

Writing on the Run: Travel in Nineteenth-Century Mexico

By

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I study the relationship between circulating texts and traveling bodies as challenges to the construction of a national community in nineteenth-century Mexico. It is curious that although some of the most influential critical studies of nineteenth-century culture emphasize the importance of circulating bureaucrats and circulating texts, it is less common to find a study that combines these two forms of representation and dissemination.¹ What texts did writers carry with them on their travels? What texts did they encounter while on the road? With what circulating texts did these travel writers compete? What impeded the circulation of texts and travelers? What impediments to writing and dissemination did the travelers confront? And conversely, how were travel accounts presented in the press and how were travelers written about? By putting writing, the press, and travel face-to-face I grapple with the most authoritative means of representation in the nineteenth century.²

By combining in my dissertation the processes of writing, circulation, and textual dissemination, I am able to engage the principal topics that have informed critical studies of nineteenth-century Mexico (nationalism, liberalism), recognizing their importance but focusing elsewhere. This dissertation is the study of what I am calling “writing on the run.” I define this type of writing in two senses: writing on *the run* (texts produced while on the road), and writing

¹ The most obvious culprit is Benedict Anderson who in his *Imagined Communities* claimed that the origins of nationalism in Latin America was found in the creole pioneers (bureaucrats who were assigned to specific regions that Anderson argues preceded nationalist sentiment) and print capitalism (the press) that created a community of readers who shared the daily reading experience and thus imagined themselves members of a community in spite of never meeting. These arguments have met with serious criticism, as will be discussed later in this introduction. For more see Anderson’s chapter “Creole Pioneers” and the collection of essays that critique Anderson’s claims titled *Beyond Imagined Communities*.

² Within these three categories I include costumbrismo, Romanticism, Realism, visual culture, serialized novels, chronicles, images, caricatures, lithographs, early photography, and the canonical—and not so canonical—travel texts by writers such as Humboldt and Lamartine.

on the run (as in writers writing about travel and the circulation of ideas). Through this mode of inquiry, I analyze how nineteenth-century writers and the media where their texts were published employed notions of travel to discuss the advantages and threats of the circulation of ideas to liberal and conservative thought, often showing how ideas circulate between these already difficult to define groups. Having identified travel and circulation as key tropes in the nineteenth century in Mexico, I study the processes that challenge the consolidation of a nation. I do not aim to define travel writing or discover a poetics of travel. Instead, I contextualize historical moments through the lens of circulation with the objective of uncovering new perspectives on the debate over the consolidation of what so many have called the nation, the nation-state, or the imagined community. In short, I study how the act of writing on the run questions the very notion of writing and representation as constitutive powers in the consolidation of communities, and how, furthermore, the representation of such texts in the press of the period further undermines the desire to create a nation.

It is widely accepted that writers during the first half of the nineteenth century understood the power of the written word, and that debates over the definition of a national literature were common.³ The affirmation of a Mexican national literature participated in the nativism⁴ that creole authors and statesmen believed to be both the path to liberty and modernization, and, paradoxically, the retention of power in the political vacuum after Independence. These debates on national literature were often held in literary academies such as *Academia de Letrán* that were meeting points for Mexican *letrados* and the space where many of the founding fathers of

³ See *La misión del escritor*, especially the essays by Francisco Zarco.

⁴ In his introduction to *Beyond Imagined Communities*, Chasteen explains nativism as the attempt to establish an American identity in opposition to Europe, or “America for the Americans.” The nativist approach, nevertheless, was problematic since the leaders who proposed it, generally members of the white minority, did not represent the majority of the population. Nativism, “addressed this difficulty by rhetorically asserting affinities among the vast native-born majority in contradistinction to a vulnerable, neatly defined enemy” (Chasteen xv).

Mexican literature met, honed their writing skills, and forged important friendships. It is noteworthy that these debates did not consider Mexican travel writing as a useful tool in the construction of a national literature in spite of the growing popularity of foreign authors who practiced the genre. As I will discuss later in this introduction, in 1882 Ignacio Altamirano suggested the recovery of travel writing as a cornerstone to Mexican culture and Thea Pitman has argued that Mexican writers deny that they participate in the genre—while writing travel accounts—due to its association with colonialism. While I do not seek to uncover a specific reason behind the absence of Mexican travel writing in the key debates of the early nineteenth century, this study reveals how, while debates raged over what was national literature or how it was to be written, a writing style emerged that emphasized what made impossible the creation of a national community or of a national literature. Instead of asking about the viability of a national literature, I focus on a writing style that suggested the opposite. In short, I argue that travel writing presented obstacles to a national identity.

My decision to work with texts generally found outside the literary canon (translations, diaries, litanies and letters) is meant to highlight their absence from a nationalist project. This national project marginalizes certain travel accounts precisely because such texts portray the difficulty of constructing a cohesive imagined community. In sum, I hope to conclude that the representation of travel in these texts constitutes not only a displacement through space, but also a journey of recognition of the difficulty of consolidating the nation. In spite of my interest in the recovery of understudied texts, paradoxically in my dissertation I have created an archive that suggests compatibility and coherence. Nevertheless, my intention is that this collection of writers, historical moments, and print culture be viewed as the ingredients of a nation under construction, a nation based more on suggestions than on achievements. The archive I have

constructed contains the failed bets made by the most important political gamblers, and, in this way, grapples with the constant recognition that the desire for unity that underpins their wagers is always open to loss.

Speaking of travel writing, Beatriz Colombi argues that travel invades prose and fiction in the nineteenth century, citing Sarmiento's *Facundo* and Isaccs' *María* as important examples. Colombi concludes that the heightened presence of travel in nineteenth century prose and fiction provokes one to think of travel writing in two ways. First, travel writing marks the difference between fact and fiction, and second, it expands into, and influences, other genres ("El viaje de la práctica al género" 305). I, however, am not preoccupied with the ability of travel writing to communicate fact or fiction, nor am I interested in dwelling on the ways in which travel writing influenced texts from other genres.⁵ Instead, I seek to analyze these texts on their own terms and, when possible, in the newspapers and journals in which they appeared. The role of the press in relation to travel writing has not been adequately studied and is an important part of my methodology. Travelers often wrote of the texts of other travelers, of the accessibility of texts, and of how texts circulated.

Although Benedict Anderson argued that print capitalism provided the means with which members of a group would recognize themselves and imagine their participation in a community, the press also provided the forum in which those same categories were questioned, undermined, and rearticulated. I study the moments in which Anderson's argument for the constitutive power of the written word and images to create imagined communities is challenged by the absence of a national archive that houses such texts and images. These moments include the unrest before the overflow of foreign texts in Mexico that threatened to eclipse local authors (Chapter 1), the

⁵ For an extremely important and influential study on travel writing as the backbone to Latin American narrative fiction, see chapter 3 of *Myth and Archive* by Roberto González Echeverría.

colonial specter of censorship that negated the free circulation of ideas and texts (Chapter 2), the ambulant national archive that carried only the liberal side of history (Chapter 3), and the problematic masculine identity of travelers whose texts were published in the same journals that aimed to celebrate the travelers' role in nation-building (Chapter 4).

I study writers who are considered important nation builders and advocates of national literature in order to consider their work from an opposing angle: as an impediment to the creation of such nationalizing projects. I do not claim that these challenging tendencies were found only in travel writing or in the representation of circulating identities. I also do not argue for the inclusion of Mexican travel writing in the canon of Mexican literature, nor do I intend to reevaluate the canon from the perspective of my interpretation of these texts. I do, nevertheless, suggest that the exclusion of these texts from serious critical studies of the period is partially due to their complexity (generic hybridity) and contradictory nature that are at odds with the projection of a stable and uniform nation. Instead of looking for alternative approaches to nation-building in marginalized or underrepresented authors, I engage those writers considered the indisputable founding fathers of Mexican literature from the perspective of a style of writing that is deemed worthy of collecting, or archiving, but that nonetheless rarely appears in critical studies and less in a way that connects these authors with the genre of travel writing, or that contextualizes them as travelers.

Travel and Textual Circulation in Nineteenth-Century Mexico

During a visit to Puebla, Mexico in 1839, Melchor Ocampo (1814-61), passionate defender of liberal ideals and respected political theorist, describes his arrival to the city. Characteristic of the observations common in nineteenth-century travel narratives, Ocampo

writes of important points of interest (the cemetery, the jailhouse), and the organization of the city (the church and market are found on the plaza, the city overlooks the valley of San Martín). But within these expected descriptions, Ocampo narrates a curious moment when he is approached by “libros-vejeros,” ambulant book salesmen. The traveler is a potential customer for the men who dedicate their time to literary commerce and Ocampo, who wrote works on Botany, Geology, Geography, and Zoology, makes this episode a critique of the city known for its piety, using the book titles as representative examples of what troubles him most about Mexico: the persistent presence of superstition:

Cojí luego la primera (obra) que me presentaron, y leyendo en el brevete *Casos raros*, la devolví, añadiendo *de vicios y virtudes*, supongo qué sigue dentro; y después de la seña afirmativa con que el librero consintió mi acierto, alargó la mano con *Soledades de la vida y desengaños del mundo*; volví a añadir, y a entregarlo. Después, sin tomarlos ya en la mano leí bajo su brazo: *El alma al pie del Calvario*; *La venerable madre Sor María de Jesús*; *Temporal y eterno*; y otras obras maestras de igual calaña. (Ocampo 148)

When the salesmen express their ability to appease the selective customer, claiming that they can produce whatever texts Ocampo wishes, Ocampo reiterates his enlightened thinking in his preference for science and the arts over moral instruction: “¿No tienen bastante extensión la historia, la literatura, las ciencias y las artes, para que sea necesario buscar instrucción y pasatiempo en los desarreglos de esas imaginaciones diversamente extraviadas?” (148). In spite of the ambulant salesmen’s attention to their customer’s tastes, for Ocampo the initial selection of texts establishes the local archive and reveals local identity.

The encounter between Ocampo and the libro-vejeros demonstrates the regional differences the traveler confronted while moving through the nation, but also the relationship

between moving bodies and circulating texts. The accessibility of the texts whose contents Ocampo finds retrograde provokes his personal censorship and thus underlines an unrest that emerges from within the country in regard to the nation's future. What Ocampo considers to be frivolous texts circulate freely through the national space, warranting a categorical reaction that is embodied in Ocampo's dedication to radical liberalism founded on action and rupture with tradition. The ambulant libro-vejeros represent another type of traveler whose profession, for Ocampo, highlights the danger of the written word and its dissemination for the future of Mexico. This encounter raises questions about the relationship between travel writing, social criticism, and the preoccupation with circulating texts. A visit to a neighboring region includes the evaluation of its literature and how it is distributed, and Ocampo's concern with superstition, I suggest, becomes part of Mexican travel writing.

In the introduction to another work of Mexican travel writing, Luis Malanco's *Viaje a Oriente* (1882), radical liberal and renown writer Ignacio Manuel Altamirano (1834-1893) presents an especially provocative analysis of travelers and the role of travel literature in Mexico in which he places migration, nomadism, and exile at the heart of Mexican culture. Beginning with the foundational moment that brought European and indigenous identities into contact, Altamirano explains that the conquest united two very distinct cultures that shared expeditionary tendencies. Modern Mexican society, he claims, "es hija de dos razas esencialmente móviles y atrevidas, muy dadas á (sic) los viajes y apasionadas de la aventuras, como fueron la raza española del siglo XVI y la raza azteca" (Altamirano XII). Although his observation is reductionist and overlooks the cultural complexity of both the Iberian Peninsula and the geographic space that would come to be known as Mexico, Altamirano does incite his readers to rethink modern Mexico in terms of routes and journeys, or as a series of interactions and

crossroads. This perspective is especially provocative when viewed in the context of the nineteenth century that was characterized by foreign intervention, civil war, and indigenous uprisings. That is, writing from the comparative stability of the “paz porfiriana,” Altamirano directs his readers to consider movement and fluidity as the foundational metaphors of Mexican society.

In contrast to the vitality of travel and circulation that defined the Spanish and indigenous peoples before the conquest, Altamirano posits the colonial period as one of stagnation and lethargy. With the acquisition of new lands and material wealth, the adventurous spirit of the Spanish was transformed into “un gran período (sic) de reposo y de somnolencia á (sic) fin de hacer la digestion” and their Catholic religion “trocada en enervante misticismo” (Altamirano XIV). Once living “del merodeo” and restless “por necesidad,” the colonialized indigenous tribes of Mexico lost the “hábito de locomocion” and shared the “estancamiento durante tres siglos, lo mismo que su vencedor” (Altamirano XVII). Altamirano’s interpretation of Mexican history grounded in circulation and stagnation allows us the opportunity to reevaluate the romantic search for national identity as the search for national origins. In opposition to the construction of creole identity during the post-Independence years that was founded on the appropriation of a malleable cultural past, Altamirano proposes Independence as a return to circulation and a shaking-off of colonial sluggishness. Our concern here is not the historical accuracy of Altamirano’s interpretation, but instead the suggestive analytical tools that he gives us. A key political participant and fundamental essayist and novelist, from a temporal vantage point distant enough to allow critical reflection, but close enough to contain the residual effects of the chaos of the mid-nineteenth century, Altamirano suggests that the key to understanding modern Mexico is not the emblematic figure of the creole, the mestizo, or the “indio;” it also is

not the institution of the Church, liberalism, or conservatism. Instead, at the heart of Mexican identity is the traveler, the nomad, the cultural mediator. Without them, if we follow Altamirano, the previously mentioned figures and institutions lose their meaning.

The political instability that plagued the post-Independence period also increased the circulation and displacement of its principal actors. Whether exiled within Mexico or abroad, or traversing the countryside in armed rebellion, the laziness of the colonies was replaced by agitation and movement. In the vertiginous political activity that placed different factions of liberals against conservatives, monarchists, and defenders of the Catholic Church, the pattern of exile and return at times lead to humorous encounters that manifested the movement that was the underlying structure of Mexican society. As Altamirano points out:

los liberales que emigraron en tiempo del Imperio, y los imperialistas que emigraron al triunfo de la República, militares, diplomáticos, publicistas, sacerdotes, simples empleados, muchos de los cuales han tenido todavía tiempo para ver en su destierro á (sic) los mismos que los habia (sic) proscrito, ó (sic) para viajar en un mismo coche con ellos, obligados por un tercer proscriptor. (Altamirano XIX)

Altamirano's humorous representation of the chaotic political atmosphere of the mid-nineteenth century provides the framework for the current study. Coming after the lethargic three-hundred-year Spanish colonization and before the renewed peace and stability of the Porfiriato, the period spanning from the Mexican American War (1846-48) and the outbreak of the Caste War (1846-1901) to the defeat of Maximilian and the challenge to French colonial intentions in 1867 is one of extreme circulation and displacement.

The commentary by Ocampo and Altamirano presents a fascinating dichotomy of travel as source of knowledge and method to understand Mexican cultural heritage, but it also reveals a

negligence in regard to travel writing (Altamirano beckons for the resurrection of travel as cultural paradigm) as well as a certain fear pertaining to traveling texts (Ocampo, the outspoken target of conservative censorship, seems willing to remove certain types of texts from the ambulant market of the *libro-vejeros*). The ambivalence in these two contrasting views of travelers and their relationship to writing and publication summarizes the state of Mexican travel literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

What could be considered a mission to recover neglected travel writing begins in 1939 with the publication of *Viajeros mexicanos*, an anthology of Mexican travel writing edited by Felipe Teixidor. A collection of fragments of texts written during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Viajeros mexicanos* is an attempt to reconstruct, or build anew, an archive of national travel literature. In his introduction, Teixidor acknowledges the absences in the anthology, explaining that the texts he has chosen are neither exhaustive examples of Mexican travel literature, nor is their inclusion based solely on the quality of the work, “[n]o es esta complicación una ‘antología de los cien mejores viajes’” (11). In the justification of Teixidor’s anthology we find the suggestion that the recuperation of Mexican travel literature begins with the acknowledgment of its existence, and only later the search for what could be considered texts worthy of celebration and analysis.

In a curious move, Teixidor offers a warning in regard to the lost tradition of reading Mexican travel literature. Not only is the tradition in danger but so are the texts themselves. He goes so far as to call the practice of rescuing these works an, “obra de redención” (16). Teixidor argues that these texts, forgotten in “librerías y baratillos,” need to circulate, to be placed in public hands, and to be read with love: “el coleccionista que no quiere trascender a egoísmo, los lee con amor, toma notas, les pone señales, y va preparando la hora en que han de volver, aunque

sea en fragmentos, al torrente circulatorio de la cultura Mexicana” (17). By mentioning the return of the texts to public access, even if in fragmented form, Teixidor makes a self-reflexive comment on his own anthologizing project and presenting himself tangentially as the careful reader of travel writing who takes notes and leaves his mark on the texts before returning them to active circulation. But the warning does not consider only the possibility of these texts passing into obscurity; Teixidor also articulates the fear that this rich cultural archive will fall into the hands of foreign collectors of Mexican culture: “Démonos prisa, antes de que estos volúmenes, amables, curiosos y difíciles de encontrar, se dispersen o emprendan su tránsito final a los Estados Unidos del Norte, nueva Tierra Firme de nuestras desventuradas bibliotecas” (17). Uniting Ocampo, Altimirano, and Teixidor is the simultaneous fear and fascination regarding travel writing and the circulation of texts. While creating a framework on which to construct a new approach to Mexican culture, the emphasis on travel writing also produces the danger that attractive cultural artifacts sometimes awaken: that foreign fascination will eclipse local acknowledgement. The result, in turn, is conservation of the Mexican travel writing tradition abroad, an inversion of Altamirano’s wish to promote locally written travel accounts in direct opposition to the more canonical foreign texts.

In a more recent attempt to promote the recovery of Mexican travel narratives, Vicente Quirarte published *Republicanos en otro imperio: viajeros mexicanos a Nueva York (1830-1895)* in 2009, and *Más allá de la Visión de Anáhuac, viajeros mexicanos en el siglo XIX* in 2007. In these two works Quirarte seems to take Altamirano to task for asserting that Mexicans traveled infrequently in the nineteenth century, and that those who traveled did not write. Although the first work is limited to the representation of New York City, the second includes commentary on Mexican travel narratives about Jerusalem and New York. While Quirarte claims that the value

of travel narratives lies in the discovery of, “[l]a evolución y el nacimiento del que viaja,” he is also clearly interested in uncovering the traces of Mexican travelers in what were important nineteenth century destinations for European travelers: the cultural capital of the United States, “imperial” New York, as well as the spiritual capital of the orient, Jerusalem (*Republicanos en otro imperio* 9). Although implicit, Quirarte’s project starts with the desire to promote the visibility of Mexican travelers during the formative years of American expansionism and European economic investment in the Americas, what has been called elsewhere the “second conquest of Latin America.”⁶ Within the school of post-colonial thought that acknowledges the agency of the newly emancipated in the age of and neo-colonization, Quirarte searches for a traveler’s poetics: “¿qué ocurre con los viajeros mexicanos? Tratemos de examinar algunos de los elementos que conforman la poética de esa particular especie que a partir del XIX decidió abandonar nuestro proverbial estatismo, viajar y dejar testimonio escrito de su tránsito” (Quirarte, *Más allá de la visión de Anáhuac* 11). In sum, the recuperation of nineteenth century Mexican travel narratives is an affirmation of Mexican autonomy embodied in the circulation of travelers.

In *Mexican Travel Writing* (2008), Thea Pitman also engages Altamirano’s comments on the lack of Mexican travel narratives by exploring the tendency of Mexican writers to deny that they write travel accounts even as they are writing them. Pitman attributes Altamirano’s comments to his desire to foment a national literature. What Altamirano was actually doing, according to Pitman, was underlining a void in Mexican national literature that had been occupied by foreign texts, such as those by Alexander Von Humboldt, in an attempt to instigate

⁶ See *The Second Conquest of Latin America: Coffee, Henequen, and Oil during the Export Boom, 1850-1930* edited by Steven C. Topik and Allen Wells.

Mexican authors to fill it. Pitman's primary project is to uncover the political and rhetorical strategies of travel writing, a genre which is historically associated with empire and expansion, and in this project lies one of Pitman's most interesting claims: that Mexican travel writers denied that they wrote travel narratives precisely because it would associate them with the discursive tool of colonialism and empire.

What unites the works by Teixidor, Quirarte, and Pitman is the recognition of the need to revisit and protect Mexican travel writing, a genre that was clearly cultivated on a large scale but that has curiously received little critical attention. Teixidor and Quirarte, in fact, seem more intent on ensuring that these texts are read than on incorporating them into the critical corpus of Mexicanist or Latin Americanist scholars. In the two anthologizers' work, a curious ambiguity is found that lies between the promotion of Mexican travel writing as a creditable reading experience and the reminder to scholars of its presence in the Mexican archive. The reminder, it seems, invites a critical inquiry into the function of these texts in light of other, more recognized, examples of travel writing on Mexico. According to Quirarte, this function should not be sought in the shadow of European travel narratives, or European literature for that matter, but instead within the same domestic vision and poetics found in the resurrected texts. Not only does this dissertation take seriously the need to revisit the mostly overlooked tradition of Mexican travel writing, but also the fear expressed by Mexican writers that their works could fall into the wrong hands, a topic I explore in Chapter 3 on the Yucatecan writer Justo Sierra O'Reilly.

Letrados

Angel Rama's important work *La ciudad letrada* forged the path for the emphasis on writing and documentation as the principal means to power and authority. The colonial

bureaucracy that was introduced with the Bourbon reforms established a symbolic power grounded on the written word and the group of writers who held control of documents and the archives that housed them. These *letrados* therefore enjoyed a monopoly on written representation, law making, and the organization of space (architecture, urban planning). Rama's model served to trace the origins of power and representation through written documentation from the earliest stages of the colonization of the Americas, through the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth. In this way, the usefulness of *La ciudad letrada* is found in the provocative suggestion that the material reality of Latin America (the organization of its cities, for example) originated in the imagination of a select group of *letrados* who created it using graphic symbols. This group dedicated to the ordering of reality was based in the urban centers, the *ciudad letrada*, and their power over the written word granted them an authority comparable, or superior, to the clergy, also keepers of the written word. In spite of the periods of extended political crisis and foreign intervention, the administrative documents producing bureaucracy remained. Rama called the nineteenth-century *letrados* the owners of writing in a predominantly illiterate society (33).

Rama's model included forms of representation that went beyond the written word:

[a]ún más que la letra, conjugaron los símbolos todos, abasteciéndose en el origen tradicional, para fundar así una escritura crecientemente autónoma. El discurso barroco no se limita a las palabras, sino que las integra con los emblemas, jeroglíficos, empresas, apólogos, cifras, e inserta este enunciado complejo dentro de un despliegue teatral que apela a la pintura, la escultura, la música, los bailes, los colores . . . (33)

This model marks an important point of contact with Benedict Anderson, Rama's contemporary, who linked the power of representation with the power to create communities. But other

scholars would take Rama's model further to demonstrate how the *letrados* were not a homogenous administrative group, and that the power of the lettered city could also be viewed as being constituted from outside its walls by the alternative powers that threatened it.

Julio Ramos' *Desencuentros de la modernidad* demonstrated that the lettered city was occupied by writers who had differing ideas about the path to modernization in Latin America. Reacting contrarily to modernity, important writers such as Andrés Bello and Sarmiento used their written powers to incorporate or reject the oral traditions that characterized the illiterate inhabitants of the new republics. While Bello sought to educate the independent republics on speaking well, "saber decir," Sarmiento, in spite of his explicit arguments in favor of civilization over barbarism, incorporated the knowledge of the underrepresented popular classes (el saber del otro). Not only does Ramos show that the lettered city is not homogenous space, but he also demonstrates how the power of the written word was used by the *letrados* against one another to further their respective political and cultural agendas. In a similar attempt to undermine the power and homogeneity of the lettered city, Juan Pablo Dabove's *Nightmares of the Lettered City* argues that the goal of the new cultural critic should not be to continue to memorialize the founding fathers, but to focus on the abnormalities, the monstrosities, that instilled fear in the *letrados* and directly influenced their decisions. In Dabove's words, his aim is to demonstrate the "ways in which these monsters, understood as identities differing from the man of letters (*letrado*) who is masculine-literate-'white'-proprietor-urban-Europeanized, were less a threat to Latin American national cultures than the secret dynamo that drove their definition" (2). In this way, the founders of the nation are viewed next to the marginal identities who were obstacles to their project (bandits, *el gaucho malo*, escaped slaves, etc.), with the true origins of the nation found among those marginal identities.

Together the works by Ramos and Dabove question the autonomy of the writer that was omnipresent in Rama's *La ciudad letrada*. I contribute to the scholarly debate about *letrados* by viewing the writers I study as men of letters who understood the power of writing and representation in the task of creating a nation, but who were also eccentric example of *letrados*. It would be an exaggeration to call them bandits, but during the moments when they wrote the texts that are the focus of this dissertation, they found themselves on the outside of the walls of the lettered city. Whether from the rebellious Mexican periphery, exiled at home, or on the losing side of the historical preference for liberalism, these writers wrote during moments when their lettered powers were in question. Nevertheless, all of these writers have been memorialized as significant contributors to the nation-building process and thus celebrated as national heroes. In this way, I use the lettered heterogeneity that Ramos studied to turn Dabove's model in on itself: not only were the men of letters using their documentary powers to question each other's position in the lettered city, but they were at times seen as outsiders, threats to the very power that constituted their lettered identity.

Nation, Nation-state

The circular task of creating the nation through its representation in "national literature" depends on the definition of the concept of the nation. My definition of "the nation" is indebted primarily to Ernest Gellner and Craig Calhoun who both agree that nationalism is a modern occurrence and bound to a collective identity. Nationalism has become a sentiment that is often taken for granted, believed to exist without knowing exactly how it came about or how it is maintained. Although it is often during moments of crisis that nationalism becomes the most visible, Calhoun posits that it transcends moments of crisis and is "basic to collective identity in

the modern era” (2). Both Calhoun and Gellner associate nationalism with sentiment, albeit in different ways. Calhoun underlines the difference between nation and state through the distinction between sentiment and reason: “The discourse of nations is couched especially in terms of passion and identification, while that of states—kindred in many ways—is phrased more in terms of reason and interests” (3). In this way, for Calhoun nationalism is a source of sentiment that is propagated through art and music and allows the citizens of a nation to locate themselves in history (3).

Gellner, on the other hand, emphasizes the association between the state and national sentiment, explaining nationalism as “primarily a political principal” and that the “political and the national unit should be congruent” (1). The state for Gellner is that entity that enjoys a monopoly on violence and is constituted through the division of labor and a mandatory order (4). While Gellner defines the state according to violence, divisions, and order, he defines the nation as a cultural phenomenon that includes those members who share similar behavior and methods of communication and thus those who can recognize each other as members of the same community. Interestingly, then, the nation as a concept and series of rhetorical practices exists prior to its members who only learn to recognize themselves as such through the internalization of the cultural practices that define it. Thus for Gellner the sentimental aspect of nationalism pertains to the “violation” or the “fulfillment” of the pact between the political and the national (1). Although there are many ways to violate this pact, for Gellner the biggest threat to the political pact is when the power holders are distanced from the other members of the nation.

The origins of Mexican nationalism are fiercely debated. In his celebrated book *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*, David Brading introduces “Creole Patriotism” that he claims informed the early manifestations of Mexican nationalism and provided it with a

vocabulary (11). Beginning during the late eighteenth century and extending to the War of Independence and immediately after, the principal themes that supported what could be considered the initial stages of a Mexican nationalism were the adoration of the indigenous past, the degrading of the Conquest, and a xenophobic antipathy towards the Spanish (Brading, *Los orígenes* 15). In short, Mexican nationalism, according to Brading, was an anti-metropolitan sentiment that did not begin to constitute its own cultural nationalism until the end of the nineteenth century (Brading, *Los orígenes* 128-29).

By locating the origins of Mexican nationalism with the creoles, Brading calls to mind the “Creole Pioneers” of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. Anderson locates the foundation of nationalism in Latin America in the “pilgrimages” the creoles made through the colonial administrative system renovated by the Bourbons (Anderson 57). Anderson claims that on this “cramped pilgrimage” the creoles “found travelling-companions, who came to sense that their fellowship was based not only on that pilgrimage’s particular stretch, but on the shared fatality of trans-Atlantic birth” (Anderson 57). The accident, or “fatality,” of birth is especially telling here since it denotes not a feeling of American-ness, that is, not an embracing of one’s birthplace, but instead a not-Spanish inclination. Anderson takes the argument that Latin American nationalism was founded with the creoles farther by introducing his famous claim that “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (Anderson 46). While the reference to travel companions is a fortunate coincidence with my study, what is most important is Anderson’s claim that national sentiment needs to be represented.

What is apparent in the work of both Brading and Anderson, although not explicitly stated, is that nationalism in Latin America is both a modern phenomenon and an invention. In this respect, Hobsbawm argues that one of the principal characteristics of nationalism is that “[i]t belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period . . . with Gellner I would stress the element of artifact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations” (9-10). The language that Hobsbawm uses makes it clear that he does not believe in any type of primordial nationalism, he thinks instead that nationalism is engineered. He goes on to claim that nations do not precede states and nationalism, but just the opposite, “nationalism comes before nations” (10). This, as we will see, becomes important in nineteenth-century Mexico as the struggle between liberal and conservative representatives of the state spills over into the administration of art academies and informs the content of newspaper publications. Finally, Hobsbawm emphasizes education, technological, and economic expansion as key elements in the analysis of the development of nationalism and claims that this phenomenon must be viewed—and he breaks with Gellner here—from both above and below (Hobsbawm 10). Although Gellner’s top-down approach is discarded by Hobsbawm, it will be useful for this study.

My approach, like that of Gellner, is a top-down approach, a view of *letrados* who were all in some way associated with the state and who adamantly sought to construct an image of a national community in the literary and ideological fields. I do not aim to view the nation building process from the perspective of alterity (Bhabha) or to focus only on an understudied group of writers. Instead, I map a mode of writing, what I call “writing on the run,” that allows me to reconsider the contribution of some of the most celebrated nineteenth-century writers in Mexican literary history and that questions, or even undermines, their explicit goal of writing the nation into existence.

Moving Beyond Imagined Communities

As is evident in this short summary of approaches to nationalism, no one theory is sufficient to explain such a complicated phenomenon. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that during the period that is the focus of this dissertation no nations existed in Latin America and that it was not until the twentieth century that it became possible to speak of nationalism. In the introduction to *Beyond Imagined Communities* John Chasteen refers to the new republics as “nations [that] remained more aspiration than fact for many decades after gaining independence,” and “states in search of nationhood” that only became nations in the mid-twentieth century with the upsurge in democracy and popular participation (xviii). For this reason, the nation in the first half of the nineteenth century was a political desire fomented by a small group of cultural promoters who, through writing, sought to create the idea of a national community from the privileged space of those who had access to writing and documentation.

Chasteen’s argument for Anderson’s failed attempt at establishing the chronology of nationalism in Latin America is but one way that he suggests current critics take Anderson to task. In a concise list, Chasteen summarizes potential ways to expand on Anderson’s model:

the competition of other imaged communities, such as warring political parties; the enduring hegemonic sway of an elitist ‘lettered city’; the intersection of imagined with immediate, face-to-face communities....the thorny problem of how to integrate (or exorcise) an indigenous past. (xxiv-xxv)

In my dissertation, I explore all of these methodological approaches to both recognize the provocative nature of Anderson’s work, and to move beyond it. The presence of multiple imagined communities is apparent in nearly every chapter (the Yucatán, the provincial states of

Queretaro and Veracruz) and I dedicate an entire chapter to the dispute between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Travel writing grants readers the opportunity to witness the intersection between imagined communities and face-to-face encounters. For example, in the chapter on Justo Sierra O'Reilly the pronounced differences between what he imagines as the future of the Yucatán and the reality of its present is especially evident, as is the topic of the “problem” of the indigenous communities. An important part of my attempt to move beyond Anderson’s model is an analysis of the role of the press and print culture in the imagining of communities. As Fernando Unzueta observes in regard to the nineteenth century, “[i]ntellectuals of the period had enormous faith in the power of the written word, both formative and corruptive” (119). While many critical works concentrate on the formative power of the written word, I am more interested in the so-called corrupting influence. In other words, I aim to underline moments where these writers, consciously and unconsciously, undermine the formative power of writing by questioning the viability of their own discursive project.

Press, the Public Sphere, and Communities

In his study of the role of the novel and a new readership in the forging of nations, Unzueta opts to side with the formative power of the press. Referring to the colonial period, Unzueta explains the importance of the written and visual representations of the ingredients of an incipient national culture: “Colonial newspapers, therefore, began to articulate land, culture, and community into more coherent units, lending some weight to Anderson’s claim that print capitalism (largely newspapers and novels) allows territorial stretches to be ‘imagined as nations’” (Unzueta 124). As true and provocative as Unzueta’s observations are, in a recent study Víctor Goldgel provides an alternative interpretative to the role of the press in the late

colonial period and early decades of the republican period. Working within the Enlightenment tradition, newspapers were a vehicle for the transmission of new ideas, as is suggested by the notion of a national culture worthy of representation. While Unzueta focuses on novels, including their serialization, Goldgel explains the advantages of the press over books for the transmission of new ideas: “periódicos y revistas parecen contar con tres ventajas fundamentales con respecto a los libros para entusiasmar a la población . . . su brevedad . . . su bajo costo . . . la variedad de materias que tratan en sus páginas” (59). The brevity and low cost of a new press whose pages were capable of crossing international borders and influencing local politics is a topic I explore in my chapter on Justo Sierra O’Reilly. A new anxiety emerges, I argue, before the abundance of circulating texts that challenge the authority of writers in Mexico that forces them to employ discursive strategies, such as translation and footnotes, that undermine their power as *letrados*.

Goldgel convincingly argues that the highly accessible newspapers carried a modernizing message—the “new,” as Goldgel names it—that introduces other destabilizing elements into the public sphere. The introduction of the new national landscapes and customs, the same ingredients mentioned by Unzueta, was not only the advocacy for something new, and therefore unstable and unknown, but also established a didactic hierarchy in reference to the nation. The dominant presence of *costumbrismo* created a relationship between “pedagogía y progreso” that, in turn, culminated in a new contract between writer and reader: “pedagogía y progreso se funden en un novedoso pacto de lectura que implica tanto la existencia de una opinión pública de la cual el escritor se dice portavoz como de un esfuerzo por guiar a dicha opinión desde la posición privilegiada del que más sabe” (60). This patriarchal relationship between reader and writer not only challenged the notions of democracy and liberty that accompanied Enlightenment

thinking, it created a dependency on the image of the *letrado* as source of knowledge and authority. Nevertheless, the press as a forum for the introduction of the destabilizing “new,” and the emotional appeals that often accompanied political battles, together undermined the legitimacy of reason and the written word presupposed by many critics:

la hermandad entre palabra impresa y razón postulada por teóricos como Benedict Anderson (1993) y Jurgen Habermas (1981) en relación con la prensa queda bastante cuestionada, así como también el estereotipo del letrado como guardián y administrador del orden de los signos. (Goldgel 64)

Goldgel’s interpretation of the function of the “new” is in direct opposition to Rama’s *letrado* given that the appearance of novelty challenged the stability of the legal and bureaucratic signs necessary for the existence of the authoritative writer, introducing a velocity that suggested “la acepción positiva de ruptura con el pasado, pero también conservaba el sentido (muchas veces negativo) de ‘asombro’” (65).

My emphasis on the press and my analysis of how the texts written by or about travelers appeared in the journals and newspapers of the period is indebted to Goldgel and the instability of the press that he highlights in his work. While the velocity of circulating texts is important in my study of Justo Sierra O’Reilly, the destabilizing novelty of the *costumbrismo* of Payno, and the reliance on the authority of a group of *letrados*/friends is also in agreement with Goldgel’s observations. In “An Illness in the Family” I focus on political unrest between the two principal political parties, but through the lens of the destabilizing ambulatory condition that conservative writers associated with liberalism, the indisputable modernizing discourse of the period. In my chapter on Guillermo Prieto, the role of the press serves as the background to my analysis. Prieto’s negative account of Santa Anna and the obvious importance Santa Anna posits on the

power and velocity of circulating documents result in Prieto's exile and the subsequent creation of a text by a foundational author that is in turn founded on prohibition. Either exiled within Mexico or representatives of a region threatening to secede, these authors offer accounts of the difficulty of constructing an imagined community. These authors provide a unique perspective on the nation building process in that they are simultaneously included and excluded from the national project. When read together and contextualized within the framework of nineteenth-century press, these authors even go beyond questioning the possibility of a nation; they disarticulate the attempts to forge a national community.

The Chapters of the Dissertation

The chapters of this dissertation are organized chronologically according to the historical moments that frame the texts and writers that I study. In Chapter 1, I explore the role of travel writing in the creation of an international vision of the Yucatán during the simultaneous violent threats of the Mexican American War and the Caste War. Justo Sierra O'Reilly, a prominent novelist, journalist, and politician, captures in his travel writing the difficulty of navigating the differences that separate Mexico from the intermittently autonomous Yucatán region in the face of both local and foreign armed intervention. During his travels in the United States, Sierra O'Reilly realizes that salvation will come from neither the centralized government of Mexico, nor the government of the United States. This realization emerges from the distance that separates him from his home and forces him to reevaluate his Yucatecan identity and to consider the role of American and Mayan culture in its construction. Through a comparison of Sierra O'Reilly's diary, an intimate document meant only for his wife's eyes, and a longer, more detailed account of the same visit to the United States meant for publication we see a pronounced

preoccupation with how texts and publication strategies affect the perception of the Yucatán. In sum, I argue that Sierra O'Reilly recognizes that in the aftermath of the invasion of Mexico by the United States and the outbreak of the Caste War, the survival of the Yucatán depends less on the creation of a nation state and more on the control of circulating texts that falsify the regions' image.

In Chapter 2, I analyze an unstudied text written by *costumbrista*, statesman, and national poet Guillermo Prieto. Prieto is considered an important member of the founding political fathers, and a fundamental writer and contributor to the archive of national literature. In spite of this image, I argue in this chapter that through the analysis of *Viajes de orden suprema*, a text informed by censorship and prohibition, we gain a new understanding of Prieto and a new perspective on the difficulties of writing the nation. *Viajes* does not confirm Prieto's status as a national hero, but instead directs the reader to an interpretation of the obstacles to nation building. In spite of Prieto's exile to the state of Querétaro for satirizing Santa Anna, Prieto writes more than ever. In this way, his exile and the prohibition on writing culminates in more writing that, instead of instructing his readers on ways to imagine the Mexican nation, demonstrates the power of the forces that threaten it: censorship and prohibition.

Chapter 3 explores the appropriation by conservative writers of the metaphor "La familia enferma," a term associated with Benito Juárez's mobile government during the Reform War and the French Intervention in Mexico. Used by liberals and conservatives, "La familia enferma" appeared in print culture as both a monument to resistance, and the parody of a defeated faction. Often overlooked by literary and cultural critics, conservative writers approached nation building through the confrontation with the monopolization of public discourse by liberal rhetoric. When liberalism became obligatory, conservative writers wrote themselves into liberal discourse. The

study of “La familia enferma” allows me to include the equally important but less studied conservative voice within the context of nineteenth-century nation-building projects. I locate the origins of the metaphor in two important discourses of difference, illness and the family, to suggest points of contact between the liberal and conservative rhetoric of the period. In other words, in spite of the common polarizing interpretation of liberals and conservatives, there were many points of contact between these two groups. Nevertheless, these points of contact did not reveal cohesion but that the discourse of nation-building on which the Mexican imaginary community was created was always accompanied by a counter-discourse that simultaneously questioned it. An important part of questioning the viability of nineteenth-century nation-building projects is the inclusion of dissenting voices, but also the reevaluation of the voices of authority. The metaphor of “La familia enferma” allows for such a study.

In Chapter 4, I analyze two sets of travel letters written by important proponents of the Mexican nation: Manuel Payno and Ignacio Ramírez. Appearing in print in important journals of the period, these letters provide an intimate account of two important moments in Mexican nation-building: the post-independence years when customs and provincial spaces began to be envisioned as worthy of literary and artistic representation and the first stages of the French intervention. I read these letters within the context of the explicit desire of the editors of the journals to present an image of Mexico propitious for the cultivation of a unified national community. In spite of their aim, I argue, these letters present the construction and reaffirmation of an intimate, masculine identity associated with a prestigious group of writers. Instead of constructing a nation founded on equality, these letters consolidate friendship that is defined by exclusion. Further complicating the possibility of these letters to present a cohesive image of a national community, the masculinity of the nation-builders is questioned in these letters. In other

words, the foundational masculine relationships that promise to forge the nation through writing also threaten to dissemble that imagined community under construction.

In the conclusion, I suggest how my dissertation is in dialogue with critical studies of the institutionalization of literature during and after the Mexican Revolution. Key for the creation of a national literature in the formative years after the Revolution was the recuperation and reevaluation of national literary figures. An important part of this process, and one that has received extensive critical study, is the definition of *lo mexicano*, or *la mexicanidad*. In works that span the fields of literary studies, anthropology, and sociology, the study of the role of literature and culture in the creation and institutionalization of *lo mexicano* is brought to the forefront of twentieth-century Mexican nationalism. To conclude my dissertation I give a brief overview of these critical studies and suggest the importance of my reevaluation of the nineteenth century as a means to rethink these extensive studies of nationalism and identity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

CHAPTER 1

MR. SIERRA O'REILLY GOES TO WASHINGTON

While on a diplomatic mission to Washington D.C., Justo Sierra O'Reilly (1814-61) developed a fear of phantoms. Not the disembodied spirit of a lost loved one, or the haunting image of a deceased stranger, but of phantom texts that Sierra O'Reilly believed threatened both his livelihood and the white creole community of the Yucatán. During an important meeting with James Buchanan, the American Secretary of State, Sierra O'Reilly made a curious observation: "Mr. Buchanan se hallaba en un sillón cerca de la chimenea, hojeando un libro que me pareció ser el de Mr. Stephens sobre Yucatán" (*Impresiones* 289). Although the title of the book that Buchanan held is not revealed, Sierra O'Reilly's paranoia that it could be a copy of John L. Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* speaks to the influence of American travel writing in Mexico and the anxiousness that it at times provoked in Mexican writers. As an important participant in the world of fictional, historical, and journalistic writing, Sierra O'Reilly understood the role of print culture in the validation of the Yucatecan voice. He dedicated thousands of pages to the historical explanation of the local indigenous culture, to the fictional rewriting of the Yucatecan colonial period, and to the documentation of his travels in the United States and Canada. Yet, in spite of his extraordinary literary output, Sierra O'Reilly often mentioned his unpublished works, troubled in general by the difficulty of gaining literary visibility in Mexico. The principal debates of the period were held in the pages of newspapers and journals, and losing control over the printed page meant sure defeat in the literary and political forums. It is for these reasons that while laboring in the office of Mr. Buchanan to

secure US aid to the Yucatán during the Caste War (1847-1901), Sierra O'Reilly began to hallucinate the phantom of his lettered rivals.

The relationship between Sierra O'Reilly and popular American aspiring anthropologist and traveler John L. Stephens can be best summarized as a misunderstanding over another type of phantom: the ghosts of the inhabitants and architects of the ruins that populated the Yucatán peninsula. While Stephens attributed the construction of the ruins to the Mayan Indians that he met on his visit to the region in 1839 and 1841, for Sierra O'Reilly it was imperative to convince the reading public of the opposite: it was impossible for the same Indians who were waging a violent war against the white Yucatecan creole population to have constructed such sophisticated structures. At stake for Sierra O'Reilly was what he believed would be the imminent extinction of the white creole community in Yucatán if he did not find a way to verify the violent nature of the Indian rebels and thus justify support for a counterattack. For Sierra O'Reilly the debate signified the need to control the representation of Yucatán and of the war being waged there; this need, in turn, placed the writer at the heart of an ongoing dispute between the circulation of texts written by foreign visitors to Mexico and the less visible Mexican travel writing tradition.

What makes Sierra O'Reilly's travel writing and his reaction to foreign travel accounts especially relevant is his role in the cultural and political debates of the period. Sierra O'Reilly believed that his self-proclaimed whiteness and his educated status would culminate in his acceptance as an enlightened equal in the American halls of democracy. Unfortunately for the Yucatecan *letrado*, in Washington D.C. the debates and discussions over the state of affairs in the Yucatán were carried out in English, a language that he claimed to read well but spoke with embarrassing results. In this way, Sierra O'Reilly's phantasmagoric hallucinations mark the beginning of a story about the authority of travel writing and debates among travel writers, the

need to speak the language of progress, and the printed struggle to control the literary representation of a politically and culturally marginalized region of what today we call Mexico. Upon realizing that his mission in Washington D.C. had failed and feeling betrayed by his own government, Sierra O'Reilly turned his attention to the translation of the text that was the source of his paranoia, Mr. Stephens's book about the Yucatán, and to an extensive defense of his interpretation of the history of the ruins of the Yucatán in the local press.

In this chapter I place Sierra O'Reilly within the genealogy of nineteenth century travel writers. Generally considered a novelist, statesman, and journalist, Sierra O'Reilly's travel writing reveals the complicated relationship between the Yucatán, Mexico, the United States, and the discourse of race and *indigenismo* of the nineteenth century. Approaching Sierra O'Reilly's work through the lens of travel writing allows for a broader understanding of how one of the most prominent men of letters from a rebellious and marginalized region of Mexico reacted to foreign influence when under both physical and political threat. An important aspect of this study is the reevaluation of creole identity that Sierra O'Reilly experiences in the United States while his home is under attack. Other scholars have noted the change in Sierra O'Reilly's opinion of the Indian rebels that resulted from his visit to the US.⁷ My contention is that in Sierra O'Reilly's travel writing we see a growing concern for the manner in which the representation of the Yucatán and Yucatecan history begins to circulate out of his control, with printed texts outnumbering any works he could publish. This realization comes on the heels of another: that in spite of his status at home, abroad he is viewed as little more than another member of an underdeveloped nation. The combination of these anxieties culminated in Sierra O'Reilly's

⁷ John F. Chuchiak IV observes that Sierra O'Reilly's view of the Yucatecan Indians changed as a result of his visit to the United States from one of an ignorant and innocent Indian, to a violent group threatening the civilized white creoles. Chuchiak argues that a smear campaign unleashed in the American press was the cause of Sierra O'Reilly's change of heart.

translation of Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, an attempt to dominate the most widely read text on Yucatecan culture of the period. His aim was to correct what he viewed as a flawed representation of his home that threatened to sway the public opinion away from the Yucatecan creoles. Nevertheless, his attempt to paint the Indian rebels as a backward and violent people demonstrates a proximity to the indigenous world. In other words, as he attempts to argue for the extermination of the rebels, he paradoxically demonstrates his vast knowledge of, and fascination with, indigenous culture, language, and customs. In short, in order to save the Yucatecan modernizing project from the machetes of the barbarous Indian rebels, Sierra O'Reilly must demonstrate his cultural proximity to the same community he has come to fear.

This chapter offers an analysis of Sierra O'Reilly, the Yucatecan *letrado*, that diverges from his image as novelist and editor and that focuses on Sierra O'Reilly the traveler and travel writer. Past studies have focused on Sierra O'Reilly the novelist (Wright, Gerassi-Navarro, Unzueta), and the politician (De Armond), while others present Sierra O'Reilly as a combination of legislator, writer, and historian (Mendiolea). More recent studies have focused on Sierra O'Reilly's attempts in his travel writing to construct a modern nation through the image of the United States as democratic utopia (España Paredes), Sierra O'Reilly's politicization of the indigenous culture of the Yucatán as a result of his travels in the United States (Chuchiak), and the analysis of the role of the United States in post-Independence Mexico through the eyes of Sierra O'Reilly the traveler (Nolte Blanquet). Although these studies emphasize Sierra O'Reilly the traveler and highlight the importance of his travel writing, they focus either on a narratological analysis (España Paredes), or on historical factors that affect Sierra O'Reilly's judgment of Mexico (Chuchiak, Nolte Blanquet). My approach, however, isolates Sierra O'Reilly as traveler in an attempt to uncover his relationship with other travelers and travel

writers of the period. This includes a reading of how Sierra O'Reilly reacted to the increasingly accessible travel accounts that documented life in Mexico and the Yucatán.

In contrast to studies of nineteenth century literature that focus on single authors or works as participants in the teleological construction of an imagined national community, I ask how Sierra O'Reilly's view of the Yucatán changed as a result of his travels to the United States, but also how that view was altered by the heightened accessibility of foreign travel accounts of the Yucatán. I argue that Sierra O'Reilly recognizes that in the aftermath of the invasion of Mexico by the United States and the outbreak of the Caste War, the survival of the white creole Yucatecan depends less on the creation of a nation state and more on the control of travelers and texts that give an account of the Yucatán that he considered inaccurate.

