

# **LATIN AMERICAN ESSAYS**

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## **THE HONDURAN POVERTY-REDUCTION STRATEGY**

**Clarence Zuvekas, Jr.<sup>i</sup>**

Consulting Economist

In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, which caused an estimated \$3.8 billion in damages to the economy in October 1998 (Honduras 1999:4),<sup>ii</sup> Honduras was declared eligible for external debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative adopted in 1996 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.<sup>iii</sup> Under accelerated debt-relief procedures adopted in 1999, Honduras reached its HIPC "decision point" in July 2000, when the IMF and World Bank accepted its interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) and the IMF approved the Government's macroeconomic-policy and structural-reform performance under an economic program supported by a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) loan signed in March 1999. The PRGF provides Honduras concessional balance-of-payments assistance of SDR 156.75 million (about \$198 million at the SDR exchange rate on January 1, 2002) over a three-year period.<sup>iv</sup> Achieving decision-point status allowed Honduras to gain partial, interim access to external debt relief.

To reach its "completion point" and gain full access to the external debt relief programmed under the HIPC Initiative,<sup>v</sup> Honduras must continue to comply with the conditionality established for its PRGF-supported economic program as well as implement its completed PRSP in a satisfactory manner for at least a year. Although the third year of the PRGF was supposed to have begun in March 2001, compliance problems with some conditions delayed its start until October 5, 2001, when the IMF

accepted the final version of Honduras's PRSP (Honduras 2001); the World Bank accepted the PRSP on October 11. If Honduras successfully implements its poverty reduction strategy, it will be able to reach its HIPC completion point as early as October 2002.

This paper discusses recent trends in the incidence of poverty in Honduras, in its various dimensions, as well as the structure and content of Honduras's poverty reduction strategy, or *Estrategia para la Reducción de la Pobreza (ERP)*.<sup>vi</sup> It also examines the participatory process under which the ERP was prepared. Finally, it considers the challenges Honduras will face in arriving at its HIPC completion point and meeting the ERP targets for 2015.

### The Dimensions of Poverty in Honduras

The ERP explicitly considers poverty to be a multidimensional concept. In other words, income-based measures of poverty need to be supplemented by other indicators of well-being that provide more insight into the various manifestations of human deprivation. This concept of poverty reflects what is now a broad international consensus. As long ago as 1990, the World Bank's annual *World Development Report (WDR)* examined poverty not only in its income dimension but also in terms of low achievements in education and health status (World Bank 1990). The *WDR* for 2000/2001 broadens the concept of poverty to include vulnerability and exposure to risk as well as voicelessness and powerlessness (World Bank 2001).

A broad definition of poverty is important for policy purposes because it makes clear that a focus on economic growth and rising *average* incomes--while necessary and of primary importance for reducing poverty over the long run--does not attack all of the root causes of poverty, as will be made clear

below. Still, income-based measures of poverty are an appropriate starting point for examining the incidence of poverty in Honduras and how it has changed since 1990.

### Income-Based Measures of Poverty

Income-based poverty indicators in developing countries must be interpreted with a great deal of caution. International comparisons are especially risky for a variety of conceptual, methodological, and measurement problems that I have discussed elsewhere (USAID 1999:38). It is best under these circumstances to focus on trends in the incidence of poverty in a particular country according to an indicator whose definition and measurement is reasonably consistent over time.

A satisfactory although far from perfect income-based indicator of poverty is available in Honduras from the multipurpose household surveys that have been conducted, semi-annually in most years, for more than a decade. A reasonably consistent measure of the incidence of poverty is available since 1991, and these figures are provided in Table 1. Some international observers would maintain that the data in Table 1 overstate the incidence of poverty in Honduras, as the figures seem high compared to other countries with similar levels of income and patterns of income distribution.<sup>vii</sup> Precisely because of the noncomparability of data among countries, the trend shown by these data is more interesting than the level of poverty they suggest.

TABLE 1  
HONDURAS: INCOME-BASED INCIDENCE OF POVERTY, 1991-  
2001 a/

(percent of households)

Year	<u>Total Poverty</u>			<u>Extreme Poverty</u>		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
1991	74.8	68.4	79.6	54.2	46.7	59.9
1992	69.9	61.6	76.5	47.4	39.2	53.9
1993	67.5	55.5	77.1	45.1	31.6	55.8
1994	67.2	62.6	71.1	47.0	39.8	52.9
1995	67.8	62.8	71.9	47.4	40.6	53.1
1996	68.7	61.0	75.3	53.7	38.7	66.4
1997	65.8	59.0	71.7	48.4	35.2	60.0
1998	63.1	57.0	69.2	45.6	35.7	55.4
1999	65.9	57.3	74.6	48.6	36.5	60.9
2000 <u>b/</u>	-	-	-	-	-	-
2001	64.5	56.3	73.8	47.4	36.1	60.5

Sources: 1991-99: Honduras (2001:9); 2001: Honduras, INE (2001:56).

a/ Based on the first of the semi-annual surveys in each year, except in 1994, when the only survey conducted was in October.

b/ No surveys were conducted in 2000.

The meaning of this trend, however, is not entirely clear. The high 1991 figure--nearly 75%--may have been a temporary spike reflecting the effects of the release of repressed inflation in

1990 when the exchange rate was devalued and various price controls were eliminated or reduced. If one accepts this to be the case, then the reduction in poverty since the early 1990s is relatively modest--from about 70% to about 65%--and roughly in line with what one might expect given the relatively slow economic growth experienced by the country over these years.<sup>viii</sup>

Moreover, the actual decline may have been even less than what the figures in Table 1 show. Calculations by the World Bank indicate that the rise in real incomes reported by the household surveys between 1991 and 1999 partially reflects improvements in the measurement of income over this period. Comparisons between data from the household surveys and the national accounts suggest that the degree to which the surveys underestimate income was reduced over these years. In other words, part of the increased real income reported by the surveys reflects a gradually more complete measurement of income, rather than an actual increase. On the other hand, both the level of GDP and its growth since 1990 are likely underestimated, in part because the national accounts do not fully account for the very rapid growth of the *maquila* (assembly) sector. If the GDP growth rate were indeed higher than reported, the World Bank's downward adjustments to the income growth reported in the household surveys are overstated. Taking these various considerations into account, a reasonable conclusion is that the incidence of income-based poverty in Honduras has declined over the last decade, but not by much.

Table 1 shows that rural poverty has averaged nearly 14 percentage points higher than urban poverty since 1991, and has shown less of an improvement. Rural-urban differences, and the lack of improvement in rural areas, are even more evident in the data on extreme poverty (households with insufficient income to acquire enough food to meet minimum nutritional requirements), which continues

to affect nearly half the country's population, and about 60% of rural residents.

### Unsatisfied Basic Needs

Poverty may also be defined in terms of the satisfaction of "basic needs," which of course may be defined in many different ways. The Honduran household surveys provide data on six such basic needs: potable water; sanitary services; primary education; capacity of the household to provide subsistence (a combination of education of the head of household and employment); housing space (no overcrowding); and housing quality (not built from scrap materials and, in urban areas, non-earthen floors).

The data in table 2 show a significant reduction since 1990 in the incidence of poverty defined in terms of households with unsatisfied basic needs (UBN). For the country as a whole, the incidence of UBN among Honduran households fell from 67% in 1990 to 48% in 1999. Households with two or more UBN fell from 42% of the total to 22% over this same period. The greatest progress occurred in education, while the least was in the two housing indicators.



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TABLE 2  
UNSATISFIED BASIC NEEDS (UBN), SELECTED YEARS, 1990-1999

(percent of households)

	1990	1993	1997	1999
National				
Total with UBN	67	53	47	48
1 UBN	25	28	26	26
2 UBN	20	15	13	14
>2 UBN	22	10	8	8
Urban				
Total with UBN	50	43	35	37
1 UBN	24	23	22	23
2 UBN	13	11	8	9
>2 UBN	13	9	5	5
Rural				
Total with UBN	80	62	58	58
1 UBN	26	32	29	30
2 UBN	26	19	18	18
>2 UBN	28	11	11	10

Source: Honduras (2001:10).

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## Undernourishment

Another dimension of well-being is that of nutrition. A time series of data on the prevalence of undernourishment among first-grade students, six year of age and older, is available for selected years between 1986 and 1997 (Table 3). These data show that the incidence of undernourishment fell

from 39.8% of first graders in 1986 to 34.1% in 1990, but then rose to 40.6% by 1997.

Nutrition figures, however, are difficult to relate to other poverty indicators because nutritional status is determined largely by food consumption (and health) in the first few years of life. Thus the data for 1997, the most recent available, probably reflect conditions in the early 1990s more than those of 1997. Accordingly, it is difficult to tell whether nutrition has been improving during the course of the 1990s. The data are nonetheless disturbing in that they suggest essentially no change in nutritional status between the early 1980s and the early 1990s. This poverty indicator, like the others presented above, shows that poverty is a greater problem in rural areas than in urban centers.

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TABLE 3  
NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF FIRST-GRADERS, SELECTED YEARS,  
1986-1997

(percent undernourished)

Year	Total	Urban	Rural
1986	39.8	n.a.	n.a.
1990	34.1	24.4	40.8
1993	35.5	26.0	40.6
1994	38.1	27.2	44.1
1995	38.6	27.6	44.7
1996	38.0	26.1	44.7
1997	40.6	28.5	47.6

Source: Honduras (2001:11).

---

## General Observations on the Poverty Indicators

The various indicators reported in Tables 1-3 present a mixed picture of poverty trends in last decade or so. The income-based measure suggests only a modest reduction in the incidence of poverty, and the nutrition indicator (with the qualifications noted above) suggests a slight deterioration. Meanwhile, the unsatisfied basic needs (UBN) indicator shows a substantial improvement in a set of six non-income dimensions of poverty.

Two principal lessons may be derived from this brief review of poverty indicators in Honduras. First, conceptual, methodological, and measurement problems limit the reliability of the data. Second, it is important to consider multiple dimensions of poverty, for these dimensions may be improving (or deteriorating) at very different rates, and these differences can provide hints for establishing priorities for a poverty-reduction strategy.

In any event, it is clear that poverty is a serious problem in Honduras. The country has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the Western Hemisphere, and it ranks 113 among the 174 countries for which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has calculated its Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>ix</sup> Within Latin America and the Caribbean, Honduras's HDI of 0.653 in 1998 exceeded only those of Bolivia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Haiti (UNDP 2000).

## Elements of the Poverty-Reduction Strategy

### Overall Vision

The Honduran poverty-reduction strategy (ERP) has a long-term, comprehensive vision that covers policies, programs, and projects related not only to economic growth and to social-sector and infrastructure investments targeted to the poor, but also to environmental protection and participatory democracy.

The ERP covers a 15-year period and is conceived as a broad commitment of Honduran society that can be maintained through several changes of government. It was prepared by the Unidad de Apoyo Técnico (UNAT), an economic- and social-policy entity under the Ministry of the Presidency, which obtained inputs both from various government agencies and through consultations with civil society, the business community, and the various political parties.

### Targets

The ERP establishes eleven broad targets that take into account international goals for the year 2015 adopted by the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank. The targets for 2015 are:

1. Reduce income-based poverty and extreme poverty by 24 percentage points (from 66% and 49%, respectively, to 42% and 25%).
2. Double the net preschool enrolment rate from 31% to 62%.
3. Raise the net enrolment rate in the first two cycles of basic education (grades 1-6) from 86.2% to 95%.
4. Double the net enrolment rate in the third cycle of basic education (grades 7-9) from 35% to 70%.

5. Raise the proportion of new labor-force entrants that have completed their secondary education from 25% to 50%.
6. Reduce infant and child mortality rates by half, from 33 and 44 per 1,000 live births, respectively, to 17 and 22.
7. Decrease malnutrition rates in children under five from 40% (in 1997) to 20%.
8. Reduce the maternal mortality rate by half, from 147 to 73 per 100,000 live births.
9. Raise access to potable water and sanitation facilities from 81% and 70%, respectively, to 95% in both cases.
10. Achieve parity and raise the UNDP's gender-related Human Development Index (HDI) by 20%, from 0.640 to 0.770.
11. Implement a sustainable-development strategy to protect the environment.

These targets are ambitious but feasible. They will require sound macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment measures that encourage private investment in productive activities, as well as significant increases in expenditures directly focused on poverty reduction.

### Strategic Guidelines

The ERP (pp. 55-59) sets forth five strategic guidelines for defining and prioritizing policies, programs, and projects:

1. Prioritize actions that tend to reduce poverty in a sustainable manner. This guideline calls attention to the distinction between poverty *alleviation* (short-term measures dealing with symptoms whose effects are generally transitory) and poverty *reduction* (long-term measures attacking the root causes of poverty and producing permanent effects), and

recognizes that the latter must receive priority in order to achieve widespread and lasting reductions in poverty. At the same time, poverty-alleviation (or safety-net) measures cannot be neglected, for both humanitarian and pragmatic reasons. As Lustig (2000:15) argues: "Safety nets can help avoid irreversible damage to poor households' human capital[;] . . . compensate the poor so that their preferred adjustment path coincides with the one that is the most efficient for the overall economy[; and] . . . facilitate the implementation of stabilization and reforms from a political point of view."

Lustig (2000:16) also argues that safety-net programs should include poverty-reduction characteristics to the extent possible (e.g. targeted human-development programs and scholarships for poor children).<sup>x</sup> The ERP adopts this view and further states (p. 55) that "subsidies and transfers for alleviating poverty will be assigned only to the lowest income strata, i.e. those least able to meet the cost of the basic food basket."

2. Prioritize actions favoring the least developed groups and geographic areas of the country. The ERP seeks to ensure that the Departments with the lowest HDIs and highest levels of UBN have per capita social expenditures that are at least equal to those in the Departments with more favorable indicators. Within the poorest Departments, special attention will be given to the rural poor, since the incidence of poverty is greater in rural areas than in urban centers. Other groups that will be targeted include households with large numbers of children, those headed by women, those whose heads are very young or senior citizens, and those with low levels of schooling. Ethnic groups with a high incidence of poverty will also be targeted.

3. Strengthen civil-society participation and decentralization. The ERP envisions greater decentralization of public services, although the process is expected to be gradual and in line with absorptive capacity, which varies greatly among Honduras's 298 municipalities, many of which have fewer than

10,000 people. Efforts will be made to provide training and technical assistance to strengthen the technical and managerial capabilities of the poorer municipalities. The process of decentralization envisioned by the ERP, it should be recognized, is a limited one, based only on transfers of functions and Central Government funding; it does not include the transfer of revenue-generating authority, which would give municipalities greater independence.

The ERP also contemplates a strong role for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in project implementation, building on the experience gained by NGOs in helping to implement the *Plan Maestro de Reconstrucción y Transformación Nacional (PMRTN)*, which was developed in response to Hurricane Mitch.

4. Strengthen governance and participatory democracy. The ERP seeks to strengthen democratic development by increasing the participation of low-income people in policy formulation and decision-making at various levels; modernizing and increasing the transparency of public administration; modernizing the functioning of the Legislature; strengthening the judicial system to provide more secure property rights, thus encouraging investment, and to enhance personal security; and ensuring the effectiveness of the newly established National Anticorruption Council.

5. Reducing environmental vulnerability and its impact on poverty. To break the vicious circle between poverty and environmental degradation, the ERP contemplates a wide range of environmental-protection activities, including institutional strengthening; disaster prevention, mitigation, and awareness programs; land-use planning; sustainable, decentralized, and participatory management of water basins and micro-basins; the use of financial incentives and instruments such as carbon markets to promote sustainable management of natural

resources; and the establishment of an environmental fund to support local environmental projects.

### Program Areas

The Strategy is to be implemented through policies, programs, and projects in six broad areas: (1) accelerating equitable and sustainable economic growth; (2) reducing poverty in rural areas; (3) reducing urban poverty; (4) investing in human capital; (5) strengthening social protection for specific groups; and (6) guaranteeing the sustainability of the Strategy.

**Accelerating Economic Growth.** In giving a high priority to economic growth, the ERP recognizes the overwhelming evidence that rapid and sustained economic growth over the long run is the most effective way to reduce poverty.<sup>xi</sup> It is difficult to improve incomes and various other dimensions of living standards when output growth does little more than keep up with population growth. For example, a stagnant economy means stagnant tax revenues for undertaking investments in the various other program areas discussed below, at least when it is politically difficult to raise tax revenues as a percentage of GDP.

The ERP seeks to accelerate economic growth by (a) ensuring a stable macroeconomic framework (basically adhering to the program supported by the PRGF); (b) increasing investment and improving its efficiency, in order to provide more and better-quality employment opportunities; (c) improving competitive access to international markets, through various trade-policy reforms; and (d) emphasizing the development of sectors with high production and employment potential (agro-industry, forestry, light assembly, and tourism).

Economic growth by itself, however, can go only so far in reducing poverty. In countries with highly unequal income distributions, such as Honduras, the ability of economic growth



to reduce poverty is not as great as in those where income inequality is less (de Janvry and Sadoulet 2001:7). Accordingly, significant progress in reducing poverty requires investments and other interventions targeted specifically at various low-income groups.

Reducing Rural Poverty. To reduce the high incidence of poverty in rural areas, the ERP emphasizes actions to (a) provide more equitable access to land and improve land-tenure security; (b) promote sustainable development in highly vulnerable geographic areas, through mechanisms that stress the participation of local governments and communities; (c) improve the competitiveness of small economic units through better access to infrastructure, market-support services, technology, and credit; and (d) improve social conditions through investments in water and sanitation systems and housing, and through food-assistance programs that combine elements of poverty alleviation and poverty reduction.

The health of the rural economy will be determined primarily by that of the agricultural sector, as the demand for non-agricultural goods and services produced in rural areas depends mainly on the level of agricultural incomes. The health of the agricultural sector is determined not only by direct public investments in agriculture and supporting rural infrastructure, but also to a very high degree on macroeconomic policies, including exchange-rate policy. In this regard, the significant real effective appreciation of the *lempira* in recent years has had a negative effect on the competitiveness of Honduras's agricultural exports. This situation makes it especially difficult for the rural economy to recover from the devastating blows dealt to the country since 1998 by Hurricane Mitch and by the sharp decline in the price of coffee, which is a major crop for large numbers of small and medium-size farmers.

Reducing Urban Poverty. Urban poverty-reduction efforts will focus on (a) stimulating the development of micro, small,

and medium-size enterprises; (b) promoting the development of intermediate cities, which will require strengthening their linkages with productive activities in surrounding rural areas; (c) providing support to low-income housing programs; and (d) improving access to basic services (potable water, sanitation, electricity, and transport) in poor urban areas.

**Investing in Human Capital.** This element of the ERP seeks to strengthen the human capital of various poor groups in Honduran society by (a) improving the quality and coverage of basic and technical education; (b) increasing access to health services and improving their quality; and (c) enhancing the cultural wealth of the country, fostering national identity, and promoting civic, ethical, moral, and democratic values.

The ERP stresses the importance not only of increasing the coverage of basic educational and health services (primary-education coverage is relatively high for Honduras's level of development, but secondary-education coverage is not), but also of improving its quality, which generally is poor. In my view, the ability of Honduras to achieve a thorough reform of its educational system will be the major determinant of its economic-growth performance over the long run.<sup>xii</sup>

The focus on cultural and related values is interesting in that this dimension of poverty has generally been neglected. In Honduras, however, consultations with civil society (see below) revealed a widespread and deep concern with these values in all areas of the country. Promoting cultural values and activities can have direct linkages with productive activities to reduce poverty, particularly in the tourism sector. In addition, stronger civic, ethical, moral, and democratic values will intensify pressures for good governance, which economists have increasingly recognized as an important determinant of economic growth.

**Protecting Specific Vulnerable Groups.** The diagnostic sections of the ERP note that insufficient opportunities and low

levels of human, physical, and social assets contribute to the intergenerational reproduction of poverty among vulnerable groups in the population, including children, adolescents, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, women, and ethnic peoples. The first four of these groups will be targeted through a variety of social-safety-net (SSN) programs, while problems of gender and ethnic inequality will be addressed through both SSN programs and legal and institutional reforms that will need to be implemented vigorously to be effective.

Guaranteeing the Sustainability of the Strategy. A sustainable ERP will require not only the maintenance of sound economic policies but also measures to (a) increase transparency and participatory democracy; (b) strengthen the administration of justice and personal security; (c) modernize and decentralize government services; and (d) improve environmental protection and risk management.

Transparency and participation have improved significantly since Hurricane Mitch, and important steps have been taken to reduce corruption. Even so, key elements of society still believe their views are not taken into account, and Honduras retains its reputation as being one of the most corrupt countries in Latin America.<sup>xiii</sup> Progress in judicial reform has been slow, and personal security (a major theme in the 2001 presidential-election campaign) is widely believed to have deteriorated. Likewise, progress in decentralization and improved environmental protection has not advanced as rapidly as many had hoped.

### Cost of Implementing the Strategy

The total cost of implementing the ERP over its 15-year lifetime (2001-2015) has been estimated at \$2,666 million. This figure includes \$769 million in resources from programs and projects already under way when the ERP was completed, plus

\$1,897 million in new activities. The actual cost is likely to be greater, since program and project activities beyond 2005 have not been fully identified (appropriately, given the increasing uncertainties associated with projections and programming beyond the medium term).<sup>xiv</sup>

### **Civil-Society Participation in Preparing the Strategy<sup>xv</sup>**

The participation of Honduran civil society in the formulation of economic and social policies historically has been weak. Nevertheless, civil-society organizations are stronger and have been less subject to repression than those in some other Central American countries, especially since the banana workers gained recognition of their union in 1954. The limited effectiveness of these groups derives mainly from internal institutional weaknesses and the fragmented nature of their efforts.

Civil-society participation in public policy-making was boosted in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, in part because external donors prodded the Government to involve civil society in preparing the country's reconstruction plan (Honduras 1999). Moreover, the international-donor community began to play an aggressive and positive role in facilitating consultations between the Government and representatives of civil society.<sup>xvi</sup> This involvement has been made formal in the efforts of the so-called "Group of Five" (now Group of 15) external donors charged by the Stockholm Consultative Group with monitoring the implementation of the reconstruction plan (PMRTN). The Group of 15 has established 13 sectoral working groups—including one on economic growth and poverty—that hold periodic meetings of both a bilateral (donors-Government) and trilateral (donors-Government-civil society) nature. Not all sectoral working groups have been effective fora for resolving implementation problems and generating new ideas; but the

economic growth/poverty group has been. Its scope now includes monitoring the implementation of the ERP as well as the PMRTN.

Initial PMRTN consultations between the Government and civil society were tentative, incomplete, not fully transparent, and characterized by high levels of mistrust on both sides. The confrontational attitude adopted by some civil-society groups, and the Government's reluctance to share more than summaries of its PMRTN drafts, limited the extent of the dialogue. Over time, and especially during the course of preparing the ERP, both sides became more comfortable with the process, and the quality of the dialogue improved. The final drafts of the ERP were widely circulated in advance of consultations, and the final version of the Strategy was posted on a Honduran Government web site.

The participatory process was coordinated by the Social Cabinet, which comprises key ministries and other public-sector entities concerned with social policy, acting through a technical team that supported the preparation of the ERP. Each phase of the consultation process was defined jointly by the Social Cabinet and the Commission for Civil Society Participation in National Reconstruction and Transformation. The Commission includes representatives of the following umbrella organizations of civil society, broadly defined:

- . The Foro Nacional de Convergencia (FONAC);
- . Espacio Interforos (a major grouping of NGOs and grassroots organizations);
- . The Asociación de Municipalidades de Honduras (AMHON);
- . The Federación de Organizaciones Privadas de Desarrollo de Honduras (FOPRIDEH); and
- . The Cámaras de Industria y Comercio of Tegucigalpa and Cortés.<sup>xvii</sup>

The consultation process, carried out between January 2000 and May 2001, included 11 work activities in Tegucigalpa, some involving hundreds of participants; regional consultations with civil-society representatives in seven cities on the diagnostic sections of the Strategy; and consultations in 13 cities on a draft of the full ERP. Approximately 3,500 persons participated in these consultations, including representatives of small farmers, labor unions, ethnic groups, women's organizations, teachers, the media, business and professional organizations, NGOs, community organizations, cooperatives, churches, municipal governments, and legislators from various political parties.

Civil-society comments and suggestions were incorporated into the ERP when they were clearly focused on the poor population; promoted more equitable access to basic public services; strengthened or clarified policies, programs, and projects; introduced important new activities; strengthened the noneconomic dimensions of well-being; and demonstrated favorable benefit-cost relationships.<sup>xviii</sup>

Many civil-society suggestions, however, were not accepted. These tended to be of three types: (1) subsidies that would not necessarily benefit the poorest groups in society, or that for other reasons would misallocate productive resources to the detriment of sustainable long-term economic growth and overall poverty reduction; (2) policies, programs, and projects clearly shown by international experience to be ineffective (e.g. massive subsidized-credit programs and price controls); and (3) programs and projects for local areas, which nevertheless may be important for regional poverty-reduction strategies (see below).

In addition, only general objectives were established for some areas-e.g., agrarian reform, agricultural insurance, and

electoral reform-for which a sufficiently broad national consensus had not yet been established.

Finally, the ERP necessarily had to operate within the financial constraints required for maintaining sound macroeconomic management. Failure to sustain good macroeconomic performance, and to comply with the structural-reform objectives of the economic program supported by the PRGF, would make Honduras ineligible for full debt relief under the HIPC Initiative.<sup>xix</sup> It would also mean that Honduras would lose significant external resources necessary for implementing the ERP.

A number of civil-society groups whose high-priority activities were not accepted in the ERP have complained that their views were ignored. Their unhappiness is understandable; but a more appropriate reading of the situation is that their recommendations were reviewed and some were found to be technically inappropriate for meeting *national* objectives of reducing poverty. Although the rejected policies, programs, and projects might have provided benefits to some poor people, these benefits would likely have been temporary, too costly, and/or not confined to the poor.

### Implementation Challenges

Honduran-government entities, as well as civil-society groups, invested a great deal of time and effort in preparing the country's poverty-reduction strategy. An equally strong effort will be necessary to ensure that the ERP does not suffer the same neglect as most of the national development plans prepared by LAC countries under the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s and 1970s.

The ERP itself (pp. 117-119) identifies six major risks facing the successful implementation of the strategy. Three are internal and can be addressed effectively by governmental and

civil-society actions. The others are external, largely but not completely beyond the country's influence.

