government also includes comfortable political positions for himself and other current employees of the Spanish crown. He speaks of

doing things “a nuestro modo” (50) and recognizes that “el verdadero problema que tendremos entonces será el de formar un gobierno” (56), but there doesn’t appear to be a definite plan. The logic meant to support his claims to future authority is faulty. He reasons that his current position as Administrator derives from the crown’s authority. By virtue of this delegation, he may then delegate that authority to the members of the Junta. “¿Y qué iban a hacer con la autoridad real? Desconocer a la Junta de Cádiz—y por consiguiente, la autoridad real—y proclamar la independencia de la Nueva España” (50). In short, Diego plans to maintain his office and authority while simultaneously disavowing the source of that authority. As Edmund Morgan points out in *Inventing the People,* governments are founded upon fictions. These fictions allow the few to govern the many. Over time fictions change according to historical context. The idea of “the people”, for example, arises in sixteenth-century England as Parliament wrested power from the prevailing fiction, to whit, the sovereignty of the monarch. Diego Aquino’s plan skips the transitional step between divine right of kings to representative of the people. By disavowing the monarch’s right to govern without replacing that fiction with another, his ambitions fall to pieces.

The flip side of Diego’s problematic aspirations is Periñón’s lack of concern for the future. When Chandón asks what form of government will replace the imperial system, Periñón replies that “Puede ser una república como tienen en el Norte o bien un imperio como tienen los franceses, pero es cuestión que francamente no me preocupa, porque sería raro que llegáramos a ver el final de esto que estamos comenzando” (85). This declaration falls short of the eloquent statesmanship official rhetoric would attribute to Hidalgo. Nestled within this response are the seeds of what Vasconcelos will dub “el culto de la derrota” (*Breve historia* 279), or the self-fulfillling prophecy that one is

doomed to failure. Vasconcelos openly criticizes the Mexican tendency to exalt history's losers, stating that such a practice runs the risk of becoming a model to follow. He asks:

> Si nuestro héroe máximo es un derrotado, un mártir, más bien que un Rolando, no es extraño que todo nuestro Panteón Nacional se haya formado también con una serie de mártires: los mártires de Chapultepec, los mártires de Tacubaya; el martirio de Cuauhtémoc; como si la milicia tuviera por objeto preparar a sus hijos para que sean víctimas, lo que es oficio de santidad, no de milicia. El miliciano debe exigirse a sí mismo la victoria; en su carrera, la muerte y el sacrificio son un azar, no un objeto.
>
> ¿Hasta qué punto la circunstancia de que nos hemos dedicado a adorar fracasados influye en el temperamento nacional pesimista y en la insistencia con que hablamos de "morir por la patria", cuando lo que necesitan las patrias es que nadie muera, sino que todos vivan en plenitud y libertad? Aparte de que está condenado un ejército que antes de la pelea ya habla de morir; ese lenguaje se queda para las monjas y los monjes que voluntariamente han renunciado al mundo. En un soldado hablar de morir, ya es felonía, ya supone que sólo va a la trinchera a dejarse matar, cuando su deber es evitar que lo maten matando al enemigo de la patria. De lo contrario, en torno al culto de la derrota, se desarrolla también una corrupción del significado de la gloria que entre nosotros parece estar ligado siempre a los fracasos más sombríos. (279)

Periñón's pessimism is consistent with Ibargüengoitia's prior conception of Hidalgo. In *La conspiración vendida,* Hidalgo pronounces the following dour prediction: "Recuerde que ninguno de los que han iniciado las conspiraciones de que sabe la historia ha disfrutado del provecho de éstas. Por supuesto es preferible ser el último rebelde que el primero, pero a nosotros no nos queda más que ser los iniciadores, o bien vasallos fidelísimos del rey de España" (*La conspiración vendida* 239). Here we see again Hidalgo's fatalistic acceptance of premature death, underpinned by an ardent desire to be free. Where Periñón lacks vision for the future, he compensates with an abundance of zeal.

Unclear as to how post-imperial government should constitute itself, Diego and Periñón—the two main spokesmen for conflicting ideological perspectives—find no consensus in procedure either. Diego imagines a bloodless revolution:

> La independencia de la Nueva España va a lograrse por medio de un acto pacífico y perfectamente legal. Bastará con redactar un documento y firmarlo. Después daremos a conocer el suceso en todo el país por medio de bandos y yo estoy completamente convencido de que será recibido con beneplácito por la mayoría de la población. (*Los pasos de López* 56)

Diego's optimism blinds him to the possibility that the Spanish crown will object to losing its primary source of income. He underestimates the empire's propensity to protect its interests. His faith in pacifist transition cripples his preparations for war. The Junta has few weapons and provisions to arm and feed its troops. Periñón, on the other hand, expects—almost hopes for—a bloody conflict. "Mientras los españoles no se vayan o sean enterrados no vamos a quedar en paz," he explains (57).

Plagued by unprepared actors and a poorly conceived script, the revolution suffers from directorial problems. Initially, Diego appears to occupy the director's chair. By regal decree he is the crown's representative in Cañada, and seeks to derive authority for the newly independent nation from that prior mandate. As we have seen, Diego's logic errs. By disavowing the seat of his authority, he nullifies his own authority. But in the end it is his weakness that makes him an ineffectual leader. His failed cover-up attempt demonstrates his inability to manage his environment. He becomes the puppet, not the master. His wife, Carmen, on the other hand, is much more decisive and temporarily salvages the independence effort from disintegration by ordering the Junta to take up arms when the conspiracy is discovered: "Después de hablar conmigo en la plaza, Carmen había quedado convencida de que la conspiración estaba a punto de ser descubierta, y había escrito y enviado mensajes a Adarviles, al señor Mesa y a mí, pidiéndonos ejecutar los planes que habíamos preparado para el día cuatro de octubre" (111-112). The *Corregidora* is one of the few—if not the only—woman celebrated in Latin American independence. Her name is included in the annual *Grito* along with those of Hidalgo and Morelos. Her husband, however, is excluded. But Carmen's moment in

command is short lived. Periñón takes the reins from Ajetreo and will remain the uncontested leader for most of the war.

After Periñón proclaims independence, Chandón observes a fundamental shift in the priest's character: "Antes de salir de la casa Periñón hizo algo que me extrañó pero cuya importancia no podía yo comprender entonces—fue el primer indicio del cambio que había ocurrido en su carácter a consecuencia del Grito—: para ir a la plaza, que estaba a cincuenta pasos, hizo que Cleto le ensillara su caballo blanco" (120). Periñón now assumes a more military role, an iconographic role. As noted earlier, Juan O'Gorman's mural in the National Museum in Chapultepec castle reflects this duality. When the Junta meets to make a number of battlefield promotions, no one discusses what rank Periñón will have, "pero a partir de ese momento actuó como si fuera el único jefe" (126). When Diego is freed from prison and hurries to pen a declaration of independence, Periñón corrects him on two points: "Tienes un error importante, Diego: la independencia la declaré yo el quince de septiembre, no vas a declararla tú hoy. [...] Yo creo, Diego, que es mejor hacer la cosa de otra manera: yo soy el jefe del Ejército Libertador, la ciudad está en nuestro poder. Entonces, basando mi autoridad en esta premisa, te nombro corregidor de Cañada" (145). Because Diego is unwilling and unable to defend his symbolic right to rule with force, Periñón's strongarm tactics prevail. If Ibargüengoitia's description of the Diego is in anyway faithful to the historical Miguel Domínguez, then there is little doubt why this man disappeared from the annals of popular history: he was simply too weak to maintain power.

Periñón, on the other hand, exercises authority but does so ineffectually. His charisma attracts the masses, but his permissiveness undermines discipline. When Chandón plans to execute a horse thief, Periñón forbids him to do so, and orders Chandón to forgive the thief. "Tanta autoridad tenía Periñón sobre mí que perdoné al ladrón. Tan

agradecido quedó que nos abandonó pocos meses después, llevándose una caballada" (124). The army he creates is, in fact, a mob. As we have seen, all the historians analyzed previously describe the insurgent army as a savage mob. Where conservative historians tend to blame Hidalgo for actively and passively encouraging brutality, liberal historians like Sierra emphasize Hidalgo's importance as a leader and lay blame on the inherent savagery of the combatants. The assault on Cuévano becomes an unbridled massacre. Chandón recounts that the insurgents "Se echaron sobre ellos [the Spaniards] y los hicieron pedazos. En otros lados del edificio había gente que se quería rendir. De nada les sirvió, los mataron igual que a los que resistieron. Un hombre subió corriendo por la escalera, lo persiguieron y cuando lo alcanzaron lo echaron de cabeza al patio" (133). Periñón does little to suppress this bestial behavior. Instead he justifies it, purporting that "Para un hombre cuya vida ha sido pura privación, el robo no es delito," or "Algún aliciente necesitan estos pobres para ir a la guerra" (146). This representation of Hidalgo is problematic. On one hand, Ibargüengoitia demonstrates Hidalgo's care for the indigenous community. But this care smacks of irresponsible indulgence which questions the paternal responsibility that Sierra attributes to the priest. Furthermore, Ibargüengoitia seems to propagate many of the negative attitudes towards Indians that nineteenth-century Creole historians espouse. In the novel, the indigenous are portrayed as uneducated, violent, and untrustworthy.

Periñón's ineffective use of power effectively unravels the insurgency. With weary and waning troops, the Mexican army appears on the verge of extinction. Ontananza observes that "Esta será la batalla decisiva… Si la perdemos, se acabó el ejército libertador" (164). Nevertheless, Ontananza directs the ground troops effectively and lays waste to the enemy forces. Periñón, in the heat of battle, breaks ranks and leads his troops into a massacre. Chandón reports: "Vimos cómo nuestros compañeros, más

fieros que nunca, corrían detrás de los soladados que huían, los alcanzaban y los tendían a machetazos.... Era una trampa. Iban acercándose a la línea enemiga. La primera descarga causó mortandad terrible" (166). This tactical error on Periñón's part destroys the army and ends the insurgency. In a rare moment of self-criticism, Periñón confesses, "Ya sé que metí la pata. Es culpa mía. No les pido perdón porque no lo merezco" (167). Ibargüengoitia has created, then, an antithetical portrait Hidalgo and the conspirators. In the novel, they are ineffective military leaders, superficial political thinkers, and overly indulgent patriarchal figures. Ibargüengoitia systematically undermines the heroic image that has been espoused by the Mexican government. But his criticism are not only limited to the heroes themselves.

Ibargüengoitia mentions a number of audiences that are worthy of censure throughout the novel. The citizens of Cuévano gathered on the hill to watch the battle, for example, proclaim *vivas* and applaud the insurgents' victory. Chandón is dubious, however, as to their motives: "No sé qué hubieran gritado si hubiéramos perdido" (134). Cuévano is the site of the massacre where indigenous troops brutally dispatch white royalists. It is doubtful that the families and friends of the deceased would readily welcome the invading forces had they not felt coerced or fearful for their lives.

Likewise, the crowd convened for Carmen's birthday does not understand what happened in *La precaución inútil*, but still applauds (79). Ibargüengoitia tacitly criticizes historians who have applauded the historical players without really understanding their accomplishments, enshrined a romanticized version of the revolution without recognizing its ideological vacuity, and covered over the swath of destruction mobs carved through the center of the nation with nationalistic rhetoric. Some of these critics, for example, read Ibargüengoitia's novel as a humanizing depiction of Hidalgo and, by extension, his revolution. Elisabeth Guerrero argues that "*Los pasos de López* does not iconize Hidalgo;

nor does it demonize him. Instead, the novel brings the hero down to scale: Periñón fumbles as a military leader and falters as a man of the cloth" ("The Plotting Priest" 103). She further proposes that his military shortcomings and his moral indiscretions make him "an ordinary man" and that "his slips are petty, not the tragic downfall of a hero" (111-112). Ultimately Guerrero believes that Ibargüengoitia remains neutral about Hidalgo and in so doing demystifies official romanticized iconography. While I concede that Ibargüengoitia tears down the post-revolutionary idealization Hidalgo's image enjoys, *Los pasos de López* is far from objective, and even farther from neutral. *La conspiración vendida* keeps its reverent distance, but the novel's expanded historical scope and the freedom from the constraints of state sponsorship allows Ibargüengoitia to criticize Hidalgo.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined Jorge Ibargüengoitia's use of theatrical motifs in *Los pasos de López* to communicate a more solemn message about the 1810 Independence movement that humoristic evaluations of the novel overlook. His criticisms take on a socially conscious attitude when understood as part of a larger criticism of the system of mythification. Written at a period when Mexico's democratic system was under close scrutiny, Ibargüengoitia undertook the process of dismantling the foundational myth that supported Mexico's ruling party. For Ibargüengoitia, the insurgency is not the heroic movement traditionally portrayed by historians. It was poorly conceived and poorly managed, like a badly written and poorly performed play. It was an uncoordinated, bloody, and destructive birthing for the new nation. The conspirators who set the stone in motion had no control over the bloody outcome once it started rolling.

Chapter Two: Recuperating Women's History in Rosa Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos*

> The history of France as modern writers have given it to us is not the true history of our country, its national history, its popular history…. The whole system of our national history revolves around no more than a small number of princely families…. Accustomed from childhood to this historical pattern, we not only are not shocked by it, we do not even imagine that another could be devised. We ask of our writers only that they add as many good maxims and ornaments of style as they can. – Agustin Thierry

This chapter analyzes the women of Mexico's first empire. Rosa Beltrán's (Mexico, D.F., 1960) novel *La corte de los ilusos* (1995) follows contemporary trends in women's history by examining women's roles in the court. Early feminist historians focused on the repression of women by masculine power structures. Beltrán emphasizes the oppression Iturbide's wife, sister, and cousin endure. Repression in the novel is both sexual and political. Societal norms establish rules that meter or curtail the expression of sexuality and ideas, and denigrate women whose circumstances lie outside the rigidly defined boundaries of wife and mother. Additionally, women in the novel are stripped of their ability to speak by men who remind them that their primary responsibility is to keep quiet. By drawing upon etiquette manuals from the period, Beltrán paints a portrait of repression consistent with traditional portrayals of the nineteenth century in the Americas and Europe. But contemporary feminist historians have moved away from this focus on repression to investigate the ways women negotiate with their oppressors to improve their circumstances. To this end, *La corte de los ilusos* demonstrates strategies for negotiation that allow female characters to actively and passively resist the stifling nineteenth-century male society.

MEXICO'S INDEPENDENCE AND FIRST EMPIRE

Hidalgo's 1810 rebellion sets the stage for *Los pasos de los López*. It was a brief and bloody movement that ultimately achieved little. By contrast, the 1821 revolution led by Agustín de Iturbide was not only successful, but relatively bloodless. Christon L. Archer writes: "In many respects, Iturbide's victory was the product of universal fatigue rather than a clear decision in favor of a particular plan or new direction" ("Fashioning a New Nation" 303). Eleven years of continual guerilla warfare eroded the morale and stamina of royalist troops. Tired of fighting, the Spanish gave up when one of their own became the leading ideological and military force for the independence movement. Beltrán sets her novel about nineteenth-century women against this backdrop, but avoids most of the historical details. But since understanding Iturbide's life and career enables us to understand the pressures against which Beltrán's characters must fight, I offer the following historical overview.

Iturbide was born in 1783 in the town of Valladolid (present-day Morelia). His father was a Spaniard and his mother a Creole from Michoacán. He joined the armed forces in 1797. When the 1810 insurgency began, Hidalgo offered him the rank of lieutenant general in the insurgent army. Iturbide later recorded that Hidalgo's offer "era seductora para un joven sin experiencia, y en edad de ambicionar, la desprecié sin embargo, porque me percudí que los planes del cura estaban mal concebidos, no podían producir el objeto que se proponía llegara a verificarse. El tiempo demostró la certeza de mis predicciones" (*Memorias* 6). Iturbide was known for his unrelenting persecution of rebel forces. He did not flinch when ordering executions and was feared for his brutality. Decisive victories brought him to the attention of his superiors, and, in 1820, they

promoted him to the rank of colonel in the imperial army. In November 1820, the Spanish viceroy placed Iturbide at the head of the counterinsurgency. Iturbide received command of the southern troops and marched south, supposedly to combat Vicente Guerrero, the leading Creole rebel. However, in the provincial town of Acatempan, Guerrero and Iturbide met and agreed to join forces against the Spaniards. On February 24, 1821, Iturbide proclaimed the independence of Mexico under the Plan of Iguala, taking the colonial administration by surprise. Independence would quickly follow, as royalist forces abandoned their posts and deserted to the insurgent cause. The signing of the Treaty of Córdoba followed, and Mexico gained its freedom from Spanish rule. Shortly thereafter, an emissary brought news that Ferdinand VII would not accept the Mexican crown. Nor would any other member of the royal family, for that matter. Set on the idea of a monarchy, Mexico's elites pushed for Iturbide's election as emperor. Some discrepancies exist as to Iturbide's motives in accepting the crown. As we will see, apologists cast him as a man thrust into power by a people clamoring for a strong government. Detractors portray him as a man who recognized Ferdinand VII would never accept the Mexican crown, and positioned himself to take control. Beltrán's novel clearly shares the latter perspective.

Jorge Volpi writes that, as Iturbide approached Mexico City's cathedral for coronation, "no imagina que el nuevo Imperio, uno de los más extensos sobre la tierra, no durará más que ocho meses, hasta el 19 de marzo de 1823, cuando sea obligado a abdicar por el Congreso y los sublevados del Plan de Casa Mata" (Volpi 73). Eight months after his auspicious rise to power, Agustín de Iturbide was forced to abdicate his throne and go into exile. A number of factors account for his disgrace: his decision to suspend the elected congress top the list extravagant spending, conflicts with the Scottish rite masons who controlled most of the nation's finances. He was first exiled in Italy. But with the

Inquisition after him for leading the independence movement and betraying the Spanish crown, Iturbide packed up his family again and moved them to England. While in London he was informed that Mexican politics stood on shaky footings, and he was invited by supporters to return and lead a peacekeeping force against dissidents. Days after his departure and unbeknownst to Iturbide, a letter arrived in London from Mexico informing him that any attempt to return to his native land would result in his immediate execution. Shortly after arriving, he was captured and summarily executed.

Unlike Hidalgo, whose legacy underwent immediate negative publicity but was later absorbed into national pantheon and deified, Agustín de Iturbide was initially acclaimed by the nation and later decried as a traitor, a villain, and a tyrant. The celebration of Mexican Independence illustrates this transition. As noted in the previous chapter, Lucas Alamán was repulsed by Mexico's decision to celebrate Hidalgo's call to arms. He proposed September 27th as a more suitable Independence Day because it memorialized Iturbide's arrival in Mexico City in 1821 (Hale 129). September 27th was a national holiday throughout most of the nineteenth century. Enrique Krauze highlights this when, observing that most of Mexico's conservative figures have been consigned to a historical hell, he concedes that Agustín de Iturbide is granted a stay in purgatory. He was:

> …aclamado en su momento como el "héroe invictísimo", "inmortal libertador", había consumado pacíficamente, con orden y concierto, la independencia del país en septiembre—siempre septiembre—de 1821. A juicio de los liberales, sin embargo, había cometido el error de creerse el Napoleón mexicano y coronarse emperador un año después. Su breve reinado y el trágico ciclo de su abdicación, exilio, retorno y muerte—como buen héroe mexicano—frente a un pelotón de fusilamiento, no lo redimieron a los ojos oficiales. A lo largo del siglo XIX, mientras duró la querella entre republicanos y monarquistas, federalistas y centralistas, liberales y conservadores, Iturbide había competido con Hidalgo por el puesto del supremo de la historia nacional. Historiadores de ambos bandos ponían en duda la continuidad entre el movimiento de 1810 y el de 1821. Les parecía obvio que el libertador era Iturbide y no Hidalgo, cuyo "frenesí" había

> quizá retrasado el advenimiento de una independencia que los criollos de Nueva España—y de América—anhelaban. Sin embargo, el destino fue implacable con Iturbide. Su recuerdo, ligado *a posteriori*, indisolublemente, al partido conservador, corrió la misma suerte de éste. (*Siglo de caudillos* 39).

Similiarly, Volpi points out: "A lo largo de casi dos siglos la tradición liberal se ha encargado de crear una imagen risible y patética de Iturbide, cuya figura se ha desvanecido casi completamente de nuestros panteón de próceres" (Volpi 74). For many he has been *ninguneado* by Mexican historiography; this is to say, Iturbide has become the quintessential nonentity of Mexican history.

Like Hidalgo, Iturbide has enjoyed his share of detractors. In both cases, short shrift is given to their ideological contributions. As noted in the last chapter, Hidalgo proposed abolition, fair land repartition, and cessation on taxes and contributions against the indigenous. Iturbide's contribution to Mexican intellectual development demonstrates a keen understanding of the world in which he lived, and a desire to unite Mexico with the least amount of bloodshed possible. The Plan of Iguala proposed conserving Mexico's religious and cultural traditions, unifying all inhabitants under a common Hispanic identity, and granting equality before the law. Paramount among these guarantees were his promises to protect the Catholic Church's monopoly Mexican spiritual life. The Plan of Iguala created a Catholic, monarchic nation. It amounted to the framework for Mexico's conservative political philosophy for the next two hundred years. Opponents rightly view the plan as the remodeling of old colonial structures with a new American façade.

In recent years, however, there has been a movement to defend Iturbide. Canadian historian Timothy E. Anna, for example, has led the charge in Anglophone circles with an excellent history entitled *The Mexican Empire of Iturbide*. Anna admits to having maligned Iturbide early in his career, basing his prejudice on early readings of Mexican

intellectuals and historians. “I now thoroughly regret making those passing comments on a subject I had not independently researched,” he remarks and then adds:

> Like many other falsehoods planted in historiography by partisan contemporaries of the events they describe, the erroneous views perpetuated since the 1820s about Agustín de Iturbide and his government of the country he emancipated are not only harmful, but likely to be immensely difficult to overcome. In this case the harm occurs at two levels. First, it has caused too many historians, over a period of one hundred and seventy years now, to dismiss out of hand a person of the greatest importance and worthy of sympathetic interest. Second, it causes us thoroughly to misunderstand the brief period, from September 1821 to March 1823, when Iturbide governed the country he had created. (ix-x)

Anna attempts to overturn common misconceptions about Iturbide by delving into the historiography, turning the text into tools for analysis and not letting the classical texts “set the agenda” (xi). As Volpi noted earlier, and as we will see in later chapters, the liberal historiography tradition has dominated Mexico’s pantheon building efforts. Enrique Krauze notes that the Porfirian regime’s project to populate the Avenida de la Reforma with effigies of liberal politicians to the exclusion of conservative figures exemplifies twentieth-century Mexico’s historical project. Since Iturbide was a strong proponent of the conservative philosophy, he has been consequently excluded.

Anna is joined in his recuperative efforts by a number of Mexican historians. José Antonio Jiménez Díaz begins the first volume of his *Trilogía de Satanizados* (2000) with a defense of Iturbide; the other two subjects will be the conservative general Miramón and Porfirio Díaz. Jiménez Díaz begins his essay with a scathing rejection of “la mentira, compañera inseparable de la historia” (27). Jiménez Díaz is, like Anna, concerned about the power of the perpetuated lie. He proposes demonstrating the short shrift given to historical truth, “en donde las más de las veces ha quedado totalmente eclipsada por las sombrías cabriolas de la mentira, es indiscutible que a la mentira se le ha entronizado a lo largo y ancho de las páginas de nuestra historia, por lo que no es temerario afirmar que conjuntamente con la ingratitud, se constituyen en el común denominador en ella” (27).

He continues, “En nuestra historia, los protagonistas y hechos, no sólo se han desvirtuado en su momento histórico, sino que se han ido deformando con el transcurrir del tiempo, subordinando los conceptos y las ideas a las figuras y a las imágenes” (28). The first order of business for Jiménez Díaz, then, is to reveal the lies propagated by Iturbide’s detractors. Only then, he asserts, can he set the record straight. His approach is aggressive but seems to share Anna’s preoccupation that, without potentially extreme measures, the historical inertia that propels negative depictions of Iturbide’s memory will go unchecked.

A similarly aggressive style is adopted by Celerino Salmerón, who vehemently—stopping just short of hysterically—attacks Iturbide’s detractors in *En defensa de Iturbide: Tres artículos y un discurso en el Metropólitan* (1974). Salmerón’s anecdotal approach leaves documentation on the sidelines. He sallies forth expecting readers to know the arguments formed against Iturbide, as well as the historical events of the early independence period he uses to make his case. Salmerón’s arguments are impassioned, polarizing, and itching to brawl with the staunchest of liberals. Rafael Heliodor Valle, a Guatemalan historian who spent his most productive years in Mexico, also published an anecdotal defense with the deifying title, *Iturbide, varón de Dios* (1944). Valle’s history blurs the borders between rigorous historiography and fiction when he includes scripted dialogues between historical actors. The text is readable because of Valle’s knowledge of the gossip and intrigues surrounding the Empire, and in this regard, offers some valid reference points for cross-referencing Beltrán’s novel.

Iturbide’s tragedy also inspired numerous fictional recreations. What is most interesting about these works is that they are generally complementary towards Iturbide. They are preeminently conservative works. A fictional dialogue, “La sombra del Padre Arenas que Iturbide encontró en penas”, between Iturbide and Father Arenas appears in

1827. Francisco Granados Maldonado pens the sympathetic *Iturbide en Padilla: ensayo dramático en tres actos* in 1850. Granados Maldonado labels the play an essay because of its brevity, but the work obeys the formal theatrical unities and is written in verse. *Iturbide en Padilla* tells the story of a family in Padilla torn by their allegiances to the exiled former emperor. The men in the family are staunch *iturbidistas* while the daughter's lover, Florencio, joined Santa Anna's campaign to oust the emperor. When Iturbide returns, he visits the family, but is then taken into custody. Florencio, outraged by the treatment given to the liberator of the nation, experiences a change of heart and joins hands with his future brother-in-law in proclaiming their undying adherence to Iturbide. Antonio Moreno's 1896 version of the story, *Iturbide: drama histórico en dos partes*, resembles a Shakespearian tragedy. In the play, Iturbide is a man torn between two promises. On the one hand, his wife pleads with him not to accept the crown. On the other, his lover makes him promise, as a token of his love, that he will. The play is divided in two sections: the first, entitled "*El libertador*" and the second, bearing the title "*El monarca*." Moreno takes great pains to demonstrate his fidelity to historical fact by means of lengthy footnotes; however, he alters important facts in the closing scene for dramatic punch. For example, he places Ana María Huarte de Iturbide in Padilla to witness her husband's death when, in fact, she was in the United State. In 1922, Alberto Fenochio wrote the historical novel *El emperador de México*. And recently Jesús Motilla Martínez wrote a fictionalized chronicle called *Príncipes sin corona: la crónica de los hijos y nietos de Iturbide* (1992), based on a collection of more than 500 letters.

There are, of course, volumes more to be read about Iturbide's life. Most of them are charged with a tension similar to the debates over Hidalgo's image that we saw in the previous chapter. As one of Iturbide's biographer asserts: "No podremos despojarnos de nuestro criterio para hacer una biografía *serena*, *imparcial*, como erróneamente lo

pretenden algunos; el historiador nunca puede ser sereno, nunca puede ser imparcial, porque jamás podrá despojarse de sus particulares sentimientos y de sus pasiones" (Romero Flores 11). Debates about national figures do indeed engender strong feelings, and as noted, run on immense amounts of emotional fuel. Maybe for this reason Rosa Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos* is such a seductive and intriguing novel. It sidesteps the contention surrounding the consummation of Mexico's independence and opens a new possibility for understanding the empire from the inside out. Instead of focusing on the political intrigues between Jacobins and conservatives, masons and clergy, Beltrán reexamines the empire by bringing forth the unheard, unexamined voices of its women.

TAKING BACK WOMEN'S SPACE IN THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Traditional histories, especially military and political histories of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries, are male histories. This is not to say, however, that women have not participated in wars. As we noted in the preceding chapter, not only was independence declared in the name of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico owes its first revolution to Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez alerting Miguel Hidalgo and Ignacio Allende of the conspiracy's discovery. Likewise, historian Elisabeth Salas's book, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military Myth and History* (1987) makes explicit the important contribution of women in Mexico's twentieth-century military history. To date, it is one of the few texts that shed any light on this subject.

If history is typically the history of men, then Gerda Lerner is correct in asserting that history has been the property of the minority. Women comprise the majority of earth's population but have, for reasons made clear by the early generations of feminists, gone relatively unaccounted for. Lerder observes that "the history of women has… a

built-in distortion: it comes to us through the lens of men's observations; refracted again through values which consider man the measure. What we know of the past experience of women has been transmitted to us largely through the reflections of men" (Lerder *The Majority Finds Its Past* 160). She prescribes a remedy for this disparity: "to construct a new history that will with true equality reflect the dual nature of mankind—its male and female aspect—we must first pause to reconstruct the missing half—the female experience: women's history" (160). Feminist historians, then, seek to recuperate and legitimate the place of women in history by reconfiguring the lens through which history is viewed.

They began their work by portraying women as oppressed or suffocated by domineering men. Recent trends in the theory, however, look beyond much studied assumptions of domination to address the dynamic dialogue between the sexes that inform politics, labor relations, et cetera. Women are no longer viewed as passive receivers of norms and rules, but are considered active negotiators of their private and public spaces. John R. Gillis, for example, studies the sexual relationships between domestic servants and their employers in nineteenth-century England. He demonstrates that not only did servants negotiate their sexuality with employers for practical reasons of keeping employment, but also—and more importantly—that many of them had adopted the values of middle- and upper-class society and expected their offspring to participate in that lifestyle. "Among higher servants in particular, the work demanded conformity to upper-class standards of respectability, rules of behavior which, even when not wholly internalized, had important effects on servants' social relations in and outside the household" (Gillis 143). Gillis effectively challenges the dominant notion that domestic servants are simply seduced and abandoned by their masters by showing that these women maintain their agency in determining their own sexuality. Other studies exist, as

well, like Afsaneh Najmabadi's work on ways in which a national panic over the abduction and selling of girls helped to authorize and legitimate the project of Iranian nation-building, Kristin Hoganson's reading of the Spanish-American war as a project of cultural masculinization, or Partha Chatterjee's and Mrinalini Sinha's rival accounts of the gendered bases of British imperialism and Indian nationalism (Pedersen “The Future of Feminist History”).

Redefining history by foregrounding women’s voices is a constant in Mexico’s female historical novelists. Rosario Castellanos’s *Oficio de tinieblas* recreates a seventeenth-century indigenous uprising in Chiapas. The uprising is led by a shamanic indigenous woman whose young son is offered as a Christ-like sacrifice for their people. Castellanos transplants the insurrection to present day Mexico, demonstrating—almost as a premonition of the 1994 Zapatista uprising—that the struggle for indigenous rights is as salient today as it was three hundred years ago. Ángeles Mastretta offers an alternate perspective on Mexico’s post-revolutionary consolidation of state power. *Arráncame la vida* takes place in the turbulent 1920s and the protagonist, the wife of a high-ranking military officer and politician, struggles against her husband’s domineering attitude as she searches to define herself creatively and sexually. The novel recreates in miniature the political difficulties associated with the transition from years of chaos towards single-party rule. Elena Poniatowska may be Mexico’s most prolific female historical novelist. Her works include recreations of the Mexican Revolution (*Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*) and the 1920s and Muralism (*Querido Diego, te abraza Quiela*). Most recently Poniatowska tackled the entire twentieth century in her ambitious novel about model-cum-photographer-cum-Soviet spy, Tina Modotti. The novel, *Tinísima*, demonstrates Poniatowska’s careful approach to historical research and detail, a keen interest in a female perspective, and her unabashed commitment to women’s history. One of the most

interesting female historical writers of recent years is Cristina Rivera Garza. Professionally trained as a historian at the University of Houston, Rivera Garza wrote her dissertation on psychiatric hospitals in Mexico. This topic became the subject of her most recognized novel, *Nadie me verá llorar*. Of this novel Rivera Garza has stated: "Mi idea fue tratar no la historia de los héroes o de los triunfadores, sino las voces no oficiales, las de los desprotegidos, aquellos perdedores que nadie quiso escuchar" (García "El descubrimiento literario"). As the narrator admits, there is another side to Mexico's history above and beyond the military and political. The protagonists of the novel never become involved in the revolutionary violence of the 1910s and 1920s. Instead, "Los dos anduvieron siempre en las orillas de la historia, siempre a punto de resbalar y caer fuera de su embrujo y siempre, sin embargo, dentro" (*Nadie me verá llorar* 174). These women are joined by others like Laura Esquivel, whose popular *Como agua para chocolate* recreates the domestic space of the early-twentieth-century Mexican kitchen and home, has been a continual bestseller in translation and led to a major motion picture.

Rosa Beltrán published her first novel, *La corte de los ilusos*, in 1995. The novel was awarded the pretisgious *Premio Planeta*. Later she published *El paraíso que fuimos* (2002), *Optimistas* (2006), and *Alta infidelidad* (2006). She has also published a number of short story collections, including *La espera* (1986) and *Amores que matan* (1996). Since *La corte de los ilusos*, Beltrán has become one of Mexico's most recognized female writers. Beltrán, like many of the authors mentioned above, challenge male-dominated histories. *La corte de los ilusos* presents a feminist history of Mexico's first empire. The novel focuses primarily on the women of the Iturbide family.

The classic historiographic texts have overlooked the Iturbide women. The exceptions to this rule are bawdy references to Ana María Huarte's prodigious fertility and, more popularly, to Nicolasa's madness and alleged amours with a young Antonio

López de Santa Anna. But little else is said about their roles in history. Contemporary texts similarly pass them by. Interestingly enough, fictional writers have given them more attention. Granados Maldonado, author of the 1850 play *Iturbide: ensayo dramático en tres actos*, credits Ana María with full knowledge of her husband's extramarital affairs. He does not mention Nicolasa, however, but this is not surprising. Granados Maldonado tacitly supports Iturbide and, as Iturbide himself did, hides the uncomfortable insanity of the emperor's sister from the public eye. Enrique Serna brings Nicolasa into his biographical novel of Santa Anna. Serna's portrayal of Santa Anna's flirtations with Nicolasa offers comic relief and underlines the young brigadier's ambition.

These examples emphasize the relative lack of attention given to the women of the court. Few documents exist about the Iturbide women. As Will Fowler writes: "Mexican women did not write diaries and the few letters of theirs that have survived rarely offer a glimpse of what they thought and felt. The better educated women of the period did not write novels" ("All the President's Women" 59). The Iturbide women, or at least Ana María, may be an exception to this general rule, however. After Iturbide's death, Ana María actively fought for the lifetime pension offered to her family by the Mexican government. Additionally, Maximilian of Austria adopted one of the Iturbide children in order to have a royal heir for the Mexican throne, and included a monthly stipend for the family. There appear to be a series of journals at the Convent of the Visitation in Georgetown, Virginia, but as of yet I have been unable to view them. Most of the documental evidence that appears to exist refers to the family's life after the empire's fall. Little remains that speaks of the Iturbide women's experiences prior to 1824. The dearth of information concerning these women allows Beltrán to enter into those areas that Brian McHale calls "the dark zones" of history.

La corte de los ilusos offers a nontraditional history of Mexico's first empire. Instead of focusing on the battlefield and the Congress, Beltrán places the action in the National Palace. The main protagonists are women: Ana María Huarte, Iturbide's wife; Nicolasa, Iturbide's aging and demented spinster sister; and Rafaela, Iturbide's widowed cousin. This novel is about women who want to make themselves heard but, because of the norms imposed upon them by imperial life, are unable to do so. The agent of their suppression is the emperor, Agustín de Iturbide, who consistently reminds them of their duty to be quiet. Each woman reacts in different ways: Ana María closes herself to her husband and reaches out for other women; Nicolasa finds solace in madness and acting out against the norm; and Rafaela fantasizes about what she envisions to be the opposite of Iturbide. *La corte de los ilusos* is a history of women struggling to claim themselves and their voice.

CULTURAL ATTITUDES IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY MEXICO

Each chapter of *La corte de los ilusos* includes epigraphs begins with a popular idiomatic expression, followed by a fragment from etiquette manuals, prayer books, popular texts, and other documents that nineteenth century society deemed appropriate for women. Salvador C. Fernández argues that these fragments have various functions in the text:

> …1) autentifican la temporalidad narrativa que la autora recrea; 2) sirven como textos costumbristas; 3) reproducen la oralidad del lenguaje de la sociedad mexicana; y 4) representan las diversidades ideológicas que corresponden al contenido del capítulo que les antecede. También estos textos que Rosa Beltrán incluye en su novela producen una heteroglosia que desautoriza el discurso unívoco oficial y una visión social uniforme. (Fernández 69)

Fernández overstates the function of these topics in his attempt to identify the novel in terms of Seymour Menton's formalist definition of Latin America's New Historical Novel. Menton borrows heavily from Bahktin, emphasizing heterglossia and carnavalesque elements. These fragments do not offer a multiplicity of ideologies, but rather resonate with monolithic conservatism. There is little variance in the notion they present about women. The heteroglossia Fernández refers is not created by the texts themselves, but by their juxtaposition with the thoughts and actions of the court's women. These fragments provide Beltrán with an alternate fountain of historical documents. It is significant that, contrary to the model of historical documentation established by the other novels analyzed in this dissertation, Beltrán opts to sidestep traditional historiographic resources. Whereas Ibargúengoitia, Solares, Del Paso, and Serna all build their narratives around political and military histories, Beltrán chooses alternate resources. The fragments reveal attitudes towards women that traditional histories typically overlook because they have been "transmitted to us largely through the reflections of men" (Lerder *The Majority Finds Its Past* 160). Textually recuperating these lost voices familiarizes readers with the social structures of repression and allows the author to develop a narrative about negotiation.

These epigraphs set the tone for the chapter and, taken as a whole, provide a documental context for understanding the prevailing societal norms and sexual politics of nineteenth-century Mexico. The document that begins Chapter Six, for example, reflects a growing preoccupation for Iturbide. It is an announcement in the *Gaceta Imperial* by a judge who reports being in possession of a silver dish that was stolen, but whose owner cannot be determined. The judge invites the owner to come collect the missing dish by providing the appropriate information. Chapter Six deals with Nicolasa's worsening kleptomania. The title and document of Chapter Eight work very well together. The title

is another idiomatic phrase: “Más fácil es apagar un primer deseo que satisfacer todos los que le siguen” (107). The document is a prayer invoking Christ, Saint Sabila, and Saint Cipriano, and Inés del Monte to conquer the supplicant’s lover. Since this chapter deals with Rafaela’s infatuation for Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, both are applicable. Chapter Two bears the phrase “Los hombres sensatos son los mejores diccionarios de la conversación.” As we will see shortly, this chapter narrates a reception where the upper crust of the Mexican court meet to see the Emperor’s “new clothes.” During the discussion the men glory in the revolution’s triumphs and the women complain that life was better under the colonial system. The opinion is expressed, time and time again, by the male interlocutors that women should hold their tongues, and restrict their comments to their domestic duties.

This last excerpt denotes a male notion of female inferiority that pervades the novel. The women of the court exist in a world peppered with moralistic attitudes about female behavior. The following epigraphs taken from etiquette manuals demonstrate these attitudes. The section entitled “Máximas morales dedicadas al bello sexo (por un ciudadano militar” offers advice to young Mexican young women:

> Hermosa joven, que conservas todavía ilesa tu reputación: no te desprendas jamás de este bien incomparable. El honor es como una isla escarpada y sin costa, donde no es posible reentrar una vez que se ha salido. Empapa tu entendimiento de este axioma: la pureza y el honor son para el alma lo que la salud para el cuerpo. Si concedes a tu amado lo que desea fuera de los límites de la ley él cesará de amarte: el amor de los hombres vive con la esperanza y muere con la posesión. (*La corte de los ilusos* 61)

The idiomatic expression that starts the nineteenth chapter equates women to children: “Las mujeres y los niños creen que veinte anos y veinte pesos no se acaban nunca” (251). Of women who are discontented with their station in life, the etiquette manual “Haciendo Hogar: La educación de la mujer y su influencia en la sociedad” says that, “Encontramos frecuentemente personas buenas, pero tan desabridas de trato, tan quejumbrosas, tan

decontentadizas; pues bien, estas personas tienen su utilidad, y es alumbrar a las que las rodean para que eviten hacerse tan desagradables como ellas" (253). The poem that starts chapter fifteen, "Definición de la mujer en común mala," best illustrates the attitude men in *La corte de los ilusos* share:

> Mujer, motivo de muerte
>
> Mujer, medio de pecado
>
> Mujer, mal en lo vedado
>
> Mujer, mentira más fuerte
>
> Mujer, monstruo que pervierte
>
> Mujer, vívora fingida
>
> Mujer, ponzoña florida
>
> Mujer, basilisco airado
>
> Mujer, demonio encarnado
>
> Mujer, infierno de en la vida. (199)

These attitudes are displayed publicly when the cream of Creole society gathers to preview the Emperor's new inaugural robes. There is, of course, an overt reference to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale about the monarch who gets taken in by a swindler promising him a suit of clothes that would be invisible to anyone who was not fit for court. The emperor and all his courtiers refuse to recognize that the king is naked because they fear losing their positions. When someone proposes a parade to show off the new suit, everyone enthusiastically agrees. The emperor's stroll down the main street is greeted with uncomfortable silence until a young boy cries out that he has no clothes on.

The meeting to preview Iturbide's robes is attended by Mexico City's elites. Military and local business leaders attend, as do their wives. The clothes in question at this meeting, however, have little to do with the inaugural robes. The revolution did not

resolve long-standing domestic and social problems in the city. During the gathering the women make their voices heard while their husbands work to silence them. Joaquinita de Estanquillo, the wife of the Marquis de Salvatierra, starts the problems by bringing up the nostalgic and exaggerated notion that before the Empire, nobody ever stole anything. The men attempt to write her comment off as frivolous: "Las mujeres tienen el hábito de creer que el tiempo que no existe es el mejor. Nunca están conformes con lo que tienen" (28). Their concern is that, by metaphorically revealing the Emperor's nakedness—his inability to maintain order—they will be found unworthy. The Marquis of Salvatierra tells his wife that "Son tiempos que ofrecen alguna dificultad, como tantos otros—explicó el Marqués… como despachando el asunto" (28). But then, "señaló su plato y la conminó a aplicarse a él. En boca cerrada no entran moscas, señora—le susurró" (28). We see two attempts to silence Joaquinita in this encounter: first, a collaborative effort by the men, and second, an individual attempt by her husband. But Joaquinita's comment sparks an evening of uncomfortable comments.