The Written Race to Represent Mexico: Mexican Travelers and Foreign Travel Accounts

In spite of the rupture between the creole and indigenous communities caused by the Caste War, as a region the image of the Yucatán was inseparable from its indigenous past and present. That identity was, in part, a result of foreign travel accounts of the indigenous Yucatán. In his introduction to Sierra O'Reilly's translation of Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán*, José Ortiz Monasterio explains that during the peak of American westward expansion, Stephens's work brought the Mayans to readers in the United States. Containing daguerrotypes by Frederick Catherwood (1799-1854), *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán*, "descubrió para el mundo 44 ciudades mayas, de las cuales sólo Uxmal era conocida" (Monasterio VIII). In this way, both the written descriptions of Stephens and the visual representations of Catherwood helped to disseminate and construct the idea of the Yucatán in the imagination of the Anglophone public.

Sierra O'Reilly's translation of, and response to, Stephens's and Catherwood's work marks an important encounter between foreign and domestic representations of the Yucatán. Nevertheless, this type of encounter was not limited to the Yucatán. The burgeoning travel writing industry demonstrated a stark contrast between writers traveling to Mexico and Mexicans writing about travel. In her article titled, "Mexican Travel Writing: The Legacy of Foreign Travel Writers in Mexico, or Why Mexicans Say They Don't Write Travel Books," Thea Pitman argues that Mexican writers have expressed ambivalence towards the travel writing genre because it is commonly associated with a colonialist legacy and she concludes that from this ambivalence emerged a paradoxical situation where writers cultivate the travel writing genre while claiming not to (209-10). Key to Pitman's argument is the claim that foreign accounts of Mexico are abundant and thus dissuade Mexicans from writing their own travel account of their homeland. Furthermore, many writers, she claims, simply extract details from the widely translated, published, and more prestigious foreign travel accounts when writing about Mexico ("Mexican Travel Writing" 212). Pitman specifically cites Alexander Von Humboldt as a liberating reference for Mexican authors who confirmed Mexico's suitability as an object of admiration, "Humboldt's works can be seen to have helped Mexicans free themselves from the shackles of the Spanish Empire by proving their suitability" (Pitman, "Mexican Travel Writing" 213). According to Pitman, Mexican travel writers in the nineteenth century found themselves trapped between the cultivation of a genre directly associated with the colonial powers they had fought to overthrow, and foreign travel writers who granted their blessing to Mexico as worthy literary muse.

In direct opposition to Humboldt's positive representation of Mexico, Pitman cites Fanny Calderón de la Barca's *Life in Mexico* (1843) as a negative example of foreign travel writers.

Pitman explains that Calderón's account of Mexico incited outrage, claiming that it was not just what she got wrong about the country that bothered Mexican intellectuals, but also, "the flippant and willfully mordant way in which she described members of the social élite" ("Mexican Travel Writing 213). Michael Costeloe expands on Pitman's example of bad travel writers in Mexico by exploring the written reaction that such authors provoked in Mexican writers. In his article titled, "Prescott's *History of the Conquest* and Calderon de la Barca's *Life in Mexico: Mexican Reaction, 1843-44*," Costeloe presents a juxtaposition of two foreign authors whose works on Mexico demonstrated varying degrees of inadequacy, and the manner in which Mexican intellectuals reacted in an attempt to correct what they considered to be flawed accounts. Costeloe confirms Pitman's observations on the attacks on Calderón by Mexican intellectuals, citing Calderón's book as "a collection of despicable trivia" that she wrote to seek, "praise to satisfy her vanity" ("Prescott's" 344). The Mexican reaction to William Hickling Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) was more tempered in comparison to the reaction to Calderón. The book enjoyed a certain prestige within Mexico and was to be translated and published in spite of many Mexican writers and politicians finding numerous errors in the work. Costeloe explains that among the problems with Prescott's book was the way in which Prescott's religious beliefs led to misinterpretations of Mexican reality, and errors arising from Prescott's general ignorance of Mexican culture ("Prescott's" 338-39). The list of prominent Mexican intellectuals who were recruited to make the revisions to Prescott's book reads like a who's who of nineteenth-century Mexican politics, literature, and, in general, lettered culture: Lucas Alamán (1792-1853), historian and an important member of the Conservative party; Carlos María Bustamante (1744-1848), a Mexican historian; José Gómez de la Cortina (1799-1860), an important academic and founder of La Academia de la Lengua in 1835; Andrés Quintana Roo

(1718-1851), liberal statesman and key figure of the Independence; and José María Tornel (1795-1853), an important writer and politician known for his influential relationship with Antonio López de Santa Anna. All were asked to correct Mexican names, supply unpublished documents unavailable to Prescott, and to clarify historical events (Costeloe “Prescott” 340).

While the reaction to Calderón’s *Life in Mexico* was categorical rejection, Prescott’s book had a polarizing effect within Mexican intellectual circles. As is evident in the list of experts charged with correcting Prescott’s book, members of both the liberal and conservative parties participated. As a result, what Costeloe calls a “race to publish” occurred with the conservative Alamán’s edition winning (“Prescott” 341). The importance of Prescott’s book to these creole members of the Mexican intellectuals can be summarized in a debate the waged over Prescott’s discussion of the removal of Hernán Cortés’s bones from their resting place. Costeloe paraphrases a letter to *Siglo XIX*, one of the most important newspapers of the period, written by Tornel where he expressed his concern about the errors in the prestigious American historian’s book:

Having quickly read Prescott’s book, he wrote, he had been very disturbed to discover that he had departed from the rules of good scholarship and on the basis of inaccurate evidence, he had given credence to the slander that a mob in Mexico City had once tried to destroy or profane Cortés’ last remains. Such an allegation made before by writers of less renown but now reproduced by someone of Prescott’s standing was a calumny and insult to the honour of the Mexican republic. (Costeloe, “Prescott” 340)

We find in Costeloe’s repetition of Tornel’s words an indication of the importance of the role of history (the colonial past) and scholarship in the constitution of the post-independence creole identity. For Tornel it was important that the remains of the man whose appearance in the

Americas formed a direct connection to Europe were unharmed, and that Mexico should not be viewed as a country taken over by mobs, likely racially mixed. A key word in understanding the context of Tornel's words is "calumny," meaning here the slandering of the young nation by an authority figure from abroad.

Although Prescott's book is not a travel narrative, his dependence on observations made by Fanny Calderón de la Barca, the unanimously trivial narrator of Mexican reality, to describe Mexican customs and character make travel writing an important part of his work (Costeloe, "Prescott" 343). Furthermore, it serves as an example, contemporaneous to Sierra O'Reilly and the Yucatecan plight for autonomy, of the internal struggle to create a national past, and the external, foreign, influence over the same debates that complicated the constitution of creole identity. As Costeloe points out, an important part of the war of Independence was the dissemination by royalist sympathizers of printed propaganda that painted members of Mexican society as, "not just economically backward but also retarded in all the social and cultural graces of a so-called civilized society" ("Prescott" 346). This negative representation of a backward Mexico was perpetuated after the war by similar texts produced from without. The anxiety caused by the flawed, although widely disseminated, foreign texts will be revisited in Justo Sierra O'Reilly's travel narratives where the translation and rewriting of texts by foreign travelers will become a remedy for such anxiety.

What makes Sierra O'Reilly's case different from that of the Mexican intellectuals associated with the political center of Mexico City is that he is not interested in debating the location of Cortés's bones, nor the construction of national monuments in their honor. Rather, Sierra O'Reilly's preoccupations are local, his political concerns confined to the Yucatán peninsula. Furthermore, the immediate point of contention is not the role of Spanish conquerors

or the foreign idea of their role in post-independence Mexico, but instead Sierra O'Reilly grapples with his own relationship with the indigenous past, and how that past informs his present.

A Writer in a Region of Unrest

It would be an anachronism to speak of a Mexican national community in the mid-nineteenth century, and even more so one that included the Yucatán peninsula. Not only was the Yucatán an intermittently autonomous community having split with the centralized Mexican government, but it also suffered an internal polarizing conflict that pitted the urban centers of Campeche and Mérida against each other. Furthermore, the geographically marginalized space—the peninsula is located in the far southeastern corner of Mexico—was characterized by a social conflict that separated the politically powerful white creoles from the numerically superior Mayan Indians, and that culminated in the prolonged and violent Caste War. A product of this unstable social and political atmosphere, Sierra O'Reilly emerged as a prolific writer and inexhaustible participant in nineteenth-century print culture. G. Ferrer de Mendiola describes the atmosphere in the Yucatán peninsula at the beginning of the nineteenth century by stating that the creole and mestizo communities successfully colonized the peninsula with the help of forced labor performed by the Mayan Indians. In this way, the cultural atmosphere was founded on ethnic diversity and was based on hierarchy.

Sierra O'Reilly was born in Tixcaltuyú, a small town in the Yucatán peninsula, on September 24, 1814 (Mendiola 205). The son of a priest, José María Domínguez, and María Sierra O'Reilly, Sierra O'Reilly was soon taken to the urban center of Mérida to live. In 1829 he began his studies in philosophy in the Seminario Conciliar de San Ildefonso, and between the

years of 1829-1836 he studied theology and civil law (*derecho civil*) in the same institution (Mendiola 209). In 1836 Sierra O'Reilly went to Mexico City to study law, obtaining his degree in July of 1838. Upon his return to the Yucatán that same year, he finished his doctoral thesis in the Nacional y Pontificia Universidad de Mérida in both civil and canon law (Mendiola 213).

John F. Chuchiak IV considers Sierra O'Reilly the most prestigious member of the Generation of 1840, an "intellectual movement" whose members began to write a new history of the Yucatán based on archival research (60). The dissemination of these works reflected a new approach to education which in turn increased literacy levels in urban centers or, "the rejuvenation of the educational system . . . in decay since the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767" (Chuchiak 60). Sierra O'Reilly and his generation were responsible also for economic advances that stemmed from increased exportation, which in turn facilitated cultural projects. Furthermore, this intellectual movement was responsible for a regeneration of the press spearheaded by Sierra O'Reilly's *El Museo Yucateco* (a journal that lasted only two years) and later *El Registro Yucateco*, in press from 1844 to 1849 (Chuchiak 61).

Sierra O'Reilly became an important novelist, journalist, and historian. Chuchiak underlines the elite nature of his literary output claiming that, "Sierra's journalistic activities during this period concentrated more on the promotion of high culture in Yucatán than on a realistic analysis of its social and economic conditions" (61). Sierra O'Reilly was the author of two novels, *Un año en el Hospital de San Lázaro*, published serially in 1845 in *El Registro Yucateco*, and *La hija del judío*, also published serially in *El Fénix* between 1848 and 1851. Both novels are considered historical novels that recreate a specific moment in Yucatecan colonial history. Among his works is the two volume set titled *Los indios de Yucatán* with which

Sierra O'Reilly had hoped to narrate the history of the indigenous population of the peninsula from pre-conquest through the Caste War.⁸ Chuchiak describes this work as a collection of essays that “re-examined the colonial history of Yucatán in order to discover the reasons for the Caste War” and summarizes Sierra O'Reilly's conclusions as being that “the repressive Spanish colonial system of labor and tribute, the Indian's innate hatred of the white race, and the barbaric Maya religion were direct causes” for the war (67).

The documentary nature of Sierra O'Reilly's literary works makes them important for their historical and ethnological traits, but also as manifestos of the white creole interpretation of the Yucatecan reality. By re-writing the colonial past in his novels, or by creating an archive that seeks to explain the indigenous past, Sierra O'Reilly brings the contemporary problems of race and exploitation to the forefront, allowing for an evaluation of the creole fears and potential remedies. Thus, Sierra O'Reilly's work is valuable as a point of reference in the assessment of the transition from the colonial period, to Mexican independence, and later Yucatecan autonomy, and the omnipresent tensions between members of the white and indigenous communities.

Another source of tension in the region was constant debate over federalism and centralism. As Hector Pérez Martínez observes, in post-Independence Mexico the Yucatán had, in practice, already separated from Mexico (XLII). Having declared their independence in 1821, the Yucatecans enjoyed a period of political peace before being confronted with the problem of how to incorporate the peninsula into the new republic that was forming around them (Quezada 121). In 1823, the provincial council agreed to join Mexico under the condition that they write their own constitution as part of a federal republic (Quezada 123). Nevertheless, when problems

⁸ In the editor's note to the 1994 edition published by the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán he explains that the work was originally titled *Consideraciones sobre el origen, causas y tendencias de la sublevación de los indígenas, sus probables resultados y su posible remedio* and published serially in *El Fénix*. When *El Fénix* went out of print in 1851 the publication of said work was suspended, thus explaining why it was left unfinished. For more see “Nota del editor” in *Los indios de Yucatán, Tomo I*, pgs. 11-12.

emerged regarding payment to soldiers in 1829, the military executed a coup that favored a central republic. What ensued was a political tug-of-war that saw members of the creole elite take power intermittently in favor of one side or the other while the indigenous population, the majority of the region, suffered the consequences.

The centralist regime headed by President Bustamante was a source of conflict in the region. The already dominant Federalist ideas in the Yucatán, a result of the diverse regional character that made it different from Mexico City and of its geographical isolation, were exacerbated by Bustamante's politics which included a series of taxes on the Yucatecan community and a military draft that sent local men to the northern border to fight in the conflict over Texas in 1836. This culminated in a political struggle that would eventually end in the Yucatán's secession from Mexico (Mendiolea 213). In 1839 Santiago Imán, "an irascible merchant, militia officer, and small-town patriarch," successfully solicited aid from the local caciques and with his peasant army was successful in taking the cities of Valladolid and Campeche (Rugeley, *Rebellion* 1-2). But once the army was dispersed and the federal system returned to the Yucatán, local politicians decided that Federalism was no longer enough:

Restablecido el sistema federal en Yucatán, el 4 de marzo de 1840 el Congreso local decretó que 'entre tanto la nación Mexicana no sea regida conforme a las leyes federales, el estado de Yucatán permanecerá separado de la Unión, reasumiendo su legislatura las facultades del Congreso general y su gobernador las de presidente de la República.

(Quezada 130)

In spite of attempts to recapture the Yucatán, the region remained independent, and the beginning of the Mexican-American War in 1846 served as further incentive to postpone

restoration to the republic as the Yucatán was determined to, “no contribuir con los hombres, dinero y elementos de Guerra solicitados por Santa Anna” (Pérez Martínez XLIII).

As we have seen, to speak of the Yucatán as a unified region during the nineteenth century is misleading as it overshadows the internal conflict that plagued it during the first half of the century. As Quezada highlights, “los centralistas y federalistas sólo se unificaron, henchidos de valor regional, cuando de 1842 a 1843 Antonio López de Santa Anna pretendió con sus ejércitos reincorporar la península” (122). But even this political binary fails to capture the extent to which the Yucatán was divided. The political conflict was translated into a rivalry between the region’s two principal cities, Mérida and Campeche. Pérez Martínez explains the historical, economical, and geographical nature of the tension:⁹

La historia de la Península, desde el momento mismo de la declaración de la Independencia de España, hasta la erección del Estado de Campeche, se llena con las rivalidades de carácter económico entre el puerto (Campeche) and su metrópoli (Mérida). Originadas primero por la resistencia de la segunda a cumplir las disposiciones relativas a la suspensión de todo intercambio comercial con España y sus colonias. (XLI)

The unrest of the region was also a result of racial strain, as hinted at above. While the extent of the struggle between the indigenous and white creole Yucatecans is much too broad for the purposes of this chapter, it is important to discuss one of its more extreme manifestations: the Caste War (1847-1901). Although it is not my intention to develop an analysis of possible causes of the Caste War, it is necessary for the present study to consider the complicated nature of the political atmosphere in the Yucatán during the mid-nineteenth century as it is this atmosphere that informs Sierra O’Reilly’s *Diario* and *Impresiones*.

⁹ For a more through account of this period in Yucatecan history see Justo Miguel Flores Escalante’s “¿Separatismo, autonomía o soberanía? Yucatán, 1821-1848” in *Yucatán en la ruta del liberalismo mexicano, siglo XIX*.

Although numerically superior, the indigenous communities were politically marginalized during the different struggles for regional freedom that began before the War of Independence and continued through the nation-building process. The “indios” did not benefit from civilizing efforts or cultural advances and only in rare cases were they able to access positions of power (Pérez Martínez XXXVIII). The main causes of the Caste War are generally held to be economic in nature with land and poor labor conditions at the center of the debate, although such a claim glosses over the racial and cultural aspects that could have played a role in the conflict. Quezada emphasizes the increasing importance of *henequén* in the region in creating new landed elite and further widening gaps between white creoles and local “Indios.” As the demand for sacks, bags and cables made of the fibrous material grew, groups of *hacendados* made attempts to found a company that could meet the exports needs to ports in Mexico and the United States (Quezada 138). Since the process of treating the agave plant to produce these goods was a local tradition, the *hacendados* generally did not seek workers from outside the region, a fact that contributed to debates over labor conditions and land ownership (Quezada 138). Terry Rugeley cites one of the Maya *caciques*, Jacinto Pat, who claimed that the origins of the war were to found in “peasant outrage over the tide of nickel-and-dime *arbitrios* that had swamped rural life” (Rebellion 23). While these historians seek the cause of the conflict in land and economy, others, like Sierra O’Reilly, made more racist arguments based on the backwardness or ignorance of the Indians, or their innate tendency toward violence.

With the combined presence of the Mexican American War and the Caste War that threatened the survival of the ruling white creole class, the Yucatecan government was forced to seek assistance abroad. Sierra O’Reilly was commissioned by Barret to request the removal of American military presence on the island of Carmen, to seek aid from the U.S. government in the

war against the indigenous population, and, as the Caste War escalated, to possibly suggest the annexation of the territory to the United States as a last resort. As demonstrated in this concise summary, the Yucatán had an exceptional trajectory in Mexican history as it passed from autonomous republic to part of the Federal Republic of Mexico and back to autonomy. It was not until 1848 that the Yucatán rejoined the Mexican Republic indefinitely, and not until 1858 that the peninsula was divided into the states of Campeche and Yucatán. In this way, the categories of nation, patriotism, and loyalty in the Yucatán are undermined and redefined during the unstable period following Independence.

Indians and Creole Identity

Simón Bolívar captured the complicated identity politics of the Latin American Independence movements in his “Carta de Jamaica” (1815): “mas nosotros, que apenas conservamos vestigios de lo que en otro tiempo fue, y que por otra parte no somos indios ni europeos, sino una especie media entre los legítimos propietarios del país y los usurpadores españoles” (89). Bolívar’s schizophrenic declaration that the creole identity was founded on a double negation of the empire that produced the conquest and the conquered indigenous communities summarizes both the general problems of identity in the post-Independence Americas and the specific one in Mexico. The role of indigenous communities in the post-Independence republics of Latin America was problematic. Between the absence of a consolidated national identity in the present and the need to distance themselves from their Spanish heritage, creoles sought to anchor themselves in the glorious indigenous past of the same communities conquered in the sixteenth century. As Mabel Moraña explains, and as is evident in Bolívar’s declaration, the post-colonial nation-building projects called for the, “recuperación de

una memoria histórica capaz de iluminar y potenciar nuestra comprensión del presente” (82).

This romantic recuperation of the past did not, however, mark a stable transition to a politically autonomous modern national subject. It was instead characterized by a fragmented encounter, “donde razón y delirio, escritura y oralidad, realidad y utopía, se combinan en el proceso del que emerge la nación moderna en América Latina” (Moraña 82). The strained relationship between creole identity and the colonial and indigenous pasts culminated in a general neglect for the living, breathing indigenous communities of the nineteenth century thus sparking debate over the place of the “indian” in nation building projects.

The arguments for and against the inclusion of the native communities first in the colonies, then in the free republics, are inseparable from the notion of creole identity. In his exhaustive study of creole patriotism, *The First America: The Spanish monarchy, Creole patriots, and the Liberal state 1492-1867* (1991), D.A. Brading traces the development of the arguments in defense of the indigenous communities and the counter arguments that challenged them. Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566) spearheaded the defense of the Indians by contesting the feats of celebrated actors in the conquest of the Americas, and he was famously challenged by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1489-1573) in a public debate in Valladolid in 1550. Brading summarizes that the principal point of contention in the debate was Sepúlveda’s claim that, “the natives of America were slaves by nature and hence unfit to govern themselves,” while Las Casas, citing complex government and religion to support his argument, set out to prove that the Indians, specifically the Incas and Aztecs, were as civilized as the ancient Roman and Greek civilizations (1). Although this is an oversimplification of what was a complex exchange between two important sixteenth-century humanists, it serves to establish the origin of the debate

surrounding the native inhabitants of the Americas that will be redefined and rearticulated throughout the following centuries.

Brading explains that in the seventeenth century the creoles, inheritors of the conquered lands, sought to redefine themselves in the face of the enhanced threat of “dispossession” that came in the form of peninsular Spaniards who flooded the Americas (2). It was also during this period that the texts that would serve as the founding blocks of creole identity appeared: “It was in this time also that creole nostalgia for both the heroic epoch of the conquest and the exotic grandeur of the native empires was deepened by the publication of Juan de Torquemada’s *Monarquía Indiana* and the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’s *Comentarios reales de los Incas*” (Brading 2-3). The complicated continuity between a glorious past and colonial present was challenged by the prolific travel accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When travelers such as Charles Marie de la Condamine (1701-74) arrived in the Americas, they failed to discover the glorious Indigenous civilizations that the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega wrote about. As Brading observes, La Condamine expressed, “his inability to reconcile the elevated image of the Incas provided by Garcilaso de la Vega with the degradation of their descendants” (423). Although Brading’s paraphrasing of La Condamine uncovers the problematic continuity between the indigenous past and the present, Brading also points out that La Condamine’s declaration places him in the same category as Spanish humanists from the sixteenth century, such as Ginés de Sepúlveda, who see only backwardness and impediment in the indigenous communities of the present. Therefore, Brading underscores both the continuity of negative thinking in regard to the indigenous communities, as well as the lack of continuity between the celebrated indigenous past and the negative reality of the Indians that links Enlightenment thinking (La Condamine) with the Renaissance (Ginés de Sepúlveda) (423).

Another important contribution to the debate over the place of the indigenous communities in the constitution of creole identity made by travelers to the Americas regarded the role of climate in the constitution of a creole subjectivity. Corneille de Pauw (1739-99) presented arguments on the importance of “climatic determinism and American exceptionalism” that, according to Brading, made him the successor to Sepúlveda and the antithesis of the inheritor of the Las Casas legacy, the Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731-87) (Brading 428). Among the debates arising within the creole community in response to the argument that climate established character and the capacity to be civilized, was the problematic nature of appropriating the accomplishments of the indigenous past, while subscribing to the idea of what Brading calls, “climatically induced savagery” (431). Obviously, the eyewitness accounts of Indian savagery posited by La Condamine and Pauw presented serious challenges to the written works that offered an opposing view, the Inca and Clavijero among the most celebrated.

Important in our analysis of Sierra O’Reilly’s travel writing are his attempts to correct what he considered to be flawed representations of the Mayan culture of the Yucatán peninsula written by the foreign traveler John L. Stephens. The power of these texts to create a bridge between the indigenous past and the present, what for our purposes will be the mid-nineteenth century, was the source of great anxiety for Sierra O’Reilly. As Brading emphasizes, creole patriotism was paradoxically constructed on the combination of the glory of the conquest with the grandeur of the civilizations it extinguished. This problematic continuity persisted well into the nineteenth century and was at the heart of Sierra O’Reilly’s decision to translate Stephens’s two volume travel book.¹⁰

¹⁰ I concentrate here on Brading’s treatment of creole identity in relation to the indigenous communities of the Americas. However, Brading underlines other important factors in the constitution of creole identity. Among them is the Bourbon reforms of the eighteenth century that introduced an extended bureaucracy that relegated creoles to

The Texts

In spite of the fact that the majority of Sierra O'Reilly's works belong to established literary genres such as the serialized novel, at the height of the political and social instability in the Yucatán, Sierra O'Reilly developed his vision of the future of the Yucatán and creole identity through the cultivation of, and reaction to, travel writing. Sierra O'Reilly wrote two travel accounts, his *Diario de nuestro viaje a los Estados Unidos (la pretendida anexión de Yucatán)*¹¹ which documented his political mission in the United States, and *Impresiones de un viaje a los Estados Unidos de América y al Canadá*¹², an expanded version of the observations made in his travel diary where he reevaluates and rewrites his experiences in North America. In addition to his two travel accounts, Sierra O'Reilly published a translation of Stephen's *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán* (1843), an illustrated archeological study of the Yucatán peninsula with engravings by Federick Catherwood. Stephens was both an American traveler to the Yucatán and a representative of progress and scientific inquiry, and his *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*

positions of inferiority and the nineteenth-century attacks on corporate institutions such as the Catholic church that had polarizing effects amongst the native born Latin Americans.

¹¹ The diary was written during a six month period marked by the end of 1847 and the beginning of 1848. Nevertheless the text was published much later, in 1938 and 1953, in fragmented form. The publication history and its importance to my analysis will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹² Manuel Sol explains that *Impresiones* was published intermittently given that Sierra O'Reilly suffered from poor health during its writing, and the forum for its publication, *El Fénix*, closed its doors in October, 1851. Sol emphasizes that although the whole travel account of Sierra O'Reilly's visit to the United States was scheduled to appear in *El Fénix* after October, 1851, it had in fact already been printed as a two volume set in 1850 in Campeche by Gregorio Buenfil. Given that the text was to be printed in four volumes, a mystery ensued surrounding the other two volumes reminiscent of a story by Jorge Luis Borges. Sol explains that although the original texts that appeared in *El Fénix* were probably the most complete version, they have unfortunately deteriorated to such a degree so as to render them unreadable. Sol quotes Carlos R. Menéndez as saying, "El cuarto tomo de esta rarísima obra, quedó desgraciadamente inconcluso. Le faltan, cuando menos, dos capítulos. Si los escribió el Dr. Sierra O'Reilly, probablemente se han perdido para siempre" (qtd in Sol 12). Sol expounds on the difficulty of finding and editing the third and fourth volumes of *Impresiones* by citing the futile attempts of Ludwig Nolte Blanquet to locate them while conducting research for his dissertation titled, *La imagen de los Estados Unidos de América en la obra del mexicano Justo Sierra O'Reilly* (2006). Having searched in libraries and archives in Mérida, Campeche, México, and Berlin, Blanquet concludes in spite of claims that four volumes exist, "son únicamente dos los que se conservan en su totalidad" (qtd. in Sol 12). Despite the ambiguous, fragmented, and inconclusive nature of Sierra O'Reilly's travel account, Sol claims to have discovered photocopies of the third and fourth volumes with the help of the "jefa del Departamento de Adquisiciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez" who, in turn, acquired them through a friend at the University of Arizona. In this chapter, I will use the edition published by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in 2012 that contains all four volumes and a prologue by Manuel Sol.

introduced the region to the Anglophone reading public. Nevertheless, the appearance of Stephens' text also represented the threat of the foreign appropriation of the Yucatán through writing. Travel writing was an increasingly popular choice for the nineteenth-century reader and Stephens's book, although scientific in nature, underlined this new demand by being written in accessible language and containing Catherwood's engravings as visual support for his written portrayal of the Yucatán. In this way, as Yucatecan history and its visual representation circulated in American markets, a crisis of authority arose between Yucatecan writers, such as Sierra O'Reilly, and the threat of the foreign writer whose texts outnumbered their own.¹³ Together, these three works emphasize Sierra O'Reilly's relationship with circulating texts and travelers in the nineteenth century.

Sierra O'Reilly's initial travel account in the form of a diary is a personal exploration of the act of writing on the road when the future of both familial and regional identity is contested and uncertain. Characterized by intimacy and destined only for the eyes of Sierra O'Reilly's wife Conchita, the diary provides a glimpse into the inner workings of the lettered creole as he visits the self-proclaimed home of progress and modernity. Sierra O'Reilly's *Impresiones*, based on the same experiences abroad, was, in turn, written for publication and aimed for mass consumption. In this work, Sierra O'Reilly combines the intimacy of his diary with more objective, historical, and political observations. Nestled between the intimate and objective is an acute anxiety over how travel writers influence the representation of the lands they visit and, in turn, how their texts can travel more quickly than they do. Finally, the translation of Stephens's

¹³ Anna Brickhouse emphasizes this point in her *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*: "Stephens's writing on the ruins was so widely read within the first month of its release that the *Democratic Review* complained, as a genteel publication, that it had little fresh material left to offer subscribers" (191). José Ortiz Monasterio also highlights this point in the prologue to Sierra O'Reilly's translation of Stephens's *Incident of Travel in Yucatan*: "*Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* se imprimió, como sus otros relatos, en dos volúmenes y bajo el sello de Harper and Brothers. Conformaba 800 páginas y 85 grabados, y vio la luz el 23 de marzo de 1843. El público literalmente lo devoraba, y se imprimía edición tras edición" (IX).

Incidents underlines Sierra O'Reilly's anxiety before a text that threatens to silence his own literary production through the appropriation of Yucatecan history.

In these three works, we discern two principal preoccupations that underpin Sierra O'Reilly's writing. The first is the contradictory admiration for, and fear of, the United States that writers such as José Martí and José Enrique Rodó would express in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Although the United States served as the paradigmatic model of liberal democracy, a model that was increasingly compulsory for progress-oriented countries, this model had its contradictions. Among them was slavery, a kink in the American model of equality that travelers to the United States such as Alexis de Toqueville (1805-1859) and Lorenzo de Zavala (1788-1836) grappled with in their travel writing. Furthermore, its foreign policy that was founded on expansion and progress threatened to geographically devour Mexico. The most glaring example of this threat was the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which ceded the entire northernmost territory of Mexico to the United States, and signed at the end of the Mexican American War.

Sierra O'Reilly's second preoccupation pertained to the relationship between the white Yucatecan creoles and the Mayan Indians. On the one hand, the Caste War threatened to physically annihilate the white population and simultaneously erase what Sierra O'Reilly considered the creole efforts to modernize the peninsula. On the other hand, the ruins that dotted the peninsula, and that had begun to attract the attention of scientific travelers such as Stephens, provided the foundation on which to construct Yucatecan history from a vantage point that

¹⁴ Although José Martí spent a prolonged period in the US as an exile and actively contributed the field of journalism, he is also famous for coining the metaphor "el gigante de siete leguas" that threatened to trample Latin America. Rodó's *Ariel* (1900) reveals an admiration for the political achievements of the United States, while also expressing fear of the utilitarian system.

distanced post-Independence Yucatán from its colonial roots. In other words, it was possible to forge an autochthonous identity through the glorification of the indigenous culture at home.¹⁵ Hence, Yucatecan creole identity became inseparable from the indigenous community, even when peace seemed possible only through the elimination of one of these two groups. Further complicating the situation in nineteenth-century Mexico were the profound differences in the indigenous cultures that characterized Mexico's many regional identities. The most salient example, and one that further manifests the tension between the Yucatán and the government of Mexico City, was the Aztec tradition of central Mexico and the Mayan of the Yucatán peninsula. A hierarchy was established, and persists today, that placed the Aztec or Mexica culture in a privileged space of national recognition. In contrast, the Mayan Indians were associated with the troublesome Yucatecan government that impeded national unity.

The Diary

Sierra O'Reilly arrived in Washington D.C. prepared to negotiate. He arrived armed with the certainty that he would be considered a political equal, and reliant on a tacit agreement among "the modernized" concerning the role of the indigenous communities in the independent republics. He arrived with a confidence whose transformation to disillusionment would have many causes and would not be limited to the failure of his mission. In Washington D.C., Sierra O'Reilly would swim in the political waters of modernity and he would sink to the bottom. Unable to dominate the language of progress, and unable to write his way into the democratizing powers of the American press, Sierra O'Reilly was forced to come to terms with the fact that the

¹⁵ In her *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth Making in Spanish America 1810-1930* (2007), Rebecca Earle uncovers the process of founding a creole identity during the post-Independence years in the indigenous past. She concludes that in glorifying the indigenous past, the creole nation builders negated the Indians of their present, relegating them to obscurity and overlooking the unfortunate conditions in which they lived.

salvation of the Yucatán that he sought in the American capital would have to come by other means.

If Sierra O'Reilly's visit to the United States provoked an anxiety related to how his homeland was represented in circulating texts written in English, his diary allows us to witness how he negotiates this anxiety. At times he struggles with feelings of inferiority while among Americans; at other times he comes to terms with the growing threat of the Caste War at home. During his face-to-face encounter with American progressivism and democracy, Sierra O'Reilly realizes that in spite of his vast book learning and language skills (he spoke French and Italian), he is unable to master the language of the expansionist northerners and that in the eyes of many Americans he is little more than another foreigner with poor English.

Sierra O'Reilly's role as political mediator during the Mexican-American War and the Caste War hurls him into American race relations and forces him to reassess his opinion of the Mayan Indians. Consistent with his earlier fears about circulating texts, Sierra O'Reilly comes to disdain the influential role of the American press. He is forced to question his admiration for what he once considered a democratizing power that broached boundaries, and instead recognizes the menacing influence of omnipresent editorials that question the legitimacy of the creole campaign against the Mayan Indians. In this way, in the diary we find a writer with the same anxieties he would later express in *Impresiones*, but we also find a writer who struggles with the fact that he is not taken seriously in American political circles. To further complicate matters, the growing distance between Sierra O'Reilly and American culture brings him dangerously closer to the Indians he increasingly fears. Ultimately, Sierra O'Reilly finds himself confined by the realization that the American culture he admires is inaccessible while his association with Mayan culture is inescapable. This complex identity triangle culminates in a

captivating attempt to defend self and homeland by rhetorically combining the Mayan Indians and civilized Americans in overlapping categories of civilization and barbarism.

One of the few scholars to include the *Diario* in an investigation of Sierra O'Reilly's political participation, John F. Chuchiak IV concludes that while in the United States, Sierra O'Reilly suffers a transformation to his vision of the Mayan Indians, moving from respectful distance to outright hatred. However, he limits his analysis to the role of the American press in Sierra O'Reilly's changed perception, thus overlooking the complexity of the writer's encounter with the North. Furthermore, Chuchiak uses the diary as a historical source to focus his attention on the manner in which Sierra O'Reilly's altered perception of the Mayan Indians is noted later in his journalism. The diary is not treated as an object of analysis. While the diary does indeed document the factors that influenced Sierra O'Reilly's opinion about the Caste War, and this opinion is evident in his later journalism, it also reveals multiple levels of complexity inherent to the travel writing genre that lend themselves to an analysis of the formation of a marginalized (Yucatecan) creole identity.

Although far from home, Sierra O'Reilly's thoughts fall predominantly on the Yucatán and as a result he creates a new vision of the creole Yucatecan community. The analysis of Sierra O'Reilly's diary allows us to glimpse the intricate workings of nation building when no nation exists. That is, with a "home" only associated with family and a State that insists on occupation by foreign powers as a potential path to survival, the writer is left to navigate the categories of race and nation from the advantage, or disadvantage, afforded by distance. In other words, in the absence of a nation he could call home, Sierra O'Reilly constructs his own.

Equally as important as historical context and the writer's biographical information is the generic complexity and publication history of the text itself. Given the personal nature of the

diary as a genre, Sierra O'Reilly introduces a marked change by writing a diary directed to his wife, Conchita (Concepción Méndez Echazarreta).¹⁶ He acknowledges this intimate written relationship in the second book of the diary when he says, “voy a sentar mi juicio aquí en este diario, en este libro reservado por que no todas las especies que voy a verter deber ser vistar [sic] ni entendidas de nadie. Es una especie de pronóstico ominoso, que voy a aventurar en las secretas páginas de este libro, en el cual sólo tú puedes leer, Conchita mía” (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 37). Through the incorporation of a narrateé, Sierra O'Reilly undermines the subjectivity of the document and replaces it with a teleology otherwise absent from the diary. Instead of writing to record daily activities or observations for his own personal use, his writing is subordinated to its reception by a reader. Therefore, the *Diario* is an attempt to maintain proximity with the Yucatecan community from abroad. The diary should not be viewed simply as the documentation of the private life of a Yucatecan emissary in Washington, D.C., but instead as the discursive attempt to keep the threatened Yucatecan identity alive from abroad.

Sierra O'Reilly's diary is even more complex because of the different facets of the writing process that it contains. Sierra O'Reilly dedicates large portions of each day to writing as part of his patriotic duty, a task he carries out in collaboration with his companion Rafael until he falls ill and is forced to return to the Yucatán. Sierra O'Reilly also dictates a novel to Rafael. His diary often supplements the documents he produces as part of his mission to Washington D.C., commenting on official encounters and passing judgment on idiosyncrasies of American culture and politics. While each official meeting and its documentation in theory bring him closer to saving his patria from “savage attackers,” in his diary we see growing negativity with

¹⁶ The diary is by definition an intimate document often written for one's own eyes. In her important work titled *The Diary Novel*, Lorna Martens defines the diary as, “a periodically kept, secret, or at least private notebook in which the diarist writes down anything ranging from intimate details or introspective self-assessments to descriptions of the events of his day, random observations or aperçus, outbursts of anger, aphorisms, drafts for poems, or even quotations” (3).

respect to U.S. aid to the Yucatán and mounting discontent with the U.S. political system in general. Hence, a complicated web of writing styles emerges in the diary that establishes Sierra O'Reilly's authority as a Yucatecan *letrado* and simultaneously questions the viability of a Yucatecan state.

Given that the diary is addressed to his wife Conchita, it was clearly never destined for publication. Parts of the diary were discovered in a "librería de viejo," (a type of bookstore specializing in used and antique books) and published in a fragmented manner. What have come to be known as the first and third books were published together in the same edition in 1938 by the Antigua Librería Robredo, de José Porrúa e Hijos and the second book, believed lost, was published in 1953 by Librería de Manuel Porrúa. The prologue of the 1938 edition provides insight into the publication strategies of the editors, and the manner in which they dealt with the absence of the second book in the collection. In the simplest of terms, Hector Pérez Martínez explains the process of editing the diary as that of removing the more personal moments and reducing what was the intimate exchange between husband and wife, patriot and matriarch, to what could be considered an objective, historical document that presents only the "facts." Pérez Martínez explains the editing process as follows:

Escrito estrictamente para su esposa, la voz confidencial de Sierra O'Reilly no se detiene ante la verdad, y ello, a no dudarlo, le añade mayor valía. Su publicación obedece al deseo de presentar a los investigadores, la fuente original de informaciones sobre una etapa de la historia de Yucatán, antes muy limitada. Por ello sólo se transcriben aquellos párrafos del Diario que con [la misión de Sierra O'Reilly] están relacionados. Los otros--el mensaje cotidiano para la esposa ausente, las impresiones y recuerdos familiares ajenos a las actividades del Comisionado de Yucatán---se sustraen, porque, si válidos e

importantes para la biografía de Sierra O'Reilly, no tienen nexo alguno con la materia de este libro. (XLIX)

The editor underlines the dual nature of the diary in terms of the division of Sierra O'Reilly the political representative from the man who longed to return to his family. In other words, "El Diario es un documento, a la vez humano y político" (Pérez Martínez XLIX). Furthermore, the editor seeks to present a document founded on the truth about the Caste War. Beginning with a detailed explanation of the "causas mediatas" and "causas inmediatas," the prologue is an attempt to absorb the intimacy of Sierra O'Reilly's life within the Caste War that provoked his trip to the United States. The prologue contains a thorough history of the Yucatán with an emphasis on the indigenous communities and the many conflicts that they had with the white creole inhabitants of the peninsula. This history is complete with graphs explaining importation and exportation practices and the revenue of the Treasury Department which all aid Pérez Martínez to insinuate the causes for the armed indigenous rebellion. In this way, the first and third books of the diary as they were published represent an attempt to produce a truth-telling document that participates in the historical narrative of nineteenth-century Mexico. The intimate, self-reflexive moments that characterize the diary genre are removed since they go too far, or "no se detiene ante la verdad" (Pérez Martínez XLIX).

Although circumstantial in nature, the biggest lacuna in the volume edited by Pérez Martínez is the absence of the second book of Sierra O'Reilly's *Diario*. The second book was discovered by Manuel Porrúa, "sagaz hurón de libros viejos," and edited by Marte R. Gómez who also wrote the prologue (Gómez 9). The contrast between the two prologues is noteworthy. While Pérez Martínez concentrates on concrete statistics and historical events, eliminating for the most part Sierra O'Reilly's personal life, Gómez's focus lies in a defense of the writer. Sierra

O'Reilly was considered by some to be a traitor since part of his mission was to propose the annexation of the Yucatán peninsula to the United States in exchange for military aid during the armed conflict with the Indians. On another note, the writer is accused of proposing extermination to resolve the Caste War, eliminating the enemy instead of negotiating. Gómez proposes a historical contextualization that frames Sierra O'Reilly's actions and places them within a narrative that would help the reader to understand his motives. The editor of the second book does not intend to "enjuiciar al hombre" but instead to "situarlo correctamente dentro de la época que vivió y dentro de las ideas que imperaban en aquellos tiempos" (Gómez 10-11). He does this in four principal ways. First, he claims that Sierra O'Reilly was one of many who believed the Caste War called for a violent resolution and he should not be singled out as the sole propagator of such thought. He was essentially one gear in the Yucatecan political machine (Gómez 11-12). Second, by opining that the Indian rebels should be exterminated Sierra O'Reilly echoed other prestigious thinkers of the time period, such as Fernández de Lizardi, *El Pensador Mexicano*, who called for the extermination of the Yaqui Indians in the northern state of Sonora (Gómez 13). Third, Gómez claims given the historical situation Sierra O'Reilly could not have reacted any other way. With the rebel Indians attacking the white community in the Yucatán it was impossible for Sierra O'Reilly to sympathize with their plight (Gómez 13). Finally, Gómez emphasizes the distance from his wife and the biting cold weather as factors to be taken into consideration when judging Sierra O'Reilly's categorical judgment of the Indians (14-15).

The striking difference in the strategies of each of the prologues is further emphasized when we consider how Pérez Martínez attempted to fill the gap in his edited edition left by the absence of book two. Between book one and book three we find a footnote that directs the

reader to the appendix where she will find copies of official documents and correspondence between Sierra O'Reilly and members of the government of both the United States and the Yucatán:

Entre este tomo del *Diario* y el que sigue, hay una laguna correspondiente a los meses de enero y febrero. Para llenarla, consultar en el Apéndice los documentos marcados con los números 16, 17, 18, 19 y 20, notas dirigidas por Sierra O'Reilly al Gobierno de Yucatán y al Ministro Buchanan, de 4 de enero, 15, 17, 24 y 29 de febrero, respectivamente. (Pérez Martínez in Sierra O'Reilly, *Diario* 17n2)

The substitution of the second book by official documents completes the editing job Pérez Martínez had already begun; if first he sought to remove Sierra O'Reilly's mark from history, he now wedges history within the already edited copies of what was once a document characterized by intimacy. In both cases, the desire to create a historical, objective narrative prevails to the detriment of the personalized, conflicted, and self-reflexive account.

The dissimilar editing strategies of the three books of Sierra O'Reilly's *Diario* demonstrate the difficulty of establishing a clear delineation between man and mission during his visit to the United States. Furthermore, the broader categories that inform those editing strategies, and thus the historical importance of the mission, are not explored or defined. In Gómez's tenuous defense of Sierra O'Reilly we find many of the binary oppositions (civilization vs. barbarism, for example) that shroud the complexity of the nineteenth-century subject. First, in claiming that Sierra O'Reilly is one actor in a larger political machine we find the subject-state opposition that questions the enlightened notion of individual liberty before the necessary governing forces. Second, in defending Sierra O'Reilly's thoughts on extermination by placing his comments within the already existing discourse of the Mexican lettered city, the racial binary

creole-Indian remains intact as does the modern hierarchy that favors the urban over the rural. In an exemplary case, Ferández de Lizardi admonishes the uncivilized barbarians to the north that pose a threat to the centralized lettered city. Gómez's third defense of Sierra O'Reilly echoes the first in that it calls into question his ability to act within the historical moment. It also references the second defense in that it implicitly refers to the civilization against barbarism binary that, in this case, eclipses the possibility of violence originating among the civilized. Before the indigenous rebellion Sierra O'Reilly was helpless to react with anything other than the desire to violently eliminate the threat. The fourth defense inverts the more canonical representation of the masculine nation builder. Here, Sierra O'Reilly's political platform, and consequently the future of his nation, is directly affected by his longing for his wife and his inability to come to terms with the cold climate. Both of these arguments, whether valid in defending Sierra O'Reilly or not, question the notion of masculinity based on fortitude and individuality. Here the masculine messenger who is sent to negotiate the future of the Yucatán ends up being overly sensitive to the cold and overcome with angst at the prospect of not receiving correspondence from his wife.

Gómez's assumptions behind his sympathetic defense of Sierra O'Reilly provide insight into nineteenth-century nation building strategies, including race relations. In "Intellectuals, Indians, and the Press: The Politicization of Justo Sierra O'Reilly's Journalism and Views on the Maya while in the United States," Chuchiak traces the manner in which the representation of the Maya community by the creoles changes over time, and how those changes culminate in Sierra O'Reilly's hatred for the Indian rebels while in the United States. He argues that the principal catalyst of this change in perception of the Maya was an attack in the press on Sierra O'Reilly's mission and on the creole population of the Yucatán peninsula. He summarizes his argument by

outlining what he considers to be the transformation from an Indianista approach to the Maya that represented the Indians as docile and noble and moving to an account of the Indians that considers race as a factor of difference. Chuchiak highlights and questions two important points in the mission of Sierra O'Reilly that the editors Pérez Martínez and Gómez took for granted, the first being that Sierra O'Reilly subscribed to the liberal ideology of the time period. Chuchiak emphasizes that Sierra O'Reilly's initial "liberal image of the Indian" changed, suggesting that either liberalism itself is a political platform founded on contradiction, or that by visiting what was considered to be the paradigm of liberal ideas, the United States, Sierra O'Reilly had ceased to be a liberal.

Second, and ostensibly more important for our current study, Sierra O'Reilly discovers how the conflict in the Yucatán is interpreted through race relations in the United States. While the distance between Sierra O'Reilly and the Mayan Indians went unchecked, so did the proximity between Sierra O'Reilly and the Americans. That is, upon arrival in the United States the petition for aid to save the white members of the Yucatán held the inherent distinction between Indians and Yucatecans that would, without question, place the Americans on the side of the creoles. In considering the Yucatán a civilized enclave under attack by barbarians, he located the creole community within the same civilized family to which the United States belonged.

Chuchiak again does well to underline the moments when Sierra O'Reilly became aware of his flaw. He reminds the reader that some of the attacks on Sierra O'Reilly's mission and the Yucatecan creoles emerged from a southern newspaper and contained a racist slant. The "pro-slavery newspaper" the *Daily Delta* "attacked not only Sierra but also the entire Spanish 'white race' in Yucatán" with one especially aggressive article referring to him as "'effeminate' and

weak” (Chuchiak 64). Hence, through his ignorance of the political realities in the United States, Sierra O’Reilly enters in contact with his own racial profile and the prejudices it carried with it: “Sierra had run up against Southern U.S. attitudes of the day, which perceived the world in racial terms yet failed to perceive the distinction between European-descended Yucatecans and Maya Indians that was so clear to Sierra at home. To the editors of the *Daily Delta* the two categories meant more or less the same thing. In the United States, Sierra was simply a Mexican” (Chuchiak 64).

Making matters worse for Sierra O’Reilly, the creoles were losing the Caste War. As the *Daily Delta* claimed, the white race in the Yucatán turned out to be the weaker race, thereby undermining the argument that aligned the Yucatecans with the, presumably, white Americans. Therefore, the pro-slavery white southerners considered the Yucatecan *letrados* members of an inferior branch of the white race who labeled the Indians “savages” in order to draw attention away from the indigenous superiority. In other words, it was not a battle between the civilized and the barbarous, but between two different groups of barbarians in different stages of development. The *letrados* simply exploited the slight difference in skin color to seek U.S. support (Chuchiak 64).¹⁷

While Chuchiak’s fascinating analysis makes a strong argument that the journalism war marked the turning point in Sierra O’Reilly’s assessment of the Maya, it seems to equally suggest other alternatives that he leaves unexplored. For example, Chuchiak seems to combine the attack on Sierra O’Reilly’s masculinity with the racial prejudice that separated him from the

¹⁷ Chuchiak also presents examples of newspapers that supported Sierra O’Reilly, but in terms of expansion: “a few U.S. editors championed Sierra’s vision of Indian barbarity, likely with their eyes on the expanding U.S. frontier” (64). The contrast between those who supported Sierra O’Reilly and those who attacked him give us a broader vision of the conflict in the Yucatán in general, and Sierra O’Reilly’s encounter with the U.S. in particular. Nevertheless, for the purposes of our study the attacks on Sierra O’Reilly are more useful in that they force him to reevaluate his position in the Yucatecan government, his role as masculine nation builder, and white creole.

white Americans. While he accurately points out that, “If Sierra had learned one thing in the United States, it was that the issue of race was a major factor in shaping that country’s image of the Yucatecan elite,” by isolating race as “othering” category Chuchiak leaves us to wonder what other discriminating categories Sierra O’Reilly discovered in the U.S. (Chuchiak 67). In the following section I will analyze Sierra O’Reilly’s struggle and fascination with the English language as a means to understand another manifestation of discrimination and his subsequent disenchantment. Although race and masculinity were points of contention in the press, Sierra O’Reilly’s everyday activities also involved navigating the English language.