The first internal risk is that of an insufficiently strong national consensus, especially for implementing the key economic and social reforms identified in the ERP. An immediate test of the country's ability to confront this risk is being provided by the inauguration on January 27, 2002 of a new administration, with political leadership passing from Carlos Flores Facussé of the Partido Liberal to Ricardo Maduro of the Partido Nacional. Initial indications are that the new administration is strongly committed to the economic program being supported under the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). Adherence to this program would facilitate Honduras's ability to reach its HIPC completion point by the end of 2002 and receive the full external-debt relief programmed under this Initiative. Another encouraging sign is that the new President has had direct experience in educational reform,<sup>xx</sup> one of the most important areas in which Honduras must make major advances in order to reduce poverty significantly over the long run.

If the HIPC completion point is reached successfully by the end of 2002 or soon thereafter, debt-relief benefits will become irrevocable, and external pressures to continue implementing the ERP will diminish (but will not disappear entirely). Strong political leadership thus will be necessary to maintain an adequate consensus on poverty-reduction measures. Maintaining and even strengthening the consultation process with civil society will be key to retaining a strong national commitment to poverty reduction.

Another internal risk to the successful implementation of the ERP is the country's limited implementation capacity, a reflection of weak technical, managerial, and administrative skills, as well as a legal and institutional framework that historically has not provided a high degree of transparency in



contracting and implementing public-sector investments and services. Again, strong political leadership will be required to assure the success of reforms recently adopted in these areas.

The third internal risk consists of threats to sound fiscal management. Pressures on the revenue side of the budget include those for reductions, exonerations, or delays in the payment of taxes and tariffs. On the expenditure side, various groups are constantly seeking new or increased subsidies and direct transfers. But perhaps the greatest spending pressures in recent years have been the demands by public employees (notably teachers and medical personnel) for large salary increases. Satisfying many of these demands has raised total public-sector wages and salaries by several percentage points of GDP. A clear, uniform, and equitable wage-and-salary policy, based on technical criteria, would make it easier for the government to keep these expenditures within the boundaries of prudent fiscal management. Maintaining sound fiscal policies is essential for the long-run success of the ERP.

The external risks include, first, the possibility that international-assistance levels, including debt-relief under the HIPC Initiative, will be less than expected. While these flows will depend largely on factors beyond Honduras's control, this risk can be reduced by demonstrating to external donors that the country is improving its capacity to use external resources transparently and efficiently, and also is maintaining sound macroeconomic policies that stimulate economic growth and private investment.

Another external risk that Honduras must face is its high degree of vulnerability to developments in the world economy. This vulnerability was acutely evident in 2001, when world prices fell for coffee--one of Honduras's principal exports--and the dynamic growth of the *maquila* sector was halted by the slowdown of the U.S. economy, which began well before September 11. Honduras can minimize these risks by further

diversifying its export base and export markets, and by continuing to maintain a relatively high level of foreign-exchange reserves so that import levels can be sustained without significant pressures on the exchange rate.

Honduras must also face the risks associated with its location in a geographic area of the world that is highly prone to hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, and other natural disasters. Events such as Hurricane Mitch cannot be prevented, but their impact can be reduced through more effective programs of disaster prevention and mitigation. Despite progress since Hurricane Mitch, Honduras still lacks a national strategy for confronting natural disasters, and its legal and institutional framework remains weak.

Since economic growth and therefore poverty reduction will depend largely on the quality of the country's macroeconomic policies and its structural-reform measures, recent efforts to convince the public of the importance of these actions-through dialogue with civil society-should be maintained and strengthened. Public acceptance of reform efforts generally has been increasing; but resistance remains strong to such reforms as privatization and the removal of subsidies that benefit middle- and upper-income groups more than the poor. Moreover, Hondurans remain fond of ill-conceived subsidized-credit programs.

Finally, poverty reduction can be facilitated by stronger initiatives to develop and implement poverty-reduction strategies at the subnational level. These initiatives will be most effective if they are based on joint efforts by local governments, private enterprise, and civil society. Local leadership in each of these sectors will need to look less to the national government for answers and resources, and more to what they themselves can contribute.

## ***Notes***

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<sup>i</sup> The author has served since 1997 as a consultant to the Unidad de Apoyo Técnico (UNAT), the Honduran Government entity responsible for preparing the country's poverty reduction strategy in the context of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt-relief initiative coordinated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Funding for the author's consulting services has been provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through a contract with a consortium headed by Chemonics International Inc. and including Management Systems International (MSI), with which the author has a direct consulting relationship. Responsibility for the material presented in this paper rests solely with the author and in no way should be construed to represent the views of UNAT, USAID, Chemonics, or MSI.

<sup>ii</sup> A survey of 2,398 households in 80 of the country's poorest municipalities, conducted 7-9 months after the disaster, found that Mitch caused 45% of these households to incur medical, housing-reconstruction, or other expenses. Nearly 37% suffered crop losses; 20% lost non-housing assets; 8% lost wages; and 5% lost business income. Short-term relief programs covered less than 10% of these losses (Morris et al. 2002). Many households, however, benefited later from various public and private programs.

<sup>iii</sup> Even before October 1998, Honduras had expressed an interest in acquiring HIPC status. However, its income level was probably too high, and its debt indicators not sufficiently burdensome, to make it eligible for HIPC benefits, even though some economists (see Esquivel, Larraín B. and Sachs 1998) attempted to make a case that the country could qualify under

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**FINDING AN ALLIANCE: RETHINKING ARGENTINE-UNITED STATES  
COLD WAR RELATIONS**

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In Argentina, the end of the Cold War coincided with Carlos Menem's election to the presidency. A charismatic leader, Menem brilliantly integrated disparate and often conflicting strands of the Peronist movement into his politics. He campaigned against the post-dictatorship Radical Party government of President Raúl Alfonsín, in disarray over its inability to slow economic decline and hyperinflation. Menem's presidential run featured traditional Peronist calls for a strong union movement in defense of national industry, an end to the foreign debt burden, and oblique criticisms of international capital. His victory and early assumption of office in late 1989 made foreign and domestic business leaders nervous. Nevertheless, in the most stunning about face in twentieth century Argentine politics, within eighteen months Menem had reinvented himself and his party. In the late 1980s the Reagan and Bush administrations had placed a new policy emphasis on the free movement of goods and capital in and out of stable democratic polities in the Americas. Following similar shifts in Brazil and Mexico, Menem aligned his economic and foreign policies with those of Washington.

Menem's shift not only redefined Peronism but set in place sharp policy shifts that dovetailed with post-Cold War initiatives in Washington. So radical were the reversals in Argentine foreign relations that through the latter half of 1990 that the Foreign Ministry sponsored a series of high

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level private meetings in different locations to explain the shift to incredulous senior diplomats. At home, the government changed the law to pave the way for the privatization of government businesses and industries that had defined so-called state capitalism for more than a generation. Menem broke the political power of organized labor and cleared restrictions on foreign investment and capitalization. In the international sphere, political scientist and special adviser to the foreign minister Carlos Escudé led planning for and the execution of Argentina's withdrawal from the non-aligned movement after twenty years of membership. For the first time ever, Argentines and Americans can be said to have "fought side by side" with the sending of an Argentine warship to the Persian Gulf in support of American forces during the Gulf War. After more than two decades of charting a nuclear non-proliferation policy at odds with Washington's, the Argentine government reversed itself overnight accepting the premise for the first time that there could be no hypothetical, theoretical, or practical distinction between belligerent and non-belligerent nuclear testing. In the early 1990s, after decades of opposing U.S.-led, Organization of American States (OAS)-sponsored interventions in the Americas, Argentina joined the failed international effort to help bring democracy to Haiti.<sup>iii</sup>

During the 1990s, the unprecedented success of U.S. policy in Argentina and the alignment of Argentine foreign policy with U.S. goals stand in contrast to more ambiguous and sometimes hostile bilateral relations for much of the twentieth century. Moreover, Argentine and non-Argentine commentators have highlighted this divide; before 1989, the two countries were antagonists, more often than not. After, they were allies. Without wishing to diminish the

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importance of Argentina's post-Cold War policy shift, this paper will argue that it is inaccurate to imagine US-Argentine relations before 1990 as a polar opposite to what followed. There were hostile episodes in bilateral ties. Argentine democrats lamented Washington's friendships with the Argentine military. There was ongoing conflict on a variety of trade issues, including the problem of beef and foot-and-mouth disease. The two countries clashed repeatedly on the problem of international lending and finance policy. Despite these very real points of contention, Cold War relations between the two countries were strong, consistent, framed by extensive cultural ties, and oriented around common economic objectives and Cold War security. Some key components of the post-1990 Argentine-United States policy alignment came in a context outside of bilateral ties (for example, the shift toward open markets throughout Latin America). This is also true of some of the most important points of bilateral tension during the Cold War, framed in a context that went well beyond the United States and Argentina. The rhetoric of successive Argentine governments, for example, in defense of economic nationalism came in a larger Latin American intellectual and political climate of *cepalismo* and *desarrollismo*. These and other points of Cold War bilateral friction must be reconceived in the context of persistently strong ties between the two countries. This paper will focus primarily on two areas of Cold War ties during the 1950s and 1960s, each of which helped strengthen U.S.-Argentine relations over time and established key precedents for the decades that followed. First, in a context of growing bilateral business ties but continued economic tensions and misunderstandings between the two countries, American cultural influences in Argentina became enormous and

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helped shape Argentine interest in and sympathy for American society. Second, Argentina became a reliable Cold War ally for Washington in the fight against communism and in the application of National Security Doctrine precepts.

Cold War era bilateral ties were likely at their worst before 1950 when the U.S. government backed a determined effort to undermine Argentine economic strength and independence.<sup>iii</sup> After 1950, Perón abandoned some elements of his economic nationalism. Improved relations were sparked in part by a U.S. Export-Import Bank loan and a new Argentine law in 1953 that reopened the country to foreign investment. They were given a further boost with a series of contracts between the Argentine government and Standard Oil and with the collapse of Perón's "*tercera posición*" diplomacy. Change came quickly with heavy new American investments in Argentina in the 1950s and strong Argentine support for US Cold War policies in Latin America and beyond.<sup>iii</sup>

In comparison to credits offered to Brazil and to countries in other parts of the world, U.S. financial assistance to Argentina was weak. For Washington, this simply represented a combination of Argentina's relative insignificance as a strategic and investment priority, and a persistent sense that Argentine authorities could do more on their own to spark economic growth, limit social uncertainty, and resolve disputes between U.S. companies and the Argentine government. American officials pressured for open trade and finance policies in Argentina, but when the Argentine government acceded, the Americans seemed always to want more. Even so, there is no evidence to suggest that had the U.S. government been more supportive of Argentina financially and otherwise that Argentina's

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growing economic problems through the early 1960s might have been solved.<sup>iii</sup>

Like other Latin Americans, Argentines followed an American lead in the rapid cultural and ideological changes that accompanied Cold War tensions in North America. In fashion, American styles predominated. In the early 1950s, women showed a new found social independence by moving their skirt hemlines up to their knees or slightly higher. Male Argentine designers exalted women's curves, as did their American counterparts. American technology and culture found their way into Argentine radio. In the late 1940s, Argentines modeled radio programs on their American equivalents. There were large studio audiences. Tarzan, Batman and Robin, and other American stories were serialized in Buenos Aires. American companies sponsored programs and contests for listeners and audience members.<sup>iii</sup>

In 1943, the government tried to control the diffusion of American cultural influences by limiting jazz on the radio. The effort did not last. Popular on radio and in nightclubs since the 1920s, a broad range of American-influenced jazz styles – from Louis Armstrong to Charlie Parker – caught the imagination of thousands of Argentines in the late 1940s and 1950s. Cab Calloway toured with his orchestra in 1951. In 1956, Dizzie Gillespie played in the "Casino" nightclub in Buenos Aires. Gillespie also performed on Argentine radio and, with the pianist Osvaldo Fresedo, made a series of recordings in Buenos Aires that included a composition by Astor Piazzola. Argentine musicians inspired by Miles Davis, Charles Mingus and other Americans won international recognition in the 1950s. Piazzola and Gato Barbieri moved easily between New York and Buenos Aires, as did Lalo Schiffrin, long before his jazz days ended and he wrote the theme to "Mission Impossible." These and other musicians



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fused Argentine and American jazz rhythms in their work. Jamaica, Café de Jazz, Hot Club, Jazz Club Cultural, and many other jazz clubs thrived in Buenos Aires and other cities.<sup>iii</sup>

Television had powerful American influences. Before the first Argentine transmissions, the Buenos Aires press reported excitedly from the United States on the impact television was having. In 1951, the entrepreneur Jaime Yankelevich convinced Perón to allow the import of television sets and broadcast equipment from the United States. Yankelevich told the Buenos Aires daily *La Prensa*, "I'm going to the United States to bring back television. If the Argentine government agrees, fine, if not, I'm bringing it anyway." It is not that Yankelevich doubted Perón's authority. He simply recognized early what many other Argentines would see much later; American popular culture was powerful, influential, and likely unstoppable. In New York, he met representatives of RCA Victor, ITT, Dumont, and Federal Communications. David Sarnoff and Dan Panley introduced him to the mayor of New York. Yankelevich returned to Argentina with a transmitter, studio equipment, an antenna, six Standard Electric cameras, and 450 Capheart television sets. On 21 September 1951 his Channel 7 went on the air. Advertising agencies had no more important or aggressive clients than television manufacturers. According to Carlos Montero, an employee of the Pueyrredón Propaganda advertising agency, in the late 1940s and early 1950s "one of our clients was Standard Electric and our principal preoccupation was selling television sets." Adolfo Suárez, a car dealer and the concessionaire for Admiral televisions in Buenos Aires, produced the country's first situation comedy. He based it on "I Love Lucy" which he saw while on a trip to the United States. General Electric

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sponsored the first variety show. The Argentine television producer Eddie Williams commented on how common television salespersons had become. In "Una ventana a la vida," a situation comedy that first went to air in 1952, Williams remarked that "for whatever reason, in the most unusual circumstances of humor or passion, a television salesman would appear on screen."<sup>iii</sup>

The Argentine fascination with American television continued through the 1950s and 1960s. In 1956, the first dubbed American series reached Argentina. They included "Cisco Kid," "Boston Blake," starring Chester Morris, and "Patrulla de caminos" with Broderick Crawford. In the latter, Argentines watched enthralled by high speed chase scenes on American highways, gunshots that almost never hurt anybody, and American story lines pitting good guys against bad guys. "Odol pregunta por \$1,000,000," "La cabalgata Gillette de los cien mil pesos," "La cacería de los quinientos mil pesos" and other game shows modeled on their American equivalents went to air in 1956, as did the Argentine musical comedy "Field's College." In the latter, actors appeared as Argentines imagined American teenagers would dress, with leather jackets, hoop skirts and bobby socks. Disney Studios' "Zorro," starring Guy Williams and Henry Calvin reached Argentina in 1957. The show developed a cult following among Argentine children, already primed by American adventure movies and comic books. Inspired by the show's success, Argentine producers tried an adventure show of their own the same year. "El capitán Minverva" boasted more than 400 actors and horses for its elaborate action scenes shot on a huge sound stage at Plaza Francia and on a pirate ship reproduction built in the port of Buenos Aires.<sup>iii</sup>

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The Argentine literary world remained more reserved toward the United States than did the television or film industries.<sup>iii</sup> However, American ideological, political, and literary influences marked the Argentine cultural landscape here as well. Eva Perón grew up in the town of Los Toldos dreaming of movie stars and exchanging photographs of Hollywood actresses with her sisters. Jorge Luis Borges was also deeply inspired by the creativity of John Huston, Orson Welles and a number of other American directors. He wrote dozens of movie reviews for the prominent literary magazine *Sur*. One of Argentina's most important twentieth century authors, Manuel Puig, was one of many writing in the 1950s and 1960s who had similar experiences, drawing on cultural links to the United States throughout their careers. Ironically, like many Argentine authors, Puig wrote his best work outside Argentina. More striking still, Puig penned his most important work of fiction, *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (1968) in New York, coming to an understanding of his own society through the prism of Hollywood films and life in New York in the early 1960s.

When Puig moved to New York in 1963 he entered one of his most important creative periods. He stayed first at the YMCA working as a translator and a waiter. He saw Anne Bancroft on stage in the Broadway production of *Mother Courage* and was a frequent visitor to the art deco, cavernous movie theatres on the Upper East Side. He obtained a Green Card and began writing *Rita Hayworth*. By September 1964, Puig had written several chapters of his novel. Though well versed in the works of dozens of American and European writers, it was only in New York that he began to explore the literature of Argentina in earnest, working in the New York Public Library. Here he discovered the works of Alfonsina Storni, Roberto Arlt, and Eduardo

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Mallea among many others. Puig finished *Rita Hayworth* in 1965. Its monologues and its observations on Argentine family life and society were inspired by Hollywood film genres, by the writings of John Dos Passos, and by the pop art of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. Puig had come, in fact, to his own autobiographical material in *Rita Hayworth* through a series of Hollywood-inspired metaphors. In the end, it was impossible to extract American popular culture from the works of one of the era's most creative Argentine writer.<sup>iii</sup>

Warhol and Lichtenstein were two of the many American influences on the vibrant world of Argentine modern art. In 1958, IKA organized a competition for Córdoba artists and a year later, the contest was expanded to the sixteen provinces of the center, north, Cuyo and Litoral regions of Argentina. According to Kaiser, the decision to base a new and influential prize for the arts in Argentina's second most important city was an effort to find new artistic talent. It was also a political move on the part of the company to open a new cultural space outside of Buenos Aires that it might influence. In addition to building workers' housing, medical clinics, and schools – what Kaiser called public relations projects – the company was interested in advancing its reputation through fostering the plastic arts. IKA's interest in the arts was tied to a U.S. government and an Organization of American States (OAS) vision that modern art – as a pure expression of free speech in a democratic society – might be used to counter Soviet cultural influences internationally. In 1961, José Gómez Sicre, head of the Visual Arts Division of the OAS, told Buenos Aires journalists that he was worried that “complots políticos internacionales” were at work in converting the Bienal de San Pablo art competition into a forum for the

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"wonders of Soviet bloc culture."<sup>iii</sup> Gómez Sicre saw as his mandate to challenge that communist presence in South America. In Argentina, he served as a judge at both the first and second IKA-sponsored Córdoba exhibits, the Bienales Americanas de Arte <sup>iii</sup>

The 1962 Bienal Americana reflected a Cold War-influenced Pan Americanism.<sup>iii</sup> Now expanded to include artists from Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, prizes were awarded in a manner consciously meant to emphasize cooperation – a prize for an artist from each country participating. After Córdoba, the exhibit moved to several other locales, including Washington where critics acclaimed it.<sup>iii</sup> According to the art historian Andrea Giunta, images in the assembled works suggested a modernist and triumphal epic of the Americas. In her works "Los que vieron la luna" and "El astronauta," for example, the noted Argentine painter Raquel Forner celebrated the American quest for space exploration.<sup>iii</sup>

To be sure, in Cold War Argentina vanguard art at times combined American artistic influences with a profoundly Argentine critique of US imperialism. An important 1966 exhibition at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires was titled "11 artistas pop: La Nueva Imagen." Artists featured included Lichtenstein and Warhol among others. Americans had a powerful influence on a generation of Argentine "pop" artists that included Carlos Squirru and Juan Stoppani. Writing at the time, the art critic Lawrence Alloway argued that Buenos Aires was one of the most dynamic international centers of pop art.<sup>iii</sup> Not long after, Argentine pop artists were among the most harshly critical of the American presence in Vietnam. On 30 April 1968, at the inauguration of a show at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Buenos Aires, the artist Eduardo Ruano burst in accompanied by several friends, including the artists Roberto

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Jacoby, Pablo Suárez, and Juan Pablo Renzi. Ruano had contributed a piece to the show. It was a large, pop poster image of John F. Kennedy inside a glass case and accompanied by literature on Kennedy's life and death. According to historians Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, Ruano's artistic *obra* was not inside the glass case, but in what the artist did after barging through the inaugural ceremony: Ruano quickly destroyed the glass case and ripped the image of Kennedy to shreds. Ruano's attack, to which the magazine *Primera Plana* referred as "el *happening* inoportuno," was an anti-Vietnam War protest.<sup>iii</sup>

Where Argentine culture reflected American Cold War influences, so too did Argentine strategic planning. This was most evident in the launch and early development of a nuclear program that was a function of, but also tested the limits of American nuclear policy. Between the discovery of nuclear fission in 1938 and the First International Conference on the Pacific Use of Nuclear Energy in 1955, nuclear power became central to American military strategy and foreign policy.<sup>iii</sup> Argentina launched its nuclear program in 1944 in a context very different from the Manhattan Project, though the Second World War and early Cold War international tensions were a key backdrop. The Argentine nuclear program was tied to nationalist ambitions that linked industrial growth to strategic power, to access to energy, and to the seemingly limitless potential of nuclear power more specifically. Writing in 1963, for example, Comodoro Fernando E. Barrera Oro argued that Argentine military strategy was directly linked to industrial development.<sup>iii</sup> A longstanding association of naval officers with the Argentine government nuclear agency, the Comisión Nacional de Energía Atómica (CNEA), had a parallel in other countries. Like naval officers in the United States and France, for

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example, Argentine naval officers believed in a strategic panacea based on the nuclear propulsion of warships and submarines. For military strategist Captain Fernando A. Milia, "as far as warships are concerned, atomic propulsion will mark their liberation from a longstanding [strategic and energy] servitude."<sup>iii</sup>

There is no evidence that Argentine authorities ever developed or tried to develop nuclear weapons, though military governments in the 1970s wanted a level of readiness such that Argentina might always be within five years of producing a small nuclear arsenal.<sup>iii</sup> However, the U.S. government was always suspicious of Argentine nuclear intentions. At the same time, Argentines were wary of what they correctly suspected were close nuclear ties between Brazil and the United States. In 1945, the two countries signed a secret agreement that committed Brazil to supply the United States over a three-year period with 3,000-5,000 tons of monazite, a mineral containing uranium. There was a second monazite agreement signed in 1952 and in late 1956 Brazilian scientists achieved the first nuclear chain reaction in Latin America with U.S. technical support.<sup>iii</sup>

The United States and Argentina signed their first nuclear cooperation agreement in 1953. This allowed Argentine access to information and assistance in the construction of an American-designed Argonaut experimental reactor, which was completed in 1958.<sup>iii</sup> In 1954, Perón offered the New York-based Atlas Corporation the opportunity to undertake aerial surveys of zones in Argentina where uranium thorium was thought to exist.<sup>iii</sup> Argentina further integrated itself into the international atomic community in 1961 by negotiating a technical assistance agreement with Italian nuclear authorities. On the problem of Soviet-American nuclear tensions, the Argentine government took positions

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favoring the United States. In its instructions to the Argentine delegation to the 11 June 1963 meeting of the governing council of the IAEA, for example, the Argentine Foreign Ministry noted that "Argentina is a western country, and... should support the western position...." Though less openly in favor of the United States where U.S. policy might generate hostility in poor countries, after 1955 Argentina was generally unwilling to alter its "western" policy position in favor of developing nations. Where conflicts might arise at the 1963 meeting between poor countries and the western powers, Argentine delegates were to avoid disputes. Argentine leaders viewed their country as a "developing country with considerable need for technical and scientific assistance, but at the same time western with an independent foreign policy." Argentina participated in international conferences on outer space and launched a modest rocket program. The Argentine-designed Proson I rocket was tested in the province of La Rioja. Carrying 50 kilos of fuel, the rocket reached a height of 50 km.<sup>iii</sup>

By mid-1950, Perón had overseen a rapid reversal of his strong stand against American capital. The Argentine government allowed Swift International to transfer its Argentine holding company from Argentina to the United States. It ended the ban on the importation of Hollywood movies. In 1951, it reached new agreements with American oil companies. Perón also agreed to an auditing of American packing house books meant to help clear up their long-standing disputes with the government. In addition, he reopened air route negotiations with American companies, stalled for four years. Perón also seemed newly keen on pressing for measures to fight communism in Latin America. During a February 1950 visit to Buenos Aires, Assistant Secretary of State Edward G. Miller met with Perón, Foreign Minister Hipólito J. Paz and several other



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Argentine officials who outlined a vision of international communism as a menace to Latin America in keeping with Washington's point of view. Perón now insisted that third position diplomacy had, in fact, been developed to "fight communism within Argentina." In August, when U.S. Ambassador Stanton Griffis questioned Perón on persistent anti-Americanism in Argentina, the exasperated president responded "damn it, can't people realize that certain things are said for local consumption?" Citing Franklin D. Roosevelt's reforms, Perón insisted that his government meant only to reform capitalism in Argentina. Remarkably, in light of past conflicts, the State Department seemed to accept Perón's position at face value. According to Miller, the U.S. government was wrong in confusing Perón's anti-United States diatribes with genuine government anti-Americanism. "At the very time he has apparently been criticizing us, he and his representatives have been working frankly and in a friendly spirit to resolve outstanding differences with us, involving Argentine concessions to the very capitalist enterprises to which Perón refers in his speeches."<sup>iii</sup>

The election of Dwight D. Eisenhower to the U.S. presidency in 1952 held out the promise of greater American attention to Latin America. Eisenhower had criticized Truman's disinterest in Latin America during the campaign and, during Senate confirmation hearings, Secretary of State-designate John Foster Dulles promised to make the Americas more central to U.S. policy-making. More so than Truman, Eisenhower was increasingly preoccupied with the growth of strong nationalist politics in the Americas and the potential linkages between nationalism and communism. At the same time, sentiment was growing in Latin America that in its focus on anti-communism, the U.S. government was giving too little attention to Latin American development

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problems. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), under the direction of the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, spearheaded this critique. Prebisch's team countered the emphasis in U.S. policy on free markets and trade. Without wishing to limit trade, ECLA reasoned that individual countries needed to protect their interests with an aggressive program of state intervention in the national economy and import substitution industrialization, a program of action that had worked well for Argentina in the 1930s.<sup>iii</sup>

For the Eisenhower Administration, ECLA was anathema to good government and sound economic policy in Latin American countries. A strong state role in the economy was viewed with suspicion in Washington, as was the prospect of any control over private investment and free trade. To shore up his prospects for successful policy initiatives in the region, the president sent his brother Milton Eisenhower on an information-gathering mission early in 1953. Milton Eisenhower's report gave credence to ECLA projects that backed fiscal conservatism for the region's governments and open trade. However, the report also prompted the president to find a way to promote better economic relations between the United States and individual Latin American countries. Many of the recommendations remained unimplemented, but the president made better bilateral trade ties a priority of his administration. Even so, strong protectionist sentiment in the business community and in Congress slowed that initiative and made American policy on agriculture seem contradictory and duplicitous to Latin American leaders.<sup>iii</sup>

Initially, Milton Eisenhower had decided not to include Argentina in his Latin American tour. However, Dulles convinced him to go as a good will gesture in light of early

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signals from Perón that the Argentine government now hoped for better relations with Eisenhower than it had had with Truman. A few days before Milton Eisenhower's arrival in Buenos Aires, Perón sent the Argentine Congress a bill liberalizing provisions for foreign company profit remittances, a longstanding sore point for American business. Opposition among deputies was heated and American companies complained that the legislation did not go far enough in redressing past wrongs. However, the U.S. government took the legislation as a positive sign from Argentina. Perón's statements to the Americans during Milton Eisenhower's visit seemed cloying. He praised all aspects of U.S. policy in the Americas and pledged his support to American anti-communist initiatives. A stream of American corporate executives from Westinghouse, John Deere, Kaiser, and International Harvester, among others, made their way to Argentina heartened by the new legislation and Milton Eisenhower's positive report. American exporters lobbied the Export-Import Bank to expand its program of loans to Argentina.<sup>iii</sup>

In conjunction with Perón's initiatives in the nuclear sector, the government launched a major expansion of energy production generally. In October 1953, Westinghouse won a contract from the Argentine government to supply equipment for a new power plant in Buenos Aires, and then won a second important concession to sell equipment for a new steel mill. In each case, the company applied to the Export-Import Bank to finance the project. In addition, on each occasion, the Bank was heavily pressured to deny the loans by the American and Foreign Power Company (AMFORP), which wanted to use negotiations to leverage the Argentine government into settling outstanding conflicts with the American firm.