Other women echo Joaquinita's concern. Doña Paz de Villar pipes up, "En tiempos de Revillagigedo, y según mi señora abuela, aún en los del virrey Marquina, no se perdían las cosas de la gente de bien" (28). Doña Ana Iraeta de Mier, one of the court's most outspoken women, also chimes in: "Es que las costumbres no eran tan relajadas" (29). The common sentiment among the women is that things have significantly been downgraded as a result of Iturbide's victory. They complain about more robberies, bumpier streets, smellier garbage, ruder pedestrians, and more rain. Ironically, most of these women's status in society has been significantly upgraded. There are very few moments when they have an opportunity to influence politicians or military officers, and these opportunities are wasted on trivialities. In Beltrán's view, Mexico's new elite women are more concerned with the preservation of their comforts and privileges than

with anything else. They have moved from second-class to first-class. With their promotion they expect the same privileges, pomp, and culture they had imagined Spanish women enjoying. While politically nothing has significantly changed, their expectations about social comfort have.

It should be noted that Beltrán casts a critical view on the pretensions of most of Mexico's elite women. She portrays them as catty, superficial, and self-interested. Elizabeth Guerrero argues that *La corte de los ilusos* is a criticism of the pretensions of middle-class women moving up the social ladder. I agree with her, and would highlight the selfish nature of their complaints. They feel that their ascension in social status should include an increase in comfort. They expect the comfort they imagined their Spanish colonial masters had. Moreover, having obtained power, they hope to replicate the same type of divisions to keep others from enjoying their new-found comforts. The narrator tells us that doña Ana "no acababa de entender por qué la insurgencia andaba perorando tan contenta aquello de la igualdad" (29). She will later voice this class bias as an attack on Iturbide's promise of equality: "Lo que quiere usted decir… es que si al Generalísimo no se le hubiera ocurrido la brillante idea de entrar con el Ejército Trigarante a la ciudad y gritar a todo pulmón que a partir de ese momento todos en México eran iguales, el agua no hubiera llegado a los aparejos." Don José Ramón Malo clarifies this point when he explains, "Lo que el Varón de Dios había promulgado era la promesa de que todos gozarían de los mismos derechos ante la ley, lo que, bien visto, no tenía por qué implicar igualdad ninguna."

When women raise their concerns, men silence them. Earlier the Marquis de Salvatierra tried to keep his wife quiet by speaking to her directly. As the conversation continues, he becomes louder in his objections: "Propongo a las señoras cambiar de tema… Si he de seguir sentado en este flanco de la mesa,… pido, cuando menos, que las

señoras piensen un poco antes de hablar" (29). A congressional representative by the name of Muñoz tries to reason with the women "en tono paternal":

> Pero, señoras mías,… seamos sinceros: antes o después de empedradas, las calles de la ciudad han sido poco menos que un muladar. […] ¿Por qué cenir ahora a eschar la culpa de nuestras desgracias a los tiempos que corren? ¿Por qué no atender a las labores propias del bello sexo y dejar que sus maridos se ocupen de estos engorrosos asuntos?" (30)

José Ramón Malo further belittles his female partygoers when he comments that, "A pesar de sus esfuerzos, digo, por entender de cuestiones ajenas a su mundo, jamás lograrán comprender que no es lo mismo un imperio a manos de españoles que un imperio en nuestras manos" (32) .

EL DRAGÓN DE HIERRO

Among Iturbide's numerous epithets, *El Dragón de Hierro* (the iron dragon) seems to be the one that most succinctly summarizes Rosa Beltrán's portraryal of the general in the novel. Beltrán hammers home the court's misogynist attitudes by making them part and parcel of Iturbide's character. Spanish American dictator novels, like Mario Vargas Llosa's *La fiesta del chivo* (2000), frequently emphasize the dictator's mistreatment of women. *La corte de los ilusos* offers a similar representation of Iturbide.

Some have misunderstood Beltrán's treatment of Iturbide. Shortly after *La corte de los ilusos* was published, literary critic Christopher Domínguez Michael argued that Beltrán falls into the disagreeable tendency of worshipping that which she ought to deplore. Arguing that historical novelists suffer from a bizarre form of Stockholm syndrome, Domínguez Michael observed that "entre más digno de aborrecimiento resulta el dictador, más entrañable resulta como personaje, convirtiéndose en un héreoe patético

pero ingenioso, víctima de sí mismo antes que verdugo, tierna criatura cuyo ineluctable otoño nos permite recuperarlo como padre" (*Vuelta* 41). He seems to forget, however, that given a legalistic reading, the same type of criticism could be applied to Cervantes' *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote*. Of Beltrán Domínguez quips, "Con *La corte de los ilusos* esta autora otorga a don Agustín de Iturbide el inapreciable perdón de la novela, indulgencia que el alma del único emperador mexicano ya había dejado de esperar, maldecido durante el siglo XIX y quizá justamente olvidado por sus compatriotas en la actualidad" (41).

Domínguez Michael misses the fact that Beltrán does not portray Iturbide as a particularly loveable individual. Beltrán depicts Iturbide as choleric and intolerant. He frequently yells, swears, and rants throughout the National Palace. "Toda la tarde," one of the courtesans "lo oyó gritar y proferir maldiciones. Ella, naturalmente, se asustó. Nunca había visto a una persona tan descompuesta como vio ese día a Agustín" (12-13). Servants administer regular doses of herbal tea to calm him after his tirades, and family members live in fear of sudden explosions of anger (17). He demonstrates little patience when others fail to meet his expectations. The lack of order in his bathroom is a constant source of frustration. He fails to understand why servants cannot learn how an imperial bathroom should be ordered.

> Exhaló: no había modo de hacer entender a Basilia que cuando el Emperador pide que le preparen un baño espera ver una muda limpia y no un albornoz. Que junto a la bañera de palastro esmaltado de blancodebe encontrarse un saco relleno de salvado para refrescar el agua, cuántas veces tiene que decirlo, el cepillo de cerdas naturales para friccionar la espalda debe esta colgado en la pared y no junto a la coladera. ¿Cómo hacerles comprender, Dios de los Ejércitos, cómo, si no entendían lo que era vivir un Imperio? (142)

In La corte de los ilusos, Iturbide also expects perfection from his wife. According to him, the entire nation building project depends on her ability to maintain order in the home: "Si la Emperatriz no se daba cuenta de que tenía que estar a la altura

de su deber, el proyecto libertario que el Dragón había soñado para el país se vendría abajo" (86). The political failures the empire suffers are not his fault, he reasons, but rather the result of his wife's inability to meet her matriarchal duties. Consequently, he blames her for the Empire's shortcomings. This thought occurs to him when he finds out that his sister, Nicolasa, has gotten lost while on an errand under Rafaela's care. He enters the room where his wife lies, having just given birth to his ninth child, with the intent to remind her of her responsibilities to maintain order in the home:

> Agustín tomó entre sus manos una de las blancas manecitas de su señora. Lentamente la llevó a sus labios. La besó. Algo había quedado pendiente en la lección, algo que no se había entendido. El Emperador recordó a su mujer: el esposo es el amo, el defensor, el proveedor de la casa y, en este caso particularísimo, el administrador del Imperio. Bien. Eso estaba claro. No cabía la menor duda. Proseguía. En cuanto a la esposa, ella debía ser el encanto que convirtiera el hogar en delicioso nido. Aunque no fuera Emperatriz, que lo era, aunque no fuera madre, ni maestra, ni institutriz, que también lo era, tan sólo por el hecho de ser mujer, ella, Ana María, debía concentrarse en la sagrada misión que había adquirido en el momento de ser bautizada con un nombre de mujer. Educar. Sonreír. Y callar. Y de esas tres cosas, sobre todo callar, señora, hacer acopio de fuerzas y callar de nuevo, que el silencio, aunque no lo parezca, es el más grande ejercicio de energía. (86)

This scene epitomizes the spousal relationship Beltrán wants to portray. Instead of congratulating his wife on the birth of their son, Iturbide takes the opportunity to perorate about a woman's duties. He lists three duties: educating children, smiling, and most importantly, keeping quiet. This scene is not without its national parallels. The novel suggests that, at the birth of the nation, Iturbide did not listen to the needs of the nation, but chose rather to establish an empire based on traditional models.

These traditional models are based on sexual repression. Beltrán portrays Iturbide as a man wholeheartedly dedicated to the proposition that women exist to reproduce. The preceding scene is terribly ironic because Iturbide waits to deliver his lesson on duty until she is physically and emotionally weakened by childbirth. In essence, Iturbide berates his

wife for not fulfilling her responsibilities when she has just performed what, according to his philosophy, is her most important duty: bringing children into the world. The exception to this rule would be the sexual function his lover, the "Güera" Rodríguez, plays. Not only does Iturbide maintain extramarital relationships with a widowed socialite, but he scandalizes his wife by deviating from the preordained inaugural path to wave to his concubine with all the courtiers in tow. Beltrán's Iturbide believes that when women deviate from their divine mission, they become the ruination of society. Convinced that the women of his household are conspiring against him, Iturbide rummages through Rafaela's underwear drawer for evidence. While doing so, he reflects upon "una causa inscrita en la historia y conocida por todos desde tiempos bíblicos: 'El hombre de juicio no ignora que el sexo delicado, cuyo deber es entregarse al aumento y delicia de todas las naciones, cuando no se ocupa de ello es en cambio el origen funesto de todas las desgracias" (151). He suspects the women of his household of betraying him because, "de todas las mujeres, las viudas, las estériles, las célibes, las solteras y las ancianas no sirven más que para acarrear problemas y distraer el caudal de la familia que ocupa de cuidarlas" (151). When he finds what he incorrectly supposes to be incriminating evidence against his cousin, Rafaela, he decides to pack her, his wife, and his sister off to convents because "Gobernar un imperio era tarea difícil, pero razonar con una mujer era labor imposible" (157). In the novel this scene coincides with a crucial political error. In both the novel and in history, Iturbide argued that there was a plot to assassinate him. As a result, the Emperor suspended Congress. Most historians generally agree that he did so because the Scottish rite masons, the majority party in congress, were withholding funds and bankrupting the empire. Unable to work with them, Iturbide ordered the suspension of activities and handpicked a temporary governing body. The narrator observes that Iturbide "Estaba al tanto de que fuera de palacio también

conspiraban contra él los insurgentes, el Congreso, sus compañeros de campaña. Pero las cosas a su tiempo y la justicia principia en casa" (151). In politics, Iturbide suspends the congress. At home, he decides that his wife, sister, and cousin present a serious threat to his wellbeing and packs them off for a cloister.

The first empire is the product of the fevered imagination of Mexico's elites. The term "iluso" can be applied to those who inhabit a world of make-believe. Beltrán suggests that Mexico's elites founded a make-believe empire. Jorge Volpi observes that "Antes que Rosa Beltrán, el Agustín de Iturbide histórico, con idénticas fantasías, hubo de consagrarse a esta tarea. Se trataba de sacar, de la nada, un universo que no existía en México y para el cual, desde luego, nadie estaba preparado" ("Como inventar y destruir un imperio en diecinueve lecciones" 74). The will to create required the founders of the empire to lay down rules of behavior. Beltrán's novel demonstrates that these historical restrictions are not without their fictional resonances. Male control over voices and sexuality are analogous in the novel to the weaknesses that permeated the first empire. Iturbide's fascination with controlling female sexuality and silencing the women of his family relate to the elites' push for a monarchy and the subjugation of dissident voices.

WILY WAYS: STRATEGIES OF NEGOTIATION

As one critic puts it, *La corte de los ilusos* "is centered on the hearth, a space dominated by women characters. Beltrán's approach to history questions the concept that the hearth is a trivial space, while the battlefield or the courtroom are places of consequence" (Guerrero "The Emperor's New Clothes" 4). The novel's actions is circumscribed into feminine space. The National Palace is described as home and hearth, as opposed to the locus of imperial power. Much of the action is filtered through the

subjectivities of the court's women, including Iturbide's ever-pregnant wife, Ana María; Ana María's widowed cousin, Rafaela; Iturbide's demented sister, Nicolasa; and especially the family's French seamstress, Madame Henriette. Each woman in the court embodies one or more strategies for negotiating in the oppressive world of the court. This section is organized as a series of brief individual analyses to allow for continuity in dealing with their negotiations. However, it should be noted that oftentimes they employ similar strategies.

The Duties of an Empress

Male society pushes women in the court to conform to strict rules of etiquette and the traditional roles of mother and wife. Three of the four major women in this novel, however, are neither mothers nor wives. As noted earlier, Iturbide views spinsters, widows, the barren, and the aged as the root of all social dilemmas. According to Beltrán's emperor, a woman should be married, fertile, and silent. His wife, Ana María, is the only woman in the novel who fits this description. As she works to conform to her husband's expectations, though, she finds that her behavior at odds with her conscience. The more he pushes for perfection, the more she withdraws from him and builds community with other women.

The narrator informs us that as a young woman, Ana María de Huarte "todo tenía menos intenciones de quedarse a vestir santos" (15). She employed her charms flirting with young royalist officers, and in due time came to the attention of Agustín de Iturbide (15). They married in 1805. Iturbide was 22 years old and Ana María was 19. Beltrán portrays Ana María as a woman heavily burdened by her ever increasing progeny and her prodigious fertility. As the novel opens, Ana María suffers nausea and "los vahídos

típicos de sus embarazos" (11). Shortly before the coronation ceremony, "La Emperatriz se sintió atacada por las náuseas: miró a doña Amparo con rencor. La madre putativa de la Emperatriz comprendió el mensaje y corrió escaleras arriba por las sales de amoníaco" (45). In their nineteen years of marriage, Ana María bore Iturbide 10 children. The first child, Agustín Jerónimo, was born two and a half years after their marriage. The remaining children came at fairly regular intervals over the preceding years. The final child, Agustín Cosme, named after his father, was born in 1824, after Iturbide's execution. Interestingly, Beltrán only mentions nine children. When writing of the 1822 birth of child number nine, Felipe Andrés María de Guadalupe, the narrator reports that Iturbide "se encontró con la noticias de que había sido padre por octava ocasión" (83). It seems odd that Beltrán would omit one of the children since it would only strengthen her portrayal of Iturbide's wife living under the constant burden of her pregnancies.

As wife of the newly crowned emperor, Ana María is expected to be a model woman. Again I quote Iturbide's expectations of his wife in order to underline what was expected of a model woman in court:

> En cuanto a la esposa, ella debía ser el encanto que convirtiera el hogar en delicioso nido. Aunque no fuera Emperatriz, que lo era, aunque no fuera madre, ni maestra, ni institutriz, que también lo era, tan sólo por el hecho de ser mujer, ella, Ana María, debía concentrarse en la sagrada misión que había adquirido en el momento de ser bautizada con un nombre de mujer. Educar. Sonreír. Y callar. Y de esas tres cosas, sobre todo callar. (86)

Iturbide clearly defines her territory of influence as the home. She is to teach, smile, and keep silent. But her royal status also carries with it other obligations. Among other things, the Empress oversees domestic servants, cares for the children, watches over Nicolasa, promotes public health measures, and presents an example of piety. These responsibilities weigh heavily on her. While convalescing from childbirth, Ana María complains to her husband that "se cansaba de sus obligaciones" (85).

It appears that the most onerous duty placed upon her is Iturbide's requirement to keep quiet. She is aware of Iturbide's extramarital infidelities with a widowed socialite but cannot talk about it. The narrator tells us that prior to coronation, Ana María had been unable to decide if allowing her husband to attend gatherings at the home of the "Güera" Rodríguez. She realizes her error when, after the coronation ceremony, Iturbide deviates from the processional route to wave to his concubine. Ana María is forced to follow her husband, stumbling through the muddy streets: "reprimió el coraje. Siguió adelante, sin bajar nunca la cabeza, controlando el terror que le provocaban las bocas que le dirigían frases burlonas desde los balcones, tolerando la humillación" (56-57). This procession marks a rather ignominious start for the empire, especially for the Empress who is publicly humiliated but unable to defend herself. "Ana María Josefa Ramona Huarte Muñoz y Sánchez de Tagle, ciudadana ejemplar, madre amantísima y mujer del Dragón de Hierro había amanecido tan indecisa que a esas alturas ignoraba incluso si haberse convertido en la Emperatriz de México era una suerte o una verdadera desgracia" (57).

On occasion Ana María does speak to her husband, but can only repeat phrases and platitudes about a woman's role in society. When Iturbide recriminates her for not maintaining order at home, she attempts to fight back, but finally must rely on the misogynist lessons she has learned.

> —Las mujeres que huyen de la virtud están llenas de vanidad, de orgullo y de pasiones bajas.
>
> Y luego, no sabiendo si podría recordar la lección completa, y con el temor de que su esposo fuera a acusarla de decir insensateces, como ocurría con frecuencia, continuó:
>
> —Todo era culpa del lujo dispendioso, Agustín. El lujo y la vida regalada y los caprichos femeninos, que los tres bastan para agotar los más gruesoscaudales, sin contar con que esos vicios son un retrayente poderoso a los hombres en los matrimonios, y ya se sabe que una mujer sin marido es un barco sin timón... (155)

She is unable to defend herself, fearing that Iturbide will insult her. Consequently she resorts to self-flagellation. But this abasement does not coincide with her feelings. She stops the repetition short because, "al repetir las últimas palabras dichas como si se tratara de otra persona, recordó la odiosa revelación del obispo de Puebla," who had informed her of her husband's affair (155). She recognizes that another individual—the ideal wife and mother—repeats these rote lines, and that this individual does not correspond to the woman whose confessor has told her of her husband's infidelities.

> Quiso continuar con su respuesta, sirviéndose de la parte siguiente de la lección, la mujer cuando es virtuosa debe hacer caso omiso de las acusaciones hechas en contra de su padre o su marido, y al escuchar los infundios, en no hablando no tendrá la boca abierta, y deberá mirar al que acusa sin interés, y se sentirá ofendida por agravio. (155-156)

Realizing that the rules of her society have placed her at odds with herself, Ana María lashes out at everyone in the court, save her husband. Iturbide chides her for "insensateces," as she had feared, and informs her that the next day she will be sent to a convent on the pretext that "las mujeres han de estar entre mujeres, a fin de conservar su reputación en tiempos difíciles y ocasionar a sus maridos el menor número de problemas" (157).

Ana María's personality undergoes a drastic change when Iturbide confines her to the convent. But she takes his counsel to heart. Though her stay there is temporary, she withdraws emotionally and physically from her husband, and keeps company with women. Throughout the rest of the novel, Ana María turns to women. The most notable case is her treatment of Nicolasa, whom she had earlier despised. When she demands that Iturbide bring her home from the convent, Iturbide is overcome with joy. His misinterprets her demands as the positive effects of the convent: "Se daba cuenta de los beneficios que había obrado el convento en el ánimo de su mujer. Apenas unos meses antes Ana María hablaba de la forma de deshacerse de su odiosa cuñada" (195). Her

apparent increase in charity causes a resurgence “la ternura de los primeros tiempos” and he embraces her. She, however, does not respond. “Ella se mantuvo inmóvil, con los ojos puestos por encima del hombro de su esposo y, sin verlo, dijo ‘Obras son amores y no buenas razones’” (195). Here Ana María turns the tables on her husband. Whereas previously she had only be able to quote etiquette manuals in response to her husband, she now uses the lessons to recriminate him. She turns his own rhetoric against him. Upon Nicolasa’s arrival, Ana María personally oversees her care. By now the old woman’s dementia has worsened, but Ana María feels impelled to make the following confession: “Hace tiempo dejé de juzgarte…. En el fondo, siempre te comprendí…. nunca hice porque lo supieras y ¡me he arrepentido tanto, tanto…! [...] La locura es el único lugar soportable de esta tierra” (215-216).

Covert Operations

Ana María is not the only character who attempts to conform to social norms. Her widowed cousin, Rafaela, finds herself in a similar quandry. Living in the National Palace at the behest of the Emperor, Rafaela’s duties include watching over Nicolasa and educating the royal offspring. But her discontent with the restrictive atmosphere in the palace leads her to collaborate with one of nineteenth-century Mexico’s most eccentric figures and Iturbide’s most vocal opponent, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier.

Fernández asserts that Fray Servando’s role in the novel underscores the tension between Mexico’s ever-conflictive political philosophies: monarchism and republicanism. In his opinion, Beltrán casts a more benevolent light on the priest while ridiculing the emperor. “En fin, el encuentro establece la superioridad intelectual y moral de Fray Servando Teresa de Mier ante una caracterización esperpéntica del Emperador y

su Imperio" (Fernández 70). I am unconvinced by Fernández's argument on this point, primarily because both men appear equally buffoonish in the novel. The scene in question portrays a perplexed and uneducated Iturbide trying to decipher the priest's incoherent Latin ramblings. Literally and figuratively, they are speaking two different languages with no hope of finding any middle ground. But Fernández is correct in his analysis of their ideological differences. Fray Servando was a passionate defender of the republican creed, and made it his personal mission to dismantle the empire.

Rafaela's attempts to conform to rigorous social norms result in uncomfortably comic situations because her desires conflict with her duties. She harbors an ardent sexual desire for Fray Servando Teresa de Mier. When Fray Servando comes to Iturbide's retreat to discuss his concerns about the empire, Rafaela is designated to introduce him. She meticulously plans out the encounter: "Rafaela ensayaba el saludo inicial seguido de la pregunta obligada, qué gusta usted tomar, y del ramillete de posibilidades... Pensaba en la elección que haría Fray Servando y sentía un escalofrío recorrerla" (114). Her attraction to the priest encumbers her courtly manners, however, resulting in the stuff adolescent nightmares are made of. When Fray Servando arrives at the hacienda, Rafaela finds herself tongue-tied.

> Rafaela hubiera querido dejar de ser Primera Marquesa de Alta Peña y Camarera Menor de la Corte para iniciar el saludo que había ensayado para el caso, pero entonces las cincuenta y seis letras de su nombre y apellido, sin contar con las del título, se vinieron encima y se empeñaron en no dejarla decir esta boca es mía. Los brazos no se comportaron mejor: cuando trató de estirar uno de ellos hacia el salón de recibir, el brazo hizo un movimiento brusco hacia arriba y hacia abajo, con lo que Fray Servando pensó que quizá ese brazo quería señalarle algo que ocurría en el techo. (115)

The physical humor Beltrán employs here embodies the uncomfortable position the Iturbide women find themselves in. We saw earlier that Ana María breaks down into disjointed accusations when trying to speak against her husband. Rafael suffers a similar

disjointedness, but here it is physical, not cognitive. Her jerky motions reflect her sense of propriety short-circuiting her impulse to embrace the priest.

Rafaela finds solace from the rigors of courtly life in sexual fantasy. Jorge Volpi makes the following observation about this tension between courtly manners and internal desire: “Hacia afuera, la *cortesía* y los modos galantes y parcos de la nobleza resultan intachables. En cambio, hacia adentro, las ideas de la Marquesa no podría ser más escandalosas: casi en un ensueño, imagina encuentros de un erotismo tierno y estúpido con el sacerdote, aproximaciones que nunca llegarán a concretarse” (Volpi 76). She fantasizes about lusty rendezvous with the priest in which “él la llevara lejos, donde ella pudiera sentirlo entre sus muslos, desafiando él las llamas del infierno de ella ocn esa lengua mordaz y terrible de fraile descontento” (116). Fray Servando becomes the outlet for her frustrations and the symbol of her liberation, a redeeming angel who can free her from Iturbide’s grasp: “Imaginaba el momento en que Fray Servando entraría a San Agustín de las Cuevas, rodeado por una luz, como arcángel de las pastorelas, y se veía a sí misma inclinándose a besar su mano y ofreciendo sus servicios para curar enfermos, enviar mensajes, recabar limosnas y hasta conspirar contra su propia familia si él lo consideraba necesario” (114). She envisions giving herself entirely to the priest and participating in any of the activities he would prescribe for her, including collecting alms, ministering to the sick, and conspiring against her family.

Eventually Rafaela comes to view conspiring against her family as the only means available to obtain her desires. When Iturbide imprisons Servando, Rafaela becomes his personal courier, shuttling subversive missives from his cell to his collaborators. “No pensó en su rango, ni en las consecuencias del acto que iba a cometer, ni tomó en cuenta el peso de su nombre y apellido. De momento su vida pertenecía a ese amor trágico que el destino le imponía” (204). But her desires seem to include more than a romantic tryst.

Rafaela's involvement with the subversives represents "un giro inesperado, ése que había estado aguardando durante tantos años con el ánimo suspendido" (204). Rebellion becomes a break from the rigidity of courtly life. Moving outside the boundaries of legality imbues her life with a sense of meaning it had previously lacked.

But shortly thereafter her betrayal is discovered, and Rafaela finds herself on the run. Doña Ana Onza reveals Rafaela's participation in Servando's escape from prison in an attempt to save Rafaela from hellfire (205). Servando was caprtured and sent back to prison, and "Rafaela, desesperada, huyó, nadie supo adónde" (205). Her covert operations did little to change the course of the empire. But, like the protagonist of George Orwell's *1984*, for whom every subversive act against the all-pervasive power of Big Brother was a victory, Rafaela's betrayal leads to freedom. She is unable to satisfy her sexual desire for Fray Servando, but she does free herself from the Iturbide household. As a result, she loses her privileges but she no longer resides under the emperor's oppressive watch.

Madness, Desire, and Rebellion

Iturbide's sister is a withered sexagenarian with racy fantasies about the young brigadier Antonio López de Santa Anna and a penchant for kleptomania. Nicolasa, the oldest of the Iturbide children, never married. She lived under the constant care of her youngest brother, Agustín, and was a source of embarrassment for the newly created court. Nicolasa's treatment in the novel shares similarities with two literary antecedents: the grandmother in Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and Ferando del Paso's representation of Empress Carlota in *Noticias del imperio*. From García Lorca's play, Beltrán draws on the grandmother's lust for life and male company. But the old woman is continually locked up by Bernarda in an attempt to keep her from ruining the

family name. Del Paso's character is described as "imaginación, la loca de la casa", which certainly applies to Nicolasa's flights of romantic fantasy. But there is more to Beltrán's representation than appropriation. Beltrán's Nicolasa is the only woman in the story who evades society's norms by paying them no attention whatsoever.

Because Nicolasa is mad, her brother orders constant vigilance of her actions. And yet, despite her madness, she demonstrates stark moments of lucidity that members of her family, enraptured by their own illusions, fail to recognize. When, for instance, the court determines to reinstate the Order of Guadalupe to bring honor to the court, Nicolasa is invited to participate with Ana María, Rafaela, and the Bishop of Puebla in selecting the honorees. Ana María selected her aged father; Rafaela chose the late viceroy Juan O'Donojú; and Nicolasa disapproved of their selections and opted for younger, more attractive members. When asked to explain herself, Nicolasa explains that the Order of Guadalupe should project an image of strength, nobility, and virility. "Esta mujer ha votado por un anciano… Y Rafaela por un muerto. Queréis decirme ¿qué clase de reuniones puede tener una congregación de este tipo?" (66). She explains herself further: "A no ser que Don Isidro convoque una sesión de espiritismo donde se invite al finado O'Donojú no veo la forma de que puede establecerse diálogo con él. Y aun el caso de comunicarse con el muerto sigo sin ver quién pueda obligarlo más tarde a pagar sus cuotas" (66). Despite her clear logic, the members of the selection committee deem that "la Princesa se disponía a complicar las cosas" (66). They view her as inferior and disregard her opinions in much the same way Iturbide considers them unworthy of attention.

The princess's insistence on Antonio López de Santa Anna's inclusion in the Order of Guadalupe is indicative of her preference for him. Their possible affair has been the subject of historiographic gossip for nearly two centuries. Depictions of their

relationship, such as the one in Enrique Serna's *el seductor de la patria*, typically undercut Santa Anna's image as a lady's man and reflect the lengths to which his lust for power would take him. However, in *La corte de los ilusos*, their relationship takes on two other hues. It epitomizes the desire for freedom from sexual repression that underpins the entire novel.

First, I would suggest that the older Nicolasa is just as willing to take advantage of her ambitious young suitor as he is to take advantage of her position. In this sense, Nicolasa is willing to play Santa Anna's games of sexual politics in order to satisfy her own physical desires. A flashback in the third chapter reveals this cat-and-mouse game of sexual politics. At a party at the well-known Casa de Azulejos in downtown Mexico City, the two meet and take a stroll on the terrace for a breath of air. "Los sofocos de ella eran reales, los de él, fingidos" (75). An awkward game of seduction ensues as "El militar se esfuerza por hablarle como hablaría a una jovencita y Nicolasa agradece este esfuerzo, enternecida" (75). When the narration is focalized through Santa Anna, we read his machinations: "Manos de vieja. Dos manos como dos huevos de arrugas y las manchas. Al lado de esas manos no hay que buscar méritos, no hay más que recibirlos" (76). Nicolasa, on the other hand, is overcome with her own desires. "Un poco mas arriba de los muslos, he ahí el sitio innombrable, ese nicho que una virgen de sesenta años no se atreve a bautizar. Trinchera, fusil, ballesta. Es tantas alegrías y tantos objetos peligrosos. Acerca la mano, libera uno a uno los botones" (77). Before they are able to consummate their encounter Iturbide intterupts them and orders Santa Anna's immediate transfer to another regiment. This reading would allow us to view Nicolasa's relationship as a bartering of poterntial political favor for sexual ones.

Second, beyond sexual satisfaction, Nicolasa seriously considers Santa Anna's advances as a serious opportunity for marriage. There seems to be no evidence that she

believes the brigadier is madly infatuated with her, but she does not discard the possibility that her flirtations might land her a suitor. “Como si Nicolasa no se hubiera dado cuenta de que el joven había renunciado a la idea de pedir su mano, inició el bordado de su ajuar de novia por un juego de sábanas que lucían las iniciales de ambos” (77-78). Marriage to Santa Anna becomes her dominant preoccupation throughout the novel. After Ana María returns from the convent, Nicolasa takes ill. Her hallucinations become more frequent, and the topic of her dementia centers on Santa Anna: “Dentro de unos minutos, brigadier… pero ahora no…. Mire, brigadier, no es que yo no quiera… sino que no es tan prudente salir tanto a la terraza” (216). In her demented state, Nicolasa still holds to the idea that she can escape the “prudent” norms of society. Marriage represents freedom from her brother’s control.

A French Courtesan in the Mexico

Thus far we have seen that the women of the Iturbide family attempt to negotiate the restrictions placed upon them by a restrictive male society with varying degrees of success. Ana María initally opts for conformity, but when this fails, she withdraws from her husband and forms relationships with other women. Rafaela reacts by rebelling against her family, and aids in bringing down the empire. Nicolasa finds refuge in madness, which allows her to violate restrictive norms. The family’s French seamstress, Madame Henriette, offers the final, and possibly most effective, negotiation strategy of the novel.

In the opening pages we learn that she is exiled in Mexico, though we have no information about the reasons behind her flight. Evidence later suggests, however implicitly, that Madame Henriette was a monarchist who fled the Revolution. The

narrator only reveals that she has nothing to return to in the Old World: “Pero el que no tuviera a qué regresar a la patria de sus antepasados no impedía que hablara de ella como del más bello ideal y que sintiera a la nueva tierra como una pesadilla impuesta a su sueño y empeñada en recargarse en él” (9). But her foreignness, more specifically her French citizenship, empowers her in the Americas. Nineteenth-century Mexico was enamored by French society, and Henriette’s pretensions gave her an air of superiority. It is precisely this affected haughtiness that lands her a job with the Iturbide family. While interviewing with Iturbide’s mother, the narrator informs readers that “La insolencia del tono bastó para que la modista fuera contratada de inmediato. La mujer de don Joaquín la aceptó al instante, convencida de que la altanería y el acento francés eran síntoma inequívoco de superioridad y experiencia” (9). The combination of the Henriette’s haughtiness and her European credentials create a bubble around her that excludes her from the traditional roles assigned by the court to women. She is free to say what she thinks, act as she desires, and violate the norms of courtly behavior.

She takes liberties, for example, when addressing Iturbide. She calls him by his first name: “Henriette repetía que había visto a Agustín desde que era *un petit garçon* que se meaba en los calzones, las cosas por su nombre, y por eso no podía sino tomar a broma la idea de que ahora tuviera que llamarlo ‘Su Alteza Imperial’ cada vez que se veía obligada a pedirle, *¡mon Dieu!*, sumir el vientre para ajustar los alfileres” (15). She is able to comment about the emperor’s increased weight, the tacky costumes Ana María designs for her children, and the ridiculousness of the new court. “Luego de clavar los últimos alfileres, miró de frente a Su alteza y le espetó que, hablando claro y en buen mexicano, lo que estába haciendo era dar al pueblo atole con el dedo” (17). This last phrase is worth clarifying. *Darle atole con el dedo* means to promise a lot and to give very little, or to trick others by offering something that does not exist. The implication is

clear: Henriette is conscious of the royal family's shortcomings, its inability to provide a true monarchy, and, possibly, their unworthiness to bear the title of royalty. Nevertheless, she aids in creating the illusion of royalty through her creations. At this comment, the women observing the scene expect Iturbide to explode. He does not get angry, however, because the uniform—the illusion—she has created is of such high quality. "Así que a esto llama usted dar atole con el dedo? [...] Pues si con atolito vamos sanando, atolito vamos dando" (17).

Costuming and theatricality pervade the novel. Like Ibargüengoitia—and all the authors analyzed in this dissertation obsessed by theatricality—Beltrán demonstrates the imperial family's need to dress up and performatively create a dignified royal court *ex nihilo*. The inaugural ceremony itself enjoys all the pomp and circumstance of a European coronation, except for the uncomfortable fact that it is an illusion crowned with false jewels. Rafaela, the Empress's cousin who had previously been so enamored by the gala, finds out midway through the procession that jewels are fake. Her dreams are crushed as she realizes she now belongs to "un imperio de pacotilla." Elisabeth Guerrero expands upon these ideas in an excellent essay about costuming and women's space in the novel. She argues that the novel, in a vein similar to Andersen's fairy tale, "parodies Iturbide's grandiose displays in imitation of European aristocracy. Iturbide's court is destined to a quick demise as it spills over with outdated ornamentation; like the emperor in the tale, he is deceived to think that 'the clothes make the man'" ("The Emperors New Clothes" 3). Guerrero further proposes that that Madame Henriette is the "costume designer of Iturbide's theatrical performance of a great empire; the shiny garnishments that she creates seek to distract and deceive the public" (8). I agree with Guerrero in that Madame Henriette is the court's chief costume designer. But I offer a different reading of Henriette's intentions. I believe that Beltrán portrays her as someone who mocks the

royal family, and ultimately, looks down upon their princely pretensions. In the novel, Henriette is, first and foremost, a servant or an employee. True, she has accompanied the family for many years. But nevertheless she is not a member of the family. Her idealization of France and her original designs for the inaugural robes lead me to believe that Henriette does not consider this family worthy of royal honors.

Despite her criticisms, Henriette recognizes that, in order to maintain her position, she must fill the family's tailoring needs. When Iturbide is nominated to take the throne, Ana María orders robes for the coronation. "La idea parecía un escándalo a quien había seguido muy de cerca la historia de Bonaparte, su compatriota, pero un modista francesa no se contrata para oírla externar sus opiniones sobre política" (11). Henriette recognizes that there are limits to her ability to speak up. She demonstrates her disapproval, however, by designing robes that resemble Aztec tunics. "Por tanto, puso manos a la obra y comenzó los diseños de unas túnicas aztecas con aplicaciones plumarias que habrían de usarse sobre las batas de algodón teñido de cochinilla. Al ver que Madame Henriette estaba decidida a vestir al Emperador de huehuenche, Ana María puso el grito en cielo" (11). Ana María, on the other hand, wants to evoke the majesty of the European empires, and demands a change. To this the seamstress responds by designing clothing worthy of "a true empire": "Tinta y papel: todo era cuestión de estudiar cuidadosamente los grabados y reproducir, palmo a palmo, los trajes de Napoleón y Josefina. Si querían que el gobierno que iba a estrenarse dentro de poco tuviera algún lucimiento había que copiar adornos, modales y el ejemplo de un verdadero imperio"(14).

Henriette's original designs are provocative because they offer two distinct readings: one that is malicious, and another that borders on the patriotic. The malicious reading would suggest that Madame Henriette, feeling that Iturbide's coronation was farcical would dress him in the most ridiculous outfit she could imagine. The second,

possibly more generous reading, would view this act as a precursor to the proto-nationalism based on indigenous identity that will appear in *Noticias del imperio* and in early-twentieth century intellectual debates about national identity. It seems provocative here that the French seamstress is willing to adopt a more native style than the Creole. Henriette, like Maximilian and Carlota as we will see in a later chapter, attempts to ground the Empire in Mexico's native imperial traditions. These readings are diametrically opposed, but interesting. My feeling, however, is that Henriette would be more inclined to mock the family's pretensions. An important element of the family's royal aspirations is the costuming we observed earlier. Madame Henriette's role is to produce these outfits, to provide "algún lucimiento" to this new court. Ironically, however, she understands that power does not reside in the outer garb. As Ana María and Joaquinita discuss the royal jewels, Henriette "hizo un gesto de desprecio. Por lo visto las señoras ignoraban que Carlomango, el más grande de los emperadores, había ceñido a su cabeza la corona de hierro de los antiguos lombardos. Claro estaba, dijo, que aquel gran hombre no necesitaba el oropel" (17).

In addition to her role as seamstress, Madame Henriette's participation in the novel has an important narrative function. As seamstress she is hired to dress the Iturbide family, including the newly born Agustín Cosme, and will ultimately prepare his body for burial. This places her at the beginning and the end of his life, and Beltrán uses this unique detail to structure *La corte de los ilusos*. Henriette's involvement with the royal family frames the novel. The novel opens with Henriette reflecting upon her interview with Iturbide's mother. It closes with her consoling Iturbide's widow at his funeral. "Madame Henriette la llevó a un rincón y arropó en sus brazos de vieja a la niña de otros tiempos. Quedamente, al oído, comenzó a relatarle una historia de batallas, Dragones y emperatrices, un cuento que empezaba con la prueba de cierta vestimenta real" (259).

This is not a military history that will go down in the annals of time. No monument will be raised from this story. Instead, the story she whispers in Ana María's ear is, in part, the novel we read. It is a feminine story, shared by one woman to another. The intimacy of this narration strikes at the heart of the historical project behind *La corte de los ilusos*.

Madame Henriette's French citizenship and her longstanding place in the Iturbide family grant her liberties that other women in the court do not enjoy. She is able to defy rules of courtly etiquette and scoff at the imperial pretensions. Her abilities also allow her to play a central role in creating the empire. She does not suffer the effects of marginalization that most women in the novel experience. Rather, Madame Henriette appears much more in control of her surroundings than do others.

CONCLUSION

History has all but forgotten the women of Mexico's first empire. Few documents allow historians to reconstruct their conditions. Because of this dearth, Rosa Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos* is a singular novel in Mexico historical fiction. Lacking the historical rigor or the totalizing pretensions of Serna's *El seductor de la patria* or Del Paso's *Noticias del impero*, Beltrán creates a pristine fiction where imagination takes precedence over documentation. The novel reconstructs the lost experiences of these women. In so doing, the novel achieves two goals. It recuperates lost space in our understanding of Mexico's ill-fated first empire by imagining the royal family's domestic space, avoiding the traditional political debates. And it issues a challenge to Mexican historiography and politics to recognize and legitimate the role women play in national histories.

Chapter Three: Confessing Thy Sins: Ignacio Solares' *La invasión*

> *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Shelah.*
>
> *– Psalms 32:5*

> *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*
>
> *– Proverbs 28:13*

A strong metaphysical current runs through most of Mexican literature. Vicente Leñero's *El evangelio según Lucas Gavilán* (1979) places the gospel narrative of Christ's Judean ministry and miracles in a twentieth-century political context. Many of Juan Rulfo's texts—most notably "Es que somos pobres", "Nos han dado la tierra", "Luvina", and *Pedro Páramo* (1955)—evince an unmistakable Catholic cosmology in his criticisms of post-revolutionary injustices. René Avilés Fabila turns to more doctrinal meditations in *Borges y yo* (1991). Ignacio Solares' (Ciudad Juárez, 1945) work places this metaphysical preoccupation at the center of his examination of Mexican history. From his first historical novel, *Madero, el otro* (1982), to his most recent, *La invasion* (2005), Solares emphasizes the relevance religious philosophy plays in contemporary discourse. Solares's philosophy of historical writing can be summarized by the concept of confession. This chapter examines the confessional aspects of *La invasion* under the light of trauma theory.

The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, the chapter begins with an overview of the 1846-1848 War, paying special attention to the political and ideological context. The American president, James K. Polk, occupies a central role as the enforcement arm of the nation's long-standing push to fulfill its Manifest Destiny.

Dissident voices, especially those of Abraham Lincoln and General Ulysses S. Grant, offer a counterpoint to what most Mexican historians consider a monolithic attack on national sovereignty. Antonio López de Santa Anna, the subject of the preceding chapter, will again play an important role in the conflict. Second, I address the critical theory that underpins the field of inquiry known as trauma theory. Critics such as Dominic LaCapra and Cathy Caruth argue that traumatic events in the past, left unresolved, continue to haunt survivors. Similarly, Solares views Mexico as a victim that will continue to be haunted by the ghosts of 1847 until it completely works through the past. The third section of this chapter examines *La invasion* as a confessional text. Through writing, the protagonist hopes to purge himself and the nation of its traumatic past.

IGNACIO SOLARES AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

Ignacio Solares' first forays into literature quickly garnered him recognition as one of Mexico's promising literary figures. By 1989 he had published five novels, one play, and one short story collection, in addition to numerous collaborations with cultural magazines and newspapers. These works were bright and engaging, but differed little from the metafictional meanderings of his predecessors. Sergio Pitol, Salvador Elizondo, José Emilio Pacheco, and others clearly influenced the young writer, especially his short stories. But 1989 proved a turning point for Solares. That year he published his first historical novel, *Madero, el otro*. At first glance the novel seems a late bloomer. It comes at the tale end of a 70-year wave of fiction about the Mexican Revolution. But its appearance is significant given the context that produces it. In what follows I give a brief

overview of Mexican Revolution literature in order to contextualize Solares' historical work as the continuation of a long line of failure narratives.

The Revolution spawned over 90 years of literature. Chronologies differ, but the literature is traditionally subdivided into two time periods: *la novela de la revolución* (1915-1940) and *la nueva novela de revolución* (1947-1990). While these designations explicitly point to the novel, the short story exists, though to a lesser degree. The first promotion began with the publication of Mariano Azuela's keystone work, *Los de abajo* (1915). This is typically considered the first great novel of the Revolution, though Azuela had published another novel, *Andrés Pérez, maderista*, in 1911. Literary critic Luis Leal comments that this first novel fails to fully capture the spirit of the Maderista revolt; it does, however, delineate a major theme in revolutionary literature: discontent with revolutionary achievements (*Breve historia de la literature hispanoamericana* 200). Similarly, *Los de abajo* narrates the disintegration of a *campesino* family, the senseless destruction of economic infrastructure, the bacchanalian fervor of raids and foraging parties, and the overwhelming inertia that carried soldiers from one battle to the next without any apparent goal. Both texts establish parameters for interpreting the Mexican Revolution in terms of failure. This theme will be perpetuated in subsequent works, particularly in the latter promotion of revolutionary literature.