The Ecstasy of Oratory and English in a Toothless Mouth

Due to its bureaucratic nature Sierra O’Reilly’s diplomatic mission in Washington D.C. entailed copious writing. Forced to produce an incessant stream of rigid documentation, he laments in his diary the obligation to write, rewrite, copy, and transcribe the contents of the official meetings he attends. His apprehension augments when his assigned assistant, Rafael, is forced to return to the Yucatán for health reasons. However, Sierra O’Reilly’s anxiety before his bureaucratic task was not limited to copies and transcriptions. In fact, the written documentation of his mission was only possible as a supplement to the daily conversations and oral interviews he carried out in the capital city. In contrast to the tedium of producing documentation for posterity, it was the orality of his visit that emerged as a source of frustration much more difficult to tame.

Sierra O’Reilly’s proficiency with the English language is well documented and it is noteworthy that he was also the translator of texts from English to Spanish. Gabriel Ferrer de Mendiola, for example, explains Sierra O’Reilly’s qualifications to represent the Yucatán in

Washington D.C. in terms of his language skills: “Nadie más indicado para dicha comisión que el Dr. Sierra, que además de su patente ilustración, ya había viajado, hablaba y escribía bien el inglés, el francés y el italiano” (227-28). Although the focus here will be on Sierra O’Reilly’s skills with English, Mendiola’s vision of Sierra O’Reilly as multilingual is important. His struggles with spoken English were often assuaged by his recourse to other languages; for Sierra O’Reilly “speaking English” could also mean speaking a combination of languages in order to facilitate communication.

In this section, I explore Sierra O’Reilly’s relationship with orality and spoken English as a way to broach his translation of Stephens’s *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* into Spanish which I will analyze in great detail later in the chapter. Sierra O’Reilly’s frustration with his inability to convince the American politicians of the need to save the creole population of the Yucatán was, I argue, a side effect of his experience with the English language and the increasingly uncontrollable circulating documents that represented the Yucatán abroad. Unable to muster the linguistic abilities to convincingly argue his case orally, and incapable of publishing his own accounts of Yucatecan history in a language that would garner such a bountiful group of readers, Sierra O’Reilly resorted to his most accessible tool of domination: translation. In this way he drew attention to his own interpretation of Yucatecan history (which he inscribed into the margins of Stephens’s text in the form of footnotes), and he avoided the clumsiness that characterized his spoken English. In what follows I trace a concise genealogy of Sierra O’Reilly’s fascination and disenchantment with spoken English, and I highlight the manner in which his encounter with spoken English distanced him from the masculine circles of power in Washington D.C. thereby affecting the manner in which he presented himself as a *letrado*.

Sierra O'Reilly's encounter with the orality of the English language while in the US can be summarized in two encounters. The first exemplifies the humiliating capacity of the language when spoken poorly, while the second manifests its power to captivate when spoken well. In both instances we find a meditation not just on English, but on Sierra O'Reilly as a foreign diplomat on an urgent mission abroad. His commentary on speaking English reflects his own linguistic capabilities and his ability to carry out his duties in Washington D.C. On one occasion Sierra O'Reilly makes the following observation: "Tuve algunos ratos de distracción oyendo hablar a un Sr. Viejísimo que estaba allí de visita y que según parece es señor de tono y rango. No tiene un solo diente ni muela, y el inglés en boca de una persona desmolada, es verdaderamente risible" (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro*, 111). I would like to suggest that this moment encapsulates Sierra O'Reilly's own struggle with English. His critique of the "Sr. Viejísimo" is framed in two ways: by his status, "de tono y rango," and by the manner in which his aging body affects his speech, "[n]o tiene un solo diente ni muela." One of Sierra O'Reilly's main preoccupations while in the US is his status. Unable to convince his interlocutors or the American public of his mission to save the creole community of the Yucatán, his prestige was always in question. Ostensibly more important here is the relationship between rank and speech. In the eyes of Sierra O'Reilly, the older man's rank is based entirely on his capacity to speak as revealed in the way he qualifies his comment, "según parece," which insinuates a fissure in the facts of the situation and the appearance of the man. In short, the man's rank is not consistent with his speech. His laughable speech, nevertheless, is not the result of incompetence. Instead his failing body and the disintegration of what allows him to construct sounds has decomposed to such an extent that for Sierra O'Reilly his prestige is reduced to an object of distraction.

In Sierra O'Reilly's comments on the "Sr. Viejísimo" we find commentary on himself, a man of rank who urgently needs to establish his authority through speech and eloquence, but who has a mouth that is ill-adapted for the task. Sierra O'Reilly is unable to reproduce the sounds on which power is established in the US, and that inability results in an appearance, not unlike that of the "Sr. Viejísimo," which is inconsistent with his rank. Sierra O'Reilly's amusement at the sound of English spoken in a toothless mouth draws our attention to his own shortcomings with the language. But Sierra O'Reilly's case is more severe: his is a youthful, tooth-filled mouth that nevertheless causes laughter.

The humor of the episode of English in the toothless mouth is easily contrasted with Sierra O'Reilly's encounter with the oratory tradition in Washington D.C. Upon attending a meeting of the American Colonization Society, he witnessed an improvised speech by one of its founding members, Henry Clay (1777-1852). Within the intimate context of his diary, Clay's speech was a pivotal moment in Sierra O'Reilly's appreciation of spoken English, as we can see in the exalted description of the speech he offers to his wife:

Yo no puedo expresarte la agradable impresión que recibí; para mí la lengua inglesa es la más dura y estridente que conozco, inclusive la lengua maya; y la más dulce y armoniosa, la lengua italiana. Pues bien, la lengua inglesa en boca de Henry Clay es lengua italiana; no puedo decirte más en elogio de la facilidad y dulzura de su expresión y acento, yo estaba extasiado al escuchar a aquel hombre. (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 59)

Clay's speech not only marks a change in Sierra O'Reilly's opinion of the English language, but it also becomes an inexpressible event in the personal correspondence between husband and wife. The difficulty to convey his joy, "no puedo expresarte la agradable expresión que recibí," leads Sierra O'Reilly to resort to a linguistic metaphor to convey his ecstasy at hearing the

speech. The harsh sounding language of the progressive nation to the north becomes harmonious in the mouth of Clay and is cloaked in what we could call a linguistic disguise: English became Italian, the foreign language that produced the most auditory pleasure for Sierra O'Reilly. But if English is Italian, how do we explain Sierra O'Reilly's comment on the proximity between English and the Mayan language? The harmonization of the Anglo tongue is explained in relation to the Mayan language, its sister in the family of discordant sounds. Sierra O'Reilly places the two languages together in the same dissonant category of jarring noises with English winning the disharmonious comparison. But the mention of the Mayan language also underlines a relationship in regard to how Sierra O'Reilly organizes foreign sounds and his thoughts on linguistic beauty. English is not as pleasing as Maya, but once in the United States, and having recognized both the power and difficulty of the Anglo language, Sierra O'Reilly's capacity to hear English and enjoy its oratory power are heightened, thus granting it an aesthetic power that puts it above Maya within the realm of the enjoyable.

In his diary, Sierra O'Reilly makes no attempts to hide his poor speaking skills. As Marte R. Gómez explains in the prologue to the second book of the diary, the apprehension that speaking English causes the Yucatecan *letrado* is expressed openly: "reconoce que tiene que hacerse el ánimo de no ponerse colorado cuando habla disparates" (17). The importance of Sierra O'Reilly's linguistic difficulties at the political level is impossible to overlook for the same reasons that Mendiola wished to emphasize his spoken English as a strong point: without the capacity to communicate, how could he aspire to negotiate the future of the Yucatán? Gómez expresses the gravity of this linguistic urgency more bluntly:

Aquel hombre indudablemente inteligente y bien dotado para los idiomas . . . vivió en los Estados Unidos de Norte América por largos siete meses sin que le entrara el inglés y

fué [sic] ejemplo viviente de hasta qué punto era imprudente él al ofrecer la soberanía de su tierra natal a una Nación cuyo idioma mismo no era capaz de dominar. (17)

In what has already been established as an intimate document destined only for the eyes of his wife, Sierra O'Reilly repeatedly inserts phrases, salutations, and exclamations in English. Given the identity of his reader and the personal nature of the narrative, the English phrases appear out of place. Moreover, given the humiliation that speaking English causes him, Sierra O'Reilly's persistent use of the language in a text written for his wife raises questions. I contend that the fragments of English in the *Diario* are attempts to maintain the image of the multilingual *letrado* who continues to negotiate the survival of the creole community in the Yucatán, while the commentary on his inability to speak the language reflects his growing anxiety before the difficulty to navigate the American political system. What emerges from this linguistic web is a curious reflection by Sierra O'Reilly about the similarities between the English language and the Mayan languages and, by extension, the contrast between two very different manifestations of what he sees as barbarity.

If language is a symptom of civilization, then the contrast between Maya and English is useful in our analysis of how Sierra O'Reilly navigates the dual realities of the Yucatán with its Caste War and the United States and the American invasion of Mexico. In a telling moment, Sierra O'Reilly explains his interpretation of the rise and fall of civilizations and the role of the organizing tropes of civilization and modernity in the process. His observations take the United States as their object of analysis, but his main concern is to explain the history and future of Mexico. Sierra O'Reilly speaks in terms of degeneration and regeneration to explain the role of empire, although he does not use that terminology. To explain Mexico he first starts with Spain,

the colonial power whose linguistic and cultural heritage had such a devastating effect in the region:

Hace tres siglos que la raza Española después de haber sido la más fuerte, prepotente y vigorosa, va caminando a su degradación y abatimiento. Esa raza, adulterada un poco en México en donde el suave clima, la facilidad de subsistir y otros elementos han contribuido a hacerla más muelle y perezosa; esa raza ha comenzado a tomar su fin.

(Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 37-38)

The vigorous Spanish race that Sierra O'Reilly refers to has handed down only an impure, or "adulterated," heritage in Mexico, consequently making it easy prey for the successors of the once powerful Spaniards: the Americans. Referring to the categorical defeat of the Mexicans by American forces in the Mexican American War, Sierra O'Reilly then formulates a comparison between European history and history in the Americas in terms of invasion and conquest:

Se ha representado la misma escena que en Europa, allá en los siglos IV y V cuando los bárbaros del norte abandonaron sus heladas regiones para lanzarse sobre los hermosos y benignos climas del mediodía con esta diferencia, que entonces los conquistadores hallaron los beneficios de la civilización en los pueblos conquistados, mientras que en el caso actual sucede casi absolutamente lo contrario. (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 38)

It is noteworthy that Sierra O'Reilly uses the same language to describe the invading Americans as he does to describe the indigenous rebels. There is also an important inversion in the model he offers: the barbarous tribes that he describes as descending from the north descend on Rome, an indisputable source of culture and progress at the time. Within this model, then, Mexico would take the place of Rome as the land of beauty and gentle climate conquered by the barbarians from the frozen lands to the north. This would also place the white Yucatecans in the place of

degeneration and consequently vulnerable to the internal threat of the rebelling Indians. I want to suggest that this analytical model reveals as much about Sierra O'Reilly's stance before the United States as it reveals about his views on the Caste War and the threat to the creole community of the Yucatán. If Mexico has already been defeated by the invading American army, the fight on Yucatecan soil is still raging when Sierra O'Reilly writes these words. While the Americans descend on Mexico, the indigenous rebels descend on the white Yucatecan creoles. This would make the urban centers of the Yucatán the Rome of the peninsula, and the invaders the autochthonous barbarians.

Sierra O'Reilly's use of English in his diary ranges from cursory exclamations, "Happy New Year," (*Segundo libro* 31), to odd translations "porque era tal la niebla (the dense fog)" (*Segundo libro* 52), to cultural curiosities, "hay un acuerdo expreso de la Cámara de Senadores, expuesto en la entrada de la galería principal, para que todo el mundo tenga entendido, que los asientos delanteros de la galería están exclusivamente destinados para las señoras (are exclusively destined for the use of the ladyes)" [sic]. In this regard, the diary becomes an English language notebook of sorts where Sierra O'Reilly jots down—and translates—words and phrases that stand out and call his attention. The diary, then, is not just an attempt to maintain an intimate proximity with home while abroad, but also a memory device that preserves the—failed—process of language acquisition. In this way, the diary lays bare the desire to remember home in the moment of its threatened destruction and political reticulation. That desire, however, is not expressed in the words of Sierra O'Reilly the Yucatecan *letrado*, but in the mixed language of the traveler whose attempts to save the Yucatán are stifled when he abandons the pen and opens his mouth.

The documentation of Sierra O'Reilly's political mission in Washington D.C. is also a testimony to his attempts to master the language of the colonizer. At times the mission to save the Yucatán becomes enmeshed with his desire to learn English:

Cada día hago más progresos en el inglés, de lo cual estoy bastante contento, porque al fin no habré perdido todo mi tiempo en los Estados Unidos. No lo hablo correctamente, ni muy de prisa; pero ya puedo explicarme en términos de ser entendido y sobre todo ya lo comprendo, que era la mayor dificultad que pulsé al principio, porque hablan estos hombres tan rápidamente que apenas marcan las palabras. (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo Libro* 46)

In his comments, we find the notion of progress with the language as he acknowledges the absence in the present of what impeded him linguistically upon his arrival. Although he does not speak English correctly or quickly, he can explain himself (“ya puedo explicarme”) in such a way as to be understood. Important is his admitted inability to understand English at the beginning of his visit when the language was a stream of sounds with now audible delineations (“hablan estos hombres tan rápidamente que apenas marcan las palabras”). In spite of his improvement, what appears most important to him is the supplementary nature of the language acquisition. In the defeat of political negotiation, his improved English makes the trip worth his while (“o habré perdido todo mi tiempo en los Estados Unidos”).

In these comments Sierra O'Reilly reveals a satisfaction with the English language that assuages the political defeat he foresees in regard to his mission to save the Yucatán. In a way, the failed mission makes him a better *letrado* who is able to at least attempt to speak and understand what was quickly becoming the language of diplomacy. Nevertheless, when he mentions that he spoke English, he often qualifies his statement by revealing the multiple layers

of mediation that are involved in speaking English. The progression from the previous citation is questioned when later he recognizes that he still struggles to express himself:

cambiamos nuestras tarjetas y conversamos mucho en inglés con el auxilio del francés y del latín que ya he visto cuanto puede servir en un lance apurado. Ello es que sin saber él una palabra de español y no ser yo muy fuerte en el inglés, nos hemos entendido perfectamente y sostenido una conversación de más de hora y media. (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 50)

The initial mediation of the card, a common method of establishing one's authority in the nineteenth century, is amplified by the use of multiple languages to communicate. The aid of other languages that O'Reilly dominates more than English is what makes his use of English possible.

Sierra O'Reilly's commentary on his shortcomings with English is at times complemented by the search for interlocutors who are proficient in Spanish. The need to express himself in "the capital of democracy and progress" places him in curious situations where, far from the offices of politicians and the American bureaucracy, Sierra O'Reilly struggles to communicate with those far removed from the political negotiation he hoped would save his home. But more common than the occasional encounter with a Spanish speaker was Sierra O'Reilly's tendency to spend prolonged periods of time among women. During his visits to the homes of friends and prominent members of the Washington D.C. community, the masculine nation builder and advocate for the extermination of the indigenous rebels of the Yucatán often found himself among women who were more willing to tolerate his poor English and who had spent their free time studying Spanish. Leading him away from the masculine circles to the feminine parlor scenes of the nineteenth century, the affluent women of these households

allowed Sierra O'Reilly to stumble through their native tongue. In spite of his own difficulties with English, he does not hesitate to offer his own critique of the shortcomings he notes in the Spanish these women speak: "Estas señoritas . . . han estudiado el español y lo hablan con bastante corrección y soltura, aunque siempre con el durísimo acento inglés" (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 39). The rough accent appears to subordinate the grammatically correct and fluent Spanish, making the sound of the language what most preoccupies him.

The mere observation of linguistic accuracy gives way to interpretation when Sierra O'Reilly speaks in these meetings, and it is in these moments that a certain dependency appears. Upon commenting on a certain "Mr. Benton's" eloquence, Sierra O'Reilly finds himself relying on the woman to speak: "Sr. Benton que es uno de los oradores más elocuentes . . . correspondí, parte hablando en mi mal inglés y parte con el auxilio de sus hijas que interpretaban mis conceptos" (Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo libro* 39). The harsh accent of the poorly pronounced Spanish spoken by the affluent American women becomes a crutch for Sierra O'Reilly who depends on the women's understanding of his native tongue that he in turn uses to complement his poor English. Sierra O'Reilly literally speaks in fragments, positioned between his inadequate English and feminine interpreters.

Outside these feminine circles Sierra O'Reilly demonstrates a reluctance to speak English, at times willing to jeopardize his arrival to potentially important encounters so as not to have to speak with his poorly pronounced English, "Como no me gusta preguntar por las calles, me costó un triunfo dar con las que buscaba en ese laberinto de Wall-street" (*Segundo libro* 81). It is the women, however, who are able to coax him to speak English and, as a side effect of their diligence, help Sierra O'Reilly toward his goal of making his visit to the US worthwhile, even in the face of political failure:

Las seis señoritas son bastante instruídas y amables y me proporcionaron uno de los ratos más agradables que yo haya pasado en los Estados Unidos . . . Todas ellas se empeñaron en hacerme hablar inglés y lo consiguieron. Sabiendo que no soy muy fuerte en el idioma, me hablaban con pausa y claridad y me exigieron que les contestase sin valerme de manera alguna del conducto de Charles, que habla español. Es este ejercicio, en el cual me corregían todas mis faltas con la mayor discreción y cordura, he ganado más que en todo cuanto he practicado el idioma. (*Segundo libro* 66)

Sierra O'Reilly's political mission turns slowly into a prolonged language lesson with him as pupil before an assorted group of female English teachers. These examples of Sierra O'Reilly's simultaneous admiration for the eloquence of spoken English, his inability to reproduce that eloquence, and his marginalization that results from his linguistic inadequacies, culminate in a realization: to save the Yucatán he must resort to other non-linguistic methods of negotiation and revision of misconceptions surrounding of Caste War. This realization would, in turn, led Sierra O'Reilly to revise Stephens' text on the Yucatán.

The Modern Tradition of Revision

Sierra O'Reilly's intellectual preoccupation with correcting written accounts of Mexico places him within the Enlightenment tradition of critical inquiry. Common among Enlightenment thinkers was not only the rejection of inherited beliefs, but also the revelation of errors, as is evident in the title of Benito Jerónimo Feijoo's (1676-1764) celebrated work *Teatro crítico universal: discursos varios en todo género de materias, para desengaño de errores comunes*. The need to defend oneself against critique was common in the Hispanic world. Part of Feijoo's intellectual project in the "Glorias de España" section of *Teatro critico* was to explain

Spain's place in modernity in such a way as to redeem the country's reputation before claims by other European countries that it was backward and behind the times. As Michael Iarocci explains in *Properties of Modernity: Romantic Spain, Modern Europe, and the Legacies of Empire*, following Spain's decline in the late seventeenth century, it was by the eighteenth century, "an object of representation—and symbolic subordination—for a newly dominate northern Europe" (xi). Creoles during the colonial period were confronted with the dilemma of establishing their identity in opposition to both an obligatory dependence on the metropolis, and their inherited backwardness stemming from their Hispanicism. This placed the creoles on the margins of the failing Spanish empire, and on the periphery of modern Europe.

The geopolitical developments in Europe provide a model to read texts written on the margins of Mexico in the early-and mid-nineteenth century. Sierra O'Reilly's position as Yucatecan writer, statesman, and intellectual place him both geographically and culturally on the periphery of Mexico. Allen Wells provides a useful summary of methodological approaches to nineteenth-century Yucatecan history that reveals how the marginalized position of the Yucatán peninsula and the backward culture in relation to the capital Mexico City, are debated and developed within the development of the nation. Wells explains that the 1980's saw a shift in scholarship away from political history toward a social history that sought to "write history from below" (198). With this methodological swing there was a change in geographical focus that marked a "break from the 'centralist' historiography" that approached culture and events from a distance and, "reluctantly and with a jaundiced eye—and then only in relation to their importance to Mexico City" (Wells 199). Wells' observations are useful in establishing the Yucatán region as one of those that received attention during this methodological shift and began to be seen on its own terms. This, in turn, helps us to contextualize Sierra O'Reilly's texts as

those written by an undisputed member of the intellectual elite, but who lived in a post-independence atmosphere that located legitimacy in the center of the nation and confined his voice to a Yucatecan audience.

An important difference in post-independence nation-building located between the political center of Mexico City and the peripheral Yucatecans is the accessibility to a glorious indigenous past. As we will see, Sierra O'Reilly dedicates hundreds of pages to the correction and clarification of Mayan language, culture, and history. Although the Maya people and culture were still present on the peninsula, the ruins most associated with their glorious past stood abandoned and run down. In the center of the nation, however, nation-builders began to reference the glorious Aztec past as a source of national pride and identity. Within this discussion, the Yucatecans occupied the historical past in a way that placed them next to the pre-modern Spain that suffered libel in Europe: the more advanced and modern center viewed the Yucatán as underdeveloped and their indigenous communities unworthy of recognition in the nation-building process. Nevertheless, the indigenous population of the Yucatán was inseparable from local history, and Wells emphasizes that when Sierra O'Reilly attempts to write the "first systematic history of Yucatán" published in *El Fenix* during the 1840's, his texts are collected under the name *Los indios de Yucatán: Consideraciones sobre el origen, causas y tendencias de la sublevación indígena, sus probables resultados y su posible remedio* (202). That is, the history of Yucatán is inseparable from its indigenous past and, in the unstable political moment in which Sierra O'Reilly writes, it is indispensable to rewrite that history correctly, and thus to defend his homeland from the slanderous texts that filled bookstores abroad.

Sierra O'Reilly writes from the marginalized position in Yucatecan society, where the indigenous rebels greatly outnumber the white creoles, but also as the representative of a region

that seeks recognition both in Mexico and in the United States. But instead of writing his way out of this societal and geographical corner by affirming the modern nature of his people, he corrects the chronological error common in Stephen's text. In his reading of the ruins and other indigenous monuments found in the Yucatán, Stephen's romantic desire to find a glorious past in the Yucatecan present inverts the historical time that would, for Sierra O'Reilly, denote the real problems that threaten creole society. While I do not intend to perform a comprehensive analysis of Sierra O'Reilly's entire translation of Stephen's *Incidents*, Sierra O'Reilly's footnotes serve as a roadmap to Stephens' errors and inconsistencies. Furthermore, the footnote is by definition a marginalized tool. Located at the base of the text and providing information that complements and completes the principal content, the footnotes in this case are indicative of Sierra O'Reilly's troubled voice, confined to the edges of Stephen's celebrated text and distraught over its contents. A close reading of Sierra O'Reilly's footnotes will reveal an intellectual battle between a scholarly man whose skepticism and reasoned critique position him as representative of the Enlightenment, and a foreigner and a tourist whose informed speculation leads to romantic musings about fictional origins.

It is noteworthy that although Sierra O'Reilly's express opinion of Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán* is that it is "casi intachable" (*Impresiones* 89), he includes over one hundred and forty footnotes in his translation of the two volume work, nearly all of which are aimed at correcting Stephens' account of the region. In this way, Sierra O'Reilly's footnotes tell a marginal story, that of the Yucatecan intellectual whose struggles with spoken English are remedied by translating English into Spanish. Anthony Grafton observes that the footnote, while spatially always on the margins, was once a respected example of craftsmanship, "a high form of literary art" (1). In regard to scholarship, Grafton explains that the footnote functions to

demonstrate that the writer has exhausted the sources pertinent to the topic, and has created an alternative narrative (4). As a result, legitimacy and authority are bestowed upon the writer of the footnote and, in turn, on his or her text. Grafton cites Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) as a paradigmatic practitioner of the footnote and accordingly locates the modern use of the footnote among Enlightenment historians. Grafton claims that the footnote, a literary device that both grants authority to a writer and refutes the arguments of others, “tells a distinctively modern, double story,” and that footnotes, “buttress and undermine, at one and the same time” (23, 32). Sierra O’Reilly’s use of the footnote confirms Grafton’s claims: he challenges the official story by telling another that recognizes the importance of Stephen’s work while simultaneously destabilizing it.

Grafton also helps us confirm our claims that Sierra O’Reilly represents the Enlightenment tradition while the victim of his skepticism, Stephens, resorts to a romantic view of history. R. Tripp Evans interprets Stephens’ rendition of the Yucatán precisely through the lens of Romanticism. In his *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination 1820-1915*, Evans studies the tendency of nineteenth-century archaeologists to construct conclusions based on invented data. He asks, “[w]hy these explorers invented or distorted archaeological information . . . and why American explorers showed a particular susceptibility to this practice” (Evans 2). Evans argues provocatively that Stephens’ visit to the Yucatán and the publication of *Incidents* are best interpreted in light of the Monroe Doctrine and the concept of Manifest Destiny practiced in the nineteenth-century United States. Eager to claim the recently liberated lands for themselves, American travelers crisscrossed the North American continent in search of clues that could legitimize its appropriation by the powerful neighbors to the north. Therefore, ethnographic writing of the Mayan past as a manifestation of

the American future, “constituted a double-barreled campaign to claim the Mesoamerican past as the United States’ cultural inheritance” (Evans 45). Tripp cites the growing interest in native North Americans and Mesoamerica as the catalyst for founding of the American Antiquarian Society in 1812. In the Romantic search for national identity in the indigenous past, the Antiquarians falsely linked what they saw as the earliest manifestations of indigenous culture in the United States, the mounds of the Ohio valley, with ruins found in Hispanic America: “By conflating the remains of the North American Moundbuilder cultures with those monuments found south of the U.S. border, the society extended its territorial as well as its typological range of inquiry. Moreover, by insisting upon a north-to-south migration route, they confirmed the Mesoamerican work’s genesis within U.S. borders” (Evans 48). The American attempt to appropriate the indigenous past of the North American continent was not limited to the scientific discourse deployed by Stephens and other scientific travelers. Stephens also attempted to purchase property and artifacts outright, the renowned sites of Palenque and Uxmal among his desired acquisitions. Consequently, Catherwood’s task of visually reproducing the ruins of the Yucatán paralleled Stephens’ effort to “physically acquire the works” (Evans 57). This, in turn, was supported by his justification of such appropriation by placing the ruins, “within an archaeological continuum that originated inside the borders of the United States.” (Evans 57).

The discursive and physical appropriation by the Americans of the same indigenous past that provided the creoles with a springboard for an autonomous identity sets the stage for Sierra O’Reilly’s travel in the United States and subsequent anxiety found in his travel accounts. While this anxiety is found in his *Diario, Impresiones*, and his translation of Stephens’ *Incidents*, in what follows I will focus on a reading of Sierra O’Reilly’s attempts at correcting Stephens’ travel account as a constitutive act of Yucatecan creole identity.

Mr. Norman

Embedded in Sierra O'Reilly's travel writing about the United States is a tangential unease due to the current state of his own writing career. As he fills hundreds of pages with critical commentary and celebratory observations, he intermittently reflects on the importance of making his writing accessible and on the politics of publication. At the heart of his lament is the tension between his effort to produce important documents and the absence of his work in the newspapers, libraries, and book stores of the time period. For this reason, the circulation of texts among the reading public in the United States becomes an object of fascination and analysis for Sierra O'Reilly, as well as a method for reflection on the current state of the accessibility of texts in the Yucatán. His commentary on Americans who write about Mexico, and the availability of their texts, is fundamental to understanding the relationship between his diplomatic mission and the salvation of the Yucatecan creole community.

Although indisputably a prolific writer, Sierra O'Reilly's *Impresiones* is sprinkled with the recognition of gaps in his publishing career. For Sierra O'Reilly, the landscape of the United States is full of literary muses, both material and historical. Not only does he comment at length on architecture, the travel industry, and American customs, but he also uses these phenomena as points of departure to manifest his extensive knowledge of history and historical actors. While in New Orleans, Sierra O'Reilly takes advantage of the sight of a bay to tell the story of a pirate, "Mr. Lafitte," who used the bay as a hideout. In reality, the story is as much about the Yucatán as the United States. Lafitte, after a heroic showing against the British in the Battle of New Orleans, died in the Yucatecan village of Dzilán. The story of the valiant, contraband-toting pirate serves to incorporate the Yucatán into the historical and commercial currents of the Southern United States, but it also provides Sierra O'Reilly with the opportunity to lament the

state of his writing career, “¡Oh, cuánta falta me hacen el tiempo y los medios de publicar ciertas páginas, que probablemente quedarán perdidas!” (*Impresiones* 66). The story of Lafitte is left incomplete and thus becomes a source of anxiety for the writer who has neither the time nor the means to finish it.¹⁸

Sierra O’Reilly’s comment on his inability to write and publish is curious given that it is found in a travel book containing nearly 700 pages. In spite of this meta-commentary, his lament serves as a starting point for our analysis of Sierra O’Reilly’s frustration with the American authors who publish even those texts that are not worthy of publication. Sierra O’Reilly is not the first writer to express concern about the reception or accessibility of his work, but his concern is a symptom of a greater unrest that is born of the recognition that to fulfill his duty to the Yucatán he must create a positive image of his homeland in the public sphere. The accessibility of texts in the Yucatán becomes one of Sierra O’Reilly’s obsessions, and one of his goals is to ensure the presence of texts in the hands of his compatriots. As is evident in the citation below, his intentions are not to indoctrinate; instead he aims to provide reading alternatives. In order to be rejected his texts must first be available. In a self-reflexive moment where he ponders the destination of the document he is writing, Sierra O’Reilly expresses his desire to give the Yucatecans the option of ignoring his text as an alternative to not having access to texts at all:

Como yo quisiera que mi librito, tal cual va saliendo de mis manos, llegue a ser una especie de guía para mis compatriotas, en donde pudieran hallar lo más curioso e

¹⁸ It is noteworthy that when Sierra O’Reilly wrote *Impresiones* he had already written a historical novel about the role of pirates and piracy in the Yucatán. Sierra O’Reilly’s *El filibustero* was published in 1842, not to be confused with *El filibustero* (1864) by Eligio Ancona (1835-93), another Yucatecan writer. For more on the pirate novel in Latin American literature see Nina Gerassi-Navarro’s *Pirate Novels: Fictions of Nation Building in Spanish America*.

interesante que yo mismo he hallado en este viaje, confío en que no tendrán a mal que entre, sin pretensiones ciertamente, en algunos detalles. No es mi objeto probar que yo mismo conozco esos detalles, cosa que cualquiera comprenderá fácilmente sabiendo la clase de estudios a que me dedico hace mucho tiempo, sino ponerlos al alcance de aquellos mis lectores, que tengan motivo para ignorarlos. (*Impresiones* 70)

Sierra O'Reilly's self-promotion appears aimed at constructing the Yucatecan archive. At times this self-promotion comes in the form of gloating, as when he writes: "se habrá visto por la traducción de su interesante obra que estoy publicando" (*Impresiones* 89). At other times, he demonstrates a pessimistic acknowledgment that whatever works he does complete go unsold (and ostensibly unread), for example: "El traductor de la presente obra hizo a sus expensas una costosa edición del padre Cogolludo que aún permanece invendida" (*Viaje a Yucatán* 43n3). It could be argued that Sierra O'Reilly's comment on the unsold books refers to his economic status, but he does not dwell on penury in his travel writing. Instead, he seems to comment on the cost of books in Mexico. The "costosa edición" would put the text out of the economic reach of many Mexican readers. Sierra O'Reilly again expresses this concern in *Impresiones*: "...en nuestro país casi ninguna publicación, ni aun las más interesantes, puede costearse, como lo sé yo mismo por una triste experiencia" (89). Sierra O'Reilly's self-promotion is not, however, a simple case of hubris. Instead it is necessary to read the frequent references to the absence of his work in the public sphere in contrast to the American authors he encounters during his visit to the United States.

Sierra O'Reilly's concern with publishing and the role of American authors in the representation of the Yucatán is extremely visible in one encounter in New Orleans. Throughout his time in the United States, Sierra O'Reilly expresses his fascination with libraries, reading

rooms, and book printers. All spaces associated with the printed word are integrated into his itinerary. His fascination with the American archive is indicative of his preoccupation with the reproduction and circulation of texts that represent the Yucatán abroad. This preoccupation is never more evident than when he arrives in New Orleans and pays a visit to “Mr. Norman:”¹⁹

Una de las cosas que yo deseaba ver de preferencia en Nueva Orleans, era la librería de Mr. Norman: y confieso que mi curiosidad no era tanto por la librería, que por otra parte es una de las más famosas, cuanto por encontrarme de nuevo con el librero, a quien yo había conocido en Campeche, durante la rápida aparición que hizo dentro de nosotros, para tener el derecho, o más bien el pretexto de escribir y publicar un libro sobre Yucatán, plagado de errores e inexactitudes. (Sierra O’Reilly, *Impresiones* 88)

This citation is a curious example of Sierra O’Reilly’s digression from archive to writer to travel book. In his initial statement, Mr. Norman as an object of interest is subordinated to his library. Nevertheless, almost immediately Sierra O’Reilly corrects himself by saying that it was in fact Norman whom he wished to see. If not raising suspicions already due to his quick change of heart, his comment becomes suspect when he undermines Norman’s quality as a writer by stating that his book on the Yucatán is riddled with errors. Reading the fragment in its entirety we see Sierra O’Reilly’s desire to view the contents of the American archive while simultaneously undermining its authority. What intellectual or cultural worth could the archive offer if it was assembled by a writer who insists on putting flawed texts into circulation? Furthermore, given the explicit disdain for Norman’s writing, what could be Sierra O’Reilly’s motive to visit him?

¹⁹ Benjamin Moore Norman (1808-1860) was an American writer and bookseller. An active participant in the burgeoning travel writing industry, in addition to *Rambles in Yucatan; or, notes of travel through the peninsula, including a visit to the ruins of Chi-Chen, Kabah, Zayi, and Uxmal* (1843), the work that became the object of Sierra O’Reilly’s scorn, he also published *Rambles by land and water, or, Notes of travel in Cuba and Mexico; including a canoe voyage up the river Panuco, and researches among the ruins of Tamaulipas* (1845), and *Norman’s New Orleans and environs: containing a brief historical sketch of the territory and state of Louisiana, and the city of New Orleans...* (1845).

To answer these questions it is necessary to interrogate the context of this scene in *Impresiones*. I suggest that Norman appears as an excuse to speak about Stephens, his American counterpart in travel writing about the Yucatán. Norman is the villain, the evil foil for Stephens who Sierra O'Reilly claims to admire more. Sierra O'Reilly establishes a contrast between Norman and Stephens that allows him to position himself on the side of Stephens. In a way, Sierra O'Reilly uses the relationship between these two men to discuss their travel writing and to set the record straight regarding both his role in the creation and dissemination of their texts on the Yucatán, and his opinion of each man's work.

Sierra O'Reilly uses two structures to distinguish between Norman and Stephens: the *tour* vs. travel, and "anticipación" vs. "aceptación." Each of these structures functions to evaluate the validity of the two authors' accounts of the Yucatán. Sierra O'Reilly begins by making a distinction between what he calls a *tour*, in the French, and travel. Sierra O'Reilly states that Norman frequently published a book after his return home from abroad, but that Norman's publications were not the result of travel, "sino de lo que se llama en francés un *tour*, como si dijéramos un rápido paseo" (*Impresiones* 88). The brevity of Norman's visit would make it impossible to collect accurate and reliable information on the region. This brevity, in turn, insinuates multiple *tours* and, consequently, an abundance of inaccurate accounts. The travel account that results from a *tour*, Sierra O'Reilly underlines, is heavy on appearance, light on content, and destined entirely for mass consumption: "bueno o malo según las fuentes de información en donde hubiese bebido, pero siempre impreso con elegancia con un lujo tipográfico, que por de contado llama la atención y se atrae compradores" (*Impresiones* 88). The brevity and frequency of Norman's excursions abroad are contrasted with Stephens' more infrequent and more in-depth travels in the Yucatán and Central America. Stephens published

two travel books on the region: *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* and later *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. Sierra O'Reilly explains that the first book spoke only in passing about the Yucatán, while the second took the region entirely as its focus. The fact that Stephens returned twice, the second time to investigate the region with more profundity, places him in direct opposition to Norman and his *tours*. One such *tour* is described by Sierra O'Reilly in terms of pace:

Se hizo conducir a Valladolid, Chichén y Uxmal, que vio como en un cosmorama, vino a Campeche, se embarcó de aquí para Nuevas Orleans y nos regaló con un libro magníficamente impreso, es verdad, pero que casi no contiene una página en la cual no puede descubrirse errores de importancia. (*Impresiones* 89)

The choppy presentation of Norman's itinerary denotes the swiftness of the *tour* that undermines the authority of his travel writing. Furthermore, that same velocity produces a distorted vision of the region; Norman's sightseeing is described as seeing through a "cosmorama," a device comprised of mirrors that reproduces images for exhibition. Although present in the Yucatán, the rapidity of Norman's *tour* prevents an accurate vision and thus culminates in "errores de importancia."

The second structure used to differentiate between the two travel writers is "anticipación" vs. "aceptación." Sierra O'Reilly characterizes the reception of Stephens' work as, "con tanta aceptación como aplauso" and as having, "excitado una especie de curiosidad febril" (*Impresiones* 88-89). Norman, anticipating Stephens' second book, travels to the Yucatán to quickly publish his own account and ride the wake of Stephens's popularity. In this way, Norman's account will always be a cheap attempt to supplement Stephens' first book and eclipse the second.

While the subordination of Norman's text to Stephens' is clear, Sierra O'Reilly's comments on Stephens warrant our attention since they reveal another level of complexity in the relationship between the two writers. One of Sierra O'Reilly's principle attacks on Norman is his reliance on Stephens' text as a source. Nevertheless, Stephen's publication is also not devoid of errors. Sierra O'Reilly explains the strengths and weaknesses of the two books that Stephens wrote on the Yucatán: the first gave little attention to the Yucatán, framing it within a larger Central American narrative; the second, however, is worthy of translation into Spanish, a task Sierra O'Reilly is undertaking as he writes *Impresiones* and that will be published in two volumes, the first in 1848 and the second in 1850. Sierra O'Reilly attributes the heightened interest abroad in the Yucatán to Stephens' first publication, the more flawed of the two and he uses translation and the dissemination of texts as instruments with which to evaluate the work of Norman and Stephens. Sierra O'Reilly is cognizant of the burgeoning literary market, and aware of the influence trade conditions exercise on the circulation of texts. In his role as a member of the Yucatecan lettered community, Sierra O'Reilly would feel responsible for assessing the literary worth of a text before translating it and putting it into circulation in the Yucatán. In other words, to translate a flawed text that reflects poorly on the Yucatán is to jeopardize the reputation of his homeland.

Sierra O'Reilly openly states that Norman's text is unworthy of translation, "no creo que el libro de Mr. Norman merezca los honores de la traducción, ni para refutarlo," but also recognizes the importance of correcting Norman's mistakes: "Y sin embargo, bueno habría sido no dejar sin contradicción esas especies, porque al cabo por más de un aspecto nos han podido perjudicar" (*Impresiones* 89). Sierra O'Reilly bemoans that Norman's book is more popular in New Orleans than Stephens' and acknowledges a fear of the dissemination of flawed texts given

the commercial relationship between New Orleans and the port cities of the Yucatán: “nuestras relaciones mercantiles con esa plaza parecían demandar nuestra vigilancia y cuidado, para conservar en buen lugar nuestra reputación” (*Impresiones* 89). The reputation of the Yucatán, it would seem, is in Sierra O’Reilly’s hands.

If Norman’s *Rambles* is unworthy of translation because of its flaws, Stephens’ *Incidents* is worthy because it is less flawed. Sierra O’Reilly explains: “[e]l libro del primero es completamente absurdo; el del segundo es casi intachable” (*Impresiones* 89). The qualifier “casi” will be important in the closing section of this chapter as it denotes imperfection and as a result undermines Sierra O’Reilly’s previous praise. If, as it appears, Sierra O’Reilly describes his encounter with Norman in order to establish Stephens’ authority in the field of travel writing, why then does he now suggest Stephens’ imperfection? In what follows, I will attempt to answer this question through a close reading to Sierra O’Reilly’s translation of Stephens’ *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*.

Translating Stephens

Knowing the history of Sierra O’Reilly’s praise for Stephens’ travel writing, one is struck by the abundant footnotes to his translation of *Incidents* that persistently direct the reader’s attention away from Stephens and toward Sierra O’Reilly. Over the course of two volumes, Sierra O’Reilly the translator inserts his voice in over 140 footnotes aimed almost exclusively at correcting Stephens’ errors. Sierra O’Reilly’s assaults focus primarily on Stephens’ poor research skills and foreign bias. For example, Stephens does not speak or understand the local Mayan language, and that being so cannot properly interpret the local reality he sees or the local

informants he meets. He is also ignorant of regional politics and history and lacks the basic foundation with which to decipher the historical relevance of ruins.

The errors that Sierra O'Reilly indicates span from minor misunderstandings to complete misinterpretations. For example, Sierra O'Reilly is preoccupied by Stephens' use of the Spanish and Maya languages, where he finds misspellings of proper names and cities and flawed translations (*Viaje a Yucatán* 167n7, 200n6, 205n10, 280n2, 455-56n2). He also takes note of Stephens' ignorance of local customs and indigenous culture which leads to misinterpretations of rituals and dress (*Viaje a Yucatán* 15n1, 69n2, 70n3, 90n2, 95n6, 216n6, 294n2). Sierra O'Reilly takes special care to correct Stephens when he claims to be the first visitor to an archeological site (*Viaje a Yucatán* 111n5, 131n3), and when he gets local history wrong (*Viaje a Yucatán* 204n8,n9, 207n12, 457n8). An exhaustive analysis of each example of Stephens' errors would lead us astray of our emphasis, but it is noteworthy to view a brief list of the extensive nature of the American travelers' shortcomings according to Sierra O'Reilly.

Here I will return to the question that informs this section of the chapter: why does Sierra O'Reilly praise and translate a text only to fill its margins with criticism? Although the most plausible hypothesis is that it is an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of Stephens, and possibly all foreign visitors to the Yucatán peninsula, and specifically to challenge the authority of Stephens as a travel writer, this claim is unsatisfactory given Sierra O'Reilly's somewhat positive appraisal of Stephens. Instead, it seems, Sierra O'Reilly intentionally calls attention to Stephens' text in order to insert his own voice in the English speaking world, where he could not manage while in the US. Therefore, Sierra O'Reilly rides the coattails of Stephens' success, like "Mr. Norman," but does so to demonstrate—at least to a Spanish speaking audience—that

Stephens is a slightly better version of “Mr. Norman,” and that the accurate account of the region must come from within.

Translation is always a critical endeavor. As Sergio Waisman points out, Latin American writers are especially subject to the dilemma of translation given that they write from the periphery, the edges of the Western canon and literary history. When a great work is translated into Spanish there is a misconception that what is produced is a devalued text, an inferior copy of the original. Waisman makes the claim that translation to a peripheral language is foundational and constitutes a gesture toward a national literature.²⁰ While my focus here is not the origins of a national literature, I do understand Sierra O’Reilly’s translation as another breed of foundational moment. His translation is a manifest against foreign misinterpretation, but also in favor of the white creole lettered elite as the best sources of local history. Walter Benjamin poses the question, “Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?” and if not, why repeat what has already been said? (75). Sierra O’Reilly’s translation is both a repetition and a clarification: in repeating what Stephens had already written he participates in the “curiosidad febril” that his work had incited. But he also promotes his own agenda: that the Yucatán appear in such a way as to reveal the indigenous rebels as savages. However, through his translation O’Reilly moves closer to the indigenous culture he also wishes to denounce, bringing himself dangerously close to what he fears.

Sierra O’Reilly’s rewriting of Stephens’ rendition of Yucatecan history centers predominantly on the representation by Stephens of the ruins that dot the peninsula. At stake for Sierra O’Reilly is the chronology of the builders of the abandoned structures. While Stephens is intent on establishing a link between the members of the indigenous communities he meets while

²⁰ See Waisman’s fascinating study of translation and Latin American literature *Borges y la traducción: la irreverencia de la periferia*

in the Yucatán, and those who built the ruined structures in the past, Sierra O'Reilly has good reason to argue to the contrary. Sierra O'Reilly's campaign for the extermination of the Mayan rebels depended on the rebuttal of Stephens's arguments. Brickhouse suggests that Stephens' *Travel in Yucatan* indirectly supported Sierra O'Reilly's campaign by juxtaposing the "virility of the Anglo-American traveler in Yucatán" with the poor state of the Mayan Indians in the first half of the nineteenth century (210). In this way, the Mayan Indians would have been a people in decadence. Nevertheless, in Sierra O'Reilly's translation he openly accuses Stephens of an error in associating the contemporary Mayan Indians with the sophisticated ruins. As Brickhouse observes, "Sierra vehemently claimed them as part of a *nonindigenous* cultural inheritance registering Yucatecan patriotism and cultural nationalism," resulting in a "deliberate misattribution" that justified the extermination project (211).

Sierra O'Reilly's rebuttal of Stephens' interpretation of the ruins centers on historical chronology, a fundamental aspect of Stephens' argument: "Y éste es uno de los datos que sirven de base al sistema de Mr. Stephens, atribuyendo a la raza actual la construcción de los edificios arruinados que hay en el país" (*Viaje a Yucatán* 109n2). It is precisely with the idea of "arruinado" that Sierra O'Reilly begins his attack. Key to Sierra O'Reilly's argument is that the ruins were already in ruins when the Spaniards arrived in what we call today Mexico. In debate, then, is the linear history of the Yucatán that spans from before the Conquest to the mid-nineteenth century. Stephens was aware of this debate, but was determined to make a connection between the contemporary Mayan Indians and those who engineered the ruins:

Mr. Stephens no acierta a resignarse pacientemente a creer que nuestras ruinas lo eran ya al tiempo de la Conquista, en cuya época ni tradición había de quiénes hubiesen construido los edificios que tanto llamaron la atención a los primeros descubridores. Esto

no quiere decir que todas las ruinas de hoy lo hayan sido desde entonces. (*Viaje a Yucatán* 204n8)

Stephens' ignorance about local history and ethnic groups helps Sierra O'Reilly unravel his historical theories. Stephens is incapable of overlooking the obvious connections between structures and those who occupy them in the present. Stephens claims that the invading Spanish never occupied the homes of Indians, thus maintaining the ruins within a pristine, indigenous historical framework:

Fijo y preocupado Mr. Stephens en su teoría acerca de la existencia de la raza conquistada en el mismo sitio que hoy ocupan las ruinas, que ya lo eran en su mayor parte al tiempo de la invasión española, inventa una hipótesis para explicar la situación de Ticul. Pero esa hipótesis nada vale en presencia de la realidad de un hecho sencillo. El pueblo indio de Ticul es el mismo que hoy existe: después de la Conquista fueron a habitar allí algunas familias blancas. (*Viaje a Yucatán* 170-71n1)

Equally important for Sierra O'Reilly is to establish that many of the ruins in the 1840's were also ruins at the time of the Conquest. This again denotes Stephens' poor knowledge of Yucatecan historiography:

Ahora bien, es verdad que los conquistados hallaron grandes edificios notables, pero o eran templos o adoratorios, únicamente, o ruinas completas de cuyos constructores no había en Yucatán ni tradición de ello, como se explican los historiadores todos. Esta especie se ha escapado enteramente a Mr. Stephens y, por tanto, la teoría que está exponiendo es errónea. (*Viaje a Yucatán* 171n2)

Sierra O'Reilly again mentions in his footnotes the danger that these errors represent for the region, but this time in relation to the Caste War specifically. With the outbreak of violence the

region is more present in the public eye. This enhanced attention carries with it, in turn, the danger that the erroneous link between the sophisticated builders of the ruins and the Mayan Indians in the present will be accepted as truth:

si bien pudiera parecer indiferente que estas especies pasasen desapercibidas, sin embargo es preciso saber que este libro es uno de los que tienen más circulación en el extranjero y acaso el único que ha servido para juzgar en muchos puntos a Yucatán después que su nombre se ha hecho notable por la desoladora guerra de razas de que es víctima. (*Viaje a Yucatán* 343n2)

Finally, the last important element for Sierra O'Reilly is to establish without a doubt that the Mayan Indians are not peaceful, but bellicose and dangerous:

No hay remedio, si la raza conquistada en el siglo XVI por los españoles fue la misma que construyó estas maravillas monumentales, no hay duda que había caído hasta el último grado de la escala; pero lo más probable es que sería obra de otra raza que la actual, tan propensa a destruir más bien a edificar, habrá exterminado. (*Viaje a Yucatán* 417n2)

Sierra O'Reilly acknowledges that the current Indians could be a degenerated version of the builders, but he favors the hypothesis that the impressive structures were made by another race that was exterminated by the more violent, and less skilled, Indians of the Yucatán.