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Despite pressure from Westinghouse and Argentine authorities, the Export-Import Bank dragged its heels until State Department officials began to worry that the delay might affect Argentina's position on the Guatemalan crisis.<sup>iii</sup>

During the 1954 Caracas Conference at which U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles won passage of his motion condemning Guatemalan communism, Argentina abstained in the vote. In the lead-up to Caracas, the State Department fell back on a decades-old Pan American tactic, rounding up the required majority in advance of the meeting. In June, U.S. Ambassador Albert Nufer approached Perón to win Argentina's support for the United States' planned isolation of Guatemala. Though Perón backed the conference on anti-communism, he was uneasy about the political implications of backing Washington in so direct an attack on an OAS member. American officials believed that Perón was trying to antagonize them. In fact, he had suggested the alternative of using the same strong language in criticizing a "communist problem" on the continent, but without specifically targeting the Guatemalan case. Perón had no sympathy for Guatemalan communism and only modest concerns over the U.S. intervention in that country. Again, though, and to the consternation of American observers who grasped the implications but could not accept them, Perón was not in a position to support U.S. policy in Latin America openly. Peronista senators and members of congress, as well as leaders of the Peronist dominated Confederación General de Trabajo took public positions that, if not openly favoring Guatemala, were nonetheless hostile toward Washington. Moreover, public sympathy was with Guatemala. In the city of Rosario, for example, during the Guatemalan crisis police were unable to

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block protesters from smashing a United States Information Agency (USIA) exhibition.<sup>iii</sup>

In 1954, the United States sought Argentina's support in challenging ECLA's growing policy influence among Latin American governments. In anticipation of a Pan American economic conference to be held in Río de Janeiro in late 1954, hoping to seize the initiative from ECLA, Eisenhower expanded Export-Import Bank lending capacity by \$500 million. In response to senior administration members who opposed the change, Eisenhower framed his decision not only as part of how Americans had to do business successfully in Latin America, but as a key component in the fight against communism. Eisenhower did not go far enough in adopting ECLA proposals, according to Harold Stassen, the Foreign Operations Administration chief. However, Treasury Department Secretary Humphrey opposed any concession to ECLA and was named by Eisenhower to lead the U.S. delegation to Río de Janeiro. Henry Holland made visits to several Latin American countries to try to build support for the United States. Reflecting the underlying strength of U.S.-Argentine trade ties – and in spite of persistent conflicts over a variety of trade and investment issues – Perón promised his support for the United States in Río de Janeiro.<sup>iii</sup>

When Holland made a second visit to Argentina in late 1954 he pressed Perón to take the initiative on the profit remittances for U.S. companies. In January 1955, the Argentine government changed the rules to allow foreign manufacturing and mining companies to remit 8% of their annual profits. The State Department remained unsatisfied. Nufer pointed out to Perón that most American companies were not in mining or manufacturing. However, because of a persistent hard currency shortage, the Argentine

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government was not in a position to expand the scope of the decree. Partly because of the profit remittance rules change, over the objections of the Commerce Department and others in the Eisenhower administration, the Export-Import Bank finally approved a new \$60 million loan to the Argentine steel sector. However, because of continued political opposition, the money was only dispensed in 1956 after Perón had fallen. In 1955, after long negotiations, Standard Oil of California reached agreement with the Argentine government on a contract to search for and remove oil from a large area in Santa Cruz province. American government representatives were delighted. However, provisions that included the concession to build roads and airstrips outraged Argentine nationalists on the left and right. They also fueled the political aspirations of Radical Party leader and future president Arturo Frondizi.<sup>iii</sup>

In the year before the military coup that overthrew him, Perón faced a declining economy for which his government could produce no viable remedy. Perón viewed his relations with the United States as better than ever, as did his nationalist critics. A January 1955 multi-million dollar agreement with Henry Kaiser to build an automobile factory in Córdoba was important both symbolically and materially. There were other foreign contracts with firms from Europe and the United States. These included one with Merck & Co. for the building of a cortisone factory and one with Monsanto to manufacture polystyrene. None of this satisfied American officials that Argentina had, in fact, "come around" to a pro-United States business stand.<sup>iii</sup>

Americans saw the period after Perón's fall and before elected president Arturo Frondizi's term of office began in 1958 as a golden period in bilateral relations. Argentina's military rulers presented none of the complications of their

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equivalents a decade before; the specter of Nazism had passed and Argentina's military seemed a strong potential ally in the fight against communism in the Americas. Unlike his reserve in dealing with Hipólito Paz over remittances, Henry Holland's approach to the new Argentine ambassador in Washington, Adolfo Vicchi, was much more hospitable. Vicchi announced that he was pressing his government to join the IMF and the World Bank. He also indicated that it would be a priority of the new government to find new dollar earnings through increased sales to the United States. Holland was enthusiastic. Vicchi told him what he wanted to hear. American companies would now be eligible to compete for contracts in the electricity sector, heretofore controlled by the government. A dispute between the government and IKA was settled happily for both sides. The company would make new investments in Argentina and instead of producing passenger cars, it would build jeeps, trucks, and tractors.<sup>iii</sup> Moreover, unlike Washington's relations with the previous administration, there were no serious misunderstandings over Argentine government public postures for domestic consumption and the real state of bilateral relations. When Vicchi proposed a military pact between the two countries, he and Holland were able to discuss candidly the potential dangers this might pose to the new government, as it would surely face charges of "selling out" to the Americans.<sup>iii</sup>

Washington liked what it saw in Buenos Aires. Acting on the recommendations of Raúl Prebisch, the new military regime quickly ended a number of state strictures on the economy. Government spending was slashed, price subsidies on exports were cut, and export taxes eliminated. Perhaps most significant, the new regime set in place an open foreign exchange market that allowed free capital movement

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in and out of the country. Both Holland and Nufer pressed hard in Washington for the U.S. government to back new Argentine loan requests and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles made that case to the National Security Council. However, others were more cautious. The State Department's Bureau of Economic Affairs wondered whether an American loan package that was too generous might unfairly disadvantage U.S. agricultural products in the face of Argentine competition on international markets. The State Department insisted that Holland make no quick commitments to Argentina. At the same time, *de facto* President General Pedro Aramburu made clear that the ambiguities of Perón's "Third Position" foreign policy were at an end and that Washington would find staunch support in Argentina for its hemispheric anti-Communism.<sup>iii</sup>

In 1956, Argentina ratified the OAS Charter and signed on to the 1954 Caracas anti-communist resolution. The military government became a member of the IMF and signed an Air Force Mission agreement with the United States. The Argentine Navy joined its U.S. counterpart in anti-submarine exercises. Nevertheless, old irritants continued to shape bilateral relations. Despite the dismantling of many Perón era regulations, the military government was slow to negotiate an end to controls on profit making in the meatpacking sector. In January 1956, the government placed IKA on a list of interdicted companies – a Perón era device -- for supposedly improper business practices. Though nothing came of the accusations, Americans remained wary of what had happened. In addition, the Aramburu regime tried again, unsuccessfully, to convince Washington that Argentine beef exports were safe and that Foot-and-Mouth disease was no longer a threat in Argentina.<sup>iii</sup>



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When Arturo Frondizi took presidential office in 1958, he seemed convinced that where Perón had got it wrong on economic nationalism was not so much on the principle that Argentina should substitute domestic industrial production for foreign imports, so much as on how and in what sectors that project should be implemented. Labeled *desarrollismo*, the president's new economic plan gave priority to heavy industry.<sup>iii</sup> Faced with annual expenditures of \$250 million on oil imports and \$150 million on foreign steel, Frondizi targeted these sectors as well as coal and iron mining. However, the new government faced problems at least as serious as those encountered by its predecessors. Dollar earnings were scarce. The foreign debt had reached \$930 million. Debt service payments for 1958 were \$95 million, almost half of which were in dollars.<sup>iii</sup>

The president moved quickly to raise wages and to restore collective bargaining and other Confederación General de Trabajo (CGT) rights denied by the military. He also invited American oil companies to compete for new exploration and development contracts. U.S. Vice-President Richard Nixon had attended the May inauguration. Frondizi had told him that he intended to do all he could to attract foreign investment. Nixon stressed the possibility of American companies investing in oil exploration and Frondizi acted on that suggestion. Despite his having been a strong and vocal defender of YPF's role in oil exploration, Frondizi now believed that the state petroleum company simply did not have the resources to find and extract enough oil to reverse Argentina's persistent energy crisis. Frondizi took charge of secret negotiations personally. In late July, he announced new contracts with several foreign drilling and production companies including Carl Loeb, Rhodes & Company, Pan American International Oil Company (Standard Oil of

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Indiana), and Williams Brothers. Contract terms varied but in each case, companies would deliver oil found to YPF and would receive compensation in a combination of dollars and pesos. By December, the Argentine government had reached agreements as well with Esso and Shell. In light of past antipathies to foreign oil companies in Argentine politics, the agreements were particularly lucrative and generated loud protests against Frondizi having sold out his principles. YPF's agreement with Esso promised the latter thirty years of exploitation rights to a petroleum-rich 4,800 square kilometers. While YPF would pay for Esso's oil in pesos, a crucial provision of the agreement made clear that the Central Bank would convert those profits to dollars on request.<sup>iii</sup>

Remarkably, and despite the opposition correctly pointing out that Frondizi had undertaken a one hundred and eighty-degree political turn around, the new government moved faster and more effectively than any government since the 1920s in reversing the country's economic nationalist policies. Frondizi wanted to clear the books of all outstanding disputes with foreign companies. In May, the government gave back to German investors property that had been expropriated more than a decade earlier. In September, Frondizi quietly reached an agreement with AMFORP by which outstanding claims would be settled and the American firm would build a new plant in Buenos Aires.<sup>iii</sup> In December, the Argentine congress passed Frondizi's Law 14.780 that ended controls on profit remittances and assured capital repatriation. The Industrial Promotion Law that followed offered lower taxes and other incentives for foreign investors. Frondizi's speed and lack of hesitation in settling issues that had irritated U.S.-Argentine relations for more than a decade had a strong impact in Washington. In

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July, Export-Import Bank representative Vance Brand had gone to Buenos Aires to study Frondizi's economic policies and actions in reference to a new Export-Import Bank loan. Frondizi wanted money for a new steel plant. Brand was uninterested and unconvinced that the project would be viable. However, just a few months later, Brand had changed his mind based on the oil contracts and the AMFORP settlement and other issues. He favored an Export-Import Bank loan for \$250 million.<sup>iii</sup>

In late 1958, U.S. government agencies cobbled together the most aggressive American assistance package in the post-War period. The Treasury Department provided \$50 million in credit to back exchange support. The Export-Import Bank offered a balance of payments loan of \$24.75 million and provided a further \$100 million for specific project financing. The Development Loan fund added \$24.75 million in credits for imports from Argentina. Private banks made loans of \$54 million and \$75 million more by the end of 1959. By mid-1961 Export-Import loans to Argentina had reached \$486 million, \$230 million of which had been disbursed. Nevertheless, the Argentine government expected still more. Between May 1958 and April 1961, the Argentine government approved \$323 million in foreign capital investment proposals. All of this came too late for Frondizi. Even if it had come earlier, it may not have saved him politically. Ironically, the most far-reaching American financial support package for Argentina ever ushered in a period of severe political instability for Frondizi that lasted through the end of his government.

In 1961, the U.S. State Department Bureau of Inter-American Affairs described Argentina as having worked harmoniously and productively with the United States after the fall of Perón. Frondizi was hard at work on a

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"courageous" stabilization and recovery program. Argentina had "proved" its alignment with the "West." Moreover, for the Bureau, it was a "tribute to Argentina that it is endeavoring to rise above nationalism, neutrality, sensitivity, egocentricity, and fancied rivalry with the United States for hemispheric leadership." For American leaders, the key issues that defined good bilateral relations had always been clear. Once specific business and commercial problems had been settled satisfactorily for the United States, relations were considered good. For the Bureau, Argentina's "current improved and productive state may be ascribed in large part to the fact that Argentina needed United States sympathy, cooperation, and financial support to rebuild the country following Peron's overthrow, and that the United States was willing to forgive the past and extend help."<sup>iii</sup>

If economic ties reflected frequent misunderstandings and disagreements between the two nations, there were few tensions over Cold War strategic imperatives. One day in 1961, at the training grounds of the Colegio Militar, Argentina's equivalent to West Point, two key figures in Argentina's Cold War fight against communism confronted one another over old and new strategies. The conflict reflected the rapid rise in importance of National Security Doctrine priorities in Argentina. Both men were already dedicated cold warriors and followers of the U.S.-led fight against communism in the Americas. Their disagreement came as a reflection of the growing influence of American military strategy and ideologies in Argentina. At the time, Jorge Rafael Videla, future *de facto* president and leader of the first *junta* that followed the coup d'état of 1976, was a Lieutenant Colonel and Commander of the Cadet Corps at the Colegio Militar. The young officer and military instructor Mohamed Alí Seineldín served beneath him. During the

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1976-1983 dictatorship or *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Proceso)*, Seineldín was one of the military regime's most fervent ideological defenders. A Falklands Islands/Malvinas War hero, Seineldín won a more ominous notoriety in 1990 by helping to lead a failed coup d'état attempt against the Argentine government. Still jailed for that uprising in 2002, Seineldín is the longest serving Argentine convicted of treason. In 1991, from his prison cell on the Campo de Mayo base outside Buenos Aires, he told the story of his 1961 run-in with Videla.<sup>iii</sup>

On the day in question, Videla's order of the day called for Seineldín to lead his troops in a frontal attack maneuver. Seineldín, convinced by National Security Doctrine analysis<sup>iii</sup> that Argentina's next war would be fought against an internal subversive threat, altered the plan. He instructed cadets to remove their insignia; training began in counterinsurgency warfare to capture guerrilla warriors. However, Videla appeared in a surprise inspection and did not like what he saw:

"What is called for in [today's] plan?" he demanded.

"A conventional maneuver, a frontal attack, colonel," Seineldín replied.

"Why aren't you doing that?" Videla continued.

"What's coming is a revolutionary war, lieutenant colonel."

In the early 1960s, Seineldín was among many of Argentina's fastest rising young officers committed to Cold War models of National Security Doctrine and counterinsurgency warfare. Just as in Brazil and other South American countries, junior officers pressed their superiors to reconsider what they viewed as dated strategic and tactical models. Seineldín was among many that saw traditional troop movement training as outdated and irrelevant to Argentina's current threats. In keeping with how the United States military defined the most

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prescient threat to Latin American nations in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, Argentine officers looked increasingly for the enemy within the country's borders. In retrospect, Argentine officers identified the late 1950s and early 1960s as the point of departure for an internal subversive war against Argentine authorities, led by the Frente Revolucionario Indoamericano Popular (FRIP), the Montoneros, and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR), among others.<sup>iii</sup>

Facing what they believed was a global revolutionary communist threat Argentine and American officers had never worked more closely together or with a more clearly common set of military objectives. Argentine military and naval strategic planning for external war came to be strongly based on American models, far more so than at any time previously. A 1960 armed forces manual on the workings of an Army Air Corps, for example, cited the cases of Germany, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Soviet Union as possible models for Argentina. Nevertheless, in the author's descriptions of pilot instruction, aircraft types, and corps organization, the examples cited were overwhelmingly from the United States. Naval strategy was also heavily influenced by current American thinking, emphasizing, for example, the importance of nuclear propulsion.<sup>iii</sup> However, the American military impact was far more profoundly felt in Argentina's growing preparation for internal war.

Under Eisenhower, American policy makers had begun to speak of counterinsurgency and internal security. Kennedy "aggressively pushed to make such concepts essential parts of his Latin American policy."<sup>iii</sup> In September 1961, he instructed the Secretary of Defense to find ways to better ties between U.S. and Latin American armed forces. More specifically, Kennedy saw the imperative for Latin American soldiers to be taught to "control mobs and fight guerrillas." By radically increasing military aid to Latin America, Kennedy reversed his stand on restricting arms spending in the region. A November 1961 report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued to the president that an increased U.S. supply of training and equipment to Latin American militaries could improve those militaries' ability "to conduct counter-insurgency, anti-subversion, and psychological warfare operations."<sup>iii</sup>

Kennedy supported U.S. military initiatives to bring more Latin American officers to American military schools. At the same time, though, he was unable to resolve a crucial policy contradiction in how the U.S. military approached Latin America. While preoccupied with a surge in leftist insurgencies in the Americas, American officers planned for their Latin

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American counterparts to be stalwart supporters of American style democracies. At the same time, however, American military policies in the Americas encouraged Latin American officers to fight a style of warfare that turned their countries into war zones, tore down the barriers between dictatorship and constitutional rule, and contributed to horrific and unprecedented repression in most Latin American countries. In part, because U.S. policy makers and military trainers were never able to resolve how to wage a counterinsurgency war "democratically," Latin American officers under American tutelage became increasingly willing to trample on democratic freedoms in conducting brutal internal warfare.

During the 1960s, some 3,500 Latin American soldiers attended American military schools each year. A 1959 amendment to the Mutual Security Act had blocked U.S. military aid for internal security in Latin America. However, the amendment allowed presidential exemptions that Kennedy was consistently able to invoke against the potential for communist infiltration. To be sure, the initiatives of the Kennedy administration on National Security Doctrine and military training had their most profound effect a generation later. Several of the fiercest ideologues and repressors of the Argentine military regime that came to power in March 1976 were graduates of the School of the Americas who acknowledged the influence of National Security Doctrine on their thinking. These included Mohamed Alí Seindeldín, Colonel Carlos Alberto Martínez, second in command of military intelligence at the time of the coup, as well as General Roberto Viola. Viola and General Jorge Rafael Videla were the chief military co-conspirators in the months preceding the March coup. While Videla concerned himself primarily with the question of garnering sufficient strength for the coup among military and naval units, Viola's task was more explicitly ideological and political in laying the groundwork for the coup. Viola, whom U.S. Ambassador in Buenos Aires, Robert Hill regarded as the "brains" behind Argentina's anti-communist war, was trained in counterinsurgency warfare along with dozens of other Latin American officers at Fort Gulick in the Panama Canal Zone. Viola described himself as an operative who learned the arts of espionage and how to crush the enemy at Fort Gulick. Hill also reported to the State Department in 1976 on Videla's ideological formation as a Cold Warrior. In 1957, Videla had served in Washington on the staff of the Inter-American Defense Board at a time when National Security Doctrine anti-communism was first being applied by U.S. military strategists. In 1964, he spent fifteen days at Fort Gulick and in 1967 he returned to Washington to study the application of National Security Doctrine in Argentina.<sup>iii</sup>

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There was an immediate impact of National Security Doctrine anti-communism on the generation of Argentine military that controlled national politics after 1963. In 1962-1963, conflict within the Argentine military boiled into open warfare between two factions, the "colorados" and the "azules." Despite that, this struggle was not explicitly about counterinsurgency warfare, internecine tensions within the officer corps were partly the product of fears that emanated from the Cuban Revolution and a putative leftist insurgent menace in Argentina. As much as any other single factor, the colorado-azul divide can be attributed to a growing divergence of opinion within the officer corps on the roles of the armed forces in promoting modernization, anti-communism, professionalism, and democracy – all themes tied to National Security Doctrine. Shortly after the confrontation between Seineldín and Videla at the Colegio Militar, the Army hired an American officer and Korean War veteran, William Cole, to instruct Argentine officers in the creation commando units – *Los halcones* -- on the model of the Rangers, to fight guerrilla warriors. The Argentines sent one such corps to Bolivia in 1967 to help in the hunt for Che Guevara. Seineldín joined the *halcones*. He took the counter-terror expertise he gained with his unit in Argentina in the mid-1960s to Panama in the early 1980s to help in the formation of the counterinsurgency units "Machos del Monte" and the Compañía Doberman de Tranquilidad Pública.<sup>iii</sup>

The rise of General Juan Carlos Onganía to the top of the Argentine armed forces in 1963 and his coup d'état in 1966 confirmed the ascendancy of U.S.-inspired National Security Doctrine analysis and strategy within the Argentine military. Onganía's victory at the head of the *azul* military faction in the internal military conflicts of 1962-1963 signaled more than the triumph of that faction or Onganía's own strength within the corps of officers. According to Videla, under Onganía's leadership "political infighting in the armed forces came to an end" (if only through the mid-1960s). Onganía's consolidation of power politically and militarily in Argentina after 1962 was undertaken with what the authors Vicente Muleiro and María Seoane describe as the "anti-communist catechism that had its origins in the School of the Americas and the Pentagon."<sup>iiii</sup>

Onganía was the first Argentine commander to see his mandate for national defense as an essentially internal struggle. Speaking at West Point in 1964 in a thinly veiled threat to the constitutional authority of governments in Latin America, Onganía maintained that armies pledged to defend their national constitutions could never ignore the threat of "exotic ideologies." In other words, the fight against communism might take constitutional democracy as a casualty. In 1966, after the coup d'état that



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brought him to power, Onganía put theory to practice. While the violence of his regime would pale in comparison to that of the dictatorship that would come ten years later, Onganía's repression was unparalleled and imagined an internal enemy of the sort that National Security Doctrine had identified. The military's attack on perceived opponents in Argentine universities ("The Night of the Long Sticks"), the crackdown on labor unrest in 1969, and dozens of other violent attacks on civilians all stressed the threat of subversion, as well as the destruction of a democratic opposition to military rule.<sup>iii</sup>

American military assistance and Argentine purchases of U.S.-made materiel rose dramatically. Beginning in 1963, the two countries began negotiating toward a program of military sales under the American Military Assistance Program (MAP). U.S. Ambassador in Argentina Robert McClintock came up with the figure of \$7.5 million in aid for 1964 and \$10 million for the following year. Negotiations led to a memorandum of understanding signed by McClintock and Zavala Ortiz on 10 May 1964. The document specifically referenced the communist threat in the Americas as an internal threat to Latin American countries: American military assistance would be apportioned in a manner that reflected the "incompatibility of communism to the inter-American system." The U.S. government seemed to regard the agreement in part as compensation for Argentina's support on the American blockade of Cuba at the time of the missile crisis. Rusk envisioned the Argentine assistance package as commensurate with that for Brazil. He had two concerns. First, the assistance package should contribute to improved fiscal responsibility in the Argentine military. Second, a new military aid package would be conditional upon a successful resolution of ongoing oil company contract disputes.<sup>iii</sup>

The MAP generated heated and protracted opposition in the Argentine Congress. It was not until June 1966 that the first shipment of materiel, several M-41 tanks, reached Buenos Aires. Their arrival came long after equivalent shipments had reached Brazil and other Latin American countries under MAP agreements, and long after the decision had been made in the military high command to remove president Arturo Illia by force. At the Fifth Conference of Military Commanders of the Americas in 1964, Argentine and other Latin American commanders explicitly adhered to the National Security Doctrine, formally espoused by the U.S. State Department as early as 1961. Soon

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after the meeting, Argentine forces took part in joint naval maneuvers with warships from Brazil, Uruguay, and the United States.<sup>iii</sup> American diplomats and military officers stationed in Latin America worked to gain “maximum influence” for the 1965 fiscal year toward developing 3-5 year military equipment procurement programs in the region. The Lyndon B. Johnson administration moved to integrate fully military and other assistance programs in South America. Johnson wanted to sell foreign governments weapons as a condition for aid. For Argentina, the United States was prepared to offer a program of grant aid and credit assistance equivalent to that provided to Brazil. However, the offer hinged on the U.S. Country Team in Argentina finding that this could be used to develop a “greater sense of fiscal responsibility” within the Argentine armed forces. The State Department projected \$20 million in credits and grants to Argentina for each of 1965, 1966, and 1967. Despite that the U.S. government considered annulled oil contracts with American companies in determining military assistance to Argentina, American officials in Argentina were instructed to deny any such links when speaking with Argentine military officers. The State Department feared that if the armed forces learned that the oil contracts were tied to military assistance, officers would directly pressure the Argentine government to resolve the oil problem, “thereby again injecting” the military into politics and endangering the stability of the Illia presidency. While the U.S. military had already begun to train Argentine officers in repressive counterinsurgency tactics, the State Department reasoned the armed forces were playing a constructive role in backing Illia and staying out of federal politics. Moreover, Secretary of State Dean Rusk either badly underestimated General Onganía’s political ambitions or misunderstood military politics. Rusk believed that Onganía and

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other military leaders were working to develop a more modern, efficient military “along professional, non-political lines.”<sup>iii</sup>

The Argentine services had a long list of requests tied to Washington’s MAP in Latin America. In early 1965, the Argentine Navy asked for \$7,566,000 worth of equipment that included twelve T-28-C training aircraft, a catapult for the aircraft carrier *Independencia*, and twelve AD6 Skyraider aircraft. The Air Force wanted a broad range of spare parts, electronic equipment, and other materials worth \$5,000,000. In addition, the Argentine armed forces wanted the United States to provide \$90.5 million in credits to fund a battalion of tanks, a squadron of heavy transport aircraft, anti-aircraft missiles, a squadron of medium helicopters, and a “squadron of light helicopters... for counterinsurgency operations.”<sup>iii</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, Argentina continued to maintain a Cold War policy developed through the 1950s and varying little through the striking presidential shifts. Senior Argentine diplomats, policy makers, and political leaders often shared Washington’s feeble criteria in force at the time. The weakening of the Honduran economy by Hurricane Mitch, and the more liberal HIPC eligibility rules adopted in 1999, facilitated the country's incorporation into the Initiative.