Ten years after *Los de abajo*, an impressive entourage of writers began publishing creative and historically accurate novels that seek to narrate the conflict from the inside. Indeed, many of the early authors of *la novela de la revolución* were either combatants or eyewitnesses to the battles. Other authors of this generation include Martín Luis Guzmán (*El águila y la serpiente* 1928, *La sombra del caudillo* 1929, and *Memorias de Pancho Villa* 1936) and Nellie Campobello (*Cartucho* 1931). But the short story was not left out of the mix. Rafael F. Muñoz (*El feroz cabecilla* 1928) published revolutionary short

stories from 1928 to 1960. Additionally, other short story writers set pen to paper in order to capture their experiences and testimonies: Dr. Atl, Mauricio Magdaleno, Jorge Ferretis, Francisco L. Urquizo y Cipriano Campos Alatorre. Alfredo Pavón's analysis of the principal characteristics of the early revolutionary short story can be applied to the entire literary movement: "tendió sus redes en el relato de acciones, en personajes brutales, crueles, temerarios… en el habla mexicana de los revolucionarios, de los soldados federales, de las soldaderas, en la geografía tacaña… en los trenes y aviones villistas, en los sombreros de palma, en los huaraches, en las carabinas, en la sangre, la violencia, las vísceras, el crimen" (Pavón *Cuento mexicano moderno* xiv). Alfredo Pavón, who describes the Revolution as a "crisol donde forjar textos perfectos y desatinadas invenciones," proposes that the war "proporcionó temas, personajes, ambientes, técnicas, habla, espíritu" to Mexico's literature. But he also observes that "la cantera se agotó hacia 1940" (xv). This is to say that roughly around 1940 the Revolution ceases to function as the main fountain of inspiration for Mexico's authors.

No theories exist in the literature to explain this vacuum, though I will forward the following. With the election of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934, the post-revolutionary government reached its highpoint. Cárdenas made major military cuts, proposed labor-friendly legislation, and handed over sixty percent of the total amount of land that was redistributed after 1920. On the whole, the Revolutoin had fulfilled its social agenda. In 1946, however, the election of Miguel Alemán brought the period of revolutionary reform to an end. In his inaugural address his thinly veiled threats to labor unions foreshadow the immanent violence that awaited striking taxi workers a few weeks later. Alemán's cooptation of revolutionary slogans, married to opportunistic economic policy maneuvers and a rejection of prior progressivism, ended the Cárdenas era. By the 1950's, authors begin questioning the direction the revolution has turned. Growing dissatisfaction

with the failures associated with the government after 1946 gave birth to the *nueva novela de la revolución*.

Carlos Fuentes credits Agustín Yáñez and Juan Rulfo with revitalizing the literature of the Revolution. Speaking of the first generation of writers, Fuentes observes that:

> Los temas inmediatos quemaban las manos de los autores y los forzaban a una técnica testimonial que, en gran medida, les impidió penetrar en sus propios hallazgos. Había que esperar a que, en 1947, Agustín Yánez escribiese la primera visión moderna del pasado inmediato de México en *Al filo del agua* y a que en 1953 [sic], al fin Juan Rulfo procediese, en *Pedro Páramo*, a la mitificación de las situaciones, los tipos y el lenguaje del campo mexicano, cerrando para siempre—y con llave de oro—la temática documental de la revolución. (*La nueva novela hispanoamericana* 15)

Agustín Yáñez's novel *Al filo del agua* (1947) opens this second phase of literature. *Al filo del agua* rejoices in the overthrow of ecclesiastical power in the rural Mexico, attributing most of Mexico's maladies to the sexual repression imposed by the Church. Juan Rulfo wrote only two books: one short story collection (*El llano en llamas* 1953) and one novel (*Pedro Páramo* 1955). And yet these two volumes underline significant changes in the way future authors would write the Revolution. Whereas the first generation of revolutionary writers were steeped in socially conscious realism and regionalism, Rulfo experimented with time, narrative voice and technique, focalization, and characterization. His language is dry and sparse like the landscapes he describes, yet imbued with a deep poetic consciousness. But there is also a new social and political conscience in Rulfo's writings. Land reform and redistribution become salient topics; despotic *caciquismo* seamlessly substitutes for the abusive *hacendado*. In many ways, Rulfo sets the tone for the authors that will succeed him. The Revolution becomes a paradigm for examining and criticizing contemporary civil and political maladies. Later writers Carlos Fuentes (*La muerte de Artemio Cruz* 1962), Jorge Ibargüengoitia (*Los*

relámpagos de agosto 1964), Elena Garro (*Los recuerdos del porvenir* 1963), Elena Poniatowska (*Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* 1969), and Ignacio Solares represent a handful of authors who have made the Revolution their point of departure for addressing current problems.

These two phases share commonalities. They both critique failed revolutionary goals, democratization of corruption, destruction of the family, and the absence of ideological foundation. But there are significant differences, as well. First, members of the initial movement were hands-on participants in the conflict. Mariano Azuela had been a provincial administrator under Madero's administration and, after his death, joined the Julián Medina's rebel group as a medic. Martín Luis Guzmán was actively engaged in the political turmoil of the consolidation years. The writers of the *nueva novela*, however, are professional writers. The original writers' proximity to the action limited their scope of interpretation to immediate political effects. Azuela's interpretation of the revolution is restricted to immediate social repercussions. Guzmán's classic novel of political intrigue, *La sombra del caudillo*, was written the same year the first official state party, the National Revolutionary Party (PNR), was formed. The novel intuits the immediate future of *caudillismo* in Mexican politics, but cannot fathom the degree to which the corruption of a unilateral system will arrive. Fuentes, Ibargüengoitia, and Solares, however, apply a broader historical criticism. Instead of becoming intimately involved in the immediacy of the war, these writers evaluate the revolution in terms of its effects on Mexican society well after the battles.

Madero, el otro appeared at the tail end of the second phase, at a moment when the Revolution seemed to have lost its literary interest. Nevertheless, *Madero, el otro* poses questions about the Revolution that no other novel had hitherto dared. It places the father of 20th-century Mexican democracy, Francisco I. Madero, on trial before his

conscience in the final seconds of life. *Madero, el otro* is the first of three novels that take a markedly *maderista* tone. *La noche de Ángeles* (1991) carries out a similar operation with the elusive Felipe Ángeles, a revolutionary general who played an important role in war but who all but escaped the pages of recorded history. In the novel's introduction, Solares observes that his novel recovers Madero's protégé from scanty documents and other literary evocations. A third novel, *Columbus* (1996), reenacts the first and only Mexican invasion of United States property when, on March 9, 1916, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, at the head of small raiding party, attacked Columbus, New Mexico, making off with mules and military supplies, and leaving some twenty-four people dead. In addition to these novels, Soalres addresses the Revolution in a series of plays ("Los mochos," "El gran elector," and "El jefe máximo") published in 1996.

The recent publication of Paco Ignacio Taibo II's *Pancho Villa: una biografía narrativa* (2006) and Pedro Ángel Palou's *Zapata* (2006) may overturn the notion that the Revolution has lost its cultural impact. It also opens the possibility for a third promotion, provided these newer authors are able to differentiate themselves stylistically from their predecessors. This continued editorial interest in literature of the Revolution attests to the lasting imprint it has on Mexico's national imagination. It also demonstrates that the Revolution continues to be a source of failure narratives being used for the purpose of criticizing contemporary problems.

LA INVASIÓN

With the publication of *La invasion*, Solares breaks from the Revolution and turns to the 1846-1848 War. *La invasión* is a scathing commentary on North American imperialism. Epigraphs at the head of every chapter underline this notion. He quotes

American statesman Henry Clay, for example, as stating, “Hay crímenes que por su enormidad rayan en lo sublime. El apoderamiento de Texas por nuestros compatriotas tiene derecho a este honor. Los tiempos modernos no ofrecen un ejemplo de rapiña en tan vasta escala” (*La invasión* 51). Quoting Lucas Alamán, Solares opens the fourth chapter with this invective: “Es la guerra más injusta de que la historia pueda presentar ejemplo, movida por la ambición, no de un monarca absoluta, sino de una República, la norteamericana, que pretende estar al frente de toda la civilización del siglo XIX” (53). And the following quotation from John Quincy Adams, former president of the United States and ardent critic of the war, summarizes Solares’ attitude towards the invasion: “En esta guerra, la bandera del honor y de la justicia será la de México, y la norteamericana, me avergüenza decirlo, será la bandera del deshonor y de la esclavitud” (131). This theme is evermore poignant for the author given the current state of the Iraq war, which Solares has openly denounced.

In this regard, the novel echoes criticisms since the war’s outset. In the days prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the United States and Mexico were making headway on comprehensive reforms to immigration laws. Then-President Vicente Fox made an official visit to Washington on September 5-6, 2001. During his visit, Fox urged a joint session of Congress to grant legal rights to millions of undocumented immigrants who were working in the United States, arguing that they had brought and would continue to bring large economic and cultural benefits to the United States. “Let me be clear about this,” Mr. Fox said. “Regularization does not mean rewarding those who break the law. Regularization means that we give legal rights to people who are already contributing to this great nation” (Thompson 6). His visit was viewed positively by U.S. legislators. "The bottom line is the fences are going to go down between these two countries," Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman, of Connecticut,

said. He added that, "it's in the interest of both countries that we make it work" (Thompson 6). Fox's performance impressed more than one reporter. New York Times correspondent David Sanger reported that "Rarely has a foreign leader shown up on the South Lawn of the White House and declared that he and the president of the United States 'must' remake the fundamental rules that have governed his country's uneasy relationship with the United States -- and get it done in the next four months" (Sanger 1). President Bush appeared to share President Fox's sentiment, for as Martin and Teitelbaum wrote in *Foreign Affairs*:

> President George W. Bush, who expresses real interest in Mexico and high personal regard for his Mexican counterpart, has reciprocated Fox's willingness to reach an agreement. Bush sees a potential benefit to U.S. agricultural employers in a Mexico-U.S. guest worker program, and his administration has floated the possibility of legalizing millions of Mexicans unlawfully resident in the United States in conjunction with such an initiative. ("The Mirage of Mexican Guest Workers" 117)

Despite Fox's best attempts to push through guest-worker programs and amnesty, however, analysts in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks believed that "the issue has now been placed on the back burner in Washington as the United States concentrates on recovering from the attacks and battling future threats" ("US says migration" 1). One year later, the talks had all but fallen off the Washington agenda. Fox insisted that Mexicans residing in the United States posed no terror threat, and called to resume talks aimed at giving legal status to some of the more than 4 million undocumented Mexicans working north of the border. But the Bush administration kept its distance. An Associated Press article reported that, "While the Bush administration has refrained from saying Mexicans represent a terrorist threat, the security measures it has adopted generally have not made distinctions between nationalities" (Gedda 1). Distance was further created by Washington's insistence that Mexico support its war effort. Warning that relationships between the two countries would harden if Mexico did

not side with the U.S., “Bush phoned Fox and announced to the media: ‘I expect Mexico to be with us’” (Siddiqui F01). The majority of Mexicans, however, opposed the war and resented Washington’s mounting pressure: “Mexicans were even more vociferous: 85 per cent opposed the war and 28 per cent said they ‘hated’ Bush's America” (Siddiqui F01). Fox stood his ground, and as Bush predicted, relationships became more strained. Washington retaliated by pulling out of immigration talks, and later by approving a wall to secure the border. Much of the political malcontent that fuels current diplomatic impasses stems from the failed immigration talks and Mexico’s resolve not to support the war effort.

But lest we think that the novel is simply an indictment of nineteenth-century expansionism and twentieth-century American military operations in the Middle East, Solares has reserved his most severe criticisms for Mexico. As with his earlier novels, Solares turns a critical eye to his own nation to fathom the depths of its own guilt. Again epigraphs offer insight into the author’s sense of irritation. “Hay no sé qué ritmo trágico en la historia de México que hace perder a los aptos y honrados en beneficio de los ineptos y ladrones,” laments Francisco Zarco (*La invasión* 38). Solares inserts a possible American perspective, quoting a letter from Sam Houston to President Andrew Jackson in February 1833 that reads, “La constitución mexicana nunca ha estado en vigor. El gobierno es despótico y, estoy seguro, así lo será durante muchos años venideros. Los gobernantes no son honestos y los mexicanos en general carecen de inteligencia” (86). A word must be said here, about Solares’ use of documents. As in Serna’s novel, *El seductor de la patria*, Solares uses apochryphal documents to sustain his argument. Some of these include the letter from Houston to Jackson quoted in the last chapter. If historicity were the key issue here, I would dedicate more time to this matter; since it is not, however, and the narrative effect of failure these quotes represent is, I will simply

say that, like Serna, Solares inserts apocryphal documents to fill holes in his reorganization of the archive.

At times these epigraphs only serve as a lamentation, as in the poet Guillermo Prieto's apostrophe, "Patria, patria de lágrima, mi patria" (109). At others, Solares takes up a familiar standard, criticizing the rejection of spiritual principles in Mexican society. An editorial writer in April 1847 asks, "¿Y Dios? ¿Qué papel le han asignado a Dios en esta guerra?" (161). This question will be answered later in the chapter. An overwhelming criticism of Mexico's governmental corruption pervades these epigraphs. Solares quotes Francisco Zarco's affirmation that "En México todo lo auténtico y noble es débil y efímero. Sólo es fuerte y duradero el poder de la mentira" (175). Quoting Fanny Calderón de la Barca, wife of the Spanish ambassador to Mexico and a testimonial witness of incalculable value for her observations on the most notable nineteenth-century Mexicans, observes that, "Mientras nos asombrábamos ante el número de máquinas para hacer moneda falsa que han sido recogidas, se nos aseguró que actualmente el doble de ese número está en plena actividad en México, mas como pertenece a personajes muy distinguidos de la política, el propio gobierno tiene miedo de meterse con ellos" (261). We will see similar criticism of Mexico in Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria* in Chapter 5. Within the context of these epigraphs, we need to address the particulars of the 1846-148 War in order to appreciate the traumatic effects the invasion had upon Mexican cultural discourse.

MANIFEST DESTINY AND JAMES K. POLK

The U.S.-Mexico War has been a hotbed of ideological debate in American historiography. It generates fierce nationalistic controversy between supporters of the American foreign policy and critics of expanding imperialism. As a number of summaries of this debate are available in the introductory chapters of many of the books I cite in this chapter, I will only make brief reference to the dispute.

Critics argue against the Polk administration's morally unencumbered approach to expropriating lands in the name of national interests. These histories, exemplified by Hubert Howe Bancroft's monumental *History of Mexico* (1885) and *North Mexican States and Texas* (1889), lash out against expansionist governmental policies and lambaste Polk for pursuing an aggressive war against the nation's beleaguered southern neighbor. Supporters of the doctrine of manifest destiny and its political and military manifestations label such criticisms as anti-American, unfounded, ill-conceived, and defeatist. Justin H. Smith's *The War with Mexico* is universally recognized one of the foundational texts in American historiography on the war, despite its unabashed embracing of the American perspective. Smith argues that Mexicans forfeited their right to the northern territories by failing in their duties to produce a stable government; the obvious corollary to this argument is that, because the United States had so effectively established a functional democracy, the forfeited territory then fell to the United States. Glenn Price describes Smith's history of the war against Mexico as "one of the most flagrantly biased works in American history" (*Origins of the War with Mexico* 117). He points out that Smith's claims to historical objectivity are more self-ingratiating and comical than truthful (101).

Notwithstanding criticisms, this stance enjoys substantial contemporary approval. Sanford H. Montaigne pens an ardent defense of the American position, identifying himself closely with Smith's original project. After providing a cursory bibliographic

overview, Montaigne concludes that "This leaves Justin Harvey Smith's view that Mexico wanted war as the last interpretation to be discussed. Obviously this author is more nearly in agreement with Smith than with the other interpretations, at least as to which country bears the responsibility for causing the war" (*Blood Over Texas* 19-20). Historian John Selby, comparing modern-day California's wealth to the northern Mexico's poverty, states that "it would have been better for everyone concerned if, after the Mexican war, the United States had seized the whole country!" (*The Eagle and the Serpent* xxi).

This rift over manifest destiny is not dissimilar to the one that divided the nation in the mid-1800s. John L. O'Sullivan, a New York journalist and staunch supporter of Jacksonian democracy, first penned the phrase in an 1845 editorial in favor of the annexation of Texas. He writes that Mexico had meddled in American politics "in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed purpose of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of out yearly multiplying millions" (Johannsen 8). Robert Johannsen observes that this phrase went relatively unnoticed at the time of its first use because of overwhelming support for annexation from within and without Texas. It is the subsequent occurrence, in an editorial six months later, that cemented the phrase's existence in American political discourse. The subject of this article was the hotly contested Oregon territory, equally claimed by the United States and Great Britain. O'Sullivan is more outspoken on this occasion than he had been previously:

> Away, away with all these cobweb tissues of rights of discovery, exploration, settlement, continuity, etc. To state the truth at once in its neglected simplicity, we are free to say that were the respective cases and arguments of the two parties, as to all these points of history and law reversed… our claim to Oregon would still be the strongest. And that claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to

> overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us. (Johannsen 9)

But Robert Johannsen has pointed out that O'Sullivan's concept of manifest destiny differed from the political manifestation we normally associate with the term. Johannsen argues that because O'Sullivan "employed *Manifest Destiny* with reference to the annexation of Texas and the adjustment of the Oregon boundary dispute, the phrase has been narrowly applied to territorial expansion alone," when in fact it had much broader application (Johannsen 10). He purports that Manifest Destiny:

> …drew sustenance from the pervasive currents of a popular Romanticism, and credibility from the dynamic political, social, and economic changes in American life that were spawned by a new spirit of optimism and self-confidence. Manifest Destiny combined a fervent, idealistic, even mystical expressioin of Romantic nationalism with the realistic, practical consequences of extraordinary technological and economic developments as well as an unprecedented movement of Americans to distant parts of the continent. Indeed, it was the latter that game the former its credibility. The dramatic expansion of the Untied States in 1840s, the realization of the long-sought-for "ocean-bound republic," marked the apogee of American Romanticism; and it was the war with Mexico that seemed to win a place for the United States in the sweep of world history. (Johannsen 12-13)

Manifest destiny, then, was a philosophy that fed into the burgeoning sense of American exceptionalism. It sprang from the notion that the United States had been blessed by providential hands to carry out a great mission. This concept of a chosen people with a divinely sanctioned mission was not new to mid-century Americans. Puritan colonizers expressed similar visions for the unborn nation. But O'Sullivan's phrase, nurtured with Emersonian philosophical vigor, summarized this overall sense of uniqueness.

James K. Polk's administration, more than that of any other American president, embodied Manifest Destiny's political application. An early adherent to Jeffersonian democracy, which argued among other things for the establishment of the "Empire of Liberty," Polk was attracted to Andrew Jackson's vision for America. Polk ran for

Congress in 1824, the year Jackson first ran for the presidency. Jackson lost that campaign, but won the election of 1829, and Polk would remain one of the president's strongest supporters. When Martin Van Buren lost Jackson's support for reelection in 1844, Polk was chosen to fill the ballot. Polk did so with the promise that he would serve only one term as president. Historians generally paints a dour picture of Polk. Even Justin Smith, the ardent defender of the American cause, characterizes the president as "very wanting in ideality, very wanting in soulfulness, inclined to be sly, and quite incapable of seeing things in a great way." The president willfully "deceived men or permitted men to deceive themselves" (qtd. in Price *Origins of the War with Mexico* 102). Dean Mahin has authored an exceptionally good historical appraisal of President Polk's machinations, attempting to cast Polk in the best of possible lights while recognizing his numerous faults. Mahin observes that Polk had been itching for a fight with Mexico for months, planning out possible contingencies that might lead to conflict and the destabilization of the Herrera administration (*Olive Branch and Sword* 70-71). During his administration, Polk secured the Western half of the United States. Texas's entrance into the Union, which had been a central tenant of Polk's campaign, was ratified by Congress just prior to his taking office. All the territory presently occupied by Washington, Oregon, Idaho, in addition to parts of Montana and Wyoming were obtained in 1846 when the United States and Great Britain settled the U.S.-Canadian border at the 49th parallel. The Mexican Cession, obtained by virtue of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, ceded to the United States all of present-day California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. The strip of land occupying southern Arizona and New Mexico, known as the Gadsen Purchase, was acquired after Polk's term of office in 1853.

THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS AND THE ENSUING CONFLICT

A number of political developments led up to the U.S.-Mexico war: the annexation of Texas, the resolution of the Oregon Territories dispute with Great Britain, and a seemingly insignificant border skirmish.

First, the annexation of Texas, considered an inevitable transition for American legislators, was an insult to Mexican political pride. As early as 1836, the Mexican Congress declared that any attempt to annex the new republic would be considered an act of war. Consequently, the 1845 annexation led to fierce saber rattling and the mobilization of Mexican infantry troops to the disputed area. Despite an argument bereft of any sense of objectivity, Montaigne presents the correct thesis that the Mexican War "was an outgrowth of the Texan War of Independence" (*Blood over Texas* 15). Other historians cite this as the principal cause as well. Indeed, the 1836 rebellion of Anglo-American colonists seems to be the genesis of the 1846-1848 War for a number of reasons. There was no definite treaty that effectively resolved the dispute. Texan proponents argue that the Velasco agreement, wherein Santa Anna agreed to the independence of Texas, is the defining document. The agreement establishes the grounds for cessation of hostilities including the withdrawal of Mexican troops beyond the Rio Grande, a ceasefire between combatants, and the recognition of Texan independence. The agreement's validity is questionable, however, because the Mexican president was in captivity at the time of signing, and the Mexican Congress never ratified it. Effectively, Mexico never agreed to honor the stipulations of the contract. This, in short, led to nine years of resentment by the Mexican government and bellicose posturing with the promise to reclaim the usurped lands. They threatened a break in diplomatic relations with any nation that recognized the independence of the new republic. The Texan rebels, however,

proclaimed independence, established a national charter, held elections, enjoyed the recognition of numerous nations, and entered into negotiations with the United States for admittance to statehood.

The annexation of Texas occurred just prior to James K. Polk taking office. Aware that Mexican troops were moving north, Polk was unwilling at this early stage to enter into a war with the nation's southern neighbor. As Mahin points out, however, the President's journals demonstrate that, while he forestalled attacking Mexico until the Oregon Territory was settled, he clearly intended to take Mexico's northern territories. A border dispute over the Oregon territories with Britain was under way, and the president thought it imprudent to tackle two diplomatic fronts simultaneously. As a result, he sent General Zachary Taylor to secure the area while he finished negotiations with Britain. Once the Oregon territory issue was resolved, Polk was free to turn his attention to Mexico.

The 1845 decision to annex the contested territory enraged the Mexican government and troops were sent to the border to secure their claim to the land. But the question remains, what was that border? Since the Mexican government had never ratified a treaty defining a boundary with a country it did not recognize as independent, the question of borders became extremely important. The Mexicans recognized the border of Texas as the Nueces River; Texans, and thereby the United States, claimed the Rio Grande. In late 1846, a minor skirmish between the two forces led Polk to declared that American blood had been shed on American soil. This was all the justification he needed to ask Congress for a declaration of war. Congress acceded to the President's request, making the declaration official on May 12, 1846.

The United States military campaign was aggressive. Zachary Taylor and Alexander Doniphan took control of the northern departments. Winfield Scott entered the

country from Veracruz and marched on the Mexican capital. The American army was vastly outnumbered by the Mexican armies generated by Antonio López de Santa Anna, but their superior training and firepower, coupled with massive desertions among the Mexican conscripts and Santa Anna's strategic incompetence, overwhelmed the Mexican forces.

Scott's army met little resistance en route to the capital. Popular ambivalence and military incompetence aided the Americans in their push. Solares opens his novel with a popular revolt in the city center, known as the *Zócalo*, but it was a small rebellion when taken in the context of the whole war. Luis Fernando Granados has described the popular rebellion by the residents of the capital. He observes that a groundswell movement of guerrilla warfare swept through the city when the American troops occupied the city's central plaza. Most of the insurgents were from the lower classes, and fighting was limited to areas where the less fortunate lived. More aristocratic families kept themselves from engagements and, as in Puebla, welcomed the occupying forces with flags and thanksgiving. These popular uprisings were quelled in short order, and Mexico was forced to accept its captors' presence.

In 1848, the American envoy Nicolas Trist, refusing to obey Polk's orders to return to Washington, and the Mexican delegates signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty is a tragically ironic document. It amputates half of the national territory and bears the name of the country's most enduring symbols of independence. It carves a line of demarcation that many Mexicans today consider an ignominious scar.

When U.S. historians write about the War, emphasis is placed on the expansion westward and fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. Little, however, is said about the slavery question. The issue of slavery is fundamental to understanding Polk's actions and U.S. historiography's treatment of the War. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 established the

precedent of balance between slave- and free-states. Southerners had controlled national politics because their population numbers (based on the three-fifths compromise) had garnered them sufficient electoral votes to hold the majority. However, with an increase of population in the North, Southerners feared a loss of power. And so, they called for additional territories to be added as slave states. Texas was to be one of them.

On the home front, dissident voices made themselves heard regarding the war. Henry David Thoreau's impassioned manifesto, *Civil Disobedience*, is at once an abolitionist document and a denunciation of the Mexican-American War. Abraham Lincoln, a freshman congressman from Illinois in 1847, challenged Polk's justification for war. Citing the president's argument, Lincoln examines the history of the boundary dispute. He concludes that the president can, in no way justify his assertions to the land where he claimed American blood was spilt. Lincoln chided the president to:

> …answer, fully, fairly, and candidly. Let him answer with facts, and not with arguments. Let him remember he sits where Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer, as Washington would answer. As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no evasion—no equivocation. And if, so answering, he can show that the soil was ours, where the first blood of the war was shed—that it was not within an inhabited country, or, if within such, that the inhabitants had submitted themselves to the civil authority of Texas, or of the United States, and that the same is true of the site of Fort Brown, then I am with him for his justification. (Lincoln 439)

But since no proof could be provided, Lincoln concluded that the president was "a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man. God grant he may be able to show, there is not something about his conscious, more painful than all his mental perplexity!" (Lincoln 441-442). Polk's war was also unpopular with American military officers and legislators. In retrospect, Ulysses S. Grant—participant in the 1846-1848 War, chief of the Union forces during the American Civil War, and eighteenth president of the United States of America—remembers in his personal memoirs that, "The Southern rebellion was largely the outgrowth of the Mexican war. Nations, like

individuals, are punished for their transgressions. We got our punishment in the most sanguinary and expensive war of modern times" (*Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* 56).

For Mexicans, the War remains a delicate subject. Nineteenth-century intellectuals were torn about what approach to take: to give into American aggressions, to enter into potentially disadvantageous foreign relations with the English, or to present a fierce military response to northern encroachment. Furthermore, the border established by the treaty is often described as a wound or a scar. Solares has recently remarked that "Estamos marcados y determinados por ese hecho inevitable, nuestra cercanía con los Estados Unidos. Y esa gran frontera es una herida que no ha cerrado" (Garduño). The border is the constant reminder that half the national territory was forcibly taken. But the war meant more than territorial loss. The American invasion exposed all the incompetence and dissention that had been festering in the Mexican government since Independence. The War also, in a sense, amounted to Mexico's near brush with national extinction. Many American legislators called for the entire annexation of Mexico. More than any other foreign invasion the country suffered in the nineteenth century, the United States military campaign threatened to disintegrate Mexico as a political entity. To summarize, then, the 1846-1848 War left the young nation in a quandary. Having only obtained independence twenty-five years earlier, Mexico was besieged and despoiled by an aggressive neighbor. Its very survival as a state came into question. This brush with annihilation left an indelible imprint on Mexican national psyche.

This is the subject of Ignacio Solares's *La invasión*: the U.S.-Mexico War and its far-reaching effects on Mexican national psyche. Ignacio Solares's *La invasión* provides examples of failure narratives that, through confession and recovered memory, seek to heal open wounds left by one of Mexico's most important foundational traumas.

TRAUMA THEORY: FREUD, LACAPRA, CARUTH

Trauma theory studies the effects of traumatic experiences on individual and collective memories and identity constructions. Frequently it focuses on writing history as a therapeutic exercise intended to help victims overcome their past. The theory's application to this chapter is straightforward. The War of 1847 was the single most traumatic experience of Mexico's nineteenth century. Ignacio Solares addresses the damaging effects of the war through his recreation of the North American occupation. The following section outlines some of the basic tenents of trauma theory as a prelude to a more detailed analysis of the novel.

Trauma theory has waxed and waned according to historical context. Studies in trauma surge on the heels of crises, such as wars, natural disasters, genocides, and terrorist attacks. Once the initial shock subsides, however, trauma tends to move to the back burner. This may be precisely because, as Judith Herman points out, to speak of trauma is "to come face to face both with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature" (*Trauma and Recovery* 7). Herman observes that there is an implicit need for trauma theory to be linked to an active political movement "powerful enough to legitimate an alliance between investigators and patients and to counteract the ordinary social processes of silencing and denial" (9). Not being actively involved in the processes of remembering and bearing witness of atrocities "inevitably gives way to the active process of forgetting. Repression, dissociation, and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness" (9). An analysis of the processes of repressing, dissociating, and denying, together with their concomitant resolutions of remembering, repeating, and working through lays at the heart of this chapter over Ignacio Solares' *La invasion* (2005).

Freud's psychoanalytical approach to trauma has underpinned most of the work performed on the subject. Herman provides the "forgotten history" of trauma studies, arguing that Freud took center stage in the field's formative years. As a student of Jean-Martin Charcot, Freud attempted to move beyond his mentor's taxonomical diagnoses of female hysteria towards treatment. Freud and his rival student, Pierre Janet, began interacting with, listening to, and empathizing with patients. Herman notes that "For a brief decade men of science listened to women with a devotion and a respect unparalleled before or since. Daily meetings with hysterical patients, often lasting hours, were not uncommon. The case studies of this period read almost like collaborations between doctor and patient" (*Trauma and Recovery* 11-12). During this period, notions of preliminary trauma surged, indicating a pathological link between past experiences and present hysterias. As Freud interacted with patients, they "told him of sexual assault, abuse, and incest. Following back the thread of memory, Freud and his patients uncovered major traumatic events of childhood concealed beneath the more recent often relatively trivial experienced that had actually triggered the onset of hysterical symptoms" (Herman 13). But this idyll was to be short lived. A scant year after publishing *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud rescinded his earlier position arguing that the social implications of his theory were unthinkable (Herman 14). Herman points out that, from this point forward, collaboration between analyst and patient came to an abrupt end, and future cases reveal a trenchant test of wills.

In 1914, Freud returned to the subject of trauma, this time focusing on the therapeutic effect of drawing out memories and overcomes resistances. A lecture entitled "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through: (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)" reveals that trauma continues to occupy the Viennese psychologist's mind. After briefly tracing the evolution from Breuer's cathartic approach

to the more contemporary psychoanalytic style, Freud reminded his listeners that the goal of each successive development was the same: “Descriptively speaking, it is to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking, it is to overcome resistances due to repression” (Freud 148). These gaps are filled in as patients recover memories from early childhood experiences. Here we see that the later Freud had not distanced himself from his early experiences with female hysteria patients at the turn of the century. The roots of present maladies are rooted in past experience. The psychoanalytic method entails drawing out these memories. Freud observes, however, that at times memories manifest themselves nonverbally as action. At times, “the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it now as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it” (150, original italics). Psychoanalytic sessions should be designed to help patients overcome resistances by verbalizing and working through past traumatic experiences. He comments that, in cases where the analyst has failed to bring about a change in the patient’s condition, it may be that the “analyst has merely forgotten that giving the resistance a name could not result in its immediate cessation. One must allow the patient time to become more conversant with this resistance with which he has now become acquainted, to work through it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis” (155). Freud underscores the importance of working though trauma when he suggests that “This working-through of the resistances may in practice turn out to be an arduous task for the subject of the analysis and a trial of patience for the analyst. Nevertheless it is a part of the work which effects the greatest changes in the patient and which distinguishes the analytic treatment from any kind of treatment by suggestion” (155-156).

In the aftermath of the First World War, Freud tackled the subject of trauma again. Cathy Caruth notes that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* "has been called upon as showing a direct relation between Freud's theory of trauma and historical violence, a directness presumably reflected in the theory of trauma he produces" ("Violence and Time" 24). Caruth suggests that "this work represents Freud's formulation of trauma as a theory of the peculiar incomprehensibility of human survival. It is only by reading the theory of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in terms of its inherently temporal structure—the structure of delayed experience—that we can understand the full complexity of the problem of survival at the heart of the human experience" (24). Caruth argues that Freud's conception of trauma occurs not at the spatial but at the temporal level:

> Unlike the body, however, which protects the organism by means of a spatial boundary between inside and outside, the barrier of consciousness is a barrier of sensation and knowledge that protects by placing stimulation within an ordered experience of *time*. What causes trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a threat to the body's spatial integrity, but is in fact a break with the mind's experience of time. (25)

Many of the points suggested by Freud appear later in other theorists' work. Dominic LaCapra, for example, applies Freud's notion of temporal displacement, repetition, and working through to his studies of Holocaust survivors. LaCapra argues that a beneficial melding of deconstruction and psychoanalysis may lead to a deeper appreciation of the victims' experience.

> I would argue, or at least suggest, that undecidability and unregulated *différance*, threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions, including that between present and past, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes—scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop. (*Writing History, Writing Trauma* 21)

The solution for this disjunction involves working through trauma: “Working through is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transferential relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one’s people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future” (21-22). LaCapra’s evaluation of working through ultimately falls in line with Freud’s therapeutic approach: it “enables survival or a reengagement in life” (22).

LaCapra notes that some feel disinclined to work through their traumatic experiences: “Those traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them,” he explains, “may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it” (22). Breaking with the traumatic past for these individuals may lead them to feel they are “betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past. One’s bond with the dead, especially with dead intimates, may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound” (22). LaCapra further argues that this represents “an important tendency in modern culture and thought to convert trauma into the occasion for sublimity, to transvalue it into a test of the self or the group and an entry into the extraordinary. In the sublime, the excess of trauma becomes an uncanny source of elation or ecstasy” (23). Horrific events, such as the dropping of atomic bombs or genocide, may become “occasions for negative sublimity or displaced sacralization” (23). These moments of negative sublimity may, in fact, “give rise to what may be termed founding traumas—traumas that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or a group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity” (23).

Cathy Caruth, whose commentary on Freud I have already cited, takes trauma theory in a decidedly different direction than LaCapra. Her appreciation of trauma focuses on the individual subject, as opposed to LaCapra's concern for the broad effects of trauma on cultures and populations. She is also less inclined to emphasize the therapeutic value of working through trauma. Citing Tasso's poem, "Jerusalem Divided", that Freud uses to open *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Caruth expands upon Freud's reading. The poem tells the story of Tancred, a Christian crusader, who inadvertently kills his lover, Clorinda, when she dresses in the armor of the Moorish enemy. Unable to hear her pleas, Tancred runs her through with his sword only to discover her identity afterwards. Years later, while walking through the woods, the tormented hero strikes out with his blade against a tree and Clorinda's screams again split the air. Hearing them, Tancred remembers the murder of his beloved, and falls into a deep melancholy. Freud reads this poem as an example of compulsive behavior and repetition of repressed aggression. Caruth looks beyond this reading to suggest that Tasso's example:

> …is not just the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent and unwished-for repetition, but the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*…. Tancred's story thus represents traumatic experience not only as the enigma of a human agent's repeated experience and unknowing acts but also as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries out from a wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that Tancred himself cannot fully know. (*Unclaimed Experience* 2-3, original emphasis)

Caruth argues that traumatic experiences can only be explored by reopening the original wound: "Just as Tancred does not hear the voice of Clorinda until the second wounding, so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4).

LaCapra and Caruth allude to an open dialogue with the traumatic past that allows survivors to dialogue with their pain. Their observations echo Freud's discussion of melancholia. Freud's 1917 essay, "Mourning and Melancholia," outlines a fundamental difference between the two terms. Mourning is defined as the process by which the libido is surreptitiously disassociated from an object of desire that has been lost. This distancing renders the object dead to the individual, or in other words, transforms it into a preterit object. Freud differentiates melancholia from mourning because the former does not distance the patient from the object of desire, but rather reinforces the empathetic bond. Whereas mourning brings closure, melancholia opens the subjective conscience to the loss, and reinforces the individual's bond with the absent object. If melancholia is, as Freud suggests, an open channel to one's traumatic past—differentiated from mourning in that mourning involves the withdrawal of the libido from the desired object, rendering it dead and preterit, while melancholia reinforces the libidinous desire—then David Eng may rightly assert that melancholia allows for a positive constructive dialogue with the past. Establishing a dialogic relationship allows the survivor to reexamine, reinterpret, and reconceptualize the past.

David Eng and David Kazanjian's work on remains and loss may also make important contributions to our discussion of failure. In the introductory essay to the anthology *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, Eng and Kazanjian conceptualize physical remains as the only evidence available to us that testify to an existence that one was, but no longer is. Remains become as central to the cultural critics investigation as they do to a crime scene investigator. Positioning themselves at "the dawn of the twenty-first century", Eng and Kazanjian insist that we are at a time of reflection, "when the pervasive losses of the twentieth century need to be engaged from the perspective of what remains. Such a perspective… animates history through the creation of bodies and

subjects, spaces and representations, ideals and knowledge. This attention to remains generates a politics of mourning that might be active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary" (2). For Eng and Kazanjian, imputing "a creative instead of a negative quality may initially seem counterintuitive" (2). But this counterintuitive logic, they assert, allows for new understanding and invigorated action.

Eng and Kazanjian address Freud's concept of mourning and melancholia, arguing that in Freud's initial notion of melancholia:

> ...the past is neither fixed nor complete. Unlike mourning, in which the past is declared resolved, finished, and dead, in melancholia the past remains steadfastly alive in the present. By engaging in 'countless separate struggles' with loss, melancholia might be said to constitute, as Benjamin would describe it, an ongoing and open relationship with the past—bringing its ghosts and specters, its flaring and fleeting images, into the present (4).

Eng and Kazanjian are describing the same phenomenon that LaCapra does, that is, the haunting presence of past trauma in present memory. Whereas LaCapra views the past as an obstacle to the future, however, Eng and Kazanjian positively associate this presence as a relationship or a dialogue. They continue their analysis, asserting that the melancholic object is not a fixed signifier, but rather the carrier of multiple meanings, which endows it "not only a multifaceted but also a certain palimpsest-like quality. This condensation of meaning allows us to understand the lost object as continually shifting both spatially and temporally, adopting new perspectives and meanings, new social and political consequences along the way" (5). These authors suggest that, "while the twentieth century resounds with catastrophic losses of bodies, spaces, and ideals, psychic and material practices of loss and its remains are productive for history and for politics. Avowals of loss and attachments can produce a world of remains as a world of new representations and alternative meanings" (5). Eng and Kazanjian ultimately believe that

their counterintuitive approach to loss will ultimately "apprehend the modern and postmodern epoch of loss—characterized by the fragmentation of grand narratives as well as by war, genocide, and neocolonialism—as full of volatile potentiality and future militancies rather than as pathologically bereft and politically reactive, in the style of Benjamin's acedic historicist" (5).

LaCapra mentions that victims are "fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop." He views melancholia in strictly Freudian terms. This is to say that melancholia is an obstacle that must be overcome in order to reengage with present-day living. Similarly, Caruth views denies complete healing, and argues that comprehension is only achieved through exploring the painful past. Eng offers a different perspective. Melancholia, he argues, is not an obstacle, but an oracle. Engaging the past becomes the means for engaging the present.

The appeal to trauma theory that this chapter espouses should not be surprising. The border created by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo frequently takes on traumatic descriptions. Gloria Anzaldúa portrays the border as an ever-present open wound:

> The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, and the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. (*Borderlands / La Frontera* 25, original italics)

The unresolved nature of the open wound bespeaks the immediacy of violent act, the unresolved nature of the violation, and continued existence of the emotional pain. Caruth's theory of traumatic experience speaking from the open wound resonates with this thought. Solares has recently stated in an interview that "Esa larga frontera es una herida que no ha cerrado" (Rodríguez Marcos). The openness of this wound is the constant reminder that the U.S.-Mexico border continues to be a cultural and political

problem. The Chamizal National National Memorial in El Paso, Texas, exemplifies the actuality of this problem. The "Chamizal issue" stems from the boundary stipulations of the Treaty of Guadalupe. The treaty established the Rio Grande River as the United States southern border. Between 1852 and 1868 the river shifted south, eventually adding 600 acres of land to the United States. Both countries claimed the land, but no resolution was reached until 1963. President John F. Kennedy followed arbitration recommendations that had been made in 1911. The recommendations effectively divided the disputed property. In 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson met with Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos to officially end the dispute. A national memorial now occupies the plot of land and is hailed as a symbol of internation cooperation.

This summary of trauma theory allows us to postulate the following in regards to *La invasion*. First, the 1846-1848 War exemplifies LaCapra's "foundational trauma." Cecil Robinson has written: "The war between the United States and Mexico… was to Mexico a national trauma comparable to what the Civil War was to the United States. But there were significant differences. Whereas the Civil War resolved a festering problem, the Mexican-American War caused one, particularly for Mexico" (*The View from Chapultepec* ix). Robinson arrives at the wrong conclusion on both accounts. The American Civil War did not resolve the festering problem of inequality. It allowed the American central government to exercise political pressure that ended the social practice of slavery; but it would be another one hundred years before any measure of equality was reached. Likewise, the U.S.-Mexico War did not cause political problems for Mexico. It laid bare many of the latent instabilities, weaknesses, and divisions present since independence. Solares emphasizes the traumatic nature of the war through Doctor Urruchúa, a physician called upon to tend to the city's wounded. Solares likens this foundational trauma to physical pain. As noted earlier, many consider the border drawn

by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo a scar, the reminder of a forceful amputation. Casualties were severe on both sides, but Mexico carried the greater burden of dead and injured. Improvised triage units appeared throughout the city, and doctors were called upon to dedicate themselves wholly to the task of patching up the wounded. This does not, however, mean that Mexicans were united as to the form national government should take, as we will see. Rather, the sense of vulnerability created by the foreign invasion, coupled with the expropriation of half the national territory engendered a feeling of solidarity based on loss.