Conclusions

It is not just that Sierra O'Reilly seeks to undermine Stephens' authority; he aims to eliminate the possibility of proximity between the Mayan Indians and the American writers and reading public. His failed mission in Washington D.C, and his inability to master the so-called

language of progress, forces him to alter the most visible text on Yucatecan culture in the best way he can: through the combination of translation and the insertion of his own voice in the form of footnotes. His mediation, then, is between the rebelling Indians and the potential life-saving Americans. The negative representation of the white Yucatecan community in the American press that established the Indians as victims pushed Sierra O'Reilly to react. Given that he could not act on his frustration in the confining governmental structure of the United States, he did so through writing and in his own language. Paradoxically, his reaction positions him as the expert on Mayan language and culture that Norman and Stephens never were, as the travel writer who returns home to discover that he is more Yucatecan and more indigenous than he ever thought. Through the experience of negotiating US aid to the Yucatán, Sierra O'Reilly must confront the reality that in the eyes of the democratic colossus to the north, there is only minimal difference between him and the Indian rebels that he despises. This is confirmed in the content of his subversive footnotes that beg his reader to recognize that Stephens is not as Indian as he is.

In this chapter I have demonstrated not only that Mexican travel literature is a useful tool in understanding political and race relations in Mexico and the United States in the nineteenth century, but also that the authoritative discourses of liberalism or imagined communities that nineteenth-century scholars have come to rely on are often found to be impossible in texts dealing with travel. Sierra O'Reilly's work allows for an analysis of a fragmented community that challenges the notion of the nation, while providing material for the analysis of that category in the very moment in which it begins to be constituted. Therefore, studies of nineteenth-century identity during the nation-building era should take seriously anxiety-filled texts that grapple with translation and the need for appropriation through footnotes. For creole intellectuals like Sierra O'Reilly, foundational gestures were ambivalent due to the varying degrees of marginality that

characterized the historical moment. For Sierra O'Reilly specifically, his Yucatecan identity was already marginal to the already marginal Mexican nation and therefore undermines any notion of a homogeneous community, imagined or otherwise.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERNAL EXILE²¹

In this chapter, I present an analysis of Guillermo Prieto's *Viajes de orden suprema* as a text that offers an alternative vision of the nationalizing projects that Prieto and so many of his contemporaries labored to create in the mid-nineteenth century. My reading of *Viajes*, a text that has received little critical attention in comparison to Prieto's *crónicas*, poetry, and *costumbrismo* sketches, does not confirm the national hero status of an indisputably important politician and writer. Instead, far from confirming a national literature or "imagined community," Prieto's *Viajes* instructed his readers on the ways of coming to terms with the realization that these projects were impossible. The power of this text, I argue, is that it reveals the writer's struggle with failure and the dismay that is born from the recognition that to write in confinement and under prohibition demands a new type of writing, one that is at odds with a national literature. Writing as a result of censorship, and satirizing those in power and the political and economic structures they advocate, Prieto's internal exile culminates in a pronounced writerly presence. That is, the absence of the writer from the political forum is amplified through the production of more texts. Thus to read *Viajes* is also to analyze the supply and demand of texts related to Mexican culture during Prieto's exile. These traits, it seems, have made *Viajes* a difficult fit in the debates over national literature and its creation in the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, as I will discuss later in the chapter, in the early decades of the twentieth century, Prieto was seen by some critics as a rustic bumpkin whose poetry celebrated the banal.

²¹ I take this term from Thea Pitman who refers to Prieto as an internal exile but without exploring the concept's interpretative possibilities. See Pitman's *Mexican Travel Writing* p. 54.

In beginning this chapter with a newspaper article that highlights both the productivity of Prieto's internal exile and his importance as a national writer, I seek to approach the debate about the role of writing in the production of imaginary communities through the lens of travel writing and *Viajes* in particular. Writing on the fly, Prieto produces a corpus of texts that capture the essence of nineteenth-century culture, and this form of writing will prove problematic in the nationalistic reevaluation of Mexican letters during the early decades of the twentieth century.

In 1918, the editors of *Revista de Revistas* dedicated an entire edition to the centennial celebration of the birth of Guillermo Prieto (1818-97). The contents placed the acclaimed Mexican writer and statesman in different categories of reverence. Sections titled, "El galán más fiel de la libertad" and "El 'Folk-lore' Mexicano y la 'Musa Callejera'" accurately contextualize the life of a man who was politically and artistically committed to the creation of a Mexican national identity during the post-Independence years. While the reference to his devotion to liberty locates him within the ideological tradition of liberalism, the association with Mexican folklore and street life establish Prieto as a proponent of the artistic representation of everyday life. Prieto thus formed a bridge between the political and the popular, as the editors observe: "La austeridad de nuestros viejos liberales constituía un obstáculo para llegar a lo hondo de las multitudes. Prieto eliminó este estorbo: él sirvió de lazo de unión entre el alma popular y la actuación de los suyos" ("El galán" 15). In his capacity to unite the public figures who struggled to create a national identity through literature with the common people, Prieto represented a new type of public figure: the political actor who participated in state affairs and a writer whose work placed the popular at the forefront of national representation.

Included in the celebratory edition are two previously unedited photos of the writer, one of Prieto in his youth, and another as an elderly man.²² The younger Prieto peers directly into the readers eyes with a somber gaze as he leans, at ease, on an elaborately decorated piece of furniture. His free hand tucked loosely in his coat pocket, Prieto embodies both the seriousness of the public intellectual, and the lighthearted tone of the popular scenes and parody that characterized much of his writing. The elder Prieto retains the likable and docile countenance of his youth, but his gaze drifts off in the distance, concentrating on something other than the public. The seriousness and intensity of the younger Prieto is substituted for that of a national grandfather, symbolically important to national patrimony but no longer on the front lines of national debate. The image of the older Prieto is focused on the head and torso, reminiscent of the disembodied busts that solidify the prominence of historical figures. The photograph of the younger Prieto shows, in turn, a full body shot, typical perhaps of portrait photography of the time period, but granting the viewer, nonetheless, a visual reference point for the complete man who most actively participated in Mexican letters and politics. The arrangement of these photographs in the newspaper is revealing. The younger Prieto encroaches slightly on the larger, older Prieto, thus creating continuity between the two images that allows the viewer to grasp his diachronic importance: Guillermo Prieto was the omnipresent image of nineteenth-century Mexican affairs, expanding to fill the Mexican imaginary.

An important aspect of the celebratory edition of *Revista de Revistas* is the recuperation and exhibition of Prieto's lost works. Long before Boris Rosen Jélomer would painstakingly collect, edit, and publish Prieto's complete works in 1992 under the auspices of the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, the editors of *Revista de Revistas* included references to

²² These photographs appear on page 15 of the special edition of *Revista de Revistas* dedicated to Guillermo Prieto, domingo 10 de febrero 1918.

neglected works in the centennial edition. The most significant section in this respect is one that refers to Prieto's internal exile first to the state of Querétaro, to the north of Mexico City, then to Oaxaca, south of the capital. The section is aptly titled "Guillermo Prieto, Confinado." While for the uninitiated reader the meaning of "confined" in relation to Prieto's life is not immediately apparent, what is discernible is the tension between the editors' objective of elevating Prieto to national hero status and telling part of his story in terms of confinement. That is, in order to elevate the prolific writer and politician to national hero status, the editors saw fit to return to a specific historical moment that was defined by Prieto's exclusion and the prohibition of his writing. Having fallen from General Santa Anna's grace as a result of a negative appraisal of the dictator's role in the Mexican American War (1846-48) and a satirical account of Santa Anna's recent return to office in 1853, Prieto was banished from the capital and escorted to Cadereyta, Querétaro. While Cadereyta lies some three hours north of Mexico City by modern transportation, we should not forget that in 1853 it was a remote destination reached only after numerous days of travel down corrugated roads by stagecoach. This distance aimed to remove Prieto from the center of political operations and punish the writer for his printed transgressions. Nevertheless, the article is especially useful in establishing Prieto's exile as a period of great productivity. Not only did he write the work that will be the focus of this chapter, *Viajes de orden suprema*, but also chronicles, poetry, and economic treatises that live on as important contributions to Mexican literature and historical accounts of nineteenth-century Mexico. In short, by including Prieto's exile in the one hundredth celebration of his birth, the editors of *Revista de Revistas* give a home in Mexican culture to the works Prieto wrote as a political outcast.

The Writer

A prolific writer and active participant in the Mexican government, Guillermo Prieto was both a statesman and *letrado*.²³ Prieto participated simultaneously in the political and literary movements of nineteenth-century Mexico, both working in the Treasury Department and contributing to literary associations, the latter an affiliation that culminated in his role in the founding of the Academia de Letrán in 1836.²⁴ Known for cultivating a variety of literary genres, Prieto produced works of poetry, short stories, chronicles and his lengthy memoir *Memorias de mis tiempos* (1906). Literary critics and historians generally consider Prieto's works important for their documentation of typical Mexican figures, such as *el charro*, and local customs that, together, created an archive often associated with the notion of a nation community. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of Prieto's travel accounts (in his complete works they comprise five of twenty nine volumes) also suggests the importance of this genre to the writer. In what follows I will give an overview of Prieto's place in Mexican letters and Mexican politics. This contextual information is necessary to frame both the historical moments and contemporary discourse that informed Prieto's writing and to provide my reader with a panoramic vision of the literary movements in which he participated, and the literary figures that influenced him.

²³ I refer here to Angel Rama's celebrated work *La ciudad letrada* (1984) in which he argues that control over the written word established power in Latin America. Rama's "*letrados*," writers always associated with the urban space, organize reality in such a way as to facilitate a hierarchy, with the literate at the top. In this way, order seeking ideas committed to paper predated material reality thus hiding the *letrados* role in the creation of the organization of space. *Letrados* serve as intermediaries who connect the illiterate with the bureaucratic state structures, always favoring the written word as a prerequisite to an encounter with power.

²⁴ The Academia de Letrán existed from 1836-1856, the period associated with the earliest presence of Romanticism in Mexico. The Letrán is well known for having united different generations, ideologies and literary practices in one group. Important members were Andrés Quitana Roo, José María Tornel, the conservative Lucas Alamán, the poet José Joaquín Pesado, and liberals Ignacio Ramírez and Guillermo Prieto. The Letrán was an important precursor to another literary group, the Ateneo Mexicano (1840-1844). Groups such as these brought nineteenth-century writers together to both share and publish their work. For more information on nineteenth-century literary groups in Mexico see "¿Generaciones o constelaciones?" by Belem Clark de Lara in *La república de las letras: asomos a la cultura escrita del México decimonónico*, vol. I pages 11-46.

Throughout his long literary career Prieto was influenced by prose writers, poets, theatre, and visual culture. Undoubtedly the offspring of early Romanticism, Prieto mentioned as inspiration an eclectic group including the French playwright Paul de Kock (1793-1871), Ramón de Mesoneros Romanos (1803-1882), the Spanish cultivator of *costumbrismo* who was celebrated for capturing the everyday life of nineteenth-century Madrid, Mariano José de Larra (1809-1837), a Spanish Romantic and essayist whose satire revealed a profound disenchantment with Spanish nationalism and modernity, and Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard Grandville (1803-1847), a French caricaturist known for political satire and fantastic imagery some associate with an incipient European surrealism. Vicente Quirarte adds Francisco de Quevedo to this list and explains the nature of influence these Spanish writers exercised on Prieto, “Prieto se siente próximo a Francisco de Quevedo, Mariano José de Larra y Ramón de Mesonero Romanos. Del primero toma el sentido escatológico de la realidad; del segundo, su implacable cinismo para criticar los usos sociales establecidos” (Quirarte, “La patria como oficio” 28). Quirarte cites Prieto who explains his desire to emulate the work of Mesonero Romanos, “Y al ver que Mesonero quería escribir un Madrid antiguo y moderno, yo quise hacer lo mismo” (Prieto cited in Quirarte, “La patria como oficio” 28).

Nevertheless, Prieto’s influences did not come solely from across the Atlantic; he was equally influenced by Mexican writers and artists. Carlos Monsiváis describes nineteenth-century Mexico as, “un país escasamente poblado, donde todos (es decir aquellos pocos que cuentan) se conocen hasta el hartazgo, y los demás (es decir, el populacho vil o el pópulo bárbaro, paisaje naturalmente borroso si bien le va), se despliegan como vaguedades o sombras para mejor dejarse definir” (“La herencia oculta de Guillermo Prieto” 468). Prieto was of course a part of the former group, whose members knew each other to the point of greedy satiation

(*hartazgo*), and who both wrote to each other and read each other's work. Among the Mexican *letrados* who influenced Prieto were Ignacio Ramírez, Manuel Payno, Ignacio Altamirano, Angel de Campo, and "el hoy casi olvidado dramaturgo Fernando Calderón" (López Cámara, *Los viajes de Guillermo Prieto* 23). While the historic events of the nineteenth century unequivocally brought Prieto and his closest friends and defenders of liberalism together, there also existed a certain need to write that was intimately linked to friendship. López Cámara explains that, "siendo tan estrecha e íntima la amistad entre *Fidel* and *El Nigromante* desde que eran mozalbetes, es de suponerse una importante influencia recíproca en muchas regiones de su labor literaria y desde luego en las crónicas de viajes" (*Los viajes de Guillermo Prieto* 29). Friendship and intertextuality went hand in hand during this period of artistic and political proximity and Manuel Payno, a lifelong friend of Prieto, provided Prieto with a Mexican template for his travel writing. In some of his travels Prieto retraced the steps of Payno and recognized his influence in his writing. Again López Cámara explains: "A Payno lo utiliza más bien como guía y precedente de viaje; por ejemplo, al narrar los pormenores de su segundo destierro, cuando, camino a Puebla, le hace pasar por lugares descritos anteriormente por Payno y que Fidel recuerda con agrado" (*Los viajes de Guillermo Prieto* 29). Thus, in a historical moment when influence was often sought abroad, Prieto's writing showed influence from local writers and the desire to represent local customs and landscapes.

Finally, although not part of the fraternal group of Mexican liberal writers, José Agustín Arrieta (1803-1874) was a *costumbrista* painter who captured Prieto's attention and to whom Prieto made multiple references (Quirarte, "La patria como oficio," 26). Scholars have underlined the pronounced relationship between *costumbrista* painting and *costumbrista* writing, even venturing to argue that the *costmbrista* writers sought to emulate the new visual

representation of everyday life that defined *costmbrista* painting.²⁵ Quirarte, nonetheless, emphasizes the influential exchange that took place between these two celebrators of popular culture within the attempts to create a national identity: “Arrieta se convirtió en cronista de costumbres a través de sus cuadros, mientras el escritor Guillermo Prieto llegó a ser un pintor de cuadros populares a través de sus crónicas, memorias y los poemas resumidos en el libro que es también un manifiesto de principios: *Musa callejera*” (Quirarte, “La patria como oficio” 27).²⁶ Although aesthetically conservative from the vantage point of the twentieth century, Guillermo Prieto undeniably employed in his writing the most innovative writing styles being practiced in both Mexico and Europe in his attempts to create a national literature.

A voracious reader and energetic participant in cultural activities of the period, it is no surprise that Prieto subscribed to such a myriad of creative influences. However, perhaps the most telling detail is what is absent from the list of Prieto’s influences. Although Prieto tried his hand at nearly all literary genres with varying degrees of success, he passed over the genre that many would agree defined the nineteenth century. Surrounded by novelists such as Payno (*Bandidos de Rio Frío* (1889-1891), *Hombre de la situación* (1861), *Fistol del diablo* (1845-46)) and Igancio Altamirano (*Navidad en las montañas* (1871), *Clemencia* (1869)) and influenced by Europeans novelists such as Eugène Sue and Emile Zola, Prieto opted to try his literary skills in genres other than the novel. Quirarte explains this through Prieto’s tendency to practice genres that were associated with a lack of structure: “su estructura mental no pertenecía al universo estructurado y dilatado de la novela” (“La patria como oficio” 34-35). While it may be problematic to speculate on the relationship of Prieto’s mental state and his decision to limit his writing to genres that resisted complacent definition, such as the *crónica* or travel writing,

²⁵ For more an example of this analytical approach, see Erica Segre’s *Intersected Identities*.

²⁶ *Musa callejera* (1883) is a collection of romances celebrating Mexican popular culture.

Quirarte's comment makes sense when viewed before the thick volumes of Prieto's collected works dedicated to *cuadros de costumbres*, travel accounts, and his own autobiography *Memorias de mis tiempos*. Prieto was fond of genres that lent themselves to an urgent writing, where thousands of pages exhibit an unyielding desire to describe and record observations that are interspersed with self-reflexive commentary on the difficulty of the task of the writer. Carlos Monsiváis takes Quirarte's observation a step further by associating Prieto's inexhaustible writing with his advocacy of liberalism. The bringing together of the "high" and the "low" in a literary space based on equality, Prieto sought to amplify the world through writing: "Al revisar fusiones y oposiciones, Prieto se decide: si lo trascendente es ampliar a la sociedad, no se tomará partido ostensible por grupo alguno y sólo se ha de privilegiar el talento. Es la hora de la cultura mestiza fundada en las combinaciones interminables" (Monsiváis "La herencia oculta de Guillermo Prieto" 471). Noteworthy are the references to amplifying and mixing, "la cultura mestiza," two tasks that demand that the writer experiment with genres and challenge generic boundaries. Enlarging society required more space than the conventional novel afforded, and the mixtures and "interminable combinations" that populated the pages of Prieto's work were better cultivated through genres such as *costumbrismo* sketches and travel accounts that were characterized by a textual hybridity that made it difficult to discern when one writing style stopped and another began.

Critical Approaches to the National Man of Letters

The traits of Prieto's writing discussed above (urgency, hybridity) made Prieto's work difficult to categorize, but they also made more conventional aspects of his writing an easy target for literary and cultural critics. The commemorative edition of *Revista de Revistas* I referred to

in the introduction was preceded by an essay penned by the venerated writer and member of the *Ateneo de la Juventud*, Alfonso Reyes seven years before. *El Ateneo* was a group of young writers who formed in the first two decades of the twentieth century with the intention of creating a literature and philosophy that challenged the utilitarian and positivist tendencies of the *Porfiriato* and to renovate intellectual engagement in Mexico, “introduciendo una nueva filosofía espiritualista que rehabilitara los altos valores de la vida, muy rebajados en México por la influencia del positivismo” (Samuel Ramos, *El perfil del hombre* 138). The proposed distance from positivistic materiality entered into direct conflict with some of Mexico’s most celebrated authors of the nineteenth century. These writers, who cultivated genres anchored in empirical observation, such as *costumbrismo*, fell short of the heightened aesthetic practice the members of the *Ateneo* desired. In the case of Guillermo Prieto, Reyes’ essay titled “El paisaje en la poesía Mexicana del siglo XIX” (1911) contains an especially biting critique of Prieto’s poetry. As the title reveals, his primary objective is to assess the constitutive role of landscape in Mexican nineteenth-century poetry, but equally important for Reyes is how Mexican poets reacted to—or rejected—European poetic models.

Although Reyes’ interest in Prieto’s poetry is purely aesthetic, he cannot avoid commenting on Prieto’s personal appearance. Referring to his “desaliñada persona” and his “fisonomía ingenua y patriarcal,” Reyes cannot overlook the importance of such an image in national history (Reyes, “El paisaje en la poesía” 239). Reyes admits that as much for his “canto” and his actions, Prieto is irrevocably linked to the principal historical events of Mexican history. Nevertheless, the slovenly Prieto falls short as a poet in the eyes of Reyes. For Reyes, poetry in the hands of Prieto is akin to, “[e]l barro, sin plasticidad, [que] se quiebra entre sus manos” (Reyes, “El paisaje en la poesía” 239). More important than the clumsy elaboration of

Prieto's poetry, his poetic project serves a contradictory purpose for Reyes. Lacking a national imagination capable of unlocking the secrets revealed by poetry, Prieto imposes his own imagination thus creating an "obra artificial" (Reyes, "El paisaje en la poesía" 240). Worse still, without the profundity that grants poetry its captivating power, Prieto's poetry will never function as the "llave para penetrar en los secretos de un pueblo, sino que serán como engaños y falsificaciones frías, cosa vana y de poco momento aun cuando su intención cívica pueda ser tan alta" (Reyes, "El paisaje en la poesía" 240). The gaps between national hero, civic duty, and poet are too great for Reyes to reconcile. In fact, Reyes questions the very veneration of Prieto as national poet given that "su lectores por ninguna parte aparecen; porque Guillermo Prieto es más bien una representación histórica que no una alta manifestación poética" ("El paisaje en la poesía" 241).

I would like to underline the importance of Reyes' exclusion of Prieto from the poetic pantheon of Mexican poetry. First, by isolating poetry as his field of inquiry, he overlooks and eliminates a large portion of Prieto's literary corpus. While Reyes' choice reflects his belief that poetry is the most adequate path to the renovation of Mexican intellectual life promoted by the *Ateneo*, he overlooks the creative capabilities of Prieto's other works, among them his travel accounts. In short, Reyes fails to consider Prieto a writer who contributed to Mexican letters in unexpected ways. Therefore, Reyes is limited by his own myopia, by approaching Prieto only through what Reyes holds in high esteem.

Reyes negative evaluation of Prieto extends to Prieto's choice of topic, the everyday life of nineteenth-century Mexico. In one of Prieto's most recognized poetry collections, *Musa callejera*, Prieto celebrates quotidian images and practices in "romances" with titles such as "Boleros," "El sombrero jarano," and "Glorias del barrio." Reyes refers to these poems as

“versos festivos” and the collection as “esa abigarrada galleria de tipos vulgares” (“El paisaje en la poesía” 243). While Reyes values these poems only for their capacity to entertain, he admits that the lack of aesthetic substance could be symptomatic of the genre itself: “Pero ¿qué hemos de pedir a una musa callejera? Reproches son éstos que pueden ser aplicados no al poeta sino al género en que ejercitó” (“El paisaje en la poesía” 243). The everyday life of Mexico captured by Prieto is merely the simple and flavorless, “la verdad . . . sosa y mesquina,” that Reyes seeks to leave behind as he elevates thinking and representation to a higher plane. Nevertheless, by recognizing the limits of the genre, Reyes implicitly suggests the limitations of his critical intervention in the work of Prieto. Reyes underlines the absence of Prieto’s texts that he did not read and where he may have found topics and material more apt for the type of national literature sought by the members of *El Ateneo*.

Writing later in the twentieth century, José Joaquín Blanco explains that not only were important works by some nineteenth-century writers not appreciated, in some cases they were not even collected and published. Blanco observes that many prominent writers of the period were affected by what he calls the “pedantería de la posteridad,” the dogmatic approach to literary criticism practiced by those who write from the vantage point of more “revolutionary” literary strategies (“Prieto: viajes de fuerza mayor,” 316). In part, Blanco attributes this pedantic exclusion to the publication of the least representative works by nineteenth-century writers: those texts informed by a distance from the political reality of the moment. If the work of these writers is not worthy, Blanco asks:

¿cómo no han de aparecer imperfectos, defectuosos, cursis o inocentes, si no se rescata de ellos más que los menos representativos, aquéllos alejados de la literatura de combate,

en los que estos autores trataron en vano de despojarse de la pluma periodística y de ceñirse el frac de las festividades. (316)

Blanco gives two reasons for the rejection of these writers' literature from the trenches: one is genre, and the other is shame. The works of these authors that most capture what Blanco calls "literatura de combate" were marginal genres such as the chronicle, *costumbrista* sketches and travel accounts that were overlooked in favor of "'grandes' novellas o poemas 'refinados'" (317). Blanco also attributes the shame he associates with the critical reception of these writers with a disapproving gaze from the urban critics who created an image of nineteenth-century writers as backward and poor spoken: "se volvieron los ancestros rancheros de quienes no quiere acordarse el ciudadano pretensioso [sic]" (317). According to Blanco, both Reyes and Salvador Novo considered these writers part of "una generación rústica y provinciana . . . incapaces ya no de una gran literatura sino aun de una literatura seria. Admirémoslos como 'maístros' . . . no como maestros" (316). The reference to two types of teacher, one "properly" pronounced, the other carrying an accent that distances the speaker from "serious" ways of speaking, not only highlights the two ways of approaching this type of writing, but it also underlines the role of the literary and cultural critic in propagating a specific type of national literature.

What do Reyes and Novo teach us by limiting some nineteenth-century writers to poorly spoken—and poorly written—provincial "ancestors"? In the following section I will explore other critical possibilities in the work of these writers by embracing a more local, or domestic, approach to nineteenth-century Mexico. Specifically, I will focus on writing during this period in terms of domestic travel. Consistent with his arguments on the unjust criticism of the presence of provincial life in literature found in the work of Reyes and Novo, Blanco recognizes

what he considers a positive change in Prieto's writing as a result of the internal exile that immersed the writer in provincial life:

[e]l destierro le hizo conocer parajes mejores: la agricultura de San Juan del Río y de San Martín Texmelucan lo entusiasma y lo vuelve un poeta exaltadamente geórgico, que encuentra un insuperable paradigma de civilización en las 'feraces sementeras', y un modelo del mexicano del porvenir en el pequeño y mediano ranchero, equidistante de la miseria y de la aristocracia. (322-23)

In this fragment Blanco, considers "parajes mejores" those places Prieto visited once he left Mexico City. In other words, experiencing provincial life provided Prieto with an alternative model from which to draw his writing. Blanco cites Prieto's gloomy portrayal of Mexico City's decadence in contrast with his more positive depiction of Querétaro, to the north of the capital, as evidence of this change.

My intention here is not to argue for the literary value of one type of writing over another, nor to side with a specific critical approach to Prieto's work, *costumbrismo*, or other types of writing that sought to represent local customs and ways of speaking. Instead, I seek to emphasize the debates over nineteenth-century Mexican writers that revolved around the contribution of writing that stayed close to home, that represented local culture. I also want to explore the literary capabilities of these writers within the more general project of creating a national literature. In what follows, I will suggest that Prieto's *Viajes* can be placed within more recent critical approaches where instead of undermining the value of writers who celebrated the local, the local traveler is privileged as a type of cultural messenger.

The Domestic Traveler

The act of looking out or looking away in search of answers to national problems is a widespread gesture in Latin America as exemplified in writers such as Domingo Faustino Sarmiento who sought educational models in the United States as a path to modernization. In his *The Routes of Modernity*, Andrew Bush inverts this approach through the study of trade routes and their relation to the development of Latin American literature. Bush explains that the colonial practice of dividing resources into external (those coming from Europe) and internal ones, demonstrated a reluctance to take local commerce and products seriously. With contraband increasingly becoming a problem, Bush argues that colonial authorities disregarded internal commerce as a path to putting stagnant currency into circulation and at the same time ignored the domestic transmission of poetry. The goal of colonial powers was to stimulate commerce with the metropolis, not make local merchants wealthy. Bush asserts, “instead of dressing themselves—and their poetry—in imported finery, they might have capitalized on the local American products in constant supply and demand” (14-15).

Bush takes this claim a step further by observing that even important figures in the fight for independence often looked abroad for aid instead of contemplating the possibilities of looking within. Francisco de Miranda (1750-1816), for example, cited problems of transportation resulting from the absence of extensive internal trade routes and well developed domestic ports (Bush 16). By preferring British naval intervention over the exploration of internal routes a certain dependency was created that negated domestic possibilities. Bush, however, argues that the earliest examples of modern poetry in Latin America, a poetry that was critical of traditional authority, could be found precisely in the poetry recited on the internal trade

routes. In this way, “internal exploration” and “internal commerce” are transformed by Bush into a methodological tool he uses to reevaluate the history of Latin American literature (14).

Bush also discusses the history of critical approaches to the tendency of Latin American writers and politicians to look abroad for guidance. Citing Carlos J. Alonso’s *The Burden of Modernity*, Bush explains that Alonso explores Latin America’s entrance into modernity through the same gesture of looking abroad for answers to domestic problems. In a general summary, Alonso explores the problems that arose when, in an attempt to modernize, Latin American authors looked to European works to model their own literature. According to Bush, this “demonstrated at once their modernity and their backwardness” in that they acknowledged the modernity of European literature, and their capacity to emulate it, but at the same time it revealed their incapacity to produce something equally modern on their own (Bush 18). This culminates in the “turning away” (18) gesture that Bush finds in every Latin American text and, therefore, opens the path to what could be called a “turning in” or a search for domestic representative models. The model of inward discovery proposed by Bush provides a useful backdrop to the current study. Prieto’s internal exile results in the—obligatory—exploration of domestic culture that challenges traditional literary genres, and also introduces Mexican popular and political language and scenery.

In “Visión de Anahúac,” a widely read text by Reyes, the author re-evaluates colonial and postcolonial Mexican identity from a privileged point of enunciation that inverts the colonial tradition. That is, beginning with the Mexican landscape, Reyes ruminates on the colonial fascination with nature and landscape of the pre-Columbian lands and their role in national history and identity. Appropriating the gaze of the traveler-explorer, Reyes places the power to write the land and to establish its role in history in the eyes of the American traveler: “El viajero

americano está condenado a que los europeos le pregunten si hay en América muchos árboles. Les sorprenderíamos hablándoles de una Castilla Americana más alta que la de ellos, más armoniosa, menos agria seguramente . . .” (Reyes 15). Reyes’s use of the American traveler subverts the European authority regarding the discursive creation of the epistemology of the Americas, and, in turn, suggests a privileged knowledge found only locally.

In his rethinking of twentieth-century intellectual and literary histories titled *Naciones intelectuales*, Ignacio Sánchez Prado observes that Reyes’ American traveler reverses the model introduced by Mary-Louis Pratt in her acclaimed book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (74). In *Imperial Eyes* Pratt argues that Latin American travelers appropriated models of discourse and representation previously established by European travelers to the Americas, Alexander Von Humboldt being the most dominant example. Such prominent Latin American writers as Andrés Bello, Simón Bolívar, and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento visited and lived in Europe during the early decades of the nineteenth-century and were exposed to the writings of Humboldt and other European visitors to the Americas. In the search for a national identity that followed the successful wars of Independence, these same writers seized the literary tropes used by the Europeans to describe the recently liberated lands. As Pratt convincingly argues, the case of Bello, Bolívar, and Sarmiento is not one of simple imitation; instead, these writers incorporate only what they find fitting in Humboldt, an example of transculturation.

Sánchez Prado convincingly argues that Alfonso Reyes’ “Visión de Anáhuac” represents the inversion of this account of the influence of European on American travel narratives in that Reyes visits the imperial metrópolis—he writes “Visión de Anahúac” in Spain—and from there imposes an American sensibility: “Reyes, el americano, visita la vieja metrópolis española y le da forma desde sus propios referentes: la operación de los conquistadores de Anáhuac se ve

invertida y el viajero mexicano transforma la metrópoli imperial en un conjunto de estampas provincianas” (78-79). Sánchez Prado’s reading of Reyes grants literary agency to the Mexican writer and more specifically to the Mexican exiled abroad. Sánchez Prado explains that the case of Reyes is not that of another Latin American intellectual exiled in Europe who longs to return to his homeland. Instead, what informs Reyes’s essay is the required distance needed to grasp the revolutionary nature of his thought, removed from the institutions and domesticating processes that generated it (79). Reyes’ imposition of “domestic” forms on imperial models represents a shift in the vision presented in earlier colonial texts, but still does so from a distance, an exile, that according to Sánchez Prado allows for the rethinking of the revolutionary ideas that informed Mexican literature and politics during the first decades of the twentieth century. This distance places Reyes in the same category of writer as Bello (who wrote his “Agricultura en la zona torrida” from the libraries of London), Sarmiento (who reflected on the political culture of Argentina while exiled in Chile and created a discursive wasteland in the rural sectors that he had never visited) and Bolívar (who often looked to England for political inspiration and wrote his famous treatise on Latin American independence “Carta de Jamaica” (1815) while exiled on the island of the same name).

The need for distance as a facilitating factor in the reconceptualization of national identity and political culture mentioned by Sánchez Prado (and taken for granted by Pratt) fails to consider the transformative possibilities of domestic travel. In the case of the internal exile the distance from “home” can also bring one closer to political realities, and this in turn can result in a more immediate or desperate writing. If exile is defined by an absence, the internal exile is explained by obligatory presence. While Sarmiento critiques barbarism from his exile, Prieto is thrust into a national presence, exiled by what he calls an institutionalized barbarism.

Not only does this disrupt Sarmiento's famous civilization versus barbarism dichotomy, but it renders it useless in the case of Prieto. The institutionalized barbarism manifested in the rigorous censorship that had taken control of Mexico City culminates in Prieto's knowledge of other regions and in profuse writing. The immediacy with which Prieto wrote is evident in Francisco López Cámara's observation that Prieto edited *Viajes de orden suprema* from "la pila de 'apuntamientos' que había reunido durante sus destierros" and that those "pilas" were transcribed into 670 pages between the two moments of exile (17). Urgent writing, filling paper with "apuntamientos" that would cover hundreds of pages, is a characteristic of the internal exile; a study of its contents will reveal a critique of Mexico that is inconsistent with literary criticism of Prieto's work that aims solely to evaluate his place among the creators of a national literature.

The Latin American traveler has also been studied as a writer whose misuse of European models is the foundation of Latin American literature. In his *Descuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: literatura y política en el siglo XIX*, Julio Ramos presents a masterful analysis of the literary crisis experienced by writers in the region. During the wars of Independence a certain unanimity emerged among the creole nationalists, what David Brading has called "Creole patriotism," that was solidified in opposition to the common enemy of Spain. As Ramos explains, however, this unanimity was consistently threatened from within the new republics by a "fragmentación interna" that invalidated attempts to forge new national subjects according to foreign models (35). In the aftermath of the successful wars of Independence, the absence of a legitimizing model of citizenship and an adequate modernizing discourse prompted Latin American intellectuals to look abroad for answers, what Ramos refers to as attempts to "fill the void" (37). Using Argentine author Domingo Faustino Sarmiento as an emblematic Latin American intellectual and writer, Ramos explains that Sarmiento participated in the "viaje

importador del discurso” that established the movement from high to low, civilized to the barbarous (36). But, Ramos explains, the importation of foreign knowledge is destabilized by Sarmiento’s misuse of it (his poor use of quotes, for example), and it is precisely in the misuse of the civilizing discourse that Sarmiento creates an alternative discourse that “se convierte en el mecanismo de autorización de un trabajo intelectual alternativo, que enfatiza su diferencia del saber europeo” (41). In this way, the signs of barbarism that some readers find in Sarmiento’s works (the lack of rigor, discipline, and historical accuracy, the spontaneous nature of his work) for Ramos are signs of an incipient American discourse that contains the voice of the “other.”

Prieto also writes in the aftermath of the wars of Independence when the absence of a stabilizing discourse culminated in chaos. But Prieto is a different type of traveler, one who does not first travel abroad in search of legitimizing discourses, but instead is sent to the interior of the country, to the underdeveloped space (from the perspective of the urban elite) of the provinces. The transgressor who refuses to recognize the limits of writing imposed by State sanctioned authority, Prieto is exiled from the political center of Mexico, from the lettered city from which the organizing symbols of Mexico literature emanate. Prieto, therefore, is located between two types of barbarism: the underdeveloped interior expanses of the nation, and the residual traces of colonial censorship of the capital.

If what conditions Sarmiento’s travel is “el desnivel, la distancia entre lo alto y lo bajo” and his writing is informed by the need to dissolve the “desajuste: cubrir el vacío,” how do these categories help us to think about what conditions Prieto’s internal exile? The censorship that impedes the circulation of the satirical texts against Santa Anna is a sign of the old regime, of “el atraso” that obstructs the path to modernity. Therefore, what conditions Prieto’s travel is the control over writing, the same control that conditions the creation of the text.

Censorship and Internal Exile

Prieto was no stranger to censorship and expression in the political arena. A precocious orator, Prieto gave a scathing speech in 1837 against the current administration while still a student. The speech came to be known as the “Oda leída por D. Guillermo Prieto, empleado de la Aduana de esta capital.” Immediately afterward, Prieto was ordered to present himself before the Mexican President Anastasio Bustamante and, to Prieto’s surprise, Bustamante was interested only in his honest opinion regarding public education (McLean 15-16). Bustamante was so impressed with the young thinker that he arranged lodging for Prieto and insisted that he be paid a wage for his writing (McLean 16). In this way, Prieto’s relationship with Bustamante was founded on the audacity to speak and the authoritative permission to expression. When Bustamante was ousted in 1841 and replaced by Antonio López de Santa Anna, Prieto protested by leaving his job at the *Diario Oficial* and taking his writing skills to a new liberal newspaper, *El Siglo XIX* (McLean 17). These examples suggest that Prieto was a rebellious presence in the political forum and understood the power of free speech, whether in the oratory tradition or in the press. It was in this atmosphere of censorship, protest, and expression that Prieto’s journalism led to his exile from the capital of Mexico to the state of Querétaro.

When in 1853 Santa Anna returned to the presidential palace following the presidency of Mariano Arista, a series of critical articles were published in *El Monitor*. Prieto, the author, had opted to honor Santa Anna through a sarcastic account of his latest return to office. After a meeting with the angry Mexican president, Prieto was forced to leave the capital. Santa Anna’s campaign against democratic forms of communication is well documented. In *Santa Anna of Mexico*, William Fowler refers to the Santa Anna administration between 1853-55 as the

“dictatorship” that was extended by a *pronunciamiento*²⁷ on the part of his supporters who sought to extend his term in power indefinitely (297). Fowler explains that this period was marked by rigorous attempts to silence Santa Anna’s opposition that surpassed similar attempts by prior administrations:

The law of 25 April 1853 and those that followed in its wake imposed a particularly effective censorship of the press, leading to the closure of over forty newspapers.

Books deemed to be subversive were banned and their authors persecuted. Plays deemed to uphold questionable values were prevented from being performed. (*Santa Anna of Mexico* 297)

As Fowler convincingly demonstrates, the power of censorship went beyond the printed text to invade the public sphere where the spectacle was equally as threatening to Santa Anna’s authority. In this atmosphere suffocated by the impediment of expression, Prieto is exiled from Mexico City. Traveling under the supreme order of Santa Anna’s reigning authority, Prieto writes *Viajes de orden suprema*, a text initiated by obligatory absence aimed at stopping Prieto from writing. In this way, *Viajes* is a text conditioned by censorship that paradoxically culminates in more writing. That is, the hundreds of pages that Prieto dedicates to the Mexican provincial state of Querétaro, the winding roads that take him there, and the diverse group of people he encounters along the way, are all the result of a the censorship behind his writing by Santa Anna: a prohibition of Prieto’s writing. Furthermore, it can be argued that *Viajes* is also a manifest against the centralized government led by Santa Anna, the same entity that created the necessary conditions for the writing of this text.

²⁷ The *pronunciamiento* was a common form of military rebellion in the nineteenth century.

The Text

Viajes de orden suprema: for attentive readers the title underlines the prohibition on writing and the punishment of displacement. Travel by “supreme order” reveals the involuntary nature of Prieto’s journey to the interior of Mexico, but it also reveals Prieto’s stubborn decision to write in the face of prohibition. The existence of the text indicates Prieto’s willingness to continue to write even after when writing was also the cause of his exile. To write in the face of prohibition, as Prieto does, is to ignore the very order that obligates him to travel. Thus, *Viajes* is both a testimony to prohibition and censorship, and a memorial to Prieto’s rebellious refusal to observe such a prohibition. Read in this way, Prieto’s text turns in on itself, showing what threatens to make writing impossible, and introducing into Mexican literary history a complex text that captures what it meant to write the “nation” under oppressive circumstances.

Paradoxically, as Mexico’s national poet, Prieto’s confinement would seemingly also make him more apt to write the nation by placing him in contact with customs, accents, and cultures other than those of Mexico City, Prieto was more in touch with the broad national character that he and so many other nineteenth-century writers tried so hard to write into existence. Nevertheless, as an internal exile who recognizes his presence at “home” in Mexico, he also encounters customs and people who remind him that he is “away.” Focusing on two brief but exceptional episodes, I will present a concise analysis of what I will call Prieto’s estrangement at home (in Mexico) as a direct consequence of his internal exile.

While still en route to Cadereyta, the location of his exile, the stagecoach carrying Prieto stops in the small town of Tequisquiapan where Prieto witnesses an event he cannot explain. While strolling through town he comes upon a burial procession carrying what Prieto believes to be a saint, but on further inspection he realizes it to be a dead child elaborately dressed and in the

upright position. Prieto admits his shock, “[l]impresión que me produjo el espectáculo fue horrible,” and openly expresses his dismay to his companions:

—Pero esto es una profanación, una irrisión.

—Nada de eso; es darles el último gusto, ¿no ve usted que es difícil que se vuelva a poner de pie?

—Hombre, pero me parece interrumpir la costumbre, y la costumbre de todo muerto es estar acostado.

—Ya usted lo ve, los niños muertos de Tequisquiapan se han querido salir de la rutina...

(*Viajes* 278-79)

This seemingly innocuous scene underlines the cultural diversity that is found in Mexico, but also the estrangement that Prieto experiences as a result of his internal exile. Although close to home, it seems he could not be further away. Such a scene becomes a testimony to the power of the prohibition on writing to enact the difficulty of cultivating a homogeneous national community. Prieto’s poetry and *costumbrismo* were well-known attempts to secure Mexican customs and standardized types of Mexican in the written and visual archive that would be Mexican letters. Where, we may ask, is the place for the erect, lifeless child in such a project?

The second episode is equally alienating, although thematically very different. In a section titled “La vida del pueblo,” Prieto describes his final destination, Cadereyta. After inquiring after the best restaurant in town, he arrives to eat and to his horror is met with another Mexican type who occupied the margins of society. Given the importance of Prieto’s detailed description, it is worth quoting at length:

el cabello reluciente por la grasa, dividido como el de las mujeres y recogido en esmerados rizos tras de las orejas, sus aretes y su gargantilla de corales, su camisa con

cínico descote escondida bajo una mascada cruzada como la estilan las mujeres también, y sujeta a la banda del burato que ceñida a su cintura dejaba caer su flecos [sic] en la parte posterior con marcada coquetería, el calzón de lienzo ajustado, zapato bajo de género, y en la camisa randas y moños como lo usan las más planchadas rancheritas . . . En una palabra, lo que se llama por Tierradentro un marica, un afeminado. (*Viajes* 356)

Prieto takes great care to outline the numerous characteristics of the cross-dressed man in an apparent attempt to purge the experience from his memory. In the description, Prieto imposes the outline of a female on the man. Unable to grasp the hybrid subjectivity, he sees only a perverse abnormality that is inconsistent with the objects and practices with which he attempts to define it (earrings, cleavage, bows, how the hair is brushed). It is also noteworthy that Prieto marks a geographic and linguistic distinction: “lo que se llama por Tierradentro un marica, un afeminado.” Prieto’s comment establishes an explicit “here,” (the provincial space of the national “other”), and an implicit “there,” (the space where such transgressive figures are absent), that lay bare the regional differences that frustrate the representation of a coherent national culture.

Read through the lens of censorship and internal exile, these moments of estrangement hint at the impossibility of representing the nation: the writer whose pen has been prohibited encounters subjects in his internal exile that are worthy of representation only as a means to emphasize their incompatibility with the nation. But if the internal exile cannot write satirical accounts of State officials, and writing the provinces demands the inclusion of undesirables, how is the internal exile to write?

Writing the Internal Exile

What space do the texts of the internal exile occupy and how are they to be written? These questions preoccupy Prieto from the first pages of *Viajes*. However, the first pages of *Viajes* unexpectedly do not mark the beginning of writing for the internal exile. In fact, it is not until page 231 that Prieto offers his reader an explanation regarding the origin of the text:

En aquel lugar, en medio del insomnio producto del desvelo y la inquietud, brotó mi pensamiento de escribir los *Viajes de orden suprema*; pero quise escribirlo en renglones, así como versos, y tanto me ocupó la ida y con el aliento me apoderé de ella con el objeto de distraer mis penas, que puse al instante manos a la obra, y aprovechando un incivil tintero, una velilla que paveseaba, unos sobrescritos de cartas, salió a la sombra, porque no se puede llamar luz la que me servía, el siguiente romance que se refiere al día 29 de junio de 1853 día nefasto. (*Viajes* 231)

Prieto's exile has one departure point and one final destination, but *Viajes* begins at least twice. The opening pages describe how Prieto was summoned before Santa Anna and banished to the provinces for his subversive journalism. Nevertheless, the act of writing began after Prieto's departure, inspired by the combination of exhaustion and haste that mark the birth of the text. Prieto grasps suddenly for paper and writes desperately under limited light. The internal exile is the result of the state sanctioned attempt to name the space of writing. I suggest that in the passage above we see the lingering effects of the prohibition on writing that prompts Prieto to write only after distancing himself from the capital.

In a sudden fit, Prieto begins to document his internal exile in the most inauspicious of conditions, and this second beginning inaugurates another problem: how does the internal exile structure his text? Prieto opts to write in more than one established genre and creates a

document characterized by the urgent need to mix genres. Prieto writes prose intertwined with poetry, “renglones, así como versos.” At this moment, the reader witnesses the creation of the “pilas de apuntamientos” mentioned by López Cámara as the fragmented beginning of *Viajes* that were collected later in the consolidated travel account. The urgency of the scene of writing identifies the second act of initiation in the trajectory of the internal exile, the first a physical displacement and the second a discursive one.

If what made Prieto dangerous for the State was his transgressive writing, than after his exile he becomes more dangerous. He begins to write with a new-found urgency and challenging the traditional organization of literary texts. We are not before a simple account of exile that fits comfortably in the exile or travel account genres. Instead it is both an example of the travel account and much more than that. Prieto’s text invites us to ask what it means to depart toward exile when the borders between home, the point of departure, and destination are difficult to identify. This, in turn, generates questions about the relationship between nationality and writing, suggesting that the nation begins as the State sanctioned persecution of writing that constitutes an acceptable space for writing to take place. In short, Prieto is a stranger at home, and being a stranger at home, in turn, lays bare the difficulty of writing the nation, which is to capture complexity in a homogenous way.

Prieto’s *Viajes* is not just the account of his exile, but also of his departure and the journey toward –and arrival to–his exile. The destination—the ultimate location of exile—is postponed intermittently through short stops thus creating a chain of ephemeral visits, such as that in which Prieto encounters the “hombre afeminado.” These visits grant Prieto the opportunity to write the standard *costumbrista* sketches of the towns on the way to exile, but more importantly these stops provide Prieto with the opportunity to explicitly criticize aspects of

Mexican society that he finds harmful. Prieto's *Viajes* is more than a travel account, it is an emblematic text of exclusion: the writer is excluded and the writer identifies beliefs and customs to be excluded. Although in nearly every sentence of *Viajes* we find an excess of images, parables, legends, and descriptions of everything from architecture and culinary habits to churches and farming methods, Prieto makes an important contribution to Mexican nineteenth-century literature through a critique of the lack of circulation: stagnate economies, religious beliefs that confine intellectual movement, the mandatory separation of families.

Prieto's explicit critique of circulation in *Viajes* allows us to integrate his participation and interest in economics as the ideological foundation of his observations. Aside from poet, journalist, and politician, Prieto was also Secretary of the Treasury Department. Prieto's interest in the economic situation of the new nation is apparent not only in the fact that he held this position, but also the numerous times that he held it. Although always for short periods, Prieto was Secretary of the Treasury Department on four occasions: September 14, 1852 to January 3 1853 under President Mariano Arista; October 6, 1855 to December 7, 1855 during the presidency of Juan Álvarez; January 28, 1858 to August 5, 1858 under President Benito Juárez; and finally from January 20 to April 5, 1861 also under Juárez (Marcos Tonatiuh Águila M. 401).

In the same way that Prieto inherited an aesthetic tradition, as we saw in Alfonso Reyes's criticism, Prieto and Mexico also inherited an economic system. During his stint in the Treasury Department, Prieto was confronted with the economic colonial inheritance that persisted after Independence and the effects of multiple and ideologically diverse administrations of an independent Mexico. In his *Lecciones elementales de economía política dadas en la Escuela de*

Jurisprudencia de México en el curso de 1871 (1871), Prieto recognizes the economic woes of Mexico and in them he sees a persistent colonial structure:

Los pocos que poseen, ó dinero ú otros instrumentos de producción, los encarecen, y apenas nace un esfuerzo cuando el buitre de la usura se apresta para devorar sus entrañas... El sistema colonial, como esos insectos que depositan en el cuerpo humano huevecillos venenosos que lo pudren y agusanan, y contribuyó eficazmente á este malestar. (38)

As Marcos Tonatiuh Águila points out, an important part of the critique of the colonial system was the reevaluation of natural resources and their exploitation. Reminiscent of Bush's observations regarding the Crown's failure to adequately utilize domestic goods and the poetry that circulated through internal trade routes, Prieto also opines that confinement and lack of communication is an important part of economic stagnation in the nineteenth century. Speaking through the lens of incipient technology, in his *Lecciones* he observes:

La industria locomotiva no podría sustraerse entre nosotros al atraso general durante el período en que vivimos como colonos: sujetos á las flotas y galeones por el Atlántico . . . á los caminos de Veracruz y Tierradentro . . . Nuestras asperísimas sierras, la falta de agua en una tercera parte del país, la plaga de los bárbaros en nuestras fronteras, han concurrido eficazmente á la incomunicación completa entre varios lugares de la República. (210)

In this fragment, Prieto manifests many of the dominant concerns of the period such as isolation and nature as an obstacle instead of exploitable materials, both associated with, and arguably remedied by, economic development. By emphasizing Prieto's role and preoccupation with Mexican economics we gain new insight into the writing of the internal exile.