<sup>iv</sup> The PRGF replaced the IMF's Expanded Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) but gave to the international community a less felicitous acronym. As of December 31, 2001, 69% of the PRGF resources, or SDR 108.3 million, had been disbursed.

<sup>v</sup> Honduras is scheduled to receive nominal debt relief of \$900 million, or \$556 million in net-present-value (NPV) terms. This amount represents about 18% of its total external public debt (in NPV terms), well below the average debt relief of 47% programmed for all 22 countries that had reached their HIPC decision point as of February 2001 (IMF 2001:5 and 24). Honduras received a relatively modest amount of debt relief because its level of development is higher than that of the great majority of HIPC countries and its external public debt is less burdensome.

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<sup>vi</sup> In this paper, references to the ERP are to the English-language version available on the IMF's Web Page (Honduras 2001).

<sup>vii</sup> The Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, ranged from 0.55 to 0.60 between 1986 and 1996, compared with a Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) average (unweighted by population) of 0.51-0.54 (Wodon 2000:37-39). Income inequality is higher in LAC than in any other world region.

<sup>viii</sup> The gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an average annual rate of 3.2%, or 0.5% per capita, for the years 1991 through 2000 (Honduras 2001:21). The GDP growth rate in 2001 is estimated to have been only 2.6%, reflecting the country's high vulnerability to unfavorable world economic trends (depressed coffee prices, the U.S. recession) and natural disasters (drought).

<sup>ix</sup> The HDI is a composite index based on life expectancy, the literacy rate, the gross school enrollment rate, and real GDP per capita in purchasing-power-parity (PPP) dollars.

<sup>x</sup> Targeted human-development programs (THDPs) include those that "transfer income in cash or in kind to poor households [and] condition the transfers on the household's [sic.] investment in the human capital of their children (namely, school attendance and health care visits)" (Lustig 2000:16). Lustig mentions Honduras as one of the few Latin American countries that introduced THDPs in the late 1990s. These activities are managed by the Programa de Asignación Familiar (PRAF).

<sup>xi</sup> See, for example, Dollar and Kraay (2001) and World Bank (2001), and the various studies cited therein.

<sup>xii</sup> In 2000 the Foro Nacional de Convergencia (FONAC) presented a proposal, based on discussions involving various elements of civil society, to transform the country's educational system. This proposal is stronger in diagnosing the problems of

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the sector than in proposing specific remedies, calculating their costs, and establishing targets.

<sup>xiii</sup> Honduras was ranked in a tie for 71st place out of 91 countries worldwide, and 15th out of 18 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2001 (TI 2001), with a score of 2.7 (out of a possible 10, signifying freedom from perceived corruption). This score represents a noticeable advance over 1999 (Honduras was not ranked in 2000), when the country's score was only 1.8, placing it in a tie for 94th place out of 99 countries ranked worldwide, and last among 17 LAC countries.

<sup>xiv</sup> Of the total ERP figure of \$2,666 million, \$1,717 million (64.4%) is programmed for the first five years.

<sup>xv</sup> This section summarizes and expands upon the material in Honduras (2001:3-7).

<sup>xvi</sup> Space limitations preclude a discussion of the meaning of the term "civil society." Suffice it to say that it tends to be defined broadly in Honduras to include not only grassroots organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but also private-business groups, local governments, and political parties.

<sup>xvii</sup> Cortés is the Department (province) centered around San Pedro Sula, the country's principal industrial center.

<sup>xviii</sup> A summary of the major contributions of civil society to the consultation process is found on p. 7 of the ERP.

<sup>xix</sup> One of the key structural-reform objectives is privatization of key services such as telecommunications and electricity distribution. The case for privatizing these services is clear, in that the Honduran government lacks both its own fiscal resources and (as a heavily-indebted country) the ability to borrow the large volume of financial resources needed to expand these services to meet the demands of a growing economy.

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<sup>xx</sup> President Maduro served as co-chair of the Central American Task Force on Educational Reform of the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL). The Task Force's report, *Mañana es muy tarde*, was issued in April 2001. PREAL is a joint program of the Inter-American Dialogue and the Corporation for Development Research (CINDE) in Santiago, Chile.

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***RASHOMON IN THE ZOCALO: WRITING THE  
HISTORY OF POPULAR POLITICAL CULTURE IN  
NINETEENTH CENTURY MEXICO***

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## ***Introduction***

Those of us who study the political culture of nineteenth century Mexico often lament the absence of archival documentation and the elusiveness of that which we know must exist somewhere, but just cannot find ... yet. Further frustration arises in the study of the popular classes, who were much less likely than elites to engage in the kinds of activities that leave traces in the archives. Indeed, the urban poor were even less likely than their rural counterparts to engage in the kinds of activities that leave traces of their presence in the archives (lawsuits over communal lands, for example). The words of Jules Michelet, the mid-nineteenth century French romantic historian, form an appropriate epigraph for these frustrations. Michelet, perhaps most well known for his 1846 work, titled simply *The People*, despaired, "I had the people in my heart . . . but I found their language inaccessible. I was unable to make it speak."<sup>xx</sup>

Recent literature in history and cultural studies, however, suggests that a dearth of archival materials in fact is not the primary obstacle to the study of the popular, or subaltern, classes in Mexico, or anywhere else. Rather, the real challenges are theoretical and methodological. A crucial experience several years ago forced me to clarify my position regarding these challenges by providing the archival equivalent of viewing "Rashomon," the 1950 Akira Kurosawa film that contemplates the nature of truth and memory by recreating four different versions of the same rape-murder in medieval Japan. Rashomon arrived in Mexico City's Zócalo when I came across two diametrically opposed "eyewitness" accounts in private diaries of the same popular protest.

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The first version of this upheaval noted that on March 11, 1837, a mob of *léperos* attacked the Mexican congress. While the "pretext" for the upheaval was a recent devaluation of copper currency and a food shortage, the real cause was "the infamous machinations of anarchists." The events were carefully planned and executed by radical federalists who yet again manipulated small numbers of the city's malleable masses for their political ends.<sup>xx</sup> The second version of these events asserted that a "truly popular" cross-section of the city's residents gathered in Mexico City's main square to protest the congress' misguided decision to devalue copper coin dramatically. The participants included "many persons of distinct opinions," whose frustration was directed by "persons of no [specific political] category."<sup>xx</sup>

While temporarily frustrating my romantic quest for the Holy Grail of nineteenth century Mexican politics, finding these documents was of course a great stroke of luck, since it forced me to question again the way in which I was using all of my sources, and to refine my criteria for their evaluation. It put into sharp focus many of the theoretical and methodological problems that face the researcher who presumes to investigate popular political culture, and the pitfalls that await. First, these documents, written by members of the elite, remind us that popular political culture cannot be isolated from the broader political culture. Just as studies of popular culture in general challenge the traditional division between high and popular culture, the same must be done for the distinction between popular and elite political culture.<sup>xx</sup> Though we may try to use archival documents to explore the actions and motivations of non-elite actors, the documentary record was written and collected by and for elites, and we must always be cognizant of the changing ways in which "the masses" were used as a trope in competing elite discourses. However, to end our analysis at

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the level of elite discourse would in some ways deny both the ability of historians to contextualize and evaluate sources and the agency of non-elites, as far removed as they may be from having direct input into the documentary record.

In my work, I follow Lynn Hunt's approach to political culture, as I try to analyze the way the urban masses enter into the full array of "principles, formulae, and ground rules of political interaction," rather than simply as a discursive category.<sup>xx</sup> To do so requires a careful accounting of what Charles Tilly calls the "opportunity structure" and the "repertoire of contention," those times when the complex interplay between elite machinations, the actions of intermediaries, and popular aspirations, yield mass action.<sup>xx</sup> Further, it is important to understand the relationship between this repertoire of contention and the broader and deeper crisis of Mexican politics during the first half of the nineteenth century, which was undoubtedly characterized by a crisis of political legitimacy. In the midst of economic stagnation and the fragmentation of elite politics, rural and urban masses became engaged in the struggle over the construction of a new political order. Much of the historiography on this era focuses on the peasantry, but the urban masses became engaged in this struggle in countless ways as well. As Silvia Arrom has pointed out, the mechanisms -- both "positive" and "negative" factors -- by which the relative quiescence of the urban space during the colonial period was maintained proved less viable in the post-colonial world.

The War of Independence and its aftermath introduced new levels of confrontation to political relationships and altered the 'repertoire of contention.' We see, for example, new political rituals draped in the symbols of popular sovereignty, which provided the opportunity for, or indeed required a certain degree of, popular mobilization to meet their designers' goals. In this volatile climate, elite actions are essential to

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understanding urban unrest, but are an insufficient locus of study for the emerging political culture, since ideas and actions often moved beyond the control of elites.<sup>xx</sup> Even through the filters of elite accounts and the anonymous status of participants in these activities, we can derive some conclusions about their words and actions, like the connection between elite discourse and the language of mass action. In discussing this language, we should keep in mind Arlette Farge's observation that, "people's opinions related to a plurality of phenomena which invited participation and encouraged reflection: phenomena on many different levels."<sup>xx</sup>

The archives provide numerous clues about the raw material from which popular political opinion and language were formed: handbills, *pasquines*, poems, skits, songs and jokes were all important sources of ideas and slogans. Some are particularly memorable, capable of summarizing complex trends succinctly, and appeal to the historian's desire to entertain as well as enlighten. Most reports on the language of crowds, though, noted the use of boilerplate sloganeering of the "viva" and "muera" variety. These reports often concluded with derisive reference to the poor masses having traded their voice and vote for lucre. I would not dismiss out of hand the political savvy of the popular classes, however. We should not lose sight of the fact that very sophisticated political ideas were communicated orally and symbolically in public rituals.

The allegorical dances and allocutions that accompanied public ceremonies may not have been completely "transparent" but the symbols were explained and the "rules of the game" (including the entire constitution at times) were recited over and over. Anyone who has ever been in a crowd, whether at a sports event, a political march, or a riot, would recognize the difference between common ritual forms ("el pueblo unido jamas será vencido," "the wave") and the spontaneous artistry

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of inspired improvisation. When these moments are recorded (rarely, alas), we may gain additional insight into the nature of popular politics as understood by individuals. Finally, I would emphasize that, even with rote sloganeering, it is less than fruitful to ponder for too long whether or not slogans expressed the “true sentiments” of the masses, since this is impossible to measure, and sincerity would be a standard placed on the tropes of the masses that is not imposed on elite discourse.

My research on popular political culture focuses on those tense moments when crowds may form, either to confirm order or as avatars of upheaval. Investigations of political culture have been drawn for decades to the study of rituals and ceremonies as sites for the investigation of power relationships. As Sean Wilentz notes, “by exploring how these fictions, and the rhetoric that sustains them, are invented and perpetuated, historians of political ritual look for the ideological lineaments of authority and consent in a particular historical context.”<sup>xx</sup> One of the assumptions that guides these investigations of political rituals is that they “can be read as statements because they are less cluttered and more focused in purpose than daily life.”<sup>xx</sup> These rituals were not constructed primarily to be read by historians, however, but by a more immediate audience, and the successful transfer of the lessons of these “rituals of rule” depended on a string of unpredictable variables, including the response of the “crowd.” Crowds are a necessary component of most public political rituals, but crowds are potentially unruly and dangerous, and efforts to transform active participants into passive spectators often fail, as the masses use these opportunities to make “contentious claims in public arenas.”<sup>xx</sup> The members of a crowd bring expectations and the potential to alter the nature of the lesson by their response.

An important key to understanding popular political culture then is understanding when crowds were a required

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component of successful political rituals, how crowds responded to politics, and finally, how events were analyzed after the fact. A "successful" political ritual is not defined simply as the completion of the event itself without major problems or incidents, but how the event is recorded for posterity and perhaps reproduced across space and time, repeating the dynamic relationship among preparation, expectation, and execution, and providing opportunities for communication within elite factions, and between elites and masses, forming a key component of the "competing narratives" about the new nation.<sup>xx</sup>

Many different kinds of crowd actions characterize the first half of the nineteenth century. When studied together, they offer rich data on popular political culture. The two essential foundation rituals that emerged during the era -- the implementation of constitutions and Independence Days -- marked a public acknowledgment of the place of popular sovereignty in the emerging political culture. Elections, the direct cyclical expression of popular sovereignty, provided another command performance of "the people," and have their own complex history, as does the more "informal" political ritual of the riot or rally, and the less "political" ritual of the feast day. Competing elite factions and the masses intermittently employed these opportunities to intervene in politics, to attempt to alter policy, to protest against incumbents, or to express dissatisfaction with the entire state of public affairs. Yet, each of these rituals is related in very complex ways to the others, and it is difficult to limn their meaning without placing each within a broader repertorial and chronological context. In the pages that follow, I highlight the way in which this methodological approach can illuminate the study of nineteenth century Mexico's two key foundation rituals. In the conclusion, I return to the "Rashomon dilemma" and the riot of 1837.

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### Foundation Myth I: The Constitution

A great variety of civic and religious celebrations developed over centuries of colonial rule formed the context within which nineteenth century political rituals -- including celebrations of the "new," like Constitution or Independence Day -- were assessed. Some aspects of the colonial vocabulary of celebration were incorporated into new rituals, while those rejected were often done so consciously, and the decisions publicly explained and justified. The celebrations surrounding the introduction of constitutions in 1812, 1820, 1824, and 1836 provide fascinating examples of the ways in which tensions between tradition and innovation, precedent and expectation, played out. The Spanish Constitution was introduced in Mexico City with a series of celebrations in the fall of 1812. As preparations for these festivities began, the *cabildo* wrote the Viceroy suggesting that the celebration should resemble the *juras del rey* "because these are the most analogous" events, but that the new event should incorporate "the differences that the distinct nature of this act demands." The *cabildo* estimated that it would need nine or ten thousand *pesos* for the ceremonies, and asserted that during more prosperous times they had spent two or three times as much on such events. Funds were approved and the *cabildo* and Viceroy set about their work, organizing an elaborate ceremony and ordering residents of the city's center to decorate the façades of their homes for the festivities.<sup>xx</sup>

According to the *Gaceta del Gobierno de México*, the Constitution was received in the capital with "the most energetic enthusiasm" on September 30, 1812.<sup>xx</sup> After royal officials swore their allegiance, cannon blasts resounded in the Zócalo and all the city's church bells pealed in unison. Military bands played, troops marched through the city and orators praised

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"this glorious day that has signaled the epoch of our desired liberty."<sup>xx</sup> In addition to the Viceroy and the municipal council, seats of honor were assigned to members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the nobility, and the governors of the *parcialidades de indios*.<sup>xx</sup> The ceremonies included a mass of Thanksgiving and Te Deum in the metropolitan cathedral, and music and theatrical performances at various sites in the evening.

The way in which the "public" was incorporated into this spectacle provides numerous clues to the tensions present in this "transitional Mexico." For the ceremonies of 30 September, three stages were constructed, one in front of the viceregal palace, one in front of the archbishop's palace, and one in front of the municipal council building. As the procession passed to each stage, the entire constitution was read. Prior to the festivities, the *cabildo* expressed concern about the length of the day's festivities if the constitution were really read three times in its entirety, but the viceroy insisted it was a necessary part of the proceedings, and would only concede that perhaps it could be read quickly to speed things up a bit.

In keeping with long-standing tradition, coins were tossed to the crowd at these key moments in the celebration.<sup>xx</sup> Such displays of state largesse occurred at public celebrations like the *jura del rey* throughout the colonial period as well.<sup>xx</sup> In contrast, other gestures articulated a new, more active role for the masses in Mexican political life. As the constitution was read over and over that fall, explanatory presentations often accompanied the act, making completely explicit the didactic nature of these exercises. Still, these ceremonies repeated symbolically the ambiguous messages encoded in the Constitution itself. As Antonio Annino has pointed out, these early rituals of the constitutional regime remained tied up in traditional, corporate structures, with roles to be played by the Catholic Church and the indigenous communities.<sup>xx</sup> The church



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and its officers played an official, important and continuing role in political activities throughout the era.

On October 4, 1812, each of the city's parishes celebrated a mass of Thanksgiving for the new constitution. Prior to the offertory, the entire constitution was read, after which a priest offered a "brief exhortation" to the faithful, and then the entire congregation joined in an oath of allegiance.<sup>xx</sup> These rituals of allegiance were repeated in other venues over the following days, with similar mixed messages. On October 6, the students and faculty of the Colegio de San Gregorio, dedicated to indigenous education, took their oath and listened to a royal official inform the audience that they were now Spanish citizens, with all the rights and opportunities afforded to them as such, and that "no one is more than you are, and whoever is equal to you has arrived at the highest [state]."<sup>xx</sup>

The constitutional celebrations of 1812 set a precedent by which others were organized and judged in 1820, 1824, and 1836. The return of the Spanish constitution in 1820 was greeted "with the same formalities as in the year 1812," and almost 16,000 pesos were spent on the festivities.<sup>xx</sup> The federal Constitution of 1824 was introduced with "the solemnity that has been customary in acts of this type," including parish masses. During the processional, acolytes met representatives of the government bearing the constitution at the back of the church and escorted them to a place of honor. After the homily, the pastor or his designated spokesperson delivered "a brief discourse expressing to the public the advantage that the nation will enjoy from the constitution and the obligation to obey it." At the end of mass, the new constitution was read and those in attendance stood and swore their allegiance.<sup>xx</sup> The centralist constitution of 1836 was sworn in with some of the same activities.

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While the continuities of these ceremonies are obvious, their very repetition altered the way they were "read" by their audience. As Mona Ozouf notes, rituals take place in historical space and time, and history and memory disrupt the utopian symbolism of festivals.<sup>xx</sup> The elimination of corporate groups (particularly the indigenous community) from the vocabulary of political rituals is noteworthy, given the continued survival of the *parcialidades* of Mexico City well into the independence era.<sup>xx</sup> The ceremonies surrounding the implementation of the centralist constitution at the beginning of 1837 provide additional examples of the messages contained in elision. The new constitution's promoters hoped that some ritual flash might start the New Year off on the right foot, after a depressing year of war in Texas and an ongoing economic crisis. Elaborate ceremonies took place in the congressional chambers and other public buildings, as elected and appointed officials in turn swore to uphold the new order. A choir sang the Te Deum in the Metropolitan Cathedral on New Year's Day. On January 4, a mixed procession of civil, military, and clerical authorities marched through the streets, carrying a copy of the constitution. But, in 1837, no one recruited people of all classes and ages to pledge allegiance to the new order. No priests delivered homilies about the rights of individuals. No one announced to Mexico City's masses the dawn of an age of equality, as in previous celebrations. Was it any surprise that these ceremonies, inaugurating the third constitution in as many decades, generated little excitement?<sup>xx</sup>

These celebrations were never meant to be cyclical. The ceremonial introduction (and re-introduction) of three different constitutions in three decades communicated a message of instability, and provided crowds (and their organizers) the opportunity to develop a vocabulary of contention, to

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incorporate cries of “restore constitution X” into their repertoire, which they did on a regular basis.

## ***Foundation Myth II: Independence Day***

Other celebrations were designed for repetition across time. The most enduring political celebration to emerge from this period was the commemoration of Independence. However, very few national celebrations ever emerge with unanimous consent and remain beyond dispute.<sup>xx</sup> Mexico’s Independence Day was no exception, in large part because of fears among Mexico’s pre-Reform elite about the message that celebrations of September 16 (Father Miguel Hidalgo’s appeal to a popular uprising) would convey about the relationship between the masses and political power. The struggle over which day to celebrate as Independence Day and the way to “spin” the lessons of the celebration are therefore worth exploring, as are the popular responses to these celebrations.

After the abdication of Agustín de Iturbide in 1823, September 16 and the *grito de Dolores* emerged as the most important holiday commemorating the War of Independence. Its transformation into a raucous and potentially dangerous celebration of popular sovereignty can be directly attributed to the partisan politics of the mid-1820s. As York-rite masonic lodges promoted popular mobilization around their efforts to secure political power, they focused among other things on tapping popular anti-Spanish sentiment. In 1825, the *yorkino* mouthpiece, *El Aguila mexicana* actively promoted a major public celebration to reflect the importance of Hidalgo and the *Grito*.<sup>xx</sup> The event’s organizing committee, with several

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*yorkinos* among its members, took great pains to follow through on this suggestion. They envisioned and carried out for the first time a large scale public display -- a procession, patriotic orations, a slave emancipation, orchestral music and dancing were all incorporated into the day's agenda. Secretary of State Lucas Alamán, fully aware of the organizers' intentions to use the day to attract mass support for their political goals, attempted to limit the scale of the event as much as possible, and requested that extra troops be deployed to maintain order during the festivities.<sup>xx</sup> While no major conflicts erupted on the 16th, the York papers reported that "the people ... manifested anew the sincerity of their patriotic sentiments" in their enthusiastic embrace of the holiday, and September 16 became the anchor of the national political calendar.<sup>xx</sup>

Struggles over the appropriate messages and manifestations of Independence Day remained part and parcel of partisan conflicts through the Reform. Just as radical federalists pushed their popular appeals through the iconography of Hidalgo's message to the masses, moderates and conservatives increasingly promoted the image and message of Iturbide (mature, creole, savvy) in contrast to Hidalgo (immature, indigenous, naive) and moved to add an appropriate coda to the *fiestas patrias*. Beginning in the 1830s, conservative-centralist and moderate governments remolded the festivities, adding September 27 to the calendar and conjuring the imagery of the Army of Three Guarantees and the creole ingenuity of Iturbide as the necessary ingredient for consummating independence, after the raw urges of the peasants of 1810 failed to achieve that goal. The first clear evidence of an official public celebration of September 27, in addition to the 16th, comes after the promulgation of the centralist constitution in 1836.<sup>xx</sup> In 1837, the patriotic committee decided that the same activities that were held on

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the 16th should be repeated on the 27th, and in 1838, the remains of Iturbide himself were transferred to Mexico City and reinterred in a lavish ceremony.<sup>xx</sup>

Conservative centralists, and many moderates, adopted Iturbide as the standard bearer of the three guarantees, with its emphasis on religion and continuity. In 1844, the patriotic committee organized festivities for both the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> that would include all the standard *diversiones* -- fireworks, hot-air balloons, music. The *junta* also organized a procession to retrace the path taken by the Army of the Three Guarantees in 1821. For the editors of the moderate *Siglo XIX*, this was the correct construction of the national origin myth for the times.<sup>xx</sup> In the context of the peasant uprisings of the 1840s and the near disintegration of the nation during and after the war with the United States, the idea of constructing a national origin myth based on unity, one that downplayed the role of peasant uprising and mass mobilization, only grew in appeal.

This construction of the *festividades nacionales* lasted, with few exceptions, through the early 1860s, although Santa Anna's periodic passages through the executive office resulted in an additional variation on the Independence theme. The celebration of either the 16<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> of September presented dilemmas for Santa Anna. While his opposition attempted to "de-nationalize" him, arguing that he had fought against the insurgents of 1810 and that he was responsible for the overthrow of Iturbide,<sup>xx</sup> *santanistas* performed an interesting, and in many ways brilliant, reconstruction of the origin myth. They added a third day in September to the *fiestas patrióticas*: September 11, the day in 1829 on which Santa Anna defeated the Spanish invasion force at Tampico. This construction placed Santa Anna in the center of the origin myth, as an indispensable figure in the master fiction of Mexican history: Hidalgo, the impulsive priest who set fire to the mass impulse to

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independence; Iturbide, the brilliant designer of the three guarantees who succumbed to his own inflated ambitions; and Santa Anna, upon whom it fell to guarantee independence finally at the battle of Tampico. As one might imagine, this construction of the origin myth did not survive the Revolution of Ayutla.

Struggles over the meaning of Independence were not simply a matter of symbols. They could be moments of upheaval and danger, since they were explicitly public lessons about political power that required the presence of crowds to affirm their success. As a result, September 16 became one of the days on which this tension between state needs for popular rituals to affirm authority and the dangers inherent in the gathering of crowds was most obvious, particularly at times when elite politics was at its most fragmented. For example, within days of the popular Vicente Guerrero's defeat in the presidential election of August 1828, Santa Anna proclaimed against Manuel Gómez Pedraza's victory. Santa Anna's rebellion was slow to spread, but the first post-election disturbance of the peace in Mexico City looked like it might occur on Independence Day. On September 15, the municipal council moved into secret session to discuss the trouble they saw brewing. Although fighting had not spread to the capital yet, the council requested extra troops to keep order because a rumor had reached them that Guerrero's supporters were distributing money in the barrio of San Pablo, organizing a mob to run through the city shouting, "death to Guerrero and long live viceroy Pedraza of Mexico and Ferdinand VII."<sup>xx</sup> Extra troops ensured a tranquil Independence Day, but their presence only delayed the turmoil, which peaked in December with the Revolt of the Acordada and the Parián riot.