Second, this sense of vulnerability has become a central tenant of Mexican identity discourse. Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* demonstrates the ends to which Mexicans are willing to go to avoid such a characterization, behavior that Freud and LaCapra might term repetition or acting out. This ties into the theme of cowardice that motivates the narrator's need to finish his chronicle.

Third, the temporal disjunction between present and past initiated by the foundational trauma has atavistically doomed Mexico to failure. Solares' novel expresses the notion that Mexico, like the trauma victim, is doomed to relive its past problems until it works through them. An example of this cyclical return to failure is epitomized by the parallel Solares draws between Hernán Cortés and Winfield Scott. Cortés arrived at Tenochtitlán (current day Mexico City) in November 1519. By July 1520 he had worn out his welcome, and the Aztecs drove the Spaniards from the city. Cortés retreated to the coast, regrouped, and convinced the Tlaxcalan Indians to help him overthrow the Aztecs. With their aid, Cortés was able to subdue Tenochtitlán in 1521. Scott, inspired by William Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico,* followed Hernán Cortés's route to the Aztec capital. General Scott's campaign landed at Veracruz, and met little resistance as they traversed the path across the lowlands, up into the mountains of Puebla, and into the

valley of Anahuac. Like Cortés before him, Scott recognized the value of dividing to conquer. American forces arrived in Puebla to open arms and stayed there comfortably for three months while planning the final assault on Mexico City. Puebla has always been a Catholic stronghold in the nation, and the *poblano* elite did not look kindly on the acting president Gómez Farías's liberal encroachments on ecclesiastical privileges and church properties. They were also displeased with Santa Anna's forced loans which were frequently aimed at the clergy's pockets. So when Scott agreed to establish order and protect the Church's interests, Puebla rolled out the proverbial red carpet. Solares' narrator associates these two men when he arrives at the city center on 14 September 1847, the day American troops made their triumphal entry. "Todos teníamos los ojos puestos en Palacio porque, se decía, el general Scott ya había tomado posesión de él y no tardaría en salir al balcón a dirigirnos un mensaje" (*La invasión* 205). The significance of the Palace and its location are key to this theme of repetition. It lies in the heart of downtown Mexico City, near the ruins of the Aztecs' *Templo Mayor*, on the same plot of land that Cortés had used to build his home in 1523. This is, and always has been, the center of Mexican political and ecclesiastical power. All of Mexico's conquerors—the Aztecs who settled the valley, the Spaniards who overthrew the Aztecs, and the Americans who defeated the Mexican army—go to this place. Solares suggests by this association that Mexico had not learned its lesson with Cortés. Consequently, the same problem that proved the undoing of the Aztec empire allowed the Americans to overrun the nation. Furthermore, Solares proposes that both Scott and Cortés exploited Mexico's instability. Their victory was not due to their strengths, but to Mexico's weakness.

Fourth, this brush with political death and the resulting survival has plagued Mexico's national conscience. Caruth suggests that it is not the awareness of threat that bothers victims, rather realizing that one is aware a moment too late.

Finally, writing or rewriting history becomes a means of confession. The spiritual and the psychoanalytical become conflated at this point, but the resulting verbalization or or confession leads to absolution. In what follows I turn my attention these confessional elements. Solares styles the novel's protagonist, Abelardo, as a melancholic prophetic figure whose mission is to purge the nation of the painful war memories. To do so, he must likewise purge himself of personal misdeeds. He must personally confess to cowardice and infidelity. This allows him to tackle the political and ideological dissension that plagues Mexico and allows foreign invaders to take advantage of Mexico.

WRITING AND CONFESSION IN SOLARES

As mentioned at the outset Solares, more than any other successful Mexican novelist, incorporates a genuine concern for the metaphysical in his works. Catholic by birth, he considers himself a spiritual man, a connoisseur of all faiths. "Estudié con los jesuitas y eso me ha marcado," he admits, "aunque tengo un rechazo absoluto a la iglesia. Muchas veces he pensado que el gran reto de los católicos es convertirse al cristianismo" (Rodríguez Marcos). His texts encompass spiritual journeys, question the relationship between life and death, probe the limits of the good within the realities of political power, challenge traditional Catholic cosmologies, and argue for a strong sense of the divine presence to whom all people are accountable. Douglas Weatherford references the spiritual current in Solares' work, but does so tangentially ("Reading and Revolution in the Novels of Ignacio Solares" 73-92). In a bolder tone, Rafael Hoyle observes that Solares writes against the grain of Mexican literature by foregrounding the spiritual in a world imbued with tension between secularity and religiosity. He explains that Solares' novels:

> ...encourage the reader to look toward any kind of religion or spiritual discipline as a means of achieving progress for either society or the individual. Solares' novels do not undermine the previous novels' critique of the Catholic Church. In fact, Solares points to the shortcomings of the dominant institutionalized religion in Mexico. However, alongside this critique there is a clear message about the importance of living according to the dictates of a set of religious beliefs and a religious discipline, and the religious path he outlines is not only a facilitator of spiritual salvation but also of social progress. (*Writing Against the Grain* 28)

Hoyle's analysis focuses primarily on the spiritual journey towards the afterlife present in many of Solares' texts, but does not address the confessional element essential to preparing for the final encounter with divinity.

This encounter is the crux of Solares' narrative. It is expressed in his Mexican Revolution novels (*Madero, el otro* and *La noche de Ángeles*) and historical dramas (*El jefe* and *Los mochos*). Preparation for that final encounter is based upon confession. This is the point of convergence with trauma theory. For Solares, confession is the "articulatory practice" that LaCapra deems so important for working through trauma. It is, essentially, the verbalization of past experience. Recalling trauma in narrative form empowers the victim. As such, the traumatic experience does not dictate the terms of its enunciation.

Both LaCapra and Caruth agree that the exploration of repressed traumas—or, for our purposes, failures—can be carried out through the therapeutic process of writing. Writing constitutes a blank space wherein victims can explore and work through their trauma. Ignacio Solares shares this vision. In a recent interview, he stated that "Carl Gustav Jung, en 1913 dijo: 'no hay major terapia que la escritura.' Esa escritura que describe Jung abre zonas insospechadas; si uno se pone a escribir, encuentra sus *yo* [sic] secretos. Básicamente, escribo para conocerme" (Garduño).

ABELARDO: PROPHET OF MEXICO'S COLLAPSE

La invasión is a chronicle of the war written by the novel's protagonist, a prophetic anti-hero named Abelardo. Abelardo's chronicle is a dual confession. On the one hand, Abelardo must confess his own crimes, which include finishing off a moribund American soldier and his youthful love of a young woman and his simultaneous lusting of her mother). This confession seems directed at his wife, Magdalena, who follows the chronicle with express interest in the romance. But the chronicle also remembers the nation's sins.

Given Solares' penchant for metaphysical themes, it is not surprising that the novel's protagonist evinces prophetic qualities. As his chronicle opens, Abelardo tells us that "Por aquellos días me sucedía con frecuencia que durante un ataque de melancolía viera—o entreviera—unas llamitas errantes en el cielo, danzarinas, que llegaban y se iban, y a veces bajaban a posarse, por ejemplo, en lo alto de una iglesia—les encantaban las iglesias, en especial las churrigurescas" (*La invasión* 19). The flames he sees accompany his bouts with melancholia and visions of things to come. Abelardo's friend, Doctor Urruchúa, observes that Abelardo's visions may have a healthy effect for the nation: "Está usted purgando la culpa de quién sabe cuántos capitalinos con sus sueños y sus visiones, amigo mío" (60). Doctor Urruchúa attributes Abelardo's visions to a heightened spiritual sensitivity brought on by his psychological problems: "¿Será possible que, en ciertos casos, el melancólico se vuelva un visionario?" he asks. "¿Será que los melancólicos descubren señales premonitorias en el cielo para las que nosotros—pobres seres normales—estamos incapacitados?" (74). Michael Dudley suggests that the gift of prophesy may, in fact, be linked to manic depression ("Melancholia or Depression" 90). Rhawn Joseph links the prophetic powers of Abraham, Moses,

Mohammed, and Jesus Christ to a high rate of activity in limbic system. Just as Eng and Kazanjian have conceptualized melancholy as an open conduit that allows for open dialogue with the traumatic past, Solares and others point to the possibility that melancholic or depression or a hyperactive amygdala "appear to… provide the foundations for mystical, spiritual, and religious experience and the perception, or perhaps the hallucination, of ghosts, demons, spirits, and sprites and belief in demonic or angelic possession" ("The Limbic System and the Soul" 106).

Prophets of the Judeo-Christian tradition called their people to repentance through warnings of forthcoming punishments. If the people repented, as in the case of Ninevah, destruction was abated. If, on the other hand, the people persisted in their ways, God unleashed turmoil upon the people. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah foretold that, "Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the agates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah" (Jeremiah 1:14-15). Likewise, Isaiah, recriminated the nation of Israel for its infidelity: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto danger, they are gone away backward…. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, ctrangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers" (Isaiah 1:4,7). The writings of the prophets constitute a record of the nation's sins. Leviticus and Deuteronomy codify the Law of Moses, laying out all the potential ways Israel could sin and each crimes concomitant punishment. But we must imagine that these laws represent, to some degree, the behavior of the Israelites and not simply Moses' fevered imagination.

Like prophets of the Old Testament, Abelardo feels compelled to record his nation's sins. He began writing in the days leading up to the invasion, but never finished it. He determines to finish the project thirty years later at his wife's insistence: "Lo que rehuyes es escribir sobre tus culpas y tus alucinaciones, insufribles para la gente que vive contigo, te conozco.... Si no lo escribes ahora, te van a llegar de golpe en el momento de la muerte, y va a ser peor, créemelo" (*La invasión* 30). Magdalena hopes that by recalling the past and writing it down, Abelardo will be able to clear his conscience. She endows the text with a redemptive aspect when she asks: "¿No será que la ciudad misma, para purgar su culpa igual que tú, necesita que lo recuerdes y lo escribas?" (30-31). Here we see the clear connection between Abelardo's individual need to confess conflated with a national sentiment. Urruchúa reiterates this sentiment: "Está usted purgando la culpa de quién sabe cuántos capitalinos con sus sueños y sus visiones, amigo mío" (60).

These visions, or flashbacks in psychoanalytic terminology, return after fifty years when Abelardo returns to his family home in Tacubaya. It was here during the war that he escaped from the world to make love to his girlfriend, Isabel. It is also here where Isabel discovers that he was secretly in love with her mother. After she storms out, Abelardo takes his carriage into town where he discovers that the American troops have reached the city. Abelardo also houses the wounded revolutionary leader, Father Jarauta, while he convalesces. The house is intimately linked to the events of that period, and reopening the house opens the floodgates for his unresolved traumas. His visions are accompanied by "unas llamitas errantes en el cielo" (20). The doctor diagnoses these visions as apparitions of "almas difuntas, atadas aún a la tierra por algún lazo muy intenso de amor o de odio, que oscilan descabelladamente como si un viento implacable las agitara y que se extinguen en el aire... no bien se les reza un padrenuestro" (20). His

prescription for ending the visions, then, is to pray, a practice that Abelardo asserts he never takes up. Instead, he turns to confession.

Confession is the key to Solares' novel. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* describes confession as the first step in purging one's soul of impurity: "Penance as a Sacrament is an external sign by which forgiveness of sin is both symbolized and effected" ("Penance, Sacrament of" *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 78). Confession forms the pivotal aspect of the Sacrament of Penance: "The rite of Penance is made up of the three acts of the penitent—contrition, confession, and satisfaction (the quasi matter)—and the words of the priest 'I absolve thee, etc.' (the form)" (73). Absolution, or deliverance from the guilt, consists of "the words of a judicial sentence in which the priest, exercising the power of the keys for the remission of sins, directly and immediately reconciles the sinner to the living body of Christ, which is the Church, and thus restores him to friendship with God Himself" ("Absolution, Sacramental" *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 41).

Abelardo's chronicle is his confession and the means by which Mexico's guilt is to be purged. To whom does he confess? Textual evidence supports the hypothesis that Abelardo is confessing, at least on a very personal level, to his wife, Magdalena. She inspires him to finish his chronicle: "Es más, cuenta en las primeras páginas cómo fue que apuñalaste a aquel pobre soldado yanqui, va a servirte como una especie de confesión pública" (22). Later he admits that "confesiones como la que hago—y en la que tanto ha insistido mi mujer—atestiguan que a toda fe religiosa sobrevive en la mayoría de los hombres esta angustiosa necesidad de *rendir cuentas*" (162). Magdalena takes an active role in questioning Abelardo about his past and prodding him to write. She makes laconic criticisms of his historical narrative and his decision to include Doctor Urruchúa's notes. But her real interest is in his romantic past. Numerous times she feigns disinterest in the

chronicle, telling Abelardo to let her know when he gets back to the love affair. This suggestion is strengthened by the narrator's closing words:

> Sin esa curiosidad tuya, ¿crees que me hubiera atrevido a escribir con tanto detalle, por ejemplo, mi relación amorosa con Isabel? Pero sabía que tus ojos estaban ahí, siguiéndome, alentándome a hacer una confesión completa, fuera cual fuera el precio y el resultado. Finalmente, tú lo sabías, lo estaba escribiendo para ti y en consecuencia para eso Otro, o Espejo, o Rey de la Muerte, o Conciencia Universal, o Dios, o como quieras llamarlo. (297)

So at one level the chronicle clears the air with his wife. At another, however, it seeks to make amends with a higher power. After stating that man's necessity to rendir cuentas surpasses mere religiosity, Abelardo asks to whom man—concretely, himself—aspires to account.

> ¿Ante quién? ¿Ante un amigo que ya murió, como es el doctor Urruchúa? Estoy seguro de que tengo su perdón anticipado. ¿Ante un punado de posibles lectores? Dudo de que llegue a tenerlos. ¿Ante el soldado al que apuñalé? Estábamos en Guerra y yo no tenía opción. ¿Ante mi familia? Mi mujer chasqueó la lenguag cuando le dije que también ella debía perdonarme. Pero, ¿no se tratará también, aunque involuntariamente, de anticipar el encuentro con Aquél que nos dio el alma y que la reclamará de vuelta en cualquier momento? Nada que atempere ese encuentro puede resultarnos banal. En especial si, como he pensado siempre, es a través de la escritura que se hace más possible el encuentro. (162-163)

He discounts family, friends, and potential readers. He asks forgiveness of his wife. But more importantly, Abelardo posits that people's urge to confess prefigures our ultimate encounter with deity. Writing becomes a rehearsal for that meeting wherein we perform a preliminary cleansing.

But these two options cannot preclude a third possibility. According to the definitions cited earlier, confession requires a confessor to pronounce absolution upon the penitent. We have seen that *La invasión* can be read as the revelation of personal sins to Abelardo's wife and of national sins to deity. But confession's ultimate goal is absolution. In neither of these two previous cases do we see any evidence that absolution is granted. The novel closes with Abelardo lying next to his sleeping wife. At no point

does she ever forgive him. Similiarly, there is no indiciation of divine forgiveness. To some degree, then, we must read *La invasión* as a truncated story of confession. The act has completed, but the reward has yet to be granted. Or we might suppose that, in Solares' conception of writing that the act of confession itself is enough to satisfy the demands of conscience. In any of the three case, the chronicle we read accounts for Abelardo's personal and Mexico's national failures during the war.

PERSONAL SINS

Opening the house at Tacubaya brings Abelardo back to his unresolved personal sins. The first of these is his romantic interest in his fiancée's mother and the negative consequences the revelation of this infatuation produces.

Abelardo storms away from the dinner table after a pro-American statement by his future father-in-law. His fiancée, Isabel, refuses food and and medical treatment, and her health deteriorates rapidly. In desperation her mother, doña Isabel, visits Abelardo's home in Tacubaya. She assures him that all was forgiven and explains her daughter's condition. A fainting spell interrupts their discussion, and Abelardo lays the woman on the couch and loosens the neck of her dress to help her breathe. He realizes that "En aquel momento cometí el segundo error en mi incipiente relación con la familia Olaguíbel. El primero fue creer que me gustaba la señorita Isabel. El segundo, descubrir que quien realmente me gustaba era doña Isabel" (*La invasión* 111). He is led to this conclusion by what might best be described as an overactive imagination. He perceives in her every move and gesture the revelation of a secret, burning passion. "Antes de ponerse de pie para marcharse, hizo un comentario que que sentí más relacionado con el sentimiento amoroso que acabábamos (¿acabábamos?) de descubrir entre nosotros, que con el

pasajero malestar que sufrió" (112). This supposedly sultry comment, relating her "frágil corazón [que] me delata y se encoge en los momentos donde más necesitaría tenerlo endurecido y protegido", remains locked in Abelardo's fevered imagination. Doña Isabel openly asks him to help her daughter, placing a suggestive emphasis on the word "help."

In every subsequent contact with the daughter or the mother, Abelardo searches for traces of doña Isabel's confession of love. When he visits Isabel, for example, she shows him a copy of Saint Teresa of Avila's *Su vida*. In the sixteenth century, Saint Teresa had been similarly ill and wrote a number of mystical experiences. Isabel claims the book has inspired her to enter the convent and that she will do so as soon as she is cured; her overt sexual suggestions to Abelardo imply otherwise. Abelardo finds phrases in the book underlined by doña Isabel that suggest to his mind her affection. He discovers insinuation and promise, for example, in the following phrase: "Más dolor causan las plegarias atendidas que las no atendidas" (139). He relates this to the promise offered in the gospel of Mark that reads: "Por tanto, os aseguro que todas cuantas cosas pidiereis en la oración, tened fe de conseguirlas… y se os concederán…" (139). Abelardo summarizes his intent to discover a secret code leading to the mother when he writes: "¿Habría también la madre incluido el libro de Santa Teresa, el subrayado y la intención de su hija de meterse de monja, en el montaje teatral que me preparó? Cada vez admiraba más su calculadora inteligencia y mayor era mi necesidad de verla" (139). Saint Teresa's spiritual ecstasy cannot compare with Abelardo's hormonal joy. He rushes from the house, purchases a copy of the book for himself, and begins to read it "como si doña Isabel estuviera leyendo conmigo, con la sensación de que participábamos del mismo éxtasis los tres: ella, la santa y yo" (143). He goes as far as to wonder if their union was sanctioned by Providence; he reports that "Un par de sueños me lo confirmaron" (147). We can suppose that doña Isabel was, in fact, underlining passages for Abelardo to read,

hinting at promises of sex through verses about spiritual union. However, later evidence suggests that it was for the purpose of enticing him to seduce her daughter.

Once Isabel recovers, she and Abelardo attend a function at the theater with her parents. When he finds himself seated between mother and daughter, he assures himself that doña Isabel has planned a coincidental rendezvous. Every accidental contact is interpreted by the young lover as an insinuation of more to come. Her sigh at a propitious moment reveals her longing for him. “Nunca, en ninguna otra circunstancia,” he pines, “he vuelto a sentir una emoción amorosa como la de aquel momento” (157-158). He confesses that:

> En uno de esos oscuros, fui yo quien reclinó el hombro hacia ella, y del puro contacto fugaz con su brazo emergió una ola de calor que me recorrió el cuerpo, subió a las mejillas y se puso a palpitarme desbocado en las sienes... Un instante imposible de calcular con nuestros pobres relojes, pero suficiente para que sintiera a doña Isabel deshacerse voluptuosamente conta mí... Ahí donde la acariciaba—y por sobre la ropa—nacía yo como flama. (158)

Remembering that what we are reading is Abelardo’s written account of his actions during the invasion, we quickly find out that we are not the only ones to read this. Shortly after the theater, Isabel moves into Abelardo’s Tacubaya residence. For days on end, they make love and hide from the world. She knows he is writing a chronicle of the war and tries to sneak a look. He hides the documents to keep her from seeing the incriminating evidence that reveals his obsession for her mother. She does find the documents, however, and confronts him. Left with no alternative, he confesses his love for doña Isabel and the daughter leaves infuriated. A short time later, doña Isabel visits Abelardo. She reports that Isabel confronted her and her father about the supposed affair:

> …la primera consecuencia de esto fue que mi marido me insultó apenas estuvimos solos, me insultó como nunca antes lo había hecho, y luego dejó de hablarme, dejó de hablarme del todo… Se coludieron contra mí padre e hija y me aplicaron la ley del hielo…, mis hijos han preferido no intervener, me hablan

> apenas lo necesario… a últimas fechas el ambiente en mi casa es un verdadero infierno de hielo…" (273)

When Abelardo pushes to know if she reciprocates his affection, if she feels anything for him, she responds that she never knew of his love and never felt anything for him. Magdalena summarizes the whole ordeal in her concise, piquant manner: "O sea, destruiste a la familia" (291). The culpability of this tragic love affair lies solely with Abelardo and his imagination.

The relationships in this novel are pathological on many levels. First, Abelardo is sexually attracted to mother and daughter. Second, the mother, Doña Isabel, makes all the arrangements to allow Abelardo to seduce her daughter. Third, the daughter is complicit in her mother's plans, and feigns illness in order to bring Abelardo back into her life. And fourth, after finding out that he has destroyed doña Isabel's marriage and her relationship with her daughter, Abelardo has the audacity to ask if she is interested in sleeping with him.

But this is not the only sin to which he confesses. We remember that Magdalena had originally told him to write the chronicle as a public confession for having stabbed an American soldier (22). This memory haunts him fifty years after the fact, despite his best rationalizations about wartime ethics. But the confession is double. In addition to accounting for the soldier's life, Abelardo admits to fleeing in cowardice. Abelardo is present in the Zócalo when the citizens revolt against the occupying army. When the violence begins, he runs: "Todo en mi ser dudaba, pero el miedo pudo más y salí corriendo hacia los portales para abandonar la plaza, torcido, desencajado, la cabeza sumida, pensando hipnóticamente que una de esas balas que intermitentemente escuchaba disparar estaba destinada a mí, que corría hacia ella sin remedio" (14). Abelardo's first confession is that of cowardice. Instead of turning on the American aggressors, rising up

with the populace to right the violation of national sovereignty, he runs panic stricken. In his flight a wounded American soldier grabs his ankle, tripping him. Struggling for life, the Yankee throws wild punches, landing one to Abelardo's face. "Sin pensarlo demasiado, saqué mi cuchillo de su funda y le asesté una puñalada en el pecho acezante" (15). Watching the soldier die, Abelardo is overcome with "una piedad infinita, como si en la miseria de aquel hombre contemplara la mía propia y la de todos los congregados en la plaza" (16).

NATIONAL SINS

Confessional catharsis at the individual level is achieved as Abelardo shares his most intimate weaknesses with divinity, readers, and his wife. But the burden of national sin must be dealt with. Twice the notion of purging national sin is addressed. Magdalena, insistent that he write the chronicle so his guilt does not overwhelm him at the moment of his death, adds: "¿No será que la ciudad misma, para purgar su culpa igual que tú, necesita que lo recuerdes y lo escribas?" (30-31). Again Doctor Urruchúa, alluding to Abelardo's role as spiritual messiah, asserts that Abelardo's visions and neuroses atone for the nation's errors: "Está usted purgando la culpa de quién sabe cuántos capitalinos con sus sueños y sus visiones, amigo mío" (60). Here we might ask, what are these sins?

National Sins: Santa Anna

First among them is epitomized by Antonio López de Santa Anna. Abelardo asserts that "la relación de Santa Anna con *su* pueblo me resultó reveladora para empezar

a entender eso que llamamos ‘mexicanidad’, y que con tantos esfuerzos y sobresaltos intentábamos contruir por aquellas fechas” (38, original italics). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Santa Anna is the premier *caudillo* of the nineteenth century and was involved in practically every major event from the first insurgency through to the French intervention of the 1860s. His role in the American invasion has been the subject of much speculation. Some argue that Santa Anna’s participation in the war was duplicitous. For example, 1846 found Santa Anna in exile waiting for an opportunity to return to Mexico. While in Cuba, U.S. lawmakers visited him. He entered into negotiations with the United States to pass through the blockade at Veracruz and begin the peace process once restored to power. This negotiation entailed instructions for the United States army to attack certain strategic points en route to the capital. Those who read his life story in bad faith view Santa Anna’s actions as treason. Others, including the general himself, argue that his actions allowed him to know the position and troop strength of the invading forces. Yet others maintain that Santa Anna, true to form, switched his intentions of dealing with the Americans when he perceived the possibility of fending them off. Whatever the case maybe, Santa Anna’s participation in the conflict was less than admirable on many accounts, and has tarnished his already besmirched image in the eyes of Mexican historiography.

But Solares’ interest in Santa Anna has less to do with his military engagements and more with the ongoing love-hate relationship with the Mexican people that led Sierra to designate him “el seductor de la patria.” In what seems to be a reoccurring theme, Solares emphasizes the theatricality of the general’s life and career. “Por lo pronto era, en el sentido más teatral del término, un farsante” (38). Paying special attention to the parades and fanfare, Abelardo relates that “a pesar de ello, de sus multiples caídas y descréditos, de lo acerbo de las burlas y de las maldiciones, cada vez que el héroe regresa

al poder, se le organiza una nueva entrada triunfal a la capital y todo el mundo sale a la calle" (40). He observes that the motivation is double: the people love parades and the "gente decente" anxiously await a protector. Moreover, upper class citizens are enchanted by "el boata que Santa Anna imprime a la vida official, a pesar de los constants quebrantos económicos" (41).

> Los banquetes, ceremonias y saraos se suceden sin interupción. Carretelas traídas de Europa y extravagantes libreas llenan los paseos. A las de gallos en San Agustín de las Cuevas van las damas enjoyadas, con sombreros de plumas y vaporosos trajes de muselina. De diario, los militantes andan uniformados de gala con todas sus ostentosas condecoraciones. Los charros deslumbran con sus sombreros galoneados y sus botonaduras de filigrana que caen a los lados de las pantaloneras como dos chorros de plata. Una compañía italiana inaugura el Teatro Santa Anna con su más selecto repertorio de ópera. Señores vestidos de etiqueta y damas de brazos enguantados aplauden a rabiar. El dueño del teatro, Francisco Arbeu, informa en una entrevista en *El Siglo XIX*: "Se ha cumplido mi voto para que la inauguración fuese justamente el día de la instalación del Supremo Gobierno Constitucional. Era para mí no sólo un deber de gratitud, sino un homenaje al Jefe Supremo de la República, a quien todo le debemos y todo nos lo da." (41-42)

Solares' description of this infatuation with the decorum Santa Anna brings to Mexican society is, of course, undermined by the reminder that they were always accompanied by "quebrantos económicos." Socialites are caricatured by their ostentatious jewelry and overly enthusiastic applause; military officers wear their dress uniforms for no particular reason. Solares suggests that the upper crust of Mexican society bartered the long-term welfare of their nation for superficial and extravagant comforts. The essence of this adoration is distilled from the following experience. Santa Anna's 1845 incarceration in the prison at San Juan Ulúa is accompanied by a massive earthquake. Solares relates that many *capitalinos* began spreading the rumor: "¡cuidado, porque aquellos temblores de la tierra se debían a que Santa Anna, Benemérito de la Patria, Alma de México, estaba preso e iba a ser fusilado!" (43).

This infatuation with Santa Anna, then, is one of the nation's foremost problems, according to Solares. But Santa Anna is a symbol of a broader problem: Mexico's willingness to forego stability in lieu of temporary physical comfort and luxury. This theme will play out numerous times in the text. It is tempting, for example, to draw parallels between Mexico's love affair with Santa Anna and Abelardo's ongoing infatuation with his girlfriend's mother. Both should be taboo. And yet both Abelardo and Mexico are inextricably attracted to persons they know should be off limits.

National Sins: Dissenting Political Voices

The second sin Abelardo's narrative accounts for is the lack of Mexican unity in the face of adversity. The Café del Progreso synthesizes different Mexican opinions about the war. They range from desperate resignation to ardent nationalism. The group that meets at the café to discuss politics perceives itself a body of socially committed intellectuals with real concerns about their nation. Abelardo relates the prospect of the United States invasion inspired him to join "un grupo de amigos en el Café del Progreso a quienes más allá de creencias religiosas o convicciones políticas—tan cambiantes y confusas—nos unía nuestro ferviente antinorteamericanismo, y en él centrábamos nuestras pláticas" (45). Group members are moderately wealthy men in the capital. They are not a representative body, rather dandies who drink and philosophize. The opinions held by the group represent a broad array of commonly held convictions about the war and mid-century Mexico. What we see in this hodgepodge of ideas is not so much an ardent nationalism as an instinct towards self-preservation, founded in the intervention of other foreign powers.

The first series of quotations attempts to diagnose the problem.

—Ya les dimos Texas. ¿Qué más?

—No logramos consolidar nuestra independencia, es obvio.

—Nuestros gobernantes no supieron crearnos una identidad nacional.

—Con Estados Unidos encima de nosotros nunca seremos independientes.

—El problema es el colonialismo mental que aún padecemos.

—Los españoles dejaron el país hecho una ruina.

—Los puros tienen la culpa.

—Los moderados.

—Los conservadores.

—Santa Anna nos vendió a cambio de mantenerse en el poder. (45-46)

These disembodied voices represent the array of different thoughts, fears, and concerns that permeated Mexican society. There is no consensus among them about how to act. Rather, the unifying element is fear. Blame is placed on American avarice, a failed independence movement, governmental failure to supply a national identity, the nation's proximity to the United States, a remnant of a colonial mentality, Spain's inability to create a viable nation, and internal political and military intrigues. These explanations seek the root of failure in historical processes. Attributing culpability for present woes on past errors relieves contemporary actors of guilt. What group members do not offer is a concerted plan of action. Instead they prefer to depend on external forces to alter the course of events.

The second portion of these quotes draws attention to the hopes placed on external help from European powers. "Sólo un emperador español podría regresar a rescatarnos. Los españoles nos conquistaron pero se quedaron aquí a catequizar, a alfabetizar, a cruzarse con las indias, a fundar una nación; los norteamericanos sólo llegarán a exterminarnos, ya lo verán" (46). "Por eso, créanmelo, se los vengo repitiendo

desde hace años, mejor protegernos con un poder como el inglés, bien dotado, sereno y firme" (47). "El establecimiento del ejército inglés en terrenos mexicanos—Chihuahua y Sonora, por ejemplo—impediría futuras agresiones norteamericanas, ya que Estados Unidos jamás se atrevería a romper la paz con Inglaterra. Sabe con quién pelear" (47). They even quote the great mid-century liberal José María Luis Mora's musing on selling the border lands to England, "¿No convendrá más a México vender a Inglaterra parte de su territorio que le asegure lo que quede, o de otra manera arriesgarse a perder sucesivamente por las invasiones norteamericanas el resto, y tal vez hasta su independencia nacional?" (47). There is no call to arms, no suggestion of action. Instead, the voices unanimously agree that the solution to their problems should come from outside. They take no responsibility for their defense, but prefer to expect the intervention of others. This passive approach foreshadows the lackluster performance of Mexican elites in defending the nation. The citizenry of Puebla and many wealthy neighborhoods in Mexico City either passively waited or actively accepted the invading forces. In either case, no real action was espoused. The group most able to actively mobilize a defense preferred to comfortably bide their time.

These thoughts reveal liberal and conservative traits. The liberal position expresses the notion that trade agreements with Britain would place an economic and military boundary between Mexican and the United States. Of course, this solution had been tried in other Latin American countries, most notably Argentina, with negative economic repercussions that would last for decades. More importantly we note here the presence of a strong conservative position: the reestablishment of a Spanish monarchy, the nostalgic memory of a benign conquest based on education and religion, and the involvement of the Jesuit order which had been exiled in 1776. The prevalence of this conservative bias responds to a number of causes: the members are generally aristocratic

and identify with the conservation of their wealth and privilege, and Solares' already underlined affiliation with a metaphysical strain of thought. Additionally, the comment that the Americans were more kind to their British masters than the Mexicans had been to the Spanish is a quote that proceeds directly from José Vasconcelos' *Breve historia de México*, which Vasconcelos undoubtedly inherited from Lucas Alamán. Far from consolidating their ideas into a homogeneous ideological project, group members seem at odds about what to do. Some prefer a monarchical solution. Others opt for taking up arms. Still others prefer to negotiate with the Americans and to salvage what they can. Whatever their cause, however, all coincide in their disgust for the North American expansionism. Abelardo and Urruchúa are newcomers to the group. Abelardo writes that:

> Dentro de aquel caos, algunos de nosotros, como el doctor Urruchúa y yo, sólo podíamos creer en reafirmar nuestra identidad como mexicano y consolidar nuestra Independencia—donde lo educativo, pero también lo artístico, jugarían un papel determinante—, en la libertad irrestricta del hombre frente a la autoridad y las tiranías, en la honestidad de los funcionarios públicos que eligiéramos democráticamente, y todo esto sin dejar de lado las graves exigencias de justicia y equidad a favor de los indigentes. (48)

Abelardo is a confessed sceptic, but assures readers that "esos sucesos del 47 me obligaron a una participación activa y decidida que antes nunca hubiera supuesto ni deseado por mi pacifismo irredento y mi hipersensibilidad emocional" (49). As we will see, Abelardo's participation is less than active. His ideological fire does not produce any meaningful action on his part.

Like most members of the group, Abelardo is financially well off. Living on money from his inheritance, Abelardo only works at a local newspaper writing religion-infused commentaries about the war to entertain himself. He describes himself as an ardent nationalist. During a carriage ride home, Marcos Negrete, a member of the group, attempts to convince Abelardo that an American takeover would benefit the nation. Asserting that such a resolution would result in improved prosperity, political stability,

safety for his children, and the dissolution of the old military regime, Negrete concludes that dealing with the Americans would save a lot of trouble and bloodshed. Marcos Negrete's willingness to accept the North American invasion stems from his desire to preserve his wealth and protect his comfort in exchange for sacrificing national sovereignty. We have seen a similar strain of thought in *La corte de los ilusos*; it will be repeated in *Noticias del imperio*. Abelardo is flabbergasted: "Por favor, don Marcos, ¿para qué plantearme una cuestión tan delicada en la que de antemano sabe que no vamos a estar de acuerdo, que no podemos estar de acuerdo? Parece que usted no me conoce, que no ha escuchado cuanto he dicho y repetido en el grupo respecto a mis convicciones en este asunto" (68-69). Negrete fears death at American hands; Abelardo fears living under American power.

> Todos tenemos miedo a la muerte, pero hay quienes tenemos aún más miedo, mucho más miedo, a las crisis de angustia, a los escalofríos, a los sudores helados producto de cierta presencia cercana. A saber que esa presencia está ahí, en la sombra, que quizá ya se dirige hacia nosotros. Un rostro que nos repugna, intolerable, un rechazo que nos llega más de las vísceras que de la cabeza. (70)

Abelardo's visceral reaction to the threat of American occupation causes a scandal at Isabel's house. Her father, a bombastic, domineering man, opines that, "Como liberal moderado que soy, estoy convencido de que la invasión norteamericana es una oportunidad de oro para acabar con el despotismo de dictadores militares como Santa Anna y que una vez que los yanquis ganen la guerra y ocupen todo el país impondrán el federalismo y el régimen liberal" (92). Noting that his stomach "se me contrajo y una ola de sabor amargo me subió a la garganta," Abelardo makes an intempestuous exit from the dining room (92). He alleges that he has committed an inexcusable *faux pas* spilling a drop of hibiscus water on the clean, white tablecloth. His melodramatic exeunt leaves the family perplexed. He resolves to never return, but doña Isabel's pleading on behalf of her

daughter and the ensuing amorous miscommunication return Abelardo to the family's home.

Abelardo's perceived solidarity with Urruchúa does not represent the true distance between their ideological views. The war takes on a curious metaphysical nuance for Urruchúa. While attending the Café del Progreso where Abelardo and some friends meet to share in their "antinorteamericanismo irredento," Urruchúa often finds himself an awkward outsider (59). Unlike his companions, Urruchúa does not subscribe fervently to any political ideology. When someone suggests that the Yankees are the earthly incarnation of evil, Urruchúa plays the devil's advocate. What if the United States army were, in fact, evil, he queries. Evil, he argues, is not the sole possession of any one race or nation. But supposing that it were, the United States would do Mexico a great service bringing evil to Mexico, because only knowing evil can Mexico become acquainted with good. This unwillingness to fall into facile classifications, to invite pluralistic discussion, to explore what Borges describes as the inherent beauties in philosophical ideas, that makes Urruchúa an outstanding character. This also provides a strong contrast to the ardent nationalism of his companions.

One of the group responds to the doctor's suggestion arguing that, "Para conocer el Mal, a los mexicanos nose s suficiente con Santa Anna, para qué más" (66). Urruchúa responds that "ése es un mal con minúscula. En todo caso, se asemeja más a la estupidez que al verdadero Mal" (66). Insensed, another participant in the discussion lashes out: "Entonces, doctor, según usted tenía que ser así, ¿sufrir hoy los mexicanos una invasión yanqui para luego apreciar mejor las ventajas de la libertad y la independencia, Dios Santo?" (66-67). To which Urruchúa reponds almost flippantly, "Es posible" (67).

But Urruchúa's supposed indifference towards the war covers a deep-seated concern over the nature of the war and Mexico's participation. In his personal diary,

Urruchúa contemplates leaving the group that meets at the café. “Debería renunciar a esas controvertidas reunions en el Café del Progreso, en que mis opinions seguramente dan la impresión de falsa indiferencia o, lo que es peor, de frivolidad?” (149). Afraid that his comments might cause a confrontation with the group, he considers separating him from their company. It is not his fear of confrontation, however, that motivates this sentiment. Instead, he wonders, “¿Qué puede entender un aristócrata que vive como si la Revolución Francesa no hubiera tenido lugar, que considera idealismo una palabra ‘difusa’?” (149). For Urruchúa, the group is composed of dandies who occupy their time with idle political chatter. Their passions surpass their capacity for rational thought. Urruchúa believes that, regardless of what they say, “para mí, la Guerra con Estados Unidos es un puro supuesto, no existe como tal” (149). He continues:

> Para que haya un guerra tiene que haber dos que quieren pelear. Aquí sólo uno quiere—la indignación del pueblo y de algunos generales y soldadosexcepcionales es otra cosa—, mejor dicho, al comprobar que es tan relativa la oposición que se le presenta, el yanqui se limita a arrasar los pueblos por los que pasa y toma de ellos lo que le viene en gana. Hasta que le venga en gana tomar el país entero, y también se lo daremos. (149-150)

Mexican history, he argues, “puede representarse por el ensanchamiento paulatino de un círculo: el de los propietarios de la riqueza” (150). He observes that the genealogical line of wealth passes from the conquistadors to the clergy, the *encomenderos,* and the *criollos*: “Así cada Nuevo ensanchamiento del círculo se ha logrado a costa de ahogar al país en ríos de sangre, de convertirlo en fácil presa de rapiñas extranjeras, de arrojarlo al caos” (150). The chaos unleashed by this ever-growing and destructive circle of power and wealth allows for “la aparición de falsos redentores y de caudillos venales, y para que la gente ‘decente’ se haga de una fortuna y la conserve con el apoyo de la violencia represiva o la llamada chicana legal” (150). He concludes that this avarice allowed the United States to discover, “como quien decubre filones de oro en una roca, que nuestro

grupos políticos hacían la simulación de pelear contra ellos, cuando en realidad sólo se peleaban entre sí" (150). The obvious victim of this infighting is the Mexican people, whose blood has been spilt defending "esa falta de patriotismo" (150). "Pobre gente que es capaz de dar su vida—como sucedió en Veracruz y Puebla—por una simple mentira, llamada nación mexicana, inexistente fuera de los ampulosos discursos, los sellos oficiales, y del territorio que depredan propios y extranjero" (151).

National sins: Passivity and paralysis

A third sin alluded to in the text is that of passivity. We have seen that members of the group offer no plan of action. Wealthy sectors of the city did little to offer resistance. It seems also that prior to the occupation of the Zócalo the lower echelons of society became involved. And yet, this is the heroic narrative that Solares hopes to weave. The novel begins with Abelardo's account of the flag raising at the city center. The narration is repeated later, but with more detail. The second version expands upon the Mexican population's attitude.

Abelardo writes that the Mexicans submissively followed the invading army through the streets towards the Zócalo "como un gran animal torpe, por su tamaño, por su pesantez" (204). The multitude congregated in the city center and watched with "augurios apoyados en remembranzas" and the occasional "suspiro estrepitoso, aún más doloroso que cualquier queja" as General Scott offered his triumphal speech. "Con indignación, escuchamos el grave lamento de la campana mayor de Catedral, henchirse y estallar como una burbuja de oro en el aire vehemente de la mañana" (205). Abelardo tells that "la atmósfera se me volvió irrespirable. Un sudor de agonía lo impregnaba todo, creí que iba a morir, ahí mismo, entre los rostros inquisitivos, pasmados o descompuestos, que me

rodeaban" (206). Incensed, Abelardo listens to Scott's "emotivo discurso... ¡en inglés!" (206). The multitude reponds with insults and threats, but there is no action. Solares observes that, for as emotive and poetic the insults might have been, no one dared move against their "nuevos amos, recién llegados" (204). A moment of change comes, however, when Próspero Pérez, a beggar, challenges Mexicans to do something. "¿Qué, aquí no hay hombres?... Porque supongo que los hombres, los de versa hombres, no soportarían que los pendejearan como ustedes lo soportan. Lo pendejean y algo peor. ¿O no ven la mierda que les echa encima, con su pura presencia, cada yanqui que entra a esta ciudad?" (208). Following this passionate call to arms, the multitude attacks the American army. But the resistance is short lived, and the insurgency is put down within a matter of weeks.

The counterpoint to this passivism is Father Domeneco Celedonio Jarauta. Jarauta led a guerrilla rebellion against Scott's forces in Jalapa. He never enjoyed much success, however. Solares places him in Mexico City for the raising of the American flag, and credits him with shooting the soldier who tried to raise the banner. He epitomizes the romanticized Mexican revolutionary priest. Jarauta is an interesting footnote in the pages of Mexico's religious fanaticism. A Spaniard by birth, Jarauta fervently supported the Catholic Church and condemned Protestantism. His objection to the North American invasion had little to do with politics, and everything to do with protecting the Church's rights in the Americas. "Así como la lucha contra el Islam ocupaba la mente de San Ignacio de Loyola durante su juventud, en la de él se volvió obsesión ayudar a los mexicanos a pelear contra los *infieles* yanquis, para lo cual tenía que ser jesuitas y nada más que jesuita" (*La invasión* 223). Jarauta tells Abelardo that the North Americans' mission was clear: "apoderarse de México, exterminar a sus habitantes, luego conquistar el resto a América Latina, imponiendo el mismo dominio bárbaro, con la bandera de las

barras y las estrellas como único símbolo; brincar a Europa, someterla también, acabar con su cultura y sus tradiciones, y concluir su larga y siniestra marcha... en el Vaticano, al que tomaría por asalto" (226). Jarauta's role in the novel should be interpreted as a defense of Catholicism. As I have demonstrated earlier, Solares bears no special love of the Church and, in fact, criticizes its adherents on their lack of Christianity. But Solares certainly does romanticize Jarauta's zeal. There is a definite sense of appreciation for the Jesuits and their contributions to American civilization. Again, Solares has commented that the Jesuits left an indelible impression upon him. Much like James Joyce, whose experience with the Irish Jesuits left a similar distaste for the institution, Solares is unable to distance himself from the doctinres and the achievements. Solares prefers the energy and willingness to fight of a Spanish Jesuit priest to the passivity of his own people.