For example, in the fragment above we see that in 1870 Prieto was troubled by the lack of water, or the lack of proper circulation of water. It is not a coincidence that Cadereyta, the scene of confinement, is constructed in Prieto's imaginary through the properties of water. Upon embarking Prieto mentions that his destination is Cadereyta provoking the following observation from one of his travel companions: "Figúrese usted que es un lugar en que el agua se masca . . . Sí señor, cuando la hay es la que se exprime de los lodazales más infectos; se suscitan tumultos populares disputándose un jarrillo" (Prieto, *Viajes* 118). This is the foundational moment when Prieto begins to imagine his destination and the potential for discontent that he will find there. Thus the reputation of his destination is an important part of the prohibition that conditions Prieto's writing: as he travels on and writes, he comes closer to the stagnant, infected water that is Cadereyta. The internal exile is travelling to the heart of national problems, where both the free expression that is prohibited in the capital and the water that seems to represent it both cease to circulate.

Prieto's critique often draws from language associated with methods of travel and touches themes as diverse as colonialism, modernity, and conservative politics, among others. Early in *Viajes*, Prieto visualizes of the colonial past side by side with post-independence travel luxuries. While observing the more traditional *diligencia* he quickly contrasts it with the more modern bombé: "los dos carruajes unidos eran como la materialización de dos épocas, eran, visiblemente, la feliz época colonial al frente de los males de la Independencia y de la civilización" (Prieto, *Viajes* 117). More than an authentic homage to the colonial era, Prieto incorporates sarcasm to produce a scathing critique of the current state of Mexican politics. Implicit in the contrast of the two means of transportation is a comparison between the old and

the new order, with the old gaining the upper hand. While the new *bombé* is unquestionably more modern, and more “bonito,” it also sacrifices harmony.

Querétaro, the site of the initial stages of Prieto’s internal exile, is both a main half-way point between the interior and Mexico City whenand home to the displaced. Travel to Querétaro includes the frequent arrival of groups of political refugees, a detail that Prieto found consoling: “Querétaro, en los momentos en que yo llegaba, ofrecía una excepción consoladora en material de persecución. Cuando, despavoridos y como ratas perseguidas por muchachos crueles, de los departamentos salían expulsos los liberales” (*Viajes* 124). In spite of his consolation, the congregation of displaced politicians reminds the reader of the description of Cadereyta as the dwelling placing of stagnant water, and by association of stagnate progress. In this way, Prieto’s description of Querétero underlines the political problems and authoritarianism of the *momento*.

Another of Prieto’s objects of critique is the *leva*, or conscription of men for military service. By forcibly removing the male family members, the *leva* leaves only stagnant remains in its wake, families unable to progress: “En las noches, al frente de los cuarteles, repegándose contra las paredes de las calles, clamando a la piedad pública, veíanse a esas familias hechas grumos de vivientes, encogidos, sucios, dolientes” (Prieto, *Viajes* 146). These human coagulations in the blood stream of the national body are metaphors for the widows and orphans left behind by the conscription laws. Prieto continues his critique of stagnation with a foray into the area of commerce: “Querétaro es un rey destronado . . . un gigante paralítico [que] apenas tiene movimiento . . . y se estancaba en él la lama rica del comercio interior y exterior” (*Viajes* 146). Querétaro, at this point an allegory for the nation, is the city that does not harvest crops or stimulate the circulation of goods, but instead collects exiles and the discarded members of broken families. Like coagulated blood it is unable to move, it is paralyzed. To clear the paths

leading to a liberal notion of freedom, the social body must have “proper” circulation. But Prieto’s ability to circulate is, paradoxically, also a side effect of the same disease that produces the silence and stagnation he deplors. While the state’s power to displace families sickens the national body, it also gives Prieto the necessary stage to write, to make his words circulate, thus contaminating his critique with the prohibition that made them possible.

Arguably the most blatant example of how the State mandated prohibition on writing creeps into Prieto’s *Viajes* is the self-censorship that the writer practices on himself. At times explicit, his omissions direct the reader’s attention toward what he refuses to write. Other times, however, Prieto incorporates a writing strategy based on the ethnographical gathering of testimony that allows him to transmit his message without being the direct source of information. Prieto’s explicit omissions range from the hesitation to mention in the text the favors carried out by friends, “fue mi protector y consoló las acerbadas penas que sufrí y no son para recitarlas en este escrito,” to his refusal to reproduce what he finds unpleasant, “No pintaré las escenas que nos refirió y que hoy mismo me comprimen y espantan” (*Viajes* 120, 137). While these explicit omissions remind the reader of the role of censorship in *Viajes*, examples of implicit self-censorship are what distinguish the writer of the internal exile who struggles to write the nation against prohibition from those writers who enjoy the support of the State.

Curiously, the two most telling examples of self-censorship are found in the sections of *Viajes* that Prieto dedicates to the description of Indians. Prieto’s narration of the Indians he meets and the indigenous communities he visits is characteristic of the liberal sympathy of the period. Even though the Indians are considered to be lazy, superstitious, drunk, and isolated, Prieto expresses time and again possible methods for their integration, including racial mixing, of the indigenous communities in the greater modernizing plans of Mexico. Although such

observations create a dialogue with other Mexican intellectuals such as José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, his comments are, for the most part, unexceptional. What warrants more attention is the discursive method he uses to present his observations to the reader. In the first section dedicated to the Indians, he begins his commentary in the same narrative voice that he has used throughout, “Cualquiera que sea la fortuna de un indio que por lo común es muy miserable, jamás se le ve sobresalir ni hacer ostentación en su pueblo” (Prieto, *Viajes* 213). Since the reader already knows the identity of the author, the third person narrator indicates Prieto as the speaker. Nevertheless, in the middle of his narrative Prieto surprises his reader with the following declaration: “Así terminó su curiosa narración mi amigo, y yo quedé sumergido en hondas reflexiones” (*Viajes* 218). Prieto returns to the “second beginning” studied earlier in this chapter where the beginning of writing and narration is displaced creating a silence that points to the lingering presence of censorship. In other words, I suggest that Prieto is hesitant to openly present his critique of the current situation of the indigenous communities and therefore puts the words in the mouth of another. He does not, however, conceal the sympathy the story provokes; he simply takes measures to ensure that the discourse is not his.

Prieto changes his strategy in the third section he dedicates to the Indians. In this section, he begins with a disclaimer that points the reader in the direction of the author of what she is about to read:

Inserto enseguida las apuntes de mi amigo el doctor Villa sobre los indios, apuntes que se las hice formar con extraordinaria precipitación de las que perdí una parte que le supliqué repusiese después; en una palabra, apuntes con las que por mi parte se dieron todos los motivos posibles para que saliesen incorrectísimas, y las que sin

embargo, veo como un adorno y una gala de mis pobres *Viajes de orden suprema*.

(Prieto, *Viajes* 380)

Prieto takes great care to both implicate and distance himself from the content of the section on Indians. He admits to soliciting the information, “se las hice formar,” but in such a way as to undermine their authority, “con extraordinaria precipitación.” He further complicates the validity of Doctor Villa’s testimony by admitting that the text he transcribes is fragmented and incomplete, “perdí una parte.” He recognizes that the haste with which the comments were made and the unfinished nature of the text suggest that the testimony is flawed, but it is precisely in its incompleteness that Prieto finds worth, “veo como un adorno y una gala.”

Prieto’s critique of the state of the indigenous communities is made through a complex web of distance and self-censorship. Prohibited by law to openly criticize the Santa Anna administration, Prieto finds thought-provoking methods to speak his mind obliquely. Prieto writes the nation through a combination of explicit critique and implicit self-censorship that denotes the residual presence of the censorship on writing that conditions *Viajes*.

Conclusion

Remembering Julio Ramos’s description of Sarmiento’s travel abroad as the “viaje importador del discurso” (36) that established the move from high to low, and from the civilized to the barbarous, as an internal exile, a domestic visitor to the interior, what does Prieto import? He imports a writing founded on prohibition, conditioned by the omnipresent gaze of the barbarous *caudillo*. We see in *Viajes* how prohibition transcends texts and invades Prieto’s body. A case in point, in the text Prieto is described as “contraband,” something that circulates illegally within the national space as prohibited merchandise. When asked about Prieto’s

“paseo” in the city of Querétaro, a friend exclaims: “Dirán que le envían, no que viene Fidel, que Fidel está de tránsito, que Fidel paseando es un contrabando” (Prieto *Viajes* 164). It is not the production of the merchandise that makes it contraband, but how the merchandise circulates, from where to where. As an internal exile excluded from official, State sanctioned writing, Prieto circulates as an illicit writer from the urban to the provincial space, and produces a text founded on prohibition. Furthermore, Prieto travels in compliance with a State mandated punishment, but paradoxically that mandate transforms him into the producer of a text whose existence questions the very power of the State.

What type of confidence must the State have in a transgressor to deem his or her writing worthy of exclusion? Why is this exclusion necessary if it culminates in more writing? In a sense, by sending Prieto to the Mexican countryside the State loans Prieto his muse: the provincial life of Mexico. And as Prieto states in one of his economic treatises,²⁸ only those with credibility receive loans, and that credibility is founded on the confidence that the loan will be returned. Prieto returns what the State loaned him, in writing, to demonstrate that he is as credible as they had believed. In the text written by the internal exile what makes the nation possible is the self-perpetuating chain of exclusion: Prieto’s exclusion from the capital and the text he produces that carries the marks of his own self-imposed censorship. The urgent writing of the internal exile culminates in hundreds of pages of text, but there is no excess of writing that can negate the censorship at its origin.

It is important to remember that *Viajes*, as robust a text as it is, also contains the residual traces of other texts that Prieto wrote during his exile. As mentioned in the introduction, Prieto also wrote economic treatises, poetry, and personal letters. Ostensibly the most famous text he

²⁸ In *Lecciones elementales de economía política* (1871) Guillermo Prieto makes the following observation: “Crédito es la confianza que inspiramos en virtud de la cual adquirimos un valor cualquiera en la creencia que infundimos de que lo devolveremos en un plazo dado” (251).

wrote during his internal exile is “Marcha de los cangrejos,” a satirical hymn that Prieto submitted to a competition to name the national anthem of the young republic. Although Prieto—predictably—lost the competition, his hymn was recovered during the French Intervention as the popular song that sought to undermine the abuse of power through the satirization of the Mexican conservatives and the invading foreign army. *Viajes*, then, appears to be a national archive for transgressive texts. But, as we have seen, on closer inspection we find traces of the prohibition that censors Prieto’s writing style, and therefore also the archive that he creates. Thus *Viajes* is not the foundational text of a national community, but a text of a foundational exclusion and prohibition.

CHAPTER 3

AN ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY

During the summer of 2012 an exhibition commemorating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the French invasion of Mexico was on display at *El Estanquillo*, a museum housing the art and film collection of celebrated Mexican cultural critic Carlos Monsiváis (1938-2010). In spite of recent scholarship that has convincingly argued for the importance of the Mexican fascination with failure and defeat, this exhibition was a celebration of victory.²⁹ Containing satirical lithographs of French soldiers and film clips that reenacted iconic scenes from the 1862 Cinco de Mayo battle in Puebla, the exhibit memorialized an ephemeral Mexican victory against a formidable European opponent as a foundational moment in the nation's history.³⁰ The film clips, shown on a television tucked away in a corner of the exhibition, contained scenes depicting victorious moments in the liberal battle against the conservative endorsed French occupation from films as diverse as the Hollywood production of *Juárez* (1939), directed by William Dieterle and starring Bette Davis as Carlota, to domestic productions like *Aquellos años* (1972) directed by Felipe Cazals. Among these clips was a scene that portrayed a dusty black carriage, windows covered, as it sped toward an unknown destination. In a culminating moment, armed men on horseback stop the carriage and, to the surprise of the viewer, Benito Juárez steps out from the mysterious carriage to confront them. After a brief verbal exchange in which Juárez is informed that the vanquished were not permitted beyond that

²⁹ I refer to John A. Ochoa's *The Uses of Failure in Mexican Literature and Identity* and Brian L. Price's *Cult of Defeat in Mexico's Historical Fiction: Failure, Trauma, and Loss*.

³⁰ It is important to remember that although the Mexican forces were able to defeat the French in Puebla, they later lost the war, clearing the way for the Conservative supported monarchy of Maximilian.

point, Juárez returns to the carriage and it speeds off in the same direction from which it came, the Conservative commander exclaiming, “Qué se pierdan en el desierto.” While the clip portrays a moment of liberal resistance in the days after French victory, it also presents the viewer with a curious memorial to conservative triumph. In an exhibition dedicated to the historical and visual preservation of liberal victory, the monument to the Conservative victors appears, marginalized, in the corner. This spatial organization reflects a broader attempt to reconstruct nineteenth-century Mexican identity through a tribute to glory founded on forgetting the impermanence of that glory. That is, the very force of the liberal commemoration depends on the absence, or marginalization, of the memory of its subsequent defeat.³¹

Three years after the release of *Aquellos años*, in 1975, Cuban author Alejo Carpentier contributed to the mythologizing of the black carriage by using this same historical moment to explain how the Baroque, and by default *lo real maravilloso*, is omnipresent in Latin American culture: “El cochecillo negro de Benito Juárez, en que Benito Juárez lleva a toda la nación de México sobre cuatro ruedas a través de las carreteras de la nación, sin despacho, sin lugar donde escribir, sin palacios, sin descanso, y desde ese cochecito logra vencer los tres imperialismos más poderosos de la época” (75). For Carpentier, Juárez’s mobile government is not only a paradigmatic example of the marvelous turned quotidian, but the manifestation of anti-imperialism and autonomy. The epitome of resistance, Juárez’s stoicism is framed by the difficulty of establishing his location; his legitimacy is grounded in the fortitude with which the nomadic government bears the weight of the nation. Yet the “cochecillo negro” did not carry

³¹ Ernest Renan forcefully argued that the nation is constructed not on the memory of its accomplishments, but instead on events, or characteristics of events, that were forgotten. Historical events are celebrated for their potential to unite, while other events that would threaten disunion are erased from historical memory. See “What is a Nation?” in *Nation and Narration* edited by Homi K. Bhabha.

“toda la nación.” In fact, it seems more practical to interpret the black carriage as the manifestation of a fractured community during a moment of excessive unrest.

In this chapter, I seek to expand upon that visual representation of a fleeting moment of Conservative victory, in a way inverting the logic of the commemorative exhibition. I will focus on how conservative writers conjured the images of the defeated liberals to underline that the official liberal discourse of nation building was always accompanied by a counter-discourse that simultaneously put it into question. Key to my analysis will be the carriage, curtains drawn to maintain anonymity, that carried Benito Juárez and the defeated liberals on a march through Mexico. First during the Reform War (1857-61), and again at the outset of the French Intervention (1861-67), President Benito Juárez and his administration fled Mexico City in a black stagecoach and intermittently established political strongholds in multiple provincial cities. Julia Preciado Zamora describes the stagecoach as a symbol of resistance, “la mítica diligencia que en muchas ocasiones sirvió de palacio de gobierno portátil,” (227) while Kristine Ibsen explains that the displaced liberals carried, “the national archive of the Republic” (1). Found in both descriptions is the persistent authority associated with Juárez and his followers. Whether a mythical government on wheels or the metaphorical national archive, the authority associated with the stagecoach appears unaffected by its instability. As is evident in these examples, and as the scene from *Aquellos años* testifies, Juárez’s mobile administration during the French intervention was, in a sense, mythologized.

Other interpretations—which will be the focus of this chapter—sought to undermine the authority of the displaced liberals. Sectors of the conservative press labeled the exiled liberals, “La familia enferma,” a term that apparently originated in the liberal ranks but that was appropriated by conservative detractors and transformed into a metaphor that paradoxically

emphasized both the potential for contagion and familiar proximity. Thus the metaphor “La familia enferma” allows us to analyze how dissenting voices were inserted into the obligatory liberal discourse that had become the trademark of the period.

Although studies of the nineteenth century often pose liberalism and conservatism against one another in a polarized view of Mexican society, “La familia enferma” is a metaphor that was used to define the limits of liberalism, and its relationship with conservatism, precisely when these terms were being classified. The metaphor helps us to think critically about the figures of the nineteenth century that would later be mythologized as well as those that were not. Equally important, it also reveals the moments of negotiation and negation that make the validity of the myth-making process impossible. When speaking of “La familia enferma,” “sick” was synonymous with uprooted and roaming, both physically and ideologically, and Conservative publications, like Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho’s *La familia enferma*, sought to create the healthy Mexican, “el mexicano sano.” Within a broad institutionalization of obligatory liberalism, the metaphor of “La familia enferma” sheds light on conservative attempts to counter liberal dogmatism that goes beyond debates over religion, property, and authority. Instead, in the absence of the liberals, questions arose regarding the visibility of power, the notion of aimless progress, and instability at home. A cornerstone in conservative thinking, the family is associated with tradition and stability. The sick family, therefore, introduces the proximity of liberals to conservatives by placing the liberals within the same semantic field of “the family” while also warning of their ideological illness.

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Ignacio Altamirano (1834-93) accurately captured the ambulatory political landscape of Mexico in the nineteenth century in his introduction to Luis Malanco’s *Viaje á oriente* (1882) when he noted that Mexican politicians

were destined to “andar siempre errantes,” paradoxically crossing paths with the same men they had previously defeated: “muchos de los cuales han tenido todavía tiempo para ver en su destierro á los mismos que los habian proscrito, ó para viajar en un mismo coche con ellos, obligados por un tercer proscritor” (XIX). In Manuel Payno’s (1810-94) celebrated novel *Los bandidos de Río Frío*, published serially between 1889 and 1891 although depicting events in Mexico during the first half of the nineteenth century, we find another example of the displacement that characterized nineteenth-century Mexico. A direct challenge to already shaky power structures, bandits made excursions into the countryside targeting, among others, the aforementioned elite travelers as they entered or exited the country. I cite the examples of Altamirano and Payno to underline the different ways in which writers emphasized the ambulatory or uprooted nature of nineteenth-century Mexican culture. In a society characterized by people on the run, the representation of the uprooted became a canvas on which to contest political platforms and to satirize enemies.

Nevertheless, these examples also reveal a historical bias. It is no coincidence that both Altamirano and Payno were prominent liberals, and although their individual contribution to the movement varied greatly, they participated in the attempt to consolidate a national literature that propagated the liberal agenda.³² In a sense, the ambulatory nineteenth century I describe above is the liberal Mexico, where the pillars of the Enlightenment, such as secularism and individual liberty, were championed. While it is true that detractors of liberalism appear in the novels of

³² The examples of Altamirano and Payno as two very different liberals also helps us to view Mexican liberalism as a heterogeneous movement. Alan Knight convincingly argues that there was no monolithic Liberal party and cites three types of Mexican liberal in the nineteenth century: advocates of constitutional liberalism, an institutional liberalism, more radical in its aspirations, that advocated anticlericalism and the appropriation of Church lands, and what Knight calls a developmental liberalism, “liberalismo desarrollista,” that appeared in the last third of the century and was grounded in positivism. For a thorough account of the complicated nature of Mexican liberalism in the nineteenth century see Charles Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora 1821-1853* (1968) and *The Transformation in Late 19th Century Mexico* (1989). For a revisionist reading of Hale see Elias Palti, “Beyond Revisionism: The Bicentennial of Independence, the Early Republican Experience, and Intellectual History in Latin America” in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70:4, October 2009.

Altamirano and Payno, especially representatives of the Catholic Church, they are often targets of parody or critique. Whereas it appears unexceptional to note the liberal attack on conservatives in nineteenth-century literature, such representations underline the absence of opposing visions of Mexico's future. During a period when political discourse was dominated by proponents of democracy and progress, literary history demonstrates the anti-democratic tendency of favoring liberal writers.

In this chapter I combine the two models of inquiry outlined above, a view of nineteenth-century Mexico as an aspiring nation "on wheels," and the monopolization of literature and print culture by liberal discourse, to analyze the conservative reaction to the circulation of liberal ideas. Common in nineteenth-century literature is the Latin American traveler who returns from abroad carrying political ideas believed to promote progress and equality, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento being one of the more obvious examples. As Julio Ramos points out, while the numerous European visitors to the Americas who were linked to market expansion were important, they had an equally important American counterpart: the liberal elite of Latin America who ventured to Europe in search of "modelos para ordenar y disciplinar el 'caos', para modernizer y redefinir el 'bárbaro' mundo latinoamericano" (*Desencuentros* 188-89). In conservative publications, however, these Latin American travelers were often depicted not as the remedy to chaos, but as its source, at times as carriers of contagion who return from liberal centers such as the United States carrying ideological illness.

My goal in this chapter is not simply to retrieve forgotten texts for their inclusion in a more comprehensive history of Mexican literature, although this is an inescapable side effect of my approach. Instead, I seek to challenge the notion of a polarized battle for legitimacy in the literary realm. How did the Conservatives attempt to write their way into a modernity defined by

what they considered a detached and limitless utopian project? Given the monopoly of print culture by the liberals, what language did the Conservatives use to fend off their isolation? The metaphor of “La familia enferma” captures the essence of the liberal project from the Conservative perspective: uprooted, progressing blindly with no fixed destination, and dependent on ideas instead of reality. Thus, the inclusion of conservative writers allows me to reevaluate the memorialized liberal writers while also emphasizing the presence of nation-building strategies that challenged those carried out by liberals.

Origins of the Sick Family

While the exact origins of the metaphor of the Sick Family in relation to Juárez’s administration are unclear, examples can be found in the work of both liberal and conservative writers. The consummate liberal poet, *cronista*, and traveler, Guillermo Prieto, begins his *Viajes a los Estados Unidos* by attempting to reconstruct the memory of a previous visit to the United States. Upon embarking for San Francisco in 1877, Prieto writes that he felt as if he were living the same journey twice, of having visited the same places in “otro tiempo” (*Obras* VI, 19). He clarifies: “Entonces (1858), mal feridos y desgovernados en nuestros rocines y llevando a cuestras el retumbante título de La Familia Enferma, llegamos al Manzanillo, Juárez, Ocampo, León Guzmán . . .” (*Obras* VI, 19). Prieto’s recognition of the apparently negative label is important in locating the origin of the term during the Reform War. Equally important is the way in which Prieto characterizes the term. The resonance, “retumbante,” he associates with the label “Sick Family” calls attention to the defeat suffered by the liberals and possibly to the way in which the moniker echoed in the conservative press.

Beginning on August 29, 1858, the Conservative publication *La Sociedad*, whose editorial staff included important Conservative writers Félix Ruiz, Francisco Vera Sánchez and José María Roa Bárcena, made disparaging references to the Juárez administration that included, “el risible gobiernillo de *la familia enferma*,” and, “*la familia enferma*, á quien la inopia ha aguzado todas las facultades intelectuales.” These references continued into 1859 when the Sick Family was mentioned nine times on November 18th in the journal. Meanwhile, Prieto’s reference to “a cuestras” points to the burden that persecuted the liberals on the run. In this way, the metaphor of the Sick Family becomes inseparable from displacement and defeat. Prieto’s passing comment almost twenty years after the event is made after the liberal victory and the restoration of the republic, a detail that could explain the nostalgia he finds in retracing the steps of vanquished liberals.

While Prieto does not expound on the exact origin of the term, he uses it in a way that suggests that his readers would already be familiar with it and I suggest that this familiarity stems from its earlier use by the Conservatives. In his *Obras: Estudios históricos* published in 1897 and aimed at painting Juárez as a traitor, Alejandro Villaseñor y Villaseñor also uses the term in a seemingly familiar way, but, possibly recognizing a new readership marked by the historical distance from the events, he uses footnotes to offer an explanation of the term. Highlighting the transient nature of the Juárez administration Villaseñor writes: “Juárez con sus ministros no pudo establecerse en ninguna parte, pues la expansión que desde un principio tuvo el Plan de Tacubaya lo obligaba á andar errante siempre, lo que le valió el apodo de *la familia enferma*” (72-3). Villaseñor equates the attempts of the participants of the Plan de Tacubaya to abolish the 1857 constitution with the force that propels the liberals’ nomadic existence. As Juárez and his exiled followers advance through the Mexican countryside, the constitution they

had defended in Mexico City disappears in their wake. Although Villaseñor clearly attributes the “nickname” of the Sick Family to the nomadic qualities of the group, in a footnote he reveals another origin for the term: “Este mote le provino de que Juárez y los Ministros caminaban en una diligencia cuidadosamente cerrada y custodiada; cuando algunas personas se acercaban en busca de noticias de México, se les contestaba que iba una familia enferma y que no se le podía hablar” (73n1). Taken together, the combination of the nomadic metaphor of the sick family with the declaration of its liberal origin suggests the Conservative appropriation of the term. Furthermore, Villaseñor’s explanation emphasizes the liberal attempt at what could be called “anonymity on the road,” of the desire to be shielded from the inquisitive eyes of the curious populace. Interestingly, this shield is created through illness and the possibility of contagion.

The booming presence of the Sick Family, the “retumbante” term that Guillermo Prieto mentioned, contradicts the attempt of the exiled liberals to remain anonymous. One can venture to guess that the sonorous effect of the seemingly derogatory term was produced by conservative writers who sought to undermine the obstinate political party on wheels. But where the conservative press apparently sought to call attention to the instability and untrustworthy nature of a mobile administration through the use of the Sick Family, what was the illness to which they referred? The conservative press, I suggest, referred to liberalism as an illness that threatened the health of the nation.

Liberal Dogmatism in Public Discourse

A country steeped in Catholic tradition and drowning in economic sluggishness, how did liberalism, a secular endeavor that promised economic development, find such success in Mexico during the mid-nineteenth century? Guy Thompson addresses how liberalism became the

dominant discourse in Mexico in his article “Popular Aspects of Liberalism in Mexico 1848-1888.” Thompson explains that between the years 1855 and 1867, liberalism went from a “minority movement” to “political consensus,” and thus achieved a “monopoly of ideological discourse” (265). The victory of liberal discourse, Thompson claims, was aided by the “disappearance of ‘Conservatism’ from the political vocabulary,” an absence that he attributes to the shame of having advocated the French intervention in Mexico (265). This claim echoes the assumption that it was only after the execution of Maximilian in 1867 that liberalism’s definitive victory was sealed. Nevertheless, many scholars have commented on the likelihood that liberal victory was not the result of ideological changes or societal improvements, but was instead due to the failure of conservatism in Mexico (Thompson 265). To simply ask how liberalism was able to triumph silences the rival conservative discourse and underplays the opposing, although equally important, conservative reaction. Put in broad terms, in the face of impending liberal victory, how did conservative writers defend themselves?

Thompson’s study exemplifies what we could call a liberal bias in approaches to Mexican history. The principal claim of Thompson’s study of popular liberalism (that conservative discourse disappeared) reveals a partiality in scholarly approaches to nineteenth-century Mexico that transcends disciplines. Victoriano Agüeros expounds the need to resurrect conservative writers whose works live in the obscurity of the vanquished. The exclusion of conservative writers constituted, “el injusto aislamiento en que después suelen quedar los hombres notables y los entendimientos superiores” as a result of political conflict and revolution (Agüeros VII). Their contribution to both the nation and society is erased and replaced by an “estigma de maldición” and, in what could be described as an extremely undemocratic move, the dissenting conservatives voices are discarded (Agüeros VII). Nevertheless, the lack of

representation was the least of the problems for the conservatives. With the ratification of the Constitution of 1857, many of the fundamental tenets of their political agenda became illegal, “Así pues, la Ley Juárez (1855) terminó con los privilegios legales de los clérigos, y la Ley Lerdo (1856) declaró ilegales las propiedades eclesiásticas y comunales; ambas formaron parte de la gran constitución liberal de 1857, cuya vigencia se extendió por sesenta años” (Knight 60). Silenced and criminalized, the conservative voice poses an interesting point of departure in nineteenth-century studies.

There have been significant attempts in the last two decades to highlight the importance of conservative voices and to emphasize the meaning their attempts to consolidate a Mexican national identity. As William Fowler explains in the introduction to *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX (1810-1910)*, Conservatives are always “*los malos de la película*” (11) and negative terminology used to describe the villainous Conservatives abounds: “‘traidores’, ‘vendepatrias’, ‘reaccionarios’, ‘cangrejos’” (Krauze qdt in Fowler 11). This polarized view of the conflict over the future of Mexico that placed the victorious liberals at the center of History, propagated a manichaeism that insinuates a prolonged struggle and profound distance between these two groups. However, Fowler and the contributors to his anthology reach a much different conclusion: “that conservative thought rose up within the liberal movement, not parallel to it” (12). Contrary to the notion of an eternal split between liberals and conservatives, a conservative political platform did not emerge in Mexico until the end of the 1840’s and as a direct result of the political chaos that plagued the country. For example, it was not until after the signing of the Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 that Lucas Alamán formed the Conservative Party in 1849 (Fowler 17). The sobering and resounding defeat at the hands of the American troops

symbolized the failure of the liberal utopia which sought justification in the future and was distanced from the realities of Mexican nineteenth-century life (Fowler 17).

Erica Pani warns against the simple recovery of the conservative voice, or, on the contrary, undermining the liberal voice. In her book chapter titled, “‘El tiro por la culata’: Los conservadores y el imperio de Maximilian,” Pani stresses the dangers of viewing nineteenth-century Mexico as the teleological battle between the “good” liberals and the “bad” conservatives (99). Pani emphasizes the need to “desmistificar” the two political groups, but to also question the polarizing duality liberal-conservative: “[H]abría que preguntarse qué tanto el reproducir dentro del análisis histórico, la lucha por el poder como una oposición cerrada entre dos fuerzas contribuye a nuestra comprensión de un periodo, y más cuando éste es largo, de cien años” (“El tiro” 100). Even when we study conservatives there are other risks:

por una parte, la historia ‘redentora’, de tanto querer ‘rescatar’ a los conservadores, de tanto diluir diferencias y enfrentamientos, corre el riesgo de condenar a niveles insospechados de irresponsabilidad o esquizofrenia a los hombres públicos del XIX, que al mediar el siglo se enfrentaran en una larga y cruenta guerra civil. (“El tiro” 100)

Equally inadequate is the elevating of conservatives to the status of “santos, buenos” (Pani, “El tiro” 100). Nevertheless, one productive path to the study of conservatism, according to Pani, is the study of the vibrant context in which their projects were expressed and their visions for the future of Mexico articulated. In this regard, Pani offers a useful methodology for the study of literature and print culture associated with conservatives.

Likewise, in his fascinating work *Against Democracy: Literary Experience in the Era of Emancipations*, Simon During argues that in an era where democracy is obligatory, all of its rivals having been defeated, we should rethink the relationship between literature and

democracy. During provocatively asks, “How democratic *is* literature?” and answers with, “Barely at all” (vii). During claims that this is because even when literature suggests reform, it is really only asking for more of what we already have: democracy. For these reasons, the literary critic who hopes to reposition literature as a democratic institution must seek moments in literature when democracy is questioned and criticized. In other words, the role of the literary critic must be reconsidered given literature’s role in the confirmation of the conservative nature of democracy. The relationship between literature and democracy, then, is not natural, but built on tension and it is in antidemocratic works that the critic may find new exits for the conservative propagation of more of what we have.

During’s analysis of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* is especially useful for the present study given that it speaks to nineteenth-century culture and uncovers the moments in Tocqueville’s text when he questions the viability of liberal discourse (77). During concisely summarizes the characteristics of the beginnings of democracy as, “the historical and enlightened struggle for democracy [that] had predominantly figured itself as emancipatory, as a struggle for freedom against arbitrary, corrupt, and repressive privilege and authority” (78). Nevertheless, texts like Tocqueville’s taught Europe to prepare for the dangers that the fated democracy could bring, when emancipation became an obligation and when democracy’s principal tenets of liberty and equality would be recognized as mutually exclusive and irreconcilable. During’s project of re-reading nineteenth-century texts helps us to rethink the role of literature and the literary critic of the twentieth first century, but it also gives us a new model with which to read nineteenth century literature. Although During’s principal object of analysis is democracy, liberalism in Mexico, and much of Latin America, achieved the same obligatory status as the sole path toward modernity.

The liberal bias is also found in the literary history of Mexico. Conservative writers are mentioned sparingly in comparison to liberal promoters of modernity, and at times only in terms of classicism or neo-classicism, literary movements that obstructed the attempts to construct a national literature that celebrated local customs and culture.³³ In his study of the essay in nineteenth-century Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, Martin S. Stabb describes the genre as ““serious”” given that it directly engaged with the pressing realities of the period such as “nationhood” and “*la problemática nacional*,” meaning Independence and rupture with Spain (590). Stabb locates this “seriousness” in Mexican writers associated with liberalism and reform, citing José María Mora (1794-1850), Manuel C. Rejon (1799-1849), and Miguel Ramos Arizpe (1775-1843) as founders of the movement (592). It is noteworthy that Stabb includes only one cursory note on a writer with a conservative affiliation, Lucas Alamán (1792-1853), before giving an in-depth analysis of two other Mexican liberals, Ignacio Ramírez and Justo Sierra Méndez (1848-1912). Stabb is quick to point out that Alamán, not unlike some of the early liberals, was not an essayist but a historian (592). In this way, Alamán is included as the sole promoter of tradition (Hispanic tradition) but only as a means to exclude him through both his conservative ideas, and his non-literary writing. Nevertheless, the bias exists even within “literary” writing. In the widely cited *México en su novela* (1966), John Brushwood explicitly reduces conservative novelists to one, José María Roa Bárcena, and openly states, “[l]a oposición conservadora de la Reforma encontró relativamente poca expresión novelística” (205).³⁴

³³ Carlos González Peña’s *Historia de la literatura mexicana* (1928), translated to English in 1943 as *History of Mexican Literature*, is an important example of an early twentieth-century attempt to write Mexican literary history. González Peña grants limited commentary to early nineteenth-century poets associated more with classicism than early Romanticism, such as Manuel Carpio (1791-1860) and José Joaquín Pesado (1801-60), as well as to poets allied with the Conservative party, such as José María Roa Bárcena (1827-1908).

³⁴ This short summary of approaches to the history of Mexican literature is not meant to be exhaustive, but only to highlight a trend that favors those writers who advocated progress and democracy over writers with conservative tendencies.

Family, Illness, and Vagrancy: Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century

The metaphor of “La familia enferma” is complex in that it combines two categories that appear to repel each other: one that denotes proximity and intimacy (the family), and another that incites fear and prescribes distance (illness). Further complicating the rhetorical figure, “La familia enferma” contains a message on the negative aspects of circulating freely, of roaming, or, essentially, of a type of vagrancy. These three discourses, family, illness, and vagrancy, were common in the nineteenth century and, as we have seen, were used by both liberals and conservatives. In what follows, I offer a brief summary of critical works that have highlighted the importance of these three discourses in order to emphasize the importance of the metaphor “La familia enferma” in a broader understanding of nineteenth-century literature and culture in Mexico.

Illness as metaphor was common in nineteenth-century Latin America. In his *In Quest of Identity* (1967), Stabb documents the use of the illness metaphor in the Latin American essay. He traces the influence of positivist thought in late nineteenth-century Latin American essayists and the subsequent reaction to such thought by writers who came to be known as *Arielistas* due to their association with the spiritual being from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. The reaction of the *Arielistas* against positivism indicated a distance from the empirical and material forms of knowledge associated with the positivist sciences. The title of Stabb’s book denotes this attempt by writers to establish an alternative approach to subjectivity through the cultivation of the spiritual and the appeal to idealism. The illness metaphor, used to diagnose what the practitioners of positivism considered a backward and underdeveloped Latin America, was common in essay titles and pointed to the power of positive discourse in addressing the economic, political, and social setbacks so common during the nineteenth century.

In chapter two titled, “The Sick Continent and its Diagnosticians,” Stabb emphasizes the role of positivism amongst Latin American intellectuals and underlines its manifestation in “race and racial theories” (*In Quest* 12). Drawing from biology and “social organists,” writers who attempted to reveal the ills that hindered Latin American development referred to racial differences between the powerful United States and the inhabitants of the “sick continent” (Stabb, *In Quest* 14). Stabb observes that, “If something was wrong with the society, then the vocabulary of the times demanded that it be called a ‘sickness,’” while simultaneously locating the source of the sickness in race, “the unhealthy virus producing the illness was to be found in the racial make-up of the population” (Stabb, *In Quest* 13, 14). While Justo Sierra (1848-1912) spoke of “scientific skepticism,” writers such as José Enrique Rodó (1871-1917), proposed an approach based on ideas instead of biology (Stabb, *In Quest* 45). Although this debate had overarching consequences in art and literature of the time period, what is most important for Stabb, and for our study, is the dominant discourse of illness and infirmity that filled the minds of intellectuals and the pages of nineteenth-century texts.³⁵

Benigno Trigo astutely observes that Stabb, while condemning the positivist essayists for the use of biological discourse to diagnose Latin America as a sick continent, incorporates the very same language he criticizes. Stabb explains that the essayists’ tendency to use racial discourse and to see Latin America as backward and sick is in part due to the American victory over Spain in the war of 1898. Having witnessed the defeat of the “mother nation” at the hands of the white, blue-eyed Americans, Latin Americans, already economically behind, suddenly felt

³⁵ Stabb is quick to point out that not all writers participated in the positivist diagnosis of Latin America. Among the writers who denounced race as a source of inferiority were Manuel González Prada and José Martí. In regards to literature, characteristic of Latin American *Modernismo* was the tension between the desire to participate in a new literary movement that denoted progress, while rejecting the material advances of modernity. The gaps between the aesthetic project of Rubén Darío, the undisputed founder of *Modernismo*, and the material reality of Latin America created an insurmountable impasse that defines art and literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, this aspect of nineteenth century literature is not the focus of this project.

racially hindered as well (Stabb, *In Quest* 12-13). In Stabb's argument positivism was challenged by a humanist turn, but Trigo finds a tendency toward progress that locates Stabb within the parameters of the same linguistic system he criticizes: "This progressive rejection, however, is belied by the continuities between the positivist assumptions [Stabb] describes and his own humanist analysis" (3). In one breath, Trigo convincingly argues, Stabb distances himself from the positivist "diagnosticians of sickness," while in the following breath he diagnoses them with an "inferiority complex" (Trigo 3). In this way, Stabb substitutes the biological nature of positivist discourse with the discourse of new legitimizing sciences, namely history and psychology (Trigo 3).

What unites the essayists, in Stabb's view, is the shared belief that Latin America is in crisis, another example of medical terminology. But crisis is used in two completely different ways by the nineteenth-century essayists and by Stabb, leading Trigo to ask, "How is it possible that crisis can perform the same authorizing function in opposite philosophies?" (4). Following Michel Foucault, Trigo answers his own question by tracing the continuities between Stabb and the essayists through discourse, defined as "a network of interrelated, systematic, repeated, co-opting operations and performances of exclusion, which gives particular forms to perception and self-perception within disciplines, knowledges, and subjectivities" (Trigo 4). Trigo picks up where Stabb left off by analyzing the discursive strategies that aimed to make crisis and illness visible.

Michael Aronna's '*Pueblos Enfermos: The Discourse of Illness in the Turn-of-the Century Spanish and Latin American Essay* (1999) is a comparative examination of the discourse of illness in texts by Spanish and Latin American authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He analyzes the "language or rhetoric of national illness, not as an idea, but

as a grammar inflected by notions of race, evolution and gender” in texts that demonstrate ““non-literary’ discourses of natural selection, psychology, criminology, sexology, and medicine” (Aronna 32). Aronna explores the discourse of illness that stems from the exclusion of the underdeveloped or impoverished from the evolutionary and rational doctrines of the Enlightenment. Aronna explains that the progress-oriented development model of modernity needed a “system of knowledge capable of articulating the differences between these stages of mental growth,” and he adds that that system favored a psychological approach that engaged biological inequality over one based on rationality (13). This system, in turn, facilitated a theory of inequality that depended on pathology, which culminated in the appearance of new scientific experts including sexologists, criminologists and ethnologists.

Aronna explains that the failed modernizing project in Latin America, apparent in the discrepancies with the modernizing theories of progress, concluded in a “discourse of degeneration,” or the shift from the external scientific belief in evolution to internal and organic insufficiencies within the national “body.” Aronna claims that this move was a repetition of earlier European attempts to confront the similar shifts associated with modernity:

Reproducing the critical blind-spot of European social organicists regarding the socio-economic and political necessity of underdevelopment for the modernized hegemonic center, many Spanish and Latin American intellectuals examined their own populations in search of internal psychological, racial, criminal, moral and sexual deficiencies which would explain their own regions’ or nations’ weak and exaggeratedly uneven entrance into modernity. (21)

Nevertheless, the language used to diagnose the so-called backward and primitive as obstacles to progress was not limited to the conservative and reactionary factions of intellectuals. Instead

Aronna reveals a “cohabitation of different political ideologies within the discourse of national illness” that demystifies the belief that degeneracy theory was the weapon of “racist political troglodytes or self-loathing Europhiles” (28). The degeneracy theory that is the object of Aronna’s study was practiced by both proponents of progressive social sciences and conservative traditionalists.

While Stabb, Trigo, and Aronna focus on the metaphor and discourse of illness as exclusionary practices, other scholars concentrate on the rhetorical strategies used to insert those deemed as obstacles to modernity into a legal system that not only marginalizes, but also incriminates them. Many behaviors and practices often associated with the popular classes were seen as impediments to progress and were subsequently made into crimes and their perpetrators criminals. In an article titled “Mass Mobilization versus Social Control: Vagrancy and Political Order in Early Republican Mexico,” Richard Warren argues that laws against vagrancy were used by both liberal and conservative political groups to sidestep direct political participation by the lower classes. In this way popular sovereignty, the very structure that legitimized the conservative and liberal political endeavor was used strategically to undermine its own legitimizing effects. Warren explains that the crime of vagrancy was associated more with the identity of the culprit than his or her activity. That is, vagrancy “was more a crime of ‘being’ than ‘doing’” (Warren 42). The category of vagrant was set apart from beggar, for example, in that vagrants were those psychically able to perform labor but who chose instead to live by “socially unacceptable” activities like stealing or gambling (Warren 42). The threat to social order that the vagrant represented, then, was to be well, “able bodied,” and voluntarily out of work (Warren 42). Those who were physically disabled, the sick generally speaking, were considered “legitimate mendicants” (Warren 42). The laws that were created to curtail vagrancy

revealed the fear that such citizens represented to the state sponsored political programs and the citizenship in general. The problem of vagrancy “was considered the ‘fecund seed of so many crimes’ that aggressive means were needed to impede its spread” (Warren 42). Using the discourse of illness, the lettered elite sought to create a national disease that could be stopped only through the creation of a new legal category. In this way, in legal discourse of the time period, the sick body was paradoxically used to differentiate between the physically and morally incapacitated, as well as to transform the improperly used able-body into the well-body of the nation. In other words, the misuse of the able-body became an illness that threatened national health.

In “Urbanistas, Ambulantes, and Mendigos: The Dispute for Urban Space in Mexico City, 1890-1930,” Pablo Piccato speaks to the need to reorganize the social space in light of the new laws that created new social dangers. By concentrating on Mexico City, Piccato is able to map out the encounter between attempts to modernize the urban space that often culminated in more accessibility for the popular classes, and in laws that sought to restrict that same accessibility. Piccato concludes that the same modernizing processes (increased transportation both to and within the city being important) that aimed at bringing Mexico City up to date also frustrated and weakened the attempts by the elite to isolate the upper classes from the popular invasion by the lower classes. Ultimately Piccato seeks to reveal hidden tensions that lie between the rigid and official mapping practices and laws born from the lettered imagination, and the reception and contestation of such practices by those who experienced them on the ground (Piccato, “Urbanistas” 119). The justification for laws associated with circulation and mobility were diverse. For example, peddlers and beggars challenged the state mandated delineations that separated the rich from the poor, and roaming or having no official address

were forms of resisting a system that demanded the ability to identify and locate the inhabitants of the city (Piccato, “Urbanistas” 128-138). Furthermore, crime was associated with this itinerant quality, “Judicial narratives attest to the meandering that preceded the committing of crimes” (Piccato, “Urbanistas” 138).³⁶

The problems associated with presence and circulation within the political forum were at times opposed by another discourse that sought to praise the advantages of staying close to home. The metaphor of the family functions in a way as a response to vagrancy. Silvia Arrom has argued that during the last years of the colony the family became a survival strategy given the lack of institutions aimed at promoting well-being, explain the family as a, “recurso para evitar la indigencia” (119). The family as metaphor goes beyond a survival strategy and becomes the rhetorical figure that highlighted union. The family, according to Brian Connaughton, underlines the desire for reconciliation and the need to, “abandonar la lucha fratricida,” in order to resolve the internal divisions that characterized Mexico and to avoid both a dogmatic democracy and the return of aristocracy (478).

As outlined in these works, to remedy the ills of the “nation” a diagnosis was in order, and the language of degeneration, criminality, and meandering was used by advocates of progress and tradition. These discourses serve as the framework on which the disputes that characterized the construction of liberal and conservative ideologies were created, and at the precise moment when they were created. If the discourse of criminality was used by both liberals and conservatives, they were also both the victims of the discourse. For example, the conservatives were criminalized by the 1857 Constitution thus forcing them to defend their beliefs against the same criminalizing discourse that they at times employed. The discourse of

³⁶ For more on vagrancy in Mexico see Richard Warren’s *Vagrants and Citizens: Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic*, Pablo Piccato’s *City of Suspects: Crime in Mexico City, 1900-31*, and Teresa Lozano Armendares’ *La criminalidad en la ciudad de México 1800-1821*.

vagrancy also sheds light on the structure of the liberal-conservative dispute. Both groups saw each other as able bodied citizens with flawed minds. The displaced liberals of “La familia enferma” were, in the conservative sense, vagrants who improperly used their bodies to meander dangerously through society transporting flawed ideas. It is important to remember that these discursive tactics were not only deployed in writing, but also visually in the form of images and caricatures. As we will see in the following section, “La familia enferma” was also the focus of a visual debate where the categories of progress and stability were mixed with those of vagrancy and the able body.

Visualizing Difference

A dominant theme of the commemorative exhibition mentioned in the introduction to this chapter was the importance of visual culture in political narratives of the nineteenth century. The satirical lithographs displayed in *El Estanquillo* included images of disillusioned French soldiers who confronted a Mexican reality much different from what they had expected. Instead of a land of abundance, they found heat, desert, and cactus. For example, in one frame two French soldiers cross paths with an indigenous woman carrying a basket strapped to her head. Comparing the woman with an image of what he believes to be a Mexican woman dressed in European attire he holds in his hand, one French soldier exclaims, “Dios! . . . Nos han engañado!! . . . ésta no se corresponde a la imagen que yo compré en París en la casa Martinet-Hautecour! . . .” In another, *Zuavos*, member of a branch of the French army that originated in Algeria, are seen digging with their bayonets in the barren earth with the following caption: “Actitud de los zuavos en tierra Mexicana, buscando oro.” These images were in printed in 1862 in *La Charivari*, a French newspaper famous for its political cartoons and caricatures and thus

represent the French disillusionment with the attempts to introduce monarchy in Mexico that would be echoed by the liberals.

The celebrated Mexican caricaturist Constatino Escalante published in *La Orquesta* his own rendition of the French intervention seeped in parody. One of his images titled *El 5 de Mayo* (Figure 1) portrays the *Zuavos* with their uniforms caught on cactus with a caption that asks why the troop has not advanced, and answers tongue-in-cheek, “Se ha atorado en un maguey,” implying that the powerful French forces can be defeated by the Mexican landscape. In another, a French general holds a jack-in-the-box labeled “Intervención.” As the jack in the box, arms outstretched, bobbles at the end of a spring before surprised spectators, the question is posed, “Amigo, “¿qué es esto?” with the answer, “Todo, menos lo que esperábamos.” The former Escalante image appeared in 1862 and the latter in 1864, thus tracing the representation of the development of the French intervention from the initial and unexpected obstacles that impeded the occupation, to the later realization that the entire endeavor had become an unpleasant surprise.



Figure 1: El 5 de Mayo

These lithographs reveal stark differences that culminated in failed attempts to incorporate European ideas into Mexican politics and they also laid bare the impossibility, just forty years after Independence, of reconciling European thought with Mexican reality. Nevertheless, absent from these images, and from the commemorative display in *El Estanquillo*, are alternative visual narratives that introduce parody of a very similar kind. It is important to remember that the liberals founded their politics on foreign models, albeit not the French model. From the conservative perspective, liberalism induced scenes in Mexico equally as humorous as the French soldiers, their uniforms caught on a maguey, and unable to advance.

Visualizing Stability and Displacement

The lithographs of the French soldiers during the French Intervention constituted liberal commentary on what they considered to be the neo-colonization of Mexico by yet another European power. Nevertheless, the figurative attack on the incorporation of foreign ideas was not limited to the foreign, European, body arriving clumsily on Mexican soil; also targets were the advocates of what Conservatives deemed ideas unsuitable for Mexican reality.