Popular enthusiasms could move beyond their usefulness even to populist elites, however. In 1829, the ill-conceived

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Spanish attempt at reconquest captured the attention of the nation and provided additional fuel for patriotic fires. As Independence Day approached, the fate of Santa Anna's expedition against the invaders was still unknown. Anti-Spanish violence had broken out in the city sporadically since the Acordada Rebellion, and more was inevitable after the invasion, but Guerrero and his advisers wished to secure social peace now that they controlled the presidency.<sup>xx</sup> On September 13, Federal District governor José María Tornel published an announcement about the upcoming Independence Day festivities, noting that a great display of patriotism was necessary, given that "the execrable Spaniards have returned to profane the sacred ground of the republic." Yet, at the same time, with the upheavals of the last twelve months in mind, security precautions were emphasized. Tornel's public pronouncements warned that the police would accept no alterations of public order under any pretext during the celebrations.<sup>xx</sup>

Tensions of this type emerged periodically into the Reform era. In 1836, subversive posters plastered around the city greeted Independence Day revelers.<sup>xx</sup> The following year, rumors circulated that the festivities commemorating September 27 would be leveraged into the establishment of a dictatorship.<sup>xx</sup> In 1858, fear of unrest outweighed the desire to create ritually the national community. That year, the most popular public aspects of the Independence Day festivities were canceled, and only the religious service and civic discourse remained.<sup>xx</sup>

### **Conclusion: Solving Rashomon's Dilemma**

To conclude, then, we return to the incident that opened the essay. Using the same methods employed above allows us

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to assess judiciously the competing claims of different witnesses by placing them in a broad framework of actions and understandings. In the spring of 1837, a dramatic copper currency devaluation was undertaken by Mexico's newly formed centralist government, facing an extreme fiscal crisis. A chronic shortage of government revenue with deep roots was exacerbated by the demands of the war in Texas, and an apparent increase in the circulation of counterfeit coin. The constituent congress responsible for forming the new constitution spent long hours debating potential solutions to the revenue crisis during the summer of 1836, but a decision was delayed until after the new founding document was completed.<sup>xx</sup> Finally, in January 1837, within days of the ceremonies introducing the new constitution, the congress ceased minting copper currency and established a means to amortize at its nominal value the copper currency already in circulation.<sup>xx</sup> However, even after the bill's passage, *de facto* discounting of copper currency continued to plague the provinces, and speculators began flooding Mexico City with copper coin, both legitimate and counterfeit, since the currency appeared to hold more of its value in the capital. This only increased disparities between the nominal and market values of copper coin in the city.<sup>xx</sup>

In an attempt to stop the inflationary spiral and secure a stable value for copper coin, the congress passed additional legislation on March 8, establishing that copper coin would now trade at its accepted market value, which at the time was about half its nominal value.<sup>xx</sup> Rumors of such a move had been reported in the press for days, and the opposition ominously warned that "lesser causes produced the bloody scenes" of the French Revolution.<sup>xx</sup> Although denounced immediately by the editors of *La Lima* as a death warrant for the poor, the day the decree was issued, relative quiet reigned in the city, due in part



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to a generous deployment of troops and the canon situated at the entrances to the national palace.<sup>xx</sup> Several sources note rising tensions in the city the following day, as some stores closed their doors early, while others ran out of staple goods, refused to accept copper currency, or demanded dramatic markups for payments received in copper. Minor skirmishes also appear to have taken place, but the greatest confrontations occurred on Saturday, March 11.<sup>xx</sup> That morning, large crowds took to the streets of the capital. One group descended on the main plaza, gathered outside the palace where the national congress was meeting, and demanded to be let in to the chambers. Others ran through the streets, shouting slogans and trading insults with the military, throwing rocks, and threatening local businesses. Popular disturbances were also reported in Orizaba, Acámbaro, Querétaro, and Morelia.<sup>xx</sup>

An uneasy calm was restored to the city by Sunday morning, though the repercussions of events of the 11th lasted well beyond the time it took to repair the damaged facades of several homes and businesses. While neither the property damage nor the political fallout that ensued equaled the Parián riot of December 1828, the specter of mobs roaming the streets, the potential anarchy of renewed *lépero* politics, and the precarious nature of urban political and social relations sparked rancorous debate, and vituperative accusations of indifference or incompetence were traded among the capital's political authorities.

Reviewing the incidents of the day, numerous sources reported attacks on commercial establishments, which we would expect given the context of rising prices and food shortages, though no general or sustained attack on property resulted. This fits in the larger pattern of limited attacks on property that characterized much of the political upheaval in Mexico City during the era.<sup>xx</sup> The crowds that gathered chose several

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political targets: some individuals gathered to force their way into the national palace to confront the congress; others stoned the home of former president Corro; still others engaged in altercations with military detachments, and casualties resulted. The antagonisms ranged from the exchange of insults to physical altercations resulting in injuries and several deaths. This raises interesting questions about civil-military relations in these years, which may have been strained due to the ever increasing use of the *leva* for troops of the line during the Texas war, or even a backlash against the army's performance in Texas in general. Though this is speculation, we do know that the national government was disappointed in the municipal council's efforts to enlist sufficient troops through the Tribunal de Vagos, suspended the court in August 1836, and stepped up other efforts to round up "recruits," creating great friction between the council members and the central government, and increasing tensions on the street.<sup>xx</sup>

Shouts of "death to the congress, death to the government," were reported by multiple sources. Denunciations of foreigners joined a chorus of, "*viva la federación, muera el centralismo, viva la libertad*," and demands outside the palace that the government "return our *cuartillas*." In the midst of all this excitement, one person reportedly added the anomalous, "No queremos tratados con el Papa."<sup>xx</sup>

What can these actions tell us about the participants in this uprising? The crowd, a melange of actors with mixed motives and objectives, joined in their disdain for current policy. One would assume that, given the generally recognized crisis of the marketplace, hostility towards the current government was real, as was the desire for a stable currency ("death to the government;" "bring back our *cuartillas*"). The labels placed on culprits, and solutions to the crisis, appear to be mostly pre-packaged opposition discourse -- "*viva la federación, muera el*

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*congreso, mueran los agiotistas* (money lenders)" -- perhaps garnered from the "seditious *pasquines* and public speeches" delivered by the "apostles of disorder."<sup>xx</sup>

However, these were mixed with visceral, long-standing, popular political sentiment against merchants and foreigners whose vehemence surely frightened even the most radical of the opposition's leaders, who spent enough time dealing with foreigners in their own intermittent exiles, family affairs, and business dealings. Even those publications frequent in their criticisms of foreign bankers attempted to downplay the general anti-foreign sentiment of the crowds, labeling it the work of a few "perversos."<sup>xx</sup> Finally, even the seemingly bizarre improvisation from the iconoclast in the crowd who wanted no treaties with the Pope can be revealing. While this individual was ridiculed in the newspaper that reported his outburst, it reveals an individual who was offering up a potential political addendum to the day's goals, and demonstrates an awareness that Mexico's rift with the Vatican was healing.<sup>xx</sup> It was, after all, only a few short weeks before the riot that there had been public celebrations of the papal recognition of Mexico's independence.<sup>xx</sup>

To understand the dissipation of Saturday's energies into Sunday's quiescence, we must turn our attention to one final component of the crowd: the individuals charged with controlling, dispersing or destroying it. To ignore the role that the military played at any given moment in nineteenth century Mexico would be to miss much of the story. The most important aspect of the city's military regiment's behavior in 1837 was that it remained loyal to the government, despite the fact that the troops were paid in the same copper currency as the rebellious groups in the streets. While at least one unit was accused of aiding a crowd intent on sacking a business, the timely arrival of other troops thwarted even this collaboration.<sup>xx</sup>

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In fact, the *comandante general* of the capital's battalion published a thank you note to his troops for remaining loyal during the crisis.<sup>xx</sup> The troops who held firm in March were rewarded for their loyalty in other ways. The national government awarded a special bonus to the capital's regiments for their performance during the crisis.<sup>xx</sup> It recognized the obvious: the military held the key to the regime's survival.

Historians should recognize this as well. In political conflicts, words are indeed weapons and rituals matter, but so do bullets. To focus on one without the other would be a misguided practice for state makers, and for historians. There has been far too little study of the institutions and actors, like the military, that shaped the nineteenth century. Although that problem presents great opportunity to those of us who study the era, and recent historiography has begun to rectify the situation, we still must recognize that much of the ground work remains to be done. We must therefore resist the temptation to think of the era as having one character or to assume that specific manifestations of popular political culture are emblematic of the period as a whole. In other words, the historian who presumes to study popular political culture for this era cannot simply limn texts in isolation, or tack on as a framework a preconceived "broader context." We must also take on the burden of redefining our understanding of the context itself. Indeed, Michelet himself, romantic champion of the heroic *peuple*, wrote *The People* as part of a broad revisionist history of France.

## **THE FRAGMENTED PSYCHE OF MEXICO: THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF *LA MUERTE DE***

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## **ARTEMIO CRUZ THROUGH THE LENS OF FRANCISCO GONZÁLEZ PINEDA\***

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Upon reading Carlos Fuentes's novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) for the first time, many readers find themselves confused, frustrated, and even lost, due to its complex narrative structure. With each chapter divided into three parts (Yo, Tú, Él) the reader is left searching for an explanation of such a structure and the significance of each narrative voice. Much of the novel's early criticism emphasizes the challenges that this structure presents. Lanin Gyurko acknowledges this difficulty, noting that "...the structure is visible on the surface, like a literary exoskeleton, at times like a straitjacket over the narrative" (30). Andrea Lower suggests that the structure reflects Fuentes's complex world vision (19), while June Carter notes, "The total movement of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* for character and reader has been from disintegration to wholeness" (43). During the forty-one years since the novel's publication, critics have taken various analytical approaches in search of a solution that explains the various fragments of the narrative structure. However, the tripartite division of the novel continues to be the subject of interest and investigation. The following study offers an interpretation by means of a previously unrecognized source. Francisco González Pineda published *El mexicano: su dinámica psicosocial* in 1959, just three years before Fuentes wrote *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. In what follows, I hope to shed light on the complex, fragmented character of Artemio Cruz by means of an analysis from the perspective of González Pineda.

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*La muerte de Artemio Cruz* lends itself easily to psychoanalytic interpretation, since the narrative division points to the most urgent and mysterious questions of the human mind, its conscious and unconscious processes. Which psychological functions could the three narrative voices of Artemio represent? What is the relation between these three voices and what could have caused this psychic fragmentation? And, above all, what kind of message does Fuentes convey by organizing the novel in this way?

Several critics have employed Freud's hypothesis on the tripartite division of the psyche into Ego, Superego, and Id for an understanding of the novel's structure. Hernán Vidal, examining the narrative mode of the novel, concentrates on the "tú" voice as it relates to the Freudian concept of the Superego, while Santiago Tejerina-Canal also uses some Freudian terminology to interpret the voices of Artemio: "the consciousness of the Artemio-I of the present, the subconscious of the Artemio-YOU of the recent past and future, and the memory of the Artemio-HE of the distant past" (200). In these analyses it seems that the critics are approaching a solution to this problem of structure within the novel, touching upon questions of conscious and unconscious levels. Albeit separate, they are useful for a better understanding of the character of Artemio. However, Andrea Lower calls attention to a crucial point for reaching a more complete understanding of the complex structure of the novel: "Si bien los tres niveles están bien marcados y forman ciclos reconocibles, pueden parecer inconexos entre sí, o incluso autónomos. Consecuentemente, la crítica los ha tratado así, analizando la naturaleza ya de uno, ya de otro nivel. Creemos, sin embargo, que el sentido total de la obra se explica mejor buscando cómo se enlazan los tres niveles, insistiendo en su interdependencia" (19).

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The Freudian school of psychoanalysis identifies three levels of the psyche: the Ego, Superego, and Id. Although other schools of psychoanalysis serve to explain specific elements of Fuentes's novel, there seems to be a definite connection between the three voices of Artemio and the three Freudian levels of consciousness. Freudian theory offers the possibility of interpreting the three voices in the novel as well as explaining their interdependence.

Following in the tradition of Octavio Paz, Samuel Ramos, and many others, Francisco González Pineda, a Mexican writer of the 1960's and 70's, attempted to analyze Mexican national identity in *El mexicano: su dinámica psicosocial* and other works. González Pineda raised the same fundamental questions: What does it mean to be Mexican? How has the past affected Mexican identity? What are the most urgent problems of Mexican society? What attitudes, values and emotions are essential to Mexican society? Addressing many of the same problems as Paz, González Pineda utilized Freud's work on group psychology from *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* to psychoanalyze the collective psyche of Mexico and address the problem of its fragmentation. His essay is "un intento de abordar algunos aspectos de la psicología de México como pueblo, como un todo social" (5). Although González Pineda's Freudian theory is not consistent with modern analyses of Mexican national identity, it is important to contextualize him as a contemporary of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. His psychoanalysis of Mexico helps to shed light on the significance of the three voices of Artemio as well as their relation to the challenges facing post-revolutionary Mexico during the second half of the twentieth century.

Basing his classifications on Freudian collective psychology, González Pineda divides the country into three parts: the national Ego, Superego, and Id. The national Ego

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refers to the *pueblo*, or community, of Mexico, "el conjunto de individuos que lo integran y, con ellos, el conjunto de organizaciones sociales y culturales por las que se expresa" (González Pineda 6). The emotional or instinctive expressions of the nation form the national Id, but this level can only find expression through the Ego (6). The third term, the collective Superego, refers to the external, individual, or socially organized representation of conscience. González Pineda characterizes this entity of conscience as "...una serie de contenidos normativos que cada quien lleva dentro de sí y que le ordenan que haga tal cosa porque es buena...y que no haga tal otra porque es o puede ser mala o peligrosa; la cual le produce sentimientos de culpa, remordimiento, si hace algo malo, o, al contrario, le da contento consigo mismo si hace algo bueno" (7). Specific social institutions such as the Church, the government, and the legal system constitute the collective Superego, which is embodied in laws as well as moral and civil codes that form the national conscience. Thus, within the Superego lies the function of maintaining control of internal impulses (the national Id) that can be dangerous to the integrity or survival of the national psyche, such as revolution.

While Freud employed these terms to psychoanalyze society as a whole, González Pineda applied them to describe the political and social realities of Mexican society. In *E/ mexicano: su dinámica psicosocial*, he claims that Mexican history has yet to confront the sociological effects and implications of the mixture of its various cultural and racial groups as a result of conquest, independence, and revolution, "pues subsisten las diferencias originales aunque haya más mezcla, confrontación y tolerancia entre los componentes" (39). González Pineda does not suggest racial homogeneity; rather, he asserts that Mexicans need to create a more equal society



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and a common national identity, outlining the problem as follows:

Los criollos y los herederos de esa identidad, generalmente, quieren ser iguales...a otros criollos en quienes ven superioridad, o iguales a los europeos o americanos a quienes admiran, pero nunca iguales a sus connacionales. Los mestizos anhelan ser iguales a los criollos, pero desprecian sus identidades indígenas, por lo que fácilmente sobrecompensan sus sentimientos de superioridad ya con agresiones hacia el criollo al que secretamente envidian y de cuyo "valor" quieren apoderarse, ya con desprecio a los indígenas, o con falso amor o admiración a éstos, a quienes secretamente temen. Los indígenas desintegrados de sus propias comunidades, generalmente, son mestizados con rapidez en lo que se refiere a actitudes y emociones;...o bien, si conservan la identidad local, viven entonces su vida retraída, alejada del mundo mestizo y criollo... (146)

The encounters between these various groups has not resulted in national unity, and consequently the author proposes that the collective psyche of Mexico suffers from multiple identities.

This leads González Pineda to claim that multiple identities within the national Ego have led to a separation from the Superego. These multiple identities have not been able to reach accord as to what kind of government would be most appropriate for the nation. As a result, the government, which finds its written representation in the Constitution, is overly ideal and does not correspond to the reality of the Mexican people (164). González Pineda notes, "Quizá los gobernantes

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no corresponden al tipo exacto que los mexicanos anhelan, pero los anhelos de los mexicanos...son contradictorios, a veces tanto los absolutos como los relativos" (54). Thus, his essay addresses fragmentation in post-Revolutionary Mexican society. Above all, the question González Pineda raises is this: "¿Qué pasa en un individuo cuando su organización superyóica es demasiada ideal o extraña, dentro de un Yo fraccionado con identidades múltiples, con poderisísimas demandas instintivas, poco manejables por un Yo débil, como el descrito?" (131). The result, according to González Pineda, is the "schizoid," the fragmented psyche – which we see personified in the character of Artemio Cruz created by Carlos Fuentes.

González Pineda writes about the fragmented psyche of Mexico, but when Fuentes's novel is read as if Artemio were a personification of Mexico, as many critics have suggested, one can clearly note the psychoanalytical descriptions of the national Ego, Superego, and Id of González Pineda's work evident in the Yo, Tú, and Él of Artemio as delineated in the narrative divisions of the novel. Such a reading of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* illuminates the text and helps us to understand its tripartite structure. However, before a more in-depth explanation of González Pineda's connection to Fuentes's novel, it would be useful to examine the ways in which Artemio serves as a representative of Mexico.

It is widely accepted among critics of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* that Artemio serves as a personification of the country. In this discussion of *lo mexicano*, it is convenient to refer to the work best known for its analytic description of Mexicans and Mexican national identity, Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950). Michael Moody notes, "Fuentes' depiction of Artemio Cruz is remarkably similar to the generic Mexican described by Octavio Paz" (30). Surely, for the reader

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acquainted with the work of Paz, the influence of *El laberinto de la soledad* is quite apparent in the character Artemio.

First, the great contrast between the Artemio of the “yo” and “tú” sections, revealing his inner voices, and the Artemio of the “él” sections, which show his public life, implies that Artemio Cruz, just as Paz’s generic Mexican, wears a mask in his interaction with others. To trust another person is to leave oneself open, an attitude Artemio clearly demonstrates in the section dated October 22, 1915, in the interaction between himself and Gonzalo Bernal: “Y la rabia era contra sí mismo, porque él se había dejado llevar a la confidencia y a la plática, se había abierto a un hombre que no merecía confianza” (Fuentes 197).

Even more relevant to the influence of Paz in the novel is the “tú” section preceding the section dated September 11, 1947.

Tú lo pronunciarás...santo y seña de México: tu palabra:

- Chingue a su madre
- Hijo de la chingada
- Aquí estamos los meros chingones
- Déjate de chingaderas...(Fuentes 144)

Fuentes dedicates two entire pages to phrases of this sort, all derivations of *chingar*, which is the word that defines all Mexicans, according to *El laberinto de la soledad*. Similarly, in the “él” section dated November 23, 1927 *el gordo* advises Artemio to always choose his friends among “los grandes chingones” in order to protect himself from being the *chingado*. “Brindaron y el gordo dijo que este mundo se divide en chingones y pendejos y hay que escoger ya” (Fuentes 129). This is the beginning of his life that, now, the elderly Artemio is recalling: at several points he confronted the choice of being

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the *chingón* or the *chingado*, and the decision he made is clear in the phrase the now-dying man repeats throughout the novel: "Ustedes murieron. Yo sobreviví" (Fuentes 92, 222, 245).

Steven Boldy states that only at the end of the novel (the "él" section dated January 18, 1903) does the reader realize that Fuentes's protagonist is the product of another rape, that "Artemio is thus an hijo de la chingada before confirming the self-perpetuating curse of la Malinche by taking in turn the mask of the chingón" (33). Born an *hijo de la chingada*, Artemio's participation in the Revolution leads him to a change of roles, as he becomes the *chingón*. In the same way, Ortiz Vásquez affirms that Cruz "es un símbolo de un proceso histórico fatalmente marcado por el pecado original de la chingada" (530).

Octavio Paz's theories on Mexican national identity, much like those of Francisco González Pineda, do not reflect post-modern thoughts about culture and identity. Nevertheless, these theories hold historical importance in that they have influenced the ways in which we have considered Mexican culture for the last fifty years. Furthermore, it is also important to note that Paz was a contemporary of both Fuentes and González Pineda, making it likely that *El laberinto de la soledad* influenced both writers. The same can be said of Freudian psychoanalytic theories, which do not hold a great deal of weight today, but do offer a historical perspective of the intellectual environment at the time when Fuentes wrote *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*.

Even apart from the definition of Paz, the character of Artemio Cruz represents Mexico in light of the Mexican Revolution. In the thoughts of the character Don Gamaliel, "Artemio Cruz. Así se llamaba, entonces, el nuevo mundo surgido de la guerra civil" (Fuentes 50). Artemio represents the new Mexican that rose out of the Revolution and his history

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represents the history of Mexico. Moody comments, "In a very large sense his story is the story of Mexico – with representative meaning beyond the latest revolution – suggesting the many frustrated expectations, the human and political tragedies that are Mexico's history" (27). Lanin Gyurko affirms this view: "The life of Artemio is carefully structured to include key episodes in twentieth-century Mexican history – from the Revolution through the aftermath of power struggles and the military conspiracies that characterized the Calles epoch to the labor agitation of the 1950's" (30).

Through Artemio's similarity to the generic Mexican of Paz's work as well as through the character's representation of the new *mexicanidad* rising out of the Revolution, Fuentes clearly creates a character representative of Mexico. Nevertheless, these facts alone do not suffice to explain the challenge that almost all readers encounter upon reading the novel for the first time. How to explain and understand the unique narrative structure of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* in relation to Mexican national identity? Now, more specifically, an analysis of this complex character as a representative of the Mexico psychoanalyzed by González Pineda in *El mexicano: su dinámica psicosocial* can shed light upon this aspect of the text.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader finds the elderly Artemio Cruz, who has recently awakened on his deathbed and cannot even bear to open his eyes in the midst of his intense pain and agony. However, there is "una fuga de luces negras y círculos azules" (Fuentes 9) beyond his closed eyelids that forces him to open one eye and see, in turn, the fragmented reflection of his own face through the uneven sequins on his daughter Teresa's purse. "Trato de recordarlo en el reflejo; era un rostro roto en vidrios sin simetría, con el ojo muy cerca de la oreja y muy lejos de su par, con la nueca distribuida en tres espejos circulantes" (Fuentes 10). This encounter with his

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fragmented reflection is symbolic of his lived experience, which informs the reader's experience, throughout the novel; it is a startling encounter with the various fragments of the self, in addition to the fear, panic and ultimately, the truth that such an experience entails. Thus, it is not difficult to deduce that the three voices signify the fragmentation of the narrator. However, the reader is still left to wonder *how* the psyche has divided, what each voice *means*, and how the three are related. Through the lens of González Pineda's essay, the "yo" of Artemio represents the national Ego (el Yo nacional) of Mexico. It serves as the Ego of the present reality of the pueblo, as of the individual Artemio Cruz. Within this Ego, two subconscious forces emerge: the Superego and the Id.

The "tú" voice of Artemio, in turn, suggests tones of authority and moral conscience. Critics have characterized this voice as an interior level (Moody 28), the voice of conscience (Schiller 93, 95) or his suppressed conscience (96), the personal unconscious that examines the moral implications of his actions (Carter 37), and the subconscious level that "sirve para informar al lector sobre hechos pasados no contados en el nivel del él" and that "reconoce verdades que el yo no puede o no quiere aceptar" (Lower 21). Furthermore, Vidal identifies the presence of a "supraconciencia" or "supra-yo," which is something of a moral conscience: "Observamos que a pesar del gran compromiso emocional del supra-yo con los hechos ocurridos en la vida de su portador, los actos de Artemio Cruz son juzgados mediante una interpretación de su existencia en terminos de bien y mal, error y corrección, intentándose con ellos que él llegue a una comprensión del sentido de la existencia ya vivida" (308).

Thus we see that the second-person voice of Artemio serves the same function as the Freudian Superego. Both deal with an inner conscience that demands one to do that which is

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good, or else “le produce sentimientos de culpa, remordimiento, si hace algo malo (González Pineda 7). While the protagonist remembers the twelve most decisive days of his life, the “tú” voice appears as a source of guilt and remorse, speaking in future tense so as to have the chance to choose again what he should have chosen before, making the decisions that are good, correct, and moral:

...tú le dirás a Laura: sí  
tú le dirás a ese hombre gordo en ese cuarto  
desnudo, pintado de añil: no  
tú elegirás permanecer allí con Bernal y Tobías,  
seguir su suerte, no  
llegar a ese patio ensangrentado a  
justificarte...(Fuentes 246)

The true complexity of this inner conflict presents itself in Artemio’s knowledge of the fact that, if he had chosen this way, he would not have lived *his* life, he would not be the socially important but corrupt man he is now, and he most likely would not have even survived:

...tú serás un peon  
tú serás un herrero  
tú quedarás fuera, con los que quedaron fuera  
tú no serás Artemio Cruz, no tendrás setenta y un  
años...(Fuentes 247)

According to González Pineda, the fragmentation of the national Superego is the result of corruption in post-revolutionary society, and in *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* such corruption is manifested in the “él” sections. These twelve decisive days mark the instances in which Artemio chose

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survival above morality, his own well-being over the feelings, the love, even the life of others. He chose not to act on his conscience but rather on the basic instinct of survival. The "él" sections demonstrate "las expresiones emocionales o instintivas" (González Pineda 6) of the Id which the Superego of González Pineda's text – which corresponds to the "tú" voice of Artemio – normally tries to suppress; however, in these instances the Id triumphs and the Superego is suppressed, hence separated from the Ego.

González Pineda's description of the schizoid clearly illustrates Artemio's fragmentation:

El esquizoide aparece contradictoriamente como una persona lejana y distante y, al mismo tiempo, como una persona muy dependiente, muy ligada a la necesidad de recibir de afuera las aportaciones de satisfacción que sus necesidades narcisistas demandan. Asimismo, da la impresión de que fácilmente pierde su identidad y acepta las identidades que le parecen mejores que la suya; sólo que tal pérdida de identidad e incorporación de las otras es fenómeno transitorio, ya que tan luego como el Yo percibe con más claridad la realidad del supuesto Objeto admirado y amado [del Superyó]...huye de nuevo hacia sus realidades internas (en medio de un proceso de angustia) y en busca de sus propias identidades con la [realidad] que le sea más fácil y posible vivir. (135)

The schizoid psyche is characterized by its alienation from reality. What is the cause of this phenomenon? According to González Pineda, the origin of fragmentation lies in sentiments



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of guilt (134), which we can see Artemio has suppressed during the course of his corrupt lifetime.

The patriarchal system of government which was established at the end of the Revolution provided the opportunity for Artemio Cruz to begin his corrupt career as a wealthy landowner, exploiting workers under the guise of land reforms. Similarly, González Pineda emphasizes land distribution as one of the principal sources of corruption in post-revolutionary society. These reforms, originally intended to serve the masses, did not favor the majority of Mexicans and "los más fuertes y hábiles se impusieron a los menos fuertes e ineptos" (González Pineda 176). Again, this originates from Mexico's fragmented psyche, its inability to come to terms with its multiple identities and a government that does not take into account the present reality of the masses. "El fracaso se ha debido a que no se reconocieron las peculiares necesidades de cada una de las identidades nacionales" (177).