But another priest offers what might be regarded as Solares' final interpretation and confession regarding the war. After the American forces occupy the city, Abelardo enters a small parish to hear Mass. The priest offers a scathing sermon that hits at the heart of the novel's message. He proposes that the United States army is a plague sent by God to punish Mexico for its numerous sins. "Quién les da su fuerza a los norteamericanos, su poder físico, su talento para fabricar mejores armas, para arrasar pueblos a su paso? ¿Quién les dio su fuerza a Aníbal, a Alejandro, a Napoleón? ¿El demonio? Lo dudo" (245). Rather, the very God that liberated Israel from Pharoah, that destroyed Jericho, to whom they dedicate "nuestras oraciones, el único Dios en el que podemos creer" and against whom "son incapaces tanto el Ayuntamiento como el general Santa Anna o el major de nuestros guerrilleros" brought the invading forces as punishment (245). He continues:

> Durante mucho tiempo esta ciudad tuvo su oportunidad de salvación, como todas las ciudades del mundo, como cada uno de sus habitantes en particular. En su eterna misericordia, Dios nos dejó la oportunidad de elegir, de encontrar nuestro

> camino. Pues bien, esto no podía durar. ¿Qué hemos hecho con este país a partir de que se proclamó independiente? Díganme, ¿qué hemos hecho de él? ¿A quién hemos permitido que nos gobierne? Dios, cansado de esperar a que fuéramos más cautos y más responsables, qué digo cansado, harto, decepcionado de todos nosotros, Él ha tenido que tomar cartas en el asunto. Tenía que hacerlo, no tenía más remedio. Y entonces nos mandó a los yanquis como castigo. Por decirlo en una palabra: los mexicanos nos ganamos a pulso esta invasión. (246-247)

The priest's words resonate with biblicial foreboding. But they communicate the possibility of redemption: "Sí, nosotros mismos llamamos a nuestros invasores. Acéptenlo, asúmanlo, vívanlo como una realidad ineludible, con todo lo que implica de vergüenza y de dolor pero también de posible redención" (248). This redemption lies in remembering and acting. "He aquí, hermanos míos, la reflexión que quería traerles para que esta invasión norteamericana no quede sólo como un suceso más en nuestra historia, sino como un medio para la penitencia y la posible salvación de nuestra alma. Quizá del alma de la ciudad entera" (248).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this chapter has examined how Ignacio Solares uses narratives of failure to criticize divisions that weakened nineteenth-century Mexico's ability to defend itself from foreign invasion. He suggests that the nation's fascination with corrupt political leaders, lack of unity, and passivity opened the doors to the American invaders. His narrative of failure also alludes to the possibility that Mexico can redeem itself by recalling its traumatic past, confessing its guilt, and changing. There is a call to political action in this novel. Solares asks Mexicans to become more actively engaged in their political process. This novel emphasizes that maxim that failure to learn from the past dooms the present to relive it. Solares invites Mexicans to give up their passivity, their self interest, and their adoration of false idols (i.e., Santa Anna). Doing so will exorcise

the painful memories that haunt Mexico's historical conception of self. Accepting and working through this exemplary failure may ultimately lead to the salvation Solares so desperately seeks.

Chapter Four: Making a Case for Mexican Maximilian in Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio*

> Y porque también es potestad de los sueños hacer que el espejo sea una rosa y una nube, y la nube una montaña, la montaña un espejo, puedo, si quiero, pegarte con engrudo las barbas negras de Sedano y Leguizano y cortarte una pierna y ponerte la de Santa Anna, y cortarte la otra y coserte la de Uranga, y vestirte con la piel oscura de Juárez y cambalachear tus ojos azules por los ojos de Zapata para que nadie, nunca más, se atreva a decir que tú, Fernando Maximiliano Juárez, no eres; que tú, Fernando Emiliano Uranga y Leguizano no fuiste; que tú, Maximiliano López de Santa Anna, no serás nunca un mexicano hasta la médula de tus huesos. (*Noticias del imperio* 117)

> Pero de todos esos mexicanos muertos sus huesos volvieron al polvo del que habían salido y su sangre tiñó la tierra que alimentó su carne, para fecundar una historia bárbara de traiciones y mentiras, una historia bella de triunfos y heroísmos, una historia triste de humillaciones y fracasos pero al fin y al cabo su historia, la de un pueblo que jamás fue el tuyo ni el mío por más que lo quisiste y que quise yo. (*Noticias del imperio* 550-551)

When Maximilian of Austria stepped off the *Novara* onto Mexican soil, he was greeted with a letter from the nation's president, Benito Juárez, informing him that he was not welcome in Mexico and that history would judge them both for their actions. While official Mexican historiography has almost uniformly ruled in favor Juárez and against Maximilian, Fernando del Paso (Mexico, D.F., 1935) reopens this debate in *Noticias del imperio* (1987). For Del Paso these men mirror each other. Both are outsiders trying to find their place in Mexican society. Their ostensible differences (race, education, upbringing) take a backseat to their similarities (foreignness, exoticness). Both Juárez and Maximilian struggle to conceive of themselves as Mexicans. History has blessed Juárez's integration, but Maximilian remains an outsider. *Noticias del imperio*

argues for the Austrian's incorporation into the Mexican pantheon, but in order to do so, Del Paso must highlight similarities between Maximilian and Juárez.

This chapter begins with a brief contextualization of the upsurge of monarchism in the 1860s. Contrary to the claims of official historiography, monarchism was not foreign to the Mexican experience and had long been engrained in the Mexican political psyche. Specific historical conditions allowed for the establishment of the Second Empire. In this chapter I analyze Fernando Del Paso's proposal that Maximilian and Carlota, the ephemeral Emperors of Mexico, deserve more consideration from Mexico than they have received. Del Paso's argument expands traditional definitions of *mexicanidad* to include foreigners who choose to "Mexicanize" themselves. To this end, I compare the novel's representations of Benito Juárez and Maximilian of Austria. Del Paso demonumentalizes the statuesque representations of Juárez while simultaneously humanizing the traditionally demonized Habsburg. Both characters are analyzed in terms of marginalization, language acquisition, and death. The chapter closes with comments about history's judgment as it relates to the novel.

MEXICAN POLITICS IN THE 1860S

Mexican politics through the 1860s can be summarized with one word: militarism. Generals of all stripes bid for the seat of power. Prior to 1864, thirty-four men had held the reins of the nation. Of those, twenty-four were professional military men and four of them (Anastasio Bustamante, Antonio López de Santa Anna, Valentín Gómez Farías, and José Joaquín Herrera) took power multiple times. Santa Anna occupied the presidential throne an unprecedented eleven times. Following independence, the presidential palace seemed more like the parade grounds for short-lived military

presidents than the seat of democratic authority. Generals elected themselves by force when the prevailing political winds did not favor their personal interests. Pronouncements became the common stock of political discourse. Impassioned patriotic fervor thinly veiled rampant self-interest. The pendulum swung violently between liberal and conservative governments. Both factions seemed intent on outdoing the other in extremism. But regardless of a given president's political leanings—be they towards Church and Hispanism or towards Enlightenment ideals and Americanism—the early leaders of the new nation were universally career military men. Add to this confusion a series of years when presidential terms were expressed in weeks or months: 1829 (4 presidents), 1833 (3 presidents), and 1853 (4 presidents). And lest we forget, parallel presidencies vied for control from 1855 to 1864. The chaos created by these militaristic power grabs led conservative factions to believe that liberal, republican government was untenable in Mexico. Monarchism seemed to be the best option.

But this was not a new alternative. Mexico was not the only nation enamored with resurgent monarchism. The Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) was convened by representatives from England, France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia to reestablish territorial possessions lost during the Napoleonic wards. Klemenz Wensel von Metternich, the acclaimed Austrian politician, was a leading force in these proceedings. In *Noticias del imperio*, Metternich colludes with Napoleon III over the conquest of Mexico at a costume party. The Americas were not exempt from this trend. Portugal's royal family abandoned the Iberian Peninsula in November 1807, fleeing the invading Napoleonic armies. The Bragança royal family took with them the entire Portuguese court, consisting of 10,000 courtiers, and filled 46 ships. They arrived in Salvador de Bahía in January 1808. Thomas Skidmore describes the arrival in the following terms: "For the residents of Salvador, the sight must have been bizarre indeed: a mad queen, an

obese regent, and thousands of disheveled courtiers aghast at the new world they saw before them after the sumptuous palaces of Portugual" (*Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* 35-36).

Monarchism exists in the Mexican political imagination as early as the nation's first attempts at Independence. As we saw in *Los pasos de López*, the conspirators of Querétaro rallied under the banner of the ousted Ferdinand VII. Similarly, Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos* reminds readers that Iturbide's *Plan de Iguala* called for a Bourbon prince to rule in Mexico. In the event that one was unwilling, the regency would choose a Mexican, which it ultimately did, placing the crown on Iturbide's head. And Solares points out in *La invasión* that many members of the elite class preferred a European monarch to a United States military commander. Even some of Mexico's leading liberals gave serious thought to dealing with Great Britain to fend off potential North American encroachments. These flirtations with monarchism lead historian Erika Pani to argue that the Second Empire was not, as liberal historians would purport, foreign to the Mexican experience. The Empire, she writes, is perceived as:

> el resultado exclusivo de la ambición de un Bonaparte caricaturesco, de la ingenuidad y el romanticismo de un Habsburgo segundón con ínfulas de buen gobernante, y de los proyectos disparatados de unos pocos traidores a la patria. Se describe como paréntesis histórico que interrumpe momentáneamente la ascensión natural, irresistible, de la corriente liberal, federalista, democrática y popular que había emergido definitivamente triunfante de la guerra de Reforma. (*Para mexicanizar el segundo imperio* 19)

To the contrary, Pani contends that "el imperio representa no simplemente una ruptura, sino una época de continuidad y cambio, durante la cual actuaron hombres conocidos—no extranjeros que ni español hablaban—, que intentaron dar solución a problemas que la clase política venía arrastrando desde la independencia. En este aspecto, el imperio está firmemente inscrito dentro del proceso histórico nacional" (19-20). According to her, monarchism and conservatism form an important part of Mexico's political heritage. To

this end, the Second Empire may be interpreted as the culmination of what conservatives had long harbored as the solution to Mexico's political bedlam: a return to the stability of an imperial system.

It is of little surprise that dogged conservatives like José María Gutiérrez Estrada would offer the crown to a European monarch. Gutiérrez Estrada had been a lifelong supporter of monarchy and makes his feelings clear that the republican experiment had failed. In his 1862 proposition in favor of monarchism, Gutiérrez Estrada recalled his initial dismay at the political situation in 1840 to observe that once again the nation has plunged into "una de esas profundas crisis que está atravesando, casi desde el momento mismo de haberse constituido en República" (Gutiérrez Estrada *México y el Archiduque* 1). As a result, he determined that the time had come to redeem the country by importing foreign talent. Only monarchism, he argues, "con un Príncipe de estirpe real", can save the nation because it is the political structure "más acomodada a las tradiciones, a las necesidades y a los intereses de un pueblo, que desde su fundación fue gobernada monárquicamente" (2-3). Gutiérrez Estrada pleads, "En nombre de la patria que ya se muere", that Mexicans everywhere "den conmigo su voto a S. A. I. y R. el Archiduque Fernando Maximiliano de Austria, para monarca de México" (28). He reasons that "Regidos por un monarca ilustre y justo, y con instituciones representativas, gozaremos sin duda de más libertad que bajo los gobiernos cuya autoridad nunca ha sido bastante fuerte para afianzarla y protegerla contra los excesos que á su sombra se han cometido" (32). Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio* and Pani's book share a similar goal: to recognize the Mexican conservative experiment as an inherent part of the national experience. As such, his project to "Mexicanize" Maximilan and Carlota is the novel's main focus.

HELPING MAXIMILIAN ALONG

The most appropriate beginning for this analysis occurs near end of the novel. In the second-to-the-last chapter, Del Paso lays out his argument for Maximilian's integration. He cites Rodolfo Usigli, who, in the prologue to *Corona de sombra* (1943), writes that "la sangre de Maximliano y la locura de Carlota merecen algo más de México" (*Noticias* 642). What that something is, however, Usigli leaves to the reader.

Del Paso suggests that they deserve no less than to be recognized as Mexicans. He presents the following evidence: "A favor de Carlota, qué duda cabe, está su locura: sesenta años parecerían un castigo, un purgatorio más que suficiente para hacerle pagar sus ambiciones y su soberbia. También, pobre Carlota, su espantoso fracaso. Y a favor de Maximiliano está su muerte, están las gotas de sangre que se mezclaron con la tierra del Cerro de las Campanas y están sus últimas palabras, su *¡Viva México!*" (642). Del Paso suggests that the manner in which Maximilian confronts his death "lo transformó en una muerte noble y oportuna, en una muerte valiente y, en resumidas cuentas, en una muerte muy mexicana" (643). In short, "Maximiliano y Carlota se mexicanizaron: uno, hasta la muerte, como dice Usigli, la otra—digo yo—hasta la locura. Y como tales tendríamos que aceptarlos: ya que no mexicanos de nacimiento, mexicanos de muerte. De muerte y de locura" (643). Usigli observes that "es la historia, en fin, la que nos dice que sólo México tiene derecho a matar a sus muertos y que sus muertos son siempre mexicanos" (qtd. in *Noticias* 643). But this is a lesser matter. According to Del Paso, Mexico has not accepted the imperial couple as its own. He writes, "el problema es que a ninguno de los dos los enterramos en México. Es decir, ni Maximiliano... ni Carlota... quedaron integrados a esta tierra fertilizada al parejo con los restos de todos nuestros héroes y todos

nuestros traidores" (643). The burial to which he refers is both literal and metaphorical. Maximilian's body, after two embalmings was transported back to European soil. Carlota lived her exile from Mexico and from reality in European castles and never returned to Mexico. But the metaphorical allusion to burial goes deeper.

Burial means ownership. Giambattista Vico points to the act of burial as the moment in which man connects himself to the land. By burying ancestors, people literally sets their roots and inextricably link themselves to a geographic location. Burial is a sign of approval and acceptance. Heretics and apostates are denied interment in holy ground. Burial is also a form of remembrance. The characters of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* find themselves eternally damned because, while they are in fact buried, no one remains to pray for their souls, Father Renetería's refusal to absolve them of their sins, even the venial ones, becomes an unmitigated condemnation. Collective monuments to unknown soldiers and victims of genocide attest to the inherently human necessity to close life's experience for the living with burial. Mexico should bury its European emperors—suggests Del Paso—"para que no nos sigan espantando: las almas de los insepultos reclaman siempre su abandono. Como lo reclama y nos espanta, todavía, la sombra de Hernán Cortés" (644). Both Cortés and Maximilian bear weight in the formation of the Mexican nation. Both are foreigners, both are excluded from the Mexican pantheon, and both have marked Mexican history in indelible ways. Recognizing their role in history does not mean that Mexicans must fundamentally shift their ways of thinking. Del Paso hopes Mexicans will recognize those aspects of Maximilian and Carlota that are truly Mexican and thereby enrich their own sense of national identity. *Noticias del imperio*, then, is an exorcism. Like Solares, Del Paso attempts to expunge painful memories. As noted in the preceding chapter, traumatic events left unresolved continue to haunt the present. By remembering the Second Empire in narrative form and working through past

trauma, Del Paso attempts to rectify what he perceives as a historical injustive and thereby offers a model for exorcising other ghosts.

For Del Paso, the process of becoming Mexican is a collaborative effort. He writes that "con un poco de voluntad podemos aceptar la posibilidad de que Maximiliano y Carlota hayan sido honestos hasta cierto punto en su deseo de volverse mexicanos y lo suficientemente ilusos—quizás más Maximiliano que ella—como para creer que lo habían logrado" (644). Here the author suggests that the reader's role in accepting their attempts is fundamental to incorporating them. And, if they were indeed unable to become Mexican in life, "quizás lo logren algún día. Quizás, si los ayudamos un poco. Si a esas dos cosas: la ejecución de Maximiliano y la locura de Carlota—para él, el fin de su vida, para ella, una muerte sin fin—, les damos lo que, según Usigli, merecerían más de la imaginación de México y los mexicanos" (644). Of note in these quotations is Del Paso's use of the first person plural, "we", referring to those who will ultimately grant this posthumous citizenship to the royal couple. The inclusiveness of this word becomes a motif throughout the novel as individuals define themselves and others by assigning or denying group membership. In this case, Del Paso creates a community of specifically Mexican readers, and dialogues with them about the possibility of accepting the royal couple as their own. He suggests that Mexico give them their just due, and accept them into the national pantheon. Later in this chapter we will see that Maximilian will also use this inclusive "we" to include himself as a Mexican while others will use the same word to exclude him.

José Antonio Álvarez argues that in order to exorcise Maximilian's ghost, Del Paso must first demonumentalize Benito Juárez. Fernando del Paso systematically chips away at Juárez's deified image (*La desmonumentalización* 121). Álvarez's dissertation examines how monuments are used to eternalize Latin American heroes. His work is a

comparative study of the processes of plastic monumentalization and literary demonumentalization. There are a number of monuments to Juárez throughout Mexico, but none more impressive that the *Hemiciclo* on Mexico City's *Alameda*. It is a massive marble structure. Juárez sits amid two female figures that symbolize Justice and Glory. In *Noticias del imperio*, Del Paso chips away at the monumentalized legend that historians have woven about Juárez's life and personality. "De esta forma," writes Álvarez, "el Benemérito de las Américas vuelve a ser el mortal don Benito en la novela. En contraposición, del Paso reconstruye de forma multifacética las identidades de Maximiliano y Carlota con el objetivo de proveer una semblanza más compleja y por ende completa de los emperadores repudiados por la historia oficial" (121). I agree with Álvarez's argument but his analysis is truncated by his scope. Álvarez focuses on the demonumentalization of Spanish-American founding fathers across the nineteenth-century. While his analysis is extremely thorough at a continental level, he must limit himself to speaking only of the monumentalized subject, in this case, Juárez. He makes only passing reference to Del Paso's attempt to exorcize Maximilian's ghost because no monuments—other than *Noticias del imperio* and, to a lesser degree, *Corona de sombra*—exist. I contend that overlooking the dynamic that exists between the two men, artificially separating them, is antithetical to Del Paso's project.

Del Paso's portrayal of Juárez and Maximilian's relationship is informed by the late work of Usigli. The prologue to *Corona de sombra* serves as an explicit source to which Del Paso appeals. Thirty years later, and just prior to when Del Paso began the historical research for the novel, Usigli writes an essay that explicitly delineates his paradoxical conception of the two men. Arguing that Juárez is poor material for theatrical representation, Usigli observes that "la proyección de la figura de Juárez en el teatro

universal es, no curiosa sino naturalmente, Maximiliano" (*Teatro completo* 407). He continues:

> Puede ser sacrílego para muchos lo que voy a decir, pero creo—he creído largo tiempo, en toda honradez y simplicidad—que el día en que llegue a registrarse entre nosotros una verdadera *toma de conciencia histórica*, nuestra numismática se enriquecerá con una medalla conmemorativa del advenimiento de nuestra soberanía política que ostente en el anverso la imagen del patricio de la Reforma y en el reverso la del infortunado pero sincero y democrático príncipe austriaco que refrendó las Leyes de Reforma, pasó su primer 15 de septiembre en Dolores de Hidalgo—elegante lección a los anteriores gobernantes mexicanos—, invitó a Juárez a ser su primer ministro—o lo deseó al menos—porque lo había entendido, porque respetaba y compartía su visión política, su sentido de México, y porque al fin y al cabo dio su vida por la soberanía del país que había aceptado, elegido gobernar después de haber rechazado la corona de Grecia. Masones en grado 33 los dos, si bien en sectas rivales. Colaboradores los dos por un destino superior: por el destino de México. (407, original italics)

Usigli postulates a symbiotic relationship between Juárez and Maximilian. They are, to use his image, two sides of the same coin. Moreover, Mexico owes its political sovereignty to Maximilian because he had accepted the crown that was offered to him and then gave his life when his service was deemed an impediment to the nation's progress. They were, as Usigli purports here and Borges suggests of Jesus and Judas in "Tres versions de Judas", collaborators for a greater destiny.

Though Del Paso makes no overt reference to Usilgi's essay, it clearly informs his novel. Del Paso's representation of the men highlights both their differences and affinities. For example, both men are frequently seen traveling with a secretary. Juárez's secretary, a well-educated white man, provides historical information about the Habsburgs and validates Juárez's comments. Maximilian travels to Cuernavaca with his Indian scribe, Blasio, who never speaks, but constantly copies everything that the Emperor says. Both secretaries act as sounding boards for their employer. Both men validate the speaker: one by his agreements, and the other by his silence. Chromatically, the roles are inverted. Juárez, the Indian president perorates to his white secretary;

Maximilian, the white monarch dictates to an indigenous scribe. More than two sides of the same coin, as Usigli imagines, in Del Paso's novel they are mirror images. By establishing a binary relationship between the two men, Del Paso appears to support the traditional history wherein these men are diametrically opposed. Moreover, the dual process of demonumentalizing Juárez and creating a more complex portrait of Maximilian serves to highlight their affinities. Both figures have been simplified by official history. There are no human nuances. *Noticias del imperio* restores that humanity, and in so doing demonstrates that the Indian president and the Habsburg archduke share more than historians would lead us to believe.

Before discussing Maximilian and Juárez's integration, we should first determine to what degree they have been marginalized. I focus my attention on Maximilian's foreignness in Europe and in Mexico. When discussing Juárez, I examine his origins and indigenous identity. In both cases I emphasize perceptions of their physical characteristics.

THE HABSBURG EMPEROR

It may seem odd to talk about the marginalization of a Habsburg monarch. But Maximilian of Austria was an odd bird. He was second in the line of succession to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but showed a patent incapacity for governing. He aspired to glory, but lacked the wherewithal to obtain it. He received a military education and rose quickly in the naval ranks, but liberally pardoned dangerous opposition generals. The October 3rd Degree, known as the "Decreto Negro", ordered the summary execution of all who raised arms against the Empire. Del Paso suggests that Maximilian was adamantly

opposed to it. It appears to have been inspired by the sanguinary General Bazaine, who added an official order that there would be no clemency granted to prisoners. Of the Decree's victims, Del Paso writes:

> Unas de las primeras víctimas fueron dos generales republicanos de limpio historial: Carlos Salazar y José María Arteaga. Su fusilamiento, llevado a cabo en Uruapan, Michoacán, sin el conocimiento de Maximiliano, levantó una ola de indignación. De nada sirvió alegar que el responsable había sido el general imperialista Méndez, quien, siendo enemigo de ambos generales, y llevado por un deseo de venganza, había decidido llevar adelante la ejecución sin notificar a sus superiores. (*Noticias* 295)

Del Paso surmises that Maximilian would have pardoned the generals in view of his magnanimous approach to dealing with other dissidents. But despite his best intentions, the stigma of the Black Decree would hound Maximilian incessantly. He held imperial power, but came off to his subjects as a nice, but unexceptional man. Manuel María Giménez, loyal servant of Antonio López de Santa, tells in his memoirs of his audience with Maximilian. Giménez, who presents a plan for an official state-sponsored tailor shop for producing military uniforms, finds the emperor affable, kind, and possessed of a sweet disposition. Truth be told, the account inadvertently paints Maximilian as a bit of a simpleton. The pomp and ceremony subjects that had to endure to obtain an audience seems immediately undermined by an apparent lack of power emanating from the man.

This good-natured bonhomie contrasts with the austere demeanor of his older brother, Franz Joseph. Franz Joseph was a career military man and ran the Empire like an ongoing military campaign. It is rumored that he ate only sausages, drank beer, and slept on a military cot. Franz Joseph was the last of the great Habsburg emperors, reigning until 1916. By contrast, many portraits of Maximilian reveal him to be a tall, blond, moderately handsome man. Van Oostenrijk's portrait of the young admiral emphasizes his blue eyes, clear complexion, and flat rosy cheeks. Winterhalter depicts the newly crowned emperor in military dress with imperial robes. These external features are

precisely what make him the ideal conservative candidate for the Mexican throne. Unbeknownst to the conservatives, however, was that his distaste for administration contradicted this ideal image.

Maximilian was much too interested in botany, etymology, history, poetry, and ceremony to be bothered with the practicalities of government. Maximilian made frequent trips to the countryside to collect butterflies, leaving governmental affairs in the hands of his more politically savvy spouse. He would have had a much more fulfilling—not to mention longer-lasting—career as an eccentric humanities professor than he did as an emperor. But he was ambitious enough to desire a throne, and enough of a potential threat to Franz Joseph's line of succession, that the European powers agreed that he should be offered the Mexican throne. As a result, when the Mexican delegation led by José María Gutiérrez Estrada came to Miramar in 1864. Maximilian graciously accepted their offer.

In *Noticias del imperio*, Fernando del Paso portrays Maximilian as a well-intentioned, hapless romantic. Maximilian's education in the seat of Austrian power does little to mitigate his love of the arts and his fascination with the natural world. His right-brained tendencies distance him from the pragmatics of the Austrian court, and he exiles himself to his palace in Miramar. Maximilian does not fit in the Empire. Beloved by the commoners of Trieste, he is considered a buffoon by royalty. Del Paso purports that, during their trip to Rome to receive the papal blessing for their endeavor, one witness reports that the French surrounded them with adulators "porque sabían que no encontrarían a otro bobo que aceptara la corona de México" (*Noticias* 253).

During his trip from Italy to Mexico, for example, the soon-to-be emperor forgoes a study of Mexican politics and history to write a document detailing court procedures. If

there was ever a document proving an individual's obsessive-compulsive tendencies, it is the *Reglamento para el Servicio y Ceremonial de la Corte*.

The *Reglamento para el Servicio y Ceremonial de la Corte* demonstrates, possibly better any other document, the royal couple's obsession with outward appearances. I have had the good fortune of examining an original copy at the Nettie Lee Benson Collection. The Benson copy appears to be the original presented to Juan Nepomuceno Almonte by Maximilian. Almonte was a veteran of the Battle of the Alamo in 1836, a member of the *Junta de los Notables* which offered the crown to Maximilian, a member of the Regency, and the "Gran Mariscal de la Corte y Ministro de la Casa Imperial." It is a 330-page treatise that revels in minutia. The first section, the *Reglamento para el Servicio*, outlines the different offices of the imperial court. The second section, the *Ceremonial*, the order of operations for all major rituals and ceremonies. Instructions are provided, for example, for "los pequeños conciertos de la corte." These also take up 4 pages and include 19 detailed points. Item 7 reads as follows:

> 7. La sala del concierto se arreglará del modo siguiente
>
> I. Enfrente de la orquesta se colocarán en un estrado dos sillones de damasco caramesí para SS. MM.
>
> II. Al lado, y en la misma línea, se pondrán sillas de damasco caramesí para los Príncipes, los Cardenales, los Collares del Águila Mexicana y los señores de la primera categoría.
>
> III. Al lado derecho y junto al estrado, se colocará el cuerpo diplomático precedido por los Embajadores, según su antigüedad.
>
> IV. Al lado izquierdo, los individuos que componen el gran servicio de honor, y los señores de la segunda categoría.
>
> V. Detrás de SS. MM. los individuos que componen el pequeño servicio de honor y las señoras de segunda categoría. A continuación se colocarán las señoras según su categoría, y después de ellas los señores en el mismo orden. (*Reglamento* 230)

In addition to its written instructions, Maximilian included twenty-two processional maps for the Imperial Palace, the Cathedral, and the Zócalo. While crossing the ocean, the emperor takes it upon himself to design the entire procedural manual for the court, from the dress of each member of the royal court to the elaborate ceremonies for Easter Sunday worship. *Noticias del imperio* portrays the ocean voyage as one long meeting to determine ceremonial procedure: "Y si a ustedes les parece bien, dijo Maximiliano..., en las Audiencias Públicas que serán cada domingo en la mañana, y en las que recibiré a todo el que quiera verme, el chambelán vestirá frac de corte, su corbata será blanca, y tendrá puestas sus condecoraciones (249-250). Maximilian personally drafts the procedures, draws all the design sketches, and even includes a processional map for the Imperial Palace. His preoccupation with the ceremonial aspects of the new empire even lead him to imagine a procedure for grieving over the premature loss of a child they do not have: "...el día en que muera el infante de una testa coronada, uno de nuestros hijos, Carla, el Emperador no portará duelo, pero se ordenará cubrir la cámara y la antecámara de palacio, los sofás y sillones con telas, fundas y tapices de color violeta y en el puño de mi espada pondré un crespón violeta también, y violeta será la banda de seda que rodeará mi brazo" (250). Del Paso writes that:

> La historia, con minúscula, lo cuenta así. O así dice la historia: que Maximiliano, durante toda la travesía, de Miramar a México, olvidó el dolor que le produjo abandonar su castillo blanco a orillas del Adriático, su dorada cuna austriaca y sus padres y hermanos, y se dedicó no sólo a soñar con un *Ceremonial de la Corte*, sino también a dictarlo y escribirlo de su puño y letra. Un *Ceremonial* que, impreso algunos meses más tarde en México, pasaba de las quinientas páginas. De lo detallado que era, el hecho de que la ceremonia de entrega de la birreta a un cardenal contuviera ciento treinta y dos cláusulas o párrafos, sirve de ejemplo. (261)

Del Paso waxes hyperbolic when describing the *Ceremonial's* page count. The whole text has approximately 500 pages, but the *Ceremonial* makes up less than half the total pages. As I have noted, the complete text is actually two books. The *Reglamento* is 152 pages.

The *Ceremonial* has 175 pages. The illustrations and maps, including a number of blank pages separating them, make up the remaining part.

As frivolous as the *Ceremonial* may seem, it indicates that the royal couple was at least thinking about Mexico in an outwardly Mexican way. It represents an attempt to legitimize Mexico's cultural past and to elevate it to the level of the European courts. Del Paso suggests that Carlota was inclined towards a Mexican theme for court dress while Maximilian held to traditional French models. Referring to the garb to be worn by the court advisors, Maximilian ponders, "¿Con casaca azul claro, como en Francia? Nononó, diría Carlota: verde. *All right*, verde, pero verde claro, y con botones dorados, gruesos, en el pecho. Ajá, y con el águila labrada en ellos. *Das ist Recht* [sic]" (251). Carlota pushes for incorporating Mexican iconography into all facets of imperial life: "Y como concesión a Carlota: ¿te gustaría, *cara*, querida Charlotte, que la levita del medio uniforme de la Guardia Palatina, la Guardia de la Emperatriz, sea de paño verde dragón, y las vueltas de las mangas sean encarnadas para que así, con los guantes de ante blanco tenga los tres colores de la bandera imperial mexicana?" (252). She states that "no me convencen las hojas de viña y las espigas de trigo bordadas en oro sobre paño gris para los inspectores de finanzas, ¿por qué no hacer un diseño con plantas mexicanas y no con plantas europeas? [...] Pues en uno de los libros que leí... dice que en las casullas de los sacerdotes mexicanos se han incorporado los diseños de las grecas mayas y aztecas" (255). The butter served at imperial tables "tendrá también realzados el águila imperial y la serpiente" (257). And the "cisnes de hielo que adornan las mesas de los banquetes: ¿se transformarán en águilas de hielo devorando serpientes de hielo? ¿Y por qué no?, contestó Max. Sí, por qué no: si en las Tullerías les habían ofrecido un águila de azúcar, por qué no de hielo o mantequilla, de turrón, de pasta de alajú, queso de tuna" (257-258). Maximilian gives in to his wife's demands but mocks her in the process, "¿Y la faja del

presidente de la Corte de Apelación de seda blanca con bellotas doradas, como en Francia? Porque no pretenderás que cambiemos las bellotas por tunas verdes o chayotes con espinas, ¿verdad, Carla, Carlota querida, *mia cara carissima Carla*?" (265).These attempts to create a Mexican court seem shallow, but they represent an honest attempt. The foreign couple adjusts their concept of the royal court by integrating as many elements of their adopted kingdom as possible. The *Ceremonial* represents the triumph of form over substance. Given their upbringing, cultural paradigm, and family tradition, Maximilian and Carlota do their best. This is what Del Paso means when he argues that Mexican readers should "aceptar la posibilidad de que Maximiliano y Carlota hayan sido honestos hasta cierto punto en su deseo de volverse mexicanos" (644).

For many Mexicans, the Habsburg couple's attempts to incorporate Mexican symbols into courtly life is nothing short of a farce. But I argue that it is more akin to what Jossianna Arroyo terms "travestismo cultural" (*Travestismos culturales* 20). Her analysis defines cultural transvestism as a process of cultural representation that:

> …enmascara estratégicamente al sujeto de la escritura, con el fin de crear subordinaciones y acercamientos sinuosos con el sujeto masculine que está representando. Aquí, los discursos de raza, género y sexualidad se manipulan, creando una "doble identificación". En esta "doble identificación" se articulan ambos discursos, el de acercamiento y conciliación, y el de la subordinación. En este gesto representativo de doble identificación donde sitúo el travestistimo cultural. El travestismo cultural es el lugar conflictivo en la representación del otro—el negro, el mulato—en el cual se hacen juegos de identificación, espejeo y reconocimiento continuo, que desplazan la escritura para finalmente abolir la constitución de un sujeto fijo. (20)

Arroyo's definition is useful for this discussion of Maximilian and Carlota. They find themselves in a process of identification that doubly requires them to draw near to the new culture while simultaneously attempting to subordinate various aspects of it. We see this in the first epigraph that begins this chapter. Carlota fantasizes about dressing her late husband with the body parts of other deceased Mexicans:

> Y porque también es potestad de los sueños hacer que el espejo sea una rosa y una nube, y la nube una montaña, la montaña un espejo, puedo, si quiero, pegarte con engrudo las barbas negras de Sedano y Leguizano y cortarte una pierna y ponertela de Santa Anna, y cortarte la otra y coserte la de Uranga, y vestirte con la piel oscura de Juárez y cambalachear tus ojos azules por los ojos de Zapata para que nadie, nunca más, se atreva a decir que tú, Fernando Maximiliano Juárez, no eres; que tú, Fernando Emiliano Uranga y Leguizano no fuiste; que tú, Maximiliano López de Santa Anna, no serás nunca un mexicano hasta la médula de tus huesos. (*Noticias* 117)

The notion expressed here is that by incorporating Mexico (or Mexicans) into his body, Carlota can help her husband achieve the Mexicanness that he desired. The concept of transvestism may also explain Maximilian's preoccupation with imbuing Mexico's court with European royal values and standards. For the Emperor, Mexico itself is not sufficient, but can become so through adopting Old World norms. In essence, the court must cross-dress to look the part. Similarly, Maximilian must dress up as well in order to feel a part of his new world. But despite their best efforts, Maximilian and Carlota seem as equally out of place in Mexico as they were in Europe. The Mexican monarchists wanted a strong, Catholic prince; instead they got weak, unproved governor with a penchant for liberal reforms. Maximilian's reforms, which were frequently referred to as "juarismo sin Júarez", include the universal recognition of all religions and the continued restrictions on the Catholic Church's privileges. This angered the papal nuncio to no end, and alienated Mexican conservatives. A letter from Ángel López de Santa Anna, son and military advisor to his father Antonio López de Santa Anna, relates Maximilian's fall from grace with Mexican conservatives:

> La marcha tortuosa que ha adoptado el Emperador y la manía de *liberal* en que ha caído, es lo que deploran los monarquistas y que, por atraerse á los llamados liberales, haya volteado la espalda á sus adictos aún á los que votaron por él y fueron a felicitarlo á Miramar; se nota, pues, que atiende de preferencia á sus enemigos, á los que nunca podrán ser adictos al Imperio, y disgusta á los que lo han sentado en el trono. ("Copia de carta" 163-164, original italics)

The closer Maximilian moves towards becoming "Mexican," the less support he receives from Mexicans precisely because they did not want a Mexican monarch. Both in Europe and in Mexico, then, Maximilian finds himself outcast and unable to fit in.

THE INDIAN PRESIDENT

Benito Juárez in Del Paso's portrayal is no less a foreigner than Maximilian. Despite official histories that have posthumously integrated Juárez into the pantheon, Juárez did not enjoy universal acceptance in life. His indigenous identity was a major stumbling block to his integration. As Álvarez notes, Del Paso highlights the uncomfortable situation that Mexico's only indigenous president faced (*Desmonumentalización* 121-125).

Our introduction to Juárez imitates the official dogma as told to the average four-year-old. The first paragraph of the section entitled "*Juárez and 'Mostachú'*" is written in a childlike, fairy-tale lilt: "En el año de gracia de 1861, México estaba gobernado por un indio cetrino, Benito Júarez, huérfano de padre y madre desde que tenía tres años de edad, y que a los quince era solo un pastor de ovejas que trepaba a los árboles de la Laguna Encantada para tocar una flauta de carrizo y hablar con las bestias y con los pájaros en el único idioma que entonces conocía: el zapoteca" (*Noticias* 29). The scene evokes a pastoral setting complete with an enchanted lagoon, talking animals, forest, and flute music. While no references appear in the novel to designate a specific text from which Del Paso might have pulled the preceding story, we have but to look at Ermilo Abreu Gómez's *Juárez: su vida contada a los niños* (1972) to understand that Del Paso is recreating the story traditionally told to small children. Abreu Gómez writes, "Benito nació el 21 de marzo de 1806. Al siguiente día de nacido, sus padres lo bautizaron en la

iglesia del lugar" (*Juarez* 9). "Sus primeros años Benito los pasó en aquella soledad. Apenas tenía tres años cuando murió su padre Marcelino. A los pocos días nació su hermanita María. La alegría de su nacimiento se volvió tristeza porque en seguida murió su madre. Solos en la vida quedaron los huérfanos Josefa, Rosa, Benito y María" (9-10). Of the uncle, Bernardino, who would take young Benito in after the death of his grandparents, Abreu Gómez notes: "Tenía un rebaño de ovejas. Como los demás montañeses de la region vivía con mucha pobreza; pero era de buen corazón, apegado a su trabajo, amante de su familia y muy afecto a su terruño" (11). Abreu Gómez notes that, "Así empezó la vida pastoril de Benito. Aunque era niño se entregó al trabajo con ánimo de ayudar a su tío. Al amanecer, con los luceros en el cielo, ida al corral, quitaba las trancas del portón y llevaba las ovejas al campo…. Cuando se sentía cansado se sentaba debajo de un árbol. A veces se ponía a conversar con los niños que por casualidad pasaban por aquel sendero. Es claro que con ellos hablaba en zapoteca" (12-13). Additionally, Abreu Gómez comments that "Para entretener sus ocios en el campo, Benito se fabricó una pequeña flauta…. La flauta era un carrizo con agujeros" (16). And, of course, no pastoral scene would be complete without the enchanted lake: "En días de mucho calor, Benito se iba al río a bañarse y a chapotear en el agua….Cierta vez, más osado, se llegó a una laguna cercana que llaman *La Encantada*" (19).

Both authors use similar techniques to endear the historical subject to the reader and to promote the myth: the parents' death at an early age, the endearing portrait of Juárez as young shepherd, the enchanted lagoon, the flute, and the Zapotec language. What is exceptional about Del Paso's text, however, is how he undermines this official narrative from the beginning. The first description of Juárez is not that of a glorious, triumphant founding father. Rather, Mexico is governed by a "sallow Indian." This image contrasts sharply with the robust effigy of the *Hemiciclo* or official history.

The fairy-tale language continues two paragraphs later when readers learn that in Oaxaca:

> ...esa ciudad, capital del estado del mismo nombre, y ultramontana no sólo por estar más allá de las montañas, sino por su mojigatería y sumisión a Roma, Juárez aprendió castellano, aritmética y álgebra, latín, teología y jurisprudencia. Con el tiempo, y no sólo en Oaxaca sino en otras ciudades y otros exilios… también aprendió a ser diputado, gobernador de su estado, ministro de Justicia y de Gobernación, y presidente de la República" (29).

The narrative voice belies an increasing awareness about Oaxaca's moral orientation and religious atmosphere; and yet it speaks of Juárez learning to be a deputy, a governor, a minister, and eventually the president. Again, Del Paso appears to imitate an infantilizing, didactic style of speech. This fairy-tale language gives way to the harsher realities of revisionist historiography. Instead of deifying Juárez as the man destined to lead Mexico to greatness, Del Paso observes that for "otros"—most notably white conservatives—"Benito Juárez se había puesto una patria como se puso el levitón negro: como algo ajeno que no le pertenecía, aunque con una diferencia: si la levita estaba cortada a la medida, la patria, en cambio, le quedaba grande y se le desparramaba mucho más allá de Oaxaca y mucho más allá también del siglo en el que había nacido" (30). Juárez does not fit; instead he is defined by his difference.

This otherness derives primarily from his ethnic heritage. As a Zapotec Indian he belonged to Mexico's marginalized indigenous community with little or no access to the political system. For the dominant white society, both in the Americas and abroad, Juárez represented everything they were not. Because of his strong anticlericalism:

> Juárez fue considerado por los conservadores mexicanos y europeos, y desde luego por el Vaticano y por el Papa Pío Nono, futuro creador del Dogma de la Infalibilidad Pontificia, como una especie de Anticristo. Por no saber montar a caballo, ni manejar una pistola y no aspirar a la gloria de las armas, se le acusó de ser débil, asustadizo, cobarde. Y por no ser blanco y de origen europeo, por no ser ario y rubio que era el arquetipo de la humanidad superior según lo confirmaba el Conde de Gobineau en su '*Ensayo sobre la Desigualdad de las Razas Humanas*'

> publicado en París en 1854, por no ser, en fin, siquiera un mestizo de media casta, Juárez, el indio ladino, en opinión de los monarcas y adalides del Viejo Mundo era incapaz de gobernar a un país que de por sí era parecía ingobernable. (32)

Juárez's otherness is emphasized by his interaction with his white secretary. The secretary is a essentially a "yes man", a lackey whose main purpose is to validate the president's flagging self-esteem. When speaking of race, the secretary states that "Don Benito, usted nos ha hecho sentirnos orgullosos de nuestros antepasados indios. Yo mismo... yo, Don Benito, estoy seguro que tengo algunas gotas de sangre india en mis venas..." Juárez retorts, "¿Usted, sangre india, Señor Secretario? Me está usted tomando el pelo. Lo dice sólo por halagarme. Usted es tan blanco que casi es transparente" (151).