The movement of bodies and ideas often appeared as organizing tropes in the visual culture of the period. In returning to Benito Juárez's mobile administration, we find attempts by liberal and conservative propagandists to intensify Juárez's role as both a promoter of a liberal modernity located in forward reaching progress, and a political castaway who drifts dangerously far from the stable, colonial foundations: the liberal version of Juárez, a stoic and static figure with a clear path and destination; the conservative version, a Juárez who circles aimlessly through the nation, tired and downtrodden. Exemplary of the first category is an image which appeared in *La Orquesta* with the title, "La virtud es inmóvil: Brindis del presidente." *La*

Orquesta was known for its political satire and in particular political caricature. Luis Leal places the appearance of *La Orquesta* at the forefront of political satire in Mexico claiming that, “El uso tan eficaz que se hizo de esta arma-que había de ser utilizada por la mayoría de los periódicos

mexicanos de allí en adelante-es tal vez la mayor contribución de *La Orquesta* al periodismo mexicano” (329). Equally as important, Leal emphasizes that *La Orquesta* was a publication bent on criticism, satirizing whoever held power, “Durante el gobierno de Juárez, atacó a Juárez; durante el gobierno de don Porfirio, atacó a don Porfirio” (329). Most important for the current study is to establish that *La Orquesta* was an important forum for political satire during the years corresponding to the French Intervention.³⁷

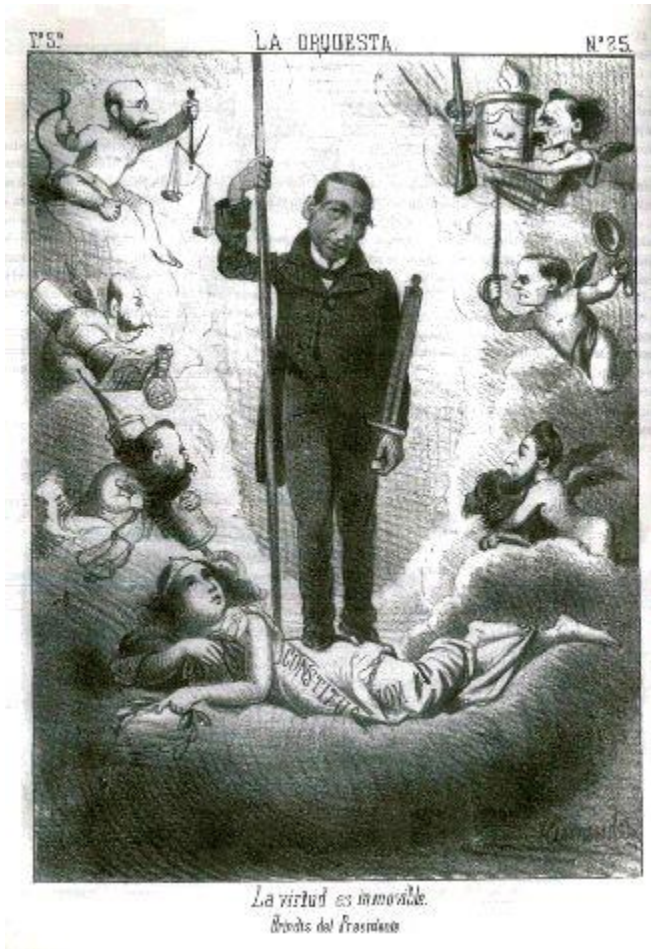


Figure 2: La virtud es inmóvil

In “La virtud es inmóvil” (Figure 2) we see Juárez against a backdrop of a cloudy sky, occupying a clearing that illuminates his

otherwise obscure figure. Juárez gazes directly into the viewers’ eyes with a certain neutrality,

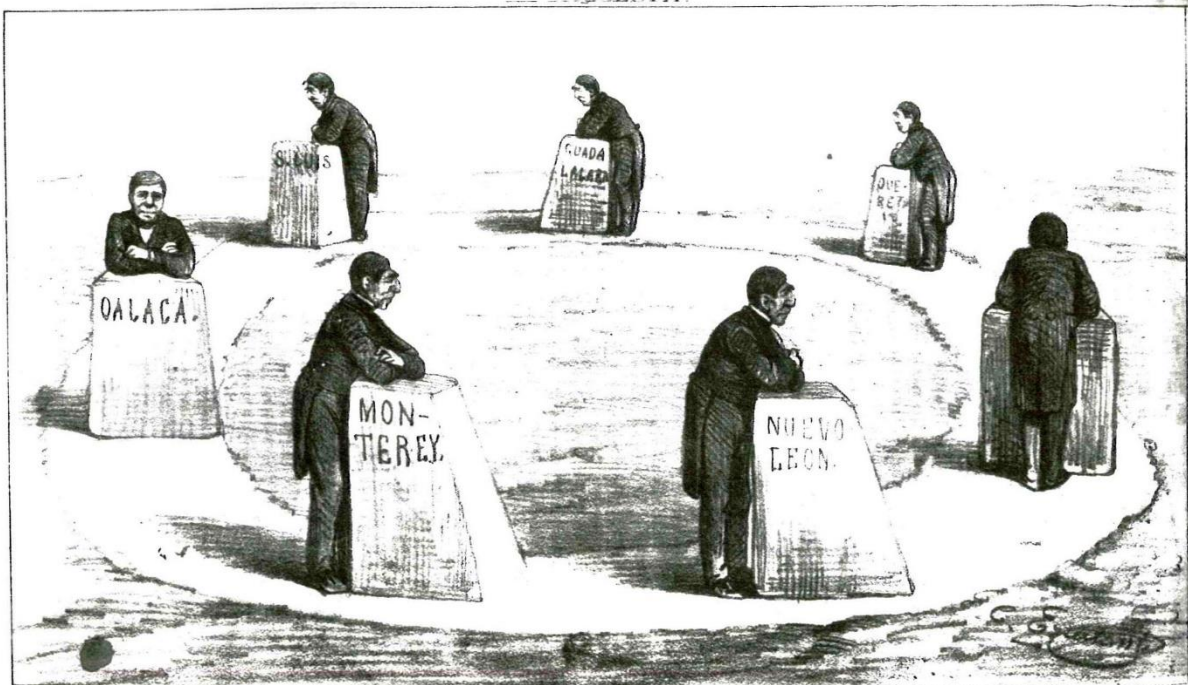
³⁷ Luis Leal places the founding of the newspaper in March of 1861 under the direction of Carlos R. Caserín and Constantino Escalante. Its publication temporarily suspended in May 1863 due to the French Intervention, it resumes during the Second Empire in December 1864. Its publication ceases in 1866 and its editors began to publish *El Impolítico. Periódico de todas las cosas impolíticas, con estampas* under José María Casasola. Except for a brief appearance in from June to July of 1866, *La Orquesta* does not return to publication until the triumph of Juárez over Maximiliano and his supporters in 1867, this time under the direction of Vicente Riva Palacio. Its publication is finally suspended in 1877. For more see Luis Leal’s “El contenido literario de ‘La Orquesta’” in *Historia Mexicana* 7:3, 1958: 329-367 and *Publicaciones periódicas mexicanas del siglo XIX, 1856-1876*, Ed. Guadalupe Curiel. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003.

neither malicious nor benevolent. A clear attempt at a hagiographic representation, Juárez is surrounded by his “angels,” each carrying an object symbolic of his administration: a set of scales, a syringe, a marble pillar, a sword. But each angel also carries an object that could be interpreted as an attempt at parody: a mirror and sword, a bag of money, a whip. In this way, we find justice and equilibrium (scales), a classicist reference to stability (pillar), a link to modernity (syringe); but we also find intransigence (sword, whip), vanity (mirror), and avarice (money). It is then possible to conclude that the image represents Juárez in a contradictory splendor: the national god emerges from the sky bearing traits that point to both stability and dogmatism. The image is highlighted by the fact that Juárez rests his right foot on a reclined feminine figure bearing the name of “Constitution.” In this way, the entirety of Juárez’s contradictory legitimacy depends on the supine constitution, precisely the source of national unrest and instability during the mid-nineteenth century.

Revealed in this caricature of Juárez, aptly titled “The Immobility of Virtue,” is the impossibility of establishing immobility in regard to the political atmosphere of the period. The supposed source of stability is surrounded by supplementary sources of unrest; its foundation serves as the origin of unrest. The attempt to restrain the god-like figure of Juárez in an easily recognizable hagiographic portrait is undermined by the facts that enclose and buttress it. Thus the stability of the national hero also contains fissures that could lead to collapse with Juárez tumbling to the earth from his position in the clouds.

In the July 1, 1865 edition of *La Orquesta* we find a more telling example of how the instability of the Juárez administration became the focus of both journalism and satire. In a caricature titled “El Sr. Juárez, según la prensa ‘grande’, llega cada día á su ultimo atrincheramiento,” (Figure 3) multiple images of Juárez are found on a circular path, each figure

looking ahead to its replica. In each representation, Juárez leans on a block with his current location engraved on its side: Monterrey, Nuevo León, Puebla, Guadalajara, San Luis Potosí, and Oaxaca. Arms crossed and with a somber expression, Juárez appears to gaze apathetically at his immediate future: a clone of himself in another location. The circular path suggests a monotonous nomadism with no concrete destination. Furthermore, each Juárez casts a shadow, at times behind him, at others in front of him, giving the impression of simultaneity or of being at all places at once. In this way, the viewer is left with the sensation of a president who plods along aimlessly through the nation, and who is impossible to locate. This message is supported by the accompanying texts presented in the form of a dialogue between an anonymous interlocutor and the anthropomorphized newspaper: “—Y dígame usted, ciudadana *Orquesta*, ¿qué ha sucedido con el presidente de frac negro? /--Señor, si debo decir verdad, no lo sé” (Barajas 234). And later, responding to the inquiry concerning Juárez’s whereabouts: “No se sabe á punto fijo; él corre como un azacán y desaparece de un punto para aparecer en otro” (Barajas 234). In spite of the obvious satirical charge of the caricature of Juárez, it also plants in the mind of the reader the image of a president intent on resisting injustice and his omnipresence in the national space as the impossibility for his enemies to eliminate their adversary. This culminates in a mystification of Juárez that places him in the realm of the supernatural as we see in another exchange in the text that accompanies the image: “—Dicen que el bueno del hombre lleva consigo un diablo familiar que le sirve de Mentor. ¿Será esto cierto? /--No será raro, señor, puesto que, según se asegura, el bueno del hombre tiene pacto con el demonio” (Barajas 234).



El Sr. Juárez, según la prensa "grande", llega cada día á su último atrincheramiento

Figure 3: El Sr. Juárez, según la prensa ‘grande’, llega cada día á su último atrincheramiento

The contradictory nature of viewing Juárez and his mobile administration as both the vanquished that flee their rivals and as mysterious men whose ability to not be found can only be explained through bizarre pacts is explainable through an analysis of the satirical press of the period. As Rafael Barajas explains in his study *La historia de un país en caricatura: caricatura mexicana de combate (1826-1872)*, in order for Maximilian’s empire to function, Juárez and his supporters had to be located and removed or incorporated into the monarchic system. His presence symbolized resistance to empire and a “desafío para el imperio, puesto que mantuvo vigente un gobierno legal, liberal y nacionalista en suelo mexicano” (234). The positive interpretation of Barajas of Juárez as a symbol of resistance seems at odds with the more satirical reading presented above. Barajas explains that during the French occupation of Mexico the

national press often published false reports on the whereabouts of Juárez, claiming that he had abandoned the country essentially giving up the fight (234). Barajas argues that the caricaturist, Constantino Escalante, echoed the national press in his portrayal of Juárez, creating a representation, “tan irreal como las noticias de la ‘gran prensa’ sobre el destino de don Benito” (234). In this way, the “unreal” aspect of Escalante’s Juárez parodies what he sees as a dishonest depiction in the national press. In Barajas’s eyes, Escalante presents Juárez as imposible to capture and able to tap into “poderes mágicos, como el don de la ubicuidad que le permite estar en todo el país” (234). In its symbolism, this rendition of Juárez’s roaming administration places the nation by his side, and presents him as an embodiment of the nation.

Barajas contrasts Constantino’s representation of the Juárez administration with another that appeared in the conservative publication *Doña Clara. Periódico político, católico, lírico y poético, con caricaturas y pretensiones de arreglar el mundo* on July 6, 1865. In the caricature titled “De cómo el Sr. Juárez está en todas partes,” (Figure 4) we find multiple images of Juárez walking tiredly up a spiraling trail. In direct contrast to the image from *La Orquesta*, here the caricaturist emphasizes Juárez’s indigenous features and dresses him as a commoner. Not only is the black frac for which Juárez was known missing, but he is dressed in white, wrinkled, clothing and walks barefoot. Also, Juárez carries a *huacal*, a type of wooden crate used to transport goods. While the contents of the crate are not visible, Juárez’s load adds to the toil of the uphill walk and in the third image we find him fatigued and at rest, leaning against the *huacal*. Once again Juárez’s multiple whereabouts are inscribed in the image, this time on the *huacal*, placing him in Guadalajara, Monterrey, Nuevo León, and Oaxaca. As Barajas points out, the circular trail in Constantino’s caricature is substituted for a spiral whose beginning is unknown, and at whose end we find Juárez sitting on the ground and staring off into the distance.

Barajas sees Juárez as having collapsed out of exhaustion after the “dificultosa y torpe carrera que termina en su caída” (235). Nevertheless, a closer look reveals a Juárez who has simply reached the end of the road, possibly still willing to carry the metaphorical liberal resistance on his back, but with no road left to travel. This culminates in the combined exhaustion and melancholic gaze.

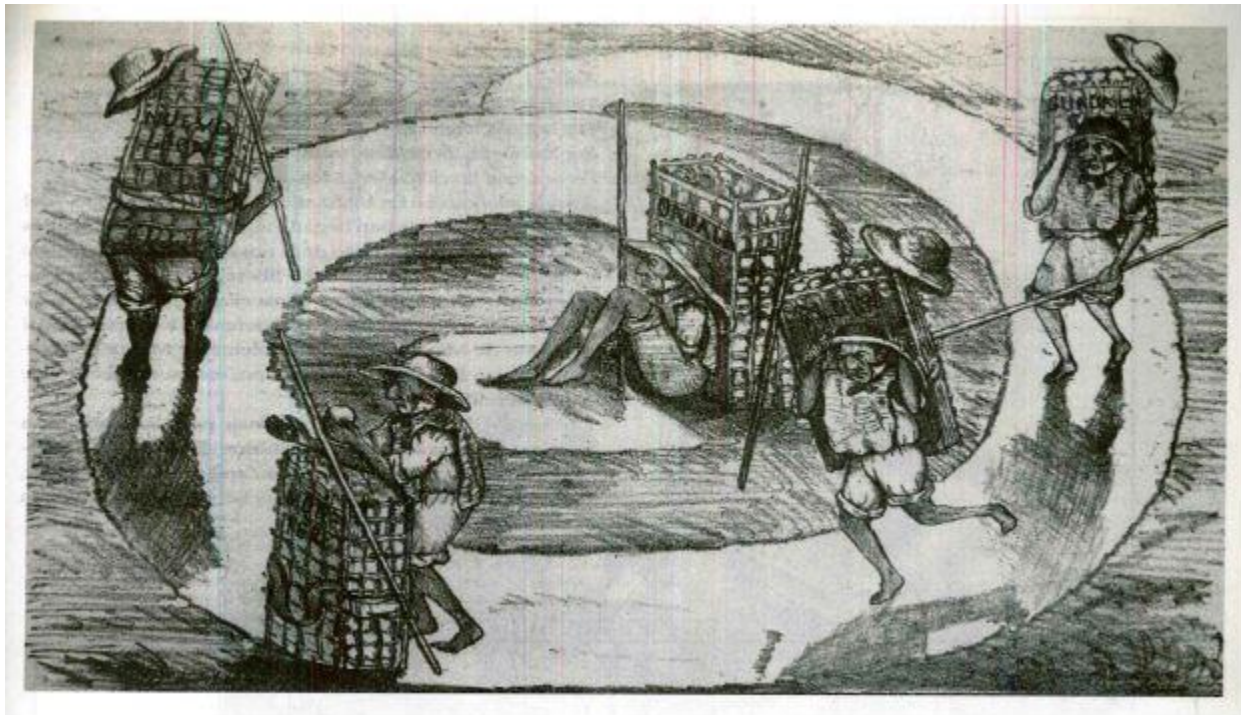


Figure 4: De cómo el Sr. Juárez está en todas partes

While the topic of both caricatures is the roaming Juárez administration, contrasting them tells us about the differences in interpretation of this important historical moment. Unlike Constantinos’ caricature of Juárez, for example, the shadows the traveling president produces are all facing forward, thus giving the impression of constant forward movement. Furthermore, in this image the trajectory of Juárez is given a clear destination, erasing the sensation of ubiquity

we found in Constantino's caricature. The stoic Juárez is replaced by a man who changes over the course of his journey, tiring physically and mentally, at the end of the spiraling road Juárez demonstrates emotion as he senses defeat; the pillar on which Juárez supported himself in Constantino's caricature and that gave the sensation of an indomitable spirit is substituted with the heavy crate that weighs Juárez's down, impeding his advance.

Liberals and conservatives depended on the images of Juárez, and through association of the other displaced liberals, to visualize their respective arguments about the dangers of the opposing political platforms. What is most important here is the mutual preoccupation with vagrancy which supports the metaphor of "La familia enferma." The representation of the displaced liberals became a visual battlefield on which the future of Mexico was contested. The battle, however, was not limited to images. "La familia enferma" also appeared in literature of the period.

Illness and Families in the Press and Popular Literature

In this section I analyze literary representations of conservative attempts to invoke and cure "La familia enferma." Conservative writers used a combination of popular genres, such as the pamphlet, or *folleto*, and the calendar, as well as the essay and the serialized novel to construct their reaction to the liberal monopolization of discourse. The pamphlet was an especially powerful discursive tool given how rapidly it could be printed and its low cost, that made it economically accessible to a broad reading public. Ann Staples explains that pamphlets were:

la manera más eficiente de hacer llegar la lectura a un amplio público y hoy en día son una de las fuentes documentales más ricas para comprender las pasiones y las presiones

de la vida cotidiana del [siglo diecinueve]. Toda la emoción del momento se vertía en los folletos, cuya inmediata publicación y consecuente lectura permitía tratar los asuntos con continuidad. Sin extender demasiado la imaginación, se podría decir que durante el siglo XIX la panfletería sirvió como medio masivo de comunicación, a la manera en que la televisión lo hace actualmente. (96)

Given its accelerated and accessible nature, the pamphlet is extremely relevant as a means for conservative writers to contest the monopolization of the public sphere by liberal discourse.

Published by Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho in 1860 during the interim separating the end of the Reform War from the beginning of the French Intervention, *La familia enferma* belongs to the calendar genre. *La familia enferma*'s title places it within the same conservative mission of "Preces y letanía de la familia enferma," and the calendar locates it in the same category as popular literature. In her contribution to *La república de las letras: asomos a la cultura escrita del México decimonónico, vol. 2*, Isabel Quiñónez explains that the calendar was part of the literary family comprised of the *pronóstico* and the *almanaque*, genres whose contents placed them somewhere between the imagined and the scientific (331). These publications were hot items in nineteenth-century Mexico given that, "[e]ran baratos, venían repletos de información, daban consejos de utilidad" and because of this accessibility and utility they circulated across classes boundaries, "entre la gente del saber y entre los iletrados" (Quiñónez 331-32, 332). Aguilar y Marocho's *La familia enferma* is another example of a popular publication that is appropriated by a conservative writer to challenge the liberal voice through satire.

This study of the dissemination of a satirical attack of liberalism would be incomplete without a discussion of newspapers. As Erica Pani observes, although the conservatives were labeled "reaccionarios" and "mochos," the social and political nature of conservatism was much

more complex and heterogeneous (“Para difundir” 119). The conservative writers had multiple forums in which to display this conservative complexity, among them were *El Católico* (1843-47), *El Ilustrador Católico* (1846), *La Verdad Católica* (1854-55), *El Universal* (1848-55), and *La Sociedad* (1857-67).³⁸ *La Cruz*, published from 1855 to 1857, was an important conservative publication given that its contributors included some of the most talented Conservative writers of the period, including Manuel Carpio (1791-1860), José Joaquín Pesado (1801-61), and José María Roa Bárcena. Especially useful for our study are the editions of *La Cruz* dedicated to a critique of liberalism and the serialization of José María Roa Bárcena’s short novel “La quinta modelo.” The study of these two works together allows us to see how the paper’s readership would have experienced the conservative denouncement of liberalism in both essay form and the fictional representation of an unsuccessful liberal-utopian experiment in Mexico. I will construct my analysis around the use of the family in *La Cruz* as one of the fundamental rhetorical strategies used by the conservatives to identify and instruct the ideologically sick liberals. In turn, my reading of *La Cruz* and “La quinta modelo” will set the stage for the analysis of the later publications, “Preces y letanía de la familia enferma” and *La familia enferma*, that continue the mission of the editors of *La Cruz*.

The Mexican Family in the Conservative Press

In “Iglesia y Estado, una pugna discursiva en el siglo XIX,” Rosaura Hernández Monroy emphasizes the role of *La Cruz* in the liberal-conservative debates of the mid-nineteenth century. The discursive battle over the attributes of the conservative-supported notion of tradition versus the liberal advocacy for development and progress was waged in the press, and important

³⁸ For a more complete list and explanation of conservative newspapers see Erica Pani, “‘Para difundir las doctrinas ortodoxas y vindicarlas de los errores dominantes’: los periódicos católicos y conservadores en el siglo XIX” in *La república de las letras*, vol. 2.

intonations of the Catholic voice emerged in the pages of *La Cruz*. José Joaquín Pesado was already an acclaimed poet when he became editor of *La Cruz* and thus understood the power of the written word in the public forum (Hernández Monroy 81). Pesado was a curious nineteenth-century conservative given that he first participated in the Liberal party before abandoning its ranks to take up the pen against the disorder and unrest he associated with liberalism. Hernández Monroy claims that Pesado's role in *La Cruz* was a "reivindicación" of his political stance and that in the pages of the Catholic newspaper Pesado sought to oppose the notion of liberal modernity, to warn about the threats to tradition that it promoted, and to highlight the rhetorical contradictions on which the liberal constitution of 1857 was founded (82). The problems that conservative writers found in the liberal agenda were many, but the way that the conservatives constructed their reproach is the focus of my analysis of Pesado's editorial essays in *La Cruz*.

An important section of *La Cruz* was "Observaciones sobre la verdadera ciencia politica," written by José Joaquín Pesado and dedicated to the explanation of the conservative agenda and the undermining of what was generally referred to as liberal dogma. While Pesado went to great lengths to explain in detail the differences between what he considered the liberal idealization of a government in the hands of the masses, and the conservative reason that kept citizens in the Catholic household that was the Mexican nation, what is most important for the present study is the language Pesado used to construct the Mexican family.

In the edition published on February 18, 1858, Pesado argues that the objective of humanity is to obtain happiness. Pesado first establishes that there are two kinds of happiness; one transcendent and granted only by God through union, while the other, imperfect happiness is a terrestrial happiness. It is this imperfect happiness that Pesado associates with politics and society and that he states manifests itself through three main groups of properties: "los del alma,

los del cuerpo, y los bienes exteriores [sic], que sirven al hombre de órganos ó de instrumentos para perfeccionar su alma y su cuerpo” (18 Feb. 5). For Pesado, these distinct paths to happiness were closely intertwined and interdependent. If at the end of the day virtue was at stake, then the soul was indispensable for its realization. Nevertheless, “Si los bienes del cuerpo y los exteriores [sic] se comprenden en ella [el alma], es porque unos y otros son hasta cierto punto necesarios para el ejercicio de las virtudes” (18 Feb. 5). Pesado writes his way toward a representation of the ideal society that seeks happiness through reason and interaction. In the first place, a functional society is founded on communication which is only possible through the participation and proximity of its members (18 Feb. 5). In other words, without a society that consists of members who share an intimate relationship and who interact, there can be no happiness and society ceases to fulfill its purpose. Pesado extends what he understands as society to a political family thus creating a metaphor that refers back to the conservative political platform. In an apparent tautology, Pesado both places the metaphorical family at the core of the ideal political model and makes that model dependent on the previous existence of the family, “Los placeres de la familia exigen la existencia de la familia” (18 Feb. 5). In spite of this rhetorical ambiguity where the creation and maintenance of the family is both the conservative goal and the structure that makes that goal possible, the central role of the metaphor of the family in the conservative press of the mid-nineteenth century was evident.

It is with this same language, which established society as a body and formed a political family, that Pesado and the editors of *La Cruz* attacked the liberal agenda. In the liberal agenda, the freedom of the individual is subordinated to the will of the people, which always becomes the masses in conservative rhetoric. While Pesado presents numerous arguments against the liberal model, an example being the difficulty of establishing the just or benevolent among the sea of

opinions that constitutes the will of the masses, his principle attack takes aim at the challenges the liberal model presents to the political family. For Pesado this culminates in an important question: “Cuando se proclama en términos tan espesos [sic] el despotismo de la multitud, ¿qué viene á ser la familia?” (25 Feb. 36). He answers his own question in terms of the disappearance of the family in the face of the multitude. Pesado claims, for example, that the family becomes a, “sombra vana, una verdadera nada” (25 Feb. 37). The threat the masses pose to the family is exacerbated through the establishment of the family as metaphor for the nation: “una nacion, por grande que sea, no es mas que una gran familia, que observa a escala mayor las proporciones y reglas que la familia guarda en pequeño” (Pesado, 25 Feb. 37-38). In this way, Pesado creates a string of interconnected metaphors that unite civil society, the “familia pequeña,” with political society, “una gran familia.” Equally important is the way Pesado expresses the corruption of the family model. When the national family is threatened by disorder, the nation becomes a mental ward: “Una nación en anarquía, es una casa en desórden, y una república entregada al vértigo de teorías irrealizables, es un hospital de dementes” (Pesado, 25 Feb. 38). It is important to remember that in Pesado’s critique of liberalism there is an implicit warning against foreign ideas that stray from the family model and that threaten the order at home. It is these rhetorical figures that inform the more explicit literary attacks on the unstable characteristics of liberalism used by conservative writers who waged their battle in genres more popular than the essays by Pesado.

Ideological Illness and Sick Families

Jorge Ruffinelli begins his biographical sketch of José María Roa Bárcena by underlining his simultaneous importance and absence in the field of Mexican Studies: “Desde hace muchos

años no se lee la obra de José María Roa Barcéna (1827-1908) pese a considerárselo . . . iniciador del cuento moderno en México” (303). Nevertheless, Roa Bárcena was not just a short story writer; he was also a poet and journalist. Given Roa Bárcena’s extensive literary production, Ruffinelli explains his absence in critical literature in terms of liberal hegemony and the negation of conservative culture (304). In spite of this negation, Roa Bárcena was indisputably an important author and political contributor in the nineteenth century who openly supported the arrival of Maximilian, wrote an “oda salutorian” to the monarch and participated in 1865 in *La Academia Imperial de Ciencias y Literatura* founded by Maximilano (Ruffinelli 307).

In his short novel “La quinta modelo” (1857), José María Roa Bárcena explores the relationship between the circulation of ideas, family, and illness. The novel is the story of Gaspar Rodríguez, an exiled liberal who returns to Mexico from the United States in the 1840’s, his son Enrique, daughter Amelia, and wife Octaviana. Upon his return, Gaspar is thrust into local and national politics as a representative of the Liberal party, eventually striking out on his own to experiment with a liberal utopian community, “La quinta modelo.” The liberal ideals on which Gaspar founds his community are, of course, incompatible with Mexican reality, thus giving way to a series of humorous and tragic results. Stubborn and unwilling to give up on his utopian society even after it becomes evident that it will fail, Gaspar’s experiment not only jeopardizes the community, but the same liberal fever that provoked his utopian experiment also threatens the well-being of his family. Gaspar’s experiment first leads to the separation of the family, when his son Enrique is sent away to receive a liberal education and later his wife and daughter are expelled as aristocratic sympathizers, and ultimately leads to the death of Enrique who is stabbed during a gambling dispute. Although the novel is an explicit parody of

liberalism, a more serious message is conveyed through the narrative strategies of illness and the family. As Gaspar's liberal fever worsens, so does his physical and mental health. In this way, the effects of idealized liberalism are transformed into the materialization of a pathological threat. This threat exceeds the health of Gaspar, threatening his family, the community, and by allegorical association, Mexico.

Roa Bárcena's critique of liberalism leaves no stone unturned. Gaspar is seen as a bumbling, naïve man whose arguments in favor of liberal reform are contradictory and at times ridiculous. Gaspar's characterization as a liberal begins in the opening scene of the novel. When he first glimpses Mexico from the deck of an American ship on which he returns from exile, Gaspar views his home with indifference, "no le causaba impresion alguna volver a ver las montañas y los edificios del país donde nació" (Roa Bárcena 96). Gaspar's indifference is meant to underline the liberals' detachment with Mexico's material reality and their tendency to structure the future based on ideas, or "filosofía" as it was commonly called in the conservative press. The story of Gaspar's return to Mexico at the precise moment when liberalism has regained ground in the political struggle is a successful attempt to undermine the reformist platform espoused by the liberals. Not only did liberal reform mark a distance from Mexican reality, but from the conservative perspective, it also threatened the most fundamental structures of society, such as the church and the family.

Though Gaspar is a liberal exile who recently returned from the United States, in theory the archetype of progress and equality, his reformist ideas have multiple sources. He was a liberal proponent before his exile, yet Roa Bárcena plants doubt about the seriousness of Gaspar's crimes and the validity of his exile: "Gaspar . . . tuvo la mala o buena suerte de hacerse sospechoso al gobierno a causa de su lenguaje un tanto desenfrenado y espartano" (Roa Bárcena

96). The superficial treatment of Gaspar's liberal crimes puts in doubt his role as an authentic agitator. Furthermore, Roa Bárcena emphasizes that while in exile, Gaspar did little to overthrow the tyranny that the liberals thought plagued Mexico. Roa Bárcena sarcastically enumerates Gaspar's subversive activities while abroad as follows: "brindó cuatro veces en los hoteles de Nueva York y Nueva Oreláns por la caída del tirano;" "escribió cartas destempladísimas contra el mismo gobierno y las dirigió a algunos de sus amigos en México, lo cual dio por resultado que estos amigos fuesen empaquetados y despachado a hacerle compañía;" "publicó artículos furibundos en los periódicos de Brownsville . . . que nadie los leyese en México;" "a fuerza de botellas de champaña, conservó vivo en los pechos de sus amigos el fuego sagrado de la revolución" (Roa Bárcena 99-100). This whimsical description functions as a critique of liberalism, but also to question the role of liberalism in the United States in Gaspar's subsequent liberal fever and utopian experiment.

Roa Bárcena clearly underlines the exacerbation of Gaspar's liberal ideas as a direct result of his exile. The implicit argument in "La quinta modelo" is that the liberalism Gaspar encounters in the United States is incompatible with Mexican reality and although Gaspar does not fall ill until the end of the novel, the symptoms of his illness are foreshadowed in the beginning of the story:

Las instituciones de la nación vecina, que a un espíritu profundo y observador habrían dado materia para meditar en la prosperidad de un pueblo cuya máquina gubernativa se adapta a la índole de la raza, a sus tradiciones y a sus costumbres actuales, sólo sirvieron a aumentar la confusión de las ideas políticas no muy sensatas que, de años atrás, germinaban en el cerebro de Gaspar. (Roa Bárcena 97)

Gaspar, it seems, already carried the “liberal germ” and his visit to the US only amplified its effects. Nevertheless, it is another Mexican liberal, el compadre Márquez, who suggests the idea of the liberal utopian community (Roa Bárcena 150). In this way, in Gaspar we see a curious combination of foreign ideas and domestic prodding that culminates in his utopian experiment.

The distance between liberal ideas and Mexican reality functions as a foundation on which the author builds his criticism of liberalism. Roa Bárcena emphasizes the contradictory nature of liberalism at every turn. The “equality” professed by Gaspar requires turning a blind eye to slavery in the United States and the discrepancies between Gaspar’s anticlericalism and his acceptance of Protestantism while abroad. At the political level, upon his return to Mexico, Gaspar is—fraudulently—elected as representative for his unnamed provincial region. This appointment entails a visit to the capital where he is surprised that he is not recognized in the street or celebrated by the people. In an interesting inversion of political roles, Roa Bárcena points out that such an attitude shows Gaspar’s Hispanic roots, or the conservation of the privileged role of royalty, thus turning Gaspar into a retrograde conservative out of touch with the ways of modernity (Roa Bárcena 116-17). Also while in the capital, Gaspar purchases a copy of the Constitution of the United States and receives as a gift a copy of Rousseau’s *Social Contract*. In spite of the revolutionary and reformatory content of these two works, what Gaspar learns is intolerance: tradition and progress, faith and reason are incompatible (Roa Bárcena 119). This in turn led Gaspar into the realm of abstractions, lost in the ideas that he was misinterpreting:

como [Gaspar] no estaba adornado de conocimientos muy profundos en los diversos ramos que deben construir la ciencia de un buen legislador . . . se propuso no tocar, generalmente hablando, más que las cuestiones abstractas, que pudiéramos llamar la

metafísica política, y en las cuales, con embutir las palabras *patriotismo, ilustración, progreso*, etc. (Roa Bárcena 119, emphasis in the original)

The flawed, abstract ideas with which Gaspar fills the progressive vocabulary of the period further undermines his status as a productive nineteenth-century reformer. Unfortunately for Gaspar, his flaws extend beyond his own misunderstanding of political ideas. Consistent with the need to “ilustrar” and with Rousseau’s *Émile*, Gaspar also takes charge of the education of his son, Enrique. Again, his well-meaning liberal intentions backfire as he enrolls Enrique in a school in the French tradition of “ciencia, moral y políglota” which only transforms Enrique into a lazy, rude and drunken gambler with limited knowledge of science and geography (Roa Bárcena 197). Equally as ridiculous, when Gaspar visits the school to observe first-hand how his son is progressing in the enlightened pedagogical tradition, he is revealed as monolingual and ignorant in all subjects he claims are indispensable for the citizens of a modern nation.

Roa Bárcena presents this rigorous critique of liberalism as preparation for the most exaggerated of Gaspar’s liberal projects: “La quinta modelo,” a democratic utopia he constructs using the members of his *hacienda*. Beginning with the inauguration of the utopian project, Gaspar’s liberal fever worsens and becomes illness. The local priest acknowledges Gaspar’s illness, observing that, “el cerebro de Gaspar se hallaba fuertemente afectado por la manía política” and that “física y moralmente hablando amenazaba a la esposa y a la hija” (Roa Bárcena 160). The explicit relationship between liberal illness and the threat to the family is what structures the final stages of the story. It is no coincidence that the novel contains individual sections for each of Gaspar’s children, a narrative strategy that underlines the impending rupture of the family. Gaspar separates Enrique and Amelia according to their gender (Gaspar is paradoxically a misogynist who refuses to recognize women’s intelligence or women’s equality)

and to their approach to tradition. Enrique was educated by his father and in school in the tradition of anticlerical liberalism, while Amelia is a believer who attends church. This discrepancy culminates in the removal of Octaviana and Amelia from the *quinta* for refusing to participate in the experiment, as Gaspar indicates to his wife, “Residirás en la ciudad, porque tú y tu hija representáis aquí la aristocracia, en todas partes enemiga jurada de la reforma democrática, y para llevar a cabo esta reforma, se debe comenzar aniquilando la aristocracia” (Roa Bárcena 160).

Although apparently at the height of his liberal illness when he expels his wife and daughter from their home, Gaspar’s condition deteriorates after Enrique is murdered, stabbed by el compadre Márquez over a gambling dispute. When Amelia and her mother Octaviana return to *la quinta* to console Gaspar they are met with a madman, “al paroxismo del dolor sucedió en [Gaspar] rápidamente el paroxismo de la demencia,” who swiftly descends into the depths of mental illness (Roa Bárcena 178). If in the absence of the family Gaspar’s condition worsened, the return of his wife and daughter marks his sluggish return to health. Slowly, Gaspar’s “insensatez” and “manía liberal-reformista” begin to subside (Roa Bárcenas 181, 185): “El crédito de Gaspar estaba completamente restablecido, y en cuanto a su insensatez, había casi desaparecido . . . merced a las prescripciones de un médico hábil y , sobre todo, al cuidado y cariño de su familia” (Roa Bárcena 193). The combination of economic “health” and physical health has the same origin: the care of the family.

We see in the final pages of the novel that the contagion of liberal illness is limited to a warning and that though the basic family structure is recuperated, there are important changes. Firstly, Gaspar does not recover entirely but suffers relapses of liberalism. For example, still convalescent he awakes to scold his daughter for marrying a man who is “too feminine” and

dedicates his time to painting exotic landscapes, lost in ignorant contemplation (Roa Bárcena 194). Nevertheless, if we juxtapose the death of Enrique, the future of Mexico educated in the liberal ways, with Gaspar's illness and subsequent recovery—albeit only partial—, we find the real threat of liberalism: it is fatal for those, like Enrique, who are brought up in the liberal tradition, whereas, those, like Gaspar, still capable of contemplating a life without liberalism, can still be healed. As Gaspar attempts to regain his health, so does the family that he had neglected. The only death is that of the lazy and discourteous Enrique whose irresolute life and liberal education make him an undesirable citizen for the future of Mexico.

Enrique's death points to the dangers of liberalism and the threat to the family. Gaspar's story takes the reader to the very precipice of liberal destruction; the allegory of the family in turmoil is easily extended to Mexico in general. Nevertheless, the unfortunate denouement can be avoided with instruction on how to maintain a healthy family and this was the task of the writers who follow.

Invoking the Sick Liberal

Another excellent example of the way liberals were conjured in the conservative press appears in a pamphlet titled "Preces y letanía de la familia enferma" printed by the Imprenta en la Calle de María Andrea in 1860.³⁹ "Preces," meaning prayer or plea, and "letanía," meaning litany but also referring to a list as in "a litany of complaints," indicates a combination of devotional prayer and recited invocation. The litany is a redemptive ceremony and consists of a petition generally made by the clergy and repeated by the parishioners. Meant for the betterment

³⁹ Although WorldCat lists this document as appearing "1860?" the print date is indicated as January 28, 1860. Furthermore, its contents leave no doubt that it was printed between March 1857 and June 1861. The radical liberal Melchor Ocampo, who was killed in June 1861, is mentioned as living, and there is a reference to liberal attempts to seek aid from James Buchanan, US president from March 1857 to March 1861. This locates the print date during the Reform War and thus within the historical parameter I explore in this chapter.

of its subject, one imagines the litany for the sick family as destined for the improved health of an infirm family. In this case, however, the prayer is made by the sick liberal family, as they are summoned, one by one, in a long list of what are presented as liberal delinquents. Benito Juárez assumes the role of the clergy and directs his plea to James Buchanan, the current president of the United States: “¡Levántate, Buchanan, corre en auxilio nuestro; apresúrate á libramos de Miramón!” (Preces 1). The summoning of Buchanan to rise and save the liberals from the feared conservative general Miguel Miramón (1832-67) underlines the precarious position of Mexican liberalism at the time the pamphlet appeared. But “Preces y letanía” is also a curious example of the attempt to position the liberals, in theory a secular group, within the Catholic tradition at the precise moment when their defeat, if we believe the printers rendition of the conflict, was preventable only by foreign intervention. Consequently, “Preces y letanía” appears at a moment when conservatives seem to hold the strategic advantage over the liberals and therefore presents an example of conservative attempts to undermine the dominant liberal discourse.

In this pamphlet there are explicit references to the liberals as “La familia enferma,” thus making “Preces y letanía” a participant in the rearticulation of liberalism as illness. Immediately following Juárez’s petition to Buchanan, the reader is presented with an exhaustive list of sinning liberals, a litany of liberal sins, with their respective crimes indicated by the parts to be repeated by the parishioners: “Antonio Carbajal, principal ganzúa de la familia enferma, personificación del mal:--Todos responden/ Roba por nosotros.” (Preces 1). The list of sins is personalized for each liberal member and spans the arts, “Guillermo Prieto, poeta romántico, bufón de la familia enferma: versifica por nosotros,” medicine, “Todos los Rafaeles que son medicina de la familia enferma: recetad purgas lavativas y cáusticos para nosotros,” and politics, “Benito Palermo Juárez, padraastro de la república mexicana, miembro principal de la familia enferma,

personificación de la constitución cuerno, indio ladino de Ixtlan: sirve de espantajo etc.” (Preces 1, 2, 1). Although each of these examples is steeped in parody, the repetition of “de la familia enferma” reminds the reader of the underlying liberal practices that are the target of the conservative harangue: the national poet Prieto, whose romantic verse and *costumbrismo* that aimed to elevate Mexico to the realm of national literatures and to dignify Mexican customs through artistic representation is reduced to a buffoon whose verse only entertains; medicine, a manifestation of progress, is depicted as little more than an easier way to defecate in the hands of a liberal; Juárez is described through a series of traits that are defined by a metonymic inauthenticity, where the proximity to a genuine source of power and legitimacy only emphasizes that source’s absence: not “padre” but “padrastro,” not the constitution, but the personification of an unfaithful constitution, not the most important member of the liberal family, but a sick family. The insistence of Juárez as an “indio” is another attempt to both recognize his power, the president of the republic, and at the same time undermine that power: an Indian president. To present an analysis of all the members of the sick liberal family would be to belabor these points. Just the same, the extensive litany of liberal sinners serves to confirm the discursive strategy of the conservatives to conjure the sick liberal family and to exhibit the origins of their illness.

At the end of “Preces y letanía” there are two fragments titled “Petición” and “Decreto” that permit us to understand the full scope of the conservative plan with the pamphlet. Under “Petición” is the explanation for the rigorous role call that names major and minor figures in the movement and their negative characteristics: “Te rogamos ¡oh espíritu infernal! Que, si permanecemos obstinados en nuestros errores, nos proporciones toda la lumbre necesaria á de que con ella nos calentemos sin consumirnos por toda la eternidad” (Preces 2). Obstinance is a powerful word here as it highlights the liberal dogmatism that marked the period. While the

differences between liberals and conservatives are indisputable, there also existed the sensation that the problem was not just liberalism, but the refusal to acknowledge any other viable political paths. The “Decreto” section offers an important message regarding the politics of print culture in the nineteenth century: “Para que las anteriores preces y letanía lleguen á manos de todos los deudos de la familia enferma, damos amplias facultades á todos los impresores para que hagan las ediciones que gusten con lo cual harán un positivo servicio á la demonocracia” (Preces 2). The printers’ permission to reprint the pamphlet as many times as necessary fulfills a didactic function by calling to saturate the public sphere with the names of the liberal sinners, the sick family whose remedy is implicit in “Preces y letanía.” In this way, the pamphlet summons the sick liberals, naming them rigorously, one by one, thus returning the displaced members of the opposing ideology to the public forum. The expediency of the pamphlet genre, and the explicit petition to reprint “Preces,” will also fill the void left by the fleeing liberals.

In naming the exiled liberals with the metaphor “La familia enferma,” the conservative writers locate the roaming exiled liberals and present a prescription for their recovery. The use of a traditional Catholic genre to demonstrate the ills of liberalism demonstrates both distance and proximity. The conservative pamphleteers bring the liberals close, within their catholic writing tradition, but only to demonstrate how the liberals have strayed from that tradition. Far from advocating their continued absence, they summon the liberals and indicate the path for their return to the family, not the sick family but the conservative one.

Curing the Liberal Illness

Victoriano Agüeros's prologue to Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho's *La familia enferma*⁴⁰ (1860) is the introduction to the work of a vanquished conservative. Aguilar y Marocho, Agüeros explains, was one of the most illustrious victims of the civil conflicts that plagued Mexico during the second half of the nineteenth century (VIII). Born in Morelia, Michoacán in 1813, Aguilar y Marocho was elected to the *Congreso de la Unión* in 1846 and consequently moved to Mexico City. He complemented his political life with work as editor of *El Universal*, collaborating with other well know conservatives such as Lucas Alamán and José María Roa Bárcena (Agüeros XI). He also participated in the last administration of General Santa Anna and was a member of the delegation sent to France to personally request intervention from Napoleon III. In light of his memorable political career in the Conservative party, after the fall of the Maximilian's Empire he returned to his literary duties as editor of *La Voz de México* and *La Sociedad Católica*, was known as the "escritor satírico más hábil que tenemos" and his literary talent was recognized by the Liberal party, evident in the invitation to contribute to the *Código de Marina* (Agüeros XVII). But in spite of his long list of achievements, Aguilar y Marocho has been, like many other conservatives, cast into silence and obscurity.

Aguilar y Marocho both celebrated the colonial period as a time of improvement and supported a return to monarchy. Agüeros explains that Aguilar y Marocho considered Spain "la amada madre" (XV) and quotes him at length to demonstrate his allegiance and admiration:

Ahora si paseamos nuestras miradas por la ancha superficie de nuestro suelo; si

recorremos los caminos; si bajamos a la profundidad de nuestras minas; si observamos el

⁴⁰ In this section I will reference two different versions of Aguilar y Marocho's *La familia enferma*. The first was published in 1860 by the Imprenta de la crónica federal. The second version appeared in 1969 as a reedition and was published by Editorial Jus. The reedited version contains not only a foreword by Agüeros and a second section of works that were never published, but also important omissions from the original. I will address the differences between the two editions, the importance of the moment of publication, and publishing house later in the chapter.

aspecto de nuestros poblados; por todas partes veremos impreso el sello de una autoridad que se desvelaba por mejorar en todos sentidos la condición de las colonias. (Aguilar y Marocho qtd in Agüeros XVI)

Aside from what may be an overly optimistic account of the effects of colonialism, what we see in Aguilar y Marocho's words is an attempt at inclusion. His voice asserts itself within a "we" that travels across national soil, delves beneath it, and gazes over the inhabitants of the Mexican community. While the reference to the first person plural "we" creates a proximity and an association between the speaker and other unnamed members of the community, it is nevertheless subordinated to the qualifier "if" (si): "si paseamos," "si recorremos," "si bajamos." The unifying action is thus suspended in possibility and therefore both confirms and negates the existence of a community willing to appreciate the Hispanic tradition in Mexico.

By quoting Aguilar y Marocho's explicit desire to write a community into existence Agüeros also reveals the former's project of recuperating the excluded contributions by those defeated by the Liberal party. That is, Aguilar y Marocho's call for community is also an attempt to grant a voice to an aspect of nineteenth-century political culture that was relegated to obscurity after the execution of Maximilian in 1867. As Agüeros explains, by allowing the victors to write history, important ideas and knowledge are lost. Agüeros explains that for the vanquished only "el injusto aislamiento," the "estigma de maldición," and "la indiferencia" await (VII).

In "Espejimos, decepciones, encarguitos y negocios no poco turbios: el mundo de un conservador durante el segundo imperio. La correspondencia de Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho," Erika Pani paints a different picture of Aguilar y Marocho. Although equally adamant in recuperating the work of this important member of the Conservative party, instead of juxtaposing

liberals and conservatives Pani frames her analysis within the debate that erupted among conservatives regarding the politics of Maximilian. While Agüeros emphasized what we could call the forgotten heroism of Aguilar y Marocho, Pani's intention is to problematize the image we have of Aguilar y Marocho as a steadfast catholic conservative during the French Intervention. Pani reiterates Aguilar y Marocho's support for foreign intervention and a return to monarchy, but she also underlines his, "fe arrebatada e ingenua en el rubio archiduque" ("Espejismos" 250). It is important to remember that once Maximilian gained power in Mexico he took measures that contradicted the conservative agenda. Among those measures Pani mentions the naming of moderate liberals to positions of power, Maximilian's confrontation with the Pope's representative in Mexico, and the ratification of the Reform Laws associated with the 1857 Constitution ("Espejismos" 250). Maximilian's "liberal" politics "desbaratarían las ensoñaciones conservadoras" ("Espejismos" Pani 250). In this way, Pani traces the conservative disillusionment through the disappointment found in a series of letters between Aguilar y Marocho and other conservatives.

Pani reminds us that while Maximilian held power in Mexico, Aguilar y Marocho was in Europe. This distance from the Mexican political reality amplifies the actions of Aguilar y Marocho and calls into question his failure to follow in the footsteps of his conservative colleagues in abandoning the liberal monarch. Pani suggests that gifts he sent from Europe were "una disculpa tácita por su continua adhesión al gobierno que había, aparentemente, traicionado sus ideales," and proposes that "el suyo se hubiera convertido en un conservadurismo laico menos comprometido con la defensa de los privilegios eclesiásticos" ("Espejismos" 252). Furthermore, his political principles could have lost importance in favor of the economic advantages that his continued support to Maximilian provided for his family (Pani, "Espejismos"

252). Pani's version serves to complement Agüeros's more monolithic account of Aguilar y Marocho and to further complicate the political and cultural environment during nineteenth-century Mexico.