González Pineda poses the crucial question: Will Mexico find the unity for which it is searching? Yes, he answers, but "no por el camino de borrar violentamente sus identificaciones secundarias, sino por la aceptación de su pasado total y de su presente real" (González Pineda 57). As a resolution to this conflict, he suggests a "national therapy," a re-encounter of the Ego and Superego (191). In his opinion, a large part of the problem comes from the inability to accept, or even realize, the true history of the nation. The Mexican needs to discover his past – to tolerate it, reconcile it, accept it and integrate it into his current life "sin los temores, los odios, las vergüenzas, y las angustias anteriores" (194) and this is precisely the process one may observe taking place throughout *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*.

Through the realization of his history, along with the acceptance of his own feelings of guilt and moral conscience

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that he has suppressed throughout his lifetime, Artemio Cruz is capable of bringing together the fragments of his life and of his self. Only in this way is he able to find true freedom. As the "tú" voice affirms, "la premeditación de la muerte es premeditación de la libertad" (249). Fuentes realizes González Pineda's national therapy through the character of Artemio when, at the very end of the novel, Artemio returns to the day of his birth, finds his origins, and accepts them. Only at that moment do the three voices unite: "Te traje adentro y moriré contigo...los tres...moriremos...Tú...mueres...has muerto...moriré" (316).

At last, the final question can be addressed: what message is conveyed through the novel's structural organization? Artemio Cruz, speaking in the "tú" voice, recognizes the fragmentation of Mexico: "¿Recordarás el país? Lo recordarás y no es uno; son mil países con un solo nombre" (Fuentes 274). By writing *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, with the tripartite structure, Fuentes at once confronts the problem of fragmentation presented by González Pineda in *El mexicano: su dinámica psicosocial* and compels the reader to confront it as well. Throughout the novel Fuentes analyzes the Ego, Superego, and Id of Mexico through the character of Artemio, a personification of the country, and applies the national therapy suggested by González Pineda through the re-encounter with the protagonist's origins and the unification of the three fragments. In the words of critic Marc Nacht, "Inside one single mirror, Carlos Fuentes gathers the scattered fragments of origins. And from this mirror, newly fragmented, the kaleidoscope of history is reborn" (211).

Thus, Artemio's words ring true: "La premeditación de la muerte es la premeditación de la libertad" (Fuentes 249). By recalling that which has condemned and repressed him, the truth sets him free just as, according to González Pineda,

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Mexico's reconciliation with its past will bring together its fragmented psyche. The long-suppressed Superego of Artemio is thus "...una voz perdida que...quiere resucitar...seguir viviendo...continuar la vida donde cortó la otra...muerte...no...volver a empezar desde el principio...resucitar...volver a nacer" (Fuentes 272). In his dying moments, after recalling the decisive moments of his life, the tragedies and emotions long withheld, Artemio returns to the day of his birth. In *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* Fuentes tells us that Mexico, too, can be reborn through a re-encounter with its fragmented origins.

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## **PROSTÍBULOS Y SUBVERSIÓN EN "LA GRINGA" DE GLORIA PAMPILLO**

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Seleccionar una escritora argentina contemporánea cuya ficción feminista evidencie originalidad estilística y relevancia temática constituye una tarea difícil, pues muchas han demostrado exitosamente gran creatividad en ambos aspectos literarios. Si bien autoras como Luisa Valenzuela, Noemí Ulla y Angélica Gorosdicher ocupan un lugar importante por su

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contribución literaria, el nombre de Gloria Pampillo adquiere resonancia particular al hablar de mujer y prostitución. Su temática feminista se ha ido desarrollando a través de su obra ya sea en novelas como en cuentos cortos. En su primera novela, *Las invenciones inglesas* (1992), la autora presenta dos hilos narrativos paralelos: "la historia de dos hermanas huérfanas durante la presidencia de Perón (1945-1955), quienes se disputan la autoría de un libro y la historia que ellas inventan situada en el Buenos Aires de 1830" (Dominguez 67)<sup>xx</sup>. A medida que "los ritos femeninos de las dos hermanas" se desarrollan, la autora va incorporando características de diferentes géneros literarios: "el diario íntimo de viaje de una mujer del siglo XIX, en contraposición a la construcción de una novela sobre una mujer joven de hoy, y narrativas de carácter histórico, de aventura y policial" (Domínguez, 67)<sup>xx</sup>. La narrativa feminista de Pampillo continúa en su novela *Costanera Sur* (1995), en la cual las experiencias de Julia, periodista y activista social, y las de Marilyn, naturista y marginada social, se entrelazan para presentar la lucha de los vecinos y sindicatos del barrio contra los naturistas, que pueblan la costanera. Mientras la intelectualidad de Julia y la energía emocional de Marilyn compiten en la lucha por una causa social, a saber, salvar las viviendas de los naturistas de los rapaces urbanistas, afloran las traiciones de ambas partes. Esta lucha, encarnada principalmente por el activismo feminista de Julia y Marilyn, muestra conflictos urbanos y personales presentados a través de símbolos, metáforas y un lenguaje que muchas veces rememora la literatura fantástica. La narrativa feminista de Pampillo continúa en el cuento "La Gringa", analizado en este estudio. Utilizando principalmente metodología deconstructivista, examino temas cruciales del texto: la crítica mordaz de la prostitución, de la vida prostibularia y del gobierno

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nacional, así como la formación de la subjetividad de la Gringa, el personaje principal del cuento.

Críticos literarios como Pierre L. Horn and Mary Beth Pringle presentan un análisis de la prostitución en la literatura moderna y afirman que la prostituta, un personaje constante de la literatura a través de los siglos, es frecuentemente una creación de los escritores de género masculino. Estos la presentan como un objeto, un símbolo, que muestra los valores patriarcales no sólo de los autores sino también de los críticos, quienes no le han prestado la debida atención a las implicaciones sociales y políticas de la prostitución (1-2)<sup>xx</sup>. En el campo económico, Marx no considera "natural" la compra y venta de la mujer para su uso sexual: la mujer se convierte en un objeto de trueque comercial. Además mantiene que la prostitución es "una expresión específica de la explotación general del trabajador" (citado en MacKinnon, 17). Engels ataca las bases económicas que sustentan la prostitución y considera el "matrimonio de conveniencia" otra forma de prostitución (63-66). En su estudio sociológico *El segundo sexo*, Simone de Beauvoir afirma en el capítulo "Mitos: sueños, miedos e ídolos" que la prostituta es una proyección de la fantasía masculina. Además, en su estudio feminista *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, MacKinnon sostiene que la prostitución, como la violación y la pornografía, "institucionaliza la supremacía sexual masculina", (197) la que, al erotizar el control y apoyar la sumisión, modela los roles masculinos y femeninos en la sociedad<sup>xx</sup>. El cuento de Pampillo ilustra claramente estas nociones de prostitución, patriarcado y explotación.

La Gringa, una prostituta, es víctima del patriarcado socioeconómico y político fundado en la dicotomización poderosos/marginados, colonizador/colonizado. La narrativa tiene lugar en los años 70 durante la "guerra sucia" de



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Argentina, cuando las represoras dictaduras militares torturaban y mataban a aquellos con ideologías liberales, quienes luchaban por la igualdad entre las clases sociales y la transición hacia una democracia. La Gringa vuelve al prostíbulo después de haber pasado dos años en la cárcel de El Buen Pastor por haber sido falsamente acusada de complicidad en actos subversivos. En la cárcel descubre su pasión por el dibujo cuando toma las clases de Marita, quien participa en un proyecto educativo que la universidad ofrece en El Buen Pastor. Al ser puesta en libertad la Gringa regresa al prostíbulo, a falta de otro lugar donde refugiarse, y allí empieza a dibujar a sus clientes. Juanjo, uno de ellos, tras ser informado por la Yoli, una de las prostitutas, sobre el prontuario de la Gringa, le pega y la viola para sacarle información sobre los "zurdos", vale decir, los comunistas y los enemigos del gobierno militar. En la escena final, la Chole, propietaria del prostíbulo, asustada por las complicaciones políticas de la Gringa y ante los movimientos de represión militar que se están organizando, deja que la Gringa abandone el prostíbulo.

En la dicotomización poderoso/marginado, colonizador/colonizado, la Gringa ocupa obviamente la parte inferior del par binario; ella es física y psíquicamente la explotada: "su cuerpo [...] ha sido [...] confiscado, ha sido convertido [...] en una figura doliente" (Cixous, 337). Como la prostituta Maggie en la novela de Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, la Gringa "floreció en un charco de barro" (24) rodeada de inseguridad y ansiedad. El texto revela escuetamente, a través de escenas retrospectivas, la niñez desgraciada de la Gringa: la muerte de su madre, su iniciación como prostituta cuando en Unquillo, su pueblo natal, le mostraba el "papo" (127) a los automobilistas, su explotación económica como sirvienta (las palabras "harta de fregar" (128) sugieren dicha ocupación) y su decisión de ir a trabajar al

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prostíbulo de la Chole con la esperanza de mejorar su standard de vida.

Si en Unquillo la Gringa conoce la injusticia y explotación de ocupaciones miserables, en el prostíbulo no corre mejor suerte. Metafóricamente, el prostíbulo representa un microcosmos que refleja la violencia sociopolítica y económica de la Argentina de los años 70 durante la "guerra sucia". Por su ocupación y su sexo la Gringa está socialmente marginada, subordinada a depender de los colonizadores, quienes en la jerarquía social y económica de la sociedad patriarcal ejercen su poder sobre los colonizados, cuya subjetividad les es negada y su voz, sofocada. En el prostíbulo la Gringa no sólo se convierte en un objeto sexual, sino que también su sexualidad se define de acuerdo con los deseos de sus clientes, quienes además determinan económica y políticamente la vida de la Gringa. En primer lugar, ellos no le pagan a la Gringa por sus servicios, sino a Chole, propietaria de la *maison*. Referencias a la decoración francesa del prostíbulo, a la abundancia de muebles "blando[s] y dorado[s]" (124) y al dinero que Chole tiene en el banco revelan que mientras ella goza del lucro de la prostitución, la Gringa, así como las otras prostitutas, no reciben beneficios económicos. A pesar de que la Gringa se revela contra Chole diciéndole "mierda que me vas a hacer culear para llenarte el bolsillo" (131), su falta de preparación para encontrar un trabajo rentable en el mercado laboral limita sus opciones a "culear" o "fregar", alternativas de las mujeres pobres sin educación, que en el texto y en el mercado laboral en general parecen no poder evitar la explotación económica. Además la Gringa queda políticamente comprometida cuando recibe como cliente al Negro, un subversivo, a quien el gobierno militar persigue. Cuando el Negro escapa, el gobierno encarcela a la Gringa por sospechosa a pesar de saber que "en rigor no había sido cómplice" (125), hecho que revela el abuso de autoridad

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de gobiernos represores. Si el Negro representa la subversión que luchó por condiciones socioeconómicas y políticas equitativas, Juanjo muestra la violencia que utilizó el gobierno militar para reprimir ideologías liberales y la concientización política del pueblo. Juanjo no sólo usa a la Gringa para satisfacer sus deseos sexuales, sino que al enterarse de su prontuario la acusa de "zurda" y venga su odio político a través de esta mujer inocente. Las palabras de Juanjo "yo así no me voy" (137), y la consecuente paliza que le da a la Gringa, revelan la naturaleza vengativa de este hombre y preparan al lector para entrever en Juanjo y en su maltrato de esta prostituta al torturador, figura demoníaca de la literatura política latinoamericana por sus vejaciones y violaciones de los derechos humanos. Después de gopearla, patearla y estamparla contra la pared, la viola, crimen sexual producto de un sistema de poder erróneo (Gordon, 169)<sup>xx</sup>. Tras tirarla al suelo y al no poder penetrarla por su sexo flojo, le ordena: "chupa, zurdita arrastrada, pero si me haces doler, aunque sea un pelo, te dejo estropeada para siempre" (138). La violencia física que este torturador le inflige a su víctima, va acompañada de violencia verbal que reafirma el odio y la hostilidad de gobiernos represores<sup>xx</sup>. A través de esta compleja temática (explotación económica y violencia sexual y política), el texto feminista de Pampillo funciona como una crítica mordaz de la institucionalización de la supremacía del colonizador y su degradación del colonizado, no sólo en el prostíbulo sino también en la política nacional.

No obstante, una sucesiva lectura del texto sugiere que el poder político y económico del colonizador se debilita augurándole al colonizado una sociedad más equitativa. Chole, en su función de colonizadora/ama de sus esclavas (las prostitutas), va perdiendo poder debido a su edad. Los años van mostrando su decadencia física: sus manos están

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"moteadas por las pecas de la edad" (128), sus "viarazas" (134) revelan su deterioro psicológico y su conducta errática muestra su inestabilidad emocional. A través de Chole, Pampillo presenta una ironía doble que enriquece los significados del texto. La primera ironía consiste en la explotación de una mujer por otra mujer, lo que le sugiere al lector que el feminismo debe trascender la crítica individualista del dominio masculino para estudiar las relaciones entre "todos los individuos y la sociedad (sin descuidar las relaciones entre las mujeres)" (Fox-Genovese, 164). La segunda ironía muestra la metamorfosis de Chole de colonizadora/ama en víctima de su colonizador, el Dr. Oliva, un abogado simpatizante del gobierno, que la ayuda a regentear el prostíbulo: le aconseja cómo vigilar a la Gringa y "cómo manejarse con el intendente y la policía" (124). Con destreza maquiavélica y presentándole siempre "el lado bueno a las cosas" (125), el Dr. Oliva manipula a Chole no sólo en sus relaciones interpersonales con las prostitutas y las autoridades, sino también en sus finanzas. El texto sugiere que Chole, temerosa por la inestabilidad nacional, va a "sacar los millones del banco para que (el Dr. Oliva) se los escondiera" (134). Imágenes de deterioro físico y mental, la explotación entre mujeres (versus la explotación de la mujer por el hombre) y el cambio de rol de ama a esclava indican la naturaleza cíclica del ejercicio del poder con su consecuente desmoronamiento, lo que ofrece una apertura a los marginados del orden falocéntrico.

Si en el microcosmos del prostíbulo el orden jerárquico es temporal y eventualmente se desintegra, en el macrocosmos del gobierno nacional, conflictos de represión y resistencia fragmentan el poder político revirtiendo el poder entre colonizador y colonizado. Los militares con autoridad represiva ejercen el poder hegemónico del país con la misma agresividad con que Chole da "rodillazos y empujones" (131) a la Gringa

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para que no salga de la *maison*. Si el prostíbulo es una tiranía matriarcal, el gobierno se convierte en símbolo de ideologías políticas autoritarias y machistas. Juanjo, representante del gobierno, purga su odio político y satisface su deseo de supremacía sexual masculina en la Gringa, quien se convierte en el chivo expiatorio, en la víctima de un sistema que afirma su poder en la violación y explotación de los colonizados. No obstante, el texto sugiere el debilitamiento de políticas represivas y machistas a través del fornido cuerpo de Juanjo. Si sus músculos fuertes y bien formados revelan su masculinidad, su sexo blando que no puede penetrar a la Gringa muestra la desintegración del mito sexual machista en la sociedad falocéntrica. Además, la prohibición de las clases de dibujo auspiciadas por la universidad en la cárcel y, más tarde, la confiscación de los dibujos de la Gringa, muestran la destrucción de actividades intelectuales y creativas, generadoras de pensamiento crítico, por ideologías políticas autoritarias. El hecho de que el gobierno tome medidas drásticas de represión (el ejército cierra los caminos, se prepara el golpe) sugiere el temor del colonizador ante un colonizado que se rebela cada vez con más convicción. En "La Gringa", como en la novela *Nana* de Zola, la prostitución funciona como una metáfora que refleja la decadencia política de la nación (Warren, 35).

Como esas mujeres con talento, "Poetas, Novelistas, Ensayistas, y Escritoras [...] que (a través de los siglos) murieron con ese don reprimido en ellas" (Walker, 34), la Gringa se ve frustrada social y económicamente por un sistema falocéntrico que destruye su energía creadora, esa energía que le permitirá encontrar su identidad como mujer y como artista<sup>xx</sup>. Dotada de una rica imaginación que, irónicamente, aflora durante su estadía en la cárcel, la Gringa descubre, en el dibujo del cuerpo humano, la belleza de las líneas y de los volúmenes,

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y percibe formas estéticas invisibles a los ojos del observador: "es como si al dibujar (me) cambiaran los ojos" (129), dice la Gringa. Esta energía creadora, expresada a través de sus dibujos, contribuye al desarrollo de su propia individualidad. Su imaginación no está colonizada por el imperialismo del arte comercial, el cual apoya ideologías coercitivas de belleza femenina. Por ejemplo, Miri, una de las prostitutas, comenta al respecto: las chicas de los retratos que pintan en la peatonal son todas lindas y "casi iguales" (128). Al contrario, los dibujos de la Gringa manifiestan su original creatividad, así también como el desarrollo de una consciencia de mujer que deconstruye cánones artísticos y machistas de apariencia femenina. Según Miri, en los retratos que la Gringa les hizo a las prostitutas, le salieron "todas medio chuecas" (128). Además, su talento y naciente individualidad también se muestran en "los trazos [...] leve[s] y vigoroso[s]" (126) de sus dibujos, trazos que no dejan "que nada se pierda en el abismo blanco: ni el ángulo del pubis, ni la curva de los senos, ni los muslos gruesos" (125). Finalmente, su energía creadora da muestras contundentes de la pasión que demanda la vocación artística, pasión que la Gringa manifiesta al aprovechar toda oportunidad que se le ofrece para dibujar (por ejemplo, sus paseos en el balneario o los clientes del prostíbulo), así también como en los movimientos vigorosos y decididos de su mano que se mueve con "[una]violenta agilidad que sorprendía a Marita" (133). A través de su imaginación, talento y pasión por el dibujo, la Gringa encuentra la identidad que le niegan sistemas socioeconómicos y políticos monolíticos. Si según Sigmund Freud el juego de palabras revela el inconsciente (Friedman, 373), podríamos decir que el lenguaje artístico de líneas, formas y volúmenes manifiestan el inconsciente de la Gringa, el cual se revela en una creatividad no reprimida por sistemas patriarcales.

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A través del arte y la creatividad, Pampillo presenta la subjetividad de la Gringa en un proceso de continua transformación, ajeno a construcciones sociales. En primer lugar, la consciencia femenina de la Gringa emerge como única e individual, una consciencia con su propia energía creadora, que se desarrolla a medida que este personaje va descubriendo su talento artístico. Las palabras de la Gringa: "el arte no era hacer las cosas como son, son como uno las ve" (129), revelan su naciente subjetividad expresada a través no sólo de sus dibujos sino también de su oposición consciente a opresiones económicas, por ejemplo, cuando se le niega a la Chole a "culear" (131). La subjetividad de la Gringa se va desarrollando a medida que avanza la narrativa, lo que se revela en las líneas cada vez más seguras y fuertes de sus dibujos. Además el discurso de esta mujer con respecto al arte, a saber, que el dibujo representa lo que cada uno ve y, más tarde, su decisión de dejar el prostíbulo a pesar de los peligros económicos y políticos que enfrentará, revelan la evolución de su subjetividad y la autonomía que la Gringa comienza a asumir. La formación de esta consciencia femenina, como sucede con la producción de una obra de arte, se (de)construye y (re)crea en un proceso continuo de elaboración<sup>xx</sup>, lo que también queda demostrado en el discurso de Marita con respecto a la relación estética artista-obra: "Marita al principio les hacía hacer una mancha de pintura sobre el papel; después, les decía que la miraran hasta que empezaran a descubrir cosas; ahí, ya podías entenderte con ellas" (129). Si bien en el proceso de elaboración la identidad femenina se enfrenta a fuerzas represoras (en el texto, sistemas económicos y políticos), la existencia de conductas subversivas (como las de la Gringa y Marita) deconstruyen ideologías hegemónicas para dar lugar a la formación de la subjetividad de la mujer. Es Marita la que, con su comportamiento insurgente, le ayuda a descubrir a la Gringa su creatividad y la que le

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muestra que su talento tiene futuro al decirle: "esto tuyo (este arte) no termina acá, Gringa" (134). Es Marita la que, metafóricamente, aparece al final del cuento como fuerza liberadora y protectora cuando le dice a la Gringa: "tengo que encontrar la manera de ayudarte a salir [del prostíbulo] " (135).

Si el arte y la creatividad, según se interpreta en el texto de Pampillo, contribuyen a la formación de la subjetividad femenina, los dibujos de mujeres que la Gringa realiza en la cárcel reafirman, a nivel simbólico, el proceso de constante (re)creación de la consciencia femenina, en busca de la descentralización del poder patriarcal.

La Gringa les va mostrando los dibujos (a Chole y a las prostitutas). Son mujeres de pie o sentadas, algunas deformes y otras huesudas, a veces es sólo un torso o sino una lámina cubierta de manos, otras veces una misma mujer que repite una postura, de perfil con el vientre salido, el pelo que le oculta la cara y enseguida la misma mujer surge, más decidida, desde al fondo levemente gris de la hoja; cuando seguramente cansada se ha reclinado sobre una sábana, el lápiz no deja que nada se pierda en el abismo blanco: ni el ángulo del pubis, ni la curva de los senos, ni los muslos gruesos. Hasta los dedos de los pies. La mujer para entonces ya se ha dormido y tiene los ojos cerrados .....(126).

Los dibujos no sólo presentan una narrativa de la (re)creación de la consciencia femenina, sino que también le transmiten este mensaje gráficamente al lector (a su vez, espectador del arte visual presentado). Para comprenderlo, el lector-



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espectador lo contextualiza a través de dos medios, el discurso y el dibujo.

En este medio artístico, la Gringa no sólo va formando su identidad, sino que también muestra el constante devenir de la subjetividad femenina. En primer lugar, mientras algunas mujeres están "sentadas" o "el pelo [...] le[s] oculta la cara", posición física y encubrimiento que revelan su subordinación y falta de identidad en ideologías patriarcales, otras están "de pie", en acción, impartiendo un mensaje subversivo que desafía sistemas falocéntricos. En segundo lugar, la Gringa, ajena a "la coercitiva ideología de la belleza, el imperativo que una mujer debe ser hermosa", rompe con cánones artísticos patriarcales (Grundy, 74). Según Isobel Grundy, el crear un personaje ficticio dotado de belleza es construirlo como un objeto sexual dirigido al lector masculino, quien, a su vez, responde favorablemente al mismo. Por el contrario, al crear un personaje femenino desprovisto de belleza, se lo establece en una relación patriarcal particular; generalmente, éste queda excluido de dicha relación, pues no es objeto de la "mirada" ("gaze") masculina (74-75). Pampillo deconstruye la imagen femenina como signo de sexualidad y belleza física para presentar mujeres "deformes" y "huesudas", y otra "con el vientre salido (pero que) surge más decidida", deconstrucción necesaria para desestabilizar no sólo cánones patriarcales de arte sino también estándares sociales que obstaculizan el progreso de la consciencia femenina.

Si bien de acuerdo con ciertos dibujos el lector-espectador podría cuestionar el mensaje feminista del texto, es decir, el logro de la subjetividad femenina, estos necesitan ser interpretados como parte del proceso evolutivo que conduce a la misma. Por ejemplo, la presentación fragmentada del cuerpo humano, la "lámina cubierta de manos" y la que presenta "sólo un torso" pueden asociarse con la mujer fragmentada, con el

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sujeto femenino no realizado de Julia Kristeva (353). Y el dibujo de la mujer "dormid(a)" con "los ojos cerrados", "seguramente cansada", le confiere al mensaje textual un tono ambiguo. ¿Es éste el descanso reparador después de encontrar la subjetividad deseada o es ésta la mujer todavía colonizada/subordinada por ideologías patriarcales, rendida a su colonizador? La fragmentación y la ambigüedad de estas imágenes apuntan a la frase "sujeto como proceso", que Kristeva acuñó para referirse a la subjetividad femenina como incompleta, en un constante estado de desarrollo, nunca estable ("A Question of Subjectivity", 351). En el contexto del cuento, tanto la Gringa como las mujeres de sus dibujos aparecen como "incompletas", pero en un constante devenir (vale decir, en un proceso de [de]construcción y [re]creación), que refleja la formación de la subjetividad como "proceso" evolutivo. Al no dejar "que nada se pierda en el abismo blanco: ni el ángulo del pubis, ni la curva de los senos, ni los muslos gruesos", la Gringa se convierte en agente propulsora de este proceso, así también como en mediadora entre el texto, los dibujos y el lector-espectador para subvertir hegemonías falocéntricas. Además, de acuerdo con pautas postmodernistas, que analizan la descentralización de los "absolutos" en el arte y en la cultura, los dibujos desafían sistemas monolíticos de linealidad y lógica. Estos presentan un discurso pictórico no lineal, no estructurado racionalmente según normas artísticas patriarcales, sino experimental y (re)creativo, que muestra los múltiples aspectos y significados de la femineidad<sup>xx</sup>.

Irónicamente, el texto anticipa una reversión del binarismo, pues la Gringa de sometida/pobre se convierte potencialmente en independiente/solvente: el mismo sistema económico y patriarcal que la subyugó la dota del talento y de los medios económicos que la ayudarán a sobrevivir cuando deje el prostíbulo. El texto revela que el talento de la Gringa

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proviene de una relación obscura entre ella y el famoso pintor argentino Spilimbergo, quien "vivió [sus] últimos años" (140) en el pueblo de Unquillo, donde había vivido la Gringa hasta la muerte de su madre<sup>xx</sup>. De esta velada relación patriarcal, la Gringa hereda su talento, pues "ya de chica andaba haciendo garabatos" (126) y muchos años más tarde, en la cárcel, "se [engancha] con toda el alma con el taller de plástica de la Marita Bonfanti" (126). La relación la Gringa/Spilimbergo, vale decir, debilidad/poder queda confirmada cuando Chole le muestra la lámina de Spilimbergo en la que aparece el retrato de una "chica [... con] ojos grandes, [...] el pelo claro, echado hacia la espalda" (139-140), rasgos físicos que se asemejan a los de la Gringa. Ella también tiene "ojos grandes [...] tremendamente abiertos" (123) y "el pelo pajizo recogido atrás" (123). Años más tarde, en la cárcel, Marita comenta que la Gringa tiene "los ojos que les hace a las mujeres Spilimbergo" (126). Cuando la Gringa pregunta si es su retrato, Chole le responde: "es lo único seguro [...]. Lo demás, son historias de pueblo" (140), "historias" que el texto no aclara. Si bien al principio de la relación patriarcal Spilimbergo/la Gringa, ésta queda subordinada, irónicamente esta misma relación la ayuda a subvertir el binarismo. En primer lugar, el talento heredado no sólo (re)crea la identidad de la Gringa, sino que también generará una apertura social y económica cuando deje el prostíbulo. En segundo lugar, el valioso retrato de Spilimbergo le brindará recursos económicos. La Chole le dice: "cuando te vayas de acá, te lo llevas... Vas a tener que cuidarlo, por que vale mucho" (140). Ambos, el talento heredado y el dibujo que Spilimbergo hizo de la Gringa, contribuyen a la subversión del binarismo. Dicha subversión demuestra una vez más la naturaleza cíclica del poder, probablemente con miras a establecer una dialéctica entre los géneros basada en el reconocimiento de la subjetividad del "Otro". Y en esta

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dialéctica, Pampillo, como la crítica feminista Judith Butler, propone una identidad femenina fundada en una multiplicidad de intersecciones culturales, socioeconómicas y políticas, sobre la cuales se construye la consciencia femenina (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 14). Tanto la subversión del poder monolítico, como la dialéctica entre colonizador y colonizado son cruciales para lograr la igualdad entre los géneros, meta posible de lograr, si (como sostiene Kristeva) se (de)construye la dicotomía hombre/mujer, que tiene carácter "metafísico" ("Women's Time", 33-34).