To further emphasize Juárez's otherness, Del Paso points out that beyond his political views, his disinterest in manly sports, and his ethnic origin, "el Presidente de México agregaba una fealdad física notable, rubricada según afirmaron muchos que lo conocieron y entre ellos la Princesa Salm Salm, por una horrible cicatriz sanguinolenta que nunca apareció en sus fotografías" (33). Even his wife, Margarita Maza, a white woman from the upper crust of Oaxacan society, tells their children in the novel, "Es muy feo, pero es muy bueno" (33). Thus we can see that in society and at home Juárez is considered an outsider.

Del Paso emphasizes Juárez's humanity over his monumentality. Juárez's stone-cold granite features take on the worn look of a man weighed down by exile, calumny, a terrible sense of duty, and the loss of loved ones. Del Paso paints a portrait of insecurity. Juárez, the indigenous president who has been run off by white foreigners, must come to terms with his otherness. Discussing otherness implies counterpoint, a mark by which foreignness can be measured. Julia Kristeva proposes that the foreign other is the complementary part of the self that brings to the fore our worst fears. She writes:

> Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group. Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns "we" into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. (*Kristeva Reader* 264)

In Kristeva's conception of nationalism, the foreigner is foil against which identities are built. They are the taboo others that seduce and repulse members of the imagined community. She expands upon these ideas in a 1989 interview, when she said:

> The question that arises now is knowing on what moral basis one can regulate the problem of foreigners. Because it is evident that even if the jurists and politicians decided, for example, to let all foreigners live in France, or even to give them a right to vote—which is far from being done of course, but suppose that that happened one day—the problem arises of knowing whether morally and ethically the national populations are ready to take that step. And the answer is *no*. So where does one start to open up this phobic notion of national identity, to permit the mixture of races and to welcome others, in order to proceed to what I call "puzzle" states, that is, states that are constituted from several types of citizens—immigrants, people who are part of the European community, people who come from Africa and Asia in addition to those in France—and then perhaps one day to proceed toward the disappearance of the notion of the foreigner? (Clark and Hulley "Cultural Strangeness and the Subject in Crisis" 40, original italics).

Kristeva's comments point to a number of the notions this chapter takes up: foreignness as a cultural stigma, xenophobic nationalism, plurality in national identity construction, and questions of integration. In essence, people recognize in the foreign other their shortcomings and balance themselves against the other. Nationalism is founded upon the notion of an "us" in direct opposition to a "them."

THE RACIAL LINE OF DEMARCATION

In *Noticias del imperio*, Maximilian fills the role of counterpoint for Juárez, and the President spends much of his time comparing himself to the Archduke. His insecurities manifest themselves in his comparisons to Maximilian. This insecurity regarding the racially different other is exacerbated by the European racial theories of the time. Francis Galton (1822-1911), Herbert Spencer (1844-1924), Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), and Joseph Arthur Gobineau (1816-1882) were among the leading thinkers of this movement. But Gobineau's writing found special interest in the Americas during a diplomatic mission he grudgingly fulfilled to the Brazilian court in 1869. Gobineau's most important work, *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853), became the theoretical framework for racial thought both in the Americas and abroad. Gobineau proposed that nature is inherently adverse to miscegenation, but that only those races that overcome this atavic rejection can improve society. In his racial taxonomy, all races descended from Adam and, through climatic changes, became diversified: "[History] shows us that all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it, provided that this group itself belongs to the most illustrious branch of our species" (qtd. in Biddiss 117). Their subsequent differentiation marked a point of departure from which there was no return. According to Gobineau, the black and yellow races degenerated in apathy, lack of physical vigor, and love of vice, while whites were characterized by its love of life, natural tendency towards political regularity, and organizational skills (Biddiss 120). He further claimed that miscegenation "may contribute to the improvement of the lower races… but the long-term result must be

unfavorable to humanity as a whole, by virtue of the enervation of the noblest elements" (Biddiss 117). The noblest elements of society, in Gobineau's racial calculus, equates to white people.

Del Paso's Juárez recognizes the weight that Gobineau's thoughts have on the world's perceptions of race relations.

> Usted tiene que considerar que los escritos raciales de Gobineau han tenido mucho más trascendencia en Alemania que en Francia... ¿por qué? Porque la teoría de la superioridad pangermánica va de la mano con la idea de la superioridad de la raza blanca, incluso con la teoría de que, a unas facciones bellas, corresponde siempre un alma bella y viceversa. Y como le decía, aquí mismo, en México, no escapamos a ese prejuicio. (*Noticias* 150)

We should note, however, that the philosophical correspondence between external and internal beauty does not originate with Gobineau. It is found as early as Petrarch, as is the basis for all poetic portraits. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz undermines this formula in "Agrísima Gila" when she assures readers that despite Gila's beautiful exterior, she is inwardly sour, mean, rapacious, and haughty. Juárez's first words highlight this brand of racial insecurity: "Me ha de sacar una cabeza, por lo menos..." (145). Reading the report his personal secretary has prepared on the royal couple, Juárez obsesses over Maximilian's height and physical characteristics as a contrast to his own. Remembering his childhood, for example, Juárez recalls his godfather's marriage advice: "si te casas, Benito Pablo, cásate con hija de blancos, para ver si así tienes un hijo con ojos azules. Azules como el cielo..." (148). The memory of this advice leads Juárez to ask, "Y dígame, Señor Secretario: ¿Es muy blanco el Archiduque?" (148). Color is at the forefront of his mind. He affirms that Gobineau's racial theories should not affect him in the least, but Juárez cannot help noting that some of his children "me han salido bonitos, como se acostumbraba decir... mucho menos prietos que yo" (161).

Their physical characteristics are not the only distinctions between the two men. Their upbringings are entirely different. While Juárez tended his flocks and played his flute on the shores of the Enchanted Lagoon, Maximilian learned to ride and fence. When the secretary asks Juárez if he would have liked to learn the activities, the president responds, "No, esgrima no. Pero sí montar muy bien a caballo... ya es tarde para muchas cosas... para hacer bien todo eso, hay que aprenderlo desde niño, o desde muy joven..." (147). Juárez's inability to ride properly becomes, as noted earlier, a stigma. Comparing himself to other Latin American heroes—all white or *mestizo* of course—Juárez observes that "A veces, cuando pienso en todos esos libertadores de nuestra América: Bolívar, O'Higgins, San Martín, hasta el propio Cura Morelos, me digo: todos ésos fueron próceres a caballo. Pero si tú pasas un día a la historia, Benito Pablo, vas a ser un prócer a mula..." (147-148). Again Juárez finds himself outside the norm. The founding fathers of Spanish America are white or *mestizos* and ride horses. But Juárez does find a measure of solace in his customary mode of transportation: "Pero después de todo, las mulas saben andar mejor que los caballos por los caminos muy difíciles sin desbarrancarse, ¿no es cierto?" (147). Later Juárez will note that "las mulas llegamos más lejos" (148).

The mule analogy connotes a number of negative associations that are not applicable to Juárez. Mules are hybrid crosses between horses and donkeys, and are unable to reproduce. Juárez is a full-blooded Zapotec Indian and had a large posterity. Del Paso's Juárez turns the conversation towards virility, since the Archduke had no recorded offspring and history has recorded that once he and Carlota arrived in Mexico, they ceased all sexual activities. It is rumored that this is due, in part, to an alleged case of syphilis that Maximilian contracted during an expedition to Brazil. When Maximilian's possible sterility enters the conversations, Juárez latches on quickly because he finds a point of strength over his adversary: "¿Estéril? Bueno, ya ve usted por

qué a mí no me ofende que me llamen mula, Señor Secretario, si es nada más que por lo tozudo, por lo terco... porque de mula no tengo nada más. Las mulas son estériles y yo no... he tenido varios hijos...” (161-162). Juárez takes great pride in having fathered a bountiful offspring while Maximilian, the product of a culture where procreation means the survival of power and privilege, is unable to have posterity.

WHICH CAME FIRST: THE MONARCH OR THE PRESIDENT?

The Emperor does not seem as preoccupied with the President. When Maximilian thinks about Juárez it is not in terms of race, but rather in terms of office. One might argue that Maximilian, the enlightened humanist, would not share the racial ideology of his day. Del Paso, however, points out that Maximilan was a trenchant racist. Maximilian’s main concern with Juárez is the legitimacy of his empire when confronted by a popularly elected president. When Maximilian was offered the throne, his acceptance was conditional. He states in his acceptance speech from Miramar that he is only willing to come to Mexico if the Mexican people desire a monarchy. He determines that the most democratic way to figure this out is a vote. “Del resultado pues, de ese voto general del país,” he declares, “es lo que debo hacer depender, en primer lugar, la aceptacion del trono que se me ofrece” (Gutiérrez Estrada *Discurso* 20-21). Maximilian’s caveat most likely stems from insecurities about the legitimacy of his cause, knowing there is a democratically elected president in Mexico already. It is the investiture of the presidential office that Juárez holds that disturbs the Austrian prince, not his color. *Noticias del imperio* foregrounds this discomfort.

During a trip to Cuernavaca, he reflects on the differences between being an Emperor and being a president. A president, he reasons, is a lesser political being.

Emperors are refined, more worldly, more enlightened. Theirs is a divine calling. An emperor "tiene que saber, y saber hacer, muchas cosas más que un presidente. Que a un Príncipe de una dinastía europea como la Casa de Austria además de geografía, historia, matemáticas, filosofía, botánica y tantas otras cosas más se le enseñan muchos idiomas" (429). In addition to languages he should also know fencing with all its terminology: "un presidente no necesita saber esgrima y conocer términos como correr la mano, zambullida o floretazo" (430). And no Emperor's intellectual palette would be complete without a healthy dose of dancing, hunting, and horseback riding (430). "¿Sabes por qué un Emperador, un Príncipe, tiene que aprender de todo eso y un presidente no?", he asks. "Porque además de vigilar el orden, la paz, la justicia y la democracia al igual que un presidente, un Príncipe tiene que velar por la belleza y la tradición, por la elegancia" (429-430). According to Maximilian, a president's main responsibility is to maintain order, something Mexican presidents had been unable to do. The role of an emperor is to ensure order through beauty and refinement. By raising the cultural awareness of a nation, Maximilian hoped to improve Mexico's overall stability. Stability provided by a foundation in the arts would justify his role leadership; it would lend legitimacy to a cause that, by some, was deemed a spurious imposition of authority by foreign arms.

WHAT "WE" TALK ABOUT WHEN "WE" TALK ABOUT LANGUAGE

Ludwig Wittgenstein asserts that "Everyday language is a part of the human organism and is no less complicated than it" (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 35). Understanding the logic behind language is central to Wittgenstein's thought, then, because "The limits of my language are the limits of my world," or in other words, thoughts are mediated by language and that the limits placed on thought by the logic of

language indicate the limits of perception (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 115). Our perception of the world around us is determined by the language we use to describe and interpret phenomenological input. Since language acquisition plays a major role in both characters' integration, it is worth studying in detail. What is the logic that governs both character's drive to learn Spanish? How does it help them integrate themselves into this foreign Mexican society? For Juárez and Maximilian, language serves a number of important functions. Both use language to assimilate themselves into a foreign culture. Del Paso's Juárez views acquiring language as a means to changing social status. Maximilian uses language to define himself as a Mexican and to distance himself from his European identity. Additionally, language becomes an important factor for determining who is a member of Mexican society and who is not. Maximilian, a polyglot with seven languages under his belt, dives into Spanish with the gusto of an intellectual. Maximilian's assimilation of Spanish becomes evidence for his "Mexicanization", despite others' uses of language to distance him.

Juárez must learn Spanish in order to swim in Mexican waters. As noted before, the official story tells the quaint tale of a Zapotec Indian who left his native land to learn Spanish and become the president of the nation. Language acquisition plays a major role in that transformation. When Juárez arrives in Oaxaca City, he enters the seminary and there learns Castilian Spanish. Upon leaving the clergy, Juárez becomes a lawyer. Later he would teach Spanish grammar in Oaxacan schools. These professions are all firmly grounded in the grammatical and syntactical structures of language.

For the priest, language is tied up with the notion of God. John's gospel records that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Through language, man communicates with God in prayer and the priest brings Christ to the altar in the form of the sacramental host. The language of

religion has, for ages, been used as a form of power. Those who speak the liturgical language wield the power of God on earth. From the religious perspective, language represents the binding, authoritative relationship between God and man. Language and law both function as systems of rules. The legal code is, essentially, a grammar of conduct for society. Stepping outside the grammatical boundaries of the law incurs penalties. And, as a grammarian, the disposition of words and syntactical elements differentiates the learned from the illiterate. It should be of little surprise then, that Del Paso's depiction of Juárez would be significantly grounded on the question of language. In the novel it becomes a point of honor for Juárez.

Flipping through his white secretary's report, Juáréz notices a misused preposition and corrects it: "Es nutrida *con*, y no nutrida *de*, Señor Secretario…. Que debió usted poner 'nutrida *con* una teología' y no 'nutrida *de* una teología...'" (*Noticias* 149). The secretary jokes that the president is always correcting his Spanish, and Juárez—a man of rules—fires back: "Lo tuve que aprender muy bien, Señor Secretario, con todas las reglas, porque no era mi lengua materna. Y lo aprendí con sangre" (149). Juárez's correction serves two purposes. First, it obeys his sense of legality, his feelings of propriety, and his love of the rule of law. Second, it allows him to establish his superiority over his white secretary. His explanation of his language acquisition is racially charged: Spanish is not his native language, and he was forced to learn it with all of its rules. Lacking the benefit of early childhood immersion, Juárez takes pride in having mastered the language while his secretary fumbles with prepositions.

The secretary's comment that the president *always* corrects him does not seem to be an exaggeration. We might reasonably deduce that the fictional Juárez takes every opportunity to correct his secretary. As I have shown, Juárez worries about racial inferiority, and it undoubtedly affects his relationships with others. But the corrections

also appear to sting the secretary's pride. When discussing the romantic liaisons of the European royal families, the secretary comments, "Se me ocurre, de broma, que todos esos adulterios y hijos... e hijos bastardos que han tenido los monarcas europeos, les sirven para limpiar la sangre de vez en cuando" (155). In Spanish, the copulative "y" becomes an "e" when the succeeding word begins with an "i" sounds, as in the case of "hijos." It is not uncommon, however, in colloquial speech to hear the copulative "y", as evidenced by the secretary's statement. But the secretary rushes to correct himself before Juárez can do it for him. Thus we can see that language for Juárez is intimately tied up with identity and power. He forsakes his native language to enter into the hostile world of the racially different other. When Juárez masters Spanish, it becomes a point of honor for him, and one that he is willing to display whenever the chance arrives. He uses language to dominate others and to fend off his own insecurities about race and position.

Maximilian's take on language is distinct from Juárez's. Whereas Juárez uses language as an instrument of power, law, and order, Maximilian uses language to root himself into a linguistic community for the purpose of building a new identity. Our first interaction with the imperial couple occurs in the section entitled "El archiduque en Miramar". The Emperor- and Empress-to-be are receiving a Spanish lesson at their home in Italy from a Mexican professor. While the scene ostensibly deals with language, the question of nationality and identity come quickly to the forefront.

The section opens with foreboding portent. "El Archiduque Maximiliano se encontraba esa tarde tranquila y soleada en el Salón de las Gaviotas del Castillo de Miramar en las cercanías de Trieste, la vieja ciudad en cuya catedral, San Justo, fueron sepultados tantos pretendientes carlistas que nunca realizaron su sueño de ser reyes de España" (93). Reminding readers that *Noticias del imperio* is a self-proclaimed tragedy, the narrator alludes to Maximilian's lofty, yet ultimately unfulfilled, aspirations to

successfully occupy the Mexican throne of power. Maximilian stands next to a map of Mexico and a small lacquer box with colored pins; each one represents the mineral or natural wealth of his new-found empire. Selecting a silver-plated pin, he sticks into the state of Sonora and says:

> "Sonora. Si *Herr* professor me permite una broma, yo puedo… ¿yo podría…?"
>
> "Sí, Su Alteza: yo podría, tú podrías, él podría..."
>
> "Yo podría—continuó el Archiduque—decir que el nombre de Sonora es sonoro por la mucha plata que tiene y que la quiere Napoleón. Pero no se la daremos. Es para nosotros los mexicanos." (93)

This first exchange between the European Archduke and the Mexican professor sets the stage for what will ultimately be a very uncomfortable, and revealing, language lesson. First, the verb in question, that will come up repeatedly, is *poder*. In Spanish it serves a dual purpose. As a verb, *poder* means "to be able" and speaks to the individual's capacity to accomplish something. It is generally followed by another verb indicating one's ability to perform that specific task. When conjugated, it can also be isolated as an affirmation. As a noun, *poder* literally means "power". Since the ability to assume power in a foreign land is at stake, the verb *poder* will surface numerous times in the chapter.

Second, the verb tenses used indicate a difference of opinions. Maximilian stammers between the present indicative and the conditional, though I would argue that his question about the conditional relates more to form than to semantics. *Poder* is an irregular verb in the conditional. The professor provides the correct conjugation of the verb in conditional tense, expressing the potentiality if not the realization of their ability, and will later use the conditional in a manner than infuriates Carlota.

Third, the question of financial gains enters the discussion. There is no doubt that France, aside from grand designs to restore monarchy to Spain's former colonies, viewed the Intervention as an investment, one which would ironically lead to the dissolution of

the Second French Empire and the transfer of European power from France to Germany. Maximilian's determination to preserve Sonora's silver for Mexico seems at odds with the financial arrangements he made with the French crown prior to embarking. Maximilian agreed to bankroll the entire French intervention in Mexico, including a standing occupational army for seven to eight years, with funds drawn from the Mexican treasury. Sonora's silver will end up in the French treasury indirectly.

And fourth, there is Maximilian's observation that Sonora's silver is for "nosotros los mexicanos". In *Noticias del imperio* there are inclusive and exclusive uses for the word "nosotros." Inclusion in Spanish is generally indicated by tonal (such as emphasis on the antecedent) or physical cues (like hand gentures). Here inclusion is tonal, emphasized by the word *nosotros* or "we". Maximilian includes himself in the category he designates as Mexican. The first phrase we hear from Maximilian, then, underlines his belief that he is Mexican.

The professor uses this phrase differently. He counsels the Empress to adopt the Castillian spelling of her name by dropping a "t". He assures her that "Sería un gesto que nosotros, los mexicanos, apreciaríamos mucho" (94). Using the same phrase Maximilian had previously employed to include himself within the category of Mexican, the professor now distinguishes himself as a Mexican from his employers. There is also a concomitant assertion of cultural values, codes, and mores of which the royal couple is unaware. The professor takes his Mexican identity as license to break courtly codes of behavior and to opine on the political situation in Mexico. The professor further distinguishes himself when he notes that few Mexicans will notice the change in spelling. Says he: "habrá muchos de *mis* compatriotas que no se darán cuenta… porque por desgracia, son muy pocos los que *sabemos* leer y escribir, ah?" (94-95, my italics). The distinction here is double: he first separates himself and Mexicans from the couple using

the possessive pronoun *mis*, and then from the illiterate Mexicans, identifying with the first person plural *sabemos* those who can read and write.

Herr professor's subtle exclusions of the royal couple get him in trouble a couple of times. When discussing foreign control of domestic industries, *Herr* professor finds himself in a sticky situation: "Con esto quiero decir que las riquezas de México están en manos de... Sus Altezas no se ofenderán: ustedes no serán extranjeros en mi país. Ya no lo son... las riquezas, decía, están en manos de extranjeros" (96). The professor backpedals. He has touched on a delicate subject and speaks before thinking. He points out that foreign intervention in domestic financial affairs, again marking the strong contrast between "extranjeros" and "*mi* país." He recognizes that the individuals he is addressing are foreigners who want to incorporate themselves into a new nation. His first attempt assures them that they will not—note the future tense's expression of possibility—be foreigners. His statement suggests that they are not now, but have the potential to become Mexican. He then corrects himself. They already are Mexicans, and should not consider themselves foreigners at all. Clearly, the first Mexican Maximilian encounters in the novel does not buy into his assimilation. Neither does he seem to accept a future integration. His attitude is incredulous, yet he bows when he realizes that offending his employers might carve into his wages.

Carlota, who attempts to integrate Mexican symbols into the court procedures, never seems to incorporate the language completely, according to Del Paso. Discussing the translations of *Noticias* into French, the author comments that "Me ocurrió algo muy especial al empezar a revisar esa traducción: me conmovió mucho el monólogo de Carlota, porque si Carlota hubiera dicho eso, lo hubiera dicho en francés, que era su idioma natal. Leer el monólogo de Carlota en francés para mí adquirió una dimensión muy especial y un poco escalofriante, pero esa es una excepción" (Quemain).

Language acquisition for Maximilian is an important step to becoming Mexican. Early on it appears he is swimming in a sea of languages. He prides himself on speaking German, French, Italian, English, and Spanish, in addition to some Hungarian and Polish; later he plans to pick up Náhuatl, Maya, Quechua, and Guaraní (*Noticias* 429). Consider the following example from the language lesson: "Bravo, sírvame un poco, *per favore*, y venga acá. *Übrigens… à propos*: dígame dónde se hacen en México los Buenos vinos… *Et toi, Charlotte, un peu de vin?*" (*Noticias* 95). Language is a national marker. This hodgepodge of Spanish, Italian, German, and French seems to characterize a man who has yet to put down his roots in one linguistic code or, we might argue, one country.

This voracious approach to language changes as he embraces Mexico. He associates himself and his rein more with Spanish than with other languages. Maximilian insists that all communiqués to the French court be written "*no* en francés sino en español como siempre" (425). Perhaps most indicative of the change is his choice of last words.

TO DIE LIKE A MEXICAN

The events occurring on the Cerro de las Campanas become the central point of Del Paso's narrative and his argument. He bases his assertion that Maximilian should be incorporated into the Mexican pantheon on the notion that the Emperor dies in a Mexican (read heroic) fashion. What elements of that death, then, enter into that equation? Here I will examine the Maximilian's refusal to escape, the biblical allusions, his magnanimity before the firing squad, and his final words.

A number of plans had been made to help the emperor escape. Del Paso goes into great detail about them. While he agreed to participate in them, Del Paso's Maximilian

appears reluctant, like one who accepts that the end draws near. When a plan to sneak him out of town dressed as a commoner is proposed, the emperor responds:

> ¿Yo, Señores? ¿Yo salir a escondidas de Querétaro? ¿Yo escaparme como un delincuente común, como un convicto? ¿Yo, salir del país, huir, embarcarme en Tampico, o en Tuxpan, qué sé yo, en una corbeta americana que lo sé yo, en una corbeta americana que los *yankees* me prestan de pura lástima, y dejar el país, como lo hizo Iturbide, como tantas veces lo han hecho Juárez y Santa Anna? Por Dios, Señores! ¡Por Dios y por México! (518).

In his patriotic fervor, Maximilian refuses to run as others before him had: Iturbide had exiled himself in England; Juárez was sent to New Orleans, and during the French intervention—though he never left the country—spent most of his time near the border; and Santa Anna had spent time in Nassau, Cuba, Venezuela, and the United States, waiting for his opportunities to return to power. Truth be told, foreign exile is the common currency of Mexican politics. Hidalgo was on his way north when the insurrection failed. Later on José Vasconcelos would flee. Francisco I. Madero went to San Antonio, Texas, under threat from Porfirio Díaz only to return in 1911 and sent Díaz scurrying off to Europe. Maximilian's refusal to leave breaks with a common thread in Mexican politics, but this is exactly what Del Paso hopes to underline: that Maximilian was more willing to face consequences than were other great Mexicans who have been included in the pantheon.

It is worth noting, as well, that had Maximilian left Mexico, he would have had nothing to return to in Europe. Napoleon III and Franz Joseph required Maximilian to sign the Family Pact before leaving for Mexico. One of the agreement's stipulations was that Maximilian had to renounce all claims to the Austro-Hungarian crown and all his former possessions. Essentially, he went to Mexico with nothing and had nothing to return to in the event the empire fell. Abdicating would have left him without a home. His foreignness would have reached the utmost extreme.

Del Paso also casts Maximilian in the mold of Jesus Christ. He observes that "En esa época, como en muchas otras, no era raro el afán de comparar un martirio con el Calvario" (586). The commonality of this practice notwithstanding, Del Paso paints a similar portrait. Maximilian, unafraid of death, scrambles out of a mired carriage to ascend the mount alone. General Mejía requests to change sides because "no deseaba estar a su izquierda, porque a la izquierda del Salvador había estado, en Gólgota, el mal ladrón" (586). And then Del Paso adds his own comment about Maximilian's death: "Y bueno: cristiana fue, sí, la muerte de Maximiliano en Querétaro, y noble sin duda no sólo por su increíble entereza y su maravilloso estado de ánimo que no flaqueó en ningún momento, sino también por sus últimas palabras que, aunque ingenuas e incluso chabacanas, contribuyeron a dignificar sus últimos momentos" (586). These last words come in the form of a brief speech. While differences exist as to what was said, the majority of the chroniclers coincide on Maximilian's final words: "Voy a morir por una causa justa: la causa de la Independencia y la Libertad de México. Ojalá que mi sangre ponga término a las desdichas de mi nueva Patria. ¡Viva México!" (586).

While history records that Maximilian's dying words on the Cerro de las Campanas were "¡Viva México!", Del Paso points out that "los testigos oculares del drama del cerro afirman que después de la descarga, y cuando yacía en el suelo, el Emperador dijo en *español*: '¡Hombre, hombre!'" (586, my italics). Del Paso prepares readers for this in the language lesson. The professor explains that "Hombre es además, en español, y tal vez sobre todo en México, una exclamación que puede expresar muchas cosas distintas, según la ocasión: sorpresa, alegría, incredulidad" (*Noticias* 98). It has been argued that Maximilian thought he would escape martyrdom, that his subjects would not murder him. It is possible that his last words—a phrase he had been taught expressed surprise and disbelief—indicate a degree of acculturation that has heretofore

been overlooked. His patriotic declaration may be written off as dramatic flair, but what accounts for this final expression? Why does this Austrian prince bid farewell to life in Spanish and not in German? When Del Paso offers Maximilian's heroic death as evidence of his "Mexicanization", he is not only referring to the well-known "¡Viva México!" but also the "¡Hombre, hombre!"

"HISTORY WILL JUDGE US"

Juárez's death is no less important for the novel's theme. In a chapter that repeats Juárez's warning to the recently arrived Archduke ("la historia nos juzgará"), it seems only fitting that Juárez should stand trial. Del Paso sets the stage with a dying Juárez stretched out on his deathbed. The doctor is applying boiling water to the patient's bare chest to stimulate the president's failing heart. Juárez, however, inhabits a phantasmagorical illusion populated by voices. Alternatively praising and condemning, the voices rehash the headlines of his life.

The liberal chorus sings his praises as savior of the nation, benevolent father figure, and honest citizen: "Porque fuiste, Benito, pastor y niño, estudioso y limpio…" (618). "Benito en Oaxaca, de corbata de moño y perchera blanca. Benito maestro de física en el Instituto, de levita negra y de charol los zapatos. Benito en la gubernatura del Estado, de oro los anteojos, Benito en la presidencia de la República, de bastón con puño de plata. Benito venerable hermano de la logia yorkina, la de los vinagres, ¿pero… no lo habían llamado? ¿acaso no lo habían llamado a todas esas partes?" (620). The conservative, condemning voices tell another story; they label him a traitor, a heretic, a coward, and a *vendepatria*:

> Sí: ¡abogado de las cohortes del diablo, de masones ateos, de herejes y blasfemos, de rojos y de comecuras!... Sí, traidor porque ese muchacho de piel de Judas, como fuera que en su nativa lengua zapoteca se dijera *piel* y se dijera *Judas*, unas veces por soñar despierto y otras por soñar dormido abandonaba a sus ovejas y acabó por abandonar su pueblo, por abandonar sus montañas, por ser traidor a su oficio y a su laguna encantada, a su tío Bernardino que le quería pastorcito. (619)

It is between these two poles—these two historical judgments—that Juárez finds himself. But Del Paso's Juárez comes to the conclusion that history's judgment means nothing to the dead "[por] la simple razón de que… los muertos no oyen, ni ven, ni sienten, ni perdonan (622). Moreover, "La historia sólo podía importarle a los vivos mientras estuvieran eso: *vivos*, se dijo el Licenciado Benito Juárez y recordó que cuando de joven se iniciaba en las lecturas de los enciclopedistas y los autores del siglo de las luces, le había llamado la atención de una frase de Voltaire: 'La historia es una broma', decía el francés, 'que los vivos le jugamos a los muertos…'" (622-623).

> Inventaban su juicio. Inventaban el fallo de la historia. Lo colocaban en la mesa del Tribunal de la Santa Inquisición, indefenso, paralizado, incapaz de mover un dedo o de decir una palabra.
>
> Le colgaban enfrente el cadaver embalsamado, podrido, vuelto a embalsamar del Príncipe austriaco por el cual le habían pedido gracia las señoras de San Luis y de Querétaro, los embajadores europeos, las princesas a caballo y de rodillas…
>
> Le ponían enfrente, sí, muerto ya, sin ninguna posibilidad de resucitarlo, de darle frescura a su piel y darle brillo y otro color, más claro, a sus ojos, le ponían enfrente a Abel.
>
> Para poder acusarlo de haber matado a su hermano. (623)

At this moment of enlightenment, Juárez suddenly finds himself on trial. He is lying on a table used formerly by the Holy Inquisition and later destined to hold Maximilian's corpse. To one side, the conservative voices appear, materializing as men in black hoods clutching torches. At the other end of the chapel are the liberal voices, dressed in white hoods and holding irises. In the background, he sees "el triangulo de llamitas azules, la estrella de fuego amarillo" (625). Directly in front of him is

Maximilian's naked corpse, hanging from the cupola of the San Andrés chapel. The trial has begun, complete with prosecuting and defense attorneys, testimonies and corporeal evidence.

But before judgment is rendered, Juárez stops caring. For the first time in his life, the outcome ceases to preoccupy him. "Porque sabía que dijera lo que dijera, hiciera lo que hiciera, serían otros, y no él, los que iban a decidir qué había sido, de toda su vida—y de su muerte también—lo más hermoso, lo más desagradable, lo más digno de recordarse, lo más vergonzoso. Pero no él: él ya no tendría vela en ese entierro" (626). Juárez's judgment scene is important because it establishes the basis on which Del Paso can argue for Maximilian's mexicanidad. History only matters to the living. The dead, according to Juárez, have no conscience of history's judgment. So is Maximilian a Mexican? Ultimately, Del Paso leaves the decision to readers. *Noticias del imperio* represents an exposition of evidence and an invitation to incorporate. But Del Paso does not enforce a decision, nor can he. Rather he allows readers to choose. To that end, it doesn't matter what Juárez thought of Maximilian or what Maximilian thought of himself. Rather it is what Mexicans think posthumously of these two men that matters. And successive generations will reevaluate that decision over and over again.

CREATING A MONUMENT

Noticias del imperio was a long time in the making. From beginning to end, the novel occupied ten years of Del Paso's life. His research took him to Europe numerous times, including an extended stay in London. He reports that for the first two years he refused to write anything, preferring to dedicate himself wholly to the task of sifting through monumental reams of documents. Elizabeth Corral Peña provides an excellent

analysis of the Del Paso's primary source material: essays, diaries, travelogues, popular songs, newspaper articles, historical analyses, and other period documents. She observes: "Del Paso no quiso limitarse a la exposición de un acontecimiento aislado, sino, por el contrario, presentar un cuadro muy completo, y complejo, en el que aparecieran los diferentes hilos que se tejen para constituir el entramado de la historia" (*Noticias del imperio y los nuevos caminos de la novela histórica* 17). This statement may grant more objectivity to Del Paso's Project than is due. There is no doubt that Del Paso's research is thorough. Interestingly enough, most of the documents he cites are conservative. This is particularly interesting because Del Paso has, for many years, clearly identified himself with Mexico's radical left. Why, then, does he undertake to defend Mexican conservatism? Or does he? And what effect does this have on his novel?

Corral Peña notes, almost contradictorily to her assertion that Del Paso wants to present "un cuadro completo" of the historical events, that the author covers his conservative texts "con un barniz irónico" (69). This is to say that trenchant conservatives like Gutiérrez Estrada appear buffoonish. Corral Peña rightly notes that descriptions of Gutiérrez Estrada are hyperbolic and that, "Aun cuando mantiene lo esencial de la perspective de Gutiérrez, lleva tan lejos la descripción de los 'horrores'… que logra justamente el efecto contrario al buscado por Gutiérrez: la situación catastrófica que refiere… se vuelve más bien chusca en las páginas de la novela" (69). She reports that these subtle descriptions allow readers to perceive "indicios acerca de la opinión que el narrador/autor tiene sobre el personaje mexicano, opinión que, por lo demás, coincide con la de casi todos los historiadores que estudian esta época, y en particular con la de aquellos que lo conocieron" (69). What this critic's analysis reveals is that Del Paso—and, incidentally, Corral Peña herself—is unable to create critical distance between himself and the text. Despite his best intentions to portray the ephemeral triumph of

Mexican conservatism, Del Paso still feels obligated to create a caricature of the monarchist project. What effect does this have on the novel?

If, as I have argued, Del Paso demonumentalizes Juárez and humanizes Maximilian, it seems antithetical that he would attack the conservative position. But I am not proposing a wholesale acceptance of conservatism. Throughtout this chapter I have argued that Del Paso humanizes Maximilian in an effort to draw in a part of Mexican political history that has been marginalized. Maximilian does represent, to some extent, the conservative party that brought him to power. He does not, however, exemplify that political tendency. As noted earlier, Maximilian broke with traditional conservatism and promulgated a number of liberal reforms including the freedom of religions. In this manner, Del Paso portrays Maximilian as being as liberal as Juárez. Those who initially supported the Austrian monarch eventually forsook him because he did not meet their standards. And thus Del Paso is able to criticize conservatives while enshrining Maximilian.

CONCLUSION

Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del imperio* accomplishes what no other Mexican historical novel has been able to do: it makes an excellent case in favor of recognizing Maximilian's *mexicanización*. He completes the work that was begun by Usigli and does so with masterful style. By demonumentalizing Benito Juárez without demonizing him, Del Paso can humanize Maximilian. He lowers one to raise the other, putting them on equal ground. They are mirror images. But Del Paso's portrayal of the conservative leaves some interesting questions unresolved. Is Del Paso able to fully incorporate the conservative history that liberals have excluded? Or is he only able to portray the

Mexicanness of that element of the conservative faction that most closely aligned itself with liberal principals? If this is case, what then can be said for Del Paso's novel at the ideological level? Does he succeed in incorporating Maximilian and fail in including *all* of Mexico's past? These questions, like the case of Maximilian's *mexicanización*, will have to be answered by readers of each successive generation that are willing to exercise "un poco de voluntad" on behalf of the lost figures of Mexican history.

Chapter Five: The Problematic Coexistence of Text and Document in Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria*

> El general Santa Anna es la mejor cabeza que ha gobernado á México, y él solo hombre que ha tenido una influencia real sobre el pueblo mexicano.... Se debe reconocer que ha hecho un uso deplorable de su autoridad y ha arrastrado á México en la vía fatal que lo ha perdido. — Maximilian of Austria

Throughout my dissertation I have argued that narratives of failure manifest themselves in Mexico's historical novels, and that these narratives have a constructive purpose. In *Los pasos de López*, Ibargüengoitia examines the independence movement as a means of criticizing the political and economic failures of the late 1970s and early 1980s. *La corte de los ilusos* culminates in a historiographic revolution by inserting women's history into discussions of national development. Ignacio Solares' *La invasion* offers a cultural renovation through confession as a means to overcoming historical failures. And Fernando del Paso invites Mexicans to integrate all elements of their political heritage into national history. All these texts are intimately tied to a political agenda, understanding political not as governmental but as a means of organizing human relations. Each text represents a form of cultural and historical memory. Judith Herman has proposed that there is an implicit need for remembering to be linked to an active political movement "powerful enough to legitimate an alliance between investigators and patients and to counteract the ordinary social processes of silencing and denial" (9). Not being actively involved in the processes of remembering "inevitably gives way to the active process of forgetting. Repression, dissociation, and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness" (9). The final novel I analyze spans all the events, at least chronologically, of the preceding chapters. Enrique Serna's (Mexico, D.F., 1959) *El*

seductor de la patria (1999), tells the story of Antonio López de Santa Anna, whose military career began months before Hidalgo's insurgency and whose life ended with the advent of the Porfirian regime. Like the novels already analyzed, *El seductor de la patria* has a political agenda. By creating a fictionalized biography of Antonio López de Santa Anna, Serna provides a manual for reading and interpreting historical and political narratives. Readers encounter multiple narrative voices, all vying for control of the story, and must sort through biases and concealed intentions in order to sift out the historical truth.

While Santa Anna appears to take center stage in this novel, the real story occurs behind the scenes. *El seductor de la patria* is a novel about writing, reading, and interpreting history. This chapter examines the function of the novel's two principal narrators: Colonel Manuel María Giménez and an extradiegetic narrator who identities himself as "the compiler." Both struggle to maintain control of a narration that is intricately entwined with the nation's guiding fictions. Giménez intends for Santa Anna's story to be exemplary, a monument of patriotism; the compiler responds with documents to discredit Giménez's version. Of specific interest is Serna's relationship to his primary sources and how narrators in the novel utilize those sources for distinct ideological purposes. He employs three methods of appropriating archival sources. In the first section I analyze how Serna *invents* apocryphal documents and inserts them into the novel. The second section examines how the author *incorporates* two autobiographical texts written by Santa Anna. As *El seductor de la patria* is, ostensibly, a novelized autobiography, it stands to reason that comparing this text with historical documents may provide insight into Serna's historical method. Finally I dedicate significant attention to how Serna *alters* Manuel María Giménez's defense of Santa Anna and his extensive correspondence with the general. After examining Giménez's participation in the novel, I turn my attention to

discussing the novel's contrapuntal historical narrative. The compiler works to undermine Giménez's hagiography. The text is arranged so that readers can see polarized sides of the story. Where the colonel would hide damning information, the compiler lays everything out on the table. Readers are then expected to develop their own opinions.

MEXICO'S CAUDILLO

The most representative Spanish American caudillo made his debut on the stage of life in 1794 with the grandiloquent name Antonio de Padua María Severino López de Santa Anna y Pérez de Lebrón. Santa Anna enlisted in the Spanish Army at Veracruz at 16, just months before Hidalgo's revolt. He was sent to the northern provinces of Tamaulipas and Texas in 1811 where he distinguished himself for bravery as an Indian fighter. In 1814, he returned to Veracruz and within a few years conducted anti-guerilla warfare against local insurgent cells. Soon after, Santa Anna would become the most important military figure in Mexican history.

He participated in every major military engagement from 1821 to 1855. He joined the military a few months before Hidalgo's revolution, and campaigned with royalist troops in Texas in the 1810s. While there he distinguished himself for uncommon valor and his penchant for card games. In the 1820s he switched to the insurgent cause in what is generally regarded as a calculated vertical move. The morning of his change in allegiance, Santa Anna had launched a destructive attack against the rebel forces. By dinnertime he was a high ranking official. He swore undying allegiance to the Iturbide regime, and six months later penned the Plan de Casa Mata, joined the liberal faction, and denounced Iturbide. Despite his readiness to adopt contradictory political slogans, Santa Anna was at heart a conservative who believed in authoritarianism and monarchy. In

1833 he won a congressional election to the presidency. The Texas rebellion in 1836 offered him the chance for a return to the battlefield, which he eagerly took. Along the arduous trek north, he conscripted an army that won costly battles at the Alamo and Goliad. In April 1836 he was captured by Sam Houston at San Jacinto, and signed the Velasco agreements. He would not be allowed to return to Mexico until February of 1837. November 1838 found him rallying forces against French invaders at Veracruz. Losing his leg in that battle turned the villain of the Texas campaign into a national hero. His popularity carried him to the presidency for his second term. In 1842 he presided over the burial of his leg, and decorated it with full military honors. For many this circus-like affair epitomizes Santa Anna's theatrical life and political career. The early 1840s saw more political and military machinations. He went into his first exile in 1845 but returned to Mexico in August 1846 to lead the Mexican armies against North American forces. Shortly after the fall of Mexico City and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Santa Anna left for his second exile, this time to Jamaica. He remained there from 1848 to 1850. In April 1850 he moved to Turbaco, Venezuela, where he occupied a home that Simón Bolívar had inhabited. Mexican politicians and military officers visited him between 1850 and 1853, and eventually convince him to return to Mexico once again. He was elected by congress to the presidency in March 1853, and in December he became an absolute dictator with the humble title of "His Most Serene Highness."

This tenure ended in 1855 and Santa Anna was again forced into exile. He returned to his home in Turbaco until 1858, when he moved to St. Thomas. While in St. Thomas he penned a defense of his political career. Upon hearing news of Maximilian's arrival in Mexico in 1864, Santa Anna packed his family and boarded a steamer for Veracruz. He was intercepted by the French navy and obliged to sign a document promising not to make any public speeches of proclamations for or against the Empire.

Upon arrival, however, he issued a manifesto in favor of Maximilian, and was summarily expelled by the French authorities. He traveled to the United States to secure funds for a revolution against Maximilian, but fell prey to loan sharks. He lost most of his family's fortune. In 1867 Benito Juárez imprisoned him in Campeche and later at the prison and San Juan de Ulúa. Santa Anna left for his final exile in late 1867, and does not return until 1874, two years prior to his death on June 22, 1876.

If we, like Enrique Krauze, adhere to Thomas Carlyle's biographical conceptualization of history, we might side with Lucas Alamán when he states that the history of Mexico's nineteenth century is "la historia de las revoluciones de Santa Anna." Antonio López de Santa Anna was an exceptional man: a gifted orator, a master organizer, a fearless warrior, and a talented politician. His strengths are often overlooked in deference to his weaknesses for he was also an opportunist, a gambler, a manipulator, and a womanizer. Historians cast Santa Anna in different lights, and none of them are particularly endearing. Simpson sees him as a vainglorious egotist whose crowning moment of self-aggrandizement was the burial of his now-famous leg. Jones casts Santa Anna as the brilliant perennial gambler, willing to risk everything in exchange for the big payoff. More recently, historian Will Fowler has striven to shed a positive light on Santa Anna's political career. He argues in *Mexico: The Age of Proposals* that Santa Anna was not a calculating traitor, but rather a man with honest desires for the welfare of his nation. Fowler's upcoming biography of the general, slated for publication in 2007 with the University of Nebraska Press, promises to offer a different version of the general's life than that which is typically presented. These debates are not nearly as volatile as the ones surrounding Hidalgo. Most Mexicans and North Americans have decided that Santa Anna was a villain. Serna shares this vision, and his bias becomes evident in the novel.