In spite of the discrepancies in his political agenda, what Aguilar y Marocho's calendar proves is the persistent recourse to the metaphor of the sick family in reference to the liberals. In the "Consejo a la familia enferma" section of the 1860 edition of *La familia enferma* we find the following suggestions presented lyrically:

Si pueden mis acentos,
noble familia,
Llegar á las regiones
en donde habitas,
oye el consejo
Que te dá un buen patricio
que no está *enfermo* [sic] (74)

The authority of the poetic voice is founded on two structures: location and health. First, the distance between the listener and the speaker is established through the uncertainty of the power of the poetic voice to arrive at the distant regions where the listener resides. Therefore, the need for guidance is not based solely on ignorance, but also on having moved too far away from the voice of authority. Second, the source of counsel is also the source of physical well-being. It is important that the recommendations the poetic voice makes come from a healthy body, one that "no está enfermo." Consequently, it is the combination of place and health that grants the poetic voice its authority. But where exactly does the voice originate? In the final stanza we find an indication:

¿Y para qué ir á *estrangis*,

Si acá tenemos

Remedios saludables,

Aunque caseros? (Aguilar y Marocho, 1860, 75)

The poetic voice reveals that the necessary remedies for the sick he addresses are to be found at home, and to look abroad would be futile. These homemade cures are hinted at in an earlier stanza where the poetic voice speaks of Mexican “Hipócrates insignes”⁴¹ who are skilled in removing “miembros del cuerpo corrompido” (Aguilar y Marocho, 1860, 74). In the removal of the malignant parts of the body of Mexico we find another clue on the topic of distance and location. While remedies are at home and foreign aid, if not leading to a cure, will only exacerbate the malady, the metaphorical cutting off of bad parts insinuates exile and displacement. That is, according to the poetic voice, the path to health resides in looking within for advice, and, in that way, avoiding the symbolic removal that creates the distance that separates authority from the uniformed, or the well from the infirm.

This advice is confusing given that the conservatives as well as the liberals looked abroad for support during the turbulent mid-nineteenth century. As mentioned above, Aguilar y Marocho spent the duration of the French Intervention in Europe where, paradoxically, he sought relief from a nagging illness (Agüeros XIII). However, the narrative of calling the errant liberals home, as we have seen, establishes a common rhetorical strategy among conservative writers. The structure of the calendar is part of this strategy as it includes a summary of recent historical events, satirical poetry, and short prose pieces, all aimed at parodying the liberals. In this way, the liberals take center stage and liberal history is debated, crystallizing in printed form the

⁴¹ Hippocrates (460 BC-370 BC) is known for revolutionizing medicine in ancient Greece. This reference historicizes the relationship between illness and remedy developed in the calendar.

conservative version of debated historical events. In this representation of history, we find what Salvador Cárdenas Gutiérrez calls “una glosa de los acontecimientos en pugna por el imaginario colectivo a partir de la construcción o reconstrucción de su memoria histórica” (538-39).

An important aspect of this strategy is found in the closing pages of the original edition of *La familia enferma* from 1860. In the appropriated voice of Cervantes’s Cide-Hamete Benengeli, Aguilar y Marocho provides his reader with the traditional warning, or “advertencia,” about the possible errors in the work. In the “Advertencia importante” the author makes an explicit reference to the disbanded liberals as *La familia enferma* and he explains his (failed) attempt in the calendar to re-write history. It is precisely in his failure that the conservative voice appears, presenting an alternative history through the explicit negation of “liberal facts.” Given the importance of the quote it is worth citing at length:

Aunque he cuidado escrupulosamente de consultar para la formación de estos apuntes, cuantos papeles han sido necesarios, me veo obligado á confesar que muchos hechos gloriosos de los *defensores del Cuerno de la abundancia*, se han escapado á mis investigaciones . . . Siento no poder presentar completo el cuadro de maldades, infamias y atrocidades cometidas por la gran familia liberal de la que tan dignamente es cabeza, guía y maestra la *gran familia enferma*, que como prueba de su virtud y glorias acaba de despedir el célebre decreto de robo por mayor, absoluto y completo de los bienes de la Iglesia. (Aguilar y Marocho, 1860, 73)

The history lesson is an excellent example of Cárdenas Gutiérrez’s “acontecimientos en pugna,” the space in the calendar allotted to the debate and ordering of historical events. Nevertheless, the sardonically incomplete history, “me veo obligado á confesar que muchos hechos gloriosos de los *defensores del Cuerno de la abundancia*, se han escapado á mis

investigaciones,” presents the narrator with an opportunity to insert a critique of liberalism. In apologizing for the historical incompleteness of the study, the narrator uses yet another rhetorical strategy aimed at highlighting what is missing, glorious liberal events, in order to fill that absence with liberal transgressions, “robo por mayor, absoluto y completo de los bienes de la Iglesia.”

In the second half of the “Advertencia” the narrator takes this strategy a step further by appropriating liberal history: he declares himself “Cronista de la familia enferma,” the official liberal historian who presents the reading public with the acceptable version of contested historical events:

Como la *Familia enferma*, á pesar de contar con las plumas bien cortadas de *Tata Dios*, ó sea Ocampo; de *Pantometra de sacristía*, ó sea Degollado; de *Pillo Madera*, ó sea Lerdo, y otros así así, no tiene escritas sus grandes proezas y carece de sus importantísimos *anales*: yo, aunque indigno de ser elevado al rango de *Cronista* de tal y tan distinguida familia, presento á su capacidad escelentísima [sic], este pequeño ensayo, para que, aceptándolo como una muestra del paño que corto, se digne estenderme [sic] el diploma, despacho, ó nombramiento de *Cronista de la familia enferma*. (Aguilar y Marocho, 1860, 73)⁴²

While it is impossible to know the exact readership of the calendar, the narrator makes an appeal to his reader to grant him the title that his writing cannot: that of the chronicler of “La familia enferma.” Humility becomes a weapon to undermine the prominence of the liberal writers, those of the “plumas bien cortadas,” but also to locate liberal history in an inferior plane. Although the narrator is unworthy of writing the history of a dignified family, he aspires to write

⁴² Ocampo refers to Melchor Ocampo (1814-61), Degollado to Santos Degollado (1811-61), and Lerdo to one of the Lerdo de Tejada brothers, Miguel (1812-61) or Sebastián (1823-89).

the story of “La familia enferma.” Once again, the conservative acknowledgment of the prestigious liberals functions to emphasize a negative trait, here their incapacity to write their own history. Consistent with our analysis of other documents that related to *La familia enferma*, the liberals are again summoned in order to underline their flaws. It is in the absence of the displaced liberals that the conservative rhetorical strategies take hold and uproot the liberal pens that participate in the monopolization of writing in nineteenth-century Mexico.

Conclusion: The Persistent Metaphor of La familia enferma in the Twentieth Century

One of the more biting attacks on Juárez that incorporates “the sick family” is found in Salvador Abascal’s *Juárez Marxista 1848-1872* published in 1984. Abascal was a prominent member of the sinarquista movement in the 1940’s and the promoter of the creation of a utopian agricultural society in Baja California.⁴³ Abascal goes to great lengths to vilify and defame the liberals who participated in the Reform War. His attacks range from a phrenological indictment of important liberal ideologue Melchor Ocampo that categorizes him as a debauched and incestuous person based on the shape of his head, to the accusation that Juárez attempted to invoke “yanqui” intervention with the promise of land (Abascal 21-22, 10). Nevertheless, his intention, as the title indicates, is to lay bare the Marxist underpinnings of the politics of national icon Benito Juárez. What is important for our purposes is the rhetoric that Abascal uses to carry out his attack. Abascal not only uses the metaphor of “the sick family” to portray Juárez as a

⁴³ For more on Abascal see John W. Sherman, *The Mexican right: the end of revolutionary reform, 1929-1940*, p. 122. Regarding the sinarquista movement, Guillermo de la Peña explains it as follows: “Founded in 1937 by middle-class Catholic lawyers with populist leanings, the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (UNS), thus named because it purported to represent the opposite of anarchy . . . Like the *cristeros*, the Sinarquistas opposed the anti-Church, anti-religious legislation brought about by the Revolution; but their platform also included a fierce critique of government corruption—manifest in the sudden, scandalous enrichment of most politicians—and the failure of the *ejido* as a solution to rural poverty” (410).

roaming promoter of harmful ideas, but he also dedicates an entire section to the study of the mobile administration.

In the opening pages, Abascal creates a figurative relationship between the Conservative party and the notion of a “family” that is threatened by liberal reform. Referring to the radical, *liberal puro*, he says, “A la vez implanta *el matrimonio civil* revolucionario, que destruye la “*Iglesia doméstica*”, o sea, la familia cristiana, pues trae consigo, en su entraña, como un cáncer, el corruptor divorcio” (Abascal 13). The corporal union of family and church is in danger of falling ill due to the diseased ideas proposed by the liberals. As the threat grows, Abascal makes increasing use of satirical metaphors of travel and circulation. Not content with denigrating Juárez for his unstable government on wheels, Abascal also includes a critique of Juárez’s masculinity in regards to travel options:

Lo único desagradable es que Juárez tiene que montar a caballo sin saber sentarse en la teja de la silla. Además de comprender que hace una figura desairada y lastimosa, con cada caminata queda más que molido y sin poder andar luego ni a pie. Pero, cuando menos al principio, no hay otro medio de moverse hacia el centro, hacia Cuernavaca, con las Logias, se desquitará haciéndolo siempre en coche con las cortinillas corridas. Y a la pregunta de la gente sobre quiénes van allí, los acompañantes de a caballo contestarán que *una familia enferma*. (227)

Any doubt regarding Abascal’s connection with Aguilar y Marocho are dispelled when Abascal cites Aguilar y Marocho’s calendar: “Los *más* de los siguientes ejemplos los tomo de *La Familia Enferma* de Aguilar y Marocho” (Abascal 237).

The return in the twentieth-century to the nineteenth-century archive was not limited to radical conservatives like Abascal. Examples of the metaphor “La familia enferma” also appear

in works by Alfonso Reyes (1889-1959), and in *Revista positivista*, a publication associated with Porfirian positivism in the early twentieth century.⁴⁴ Recalling Guillermo Prieto's observation that the metaphor resonated in the nineteenth-century press, "retumbante," we find that the metaphor also resonated in the twentieth century. Once identified, the persistence of the metaphor, I suggest, marks the residual presence of the discarded conservative voice of the nineteenth century, and of the forgotten common ground on which the two—heterogeneous—combatant groups often found themselves. As we saw in the commemoration of Cinco de Mayo in *El estanquillo* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, hidden within these celebrations of liberalism that smooth over dissident voices and cancel-out fissures and disparities, there are ephemeral manifestations of forgotten victories. These forgotten victories, in turn, reveal a forgotten rhetoric that can help us understand overlooked challenges to the nineteenth-century nation building process and to reevaluate the liberal victors.

⁴⁴ See Alfonso Reyes, "Intervención Napoleónica en México y sus antecedentes" in *Obras completas de Alfonso Reyes*, vol. V., pgs. 278-79, and "Ecos de la intervención francesa" in *Obras completas de Alfonso Reyes*, vol. IX, pg. 128. See also "Juarez" in *Revista Positiva*, 1 de agosto de 1901, by Porfirio Parra.

CHAPTER 4

ITINERARIES OF FRIENDSHIP

In this chapter, I analyze the representation of masculine friendship in the Mexican cultural press, culminating in a close reading of travel letters written by Manuel Payno (1810-1894) and Ignacio Ramírez (1818-79), published in *El Museo Mexicano* and *El Semanario Ilustrado* – journals whose editors, contributors, and subscribers were among the most prominent writers of the period. These journals sought explicitly to collect images, natural science, poetry, and essays to create the semblance of a progressive Mexico. As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, Mexican *letrados* were explicitly involved in documenting what they considered the principal components of a modern nation. Likewise, the *letrados* belonged to a select group that enjoyed the privilege—or punishment—of traveling, both at home and abroad. If nation-building through textual and visual representation was a predominantly masculine endeavor in the nineteenth century, we must consider how gender was constructed through the relation between travel, writing, and nation-building. As Ignacio Sánchez Prado and Ana Peluffo explain in the introduction to the edited collection titled *Entre hombres: Masculinidades del siglo XIX en América Latina*, “[e]n el caso del período nacional, el poder del sujeto masculino republicano residía en la habilidad que éste tenía de circular libremente entre la esfera pública y la privada” (Sánchez Prado 9). The topic of this chapter is precisely this masculine power to circulate, both as a traveler and as writer, and how masculinity was projected in travelers’ texts. The inclusivity inherent in the idea of nationhood is threatened by the exclusivity of masculine friendship. But more importantly, the homosocial association of the traveling nation-builders to the Mexican nation threatens to disarticulate the imagined community they seek to create.

Critics tend to view the travel accounts that appear in journals such as *El Museo* or *El Semanario* as examples of *costumbrismo*, a genre which paints the Mexican landscape and common figures for the reader, elevating local flora and customs to a space worthy of representation. I, nonetheless, isolate a specific example of travel writing—correspondence between friends that I am calling “travel letters”—to ask a series of questions about the viability of the nation-building project advocated by the journals in which they appeared: What is the relationship between friendship and masculinity in the nineteenth century? What are the values associated with friendship and are they consistent with the creation of a national community? Is the nation-building gesture really just a pose performed for friends? To answer these questions I have chosen “travel letters” as my object of analysis for three reasons. First, this genre of writing is often overlooked in favor of the content of the letters. Instead of being read as examples of the epistolary tradition, these letters are often subsumed within the category of “la crónica” that exhibits *costumbrismo* thus eliminating the intimacy and self-reflection that defines them. Second, although these writers participate in the tradition of explorer, adventurer, and nation-builder, these travel letters can also be read as examples of a homosocial relationship that undermines those categories. In other words, these texts are not just attempts at writing the nation, but also of an intimate correspondence that consolidates an exclusionary friendship. Third, by approaching the “travel letters” of two prominent Mexican *letrados* written and published in the 1840’s and 1860’s, I trace the evolution of the masculine dependency on friendship in Manuel Payno’s letters to the crisis of masculinity in Ramírez’s letters during a fundamental stage of nation-building. I consider friendship as it appears in these letters to be a discursive strategy consistent with the overarching argument of this dissertation: that in travel writing and the representation of travelers we find an emphasis on the impossibility of a national

community. Instead of texts written by masculine travelers and nation-builders, I read these “travel letters” as examples of a homosocial relationship whose exclusivity undermines their role as nation-builder, while also threatening the masculinity of the intrepid traveler.

Manuel Payno was a prominent nineteenth-century figure in Mexican politics, economics, and literature. Working alongside Prieto in the Treasury Department, he was stationed in Northern Mexico in 1839 and witnessed the nation’s financial problems first-hand. In the 1840’s he spent time in the United States studying the penitentiary system and fought in the Mexican-American War. In contrast to his close friend Prieto, Payno was a moderate liberal who defended the slow implementation of the Constitution of 1857 and believed in the possibility of a pacific resolution with the conservatives. Payno’s moderate approach to reform won him no friends among the radical liberals and after the liberal victory in 1861, Payno was imprisoned for his collaboration in the coup d’état under President Ignacio Comonfort that sought to replace the Constitution of 1857 with the Plan de Tacubaya. Upon being released from prison in 1863 Payno served the Empire under Maximilian. Manuel Payno’s main literary contribution came in the form of three extensive novels, *El pistol del diablo* (1845-1846), *El hombre de la situación* (1861), and *Los bandidos de Río Frío* (1889-1891), the last arguably the most celebrated and reread. Set in the Mexico of Santa Anna, *Los bandidos de Río Frío* is considered to be an accurate portrayal of the atmosphere of anarchy in which it became difficult to distinguish between bandits and representatives of the law. Payno was also an active contributor to Mexican journalism acting as editor of *El Eco del Comercio*, *El Siglo XIX* and *El Federalista*.

Ramírez studied law in the city of Querétaro and received his degree from the Colegio de San Gregorio. Ramírez was a radical liberal who promoted social reform and is an important

part of the history of Mexican dissidence. A strong proponent of breaking with colonial institutions, mainly the Catholic Church, Ramírez is famous for proclaiming himself an atheist before his peers in the Academia de Letrán. As an example of the difficulty of speaking of a unified liberal movement in Mexico, Ramírez is also remembered for suggesting that Payno be executed for his participation in the 1857 coup. Like many other important liberal figures of the nineteenth century, Ramírez combined politics and literary activities. He founded the newspaper *Don Simplicio* with Guillermo Prieto in 1845 and collaborated on *El Siglo XIX* and *El Correo de México*, directed by his student Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. Ramírez was also the Minister of Justice under Benito Juárez. The extreme contrasts in these two prominent liberal figures, and the differences in the historical moments in which they wrote, makes a comparative study of their travel letters especially attractive.

Masculinity in the Public Forum

In *The Central Republic in Mexico, 1835-1845: Hombres de bien in the Age of Santa Anna*, Michael Costeloe emphasizes the importance of viewing Mexican history as continuity instead of as a series of ruptures. During the decades following independence, writers and politicians worked to come to terms with their new national identities. In spite of the break with the metropolis and the symbolic removal of the Spanish colonial yoke, many colonial institutions remained although their members worked in different capacities. In other words, the rupture with Spain did not produce definitive systemic changes indicative of attempts to promote equality or popular political participation. Instead, creole leaders inherited the remnants of colonial political and bureaucratic structures. As Costeloe explains, the “traditional periodization of history into colonial-independence-modern is no longer considered convenient

or apt” and that while “the separation from Spain was undeniably a traumatic and disruptive event, it could not and did not represent a sudden break in every respect with the past” (*Central Republic* 3).

In his study of the continuity between the colonial and independence era, Costeloe describes the men who sought to replace the colonial bureaucrats as Mexican politicians, the “hombres de bien.”⁴⁵ As Costeloe points out, one of the defining factors in Mexico during the first decades after independence was the tension between the political center and the somewhat autonomous regions of the periphery. Significant sections of the edges of the republic were in constant rebellion, were threatened by foreign invaders, or attempted to split with Mexico.⁴⁶ Costeloe summarizes the relationship between the political center and the peripheral states by emphasizing that they were, “largely autonomous, and while they paid lip service to the concept of national unity, they remained on the margin of national affairs, contributing little or nothing in taxation or military conscription, which were always the two main demands of central government” (*Central Republic* 10).

The Mexican travelers who crisscrossed the republic, venturing into the peripheral regions that challenged national cohesion, united these disparate spaces in their writing. Furthermore, with the advent of a national press and greater freedom to publish controversial political journalism, even in a country with high illiteracy rates, the appeal of political discussion

⁴⁵ To briefly summarize, Costeloe argues that in the aftermath of Independence a large number of men gravitated toward political positions eager to participate in change. As a result, a wave of neologisms emerged aimed at naming the numerous political factions that these newcomers participated in. Costeloe mentions just a few of the categories that supplemented the obvious titles of federalists, centralists, liberals and conservatives: “there were, to cite only a sample, *yorkinos*, *escoceses*, *imparciales*, *bustamantistas*, *santanistas*, *aristócratas*, *anarquistas*, *demagogos*, *sanculottes*, *puros*, *ultras* and *innovadores*” (*Central Republic* 14).

⁴⁶ Obvious examples of this tension were the Yucatán’s withdrawal from the Mexican republic and the loss of the northern territories to the United States after the Mexican-American War (1846-48). Both of these events are represented in this dissertation in the chapters on Justo Sierra O’Reilly, the Yucatec writer and statesman, and Prieto, whose satirical account of General Santa Anna’s participation in the Mexican-America War resulted in his exile to the state of Querétaro.

was great among the literate minority (Costeloe, *Central Republic* 13). It is my contention that although the nation-building *hombres de bien* who appeared in the public forum as travelers incorporated in their writing the outlying, and at time rebellious, regions of Mexico, they also made visible or dramatized a crisis not only in the process of nation formation, but a crisis of masculinity.

Masculinity in nineteenth-century Mexico was more than a gendered way of being, it was a duty. In *The Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere*, Pablo Piccato analyzes the anxiety associated with the masculine need to maintain an unpolluted image in the public forum. In other words, he seeks to “untangle the links between public esteem and conscience” (Piccato, *Tyranny* 2). Piccato’s study begins in the *República Restaurada* (1867-1876) and extends into the initial years of the *Porfiriato* (1876-1910) focusing on the transition in the representation of masculine duty between these two periods. It was during this phase, Piccato explains, that republican politicians molded their image as trustworthy men or, “*hombres de palabra*—men who kept their word and answered to the obligations of credit and authority” (*Tyranny* 2). Far from the military heroics on which honor had once been constructed, the masculine image was now founded on appearance and public opinion. Piccato opens his book with an anecdote that confirms the importance of his argument. After admitting to the unlawful seizure of funds, an act that destroyed his reputation, Santos Degollado (1811-61), a prominent liberal figure during the Reform War, asked to be released from custody to return to battle where he was swiftly killed. Piccato explains that Santos Degollado’s “sacrifice spared the country international troubles and Juárez the embarrassment of the trial of a fellow liberal” (*Tyranny* 2).

I situate my study of masculine friendship between the studies by Costeloe and Piccato by beginning in the 1840's, the period corresponding to Costeloe's *Central Republic*, and extending it to the 1860's, where Piccato's study begins. In this way, I capture the still unstable identity of the *hombre de bien* as he grapples with the growing importance of his public image in the press, but also the initial stages of anxiety produced by the combination of honor, duty, and public opinion.

Literary scholars have also used different modes of inquiry to analyze masculine relationships in the nineteenth century. In her article, "Drinking to Fraternity: Alcohol, Masculinity and National Identity in the Novels of Manuel Payno and Heriberto Frías," Deborah Toner argues that Payno and Frías use drinking and alcohol to create contrasting models of masculinity in the nineteenth-century Mexican novel. Toner claims that while Payno incorporates the opposition moderate/social drinker—heavy/unsociable drinker to underline the disparity found between the notions of heroism, criminality, and cowardliness, Frías used an alcoholic protagonist/narrator to, "challenge the validity of a nationalist ideology that called on Mexico's men to define themselves through fraternal cooperation in service to the nation" (400). In this way, Toner seeks to infuse everyday nineteenth-century masculine spaces and situations with an element of morality in direct relation to the nation and the notion of nationalism. Drinking amongst men is not far removed from drinking with friends, and the drinking partner could be considered as another manifestation of the friend, and the subsequent companionship another opportunity to analyze the uses of friendship.

Toner's work on masculine relationships is important since, as she states in her introduction, it is a response to Doris Sommer's groundbreaking book *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. As has been well documented, Sommer studies the

function of heterosexual love in the unification of communities in the Latin American novel. In Sommer's words, her concern is to "locate an erotics of politics, to show how a variety of novel national ideals are all ostensibly grounded in 'natural' heterosexual love and in the marriages that provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at midcentury" (6). The allegorical love stories that interest Sommer seem to suggest the possibility of challenging the lines that divide the national community based on race and class and thus to unite an idealized heterosexual couple and the community at large.⁴⁷

Toner was not the first to offer an alternative to Sommer's interpretation of heterosexual love in the novel. In *Mexican Masculinities*, Robert Mckee Irwin argues that the key to understanding the construction of Mexican identity since Independence is found in the symbolic relationships between men, not idealized heterosexual romance. Irwin claims that, "Mexico is protagonized by young men, and national unity is allegorized by male homosocial bonding" (xiii). Equally important to Irwin's project is the second manner in which he separates himself from Sommer. Instead of focusing his study on canonical works within a recognized literary genre, Irwin suggests a study that combines both canonical and marginalized works. He explains, "The idea is not to attain an impossible goal of achieving complete and accurate representation, but to present a variety of alternatives to the hegemonic visions of Mexican masculinity of Mexico's *letrados*" (xv). Irwin, then, combines an approach based on masculinity that distances itself from what had become the most authoritative account of Latin American nation building, that of Sommer, with the incorporation of canonical and non-canonical texts. In

⁴⁷ Other scholars, while recognizing the worth of Sommer's study, have focused on violence or lawlessness as foundational elements in Latin America instead of romance. Examples are Juan Pablo Dabove's *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America 1816-1929* (2007) and Nina Gerassi-Navarro's *Pirate Novels: Fictions of Nation Building in Spanish America* (1999).

the same vein, in this chapter I focus on travel letters as non-canonical texts that present alternative versions of masculine nation-building.

The Function of Friendship

What unites the models of masculinity, honor, duty, and public opinion in the texts discussed above is their application to a reduced and intimate group of men. Friendship as a category of intimacy and interaction has been an object of inquiry since the earliest philosophers. In *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship* (1991), Michael Pakaluk gives three reasons why universal rules are difficult to apply to friends. First, friends regard each other not simply as one among many but rather as unique individuals to whom they are related in ways in which they are not related to humanity at large. Second, because of their familiarity and shared experiences, they have reasons for acting that seem unavailable to non-friends. And third, those reasons do not fit comfortably into a universal model (viii). Friendship, then, challenges the notion of universality and impartial laws that fail to take into consideration the unique relationships we share with some people. Pakaluk explains that the insular nature of friendship makes the consideration of the welfare of others tricky, observing that, “true friends seem to love each other for their own sake, and they seem to regard the good that they do for each other as valuable in its own right” (ix). Friendship, then, is at odds with equality and, therefore, is a more intimate and narrow category than the citizens of nations.

David Annis expands on the more narrow interpretation of friendship by analyzing its principal ingredients and characteristics. Among the elements he highlights are shared experience, concern for welfare, and imagining reality through the experiences of the other (349). Such an interpretation, nevertheless, establishes a hierarchy within friendship that favors

the closest friends over the others. That is, our concern and sympathy are limited to those with whom we have the most proximity, or, to use Annis's words, with whom we have a duty. Echoing Aristotle, Annis posits that bad acts in general are worse when committed against someone with whom we share the type of relationship based on sympathy and shared experience outlined above (352). To the contrary, benevolent acts, such as saving someone from danger, are good when carried out with strangers, but can be bad if we fail to carry them out with our friends. Annis concludes this line of reasoning by stating that, "it has been argued that there are special duties of friendship, and that the arguments against their existence are incorrect" (353). In this way, friendship not only challenges the universal and impartial approach to ethical behavior, but it is partial and hierarchical by definition.

James O. Grunebaum makes this friendly hierarchy the focus of his book-length study titled *Friendship: Liberty, Equality, and Utility* (2003). Grunebaum asks if the preference for friends over non-friends is morally justifiable, and answers that, "Not only should friends do more good for each other, but stronger moral prohibitions often exist against harming friends than harming nonfriends. The friendship relation is partial, specific, and particular" (1). Thus within the declaration, "you are my friend," we find the implicit negation of all those who fall outside the category of friend. In other words, by saying "you are my friend," we are also saying "everyone else is not my friend." Grunebaum's study aims more to present his reader with the many approaches to ethics and friendship that have been exercised in philosophy than to answer the question of if preferring friends to non-friends can be justified morally.

In a different approach to friendship, Giorgio Agamben begins his essay "The Friend" by suggesting that friendship, instead of a privileged space in which to explore a problem with another, is in fact an obstacle to such exploration. In a personal anecdote Agamben recounts

how he and a friend once agreed to swap letters in order to discuss their friendship. When after the first exchange the experiment abruptly ended, Agamben explains that it became clear that, “our friendship—which we assumed would open us a privileged point of access to the problem—was instead an obstacle, and that it was, in some measure, at least temporarily, obscured” (26). Agamben uses this episode to open an inquiry into the meaning of “friend” and to suggest that its semantic ambiguity could be the cause of extensive treatment by philosophers. The unrest provoked by friendship is found, Agamben argues, in its nonpredicative qualities. Agamben explains that “friend” is similar to “I love you” in that it is an utterance whose meaning corresponds only to the expression, not to a class or category that includes it (29). He explains, “‘White,’ ‘hard,’ or ‘hot’ are certainly predicative terms; but is it possible to say that ‘friend’ defines a consistent class in the above sense?” (Agamben 29). To further elucidate the complexity he associates with friendship, Agamben equates the friend to another non-predicative term, the insult, which he feels will better contextualize its semantic function. The insult, like “friend,” is an utterance that operates not by inclusion, but by exclusion. Agamben explains that the insult offends by placing the offended within a category that it would be impossible for her/him to occupy, “because it does *not* function as a constative utterance, but rather as a proper noun; because it uses language in order to give a name in such a way that the named cannot accept his name, and against which he cannot defend himself” (29). The examples Agamben offers are calling someone excrement or the female or male sex organs. In other words, “What is offensive in the insult is . . . the pure experience of language and not a reference to the world” (Agamben 29-30).

If in this way the friend is a category grounded in language and distanced from reality, what is it that unites friends? Agamben claims that it is a purely existential experience to which

the friends are subordinated: “Friends do not share *something* (birth, law, place, taste): they are shared by the experience of friendship” (36). Agamben takes his analysis a step further by arguing that to claim to be friends with someone is to speak figuratively by expressing the underlying and organizing experience through another sensorial event. This approach to friendship, he claims, reveals its political nature, its “sharing without an object” that, in turn, constitutes an “originary political ‘synaesthesia’” that has come to prop up the fate of democracy today (Agamben 36, 37). Agamben concludes by observing that the principal tenants of liberal democracy, liberty and equality, for example, are constructed around the same sharing of existence, what Agamben calls the “con-sentiment,” that underpins friendship and the “joint-sensation” to which the fate of democracies is assigned to (34).

The Letter

The letter was a common literary device used by the participants in the political forum to communicate. While seemingly defined as intimate correspondence, the letters exchanged between public figures in the nineteenth century nevertheless often found their way into the national press and ostensibly influenced the opinions of its readers. Furthermore, a remarkable number of these letters can be considered travel narratives as they narrate travel, both foreign and domestic, and express differences and similarities between “home” and “away.” Taking into consideration the differences between the political center of Mexico City and the surrounding-autonomous-peripheral regions, travel away from the political center was a journey into a Mexico where the efforts of the new Mexican politicians fell on deaf ears, or were interpreted according to local interests. In this way, the letters exchanged between *letrados* present us with the opportunity to discern how the incipient political culture of Mexico City clashed with the

periphery, or was rearticulated as a result of the encounter between the political center and the outlying provincial regions.

Speaking specifically of friendship in Mexican Studies, Víctor Manuel Macías-González explores masculine friendship within an epistolary homoerotic framework. In his article titled “Masculine Friendships, Sentiment, and Homoerotics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: The Correspondence of José María Calderón y Tapia, 1820s-1850s,” Macías-González focuses on correspondence between men in order to “push the boundaries of these documents to analyze their rhetorical strategies in order to shed light on the affective possibilities—particularly the homoerotic—within mid-nineteenth-century Mexicans’ practices of friendship” (421). Macías-González refers to a “genealogy of affective, intimate relationships” that he finds especially linked to nostalgia, a moment of pronounced bonding and intense emotional interaction (421).

Macías-González, citing Rebecca Earle, speaks of personal correspondence as reflective of intimacy without mediation, void of the stumbling blocks that State or legal discourse imposes and that we find in traditional archival documents such as petitions. In Earle’s article “Letters and Love in Colonial Spanish America,” she argues for the use of letters as sources that can be used to historicize love. Seeking to discover if love is a modern invention, Earle traces the use of salutations and sentimental language in letters between married couples during the colonial period. Through the analysis of not only why letters were written, but also the anxiety produced by a letter’s failure to arrive, Earle convincingly concludes that letters provide: “concrete examples of how Spanish and creole men (and to a far lesser extent women) actually addressed their partners, at least in their written communication. They thus amplify our knowledge of domestic life in a way different from, and complimentary to, court records or clerical investigations” (“Letters and Love” 43). Earle warns that letters should not be viewed as

documents in which “artistic embellishment” or “self-construction” are absent and this is important when thinking about the intended readers of letters (“Letters and Love” 43). When separated from the institutions associated with the State or church the authorial intentions become purely personal and the letter a genre anchored in intimacy.⁴⁸

Macías-González goes on to present a fascinating and exhaustive study of the relationship between men through correspondence, but he does not analyze the discursive strategies the writers employ and of the symbolic function of friendship and letters. He opts to delve into the content of the letters in a historical framework, that is, friendship in relation to specific historical events and the synchronic continuities through friendship as it is passed on or handed down from man to man. In placing friendship at the center of analysis he emphasizes its importance, “[t]rue friends were thus a form of capital (social capital, to be precise), and, like economic wealth, friendship was to be closely guarded; *rara avis* as it was, amity required continuous cultivation, close monitoring, and incessant reification” (Macías-González 423). But he does not ask questions regarding the function of friendship in private correspondence that is made public, or the role of distance in the nostalgia he uses as an analytical tool.

Masculine Friendship in the Cultural Press⁴⁹

During the post-Independence years, Mexico saw the intensification of a cultural press that aimed to underline an independent identity compatible with the aspiring young republic.

These publications employed as foundational strategies written accounts and visual

⁴⁸ For studies on the relationship between genre and authority see Walter Mignolo’s “Cartas, crónicas y relaciones del descubrimiento a la conquista” in *Historia de la Literatura Hispanoamericana, Tomo 1*, and Beatriz Pastor, *Discursos narrativos de la conquista de América*.

⁴⁹ Erica Segre uses this term to describe the press dedicated to presenting a unified national culture. See her discussion of print culture in nineteenth-century Mexico in *Intersected Identities: Strategies of Visualization in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Mexico*, pgs. 5-58.

manifestations of an eclectic assortment—often referred to as “miscelánea” or “variedades”—of topics, testimonies, landscapes, and customs. The combination of the promotion of nationhood and newly minted technology used to produce visual arguments made these publications extremely important for the study of nineteenth-century culture. *El Museo Mexicano: o miscelánea pintoresca de amenidades curiosas e instructivas* (1843-45) was one such publication, and its editor, Ignacio Cumplido, was on the forefront of print culture and new visualizing strategies. Nevertheless, in spite of the innovative contents of the cultural press, the titles of journals such as *El Museo Mexicano* or *El Mosaico Mexicano* point to an eighteenth-century approach to organization. As Erica Segre observes, the titles of such publications were reminiscent of Enlightenment efforts to organize an “encyclopedic education for all” that incorporated the metaphor of the museum as “a place where the products of nature, science and the arts were preserved and exhibited” (7). In his introduction to the first volume of *El Museo Mexicano*, Cumplido adds to this list of objectives. Not only is the organization of the content, and by default of a proto-national culture, important, but the manner in which it is presented is fundamental to the success of the journal’s goals:

Las ventajas de esta clase de publicaciones periódicas, que en tan grande número circulan en las naciones civilizadas, poniendo al alcance de todo el mundo, en un estilo sencillo y agradable, las verdades mas importantes de las ciencias, los métodos mas útiles de las artes, las consideraciones mas interesantes de la historia, las producciones mas hermosas de la literatura, son hoy dia incuestionables. (Cumplido, “Introducción”)

Key to Cumplido’s project with *El Museo* is the heightened accessibility of the “truths” of the nation. In making such information “simple” (sencillo) and enjoyable (agradable), Cumplido seeks to not only foster the mutual recognition of members of the nation, the “imagined

community,” but also to project Mexico into modernity. Journals such as *El Museo* symbolize civilization while inaugurating it. In other words, a nation without such a publication would not be civilized, but the appearance of such a journal also educates its readers in ways to carry out the civilizing gesture. Hence, the circulation of *El Museo* places Mexico within the category of the civilized nation, while also curiously indicating to its readers how to become civilized.

The importance of *El Museo* is apparent in its innovative contents, its civilizing goal, and the attempt to propagate the conservation of Mexico’s monuments to modernity (discoveries, technological breakthroughs, the biography of great men) among “las últimas clases . . . las poblaciones mas atrasadas donde tan conveniente y aun indispensables son” (Cumplido, “Introducción”). However, the nationalizing nature of the message transmitted on the pages of *El Museo* should not be taken for granted. It is undeniable that the detailed descriptions of regional customs, architecture, botany, fauna etc. in text and illustrations, provided the reader with a reference point for what could make Mexico a nation.

Yet it is important to ask how these publications can also function to undermine the foundational gesture that is the collection and conservation of “lo nacional.” Surprisingly in light of the editor’s explicit goal of taking the national monuments to the farthest and most backward corners of the land, a recurrent theme in *El Museo* is friendship. This is surprising because, as discussed earlier in this chapter, friendship is fundamentally an exclusionary relationship. Therefore, the combination of the foundational monuments and discoveries of the nation placed next to the celebration of the privileged, and masculine, relationship of friends seems to contradict the nation-building spirit of the journal.

It is important to pause here to ask how masculine friendship was defined by the editors and contributors of the cultural press. The cultural critic interested in masculine friendship in

nineteenth-century Mexico can consult a variety of sources to study the topic. Essays, epic poems, and novels are all texts where one could ostensibly find an explanation of what friendship meant during the early years of the Mexican republic. Curiously, one of the most explicit explanations of masculine friendship is found in a journal dedicated to the instruction of women. The education of women—by men—was the topic of many nineteenth-century journals in Mexico including *El Semanario de las señoritas mejicanas. Educación científica, moral y literaria del bello sexo* (1840-1842) and *Panorama de las señoritas. Periódico pintoresco, científico y literario* (1842). One of the earliest publications that targeted a feminine readership was the *Calendario de las señoritas mexicanas* whose contents have been described as having, “secciones de poesía, cuento y novella, así como diversos artículos que brindaban ‘nociones generales’ de cosmografía, bordado, redacción epistolar, historia universal, cultivo de plantas, florería, o lavado de ropa” (Infante Vargas 186). Obvious in the titles of these journals and the description of content is a multifaceted approach to feminine education that included science, art, literature, writing and history. It was, however, in a journal with a more ambiguous title, *Presente amistoso: dedicado a las señoritas mexicanas* (1847, 1851-52), that an essay on feminine friendship appeared in 1851. “De la amistad entre las mugeres” offers an apologetic explanation for why the anonymous author considers feminine friendship to be more frivolous and insensitive than masculine friendship. The author refers to literature, history, and biology to assert that, though no fault of women, feminine friendship is more difficult to formulate and maintain than masculine friendship. While I will analyze the essay more closely later in this section, it helps us now to contextualize the topic at hand. Mexican men in the nineteenth century had the print friendship market cornered, and with friendship came topics as diverse as masculinity and honor, as well as the homosociality, and homosexuality.

Cumplido, also the editor of *Presente Amistoso*, explains his reasons for publishing the journal in his introduction to the first volume in 1847. Echoing what he had said in *El Museo Mexicano*, *Presente* was also aimed at introducing progress into Mexico, albeit especially in relation to visual culture: “Constante en el empeño de hacer progresar en México el arte tipográfico, de manera que llegue á la perfección que en otros países alcanzara, incesantemente he estado haciendo esfuerzos y adoptando mejoras, que han producido notables adelantos” (Cumplido, *Presente*). In dedicating the journal to Mexico’s women, “Lo dedico á las señoritas mexicanas,” Cumplido includes the feminine readership in both the visual vanguard of print culture, and the progressive gesture that would soon place Mexico among the worlds’ most progressive nations. Latent in Cumplido’s introductory comments is the assertion that women need their own journal organized specifically for them in order to begin the journey to progress. Nevertheless, the didactic attempts to instruct women on their role in the young republic made by the male contributors to the journal also reveal something about masculinity. In other words, by isolating the ingredients for feminine education in the contents of *Presente* and other journals of its kind, the male writers were also defining their own masculinity.

The article, “De la amistad entre las mugeres,” elevates the power and meaning of friendship while placing men in a privileged position to experience such meaning. The author explains what he considers women’s inability to maintain a meaningful friendship as the result of cultural and biological factors. He begins by claiming that there are no historical or literary examples of feminine friendship to guide the women of the nineteenth century. Masculine examples, in turn, abound: “Es verdad que ellas, en sus anales particulares no tienen nada que oponer á las amistades justamente célebres de Orestes y Pílates, de Teseo y Peritous, de Damon y Pitias, de Dureuil y Pecmeja” (“De la amistad” 396-97). These classic examples of masculine

friendship rely on the public act of sacrifice, of putting oneself in harm's way in order to save a friend. The author offers three principal hypotheses to explain the absence of a viable feminine friendship in literature and history. First, women may very well be generous and express their sentiments and woes, acts he associates with friendship, but they do so in private. Therefore, their amiable disposition is a mystery for most and impossible to represent in art: "¿No se entregan siempre las *mugeres* en secreto, y por decirlo así, misteriosamente, á sus mas inocentes afectos?" ("De la Amistad" 397). Second, he claims that women are naturally weaker than men and thus predisposed to seek strength and protection in the opposite sex instead of among themselves. In a similar fashion, when women marry they dedicate all their sentimentality to their husbands in such a way that no other emotional bonds are possible. Men, on the other hand, are able to navigate their emotions, highlighting some and suspending others: "No sucede lo mismo entre los hombres; el amor de estos no es tan exclusivo, y si suspende momentáneamente la actividad de los otros sentimientos, á lo menos no los disminuye, ni los absorbe" [sic] ("De la amistad" 398). The third and final hypothesis is also the most categorical and the most associated with the body: the maternal tenderness of the mother. The love for one's offspring, the author argues, is so overpowering that it weakens women's capacity to authentically care for another:

Una *muger* que ha llegado á ser madre, puede formar relaciones dulces y ligeras: dulces, á causa de su misma ligereza; pero parece muy difícil que contraiga una de aquellas amistades profundas, tiernas y apasionadas que se alimentan de sacrificios mútuos, hechos con delicia y aceptados sin esfuerzo. ("De la Amistad" 399)

In sum, a mother's life ceases to be her own since her time is to be allotted to her child and if she strays from that model she would be both irresponsible and greedy. Friendship for the author, in

other words, is a masculine activity, with accessible artistic and historical precedence, and designated for those with the sentimental wherewithal and spare time.

In spite of the problematic and narrow-minded nature of the author's approach to women's place in nineteenth-century society, what is poignantly clear in his shaky arguments is the importance of friendship and the manner in which it is founded on exclusion. For the author, it is not just important to intimate what we could consider a definition of friendship, but also to draw a line that separates those who belong and those who do not. Masculine friendship appears in *El Museo* in many guises. In the second volume we find a story titled "La amistad" that explores the political implications of friendship between Napoleon and one of his generals. When General Duroc is killed in battle, his close friend and diminutive warrior, Napoleon, is portrayed as overcome with sentiment:

El solemne espectáculo que Napoleon presenta en esta fúnebre noche, sentado delante de los fuegos del campamento, abismado en el dolor y en la desolación mas amarga, ó si se quiere, hundido en una estupidez estóica á que lo han reducido sus profundos sentimientos por la muerte de su amigo Duroc, es sin duda el triunfo mas glorioso de la amistad. (J. de U. 200)

Especially relevant to our study, in Napoleon's grief he orders the construction of a commemorative stone in honor of Duroc to be placed at the exact place where he passed in the arms of his friend. Unsatisfied, Napoleon then purchases the ground on which the stone was placed and deems it holy ground. This somewhat exaggerated example of friendly commemoration echoes the goals of the editors of *El Museo*. It is not difficult to imagine the Mexican equivalent of the commemorative stone as one of the national monuments that would appear minutely described, or in a detailed lithograph, on the pages of the journal.

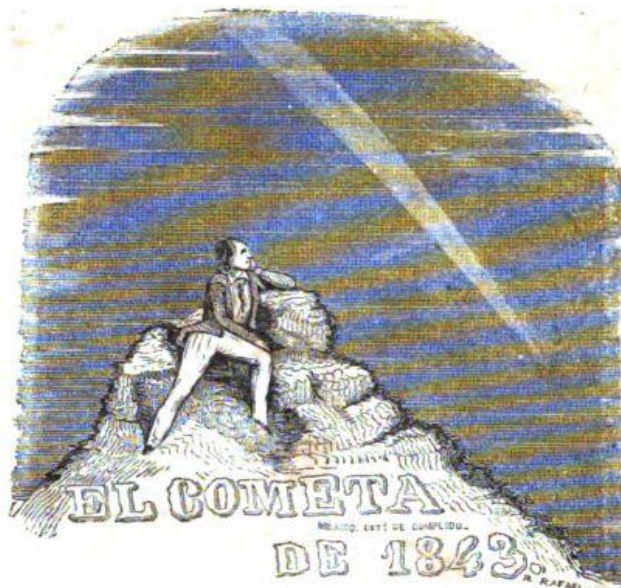
Considered in isolation, the story of Napoleon's monument to friendship would be unexceptional. Nevertheless, in the same volume we find multiple references to friendship. From poems dedicated to friends, such as Prieto's homage to a deceased friend "Oda. A mi amigo Ignacio Rodriguez Gavan"⁵⁰ (31), and "El cometa de 1843. A mi amigo Eulalio Maria Ortega" (68-69) a romantic explanation of a natural phenomenon. Another poetic approximation to the inspirational and romantic, power of nature, Juan N. Navarro's "El celage. A mi amigo Guillermo Prieto" (515-16) completes the examples of the masculine poet's need to make his debt to friendship public. However, the visibility of that debt is not limited to poetry. A very different account of nature, Agustin A. Franco's "Utilidad de los insectos. A mi amigo Fernando Orozco y Berra" contrasts with the romantic poems in its more scientific attempt to explain man's search for meaning in nature (406-07). In spite of the change in approach, Franco maintains the practice of framing his account of nature through the relationship of writing to friendship.

Navarro's "El celage" is a romantic musing over a cloud-filled sky that highlights the anxiety caused by the passing of time. The poem is marked by an emphatic poetic voice, the "yo" that characterizes Romanticism, that struggles with the sentimental realization that life progresses indefinitely toward its end, as do the clouds that drift toward the horizon and out of sight. The romantic poet uses nature as a conduit to meditation and is forced to confront his own mortality. Nevertheless, the apostrophe, the principal rhetorical figure the poetic voice uses when speaking directly to the clouds, acquires new meaning when read through the lens of the friendly dedication to Prieto. Through the title, the absent friend is summoned in the poetic lament over loss and degeneration thus making the distinction between the passing clouds that

⁵⁰ Surely an editing error, Galván appears as Gavan. Galván was a member of the important literary association La Academia de Letrán and a close friend of Prieto.

subsumed the poetic voice in meditation, and the friend who shares in the lament. Read in this way, the poem underlines a nostalgia that is born in the poetic voice and shared with the friend to which the poem is dedicated. In lines such as, “¡Qué memorias queridas/ Haces revivir en mi alma!” and “Mi corazón, el destino/ Con dardo punzante clava:/ Ya no te pido la dicha,/ Sino alivio á mi desgracia,” a relationship of dependence is established between the poetic voice’s desire to transport itself to a previous, happier time, the painful present from which it seeks relief, and the nature/friend that fuses the past and present, nostalgia and relief (Navarro 516-17).

It is noteworthy that Prieto’s very different representation of friendship in his poetry appears during the same year and in the same volume of *El Museo*. Prieto’s “El cometa de 1843. A mi amigo Eulalio Maria Ortega,” although published before Navarro’s “El celage,” would have been read by the same subscribers to the journal and therefore would have propagated the tendency to frame national musings within the category of friendship. The presentation of “El cometa” includes an image (see fig. 5) of a man contemplating a comet that disappears on the horizon. Although the meditative gaze of the masculine figure reminds us of Navarro’s poetic voice that pondered the passing clouds, the visualization of the title introduces an important difference between the two poems. The title of Navarro’s poem and the dedication to Prieto appear together and while the title is slightly larger, the proximity of the words and the similarity in font and darkness of the print establish a clear relationship between poem and dedication. However, Prieto’s title is absorbed within the image that dominates the visual plane, its lighter shade leading the reader’s gaze to focus on the image and the darker dedication. The title is consumed by the background of similar color and easily overlooked. Consequently, the presentation of the poem is focused on the relationship between the image and the dedication, or between the masculine figure who contemplates the ephemerality of the comet and friendship.



A MI AMIGO EULALIO MARIA ORTEGA.

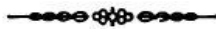


Figure 5: El cometa de 1843: A mi amigo Eulalio María Ortega

The emphasis on friendship apparent in the title of the poem is further developed in the poem itself. In the opening stanzas the poetic voice calls to the comet for inspiration, “Oigo el crugir de tus divinas alas/ Angel de inspiracion, yo te saludo” and clearly establishes the relationship between poetry and the exceptional natural event: “Allá te cantaré, raudo Cometa,/ Allí bajo tu cauda esplendorosa/ Que ora invade arrogante el firmamento,/ Yo pulsaré mi lira de poeta” (Prieto, “El cometa” 68). Nevertheless, in the following stanzas the poetic voice begins to incorporate language and images that create a relationship that challenges that of comet to poetry, and instead suggests a more prominent link between nation and friend. In describing the comet as “sublime proscrito,” “Huérfano,” “descarriado,” and “desprendido” the image of a

natural journey is replaced with one of detachment, loss, and exile (Prieto, “El cometa” 68). As we saw in chapter two of this dissertation, Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century was characterized by a constant stream of exile and return when a returning exile could paradoxically cross paths with the very adversary who ordered his exile, himself now exiled. The poetic voice contextualizes the uprootedness of the comet by incorporating images of authority as the source of exile: “Desprendido cual hoja del arbusto/ De otro grande y magnífico sistema/ Te arranca Dios de tu supremo sòlio,/ Rompió contra tus sienas tu diadema/ Y te condena á recorrer los mares” (Prieto, “El cometa” 68). The figure of the comet allows the poetic voice to create a power struggle where a natural manifestation of power, God, dethrones a lesser power, destroying the emblem that distinguishes it from its subjects and condemning it vagrancy. It is in this vagrant state that the uprooted comet serves as a muse for the nineteenth-century politically minded writer who wishes to portray the nation as a series of exiled friends: “Tú sigues impasible tu carrera,/ Bastardo de los astros: yo te sigo/ Como del borde de la ingrata playa/ Se vé el bajel del desterrado amigo” (Prieto, “El cometa” 69). The explicit reference to the exiled friend aboard the ship that carries him away from the nation completes the cycle first observed in the visual representation of the poem’s title. The reference to the comet fades into the background while the friendship that is presented as threatened by separation becomes the principal object of aesthetic treatment.