Si bien su talento le brinda a la Gringa una oportunidad para (re)crear su vida cuando deja el prostíbulo, la opresión económica que enfrenta ("cuando [una prostituta] trataba de irse de ahí, le iba para la mierda y tenía que volver" (131)), la incertidumbre política que pone en peligro su vida ("[los militares van a] liquidar a todos, a los zurdos y a los amigos y a los imbéciles" (139) ) y la ideología patriarcal que convierte a la mujer en un objeto sexual e ignora su subjetividad, se presentan como obstáculos colosales que la Gringa tiene que enfrentar. No obstante, el final del cuento anticipa la victoria de la Gringa, esta vez, a través de lo que Marita contribuye a la formación de su subjetividad.

A través de los dibujos y su discurso, Marita aparece investida de poder para enfrentar la autoridad falocéntrica y así contribuir al desarrollo de la subjetividad de la Gringa. Aunque la caracterización de Marita es escueta y su voz sólo se oye una vez al final del cuento, Pampillo crea, a través de los comentarios de la Gringa y una narradora omnisciente con perspectiva feminista, el personaje de Marita. Este personaje posee las características necesarias para moldear la naciente subjetividad de la Gringa. En primer lugar, la temática de los desnudos separa a Marita del arte tradicional y patriarcal que, tan a menudo, asocia la imagen femenina con temas

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hogareños, tales como la maternidad o quehaceres domésticos, vale decir, con la imagen de la mujer colonizada<sup>xx</sup>. Por lo contrario, los desnudos presentados por una mujer, Marita, y dibujados por mujeres, las presas, descentralizan códigos patriarcales, en los que el pintor/colonizador emerge como agente activo de la experiencia artística. Además el elegir desnudos como tema de los dibujos demuestra que "el Continente Oscuro no es ni oscuro ni inexplorable" (Cixous, 341-342), que la femineidad también involucra reconocimiento del cuerpo femenino, incluyendo aspectos sexuales y eróticos. En esta forma, Marita (re)valoriza el cuerpo femenino, las presas lo "exploran" a través de sus dibujos y, como las feministas francesas Luce Irigaray y Monique Wittig, inscriben en él un mensaje político que autoriza una estética femenina (Haraway, 400). Debe destacarse también que Marita ignora prejuicios sociales moribundos, según los cuales la mujer de clase social superior no debe asociarse con las marginadas, para llevar a cabo un proyecto universitario en la cárcel. Además, desafía el represivo gobierno militar al vincularse con las "zurdas" de El Buen Pastor<sup>xx</sup>.

Finalmente, contrario al "silencio" o afónico discurso femenino (Cixous, 343), la voz de Marita suena resuelta. Cuando la Gringa la llama desde el prostíbulo, no fue necesario que le explicara la situación. Marita "pescó todo al vuelo y habló por [la Gringa] " (135). Le dijo: "por ahora, soportá un poco más ahí; tengo que encontrar la manera de ayudarte a salir" (135). El tono seguro, su discurso breve y puntual y su uso del modo imperativo le dan a sus palabras un carácter "masculino", asociado con la etapa *mimética* inicial que utilizó la mujer para revelarse contra el sistema patriarcal. Al usar mimesis, Marita desafía al colonizador, pues cómo lo explica Irigaray, se hacen visibles pautas culturales que la lógica masculina prefiere que permanezcan "invisibles" (Irigaray, 317).

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Al romper con un discurso femenino, que presume debilidad y silencio, y adoptar un discurso "masculino" de tono fuerte e imperativo, las palabras de Marita adquieren fuerza política al convertirse en un acto de "insurrección". Como Judith Butler explica, términos usados con un cierto significado pueden adquirir nuevos significados. Esta insurrección potencial del lenguaje, que tiene lugar cuando se produce un rompimiento entre los "significados ordinarios y extraordinarios", lo hace políticamente promisorio. Derrida llama este proceso *reinscripción* (Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 144-145). De acuerdo con Butler, podríamos decir que el discurso de Marita posee características de "insurrección", al (de)construir discursos femeninos estereotípicos y (re)construir un discurso feminista investido de subjetividad.

Al presentar el microcosmos del prostíbulo frente al macrocosmos del gobierno nacional, el texto de Pampillo revela la violencia económica y política de la sociedad patriarcal argentina a mediados de los años setenta. Una lectura feminista y deconstructivista del texto muestra el poder del colonizador y la victimización del colonizado, al focalizar, especialmente, en la Gringa. Esta mujer, marginada social, víctima de un sistema político y económico que trunca el devenir de su subjetividad, parece destinada a vivir bajo el yugo falocéntrico. Irónicamente, su talento y creatividad, así como la madura consciencia feminista de Marita y el valioso cuadro de Spilimbergo, subvierten el binarismo colonizador/colonizada. En este proceso, la Gringa (re)construye su identidad, lo que le permitirá proteger su autonomía en la sociedad patriarcal cuando deje el prostíbulo. Trascendiendo la crítica de la violencia económica y política, Pampillo reivindica la energía creadora femenina. Dicha energía no sólo potencia la descentralización de dicotomías jerárquicas, sino que también impele la (re)construcción de un espacio sociopolítico y

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económico, en el cual la relación entre los géneros permita el desarrollo de la subjetividad femenina en un ambiente de equidad y libertad.

**Mireya Keller,  
Gustav Mahler, and Eric Neumann:  
Feminine Archetypes in *En el tren de los  
muertos***

**Judy B. McInnis  
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**For Barbara Ware<sup>1</sup>**

*En el tren de los muertos* received Honorable Mention in the Contest Premio Fondo Nacional de las Artes in 1997; its author, Mireya Keller, has won numerous prizes, primarily for her short stories, in Chile and Argentina; she is also a prize-winning poet.<sup>2</sup> She was born in Santiago, has resided in several Latin American countries and in Rome. Since 1992, she has lived in Buenos Aires where, since 1996, she has worked with a group of four writers to produce the radio program "Contextos." Her novel reveals her imaginative power and her mastery of a lyrical style that opens the suffocation of grief to chronicle its manifestations within the members of a large family. The death she depicts is perhaps the most poignant, the death of a child of about four or five years old, the youngest child of a family of five children, and one who was its pet, its most-loved and doted upon latecomer, born after the fourth child had already reached her mid teens. Death is always difficult to comprehend, never more so than when it strikes down a child.<sup>3</sup> Within the novel Keller contrasts the death of one of the grandmothers, a loss painful to assimilate but finally comprehensible because of her advanced age, with the death of the young child Esperanza. The loss of this child devastates the entire family, especially the



mother, whose world is shattered by this evidence of Nature's (and God's) injustice.

My purpose as the first critic to undertake a thorough analysis of this novel is to comment generally upon its form and content, especially its socio-political level, then to demonstrate specifically how and why Keller incorporated the music and the person of Gustav Mahler into her novel. I shall concentrate upon how such incorporation affects the novel's structure and why it is so useful to Keller in the development of her theme, the mother's reconciliation with nature and the cycle of life and death. Further, I shall analyze both Keller's and Mahler's reliance on the feminine archetypes of Jungian psychology, as explicated by Eric Neumann. Finally, I shall turn to the novelist herself for an autobiographical commentary on the importance of Mahler and Jungian psychology to her novel.

### **Style, Plot, Characters and Theme**

Keller incorporates elements of magic realism into her novel. Its narrator is Esperanza, the dead child, who enters into the minds of the other family members, but to the largest extent into those of her mother, María, and of her older sister, Marianela. Esperanza observes and reports on the family's male members from a more external perspective; these members include her father José, and her older brothers, José, Juan, and Jorge. The central motif of the novel is the train of the dead, upon which María and Esperanza embark, to traverse a route across the Southern Cone. María comments that the route might just as well have been the North-South trajectory from the cordillera to the frozen ice caps of the Southern extremity, but she prefers the East-West route, for it begins and ends at the oceans: the West with its cliffs overlooking the cold Pacific and the East with its sands extending the golden tones of the pampas. The suggestion of the arbitrariness of the route

universalizes the train, intimating that it runs anywhere in this world, where death everywhere exerts its dominion. At the same time the exact evocation of the geography of the region gives the novel its particularity.

Most of the dead who occupy the train are, like Esperanza, physically dead, though they may be vibrantly alive spiritually. One of the train's occupants, María, exemplifies the opposite characteristics: she is physically alive but psychologically dead. Her depression ensuing from the death of her child has caused her to withdraw from the world of the living. Following the dictates of magic realism, Keller makes this withdrawal actual: the mother has abandoned her family—has disappeared into the country. The intensity of the mother's anguish can be measured by the fact that she actually joins the daughter in death; she will not let go of this child. The father's withdrawal from the family in Santiago remains within the bounds of ordinary reality; Keller depicts him retreating to the country ranch where he feverishly and obsessively renovates the house. He thrusts himself into an activity that he can control in stark contrast to his lack of control over his child's fate. Keller again remains on the plane of ordinary reality in her portrayal of the children. They stay home, but each is isolated in his/her grief from the others. The two remaining grandmothers, the father's mother with roots in the rainy rural South and the mother's mother, an immigrant from Soviet terrorism, lose themselves in an orgy of cooking for the children. Their frenzied cooking affirms life and the survival of the body in their shared denial of the loss of Esperanza. Keller places Gustav Mahler in the role of guardian and guide of the dead; he offers María comfort and solace as he listens to her account of the events and emotions that forced her onto the train. His counsel enables María to surmount her grief (though never to forget it) and to rejoin the world of the living, once again assuming her role as mother of the family.

The choice of Esperanza as narrator reveals a basic ambivalence in the novel. The fact that the overriding consciousness is that of a dead child confirms Keller's belief that the soul continues beyond death, a belief further emphasized by Gustav Mahler's role. This conductor/composer lived from 1860 to 1911, but in the novel he continues in full consciousness with his body intact on the train of the dead. However, on the negative side of the ledger, the reader must confront the significance of Keller's decision to name the dead child *Esperanza*. The death of this child symbolizes the death or the loss of hope in life and the bleakness of the human condition. The choice of the name underscores the novel's political level.

### **Socio-political commentary**

Like Juan Rulfo, Keller depicts the world of the dead and she uses her fiction to communicate a political as well as a personal vision. In both cases the writers depict the actual landscape of their regions. The bleak and barren landscape of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* underscored his vision of the socio/political purgatory of his contemporary Mexico, as much a factor in the everyday reality of its living protagonists as in their shadowy existence in the afterlife. Keller, on the other hand, tenderly evokes the completely opposite, vibrant geography of the Southern Cone; she emphasizes its richness and promise. Through the stationary train windows she sees the lush greenery of the forests, the dizzying heights of the cordillera, the oceans of grasses of the pampas, and the sand of the beaches. Despite the evidence of nature's eternal rebirth in the landscape, death strikes and kills the promise of the youngest generation of its human inhabitants. Alluding to the cruel dictatorships of Chile and Argentina during the eighties, Keller here protests their oppressive effect upon the people, who lost their vitality to become virtual robots without joy in the present

or hope for the future. The nonsensical death of Esperanza reflects the nonsensical policies governing countries in the Southern Cone, policies which squander the countries' riches or siphon them off to the upper class, while the masses live at the subsistence level. Yet, Keller's political vision is not nearly so bleak as Rulfo's. The mother in her work only wishes to be dead, but is actually alive and in the end reaffirms life. Rulfo's mother figure dies at his novel's beginning and his narrator gradually realizes that he too is dead. Keller describes the train's passengers, emblematic of the people, as capable of exercising free will and changing their fate. They can descend from the train whenever they wish: the train's cowed passengers, now lethargic and engrossed in their "nomundos," could assume control of their destinies: "Encadenados a un asiento. Hartos. Pero cualquiera puede levantarse. Y buscar agua. Y dejar que amanezca. Y regar las ventanas en las que podrían volver a crecer flores y plantas. Solo que todos tenemos la voluntad aniquilada" (p. 34).

Before the death of Esperanza, María had reacted angrily to the fate of poor children, without food for body or soul, as ignorant of the imaginative world of fairytales as of middleclass comfort: "lo peor es que a nadie le importa, a todos les da lo mismo, a ustedes y a los que van muy tranquilos en sus autos y que ni los ven a los niños. Y yo pensaba que a los niños tampoco podía importarles, total si ni siquiera los conocían a los dos mentirosos y entonces no podían saber qué eran la verdad y la mentira" (p. 41). She dismisses the aunts' easy explanations that the children must be drug addicts and hence themselves responsible for their miserable life of seeking sustenance in garbage cans. Nor will María cast blame on the mothers, whom the aunts accuse of promiscuous coupling, which results in unwanted children whom they cannot or will not support. María also objects to the culture of violence and death in the profitable industry of making and selling war toys

for children (p. 183). Still her momentary resolution to do something about the situation dissolves into nothing. Her husband José is not afraid to face life and to impose himself upon it, bettering it for his family and society, but he too finds himself impotent before the death which claims poor children: "Cuántos niños que se iban en diarrea allá en su campo, en esa soledad sin médicos. También se morían en medio de las moscas en cualquier callampa de Santiago. Y desde las oficinas no se hacía nada" (p. 178). The daughter Marianela, lover of the sun, looks for a concrete field in which to realize her humanitarian impulses; at the end of the novel she is in training to become a pediatrician.

The death of the most imaginative grandmother, the one who lived to entertain the children with tales, celebrations and colorful costumes, reinforces the political message of the bleakness of the dictatorship years when artists and poets were suppressed and could not express themselves freely. The exotic grandmother clings to the ideal of a perfect society, which she describes as the arrival of the "Gran Sombrero": "Y este mundo tan horrible con guerras y con miseria se acabaría, por completo, porque por fin los hombres habrían entendido el mensaje y solo habría música por todas partes y bailarían felices felices incansables por el resto de los días" (p. 102). She represents an enchantment signifying not escapism but a hopefulness, which, if allowed to die, divests life of its meaning. She is an advocate of the just use of words, so easily manipulated for good or ill. Like the Biblical prophets, she wishes to return them to their original sense.<sup>4</sup> The two grandmothers who survive are the rural grandmother, a timid, unsophisticated woman, and the foreign grandmother, even more timid and fearful from her early experience under a repressive government. The mother's disappearance without a trace tangentially alludes to the "disappeared" political activists of the period. Occasionally Keller makes her political level

explicit in comments by her characters. María protests middle-class indifference to poor children: “por lo tanto esos niños que se seguían yendo en diarrea allá en el pueblo de José, o los que se venían a la ciudad y dormían bajo los puentes en casuchas de cartón y latas, podían perfectamente desaparecer de un día para el otro del mapa que a los jefes los tenía sin cuidado, o lo más probable es que ni siquiera se darían cuenta” (pp. 96-97).

### **Gustav Mahler’s Impact Upon the Novel’s Theme, Structure, and Style**

The primary thrust of the novel is to chronicle the loss of hope and its rebirth as the family members overcome their sorrow and celebrate the continued presence in their hearts and memories first and foremost of Esperanza and secondly of the exotic grandmother. María espouses a pantheistic philosophy that all is alive in nature: all that dies returns to the earth and is reborn; the spirits of the dead populate the world and keep watch over us. Hatred of the injustice of the Creator is transformed into love of the Creation and the hope of transformation and continuance. Marianela adopts her brother Jorge’s idea that the world consists of energy, no particle of which is ever lost, but is simply transformed into other manifestations. As her mother finds comfort in Gustav Mahler, Marianela finds hope in the poetry of Jaime Sabines, the Mexican poet famous for his celebration of the transformation of earth forms and the triumph of love.

By presenting him as a living character, Keller underscores the impact of Gustav Mahler’s life and music upon María. While his continued existence is beyond the reach of ordinary reality, such existence is true at least in the immortality of his music, which continues to affect all who hear it. Keller’s philosophy echoes that of Mahler, steeped in “Christian mysticism and pagan pantheism.”<sup>5</sup> As Jason Greshes points out

"Mahler was known for the length, depth, and painful emotions of his works. He loved nature and life and, based on early childhood experiences, feared death (family deaths, a suicide, and a brutal rape he witnessed). This duality appeared in almost all his compositions, especially in the *Kindertotenlieder* ("Songs on the Deaths of Children") which are actually about the loss of an innocent view of life."<sup>6</sup> Mahler perceived this symphony as a premonition of the death of his elder daughter, María Anna, who died at the age of four of scarlet fever and diphtheria.<sup>7</sup>

The genesis of Mahler's composition, its origin in Rückert's moving but technically inept poetry, provides additional insight into his ability to capture the emotion of grief in his work. From 1901 to 1904 Mahler adapted and set to music five poems from Friedrich Rückert's collection of 425 poems, entitled the *Kindertodtenlieder*, first published in 1872.<sup>8</sup> The poems record Rückert's grief and finally his acceptance of the deaths of two of his six children, both victims of scarlet fever. Theodor Reik<sup>9</sup> theorizes that Mahler's exquisite orchestration of these songs, revelatory of his profound empathy for their theme, sprang from his unconscious memory of the deaths of his elder brother Isidor, as a child, and that of his younger brother Ernst at age fourteen. The poems awakened Mahler's fear that his own two young daughters might suffer a like fate. That fear was tragically fulfilled with the death of his elder daughter, and his favorite, María Anna (Putzi). De la Grange best describes the haunting beauty of Mahler's composition: "Admittedly there exists little music as subjective, as 'lived' as this, none in any case where suffering has more communicative force."<sup>10</sup> Keller singles out Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* as another work which deeply moved her during the writing of *En el tren de los muertos*. Mahler composed this symphony at the same time as the first three

songs of the *Kindertodtenlieder* in the summer of 1901: the same themes dominate the two works.<sup>11</sup>

Keller seeks and succeeds in reproducing in words Mahler's arduous transformation of irreconcilable grief to irrepressible joy in Nature's creation. David B. Greene discusses the movement between anger and peace, and between the private and the public realms, in Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*. Setting himself the often-posed question of whether Mahler prepares for the symphony's joyful resolution, Greene affirms a positive answer by demonstrating the continuity of motifs between sections, a continuity also perceptible in Keller's novel. Mahler does not pinpoint the moment of making the decision to embrace life, but instead the state of "having decided" at some previous unidentifiable moment. In the first movement anger and peace-questing converge upon the shout of joy as they also converge upon each other and both remain present in that shout: "The tonal structure of the symphony as a whole confirms and contributes to the image of temporality as a movement from expectation into recollection."<sup>12</sup> The whole of Keller's novel is also a recollection, all the events affecting the characters occurred before the novel's beginning. The novel itself constitutes the coming to terms with events through the catalyst of Mahler's words and the evocative remembrance of his music. Like Mahler, Keller places the death at the beginning of her composition and like him "intimates that recollection displaces concrete fulfillment because life is finite."<sup>13</sup> Discussing the symphony's affirmative conclusion, Greene notes that it "unflinchingly faces the reality of death" and reflects "human consciousness as it actually is." Mahler follows not Kant but Heidegger in affirming that "by facing death one affirms that which is lost in death—one's own-most self."<sup>14</sup> By working through her grief over Esperanza's death, María at the conclusion of Keller's novel emerges with a deeper understanding of herself and her mission in life.



This is not the only work by Mahler relevant to Keller's novel. In his letters Mahler regarded hatred as an evil sorcerer, whom one must escape by seeking comfort in the center of the earth—in the great earth mother. He celebrated the god Dionysus, the great Pan "Wie Ein Naturlaut" in the *First Symphony*<sup>15</sup> and in such compositions as *Das Lied von der Erde*, "Song of the Earth," conceived as "the cradle-song of evolution sung to all life by Nature."<sup>16</sup> In this composition the human voice is used throughout to communicate desperately repressed suffering. The First Symphony depicts the successful wandering of the hero in search of faith; the second the death and resurrection of the hero; the third the praise of universal love and wonders of nature, the fourth the joys of heavenly existence; the fifth the "child of fancy," the sixth the tragedy of human existence; the seventh is a Song of Night, the eighth, the "Symphony of a Thousand," evokes the whole universe resounding in tune in a vision of planets and suns moving in harmony. The Ninth (following *Das Lied von der Erde*) develops the theme of the "dance of life" and "culminates in a slow, stately song of optimism."<sup>17</sup> His symphonies as a group reiterate the movement of the *Fifth Symphony*, the movement that Keller also develops through the medium of her poetic prose.

Keller not only reflected Mahler in the theme of her work but also in her technique. Mahler created orchestral music: "clear, complex, and full of musical imagery from the heavenly to the banal."<sup>18</sup> He sought to recreate the complexity of sounds emanating from a country fair in his music: "In the confusion of these many tunes accidentally mingled, he claimed, lay the essence of true polyphony, which is an ensemble of independent voices, each singing in the manner best suited to it."<sup>19</sup> Keller slips from one mind to another in her novel. Esperanza, as a spirit, can enter the minds of all her family members. María expresses her concerns in language quite

different from that of Marianela, who in turn differs from her grandmothers, her father, and her brothers. In the medium of words, Keller evokes a polyphony of voices, yet the reader, recalling the appearances of various motifs, hears a harmony arising from them, a harmony heard linearly, rather than vertically, just as Mahler created a linear or horizontal rather than a vertical harmony. As no other previous composer, Mahler exploited the full range of the horn; Keller perhaps alludes to this in the depiction of Jorge as a musician who learns to draw powerful music from the trumpet.

In an interview Keller revealed to me the autobiographical basis of the novel. Like Mahler, she had experienced the death of a beloved child, the youngest of her four children. Following her loss, she attended a concert of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, "the child of fantasy" which moved her deeply as it evoked the memory of her lost child. Later she saw a film about Mahler's life, which strengthened her bonds to the composer, who was also closely attuned to Nature. At the time of her loss, Keller determined to memorialize her child, but she could not bring herself to undertake this painful but transforming experience for several years. In Chapter 4 of the novel María recalls herself caught in the cycle of days, in circles of colors of sunrises, day, sunsets, and night. Through the train window she sees a landscape reminiscent of Mahler's lakeside mountain retreat, the Villa Mahler at Maiernigg, and suddenly the composer materializes before her. In the stillness, she hears the eruption of Mahler's music:

Solo. Indomable. Podían pasar días, a veces meses largos. Se respiraba una extraña calma. Nada se movía. Ni el cielo ni las aguas del lago. Pero Mahler se convulsionaba entero. Era pura violencia contenida. Se torturaba. Y se hundía. Más. Más. Hasta alcanzarse. Hasta dejar de ser un

cuerpo. Por fin. Su música brotaba. A borbotones desordenados brotaba. Era el contrapunto de un alma desgarrada. Fuerte que suene fuerte: entran las tubas y los timbales. Ahora dulce: chelos y oboes. Aparecen los demonios: cornos y clarines. Huyen de los fagotes y los contrabajos. Alguien juega allá lejos entre las lomas: es una flauta. Se calla: un violín desesperado se le colgó del alma. Suenan campanas y triángulos: es la iglesia del pueblo que llama a domingo. Y como de milagro retumban trompetas platillos trombones. La sinfonía está completa y desborda las paredes de la cabaña. Risas y llantos trasmite el agua convulsionada del lago y se repiten por los montes y se los llevan los pájaros. Todo es una gran orquesta, una única orquesta que toca y toca mientras el tren y la cabaña con Mahler empiezan a esfumarse y yo por fin me duermo rodeada de mi pequeña vida cotidiana. Pero me duermo diferente. Con esa música guardada para siempre en mi almohada. (p. 29-30)

The music gives her goose bumps and awakens her to the fact that she is still alive; it disturbs the continual circle of her routine existence. Mahler's music breaks into the circle of life and death, erupts upon the unconscious, and pushes the listener towards renewal and transformation.

### **Eric Neumann and the Novel's Feminine Symbolism**

Keller's lyricism, her cadences, her use of poetic devices like alliteration, make her prose approach music; Mahler brought words into his songs and symphonies to underscore his music's symbolism. I have mentioned above the novelist's and

the composer's coalescence of theme, but it is precisely at the level of symbolism that the two artists most approach each other, specifically in the use of feminine symbolism. Following Jung, Eric Neumann articulated a theory of the archetypal feminine in *The Great Mother* (New York: Bollingen Foundation: Pantheon Books, 1955), translated from the German by Ralph Manheim. Neumann posits the existence in the unconscious of a feminine archetype that directs the individual's conduct and acts upon his emotions, virtually seizing the individual who perceives and expresses the archetype through symbolic images, though he does so without conscious intent.<sup>20</sup> Both Mahler's music and Keller's novel illustrate this theory—in such exactness that it is almost uncanny that neither knew Neumann's work. However, Keller did know Jung upon whom Neumann bases his theory. In my view, the coalescence of these works is an argument for the validity of Neumann's theory. As Freud had early realized, artists more easily access the mythical and can interpret it for the rest of us.