SERNA ON FAILURE, LITERATURE, AND MEXICAN LETTERS

Enrique Serna is one of the most popular authors in Mexico today. Born in Mexico City in 1959, he studied literature at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Serna is a prolific novelist, essayist, screenwriter, and short story writer. He has published *Uno soñaba que era rey* (novel, 1989), *Amores de segunda mano* (short story, 1991), *Jorge el Bueno: la vida de Jorge Negrete* (biography, 1993), *El miedo a los animales* (novel, 1995), *Las caricaturas me hacen llorar* (essay, 1996), *El seductor de la patria* (novel, 1999), *El orgasmógrafo* (short story, 2001), *Ángeles del abismo* (novel, 2004), and *Fruta verde* (novel, 2007).

Serna is an iconoclast with a poison pen. Most frequently the target of his diatribes is the literary establishment. Short stories like "El hombre con el minotauro en el pecho" offer crushing condemnations of the artistic world. His detective novel, *El miedo a los animales*, digs into the dirty underworld of Mexican law enforcement. The protagonist, a reporter-cum-corrupt-narcotics-officer, searches for the murderer of a relatively unknown journalist. His investigation leads him into the labyrinthine world of Mexico's literary elite, where he discovers that artists are just as base and petty as his drug-dealing boss. Serna also collaborates occasionally with the Mexico City literary magazine, *Letras Libres*. His editorial comments maintain this hard-edged approach to writing, as evidenced in his essay, "La religión del fracaso." He opens with the following acidic statement:

> El imperio yanqui ha exportado a todo el planeta la comida rápida, el cine de acción, la cocacola, el rock, la cultura del automóvil, el sexo seguro, pero no ha podido imponer al resto del mundo la costumbre de dividir a los hombres en triunfadores y fracasados. Por más penetración que tengan los manuales de superación personal y los libros de autoayuda, fuera de Estados Unidos los publicistas de la mentalidad triunfadora han fracasado en su empeño por darle al éxito una dimensión ética…. En América Latina, donde la pobreza obliga a

> estrechar las relaciones comunitarias, el imperativo de subsistir se sobrepone a cualquier ambición personal. Para triunfar o fracasar es preciso haber tenido expectativas de bienestar y en las maltrechas economías del subdesarrollo, con salarios castigados a niveles de hambruna, sólo el narcotráfico y la prostitución pueden ofrecerlas. Por consecuencia, entre nosotros el éxito es una posibilidad tan remota que sólo puede seducir a los jugadores de futbol y a las estrellitas de la farándula. ("La religión del fracaso" 79)

Serna reports that even American bums are more convinced of their ability to triumph than Mexican *teporochos*, who have lost all external signs of prosperity and who do not consider themselves losers in a competition in which they never participated (79). Failure becomes an important theme in Serna's work, be it in the frustrated lives of his short story characters, the corrupt law enforcement system in Mexico City, the falseness of Mexico's literati, or the historical process leading from independence to present day.

Serna holds to the notion that Mexico's past is Mexico's present. For him, little has changed in nearly two hundred years of independence. In August 2002, he penned an essay entitled "La opulenta México"—a reference to "la Ciudad de México." The title is taken from Santa Anna's passionate 1847 speech in which he vowed to protect the opulence of Mexico City from the barbaric northern invaders, to push all the way to Washington, DC, and raise the Mexican standard over the White House. Serna reports that Santa Anna's problem was mistaking Mexico City for the entire nation: "Uno de sus mayores disparates fue anteponer la defensa de la capital, elevada en sus discursos al rango de ciudad-Estado, a cualquier otro deber patriótico, pues con ello sólo consiguió avivar el rencor de los provincianos hacia el gobierno central, un rencor que se venía incubando desde tiempos de la Colonia" ("La opulenta México" 68). Serna argues that the effect this had was devastating to the national defense: "Ofendidos por la retórica de un caudillo que les restregaba en la cara la opulencia de México, y al mismo tiempo les imponía tributo, su represalia no se hizo esperar: cuando las fuerzas de Winfield Scout cercaron la capital, los gobiernos de Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Veracruz y Tabasco no

aportaron un centavo para su defensa" (68). Since the times of Santa Anna, Serna argues with his poignant style, things have gone from bad to worse: "Siglo y medio después, la opulenta México es un chancro a punto de reventar, que oculta bajo sus tierras sus ajadas glorias imperiales. Si antes inspiraba respeto por su belleza, ahora intimida por su monstruosidad" (68). This brief essay is particularly germane for our discussion of *El seductor de la patria* because it combines his historical research on Santa Anna with contemporary application.

GENESIS OF *EL SEDUCTOR DE LA PATRIA*

In 1994, Serna was contracted to write a screenplay for a historical docudrama on the general's life. The telenovela was canceled, but the author recalls that "el tema me apasionaba y seguí estudiándola por mi cuenta, con miras a escribir una novela histórica sin las ataduras de los géneros comerciales" (*Seductor* 9). This comment reveals a similarity to Ibargüengoitia's *Los pasos de López*. Once free from the requirements of a commissioned work—for Ibargüengoitia, a government-sponsored project, and for Serna, a commercial endeavor—both authors feel at liberty to work according to the dictates of their personal interpretations.

El seductor de la patria was hailed as a landmark historical novel at its publication. In 2000 it received the Premio Mazatlán for literature. It continues to be Serna's most recognized work and has faired well in subsequent editions. The 2004 Joaquín Mortiz edition is the sixteenth reprinting. The novel's enduring commercial success may be directly attributed to its subject. *El seductor de la patria* reconstructs the life of Antonio López de Santa Anna, nineteenth-century Mexico's most representative caudillo. Mixing historical research with narrative creation, Serna produces a novelized

biography that challenges readers' perceptions of archive, textuality, authorship, and historiography. Despite its success in bookstores, *El seductor de la patria* has been all but overlooked by literary critics. Thus far only two articles have addressed the novel: Gerardo Francisco Bobadilla Encinas' "Apuntes sobre *El seductor de la patria*, de Enrique Serna, o el epistolario no escrito de Antonio López de Santa Anna" and César Antonio Sotelo Gutiérrez's "*El seductor de la patria* de Enrique Serna: la novela histórica como instrumento de análisis político." Both articles suffer from serious weaknesses. Bobadilla Encinas, for example, is unable to address the problems associated with multilayered narratives while Sotelo Gutiérrez incorrectly proposes that Serna is an objective author offering us a dispassionate account of the Santa Anna's life.

That Serna began his research for the novel in 1994 may indicate some of the contextual events that influenced Serna's historical imagination. It was a watershed year for turning points. On January 1, 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a comprehensive neoliberal economic compact aimed at improving trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, took effect. The treaty called for the gradual reduction of tariffs on trade between the three nations. Simlutaneously, the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) launched a military offensive against government forces in the southern state of Chiapas. Led by a university-educated *capitalino*, Subcomandante Marcos, the army fought under the banner of indigenous rights. 1994 also symbolized the highpoint of an economic bubble. When Salinas took office in 1988, inflation was at an all-time high. During his administration he managed to reduce inflation, but in so doing, overspent and laid the foundation for the December 1994 economic crash. Though the crash technically occurred during the first month of Ernesto Zedillo's, little doubt exists that the causes of the crisis lie in Salinas's administration of the national finances. One final event marred the year: the assassination

of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the PRI candidate favored to win the presidency in the 1994 elections. Documents have surfaced in the last three years that implicate Salinas' brother, Raúl, in the assassination. The novel's 1999 publication also coincides with the rise of Mexico's political right. Shortly after the novel appeared in bookstores, Vicente Fox Quesada, candidate for the conservative National Action Party (PAN), broke the PRI's seventy-one year monopoly on national elections. Oganized in 1939, the PAN has advocated increased economic ties with the United States, free market economy, privatization, reduced taxes, and neoliberal reforms. While the party is outwardly non-confessional, it maintains close ties to the Catholic Church and has allowed Church doctrines to influence its policies on abortion and birth control. There is a contextual link between the surge in conservatism in Mexico and the publication of *El seductor de la patria*. The novel's protagonist, Santa Anna, was one of the premier conservatives of the nineteenth century. While it is true that he adopted liberal slogans at various moments of his career, his decisions appear to have been bids for power more than whole-hearted conversion to the the philosophy. Thus we can argue that *El seductor de la patria* is a novel that dialogues with the moment of its creation. During the five year process of research and writing, Serna views his character through the historian's optics as influenced by the contemporary problems besetting his nation. In this regard, the novel's historical aspect can be read as an analogue for the world in which he writes. This tension between historiography, present-day concerns, and fiction become the heart of the novel.

THE TENSION BETWEEN HISTORIOGRAPHY AND FICTION

Serna opens the novel with a section entitled "Agradecimientos," the Spanish equivalent to an "Acknowledgments" section. Acknowledgments recognize the

collaborative efforts of numerous hands in the creative process. This is Serna's first gesture: "Cualquier aproximación a un personaje histórico es el resultado de un esfuerzo colectivo. La biografía de Antonio López de Santa Anna es un edificio en constante mejoramiento, construido y remozado por varias generaciones de historiadores" (*Seductor* 9, my italics). Serna inserts himself into a tradition of historians, not fiction writers. These initial lines propose that the book we are about to read is not fiction but biography. However, the author paradoxically recognizes the fictional qualities of the story, for he continues, "En esta novela no intenté compendiar todo lo que se sabe sobre Santa Anna, ni mucho menos decir la última palabra sobre su vida, sino reinventarlo como un personaje de ficción y explorar su mundo interior sobre bases reales" (9). The purpose of this novel is to recreate the historical Santa Anna as a fictional character. To do so, Serna affirms his right to reject historical objectivity. Doing so allows him to leave the field open for imagination (9). Nevertheless he recognizes his indebtedness to the classic texts of Mexican historiography, a debt he qualifies as "la misma deuda de gratitud que un fabricante contrae con sus proveedores de materia prima" (9).

The "Agradecimientos" section reveals important points. First, Serna inserts himself into a historiographic discourse. Outwardly he adopts the role of historian, but maintains his right to literary creation. Hayden White has proposed that the line between historiography and literature is less concrete than historians would have us believe. Nineteenth-century historians claimed the prestige of both the scientific and artistic traditions without adhering to the formal precepts of either. White, however, suggests that the time for fence sitting may have passed. "[Historians] must be prepared to entertain the notion that history, as currently constituted, is a kind of historical accident, a product of a specific historical situation, and that, with the passing of the misunderstandings that produced that situation, history itself may lose its statue as an autonomous and self-

authenticating mode of thought" (*Tropics of Discourse* 29). Second, Serna proposes to recreate Santa Anna on "bases reales," ostensibly the aforementioned classics of Mexican historiography. These classics include the histories written by many of the historians I have previously mentioned: Lucas Alamán, Justo Sierra, José Vasconcelos, Enrique Krauze, and others. They also include the Manuel María Giménez archive of letters and apologies, to which I will refer extensively. Third, Serna rejects what he calls "historical objectivity" in order to give free rein to his imagination. White claims that historians may be called upon to "preside over the dissolution of history's claim to autonomy among the disciplines, and to aid in the assimilation of history to a higher kind of intellectual inquiry which, because it is founded on an awareness of the similarities between art and science, rather than their differences, can be properly designated as neither" (*Tropics of Discourse* 29). This higher historical inquiry is exactly what Del Paso proposes in *Noticias del imperio* and what Serna attempts to achieve with limited success. The degree to which he accomplishes this task is questionable. And finally, he recognizes that, in spite of poetic license, he must still adhere to the historical framework Santa Anna's life imposes upon him. Serna's proposition of historical objectivity sounds good in theory, but falls short in execution. *El seductor de la patria* is not a dispassionate history. It does not eschew historical objectivity as the author claims, though it does not altogether adopt it.

El seductor de la patria details the struggle for historical authority. It pits "objective history," espoused by the Serna and 150 years of historical documentation, against an apologetic history, championed by Manuel María Giménez. These conflicting histories are made evident by the novel's epistolary structure. *El seductor de la patria* has been thoroughly documented and, by Serna's own admission, purged of anachronisms by a group of specialized historians. But he does provide a faux apparatus of documentation: fabricated letters, journal entries, confidential communiqués, newspaper reports,

proclamations, and other historical documents to recreate the caudillo's life. These documents are inserted into the historical narrative by an extradiegetic narrator known as "the compiler" and counterbalance Giménez's version. They contest the scribe's heroic tale by revealing other's perceptions of Santa Anna (Iturbide, Alamán, Jackson, Houston, his wife's, etc.) and directly contradicting the general's justification of military and political actions (bills-of-sale, journal entries, war reports).

Serna writes a defense of his method in *Letras Libres* shortly after the novel is published. In an essay entitled "Vidas de Santa Anna," Serna recounts that the general's biographers have taken as many liberties with their subject as have the fictional writers. He notes that Oakah L. Jones, Jr., one of the most frequently cited biographers, misses an important bit of irony when Karl Marx writes that the Spanish never produced a genius like Santa Anna. Jones employs the idea of Santa Anna's genius to frame his entire narrative. The irony, Serna points out, is that Marx—whose dislike for the Spanish knew no bounds—was not praising the Mexicans or Santa Anna. Instead, his left-handed compliment becomes a slap in the face to both nations. Serna then briefly describes Callcott's biography and the the novelized biography that Octavio Paz's grandfather, Ireneo. He concludes discussing Rafael F. Muñoz's novel, *El dictador resplandeciente*. Muñoz, he avers, generates a psychological profile that traditional historiography had been unable to create. He also throws in some scintillating details that are not historically verifiable, such as Dolores de Tostas hiring homeless street urchins to visit Santa Anna in his dementia to entertain the general with falsified memories of important battles. Serna writes: "Para traducir la vida de Santa Anna al lenguaje de la novela moderna es preciso tomarse libertades mayores que las de Rafael F. Muñoz. Pero hasta yo, que pensaba alejarme lo más posible del método historiográfico, me vi obligado a deslindar la ficción de la realidad en biografías, memorias y testimonios viciados de origen, para no plagiar a

los novelistas embozados que me antecedieron" (81). Ironically, Serna criticizes historians whose biographies resemble works of fiction while adopting the inverse role; he is *un historiador embozado*.

Because this novel invokes questions about textuality and the archive, I reiterate the main points of archival theory that were outlined in the introduction. According to Foucault, the archive dictates the positivity of information. More than simply telling a story, the archive determines the way we perceive historical events and actors. Like Foucault, Roberto González Echevarría views the archive as an inherent part of the power structures that govern knowledge. He argues that Latin American literature is tied up with anthropological investigations into its own foundational myths. The archive is responsible for the process that "keeps, culls, retains, accumulates, and classifies" these myths (*Myth and Archive* 18). González Echevarría also views the self-reflective nature of Latin American writing as a natural product of the region's relationship to the archive: "self-reflexivity is a way of disassembling the mediation through which Latin America is narrated, a mediation that constitutes a pre-text of the novel itself" (28-29). For González Echevarría, the archive consists of three elements that relate specifically to the archival politics of this novel: "the presence not only of history but of previous mediating elements through which it was narrated, be it the legal document of colonial times or the scientific ones of the nineteenth century," "the existence of an inner historian who reads the texts, interprets and writes them," and "the presence of an unfinished manuscript that the inner historian is trying to complete" (22). He demonstrates that this modality shows that "the act of writing is caught up in a deeply rooted mythic struggled that constantly denies it the authority to generate and contain knowledge about the other without, at the same time, generating a perilous sort of knowledge about itself and about one's morality and capacity to know oneself" (29). His comments about the self-reflexivity of the

archive coincides with Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction. She argues that this modality of historical fiction "refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses to view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 93).

The archive is not simply a repository of information. It is system of organization and censorship. The defining characteristic of the archive is its ability to privilege certain parcels of information while suppressing others. This sifting process is intimately caught up in power structures. Historical fiction challenges the established hierarchy of information within the archive by inventing documents, reordering existing documents, and altering our perceptions of the information in the archive. The following section analyzes how Serna invents apocryphal documents and inserts them into the novel. *El seductor de la patria* reorders the archive by inventing at least ninety external documents. These documents include personal journals, newspaper articles, speeches, reports, personal letters, and legal documents. They punctuate, and often contradict, claims made by Santa Anna biography. The volume of documents Serna introduces prohibits a complete analysis of each one. For this reason I have selected four that highlight apocryphal documents in the novel. These include journal entries from Santa Anna's first campaign to Texas with the royalist army, letters from his first wife complaining about his treatment, a report on the battle of the Alamo, and a letter between two prominent American politicians on the state of affairs in Mexico. The appearance of these documents attests to a heavily biased narrative against Santa Anna that pervades the novel.

A TALE OF TWO GIMÉNEZES: HISTORICAL ARCHIVE AND FICTIONAL TEXT

Having outlined a basic theory of the archive, how it is constructed, what its purpose is, and how it relates to historical fiction, I now turn my attention to the first of the novel's two main narrators: Manuel María Giménez. Serna develops Manuel María Giménez's character based on the historical record. It is clear that Serna has read and incorporated Giménez's archive into the text. But Serna is not entirely faithful to his historical sources. He modifies certain elements of Giménez's biography. Why? What does he gain by altering the facts? How does Giménez fit into the historical record? And how does Giménez's archival documents play into *El seductor de la patria*? Furthermore, how does Serna's Giménez identify with Santa Anna and what effect this has on his narration? As Giménez is one of the principal narrators in the novel, what is his narrative role?

Manuel María Giménez distinguishes himself in Mexican historiography as one of the few writers to unequivocally defend Santa Anna. If the corpus of his printed works is small, its size in no way detracts from the ardor with which he attempts to defend his commanding officer's legacy. Of inestimable value is the correspondence he maintained with the general from 1829 until shortly after 1874. Two years before the general's death, the old colonel found Santa Anna in Mexico City and was in frequent contact with him until his death in 1876. This epistolary exchange with Santa Anna, that lasts for more than forty years, undoubtedly contributed to Serna's decision to give the novel its epistolary form.

Giménez is an intriguing albeit minor player in Mexican history. Born in Cádiz, Spain, in 1798, he received minimal formal education and enlisted in the military at the

age of sixteen. In 1818 he transferred to the viceroyalty of New Spain with the royal corps of engineers. In 1821 he joined Iturbide's *Ejército Trigarante* and entered Mexico City in the triumphal procession. Giménez temporarily retired from service. He offered his services to Santa Anna in September 1828 by letter, but does not serve as Santa Anna's aide until 1838. While serving with Santa Anna, Giménez achieves the rank of colonel. But Santa Anna was not the only *caudillo* to whom Giménez attached himself. He appears to have been attracted to power, but never held major office. Throughout his life Giménez also offered his services to Iturbide, Maximilian, and Porfirio Díaz.

His writings consist mainly of memoirs and letters and exemplify Giménez's identification with monarchism, attraction to conservative doctrines, and devotion to his commanding officer. They bear the mark of an author concerned with the weight of documents in history's scales. Though the corpus of his printed work is small, its value to the Mexican historical archive is important because it offers an alternative to official liberal history. Two sets of documents merit special attention: his correspondence with the general and his biographical defense. Over the course of forty-five years, Giménez maintained an active correspondence with Santa Anna. The exchange is especially noteworthy during the general's exiles. These letters recount the most recent political intrigues and offer comments about the viability of Santa Anna's return to power. As an interesting side note about the letters that may reveal something about Giménez's personality, the exile letters were written at the end of every month in an impeccably ordered and miniscule hand, almost as if he was carefully carving each word into the page.

The second document of import to our discussion of the Giménez archive is the colonel's 1864 apology. In 1864, Santa Anna arrived in Veracruz in support of Maximilian of Austria. He signed an agreement promising not to make any political

statements for or against the new monarch. Effectively he was ordered to abstain from all political activity. He signed the document and immediately proceeded to make a public speech, declaring his allegiance to the new crown. This action was, of course, in violation of the agreement, and French soldiers under orders from General Bazaine delivered a letter to Santa Anna informing that he was to be exiled again. Santa Anna complied with the order, but asked Giménez to make a record of the events. True to fashion, Giménez penned an abbreviated history of Mexico from Independence to 1864 wherein the principal actor and hero was Antonio López de Santa Anna. Giménez's defense is a singular document because, in addition to relating one perspective about the general's life, it evolves into a personal diary from which Serna is able to fathom this man's personality. After Santa Anna's 1864 expulsion, Giménez continues to narrate Mexican history through the end of his life. He transitions from a historical narrative to a series of journal entries. These entries reveal a man embittered by years of adherence to a losing cause.

Much needs to be said about the relationship between the historical Giménez and Serna's fictional creation. When comparing the documents Giménez left behind, it is apparent that Serna has recreated his character and personality with an exacting amount of fidelity. Giménez is an acerbic critic of the liberal press of the Lerdo administration intent on shunning the general. Speaking of the massive failure at Cerro Gordo, Giménez writes, "Los sucesos desgraciados de Cerro Gordo rompieron los diques de prensa demagógica en México contra el Sr. Santa Anna" (Giménez 328). Later in life he decries the liberal nespaper, the *Monitor Republicano*, as an "inmoral e impío periódico" whose contributors are no less than "la hez de la sociedad" (383). In addition to his dislike for the press, Giménez demonstrates a patent disgust for Lerdo. He describes him as weak and lacking in moral character (378) only to later label him "una hiena sedienta de sangre

y de horrores contra víctimas inocentes e indefensas" (379). Giménez also expresses a deep-seeded dislike for Dolores Tosta, Santa Anna's second wife (398-399).

We find that the historical Giménez had a convenient, and at times paradoxical, attitude towards civil and military obedience. When, for example, he is imprisoned by General Paredes along with other Santa Anna supporters, the prisoners plan a revolt against the constitutionally established authority:

> El 26 de julio, cumpleaños del Sr. Paredes, mandó que se nos pusiera en libertad, después de tres meses y seis días de prisión; pero ya estaba para estallar la revolución que debía acabar con su poder, arreglada por nosotros en la prisión de Santiago, donde habíamos sido transladados. Llegó, por fin, la madrugada del 4 de agosto, y un cañonazo en la Ciudadela anunció a la Capital el movimiento y al General Paredes la última hora de su mando" (321).

Not long after, when a subordinate officer criticizes Santa Anna's military command, Giménez responds in a conservative paper with a vehement call to duty:

> …echémosla únicamente a nuestra falta de subordinación a los superiores, a nuestra poca exactitud en el servicio, al mal ejemplo que damos al soldado con nuestras murmuraciones en contra de los Generales y con nuestra inmoralidad. Con oficiales de cierta clase, en que, por desgracia de la Nación, abunda nuestro Ejército, a pesar del notorio valor y sufrimiento del soldado mexicano, ni Alejandro, ni César, ni Federico, ni Napoleón I, hubieran obtenido jamás una victoria. Establézcase por convencimiento la subordinación más ciega de inferior a superior en todas las clases. (327)

But perhaps the most telling moments of the Giménez archive are those wherein the colonel professes his unconditional adherence to *santanismo* and his belief that he pertained to the general's inner circle. Giménez frequently repeats that, amidst a sea of adulators, "yo seguí siempre a su lado" (317). Moreover, Giménez portrays himself as the support behind the throne. "Entonces se levantó; se agarró de mi brazo, como siempre ha tenido de costumbre, y marchamos todos a la iglesia" (382). Add to this Giménez's near obsessive preoccupation with money and his dramatic flair ("El Sr. Mora se ocultó, sin duda por no tener la suficiente presencia de ánimo para presenciar escena tan

desagradable. Yo hubiera hecho lo mismo, porque mi corazón estaba destrozado; ¿pero quién acompañaba entonces aquella [sic] ilustre víctima?" (346), and we see that Serna has done his documental research well. Moreover, Serna has found an ideal character—possibly the only one qualified—to defend Santa Anna's history.

But here a distinction should be made between the historical and the fictional Giménezes. In truth they are quite similar. Serna has done an excellent job scouring into the historical archive to gather information on Giménez's life, to recreate his voice, and to adhere faithfully to the character's intentions. But, like Del Paso in *Noticias del imperio*, Serna blends the historically true with the poetically accurate. Unlike Del Paso, however—and more akin to Ibargüengoitia—Serna takes poetic license and alters essential facts about Giménez's biography. Brian McHale describes this tendency to modify historically verifiable facts as a key element of the postmodern historical novel. The traditional historical novel, he argues, obeyed the "dark area" constraint. The "dark area" constraint relegates fictional invention to those corners of the historical record where little or no information is available. Hence it is possible to write about an imaginary encounter between a historical figure and a fictional character if that meeting does not contradict the existing historical record. On the contrary, the postmodern historical novel flaunts its anachronism (*Postmodernist Fiction* 86-93). In what follows, I demonstrate how Serna takes a text written by the historical Giménez, alters it almost imperceptibly, and incorporates the change into his novel's overall theme. An anecdote from the Giménez's archive about the Pastry Wars serves as my illustration.

In 1838, French naval vessels blockaded the port of Veracruz in an attempt to force the Mexican government to pay damages to French citizens residing in the city. President Anatasio Bustamante sent Santa Anna to the port with orders to repel the invaders and to protect national sovereignty. During the battle, Santa Anna lost the leg

that, perhaps, goes down in history as the most ostentatiously buried limb of all time. Giménez's narration begins with the nighttime surprise attack by French marines. In the scuffle he was separated from Santa Anna, and does not see him again. He received eight wounds, the most serious to his right hand. The following day he watches the French marines board their vessel as Santa Anna leads a group of two hundred Mexican infantrymen in a counterattack. The French turned their cannon on the soldiers and fired, injuring Santa Anna.

The historical Giménez's account and Serna's recreation are nearly identical. The following three sets of quotes leave no doubt that Serna both read and incorporated Giménez's writing into his novel. Speaking of the wounds he received:

> Si bien ninguna de las *ocho* especificadas *heridas* era mortal de necesidad, no obstante, el conjunto y coincidencia de ellas *puso mi vida en inmenso peligro*. (Giménez 309-310, my italics)

> Yo tenía *ocho heridas* repartidas por todo el cuerpo, la más grave en el brazo derecho, que *puso mi vida en inmenso peligro*. (*Seductor* 267, my italics)

After the attack, Giménez reports suffering twenty days of convulsions:

> Las *convulsiones* que *por más de veinte días me acometieron* fueron *terribles* y debieron, por consiguiente, *oponer* estorbos de *gran tamaño* a la naturaleza, para alcanzar la *curación*. (Giménez 309-310, my italics)

> A resultas de la amputación de mi brazo, *me acometieron por más de 20 días terribles convulsiones* que *opusieron* obstáculos de *gran tamaño* a mi *curación*. (*Seductor* 268, my emphasis)

Similarly, both accounts of the battle on the pier clear up any doubt:

> …cuando *los franceses dieron fuego a la pieza* que habían cargado a metralla. Aquel tiro, disparado *a cien pasos de distancia*, fue bien funesto, pues *sus proyectiles hirieron gravemente al Sr. Santa Anna en una pierna*… (Giménez 310-313, my italics)

> *A cien pasos de distancia, los franceses dieron fuego a la pieza* de artillería, con tan buen tino que *sus proyectiles* derribaron el caballo de don Antonio y *lo hirieron de gravedad* en la pierna izquierda. (*Seductor* 267, my italics)

These comparisons demonstrate that Serna incorporates the Giménez archive into his narrative. But what remains to be seen is how Serna distances his fictional character from its historical model.

By the same operation of comparison, we can show significant differences between the stories. The historical Giménez is injured in a nighttime raid, during which French marines "me dispararon un tiro a quema ropa, que por fortuna no salió; pero caí con ocho heridas, la mayor parte de ellas graves, y la pérdida de la sangre me privó del conocimiento" (Giménez 309). This differs from Serna's novel, wherein Giménez escapes with Santa Anna during the fray, and accompanies him in the battle at the pier where he reports that, "Alcanzado por el mismo cañonazo, caí por tierra a media vara del general" (*Seductor* 267). In like manner, there is a major discrepancy between the two texts regarding the state of Giménez's arm. The historical Giménez relates the miraculous salvation of his hand from the sawbones' craft and concludes that "El buen acierto y continua asistencia del Sr. Cuspinera, el excesivo cuidado de mi familia y el buen estado y robustez de mi naturaleza hicieron que a los cuarenta y cuatro días estuviese en estado de perfecta salud, aunque manco de la mano derecha para toda mi vida" (Giménez 313). Serna's Giménez, however, purports that "el mismo galeno que amputó su augusto pie cercenó mi brazo izquierdo" (*Seductor* 81). What accounts for this discrepancy? Why does Serna alter an otherwise insignificant biographical detail when he works so assiduously to get everything else right? I propose that these alterations emphasize the character's undying adherence to and identification with the general.

By modifying a few historical data, Serna allows his Giménez to take the biography more personally. The fictional Giménez insists on identifying himself with the general. He suffers every defeat, glories in every victory, rails against each political enemy, and unduly weaves himself into the story. At times Giménez conflates the first

person singular with first person plural. While convalescing together in a makeshift hospital after the battle at Veracruz, Giménez hears the general dictate what he supposes to be his commanding officer's final words to the nation. Giménez feels redeemed when this heroic speech is read from pulpits and reprinted in newspapers. "Por fin se nos hacía justicia, y hablo en plural, porque la gloria de don Antonio se extendía por contagio a todos los que participamos en su intrépida acción, sobre todo a los heridos como yo" (*Seductor* 268). This rhetorical approach to assimilation shares the general's victory with all veterans of the war, but especially "with all the injured like me." Later Santa Anna receives a personal letter from the president commending him for his valiant service. Santa Anna asks Giménez to read the letter, which reveals that he has been granted a jeweled cross in recognition for his valor. "Más que un golpe de suerte, el hecho de que yo leyera esa carta me parece un acto de justicia divina, pues a todas luces, el Señor quiso decirme que la cruz también me pertenecía, si no materialmente, al menos en forma simbólica" (269).

But symbolic union is not enough. The fictional Giménez's identification with Santa Anna becomes literal. He focuses his attention on Santa Anna's amputated foot and his mangled hand. Historians have often commented that the excesses of Santa Anna's regimes can be best exemplified by the attention given to his severed limb. In 1838, Santa Anna buries the limb with full military honors. In the novel, Giménez informs readers that it was his idea to shake off the general's postwar frustration. Declaring that "Nadie conoce tan bien a un lisiado como otro lisiado," Giménez proposes "rendirle honores fúnebres a su pie amputado, y darle cristiana sepultura en una ceremonia militar" (289). But the ceremony appears to have less to do with Santa Anna than with a vindication of his own injuries and to solidify what Giménez views as an unbreakable bond with Santa Anna. He comments that on the day of ceremony:

> ...entré de noche al salon del Congreso donde reposaba la urna cineraria, y deposité en su interior los restos del antebrazo que perdí en la heroica defensa de Veracruz. Con ello no buscaba compartir la gloria de don Antonio, líbreme Dios de tal osadía: solamente quise rubricar la unión consustancial de nuestros destinos. No valgo nada ni merezco la inmortalidad. Siempre fui un mozo de estoques, el actor cuyo nombre no figura en la marquesina, pero me ilusiona que los mismos gusanos que royeron su pie también mondaron mis pobres huesos. (289-290)

Disentangling the scribe from the general becomes one of the most difficult tasks the novel presents. At times he speaks in plural; at others he writes as if he were Santa Anna. For the most part, Serna's Giménez is careful not to reveal himself. But when Santa Anna's son Manuel, the official biographer, accuses Giménez of gold digging, the secretary takes special offense. A chastising letter responds to Manuel's accusations:

> Tu falta de tacto me ha causado un serio disgusto. ¿Cómo pudiste calumniar así al buenazo de Giménez, si sabes muy bien que revisa toda mi correspondencia? El pobre me leyó tu carta con la voz entrecortada por el llanto, cuando bien hubiera podido romperla, si fuera tan granuja como crees. Me vi obligado a pedirle disculpas, pues quería renunciar en el acto. Te equivocas de cabo a rabo al dudar su honestidad... Giménez es un amigo a carta cabal. ¿Quién más soportaría el trato que le doy sin cobrar un centavo? Con Dolores ya no puedo ejercer el hábito de mandar: sólo Giménez obedece mis órdenes, aun cuando son un tanto enérgicas, porque los años me han agriado el carácter y a veces lo regaño por fruslerías. Pero él nunca se queja: es el último soldado bajo mi mando, el cirineo que me ayuda a cargar mi cruz. Si lo perdiera me sentiría más mutilado de lo que estoy. De manera que te aconsejo retirar tus acusaciones sin fundamento y pedirle disculpas. (126)

Who is speaking here? Is Santa Anna upset about an insult to a subordinate? Or is it Giménez speaking in the name of the general to defend himself? For reasons that should be clear by now, I contend that Giménez's pen is at work again. The self-critical remarks seem out of character for Santa Anna. Nowhere in the text—nor in the historical record—does Antonio López de Santa Anna ever recognize his short temper, his heavy hand, or his indebtedness to others. It seems more likely that the servant uses the master's voice to vent frustration and to affirm his dedication. This, of course, represents a double

displacement of historical fact. Serna alters Giménez's history to create a fictional character for his novel. This fictional character then alters Santa Anna's history to offer a fictional Santa Anna to history. And then we must account for the ambiguity of certain statements. The recrimination for Manuel's lack of tact, for example, does not identify the speaker. Stating that losing "him" would cause the writer to feel more mutilated than he already is shares this same ambiguity. While disentangling the ambiguity may result problematic, textual clues from the letter indicate that Serna's Giménez is tampering with the historical record.

To this point the fictional Giménez's conflation of the first person singular and plural, in addition to his penchant for writing as the general, have been tactics to defend himself from calumny and obtain the honors he feels he deserves. He takes credit, for example, for writing the *Plan de Tacubaya*, the tripartite proclamation against President Bustamante by Santa Anna and generals Paredes and Valencia (*Seductor* 284). Manuel doubts Giménez's authorship of the plan, accuses him of seeking the limelight, and chastises his identification with Santa Anna. Writes Manuel, "sus vacilaciones entre el yo y el nosotros revelan una identificación con mi padre que llamaría enfermiza si no fuera francamente abusiva. Que yo sepa mi padre nunca tuvo un hermano siamés" (*Seductor* 292). He then instructs the scribe to distance himself from the biography's true subject, and let him make the decisions about what should or should not be published. Giménez responds that:

> Si en verdad se ha propuesto evitar que otras voces interfieran con la de su padre, menudo trabajo le espera. Por si no lo sabe, don Antonio confesaba sin rubor no haber leído jamás una obra larga y seria. Siempre delegó la escritura de sus cartas, discursos, manifiestos y partes de guerra en personas de su confianza que conjugaban la buena pluma con el conocimiento de la arena política. *El Santa Anna que la gente conoce y la posteridad juzgará es una creación colectiva de todos los que alguna vez hablamos en su nombre*. Prescinda usted de los documentos apócrifos en la confección de la biografía y se quedará con un muñeco de relleno de paja. Le guste o no, *su padre es nuestro invento*, y aun si

> decide reinventarlo tendrá que partir de un modelo más o menos ficticio, mucho más elocuente y pulido que el original. (293, my italics)

This statement summarizes the dilemma that Serna's Giménez and other scribes present in the biographical process. It also marks a change of tactics. First, Giménez returns to first person plural, but for a different reason. He does not delineate an affinity with Santa Anna. Quite the contrary, he differentiates himself from the general, and sides with the scribes; Santa Anna is "our" creation. Second, he asserts that Santa Anna is a collective, fictional creation. Giménez argues that the extant documents composing Santa Anna's archive were never written by him. And indeed, many letters—even those from similar periods—evince a different hand. Santa Anna's refusal to write his own story subjects his legacy to the good or bad will of others. Giménez paints Santa Anna as the summation of all the underlings, the subordinates, the lackeys who carried him on their shoulders and who "spoke in his name". This theme seems consistent in Giménez's writing: subordinates enjoy prestige by fictionally creating Santa Anna without ever becoming the leader. Third, Giménez stresses that any attempts to clean up or denigrate the general's biography will only contribute to the ever-growing mass of scribes and second-hand documents. And finally, Giménez suggests that the flesh-and-blood Santa Anna is less polished and less eloquent than the historical creation. Historiography, taken from the epic perspective, is partially the work of suppression. The hero's biography must be more than a historical account of a man's life; it should in fact constitute the hagiography of a saint. It would not be proper for a founding father to share the baser passions and weakness common to humanity. In this vein, Giménez advises Manuel numerous times to omit information from the text. The suppression of Santa Anna's humanity seems at odds with the general's original request.

When Santa Anna commissions the biography, he outlines guidelines for including his flaws. “En las memorias de Nassau,” he writes, “recargué deliberadamente las tintas al hablar de mis virtudes, porque me proponía contrarrestar la propaganda del enemigo, pero en tu biografía quiero aparecer retratado de cuerpo entero, como el hombre tempermental y voluble que fui” (*Seductor* 19). The memoirs Santa Anna refers to are found in *Mi historia military y política (1810-1874)*. They were written in St. Thomas, Nassau, during Santa Anna’s last exile. They demonstrate just how uncritical Santa Anna could be when defending himself. Descriptions of his military prowess, bravery, patriotism, and above all, his dedication to family, reek of exaggeration. There is no self-criticism. The self-portrait Santa Anna paints is one of a god walking among bumbling, incompetent inferiors. The memoirs also include rancorous diatribes against Benito Juárez: “Sí; de ese Juárez, símbolo de crueldad, cuyos servicios y hechos con caracteres de sangre se hallan marcados, para vergüenza nuestra, en las ruinas de nuestros sagrados templos y en la bárbara y horrenda hecatombe del cerro de las Campanas en Querétaro” (*Mi historia militar y política* 76-77). This protest is a truly magnificent example of the historical Santa Anna’s poison pen. His prose borders on poetic as he rails against the Indian president. Later he writes that, “No faltarán historiadores mexicanos que esclarecerán los hechos y pongan la verdad en su lugar, la verdad que tiene el privilegio de asegurar la duración de todas las obras que señalan hechos históricos transmitiéndolos a la posteridad” (80). Since he had already written one impassioned defense, Serna’s Santa Anna sees no reason to do so again. In fact, he finds that taking another, more honest, approach might win more support. He counsels his son, “No disimules mis defectos. La obra será más convincente si en vez de ocultar mis debilidades las pones en primer plano minimizadas—eso sí—por mis actos de valentía y heroísmo” (19). The general’s intention seems clear: to commission a biography that will exhibit his

humanity, but of course, while highlighting his victories and achievements. Interestingly enough, this letter is written before Giménez enters the picture. In it, Santa Anna details his childhood. He relates his combative relationship with his brother, his search for parental approval, his acquisition of bad habits on the docks of Veracruz, and his enlistment in the royalist army two months prior to Hidalgo's revolution. This period of his life is related in a picaresque mode, similar to the style used by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi in his moral tale, *Don Catrín de la Fachenda*. Lizardi's *Don Catrín* is essentially a didactic, moral tale. Carlos Monsiváis defines the *catrín* as "la proclamación de la elegancia que la ciudad capital admite, el anhelo del dandismo en el país periférico, el rechazo de la barbarie... desde la ropa. El catrín... cuida sin límite su vestimenta, porque ésta es su tarjeta de visita en el mundo, el salto al progreso desde las márgenes de la civilización" ("Léperos y catrines" 214). In Lizardi's novel, the narrator takes great pains to portray Don Catrín as a blight on society. But in the story Santa Anna wants his son to tell, Santa Anna occupies the role of an American Lazarillo de Tormes. His humanity comes to the fore and there is no intent to suppress his youthful tantrums and excesses. He hopes a show of his humanity will endear readers to him and help them to overlook his political shortcomings.

But full disclosure ends as soon as Giménez enters the novel. A letter from the general to his son opens with a brief introduction: "Te escribo con una caligrafía más clara, pues ahora tengo un secretario que se ha ofrecido a ayudarme sin cobrar un centavo. Es el coronel Manuel María Giménez. ¿Lo recuerdas?" (*Seductor* 33). Santa Anna describes his first military campaign and recounts a gambling debt contracted with a local doctor and card shark. Documents are provided that show how the debt was settled with the loss of pay, the sale of his belongings, and jail time. These documents do not form part of Santa Anna's narration. We will see later that they are inserted by Serna

to shed light on this original suppression. Giménez, writing as Santa Anna, conveniently forgets how the debt was paid; "pero creo que para efectos de la biografía, el incidente ofrece poco interés. ¿Qué soldado no ha hecho calaveradas en su juventud? Confío en tu buen juicio para separar lo sustancial de lo inocuo y para excluir del libro todo lo que la canalla liberal pueda utilizar en mi contra" (*Seductor* 47). There is no mention of "la canalla liberal," referring to the liberal press at the service of President Sabastián Lerdo de Tejada, in the original letter. Santa Anna considers that the autobiography he wrote in Nassau sufficiently refutes the accusations of his enemies. This biography is originally intended to serve a different purpose; it's written for a different audience. "No disimules mis defectos," he writes in the novel. "La obra será más convincente si en vez de ocultar mis debilidades las pones en primer plano minimizadas—eso sí—por mis actos de valentía y heroísmo" (*Seductor* 19). Santa Anna does not worry about his enemies as much as he does about posterity. Far from censuring all elements that could be used as a weapon against the general, the first letter explicitly advises the biographer to put his weaknesses in the forefront in order to "echarlos en el bolsillo". We can assume that Giménez is unaware of Santa Anna's original instructions because he was not present to write them. What appears to be an innocuous comment at the end of this letter already indicates that Giménez is interfering in a manner contrary to the wishes of the biographical subject.

The instructions to suppress increase as the biography addresses more controversial issues. Santa Anna's first governorship of Veracruz, for example, was plagued by corruption scandals. Forced labor for private enterprises, forced loans, exorbitant taxes, and illicit love affairs tainted his tenure. The narration Giménez provides Manuel tells a different story. "Como presidente siempre fui temido y respetado, pero solo entre los jarochos me hice querer de verdad. [...] Pero el cariño del pueblo

recompensaba todos mis malestares. Daría lo que fuera por volver a gobernar así, como un padre justo. ... Nunca volví a despertar en el pueblo un sentimiento de adhesión espontánea y genuina" (*Seductor* 72-73). This fond remembrance of a bucolic past serves as counterpoint to bitter recriminations against liberal conspiracies, traitors, and false friends. Realizing that this bitterness might tarnish the history, Santa Anna advises, "Para efectos de mi biografía solo debes recalcar que mientras fui un rey en pequeño, mientras pude gobernar como Adán en el paraíso, conté con la aprobación unánime de mi pueblo" (*Seductor* 73). "For the effects of my biography" becomes a reoccurring theme. It precedes instructions to withhold information that might damage the general's image in order to cast Santa Anna in the most positive light possible. In this case, Manuel is instructed to overlook potential moral, ethical, and political transgressions to present Santa Anna as a provident patriarch.