These works all celebrate the constitutive power of nature to create the image of what these authors hoped would become the nation. Consistent with the comments made by the journal’s editor Cumplido, the mission of *El Museo* was to preserve the traits of Mexico on its pages and thus instruct its readers, in the civilizing sense, on what were the characteristics of the nation. However, by constructing this preservation on a masculine web of self-referencing

texts—Prieto dedicates his poetry to his friends while Navarro dedicates his essay to Prieto—the outline of the nation is subordinated to the persistent reference to friendship. To dedicate one's work to a friend indicates both intimacy and admiration with that person, but also the dedication to a relationship that undermines the premise of the possibility of a unified community.

The analysis of friendship in volume two of *El Museo* prepares us for a more thorough analysis of volume three, where friendship becomes the topic of travel as expressed in the travel letters from Payno to Prieto. Further complicating the exclusionary gesture of friendship, it is at times presented in *El Museo* through the intimate medium of letters, where the reader would practice a type of voyeurism by peeking into the private lives of the men who attempted to forge the nation. In this way, the reader is invited into the private space of the masculine nation-builder only to be reminded that our presence there is transitory. The letters, often written by travelers and containing news and detailed descriptions of politics and customs, brought the readers up to date on current events while inculcating the notion of a national community. Nevertheless, while all of the aforementioned works incorporated friendship in a way that placed distance between writer and citizen, the intimacy of the letter both perpetuated that exclusionary act and interpellated the reader as a future citizen.

The letters Payno wrote to Prieto exacerbate the sentimentality of friendship and intimacy due to the fact that they were written on the road, the two friends were separated by space and were united only through writing. In his doctoral dissertation titled *La literatura Mexicana como proyecto de reconstrucción nacional: 1836-1849*, Pablo Mora argues that in the early decades of the nineteenth century there appeared in literature and literary journals a concerted attempt to formulate a national culture that was organized around creole patriotism and liberalism. Mora seeks to uncover a homogeneous discourse that unified the lettered class through the genres of an

incipient literary criticism, *costumbrismo*, and poetry, constructing an imaginary community, Mora argues, with three principal components: a common language (Spanish), customs, and religion. Mora dedicates the third chapter of his dissertation to the study of moral restoration in literary projects aimed at establishing this national identity. In particular, Mora focuses on the early stages of the literary output of Prieto and Payno for whom, “era necesario el saneamiento de los males sociales a través de una escritura que suponía la crítica de costumbres, de teatro y la crónica de viajes” (214). Mora argues that between the years 1840 and 1846, the work of these two authors shared the objective of “edición cultural,” an attempt to “recrear el mundo mexicano, buscaron delimitarlo, denunciarlo, con el propósito de mejorarlo” (214). Within this project, we find traces of the evaluation of colonial institutions and their legacy in the newly independent nation. Mora points out that the purification of social costumes he sees as the driving force in the literary projects of the period both preserved old values and suggested new ones (215). This characteristic, in turn, can be summarized as depending on a vision of the past and the future, where the nation originated and where it was destined.

It is noteworthy that although Mora establishes both an intimate relationship and common goal between the literary projects of Prieto and Payno, he chooses to separate them in the chapter dedicated to their work, focusing first on Prieto, then on Payno. What Mora claims brought them together initially was the obligation to grapple with the rhetoric of the future (*retórica del porvenir*) associated with the purification of morality and national customs. Nevertheless, Mora also refers to a more intimate relationship between the two writers visible in Prieto’s tendency to refer to Payno as his younger brother, “su hermano menor” (250). This relationship, albeit figurative given that Payno was Prieto’s elder, denotes proximity at the personal level that should not be discarded when analyzing how these writers approached the topic of national unity and

acceptable practices. The texts these writers produced during their travels further emphasize this immediacy as Mora suggests, “al emprender sus viajes por México y el exterior, confesaban sentirse extranjeros en su propia patria” (251). Instead of bringing them closer to the construction of a national identity through the experience of the “patria,” the distance imposed through travel simply brought them closer to each other. Given that their travel narratives often appeared in journals, their publication served to unite them in a common literary practice, and “reconocerse de manera más integrada dentro del país, al mismo tiempo que buscaban apropiarse de un patrimonio cultural” (Mora 251). If through the publication of travel narratives these writers sought to create a national archive that included the positive elements left over from the colonial period, and suggested the proper path to future nation cohesion and prosperity, it is important that this archive was framed within the intimate relationships visible in their correspondence.

Within the inventory of the national archive apparent in the travel narratives of Payno we find the need to write to a friend. The collection of scenery and customs that define the genre of the *Cuadro de costumbres* is framed within the intimacy of personal writing that both includes the reader and simultaneously excludes her. Read in this way, the travel narratives are less a moral project for the nation and more of a subjective and exclusionary portrait of the obstacles to the amicable enjoyment of a jaunt in the countryside. The discursive dynamic takes on other meanings when read within the liberal context of its participants. Adding to the complexity of these texts is the overwhelming feeling that the author transmits certain information with which his interlocutor/friend must be familiar. While Payno surely writes about aspects of the places he visits in Mexico that Prieto would have been unfamiliar with, he also insists on filling multiple pages with a re-telling of the conquest and War of Independence. Taking advantage of his visit

to the location of certain historical events, Payno adopts the voice of an eye-witness and uses his account to present a critique on colonial and post-independence aspects of Mexican society. Nevertheless, in masquerading as friendly correspondence, his narrative loses any semblance of impartiality—a characteristic Mora attributes to these texts—and the narrative instead becomes a stage on which to display inconsistencies within the liberal national project and the exclusionary nature of friendship.

Crónica or Correspondence?

The travel letters Payno wrote to Prieto in 1843 during a trip from Mexico City to the eastern state of Veracruz combine friendship, intimate memories, and nostalgia with the seemingly obligatory content of travel writing: detailed descriptions of landscapes, architecture, and historical points of interest. In spite of the duality of the content, friendship combined with documentation, it is noteworthy that the intimacy of the epistolary genre is erased during the recovery of these texts in the twentieth century. The letters appear in volume one of Payno's *Obras completas*, a volume titled *Crónicas de viaje*, as “Un viaje a Veracruz en el invierno de 1843.” It is worthwhile to ask what the editors of Payno's complete works meant by “crónicas” and how the interpretation of the travel letters changes once we consider them as such. In the introductory comments to the volume we find an inconsistency in regard to the genre of the letters. Boris Rosen Jélomer—a very important figure in the recovery and distribution of nineteenth-century literature in Mexico—refers to the contents of the first volume of Payno's complete works as “crónicas de viaje” and immediately afterward “relatos de viaje” (13). In her prologue to the volume, Blanca Estela Treviño describes “Un viaje a Veracruz en el invierno de 1843” as, “una larga crónica compuesta por veintidós epístolas dirigidos a su amigo Fidel” (20).

There is a palpable tension in Treviño's description of the work, which she categorizes as a "larga crónica" (terms some would deem contradictory) *and* letters. The categorization of texts is important because it affects how they are archived and received by readers. Speaking of the colonial period, Walter Mignolo underlines the importance not just of the conservation of texts, but how they are categorized: "[l]a diferencia de *texto* debe completarse aludiendo a la operación clasificatoria, puesto que una cultura no solo conserva los *textos*, sino que los conserva como textos de una cierta *clase*" (Emphasis in original 57). The complicated nature of establishing the class of a text resonates in the interpretation of the text's content and in the authority associated with that content. For example, Mignolo explains *la crónica* as, "el vocablo para denominar el informe del pasado o la anotación de los acontecimientos del presente, fuertemente estructurados por la secuencia temporal. Más que relato o descripción la crónica, en su sentido medieval, es una <lista> organizada sobre las fechas de los acontecimientos que se desean conservar en la memoria" (75). The clear motive of documentation thus defines *la crónica* in the medieval period, the period that most influenced the Spanish explorers who produced the first written accounts of the Americas.

In a different approach to the same genre during a different period, Susana Rotker's study of *la crónica* in the nineteenth century takes up Mignolo's preoccupation with categories to question the relationship between the literary and journalism. Rotker defends the recuperation of *la crónica* as a worthy object of analysis previously neglected by literary and cultural critics by emphasizing the relationship of the genre to the principal characteristics of *modernismo*:

[c]ualquier lectura de las crónicas revela que en ellas se introdujeron rasgos que caracterizaron en buena medida los textos poéticos modernistas: plasticidad y expresividad impresionista, parnasianismo y simbolismo, incorporación de la naturaleza,

búsquedas en el lenguaje del Siglo de Oro español, la absorción de la velocidad vital de la nueva sociedad industrializada. (16)

Rotker also highlights the difficult task of pinning down the genre in concrete terms, choosing instead to label it “un género mixto” and “lugar de encuentro del discurso literario y periodístico” (Rotker 17). The observations by these two respected scholars show the evolution of *la crónica* as genre, but also its discursive function. From a descriptive and documentary tool, *la crónica* becomes the discursive crossroads where the very notion of the category is questioned.

Payno’s work falls between the two periods studied by Mignolo and Rotker and reflects the influence of both periods. On the one hand, the lingering ghosts of colonialism and the instability of independence are visible in Payno’s account of historic sites and the recounting of battles against the Spanish. The desire to memorialize the events and dates that should constitute national history reminds us of Mignolo’s explanation of the medieval *crónica* and its function in the cultural archive. On the other hand, Payno expresses concern over the efficacy of industry in Mexico and of the modernizing effects (or the absence of them) of improved travel conditions. While Payno was clearly not an early *modernista* and his writing lacks the innovative qualities outlined by Rotker, there is a latent anxiety in his letters to Prieto over the role of the writer in a changing society, and the ways in which writing seems inadequate before these changes. What is most important here is why Payno’s texts were conserved in the particular class that they were. Although Treviño mentions that they were letters, they are subordinated to *la crónica*, and, furthermore, friendship is subordinated to both *la crónica* and the letter. The texts are, then, *crónicas*, then letters, and finally letters to a friend: “una larga crónica compuesta por veintidós epístolas dirigidas a su amigo Fidel” (Treviño 20). The internment of the epistolary genre within

the category of *la crónica*, and the relegation of the intimate correspondence that defines the letter writing tradition, warrants our attention, especially given that these texts were published in a journal whose explicit goal was to collect and celebrate the ingredients of the nation. I suggest that this concealment was indicative of the scholarly tendency to organize this type of text around the image of the masculine patriot and hero.

Travel Letters: Payno and Prieto

In Payno's travel letters he establishes a link between Veracruz and other regions he has visited. He recognizes the novelty of the region and the power that the new experience generates in him, "Está decidido que todos los días reciba yo una nueva sorpresa, y un motivo de placer y de emociones" (Payno, "Un viaje" 116). Nevertheless, he is adamant about separating this experience from that of other trips he has taken through Mexico. That is, this region is not representative of Mexico, but simply another piece in the national puzzle. However, Payno cannot make this separation alone, but instead must summon the presence of his friend in order to do so:

Figúrate un camino trazado en medio de una sucesión de colinas, más o menos elevadas, y estas colinas cubiertas de espeso bosque; pero no te figures un bosque de espinos y mezquites como los hemos visto en los departamentos de San Luis y Zacatecas, sino un bosque compuesto de olorosos liquidámbares, de serojilos, de plátanos con sus anchas hojas verde esmeralda . . . ("Un viaje" 116)

Payno draws Prieto into his description of Veracruz by insisting that Prieto imagine, through the eyes of Payno, the road Payno travels. Furthermore, Payno censures Prieto's imagined experience by calling his attention to the originality of the landscape of Veracruz. That is, he

forces Prieto into a reality he does not know, and then insists that he must not confuse the imagined reality with the reality they once shared as travelers through the states of San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas. Payno then continues with an exhaustive description of what makes Veracruz unique, a description replete with sensorial imagery aimed at drawing Prieto as close as possible. The “olorosos liguidámbarés” and the “anchas hojas verde esmeralda” ensure that Prieto will not mistake Veracruz for Zacatecas; but more importantly, they ensure that Prieto will not mistake Payno’s experience in Veracruz for the one they once experienced together. In this way, the shared experience is elevated to an unreachable status, while Payno’s account of his time in Veracruz is unavoidably subordinated to that unreachable place. Visible in the passage cited above is the desire to draw a friend near, to share the unsharable through writing, and therefore to narrate the nation, not through the first hand testimony, but through the intimate relationship that friends share. In other words, this text becomes less an attempt to include the nation in the elite writing circles of the nineteenth century, and more an attempt to consolidate friendly hierarchies.

Although the intimacy of friendship is visible from the beginning of the text in the way Payno addresses Prieto, “Querido Fidel,” it is also pushed to the margins of the text in a way that creates a discernible tension between the desire to write the customs and landscape of Mexico through the lens of the eyewitness account, and the discursive strategy of presenting the information through the voice of a friend. After an exhaustive account of the sensorial experience of his surroundings, Payno begins a historical interpretation of what he sees. The historical account is in direct contrast to the sensorial experience (something we can see) and the spatial and temporal disorientation that characterizes his visit and that is only dispelled when a historical narrative infuses the scenery with meaning. The historical account begins when Payno

arrives at a bridge on the edge of Coatepec. The bridge is symbolic enough as it not only connects two destinations during Payno's trip but separates his experience from its history. In another way, the bridge marks the union of the sensorial and the historical, and thus both brings together and draws apart. Payno's recognition of this pivotal moment is made clear to the reader: "De Jalapa a Coatepec hay como tres leguas; pero era tal mi enajenamiento, que creía no haber andado más de una calle cuando me encontré sobre un puente que está a la entrada del pueblo, y por debajo del cual corre un río cristalino" ("Un viaje" 117). The sensorial disorientation provoked by his displacement had culminated in an internal journey to "regiones ideales y fantásticas," the romantic voyage reminiscent of Lamartine (Payno, "Un viaje" 116). The bridge, however, returns the traveler to his present and to the history that defines his national heritage.

In spite of the title "Un viaje a Veracruz en el invierno de 1843," Payno's letters are as much about the journey to Veracruz as his arrival and stay in the eastern Mexican state. To be more precise, Payno's account can be divided into two parts: Puebla and Veracruz. Payno's path to Veracruz was geographically determined by stagecoach routes, and his stay in the city of Puebla should not be considered an independent decision. The manner in which he incorporates Puebla into his letters to Prieto, however, is noteworthy. In a telling moment, Payno explains the function of the urban space in his evaluation of Mexico. The cities that dot the republic are the organizing force in his imagined nation: "[s]egún la opinion de algunos, Puebla es un México en miniatura . . . Si preguntas a un tapatío, dirá inmediatamente que Guadalajara es la segunda ciudad de la república" (Payno, "Un viaje" 61). Absent in this passage is a reference to Mexico City which Payno considered the urban example by which all cities were measured. It is provocative to consider Mexico's size in relation to the three urban centers that Payno mentions,

a mentality that is summarized well in the idea of Puebla as a miniature Mexico. The metonymy works to isolate the cultural analysis Payno carries out to a single city, while simultaneously extending it to include the entire country. In other words, although he presents the metonymy as the “opinión de algunos,” he nevertheless proceeds to present his readers with a combination of critique and praise that is about both Puebla and the nation at large. Payno’s commentary on mercantilism, greediness, schools, and libraries (“Un viaje” 63), and the observation that “en nuestro país nada se hace completo” (“Un viaje” 65) are easily seen as the broad reflection of the entire incipient republic.

What calls the reader’s attention is the exclusion of Payno’s destination, Veracruz, as a viable miniature model for Mexico. His entrance into the state of Veracruz marks a notable change in the narration. His historical curiosity and critical evaluations continue, but once in Veracruz Payno finds it more difficult to feel at home. He comments repeatedly on the climate, flora, and fauna in such a way as to appear as a stranger in his own country. More important for our study, this change affects his ability to write to his friend. Writing from the city of Jalapa, Veracruz he laments:

tengo el gran desconsuelo de que partiré a Veracruz sin poder escribir una línea. Hace ocho días que estoy encerrado en la posada, sin ganas de salir a ninguna parte. El cielo está color de plomo, cae una lluvia menuda y constante que llaman aquí chipi chipi . . . y las calles están solas . . . nadie se atreve a transitar por un piso desigual y resbaladizo.

(Payno, “Un viaje” 108)

The association between danger, climate, and writing introduces a new type of Mexico into Payno’s travel letters. His critique is no longer of the educational system, industry, or architecture, but of the unchangeable characteristics that make the state of Veracruz incompatible

with a miniature Mexico. Payno establishes Jalapa as a location outside his field of tolerance, and also outside the linguistic norms of the rest of Mexico. The rain that bothers him has a local name and thus demarcates a clear “here” and “there” in the narration of the nation. Curiously, when the weather clears and Payno’s attitude improves, he is also incapable of writing. When he takes the exemplary romantic pose on the rooftop of the inn where he is lodged, he admits that what he sees cannot be expressed in words (Payno, “Un viaje” 109). This omission in the intimate correspondence to a friend demonstrates the complicated relationship he has with Veracruz: its climate makes writing impossible, and its beauty is indescribable. In this way, the friendly exchange contained in the letter is an exercise in the difficulty of writing the nation. It expresses the inhospitable atmosphere and the overwhelming landscape that make it impossible for Payno to write the region into the national imaginary, and to share it with his friend.

The Threats to Friendship

The letters, in accordance with Cumplido’s declaration, appear in a journal that aimed to collect all things Mexican and thus promote the notion of the nation or imagined community. However, Payno’s contribution to *El Museo Mexicano* is framed by friendship, the exclusionary relationship that underlines the distance in a community between those who control the construction of the written archive, and those who view it. Payno’s letters are testament to the trials suffered by the *letrado* who ventures into the periphery to document the nation. But more importantly, they are a testament to what threatens the relationship that sincerely constitutes the vertical power structure of *letrados*, the friendship of the masculine nation builders. In Payno’s letters we see not only the difficulty of reducing the heterogeneous reality he experiences in

Puebla and Veracruz to the unifying category of Mexico, but also how that heterogeneity threatens—both through its resistance to representation and the distance it imposes between two friends—the binding masculine friendship that makes Mexico possible.

While still on the outskirts of the city of Puebla, Payno comments on important landmarks and aspects of the landscape. Nevertheless, his commentary is embedded in quotations of other texts and direct references to other writers. After passing over the Atoyac River, Payno admits to a preexisting interest in the area that originated in reading: “[e]ste río era para mí demasiado interesante, desde que nuestro joven amigo Félix Escalante lo ha poetizado en algunas de sus hermosas composiciones, insertas en los tomos I y II del *Museo*” (Payno, “Un viaje” 59). Payno marks the origin of his interest in the river in its textual reproduction by one of his friends, “nuestro joven amigo.” Equally important is the possessive “nuestro” that introduces the young poet into the amiably masculine group that includes both writer, Payno, and his most immediate reader, Prieto. Nevertheless, Payno further extends the reach of his inclusive textual web to the same journal in which his letters appear. By mentioning the poem and then reminding his reader that it was published in a previous edition of *El Museo Mexicano*, Payno performs two constitutive acts. First, he asserts that Mexico is to be written not just by Mexican authors but by friends. Second, he reiterates that the forum for such friendly publications is the same journal where his letters appear. In this way, the textual web that aspired to write the nation becomes progressively more limited and contingent on the friendly relationships among men.

It is not, however, only to Mexican friends that Payno makes reference when narrating Mexico in his letters. While passing the pyramid at Cholula, notably celebrated in Latin America literature by José María Heredia’s “El teocalli de Cholua,” Payno provides a concise history of the structure and its role in the conquest of Mexico. Nonetheless, when he attempts to

explain the mystery of the origin of the pyramid he again needs to quote another author, this time Humboldt. A notable difference in the way he uses Humboldt's text in regard to Escalante's poem, Payno copies a fragment of Humboldt's *Vistas de las cordilleras y de los monumentos de América* directly into the text of his letter. The content of the fragment is unexceptional for this study, but its appearance in the letter to Prieto establishes another aspect of the masculine friendship that supports the narration of the nation. It is not only important for Mexican writers to represent nature and monuments, as in Escalante's poem, but also to have read foreign authors who have offered another account. In other words, to be a friend you must be well-read. In reference to Humboldt, at the close of the letter Payno remarks: "Son por cierto lamentables y tristes tales recuerdos que me mantuvieron mudo y sombrío hasta las inmediaciones de Puebla" ("Un viaje" 61). By closing his letter in this way, Payno presents a strong commentary on the relationship of travel writing and friendship to the narration of the nation. His closing remark is a glimpse into the life of the traveling *letrado* who passes his time reading and reflecting on the connection between text and nation. Payno seemingly pays closer attention to what he reads than to what he sees, as is evident in both examples cited above where he does not offer an extensive description of the river or pyramid, but only references to texts that provide a more suitable representation. Thus the writing of the letter is an exercise in establishing friendship, in creating a pantheon of important Mexican writers, but also of writers that Mexican *letrados* should have read. If we approach Payno's letter as a list of requirements for admission into the club of nation builders, we find reading and writing at the top. To decipher the republic you must be well-read.

Boredom

While Payno writes to his friends, and in doing so establishes the requirements for admission into the masculine group of nation-builders, in his letters there is also a repetitive fear of losing the attention of his readers. Just as Payno identifies the proper texts for his friends to be familiar with, he also expresses a latent fear that his text will not occupy the same privileged category. His fear of not being read, of boring his readers, who are his friends, underlines the complicated relationship between friendship, writing, and the nation. If through references and quotations Payno includes writers who celebrate the nation, and texts that his readers should have read, his fear of provoking boredom indicates the anxiety that his writing is not of the same quality as the works he quotes.

Payno makes multiple references to the preoccupation he suffers at the prospect of boring his reader. It is important to note that when Payno refers to “readers” it is in reference to the subscribers of the journal. These subscribers should be thought of as extensions of his more immediate interlocutor, Prieto, and thus as part of the extended network of male friends. In these moments of preoccupation, Payno takes steps to ensure the reader will follow him in his narration of the Mexican periphery. In one example, he tempts his reader with the promise of knowledge, “[d]e esta narración, que parecerá vacía y frívola, sacará el lector una lección” (Payno, “Un viaje” 48). Payno offers the reader an excuse to carry on reading, in spite of the text’s apparent triviality, and, apparently, in spite of the celebration of national customs commonly linked to this type of narration. In other examples, Payno seems to incorporate tactics to keep his reader’s attention that remind us of narrative strategies of melodrama and the serialized novel. Addressing Prieto directly, Payno speaks apologetically, “Larga es esta carta, y para no fastidiarte, en otra te seguiré contando mi viaje de Río Frío a Puebla” (“Un viaje” 56). In offering hints at what is to come, Payno hopes to captivate his audience, but also reveals an

underlying anxiety provoked by the possibility that his writing, and the content of his narrative, are unworthy of the textual construction of Mexico that he advocates.

The importance of keeping his friends entertained comes to the forefront when he extends his comments to include Prieto and the subscribers. It is in this moment that we see the extension of the network of friends and therefore of the extension of Payno's preoccupation: "Quédate, adiós por ahora, infortunado Fidel, mientras tengo humor para seguirte relatando mi viaje, que Dios mediante será en el número próximo de *Museo*, a no ser que oiga yo entre los amables suscriptores un rumor sordo que indique que se han fastidiado con mis relaciones" ("Un viaje" 67-68). Payno hopes to hold the "unfortunate" Prieto, referred to by his pen name Fidel, captive with suspense until the next publication of the journal. But Payno also recognizes his debt to the wider system of friends. While one unfortunate reader may follow the next installment of friendly correspondence, the negative reaction of the greater community of friends could halt his narration. Again, the most pressing concern of Payno is the satisfaction of friends, and not fomenting the written account of the nation.

At times Payno's preoccupation with the boredom of his friends results in textual omissions that we could consider to be a kind of self-censorship. In order to introduce shortcuts to the more documentary aspect of his travel letters, Payno chooses adequate topics to promote Mexican identity, and then presents his readers with only those snippets that are most important, or most likely to hold their attention:

Si bien la monotonía de unas vidas pacíficas, y casi iguales y uniformes debe haberte fastidiado, es un dato histórico y espero que elogiarás, así como mis lectores, el laconismo con que les he narrado la vida, hechos y muerte de veintiún pastores de la Iglesia poblana. ("Un viaje" 90)

In this way, narrating the nation becomes an exercise in not disrupting his friend's patience. The text that paints the nation is, therefore, defined as much by Payno's omissions as by what he includes. Taken a step further, the *costumbrismo* sketch that is published in the journal whose goal is to collect and protect the attractive elements of the nation, is really a text that indicates the whims of the author's friends.

Travel Letters and Masculine Crisis: Ramírez and Prieto

Between the years of 1863 and 1865, Mexican writer and intellectual Ignacio Ramírez wrote a series of travel letters to Prieto, often considered Mexico's national poet and the subject of chapter two of this dissertation. While coming to terms with the disbanding of the Mexican liberal government and the invasion of the French, Ramírez travelled through the northern states of Mexico en route to California in what could be called an internal exile. Unable to continue to perform his governmental duties, Ramírez was exiled at home, no longer welcome within the confines of the nation that he had helped to create. In this indisputable moment of crisis characterized by the anxiety of the nineteenth-century masculine responsibility to build and maintain nations, Ramírez uses an intimate literary device, the letter, to explore and suggest alternatives to state based relationships. In short, during this state-less moment, his intimate correspondence with Prieto becomes a forum for the rehearsal of alternatives to power structures and the questioning of democratic institutions. In this section, I explore the manner in which the national conflict that Ramírez experiences first-hand provides the stage on which to create and question categories of masculinity and friendship. In the absence of a state power capable of turning away the invading foreign army, Ramírez makes explicit suggestions regarding political

transformation. Given the ambulatory backdrop that informs his writing, I read these texts as travel letters.

Although written between 1863 and 1865, Ramírez's letters were not published until 1868. They appeared in *El Semanario Ilustrado*, a journal to which Ramírez often contributed. Ramírez himself is quoted as citing the goal of the journal as, “vulgarizar los conocimientos útiles, con el fin de ilustrar a ‘las clases numerosas’ y fortalecer con ellos la vida política del país, ‘débil por falta de alimento sustancioso que la instrucción científica y artística proporciona” (Curiel and Castro 512-13). Similar to Cumplido's *El Museo* and *Presente Amistoso*, *El Semanario* aimed to educate and had a strong emphasis on science as the path to progress.

Both Ramírez and Prieto were members of “La familia enferma,” participants in Benito Juárez's liberal government who were displaced by conservative threat and violence during the Reform War (1857-61) and the subject of Chapter three of this dissertation. It is then the trope of travel, of *el viaje*, that organizes categories of friendship, loyalty and masculinity, in these letters. The moments of nostalgia and longing that Ramírez experiences are produced by not only his present condition of internal exile, but the previous exile he suffered alongside Prieto as part of “La familia enferma.” The anguish of the current political state and the obligatory displacement, contrary to what we may expect, is expressed in terms of pleasure given that the distance that separates Ramírez from the liberal dream brings him closer to Prieto. “Ni siquiera puedes disfrutar como yo, los placeres del camino” Ramírez writes to Prieto, erasing the national turmoil that culminated in his displacement and inserting a personal, friendly exchange informed by the journey (115). For Ramírez the road is synonymous with pleasure, but a pleasure that is subordinated to the absence of Prieto. Here he incites Prieto, taunting him with the traveling

pleasure that only he can experience. But just as easily, the fragment can be read as a declaration of how much more pleasurable it would be if Prieto were by his side.

The letters between these two men are therefore characterized by separation and Ramírez laments the distance that separates him from Prieto in the same way that he laments the French invasion and the absence of a competent military force to counter it. Travel functions on two separate planes: it distances one from the other, but it also unites them in their role of political exile. The advancement and military victories of the French troops is documented by Ramírez, an omnipresent threat from the periphery, but always a motive to move textually closer to Prieto.

Writing with the intimacy that the epistolary tradition allows, Ramírez speaks repeatedly of satisfying Prieto. When Ramírez reveals that he is traveling on his own, without Benito Juárez and his ministers, he creates a connection between personal freedom and the satisfaction of Prieto:

Adivino que te atormenta la curiosidad de saber por qué he corrido más que don Benito y sus ministros, más que la disputación permanente, más que nuestros jefes y soldados: voy a satisfacerte. Yo no tengo obligación de seguir al gobierno ni tengo muchas cantidades que percibir de las arcas nacionales: puedo huir a mi antojo. (115)

Travel grants Ramírez a liberty that borders on treason. He demonstrates no alliance to the displaced president or the other members of government: fleeing is something he can do on his own. But his individuality stops there as he demonstrates dependence on the friendship he shares with Prieto.

At times, Ramírez invokes a memory of a more ambiguous nature. Without mentioning precise location or frequency of events, Ramírez simply asks that his reader remember him and their time together. Ramírez reminds Prieto: “recuerda que a la madrugada de una noche

tempestuosa los hemos visto saltar con la arena como polvo de diamantes bajo los pies de nuestros caballos en el sendero humedecido por las olas” (Ramírez 143). Ramírez paints a romantic scene with the two men under a cloud covered sky, the proximity between the two heightened by the perspective (they see from above, mounted on “nuestros caballos”). Ramírez also conjures Prieto’s presence through hypothetical scenes that demonstrate both an intimate knowledge and other shared excursions: “Y tú, Fidel, a los postres, hubieras improvisado, al compás de la música y la danza, tus festivas canciones populares. El incendio que nos servía de antorcha hubiera reproducido tu figura, Anacreonte mexicano, sobre el césped humedo y florido” (117). What seems to be a classic scene of “letrados cosmopolitas” is essentially Ramírez’s willing Prieto into his presence, imagining him as the national poet who embraces the popular and entertains the *hombres de bien*. Unable to enjoy the presence of Prieto’s physical presence, he summons him in the form of a Greek poet.

But what exactly is a friend for Ramírez during his exile in the north? Friendship becomes a way to resolve national crisis as travel and friendship are combined in the search for a national hero who can frustrate the French advance as Ramírez admits, “he caminado algunas leguas . . . buscando un jefe capaz de medir su espada con los invasores” (124). Ramírez is admittedly weary of violence, preferring instead to construct a male national hero to partake in the fighting. In order to orchestrate ideas he does not hesitate to retreat, as he declares in the first letter, “para huir comodamente, es necesario tomar la delantera; entre nosotros hay pocas aspiraciones al heroísmo” (Ramírez 115). Not interested in making a physical sacrifice, Ramírez is content with observing. Ramírez transforms a battle with the French into an almost theatrical event: “Yo me fui con la multitud a presenciar desde lugar seguro, como yo y tú acostumbramos, las peripecias de la Guerra” (127). At a distance and surrounded by commoners, this national

icon beholds the future of his nation. As he reveals in the fragment, the politics he practices is always of non-participation, it is what he is accustomed to do and Ramírez includes Prieto in this behavior when he says “como yo y tú acostumbramos.” In this scene, masculinity is less what we call *machismo*, and more the desire for a Mexican version of the invading army.

Nevertheless, this desire to fill the military void is articulated through the intimate device of the letter and is constructed with language that cultivates a homosocial space at odds with the notion of an imagined community and the heroic nation builder.

Although he never offers himself for the job, Ramírez seeks and finds a man of action in Mexico: “Veo muchos que quieren mandar, pero ninguno ofrece garantías para una formal pelea . . . pero yo he encontrado mi hombre” (124). This man, Antonio Rosales (1822-65), was a contemporary of Ramírez and Prieto, a real historical actor. But what is important is how Ramírez constructs the image of Rosales for Prieto. Valiant and anxious for battle, Rosales, “deseaba ser el primero que se dirigiese contra el enemigo” (Ramírez 124). In Ramírez’s state of disempowered political exile simple recruitment is out of the question. Instead he resorts to befriending Rosales: “Me he declarado su amigo y admirador y con he convenido en aprovechar el caos de las circunstancias para conseguirle un teatro donde pueda satisfacer su antojo de dar una leccioncita a los franceses” (Ramírez 124). It is noteworthy that the proximity that Ramírez establishes with Rosales is also the result of the absolute absence of companions in the life of Rosales: “Rosales pasa . . . la vida del proscrito; como no lo quieren las autoridades mexicanas, ningún mexicano lo quiere, ni siquiera lo saludan” (124). In this way, friendship emerges as the solution to national instability and the loneliness that both Ramírez and Rosales experience.

As we see in the declarations of Ramírez, behind every hero is a group of “friends.” With this friendship Ramírez aims to cure the sick liberal family—made up of men—with a dose

of amicable virility. But, is it friendly to put someone in harm's way to achieve the goals you find worthy? This is certainly not a friendship founded on equality and we could go as far as to ask, if Rosales is Ramírez's friend, what is Prieto? After all, Ramírez and Prieto represent the opposite of Rosales. They are distanced from the fighting, and the intimacy that unites them is the direct result of this distance from danger.

A friend could not be a friend if he was not capable of being an enemy. Derrida explains this as reversibility between the relationship of friend and enemy. Friendship rests on the assumption that we can be friends with anyone. Nevertheless, once we declare our friendship for another, we, by default, exclude those to whom we have not declared friendship. Within every act of befriending is the implicit act of defriending. Furthermore, in the act of befriending we introduce the possibility of the loss of the friend. By having friends we run the risk of their disappearance and the impossibility of receiving their friendship in return. Derrida writes: "I could not love friendship without engaging myself, without feeling myself in advance engaged to love the other beyond death. Therefore, beyond life" (12). The man Ramírez proposes as a national hero has traits that bring him closer to the French invaders than to Ramírez or Prieto. That is, he is more an enemigo than an amigo. So it would seem that heroes need friends, friends who recognize the qualities they share with their enemies.

Ramírez turns national crisis into a stage for experimentation, a stage that travel only intensifies. What defines loyalty and establishes the possibilities of resistance is precisely displacement. He who is willing to travel, that is, he who accepts his exile and deems it pleasurable, finds in it a proximity with others, is willing to suffer the transformation that Ramírez describes as moving from "peregrino" to "Gitano," and, in turn, is worthy of Ramírez's intimacy. In these travel letters there is an unbreakable bond between those who have traveled

together, but that bond also underlines political defeat and a homosociality that threatens the masculine image of the intrepid traveler and nation-builder.

Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to engage in the critical analysis of two foundational masculine tropes associated with nineteenth-century Latin America, *el hombre de bien* and the *letrado*, to demonstrate that when viewed through the combination of travel, intimate correspondence, and friendship, the viability of a national community is shrouded in doubt. The masculine traveler and nation-builder becomes a writer who is preoccupied with friends more than with the nation. Furthermore, masculinity becomes a questionable category. Considering the task of nation-building as experienced by Payno with Ramírez's recognition of the precariousness of the Mexican nation demonstrates the tendency to resort to friends in moments of crisis and change. The resulting homosociality, nevertheless, alters the commonly accepted image of the masculine nation-builder. Separated from friends, Payno and Ramírez resort to discursive strategies and an intimate genre that demonstrate that they imagined the nation from exclusive spaces that challenge the institutionalized portrayal of *letrados* in the nineteenth century, and the definition of community. This exclusivity, nevertheless, goes beyond the threat to the notion of the nation that these authors explicitly sought to cultivate. The friendship that generated homosociality in the Mexican nation also permeated the cultural press and threatened to unhinge the entire imagined community. By revealing that both nation and *letrados*, or *hombres de bien*, are unstable categories, the entire nation-building project is endangered.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I studied the difficulty of constructing a Mexican national imaginary through texts associated with travel and circulation that were written from the middle to the late nineteenth century. I also tried to understand the role that these texts played in important debates, and how they were appropriated or rejected, or what publication strategies were used in their dissemination. I have argued that these texts function together discursively to question the idea of national and cultural boundaries in Mexico. I began with the critical study of a group of authors who were undisputable contributors to the discursive attempt to create a national community. In rereading these iconic Mexican figures through texts that have received sparse critical attention, I sought to underline moments of contradiction and indecision. Consequently, instead of viewing these authors as contributors to the creation of an imagined Mexican community, I uncovered moments when they grapple with the realization that such a task contains multiple obstacles. I conducted this study simultaneously with another, this time a group of conservative writers. Often underrepresented in Mexican literary history, conservative writers also contributed to the debate over the future of Mexico and to the ways in which it was to be imagined. By including conservative writers in a dissertation about what is traditionally understood as a liberal national discourse, I emphasize that the attempts to forge a Mexican imagined community were always accompanied by a discourse that questioned it.

Moreover, in this dissertation I participate in the debate about the role of the institutionalization of literature during and after the Mexican Revolution. Key for the creation of a national literature in the formative years after the Revolution was the recuperation and reevaluation of national literary figures. The recovery of nineteenth-century writers for the

construction of a State sanctioned national literature occurred simultaneously with the inclusion or omission of writers contemporary to this process. Critical studies of Mexican literature and culture of the early twenty-first century have focused on the recuperation of the nineteenth century as a method to reread the problems that plagued Mexico in the twentieth century. Furthermore, studies have emphasized the absences that appeared in the institutionalization process, the discarded authors, for example, as a means to uncover alternative national imaginings. My dissertation provides an important analysis of the historical and literary moments from which emerged figures that would be fundamental for the later attempts to consolidate a Mexican national identity.

To describe Latin America during the nineteenth century as a space marked by transit and circulation is to provoke debate. Geographically, the continent was crisscrossed by travelers, immigrants, exiles, and tourists. Ideologically, the discourses that sustained the intermittent ruling political parties were imported, appropriated, and rejected. In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how a series of texts written on the road, from afar and at home, by or about travelers during an especially unstable period in Mexican history can be read as failed attempts to classify categories such as liberalism, conservatism, and nationalism. These texts also helped to define limits and emphasize absences in a changing geographical space that was mutilated from without and challenged from within. The writers I study in my dissertation not only played an important role in the political development of Mexico as it made the historical, ideological, and literary journey from Independence to empire, from empire to republic, back to empire, and back to Republic in just under sixty years; they also contributed to a literary tradition that left us with an overflowing, although understudied, archive. In sum, in these texts marked by circulation, unstable and difficult to define categories emerged that continue to be the focus of

critical studies of nineteenth-century Mexican politics and literature. I have demonstrated that these texts question the limits of identity and nationhood and thus reconfigure our understanding of what it means to belong to a larger political collective. I have also shown that authoritative discourses such as liberalism mask the antagonism and contradiction that are exposed in travel narratives, where the notions of creole identity, indigenous history, conservatism, and masculinity are questioned and rearticulated.

As I mentioned above, my dissertation enters and furthers a debate about the role of the institutionalization of literature during and after the Mexican Revolution. In what follows I will sketch this debate making reference to its most important contributors. Brian Price's *Cult of Defeat in Mexico's Historical Fiction: Failure, Trauma, and Loss* participates directly in the focus on the nineteenth century through the critical study of twentieth-century novelists who rewrote the nineteenth century. Price posits that the numerous humiliating defeats suffered by Mexico during the nineteenth century inform cultural production in the form of novels, music, and art that "highlight, reinterpret, and even poeticize perceived cultural, political, and social shortcomings" (4). Borrowing from Marx, Price claims that failure is the specter that haunts Mexico's historical imagination (2). Examples of the attempts to analyze and reinterpret this failure extend well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and can be found in novels such as Enrique Serna's *El seductor de la patria* (1999), an historical account of the life of General Santa Anna, Fernando del Paso's *Noticias del Imperio* (1987), an interpretation of Emperor Maximiliano and Carlota's reign in Mexico, and Hernán Lara Zavala's *Península Península* (2008), a novel set during the Caste War. Price posits that writers focus on failure for a number of reasons that include, "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” (4). In short, the recent return to the nineteenth century has also invited readers and writers to re-think foundational historical events through fiction and thus to consider new ways to narrate them.

Price uses the return of narrative fiction to the nineteenth century to suggest that twentieth-century Mexico still huddles in the shadow of liberalism’s political, social, and economic catastrophe, which now takes the form of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), of neoliberal reforms, and of the revival of Mexican conservatism embodied in the defeat of the *Partido Revolución Institucional* (PRI) in 2000 by Mexico’s most visible conservative political party, the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN). As Price explains, “[t]he novels studied in *Cult of Defeat* all correspond to significant moments of crisis when authors find themselves pressed to explain the missteps of the present in terms of past’s mistakes” (16). Price’s observation came at nearly the same time that another important political change took place in Mexico. The year 2012 marked the return of the PRI, a political party that had come to be known for the failed revolutionary model, corruption, and violence. The PRI’s return has begun to spark new paths in critical inquiry in Mexican Studies, a field that has taken PRI’s cultural hegemony and subsequent decline as an important object of inquiry. The reappearance of the PRI, seen by many as a resurrection of Mexico’s corrupt ghosts, presents a new interpretative opportunity for Mexicanists to again follow the model endorsed by Price: to analyze the failures of the present through moments of crisis in the past. Crucial to the critical study of the PRI-dominated twentieth century is the construction of a new critical genealogy that ventures to the epoch when many of the categories and terminology that would populate the twentieth century were forged. That is, to return to the twentieth century in search of indications that the decline of the PRI would ultimately lead to its renovation also requires a return to the

nineteenth century. In short, the contemporary political and cultural shifts in Mexico have sparked a renewed interest in the archaeological search for a genealogy that can help us understand them, and that interest extends to a new reading of the formative nineteenth century that preceded it.

While Price's study marks an important return to the nineteenth century as a useful interpretative model for twentieth-century political culture, other works focused directly on the relationship between the PRI, the Mexican Revolution, and the institutionalization of literary works that sought to imagine a consolidated Mexican identity. I have isolated a handful of influential works that used this PRI-centered approach including *Escribir en México durante los años locos* by Pedro Ángel Palou, *Querrela por la cultura "revolucionaria"* (1925) by Víctor Díaz Arciniega, *México en 1932: La polémica nacionalista* by Guillermo Sheridan and *Naciones intelectuales* by Ignacio Sánchez Prado. These works trace the problem of defining *lo mexicano* in the face of the growing importance of the field of literature and literary journals, the incipient role of the public intellectual, and the literary critic. These four works trace the significance of writing from the latest stages of the *Porfiriato* to the decades that lived in the shadow of the Revolution.

Díaz Arciniega takes up the fascinating debate over power and masculinity in the creation of Mexican national identity. More specifically, he analyzes the problem of the feminization of literature that he believes preceded the creation, or discovery, of the novel of the Mexican Revolution—a genre that sought to elevate virility and heroism. Fundamental to this debate was the consolidation of what it meant to be revolutionary. Díaz Arciniega studies the development of this debate in the press, the preferred medium of the intellectuals of the Revolution. One telling article from 1924, "El afeminamiento de la literatura Mexicana" by Julio Jiménez Rueda,

argues for literary representations of Mexico that capture the main components of the nation, a concept completely subordinated to the Revolution: “‘agitada, revuelta, en plena locura creadora, en acción constante, [de un] pueblo de perfiles netos, colorido, brillante y trágico’” (qtd. in Díaz Arciniega 73). In this way, the new need to produce a “true” and hyper-masculine account of the *conflicto* in Mexico discarded other accounts, especially those associated with Alfonso Reyes, José Vasconcelos and the other members of the *Ateneo de la juventud*, as feminizing and therefore undesirable.

Sheridan explains that the Revolution unearthed multiple manifestations of cultural dissonance that had remained “soterradas por el tiempo, la geografía o la indiferencia” and that were part of an abstract notion of the nation that had been inherited from the nineteenth century (27). The institutionalizing power of the Revolution worked to harness this destabilizing multiplicity by providing a cultural framework that would function as a reference point to which all tendencies opposed to the monolithic Revolution must be subordinated (Sheridan 27). The coercive subordination to revolutionary rhetoric culminated in what came to be known as genuine nationalism, “la genuina nacionalidad” (Sheridan 31). Within this framework, Sheridan analyzes how this debate over the definition of true Mexican culture played out in 1932, the year Sheridan underlines as the climax of debates over Mexican nationalism that confronted ideas with passions.

The debates studied by Sheridan and Díaz Arciniega lay the groundwork for later studies that would delve deeper into the institutionalizing processes of literature that not only saw the birth of Mexican culture as it would be practiced for many decades to come, but also of the political party that would sustain such an interpretation of Mexican identity. In *Naciones intelectuales*, Sánchez Prado begins his study with a comment on the importance of the fall of

the PRI in the 2000 election that inspired new interest in revisiting Mexican cultural production that had previously been associated with that political party:

Después de la derrota electoral del PRI en el año 2000 y del fin del ‘gobierno de la Revolución Mexicana’ que condujo los destinos de México por más de siete décadas, parece emerger una agenda intelectual que postula la relectura de las distintas producciones culturales realizadas durante esos años. (1)

Sánchez Prado’s re-reading of literature produced during the PRI’s tenure relies on his interpretation of the notion of “lo mexicano.” Sánchez Prado uses the interpretative model he christens “naciones intelectuales” to discover alternative approaches to the nation in works by authors who imagined the nation both according to and against the hegemonic discourses validated by the State. In this way, Sánchez Prado questions the idea of a rigid and unchanging cultural nationalism as sanctioned by the State. In order to question the construction of *lo mexicano* through the works of authors that were marginalized by the institutionalization of literature during the PRI years, Sánchez Prado focuses on the Bourdieuan idea of “el campo literario” and the founding of cultural institutions, both of which participated in the institutionalization of literature and of a cultural identity. By revisiting these foundational entities, Sánchez Prado is able to produce a new critical reading of authors who were able to imagine the nation through literature without the need to recognize an association with the State.

Naciones intelectuales uses French models of sociological analysis of public intellectuals and cultural production to revisit Mexican identity and intellectual production of the twentieth century. In this way, his work dialogues with another important Mexican cultural critic, Pedro Angel Palou, whose *Escribir en Mexico durante los años locos* published in 2001 used a similar methodology. Palou’s book serves as an important bridge between *Naciones intelectuales*,

which also serves as a bridge between the new attempts to reread the twentieth century in light of the PRI's demise and the numerous studies of Mexican identity, and this dissertation. Palou's study begins in 1900 and thus brings closer the influence of nineteenth-century literature and literary institutions to the later institutionalizing attempts of literature associated by Sheridan and Díaz Arciniega with the Revolution. This proximity is important because it demonstrates that Palou's *Escribir* (and by extension Sánchez Prado's *Naciones* which picks up where Palou left off) recognizes a debt with the nineteenth century whose analysis does not fit within the historical framework of his study. It is this debt with the nineteenth century that I sought to address in my dissertation.

Palou explains in somewhat negative terms that the writing of literary history during the early twentieth century was an uncritical task, an approach he ties to nineteenth-century historiography. Mexican national literature revolved around poetry, he emphasizes, but not all poets were included in this privileged category. Palou argues that in order to establish the inclusionary guidelines for a poet's inclusion in literary history of twentieth-century Mexico, a strong genealogy had to be forged. The method used to create the necessary historical tradition was founded on the legacy of Mexico's indigenous president and liberal standard bearer Benito Juárez (Palou 13). The enshrinement of Juárez allowed writers to isolate and underpin the principals that permitted them to "administrar el poder simbólico" that, in turn, constituted their "campo de poder" (Palou 13). Palou's study is an extensive analysis of literary groups and the power of writing in the formation of national identity that he associated with *Los Contemporáneos*, a group of writers that included Carlos Pellicer and José Gorostiza, and a literary magazine. But most important for the current study is the connection the Palou mentions between the early attempts to reformulate literature according to the incipient notion of a national

literature, and by default a national identity and the legitimizing discourse of nineteenth-century liberalism.

I would like to suggest that these important attempts to reevaluate twentieth-century Mexican literature and culture and the PRI's role in the institutionalization of literature and cultural nationalism rely heavily on notions of liberalism and the Parthenon of nineteenth-century writers who became the indisputable creators of national literature and culture. As Palou emphasizes, in order for the early attempts to associate national literature in Mexican culture with progress, a genealogy had to be established. This genealogy involved the inclusion of authors who provided a positive view of nineteenth century liberals, specifically Benito Juárez.

Following Price, the novelists that are the focus of his study, as well as Sheridan, Díaz Arciniega, Palou, and Sánchez Prado, I revisit a foundational period of Mexican history that witnessed the creation of the categories that would shape and inform political and cultural thought into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Undoubtedly, some of the most important debates on inclusion and national identity were waged in the genre of the essay and were well represented in the novel. Nevertheless, it is my contention that in texts that reflect displacement the attempts to come to terms with the gap between political thought and material reality are especially visible. This dissertation sheds light on a group of understudied texts that, when analyzed together, provide an alternative vision of nineteenth-century culture and nation building. By reevaluating the legitimizing discourses and foundational authors that, as Palou observes, provided the skeleton of what would become Mexico's twentieth-century literary identity, I hope to open new possibilities for future studies that seek to re-read cultural output in the Mexico's twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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