Another instruction to suppress appears when Giménez relates the general's depression. As old age and illness set in, discouragement replaces the general's former optimism. He is a bitter old man telling stories. But again, weakness is not appropriate for the story. Giménez advises Manuel to clean up the story of his father's old age by not allowing "que el recuento de su vida se empañe con el salitre de la amargura. A veces el general increpa a la patria como un amante despechado. Está en su derecho, pues tiene motivos de sobra para guardarle rencor, pero los mexicanos del futuro no deben saber que su patriotismo ha flaqueado con la edad y los desengaños" (*Seductor* 156). The general's bitterness towards the Mexican people becomes more manifest as he undergoes a series of hypnotic sessions. Dolores Tosta turns to a European quack to mesmerize her husband so he will reveal the combination of a secret lock box. When Giménez attempts to carry on the biographical work, he receives some surprising confessions: "Ayer el general confesó entre sollozos que al perder la pierna se redujo el tamaño de miembro viril y de

ahí en adelante sólo pudo cogerse a la patria" (274). Horrified by thought of the general's embarrassing state ever coming to light, Giménez comments, "no creo que el testimonio de un anciano mesmerizado tenga valor histórico alguno" (274).

Near the end of his life, Santa Anna lost some of the political instincts that had kept him afloat in Mexico's turbulent waters. Exiled yet again, the general looked for another way to return to Mexico and to the presidential palace. But at the time of his final adventure, he was older and less confident. He had also squandered most of the political capital he once enjoyed. Unable to rally generals to his cause, he gambled on a financial venture to secure troops of his own accord. He signed exorbitant loans with a con-man who left him in debt and ridicule. It was a sad ending to a long and checkered military career. In the novel, Giménez is quick to preserve his monument. He plays on Manuel's filial sympathies, letting him know that his father is dying. He counsels Manuel to end the story before the disgraceful episode with the loan shark.

> En cuanto a la biografía, le sugiero concluirla en donde nos quedamos, es decir, cuando don Antonio abandona la presidencia por última vez. A mi entender, en ese momento no sólo se acaba su vida pública, sino la historia de México, y creo que sería un insulto a la memoria del general complacer a los amantes del morbo narrando sus tratos con los prestamistas de Nueva York y sus funestas tentativas por volver a los primeros planos de la escena política. (*Seductor* 476)

Giménez's main tool in preserving his version of history has been suppression. When historical facts challenge with the story he wants to project, Giménez erases youthful mistakes from the record (gambling debts), writes off uncomfortable realities (love affairs), hides information (Manuel's questions and Dolores' letters), covers up mistakes (the defeat at Cerro Gordo), and calls for pious deference (Santa Anna's mental state). He outlines what is worthy of history (all that supports an immaculate image of the general) and what is not (all that detracts from that image). We have seen that he is willing to interfere in the official biographer's work when the questions are too pointed. I

have argued that, throughout the novel, Giménez intentionally suppresses information for the express intent of creating a historical monument. We have little information indicating how much Santa Anna participates in the biographical process. What we essentially have is Giménez's version of the story, a story he claims to be "el más fidedigno y autorizado" (*Seductor* 274). Giménez's obsession with preserving the saintly portrait he has created is so strong that, whenever given the choice between the real Santa Anna and his fictional creation, Giménez chooses the latter.

The novel closes with a final letter from Giménez that relates the general's demise. Giménez reports that the only two present are himself and Santa Anna's oldest daughter, Guadalupe. To assuage Guadalupe's fear that her father will die without receiving last rites, Giménez disguises his voice, plays the role of priest, and goes in to hear Santa Anna's final confession. The confession he receives, however, is devastating. Santa Anna offers a *mea culpa* that accepts responsibility for most of the nineteenth century's ills. He confesses to having uselessly sacrificed his men for personal gain, betrayed friends and political allies, ruined the lives of his wives and his children, and given in to the excesses of vanity, cowardice, and pride. But even this is tainted by the sins he confesses: "Me arrepiento de todo pero quiero que la patria se muera conmigo" (*Seductor* 502). He closes his confession stating that "Soy un miserable... Traté a la patria como si fuera una puta, le quité el pan y el sustento, me enriquecí con su miseria y con su dolor. [...] Pero es la verdad. México y su pueblo siempre me han valido madre" (*Seductor* 503).

Giménez, meanwhile, attempts to staunch the hemorrhaging confession. While playing the pirest, he acts the same way he does as biographer. First, he masks his suppression in the priestly robes: "Usted no tiene nada de qué arrepentirse... Dios nuestro señor le perdona sus errores porque los cometió por amor a la patria y sin desdoro del

honor nacional. Cuantas veces lo necesitó la nación, usted acudió a su llamado" (*Seductor* 503). When Santa Anna refuses absolution and continues his self-incrimination, Giménez appeals to his vanity: "Calle usted—lo interrumpí—. El héroe de Pánuco no debe hablar de esa forma" (*Seductor* 503). But this, too, is useless. The only way Giménez can stop the general is by force: "Que se calle le digo—y le tapé la boca con la mano, porque me dolía demasiado escucharlo" (*Seductor* 503). As a result, Santa Anna suffocates, and the scribe reports, "Al poco tiempo dejó de jadear, se aflojaron los músculos de su cuello y expiró con serena grandeza. Ahora está sentado a la derecha del Padre" (*Seductor* 503). Santa Anna's final confession threatens to destroy Giménez's monument. He cannot manipulate the general's words and must therefore protect the general's history from reality by eliminating the potential threat: Santa Anna himself. Giménez kills the Santa Anna of flesh and blood so that the monument can remain. When he is unable to control the narrative, Giménez takes the ultimate liberty and destroys the person most able to ruin the biography. The historical image is ultimately more important than the man.

Manuel María Giménez, then, appears to recreate the role of Don Quixote's faithful squire, Sancho Panza. Santa Anna's hair-brained adventure in Texas lacks the comic resonances of Quixote's battle with the windmill or wine flasks, but evinces a similar illusory pathos. Don Quixote's evocative imagination draws Sancho Panza into his madness. Sancho begins to have his own illusions, first living through the errant knight's fantasies, then inspiring them, and finally attempting to control them. His conversion to Quixote's way of thinking moves opposite to Quixote's awakening sense of reality. After so many defeats, Quixote begins his journey home, leaving fantasy behind. Traveling together, they move apart. The agonizing Quixote condemns his madness, rescinds his illusions, and attempts to make his mistakes a cautionary tale of bad

behavior. He seeks reconciliation with society, renounces his alter ego's name, and takes his societal name, Alonso Quijano. Sancho, however, refuses to accept the impending reality that the adventures are over. Farm life pales to the wild rides, the swashbuckling, the danger, the adrenaline, the chance to relive the glory days of yore.

Likewise, Santa Anna's deathbed confession seems divested of some of his initial illusion. Occasionally stirred to ideas of political insurrection, for the most part he realizes that his days are over. He forsakes the pension the government has offered him and recognizes that he is unable to control even the most basic of bodily functions. On the other hand, Giménez refuses to let the illusion fade and pushes desperately to preserve *santanismo*. He is willing to suppress truth, modify facts, cast blame on others, and ultimately, kill the very individual he hopes to deify in order to create a pristine narrative of the general's life.

Giménez and his narration take center stage in *El seductor de la patria*. His voice predominates. The title's ambiguity attests to this. Santa Anna literally seduced hundreds of women, courted the political elite, and enchanted the press for 40 years. But the novel's seduction is rhetorical, not sexual. Giménez seduces readers into adopting a more monolithic view of the general. He strategically eliminates opposition to his historical vision, without exception, when it threatens to undermine the legacy. Unchecked, Giménez's version of history would land this novel in the category of fanatical apologetic writing and would, like the actual biography written by the historical Manuel María Giménez, find itself lost on musty bookshelves. There is a second voice, however, that methodically works to counter Giménez's narrative.

CALL AND RESPONSE: THE COMPILER

González Echevarría alluded to essential elements of the archive (i.e. historical documents, internal narrator, and unfinished manuscript). In *El seductor de la patria* we observe the behavior of an extradiegetical narrator working to provide readers with information that contradicts Giménez's epic historical representation of Santa Anna's life. The only reference we have to this character is a curious footnote. It stands out because there is none other like it in the entire novel. Santa Anna's son, Manuel, requests that the general respond to a questionnaire. An asterisk follows that remits us to the following: "* Nota del compilador: el cuestionario no fue hallado en el archivo de la familia Santa Anna" (125). This annotation calls attention to the presence of an intelligence who works behind the scenes to provide documents for the reader. The function of this compiler is akin to what Hugh Kenner describes in Joyce's *Ulysses* as "the Arranger." The Arranger is not a narrator because he does not move the story along, reveal new information about the characters, or any other function normally associated with narration. Instead, the Arranger sits on the sideline, treating the reader, "when he deigns to notice our presence, with the sour xenophobic indifference Dublin can turn upon visitors who have lingered long enough for hospitality's first gleam to tarnish" ("The Arranger" 23). Unlike the Joycean Arranger, however, who is distinguished by his indifference, Serna's compiler is particularly interested in the reader's reaction to his interventions. To speak of interventions in the text, however, overlooks the fact that the compiler organizes the entire text. It is not simply a matter of throwing in letters and documents. The novel is a montage that the compiler has pieced together specifically for the purpose of contrasting the apologetic history with the supposedly objective historical record. In what follows, I examine some of the documents the compiler introduces and his motivations for doing so. Like Giménez, the compiler is not a dispassionate narrator. His selection and presentation of texts reveals a strong bias against Santa Anna.

In attempting to identify this compiler, the list of suspects is short. For obvious reasons it cannot be Giménez or Santa Anna. As we will see shortly, these documents are presented without either Santa Anna or Giménez's awareness or approval. Manuel seems an unlikely candidate because of the footnote's standoffish reference to "the Santa Anna family's archive." Also, the compiler demonstrates a heavily critical bias against the general, even more so that what we might expect from the estranged son. Manuel's brother, Ángel, who also narrates a few brief portions of the story, is excluded for the same reasons. As such, I see only one other possible alternative. The compiler is a mask for Enrique Serna.

One of the most interesting facets of the compiler's role in the novel is the introduction of apocryphal documents that support a negative view of the general. Serna openly states in his "Agradecimientos" section that he intends to eschew historical objectivity. We also saw in his brief essay "Vidas de Santa Anna" that he prefers the historically unverifiable episodes of Rafael F. Muñoz's novelized biography to the static historicism of biographers Jones and Callcott. Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale both observe in their works that postmodern historical fiction is characterized by an inventive approach to documental sources. Hutcheon asserts that apocryphal documents are typically inserted to reorder the historical archive. In *El seductor de la patria*, the compiler brings more than 90 documents to bear on Santa Anna's biography. Most of them are, as best as I can tell, apocryphal.

Gambling debt letters and journal

Santa Anna's first Texas campaign under the royalist banner was marred by gambling debts. The fictional Giménez would like to see this event expunged from the

historical record. The compiler, however, introduces two letters showing how the young Santa Anna's gambling debts were resolved. The first is a letter from his commanding officer, Colonel Joaquín Arredondo y Muñiz, to his father detailing the crime. Santa Anna had forged a payment from Arredondo to Dr. Jaime Garza for more than three hundred pesos. His sentence required thirty days confinement on bread and water and the repayment of the debt. In the event the money could not be provided, the prisoner's belongings would be sold. The colonel asked Santa Anna's father to pay the debt and save his son further disgrace. The second letter, written by Santa Anna's father to his son, chastises the young officer: "Tu madre me ruega enviarte dinero para que puedas salir del apuro, pero creo que necesitas una lección. Ráscate con tus uñas y paga la deuda de tu propia soldada. No me importa si te embargan el caballo o te quedas en la pelaza... No quiero ni pensar lo que sería de este país si llegan a encumbrarse los truhanes de tu calaña" (*Seductor* 47).

To the best of my knowledge, Santa Anna left no journals from his service in the royalist army. Will Fowler, a noted historian of the early national period in Mexico, related to me in a personal correspondence that he is unaware of any such documents. Likewise, nothing of the sort exists in the Nettie Lee Benson Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, the Genaro García archive, or any of the major Mexican academic archives. There are numerous possible explanations for this absence. The young Santa Anna may not have been inclined to write anything. If Giménez's conjecture that Santa Anna never actually wrote anything but is the collective creation of his scribes, it would stand to reason that, as a young officer, he would have had no assistant and therefore would have passed on the chance to record his future for posterity. We can also suppose that Santa Anna, upon joining the independence movement, might have discarded the journals to protect his newly fashioned Americanist identity. Borges describes a similar

cleaning of the slate in “La muralla y los libros.” Whatever the explanation, the journals do not appear to exist.

Which leads us to question the representation of Santa Anna at this formative moment of his career. Why does Giménez insist upon wiping this from the record? I argued earlier that, based on a sudden and inexplicable shift in historiographic intent, Giménez poses as Santa Anna and instructs the general’s son, Manuel, to overlook the youthful mistake: “pero creo que para efectos de la biografía, el incidente ofrece poco interés. ¿Qué soldado no ha hecho calaveradas en su juventud? Confío en tu buen juicio para separar lo sustancial de lo inocuo y para excluir del libro todo lo que la canalla liberal pueda utilizar en mi contra” (*Seductor* 47). So why, then, is the compiler intent on inserting these documents? I believe the compiler is reacting to Giménez’s first suppression. The compiler offers another perspective. This correction of the historical record seems fairly innocuous, but the apocryphal nature of the journals raises questions about the archival politics being employed. We might also ask what the inclusion of these and other apocryphal documents reveals about the compiler’s attitude towards Santa Anna. None of the 90 documents portray the general in positive terms. Rather, they conspicuously highlight his lying, cheating, and conniving nature. No statement of bias is ever explicitly made, but if we take the documents as a whole, they represent an effort to discredit the general at every turn.

Inés’ letters to her mother

As with the gambling letters, the primary triggers for the appearance of historical documents are attempted suppressions. When Giménez attempts to suppress information, the compiler provides a contradictory view. Giménez portrays Santa Anna as a good

husband and father. He believes he gave his first wife, Inés, a happy life. The obvious intent here is to establish Santa Anna as a provident father, an attentive husband, and a man capable of governing his home and, therefore, the nation. This is not an uncommon political tactic. In *El seductor de la patria*, the compiler inserts a series of five letters from Inés to her mother in response to the colonel's story.

In the first letter, written shortly after their wedding, Inés complains to her parents that marrying her off at the age of fourteen was cruel and inhumane. "Ni en mis peores pesadillas me imaginé que el matrimonio fuera algo tan espantoso. ¿Por qué me hicieron esto?", she asks. "¿Te parece muy cristiano haberme casado con un hombre que podría ser mi padre? ¡Y qué hombre, Dios mío! Cuando me pretendía era todo lindezas y caravanas; apenas me trajo aquí empezó a portarse como una bestia. Viene todo sudado de montar a caballo y se me echa encima para hacer sus porquerías, como si fuera un mueble o un animal doméstico" (137). We also learn that in her new *hacienda* the only person Inés cares for is her servant, Nazaria. The second letter relates Santa Anna's refusal to visit their first daughter's crib. The implication—which will be made more explicit in future letters—is that Santa Anna wants male offspring and cares little for females. Inés also mentions Nazaria's sudden disappearance. The third letter, opens with these words: "Cuando más tranquila estaba criando a mi Lupita, Antonio me ha clavado un puñal por la espalda. Ya no me queda ninguna duda: mi esposo no es un ser humano; es un cabrón capaz de pasar por encima de todo con tal de revolcarse en el fango" (140). During Inés' pregnancy, Santa Anna forces himself on Nazaria and leaves her pregnant. Inés is called to help birth an indigenous woman's child and finds out Nazaria's secret. When she confronts him with her discovery, he recognizes the child and tells her to lay off (141). From this point on she resolves to keep her bedroom door shut to him. In the fourth letter, Santa Anna uses his political influence to enter his wife's chambers again.

Inés' father, a Spaniard, is in danger of being exiled under the 1827 law ordering the expulsion of all Spaniards. When she asks her husband to help, he replies: "Tú quieres que dé la cara por tus padres, pero ni siquiera me cumples como esposa. ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que no me dejas entrar a tu cuarto? Va para un año, y por tu culpa he tenido que buscar afuera lo que no tengo en casa. Ya me colmaste la paciencia con tus remilgos. Quiero un hijo varón, y si no lo me das, vete yendo al malecón a despedir a tus padres" (145). Inés accedes to his demands, but the fifth letter shows how little things have changed. When news arrives that a second girl is born, Santa Anna refuses to leave the cockfight he's attending. Inés complains, "Es horrible estar casado con un hombre que te desprecia y ni siquiera intenta disimularlo" (146). The appearance of these letters has a clear intent: to discredit Santa Anna's claims to being a good husband and father. They demonstrate, with the authority of a first-hand witness, the general's arbitrariness, cruelty, disrespect for women, lust for control, and willingness to abuse political power for personal gain. These letters are not simply a comment on his domestic life. As we have seen in the analysis of Beltrán's *La corte de los ilusos*, the private and the public are not separate. These letters openly contest an affirmation intended to bolster the image of a benevolent patriarch, foreshadowing the monster that Santa Anna will become.

The problem these letters present for the sake of historical documentation is best summarized by Will Fowler: "Mexican women did not write diaries and the few letters of theirs that have survived rarely offer a glimpse of what they thought and felt. The better educated women of the period did not write novels. Inés and Dolores were no exception. If they did keep a diary or were regular letter-writers, nothing they wrote has been found" ("All the President's Women" 59). From this we may deduce that Inés de la Paz's letters in *El seductor de la patria* are fictional inventions. They do serve an important purpose in

the novel, though, as they again demonstrate the compiler's biased reading against Santa Anna.

In the novel, Inés is presented as a sexual slave, demoralized by a depraved husband. Santa Anna's sole concern is for a male heir and neglects his fatherly responsibilities towards his daughters. Fowler paints a different picture. He also notes that "The portrait Fanny Calderón de la Barca provides of Inés is one of a contented woman, greatly contrasting with Enrique Serna's fictional depiction of her as miserable and dejected in his 1999 best-selling novelisation of Santa Anna's life, *El seductor de la patria*" ("All the President's Women" 61). This portrait is one of a confident, well-mannered, stable woman who takes the lead in domestic life. This example from Calderón de la Barca speaks volumes about Inés's character: "After breakfast, the Senora having dispatched an officer for her cigar-case, which was gold, with a diamond latch, offered me a cigar, which I having declined, she lighted her own, a little paper 'cigarito' [sic], and the gentlemen followed her good example" (qtd. in Fowler "All the President's Women" 61). It is interesting to note that the men follow Inés's lead. She is clearly the head of this house. According to Fowler's investigation, Inés "enjoyed a certain degree of freedom as Santa Anna's first wife" ("All the President's Women" 59). For example, she maintained the president's largest and most cherished hacienda, Manga de Clavo. Fowler reports that Manga de Clavo, "like the other properties in the area that Santa Anna bought subsequently, fell into disrepair following Inés' death in 1844," owing to his second wife's dislike of the country. Inés was also the subject of popular adoration ("All the President's Women" 60). Hearing the news of the grave illness that took her life prematurely, 20,000 people marched to Mexico City to pay their respects (Fowler "All the President's Women" 63). The following description of her funeral processions contradicts the portrait of a country recluse that Serna paints:

> The mourning for Santa Anna's wife, albeit within the parameters outlined in the 1836 law of ceremonies, was significantly more dramatic. A huge funeral procession was held in Puebla where she was buried. Parallel processions and masses took place for her throughout the country. In Xalapa, the capital of Veracruz, the Town Council spared no expense in the events that were organized to mourn her death. Inscriptions, sonnets and octaves circulated praising her for having been "a model of maternal love, virtue and faithfulness", "a noble soul". One pamphlet, hinting at the possibility that people may have thought she regularly advised her husband when she was alive, prayed that she would "from heaven [continue to] guide the steps of her husband". ("All the President's Women" 63)

Likewise, Fowler reports that "There is ample evidence that he [Santa Anna] adored his children and that they reciprocated his love" ("All the President's Women" 61). He lavished gifts and lands upon them. Each child received a sizeable hacienda in the general's final will.

Thus we can see that the apocryphal letters Serna invents for *El seductor de la patria* exist for the express purpose of portraying Santa Anna as a tyrannical husband and disinterested father. The leap from poor father to poor leader is not a far one. We have seen this motif in my analysis of *La corte de los ilusos*, and would not have any difficulty demonstrating a similar tendency in Domingo F. Sarmiento's autobiographical writing. Indeed, Santa Anna presents a similarly benevolent portrait in his autobiography. When for example, Inés passes away, he laments: "En septiembre de dicho año [1844], ocurrió en mi familia una desgracia, el fallecimiento de mi sentida esposa, triste ocurrencia que me obligó a atender a mis propios negocios" (*Mi historia militar y política* 26).

Sam Houston's letter to Andrew Jackson

The compiler's most interesting invention may be a letter sent by Sam Houston to Andrew Jackson, dated August 25, 1836. With Santa Anna in captivity after his fateful

nap at San Jacinto, Houston relates to the American president that, "Nuestro negocio marcha a pedir de boca" (*Seductor* 250). General Urrea's troops, following orders from Santa Anna to retreat, have pulled back beyond the Rio Grande and he expects no more confrontations from the Mexican army because the national treasury lacks the funds to mount another attack. He urges Jackson to move for annexation because "todos aquí sabemos de sobra que Texas no tiene futuro como República independiente" (*Seductor* 251). Land values have tripled in the last month, and Houston expects them to continue rising now that the Mexican government's prohibition on slavery will be of no effect in the territory. The liberation of Texas is "un buen negocio" (251).

In the letter, Houston appraises Mexico's situation. It is a country with immense natural resources that, under good leadership, could succeed. This seems unlikely, however, because Mexico's men of great intelligence and stature are "relegados a segundo plano por la insaciable ambición de los militares. Si alguno de ellos logra sostenerse en el poder, quizá México tenga la fuerza suficiente para reclamar con las armas el territorio del que ha sido despojado" (251). As such, the U.S. should engage in an active campaign to destabilize the Mexican political circle.

> Debemos, por tanto, fomentar la discordia civil por todos los medios a nuestro alcance y para ello puede sernos muy útil el general Santa Anna, que en los últimos 10 años ha sido cabecilla de otros tantos pronunciamientos. Contra el sentir de muchos convencionistas, que desearían comérselo vivo, prefiero dejar en libertad al ave depredadora.... Con su díscolo genio agitando la arena política, ningún gobierno podrá enderezar la nave del Estado y México se mantendrá sumido en el caos, donde nos conviene que permanezca por mucho tiempo, para que su débil ejército no pueda impedir las futuras anexiones de Arizona, Colorado y las dos Californias. (*Seductor* 251-252)

No such letter exists in the Library of Congress or the Nettie Lee Benson Library. Nor can it be found in the collected letters of Jackson or Houston. We are left to conclude that it is apocryphal.We should then ask, why this document appears in the novel?

El seductor de la patria offers harsh criticisms of Santa Anna's career, but it reserves some of its harshest indictments for others. The novel is especially critical of the United States. The Houston-Jackson letter portrays Houston as a conniving businessman, judiciously appraising the nation's potential wealth. Preeminent in his attributes appear to be his calculating demeanor. The letter also endows Houston with prophetic omniscience, with the ability to perceive the future of Mexico's political situation.

La lima de Vulcano

Not all of Serna's inventions occur *ex nihilo*. *La lima de Vulcano* was an independent newspaper printed in Mexico from 1833 to 1839. It is clear from its editorials and opinion section that the paper served the interests of military conservatives. Frequent eulogies exalt recently deceased officers, and poems retell with romantic fervor the actions of the nation's fighting men. During the Texas campaign, Santa Anna and General José Urrea sent war reports directly to the paper for publication. These reports revel in the army's successes and hide its failures with other material. For example, the paper never reports Santa Anna's apprehension by American forces. Prior to his capture, *La lima de Vulcano* has almost daily reports of massive victories in Texas. Some of these reports are outdated—sometimes by as much as two months—and serve as filler. Afterwards, however, the paper abruptly stops publishing news from Texas. Attention is turned toward Russia, Spain and Britain. The paper is a good documentary source for Santa Anna's side of the Texas campaign. Enrique Serna inserts an apocryphal article from *La lima de Vulcano* about the battle of the Alamo into *El seductor de la patria*.

The battle of the Alamo polarizes Texan and Mexican historians. Schoolbook histories, movies, and popular histories north of the Rio Grande point to the events of

March 1836 as a heroic defense against insurmountable odds. All Texas schoolchildren, for example, take a year of state history where the Alamo figures among the dramatic highlights. San Antonio school districts schedule regular trips to the "Shrine of Liberty" to hear stilted historical narratives from the tour guides. South of the border, one finds a different story. The secession of Texas is viewed as usurpation. The heroes celebrated in the north are considered highwaymen, mercenaries, and criminals of the worst type. Santa Anna personally presided over the campaign to quell the Texan rebellion. The march was long and hard, poorly planned, and devastating for the troops. It was a quixotic adventure in every possible way.

El seductor de la patria focuses on the march more than on the battle. Tired of Giménez's continual editorializing, Manuel has instructed Giménez to distance himself from the narrative. The account we have, then, comes through Santa Anna's voice in first person present. Santa Anna brings readers up to the morning of the attack at which point the narrative breaks off. The next document we read is a March 20, 1836 newspaper article reporting José María Tornel's speech to Congress. The document referenced in my edition of the novel erroneously puts the date at March 20, 1837. Since the battle of the Alamo occurred in 1836, and it would have made little sense to report the victory a year after the fact, I have inserted the appropriate date. Tornel briefly recounts the battle with all the laud and honor draped over Santa Anna. He then provides the body count: 257 Texan rebels dead, 60 Mexican dead, and 13 wounded. The article closes with an epic poem by Ignacio Sierra y Rossi dedicated to the conqueror of the Alamo, "Ilustre Santa Anna, preclaro caudillo, / todo a tu presencia se vuelve vencible, / eres en el triunfo clemente y sencillo, / pero en el combate, con razón terrible..." (*Seductor* 230). Immediately following this praise comes the journal entry of a soldier, Carlos Sánchez Navarro. The text's its brevity does not undermine its poignancy:

> Se han quitado al enemigo un punto fuerte, 21 piezas de varios calibres, muchas armas y municiones, pero no puedo alegrarme porque hemos pagado un altísimo costo. Sobre trescientos mexicanos quedaron en el campo y los heridos, más de cien, no tardarán en sucumbir por falta de auxilio. Con otra victoria como ésta nos lleva el diablo. ¿Por qué será que el señor Santa Anna siempre quiere que sus triunfos se marquen con sangre y lágrimas? (*Seductor* 230)

The discrepancy between these fictional documents is striking. The novelized article glories in the valor of Mexican military prowess. It declares the providential blessing of heaven on a just cause and a just leader. The victory at the Alamo is portrayed as one of the crowning jewels in the illustrious military history of a national hero. The journal entry shows the flip side and rectifies embellishments in the historical record: five times more Mexican deaths and more than ten times the number of injured. And this count does not include the number of soldiers lost along the way. Sánchez Navarro's journal chips away at the pedestal upon which Santa Anna builds for himself by reminding readers that all of the general's victories come at a terrible cost (*Seductor* 231).

The real documents we have on hand indicate that no such article ever existed. There are editions for March 19 and March 22, but nothing on March 20. The March 19 edition contains a brief report from Santa Anna dated February 27. He had occupied San Antonio, and was preparing for battle with the Texans. Victory is declared in the March 22 edition. Santa Anna reports in his memoirs that "Quedó en fin la fortaleza en nuestro poder; con su artillería, parque &c y sepultados entre sus fosos y atrincheramientos más de seiscientos cadáveres todos estrangeros y en las inmediaciones un crecido número que aun no se ha podido examinar." He also counts "setenta muertos y trescientos heridos" among the Mexicans ("Secretaría de Guerra y Marina. Sección Central." 22 March 1836). Additionally we find another account in Santa Anna's 1874 autobiography. In this one, the general has significantly inflated the enemy and offered a more realistic appraisal of Mexican casualties:

> Los filibusteros, que creían que los soldados mexicanos no volverían a Texas, sorprediéronse mucho al avistarnos y corrían despavoridos a la fortaleza del Álamo [obra sólida de los españoles]. En ese día la fortaleza tenía montadas diez y ocho piezas de diferentes calibres y una guarnición de seiscientos hombres.... Los filibusteros, cumpliendo con su propósito, defendiéronse obstinadamente: ninguno dio señales de quererse rendir: con fiereza y valor salvaje, morían peleando hasta obligarme a emplear la reserva, para decidir una lucha tan empeñada en cuatro horas: uno no quedó vivo; pero nos pusieron fuera de combate más de mil hombres entre muertos y heridos. (Historia militar 18)

The article that appears in *El seductor de la patria* builds on historical documents. But the historical versions offer conflicting statistical information. It would be logical to imagine that Santa Anna manipulated data to give the impression of a more significant victory. We also can see that what appears in the novel is the the distillation of actual historical documents. The same can be said for one of Santa Anna's soliloquies in the novel. Just as he built Giménez's character off historical documents, Serna appropriates historical documents to structure what Santa Anna says. The following examples from the novel and *La lima de Vulcano* demonstrate this point.

> *¡Compañeros de armas! Nuestros más sagrados deberes nos conducen a estos desiertos y precisan al combate con esa chusma de aventureros desgraciados*, á quienes nuestras autoridades incautamente han producido beneficios que no alcanzaron los mexicnaos. Apropiándose de nuestros terrenos, *han levantado el estandarte de la rebelión para independer este fértil y dilatado departamento*, persuadidos que *nuestras desgraciadas disenciones* nos habrían imposibilitado á la defensa del suelo patrio. *¡Miserables! Pronto van á conocer su insensatez.* (*La lima de Vulcano*, 5 March 1836, my italics)

> *¡Compañeros de armas!* Estáis desnudos y mal alimentados. Habéis hecho marchas forzadas sin zapatos y muchas veces sin pan. Sólo los falanges de la opulenta México, sólo los guerreros del noble Guatimoz fueron capaces de soportar lo que vosotros habéis soportado. *Nuestros más sagrados deberes nos han traído hasta aquí para combatir a una caterva de aventureros ingratos*, que habiendo aprovechado aviesamente *nuestras disenciones internas han levantado el pendon de la rebelión con el fin de sustraer a nuestra República este fértil y vasto departamento. ¡Miserables! ¡Pronto verán su locura!* (*Seductor* 222, my emphasis).

As in his reconstruction of Giménez, Serna pulls from the historical archive to create his character. Serna imitates the general's grandiloquent style to create a realistic voice for his character. But this is only one of the uses for documents that pervades the novel. We have seen that Serna also invents, incorporates, and alters documents to contradict the positive biography that Giménez seeks to create.

CONCLUSION

El seductor de la patria is a complex novel that requires readers to engage the text. This chapter emphasizes the battle between narrative voices for control of the historical record. Manuel María Giménez attempts to erect a monument to Antonio López de Santa Anna; meanwhile, Serna surreptitiously undermines Giménez's story by inserting contradictory documents as evidence against the general. But the documents Serna brings to the novel are fictional inventions. This paradoxical relationship between his desire to distance himself from the historiographic model and his necessity to rely upon a faux apparatus of documentation underlines the novel's central problem: archival politics and the uncomfortable coexistence of fact and fiction. I have proposed that Serna's novel is—possibly at an unconscious level—a manual for learning to read political and historiographic bias. Readers must actively engage the text to disentangle narrative voices. Neither voice is neutral; both voices have a distinct ideological goal.

Conclusion: The Challenge of Narratives of Failure

> Knowledge rests not upon truth alone, but upon error also. – Carl Gustav Jung

I close this dissertation with two brief textual analyses that lie outside the purview of historical novels, but amply illustrate how narratives of failure occupy an important place in contemporary Mexico's historical imagination. Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* remains the most quoted, most recognized work on Mexican national identity, or *mexicanidad*, outside of Mexico. Paz's essay describes what he believes are defining characteristics of Mexican society: misogyny, violence, alcoholism, and passive-aggressive resistance. In 1975, Claude Fell interviewed Paz, and asked him how the public received his book at publication. "Más bien de un modo negative. Mucha gente se indignó; se pensó que era un libro en contra de México. Un poeta me dijo algo bastante divertido: que yo había escrito una elegante mentada de madre contra los mexicanos" (*El ogro filantrópico* 18). One reader who shared this criticism was Rosario Castellanos.

Castellanos was a phenomenally talented novelist, short story writer, poet, playwright, and essayist. For years she wrote a weekly column for the newspaper *Excélsior* that allowed her to pioneer the women's movement in Mexico. Her articles are witty, intelligent, and insightful. When asked to comment of Paz's *Labyrinth*, Castellanos used her article to offer a scathing parody of Paz's methodology. She argues that the method is simple: Paz identifies a cultural trait, explains it in terms of historical referents, and demonstrates how this trait constitutes a fundamental piece of national identity (*El uso de la palabra* 175-176). She then offers the following case study:

> ¿Por qué es triste? Porque Tezcatlipoca puso de vueltav y medio a Quetzalcóatl; porque el indio escuchó "el sollozar de sus mitologías"; porque la Malinche traicionó a su raza; [...] porque la Conquista se hizo con lujo de fuerza y de crueldad y no como se hacen todas las otras conquistas que es a base de convencimiento; porque nunca aprendimos a hablar bien el español, [...] y así cuando queremos escribir una obra maestra no nos sale porque tenemos que andar ¡todavía!, a cachetadas con las palabras; [...] porque Iturbide se coronó emperador; porque Santa Anna perdía una pata y metía la otra; [...] porque Juárez no debió de morir, [...]; porque bailamos con don Porfirio y no se nos olvide; porque [...] echamos balas con Pancho Villa y desorejamos cristeros y luego todo se metamorfoseó en un barrio residencial en el Distrito Federal porque... no, ya no. Hemos llegado demasiado lejos. Es decir, demasiado cerca. (176)

Like Paz, Castellanos' historical referents link a supposedly inherent Mexican quality (i.e. sadness) to historical letdowns: Malinche's betrayal, the Conquest's brutality, Santa Anna's loss of half the national territory, Juárez's untimely death, Díaz's 34-year dictatorship, and the bloody debacle that was the Revolution. She then uses this historical overview to ask how, in light of so much disappointment, can Mexican men be expected to work hard, assume family and social obligations, handle money appropriately, and drink responsibly. Obviously this is asking too much. Castellanos concludes her parody, suggesting that not only does this sadness justify patriarchal irresponsibility, but that it also ennobles Mexicans: "Pero la tristeza ¿no lo sabía usted?, proporciona un aire de distinción a quien la porta que lo vuelve elegante.... [Estamos] muy por encima de todas las penqueñas miserias cotidianas porque lo que ocurre ¡es que somos superiores!" (177). Paz and Castellanos demonstrate two distinct uses for failure. Paz poeticizes failure, though I find it difficult to believe that Paz intentionally glories in Mexico's shortcomings. I may be wrong. He may fall into the trap that Jorge Luis Borges describes when speaking of intellectuals who adopt "los encantos de lo patético" because they think that, in some way, being pathetic will make them more interesting. But my feeling is that Paz is attempting to describe, and not prescribe. There is minimal difference between the orthography, but miles separate the semantics. Outwardly, his essays appear to make

failure a normative part of Mexico's experience. Castellanos, on the other hand, rejects rhetorical excuses and uses failure to call into question time-honored attitudes and behaviors.

Like Paz and Castellanos's texts, a contemporary example illustrates how narratives of failure address present-day concerns in Mexico. In 2006 historian Denise Dresser and the novelist Jorge Volpi collaborated on the *México: Lo que todo ciudadano quisiera (no) saber de su patria.*. This tongue-in-cheek history book purports to be an educational text. The authors inform us that "lo primero que tienes que aprender como chiquillio o chiquilla es que México es un país imaginario" (17). Mexican history is "en realidad un fantástico paseo virtual por un parquet habitado por hombres machos y mujeres sumisas, héroes mancos y sólo tres heroínas... Según la versión official creada por los que ganaron, vivimos en un país donde los malos siempre son extranjeros (de preferencia gringos), y donde a pesar de que hemos peleado en desventaja, perdemos (siempre) con el honor intacto y el humor también (17). In this imaginary country, myths are the staple of national identity:

> El mito del país mestizo, incluyente, tolerante (mientras no seas indio, homosexual o mujer). El mito del país que no es racista con los negros (porque por suerte sólo hay cuatro, incluyendo al "Negro" Durazo). El mito del país que abolió la esclavitud y con ello eliminió la discriminación (excepto hacia las mujeres, los extranjeros, los discapacitados y los vendedores de chicles). El mito del país progresista donde la Secretaría de Salud distriubye la "píldora del día siguiente" (pero el partido en el gobierno la condena). (24)

The parenthetical remarks act as the counterproductive voice, the *relajo* described by Portilla, or the compiler we see in Serna's novel. The authors chip away at these consagrated myths by offering their perceived reality under their breath.

Mexico's educational system aims to create "un canon nacionalista y revolucionario que le permita a los de arriba gobernar sin la interferencia de los de abajo... Se trata de lograr que la gente piense lo menos posible, critique los menos

posible, participe lo menos posible y duerma lo más posible" (24). It does so by issuing textbooks that:

> …nos enseñan que en México el poder se conquista con narratives de injusticia y redención. La reputación se consolida a golpes de machete, para ver quién resiste más y llora menos. También ayuda que el presidente te quiera desaforar porque eso revive la pugna ancestral del pueblo mexicano: los ricos contra los pobres, los buenos contra los malos, los caudillos que han luchado por México y los traidores que lo han saboteado. Hidalgo *vs* la colonia española; Juárez *vs* Maximiliano; Madero *vs* Porfirio Díaz; Cárdenas *vs* los interestes petroleros. Los mexicanos buenos *vs* los gringos malos. Gloria Trevi *vs* el sistema judicial. El rayo de esperanza *vs* el complot de la cúpula. (25)

This system's aims are clear: "quiere que los mexicanos amen feroz y desesperadamente a sus mártires, a sus víctimas, a todos aquellos que han enfrentado la persecución injusta" (25). Dresser and Volpi claim that Mexico fosters narratives of failure to create a submissive nation that venerates failed heroes. They do so by promoting historical narratives that prove that victory, change, and triumph are impossible. They assert that Mexican government's avowed purpose is "evitar que los pobres se vuevlan a rebelar, que los campesinos se lancen de nuevo a la bola, que las clases medias rezonguen porque tienen que pagar seguridad privada" (25).

The authors' take on the nineteenth century indicates the continuation of a trenchantly negative view: "Una sola cosas puede decirse del siglo XIX: fue un absoluto desastre. Todo lo malo que podia pasarle a un país, pasó: guerras civiles, levantamientos, intervenciones extranjeras, pérdidas de territorio, desorganización civil, injerencia de la Iglesia, corrupción,... caudillismo y, por si fuera poco, un indio oaxaqueño llegó a la presidencia" (66). They continue: "Lo sorprendente es que México haya logrado sobrevivir a este espantoso siglo" (66). Of Santa Anna they write: "Pocos países han tenido la fortuna de contra con alguien como Antonio López de Santa Anna, a quien podemos echarle la culpa de todos los errors, torpezas, mezquindades, taras y problemas de México. Sólo por eso merece un lugar en la Rotonda de los Hombres Ilustres, al lado

de Salinas de Gortari, su major imitador" (68). Regarding the country's proximity to the United States, Dresser and Volpi suggest that Mexican educators teach students emotionally charged limericks punctuated with the occasional vulgarity in order to "crear un sentimiento positivo de rencor histórico que nos permita seguirnos lamentando, echándole la culpa de todos nuestros problemas a la mala suerte geográfica" (69). But rather than dwell on the nineteenth century too much, the authors suggest that "lo mejor que podría hacer el alumno es olvidarse de esta malhadada época y pasar de una vez por todas a la Revolución mexicana, la cual no fue menos catastrófica, pero al menos sí un poco más divertida" (66). What Dresser and Volpi's book demonstrate is a current use of narratives of failure in Mexico's historical imagination. Their notion of history is intimately tied contemporary problems.

To conclude, then, we can assert that failure haunts Mexico's historical imagination. Mexican intellectuals express a negative view of their country's history—especially vis-à-vis its nineteenth-century founding—and this negativity spills over into contemporary political and social discourse. To be sure, they have much to lament about the nineteenth century: multiple foreign invasions, rampant political instability and cronyism, excessive foreign debt, heavy-handed military leaders, and lest we forget, the loss of half the national territory. In part this pessimism is inherited from those who laid the cornerstones of the nation. Conservatives like Lucas Alamán and José Vasconcelos decry the nineteenth-century break from traditional Hispanic roots and the violence of the 1810 revolution. Vasconcelos coins the phrase "cult of defeat" when bemoaning Mexico's tendency to worship fallen heroes. Liberals retaliate, casting aspersions on bloodthirsty conquerors and motley mobs of indigenous rebel recruits. And one need hardly look farther than Octavio Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude* or the Muralist

movement to recognize the degree to which failure narratives have become ingrained in Mexico's cultural imagination.

I define narratives of failure as discursive strategies that highlight—and often poeticize—perceived cultural, political, and social shortcomings. They are historical arguments that attempt to explain, justify, embellish, expose, or reinterpret historical mistakes. They mediate between lofty aspirations and unsatisfied goals. They seek to ameliorate the psychological trauma resulting from loss. And despite apparent pessimism, these narratives tend to be fiercely nationalistic. It might be said that the transmission of failure narratives from one generation of intellectuals to the next has concretized their existence. Once in place, narratives of failure inform debates about nationhood, democracy, stability, and autonomy. Inertia propels these ideas forward. Despite the prevalence of these narratives in most genres, nowhere does failure manifest itself more clearly than in historical novels that recreate the nineteenth century. To this end, I have examined the narratives of failure in five contemporary historical novels. My analyses demonstrate that Mexican authors are not only in dialogue with their nation's historical failures, but also with a long tradition of historical narratives of failure. They apply their criticisms to contemporary concerns in the hope that readers will become more actively engaged in righting their country's ills. These narratives of failure are a double-edged sword. It is true that they cut through monumentalized histories and political rhetoric. But they also carry with them the latent possibility of propagating negative perceptions of history and nationhood, thereby atavistically condemning future generations to low national self-esteem. Kurt Vonnegut may be right: we may be what we pretend to be; as such, it is incumbent upon us to be careful with the pretend image that we construct for ourselves. In this regard, narratives of failure require authors to take responsibility for their writing, and reader to become actively involved in creating meaning in their society.

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Vita

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