The second half of Neumann's study is an exegesis of the manifestations of images of the feminine throughout history—from cave drawings, to the statuary of Greece, India and Tibet, to medieval depictions of the Garden of Eden and the Virgin Mary. This archetype is linked with Nature (especially the Earth and Water), the unconscious, the instinctual, the intuitive, the Night, the Moon, Life and Death.<sup>21</sup> As Neumann points out, in primitive times the opposite characteristics of the archetype were not separated: the Great Mother concept emerged from the Maternal Uroboros and contained both the aspect of the "Terrible Mother" (seen in such figures as the Gorgon, Circe, the witch, etc.) and the "Good Mother" (evident in such constructions as Sophia and the Virgin Mary). In addition, Neumann theorizes, "this primordial archetype of the Feminine contains positive and negative male determinants aside from the predominant female elements."<sup>22</sup> From the Great Mother

emerged the Anima, or feminine aspect of the personality. Through projection "the elements of the opposite sex in the speaker's own psyche, the anima in the man and the animus in the woman, are experienced as the reality of the opposite sex."<sup>23</sup> Further, there is a tendency for the ego to return to its "original, unconscious state. This tendency is inversely proportional to the strength of the ego and consciousness;"<sup>24</sup> such strength is diminished in sickness, fatigue, psychological anguish. etc. Often consciousness is associated with the masculine, with the male hero who overcomes or destroys the monster, figuring the unconscious. Yet, it is precisely the unconscious that one must access to undergo transformation, to continue to develop psychically; for the feminine archetype is associated with both birth and death, both equally necessary in the order of nature. Neumann further points out that the feminine is always associated with the vessel or the container, e.g. the body, in a return to the relationship of mother and fetus. The Great Round—the World or Nature--contains all and ultimately repossesses everything; the child of consciousness is minuscule within her and experiences her as fate or destiny. Neumann also discusses the importance of menstruation and pregnancy as blood transformation mysteries in women, far more dramatic than the male's emission of sperm. Functions of the feminine are "to nourish and protect, to keep warm and hold fast;" these functions can become oppressive if the holding fast prevails over the letting go of offspring. Attraction to the anima, to the feminine, compels transformation.

In Keller's novel *María* incarnates the good mother aspect of the feminine. Although she recognizes this as an assumed role, it is one in which she submerges her individual personality. She is aware that from the role of the good mother she can easily descend into its opposite: the parasitic, demanding, life-draining evil mother. She is especially apprehensive about adopting this posture in relation to her daughter, who

represents the independent life she might have had: "Pero sé que para vivir tuve que ser parásito, vampiro. Tuve que succionar a los demás. A José, a todos los hijos, pero especialmente a Marianela. Chupé de ella con desesperación esa sangre joven que se encabritaba ante los desafíos, que tenía urgencias, que deseaba el contacto del mundo de verdad ... Conseguí meterme en una nueva ficción . . . ahora era maríamadre, maríaesposa, maríacasa. Al menos yo estaba convencida de eso. Mi papel era perfecto..." (p. 111). Such roles offer hope and opportunities (p. 118). After the birth of Esperanza, María lost sight of life's insecurity, of the fact that the earth is not stable but is constantly in movement, and each of us is subject to death.<sup>25</sup> Before the child's death, her entire family shared José's optimism and his belief in the necessity of growth: "Hay que crecer y construir, meter las manos en el barro, hasta el codo si es necesario. Así se le va ganando a la vida, no conozco otro modo, y con esas palabras del papá o con otras parecidas que él siempre decía no quedaba otra que seguir creciendo" (p. 145).

In her youth María experienced the attraction of the animus for intellectual development; as an adult, she retains a social consciousness more acute than that of her female relatives and is also more sensitive to intellectual and emotional developments—to philosophy, music, and literature. However, with marriage and the birth of her children, she gradually assumed the mantle of the Virgin Mary. The elemental archetype of the good mother became dominant and she regressed into what Neumann describes as primitive woman's collective relation to the male.<sup>26</sup> She began to perceive José in Neumann's words as "archetypal father who begets children, who provides security—preferably also in the economic sense—for herself and her brood, and lends her a social persona position in the community."<sup>27</sup> Keller presents José in harmony with the archetypal concept of the male as breaker of the soil.

Coming from farming stock in southern Chile, he confronts life with a practical attitude of accomplishing things, activity which he expresses in the language of breaking new ground: "hay que aprender a descifrar el lenguaje de la tierra que nos está esperando abierta y lista para germinar, y hay que entender el lenguaje de los pájaros, véanlos cómo se mueven tan libres entre los árboles y el aire. . . . No podía estar sin el contacto directo con la tierra y con el aire. Con cualquier tierra y cualquier aire" (p. 74). As María is associated with the relatively stationary earth and the cyclical movement of the ocean, José is defined as breaker of the earth and is associated with the air. He is identified with the forceful movement of the plow and the flight of birds, moving easily between earth and air.<sup>28</sup> Keller also ties him to science and reason; he is the declared enemy of fantasy and sees the death of the imaginative grandmother as an occasion for putting aside foolish dreams to embrace "El Orden, perfecto y exacto" in Marianela's phrase (p. 151). He cannot prevent the other family members from recurring to their imagination, which gives them freedom. Marianela points out that the imagination brings immortality (p. 152); whether the grandmother inhabits hell or heaven is immaterial, for she continues to live in the minds and imaginations of each family member. Reason, María observes, may be defined as limitation (p. 157). However, she also recognizes that its loss signals a descent into chaos (p. 160). After Esperanza's death José discovers that Reason can offer no consolation for his grief and solitude.

It may have been Maria's capitulation of self in the retreat to the archetypical substratum that subverted her personal relationship with José and that prevented her from turning to him in her loss. Instead, she regresses even further back into the maternal uroborus and in essence loses touch with reality, drowning in the emotions triggered by loss of her child. It is only by finding a new and different embodiment of the

animus in Gustav Mahler that she can again affirm masculine consciousness to perceive herself in a fuller relationship to the feminine, perceived as Nature which must encompass both life and death.<sup>29</sup> She can relate so well to Mahler precisely because he is a male figure in whom the anima figure is dominant; they can meet on the plane of a shared emotion, the loss of a child and, in Mahler's case, of himself as well to death.<sup>30</sup> Neumann points out that the encounter with the terrible Mother may drive the ego toward masculinization and become the instrument of transformation. "For this constellation the myth of Perseus is typical: Perseus must kill the Terrible Mother before he can win Andromeda."<sup>31</sup> María experiences the Terrible Mother both within and without: her child is consumed by the Earth, but Maria, herself, adopting aspects of the Terrible Mother, refuses to let the child go, clinging to her even after Death has taken her. Through her descent to the Underworld of her unconscious, which in her case is an ascent onto the Train of the Dead, she finally achieves an understanding of her situation and of life itself; she experiences a spiritual rebirth, and is able to return to life and her social responsibilities, once again assuming the mantle of the Good Mother.

Experiencing a matriarchal transformation mystery, María is cured in spirit. Neumann points out that the spirit is associated with the word: "in the form that leads from mouth to breath, and from breath to word, the logos,"<sup>32</sup> product of creative Nature.<sup>33</sup> He perceives the Dionysian mysteries, which—as we have seen—played such an important part in Mahler's thought—as part of the vegetation mysteries associated with the feminine, like manticism and prophecy. Keller's narrator, Esperanza, bears a triple affiliation with the unconscious. As female, she is naturally attuned to the "feminine" unconscious; as a child, she remains closer in psychic development to the unconscious for "masculine" separation of the intellect has not yet occurred,<sup>34</sup> as a "dead"



character, she has experienced the entire cycle of life and death to emerge as pure spirit. In the first chapter Keller emphasizes the feminine allegiance with the unconscious and with artistic expression. Marianela suffers from nightmares; the mother's absorption with memory and the recording of the family's life experience prostrates her. The telling of the story scarcely concerns the male characters, engaged as they are with the here and now or with scientific evidence and experimentation. Keller also emphasizes breathing—the breath of life and the breath productive of the word. The mother breathes words quietly when she thinks no one hears her, but they do, and they remember her dictum that “las pérdidas jamás se olvidan.”<sup>35</sup> Keller speaks also of the danger and the pain of words; they must be wrest out of the person; they avenge themselves upon their speaker.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Esperanza remembers her mother's injunction to “respirar bien hondo y listo” when she is afraid or has been injured. The child observes that her mother had forgotten her own advice when she suffered her depression: “El dolor se acababa. Después la mamá se olvidó de respirar y hondo y listo” (p. 10).

Keller repeatedly links María to the earth and to water. The author depicts her softly crying and feeling the cold, which impels her to draw near the fireplace. This portrait recalls Neumann and behind him the Aristotelian biology which posited woman's dominance by the elements of earth and water and her consequent lack of heat or fire. Keller also endows María with a love of the sea (p. 10, 14). When Esperanza died and the world, so carefully constructed by her family, fell apart, “se fue hasta el mar y ahí se subió al tren de los muertos” (p. 14). She returned to Valparaíso, even though she could have entered the train of the dead anywhere. When Esperanza enters her mother's mind, she discovers the latter's recollection of her first love, Daniel, with whom she walked on the beach of the Pacific Ocean and gloried in its waves: “Mira esas olas. Que tan

tranquilo nos baña, humm, el Pacífico, humm, como para creérselo. ¿Nunca quisiste ser pez y meterte entre tamaña furia desatada? Así igualito como en las novelas. ¿Y por lo menos marinero? Podríamos subir a un barco, con velas, para que el viejito baluarte nos llevara hasta el fin del mundo, o aunque fuera hasta la línea del horizonte y ahí nos perderíamos misteriosamente, para siempre" (p. 16). The mother continued loving the sea and the wind, though she did not return to it until Esperanza's death (p. 17).

From the first chapter to the last, Keller continues to link the mother with nature, with the imagination, and with dreams.<sup>37</sup> On the train the mother seeks to forget, to cease existing, and finds herself longing for water with which she could irrigate her plants and flowers; then her window onto life might again be filled with scents and life (p. 21). In Chapter 4 the mother gazes at the cordillera, tracing its peak with her finger on the window, personifying it as a grand dame with an aquiline nose. Once again she recalls the sea and identifies with it completely: "El mar, tan fuerte, tan viril, penetrando una y otra vez a la arena, sin cansancio, y ella toda húmeda, abierta, siempre esperándolo. El recoge y estira su sexo, a veces muy suave, a veces violento. Y ella acepta todo. Siempre dos en el juego" (p. 24). Here, the sea becomes masculine as she merges her memories of Daniel with the landscape of which they formed a part. Her memories of her family life entwine with memories of the landscape: "No está más el ocre ceniciento de mi tierra tan desnuda, seca. No está el blanconieve de los cerros que llenaban las ventanas de mi casa" (p. 24). Her "crazy geography" makes her think of Neruda and Isla Negra.

Keller also incorporates the transformation mysteries of menstruation, childbirth, and the female climacteric. Marianela protests the dramatic change from child to woman in the onset of menstruation, which signals eventual assumption of the woman's burden of childbirth: "Y seguir al pie de la letra, brrr,

el parirás con dolor y serás mujer con el dolor, o el sudor, qué sé yo, no me lo sé bien, de tu frente. Ah no. Y lo peor de todo es que esta porquería sí que me duele, y me va a seguir doliendo, sin escapatoria, todos los santísimos meses" (p. 65). She suffers from a recurring nightmare dominated by the symbolism of Nature as terrible mother, who threatens death. In her nightmare Marianela is attacked by giant butterflies, who taunt her with their big skull-like mouths: "Me quieren llevar. Son feas mamá. Cuando llegan la noche se me pone más oscura" (p. 88). In adolescence Marianela rejects her mother to identify with her father; she wants to make a place for herself in the world, to be in control of her world, not be confined to the home, always waiting. With the birth of her little sister, Marianela begins to understand the maternal instincts that have dominated her mother and the cycle of life and death: "Porque nacer es todo lo que te leí, pero mucho más. Es la vida y la muerte. Juntas. Mezcladas. Es toda la felicidad y el dolor del mundo. Resumiendo, es la terrible dualidad de este disparatado planeta" (p. 93). She describes the woman in terms that exactly recall Neumann's concept of the feminine: "Mujer que es un gran receptáculo y después comienzo, que es un pozo profundo que un día explota y se derrama. . . . Claro que sí, eso somos las mujeres. Un refugio calentito y un enorme obsequio. Nos regalamos, nos abrimos enteras, Claudia, y damos vida para poder seguir viviendo..." (p. 94).

María also experiences a recurrent dream that gives the Andromeda myth, highlighted by Neumann, a new twist. She sees herself at sunset, sitting upon a rock, gently washed by waves. Keller literally paints this picture as she describes her heroine's desire to capture it in the colors of the artist's palette. Her identification with nature is absolute: "Y la naturaleza no se interrumpe, por supuesto. Es lindo sentirla. Vibra en toda la playa y también en cada célula de mi cuerpo" (p. 126). She descends from the rock to dance with joy before the sea. Then,

suddenly, a storm arises and the sky darkens, and she finds herself clinging to the solitary rock. After many hours a woman appears bathed in sunlight; she is giving birth. Suddenly, a red dragon appears out of the sea and threatens to consume her child as soon as it emerges. A man with batlike wings appears and defeats the dragon, but instead of rescuing her, he (a personification of Fear) takes possession of her and converts her into a reptilian creature. The dream indicates María's fear of childbirth and of death, as it also indicates, in contradistinction to the Andromeda and Perseus myth, that the conquest of her fear must come from within, from her own agency. In Esperanza's death, María sees the confirmation of her dream (p. 172). She becomes aware of Nature's cruel aspect in which earth and sea convulse in unpredictable earthquakes (p. 190). When Esperanza drowned in the pond behind her house, the family had no forewarning. Reason, Esperanza declares, exerted its dominion and Death entered the fairytale. María feels an immense guilt for not having foreseen the danger to her children; her world breaks into pieces and loses all meaning; she ascends the train of the dead. (p. 196) On the train her womb explodes, bathing her legs in a sickening, sticky bloodletting: "Sangre negra que evacua mi útero carcomido" (p. 197). Here, experiencing the climacteric, the great bloodletting which ends the cycle of menstruation. María's identification with the Terrible Mother becomes complete. Having lost the ability to give birth, she fears that she has become a giver of death.

Keller recurs to the Biblical image of the dove (p. 200) that heralded the end of the Flood to Noah to describe the family's acceptance of Esperanza's death and their affirmation of her spiritual continuance in their memories. The sun bursts forth like a wild animal (p. 200) and the hope of the family is reborn; they can again embrace both Reason and Fantasy. María searches for a glass of water and begins to see life bloom

again through the window of the train. She succeeds in opening that window to hear Mahler's symphony, the symphony of life (p. 213). In the green of the lush countryside she sees a white flower blooming. Keller sustains a long, beautiful chapter in the description of María's epiphany; she ends with the simple words, "Se acordó de respirar hondo y listo" (p. 235). On a moonlit night Marianela also experiences an epiphany. Roused by the smell of flowers, she envisions the dead grandmother, crowned and radiant in a sequined dress. She experiences the miracle of rebirth and turns away from weeping to breathe again.

Keller alludes to several other myths in the course of the novel. Recalling Phaeton and Icarus, Marianela observes that however small and insignificant we may be, we can fly like kites even though we must crash and be destroyed by the wind (p. 142). The myth of the frog-prince surfaces in the descriptions of Jorge's numerous frogs, which invade the house. María ironically comments that not one is transformed into a prince. Yet, Keller proves her character wrong, for she does show such a transformation at the end of the novel. Marianela falls in love with a young man whom she had rejected as a homely boy. When she encounters him again in young adulthood, she discovers that they are soulmates. Together they devote themselves to the study of medicine.

In my interview of Mireya Keller, she indicated that although she knew Jung's theory, she had never read Eric Neumann. Yet, as I have shown above, she exactly reproduces his theory of the feminine archetype. This is not surprising since, as both Jung and Neumann emphasize, the feminine archetype exists in the collective unconscious of humanity and in the subconscious of each individual. The fact that Keller did not know Neumann constitutes an empirical proof of his theory: working independently she designed a fiction that confirms his theory in almost every detail. The fact that she could do so

constitutes a proof of her artistic genius for artists, as Neumann, Jung, and Freud demonstrate, have special access to the unconscious. Keller corroborates Neumann's theory just as Neumann's theory corroborates Keller's psychology.

### **Keller's Response**

By way of conclusion, I give below the text of Keller's answers to my questions, communicated via email. Her words merit publication because they give the background of the novel and its importance in her autobiography, both the personal and the artistic. Keller expresses a fear that her characters, if perceived as archetypal constructions, may seem flat and without particularity. Although I have emphasized the archetypal in this essay, I have also underscored the individuality of each of her characters and the immediate relevance of her work as social criticism. The archetypality of Keller's characters and plot does not detract from their particularity, but instead gives them depth.

Me has dado una gran alegría con tu carta, llegó justo en un momento muy particular y difícil en mi vida, mis tres hijos se acaban de terminar de ir por el mundo, el mayor ya hace cinco años que trabaja en Chile, mi hija se fue con una beca a Barcelona y el menor, la semana pasada a Oxford. Te cuento esto porque tiene mucho que ver con todas tus preguntas, en especial sobre "lo femenino" y la "madre", que no me parecen para nada impertinentes, todo lo contrario, agradezco de verdad, la profundidad con la que has leído mi novela. Una vez escribí en la contratapa de mi primer libro, "El sol tenía escote en V", libro de cuentos que publiqué en Chile gracias a mi primer

premio literario, y te lo copio textual: "En éste mi primer libro, sé que empiezo un camino difícil. Siento que las revisiones deberían ser infinitas, porque tal vez sean infinitos los lazos entre la ficción y la realidad, entre el todo y los fragmentos. Pero como en los espacios pequeños o grandes que se crean, siempre rondan los fantasmas, necesitaba deshacerme de algunos de ellos y ustedes se transforman en mis imprescindibles cómplices anónimos. Y si en este empeño alguien camina mis mismas huellas, entonces además valió la pena y lo agradezco." Bueno, lo que vino después fue exactamente eso, escribí, corregí y reescribí durante ocho años mi novela "En el tren de los muertos", y tal como lo acabo de ver en una película muy hermosa: *Lucía y el sexo*, una película española que acaban de estrenar aquí, que es un momento o una novela en la vida de un escritor joven, en el que permanentemente se cruzan las fronteras entre ficción y realidad. Para mí es tal cual, y efectivamente, mi hija menor murió cuando estábamos en Chile, recién llegados, y en plena dictadura. Mientras permanecemos en Chile no pude escribir la novela, escribí otras cosas, pero lo tenía que hacer, y las permanentes y casi eternas revisiones se debieron a que nunca quise hacer una novela testimonial, necesitaba entregar lo mejor de mi literatura, necesitaba los entrecruces de imaginación y realidad, que como muy bien lo señales, creo que atraviesan no solo esta novela sino toda mi escritura. También es una novela simbólica, yo tal vez uso y abuso de esto, en mi última novela, *Circo Máximo*, inédita, también lo

hago, por esto, otra de tus sagaces lecturas, también representa la muerte y el ahogo de los sueños, tanto personales como los de toda una sociedad. Y te escribo esto en momentos realmente agobiantes para los que vivimos en este país, porque se ha salido de la dictadura oficial, pero no de la dictadura de los que siempre manejaron las cosas, aun no podemos vivir una verdadera democracia.

En cuanto a lo de Mahler, sí, su música y su biografía están impregnadas de ese dolor que yo quería acusar en mi novela, no podía haber elegido a otro, además en esos días en Chile vi una película, muy hermosa, sobre su vida, como en parte lo cuento también en la novela, y al mismo tiempo asistí a una obra de teatro, muy polémica, muy política también, en la que toda la música era la *Quinta Sinfonía* de Mahler, me puso, como decimos aquí, "la carne de gallina", entonces tenía que ser él, ningún otro. Pero mientras todo esto sucedía en Chile, solo pude escribir la novela cuando me fui, en Brasil, primero, donde vivimos por cuatro largos años, y después su corrección y reescritura, la hice aquí, en Buenos Aires.

En cuanto a la obra de Neumann, debo confesarte con bastante vergüenza, que no la conozco, y sobre Jung, sí, por supuesto, pero no tuvo de ninguna manera esa influencia directa que sí tuvo Mahler. Está incorporado en mí, desde mis estudios en la universidad, en mi curso de Filosofía hice cinco años de psicología, lo vimos en profundidad, pero no lo consulté particularmente en este caso, sobre todo porque no pretendía que



mi María fuese arquetípica, siempre espero que mis personajes tengan el suficiente vaivén, tanto en su interior como hacia afuera, para que no se me transformen en arquetípicos. Es decir, yo desciendo de dos pilares fundamentales que me marcaron a fuego: *El Quijote*, y *Crimen y Castigo*, que creo son dos ejemplos, tal vez podríamos decir hoy "arquetípicos" de cómo no trabajar con arquetipos. En fin, esto da para mucho, y por supuesto que me gustaría poder hablarlo contigo en directo.

I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to talk with Mireya Keller personally during her participation in the MACLAS 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Newark, Delaware. I eagerly await her next work and invite others to share the profound esthetic experience of her poetry and fiction.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I was inspired to read Eric Neumann on the occasion of studying Barbara Ware's doctoral dissertation, *Transforming the Gaze: Feminine Validation in Postmodernist Poetry*, Temple University, 2002. Therein she reads the poetry of Gabriela Mistral, Alfonsina Storni, Delmira Agustini, and Juana de Ibarbourou in the light of Neumann's theory.

<sup>2</sup> In September, 2000 Keller won a first place award for her poetry from the Asociación de Letras Femeninas Hispánicas, presented at its Toronto Congress at York University. In 1986 she received First Prize in the Concurso Nacional de Cuentos Bata: Biblioteca Nacional and second prize in the Concurso Nacional de Cuentos A. Pigafetta, organized by the University of Magallanes and the Sociedad de Escritores. She received

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honorable mention in the Concurso de Cuentos Avon: La mujer en las letras, Argentina, 1994; and for the novel, an honorable mention in the Premio Fondo Nacional de las Artes, Secretaria de Cultura de la Nación Argentina, 1997. Her collections of short stories include: *El sol tenía escote en V* (Santiago: Ergo Sum, 1987); *El ojo en la cerradura* (Buenos Aires: Torres Agüero Editor, 1996); *Cuentos de mi país* (Santiago: Departamento de Extensión Biblioteca Nacional, 1986); *Cuando no se puede vivir del cuento* (New York: Skidmore College, 1989); one of her stories is included in the anthology *La otra palabra*, edited by Angélica Gorodischer (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> In *En el tren de los muertos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Lumen, 1998), 80, Mireya Keller has her character Marianela allude to Beth's death in *Little Women* as being impossible to justify. Ironically, she must accept a death yet more poignant because her sister Esperanza dies at a younger age. Further references to Keller's novel will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>4</sup> "Es que cualquiera puede apropiarse de ellas y después las dice como se le da la gana. Ya lo hizo la Inquisición" (Keller, 108). See page 148 for the grandmother's conception of the world as a great story that encompasses all the smaller stories of each individual.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Engel, *Gustav Mahler: Song-Symphonist* (New York: David Lewis, 1932), 123. Here Engel is speaking specifically of the Eighth Symphony, "herald of universal love and faith."

<sup>6</sup> Jason Greshes Web Page on Gustav Mahler:  
<http://www.netaxs.com/~jgreshes/mahler/>

<sup>7</sup> See Henry Louis de la Grange, *Gustav Mahler* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1995), III: 690.

<sup>8</sup> See Henry Louis de la Grange, II: 825-846.

<sup>9</sup> In *The Haunting Melody* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Young, 1953), 315; summarized by Henry Louis de la Grange in *Gustav Mahler* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1995), III: 690.

<sup>10</sup> De la Grange, II: 845.

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- <sup>11</sup> De la Grange I: 631-632.
- <sup>12</sup> David B. Greene, *Mahler: Consciousness and Temporality* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1984), 123.
- <sup>13</sup> Greene, 128.
- <sup>14</sup> Greene, 129.
- <sup>15</sup> Gabriel Engel, *Gustav Mahler: Song-Symphonist* (New York: David Lewis, 1932), 73.
- <sup>16</sup> Engel, *Gustav Mahler: Song-Symphonist*, 16.
- <sup>17</sup> Engel, *Gustav Mahler: Song-Symphonist*, 121.
- <sup>18</sup> Jason Greshes, Web Page cited in Note 6.
- <sup>19</sup> Gabriel Engel, "Mahler's Music Language," in *Chord and Discord*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1932), p. 12.
- <sup>20</sup> "When we say that the archetype and the symbol are spontaneous and independent of consciousness, we mean that the ego as the center of consciousness does not actively and knowingly participate in the genesis and emergence of the symbol or the archetype, or, in other words, that consciousness cannot 'make' a symbol or 'choose' to experience an archetype." In Eric Neumann, *The Great Mother* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1955), translated by Ralph Manheim, p. 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Neumann, 43, observes that "in the fundamental symbolic equation of the feminine . . . woman = body = vessel = world."
- <sup>22</sup> Keller, 21.
- <sup>23</sup> Keller, 24.
- <sup>24</sup> Keller, 26.
- <sup>25</sup> "Entonces las marías estaban convencidas de que esa era toda la felicidad del mundo ahí, justo en el hueco lleno de hollín, y que ardía y ardía entre las llamas sin acabar de consumirse, nunca. Todos calentitos en esa felicidad calentita. Las marías no podían pensar en nada más que en ese goce" (Keller, 21).
- <sup>26</sup> "José siempre estuvo conmigo. Por supuesto. Y después todos los hijos. Mis carnes y mi alma fueron amoldándose a las formas del momento: sensual para la amante; recatada para la

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esposa; un formato sólido para la compañera; mangas arremangadas y delantal en la cintura para la cocinera; luces y espejos para la mujer adorno; y sobre todo, usé y abuse de la figura que más me gustaba, la gran mujermadre, la que tenía los pechos chorreando leche y las caderas anchas y la vagina abierta" (Keller, 157).

<sup>27</sup> Neumann, 36.

<sup>28</sup> In Aristotelian biology, man is dominated by the elements of air and fire.

<sup>29</sup> María describes humanity's ability to invent and reinvent distractions that make death seem less imminent: "Ahí estamos. Siempre apurados inventando algo para volverla mansita" (Keller, 118-119). The "algo" includes all the manifestations that Freud described as the sublimation of civilized humanity: art, music, science, etc.

<sup>30</sup> Neumann perceives matriarchal consciousness as the highest phase of development; it "is the original form of consciousness, in which the independence of the ego system is not yet fully developed and still remains open toward the processes of the unconscious. The spontaneity of the unconscious and also the receptivity of consciousness are here greater than in the relation between the relatively detached patriarchal consciousness, typical for Western development, and the unconscious. The matriarchal consciousness is usually dominant in the woman, and has usually receded in the man, but it is very much at work in the creative individual who is oriented toward the spontaneity of the unconscious" ( 78-79).

<sup>31</sup> Neumann, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Neumann, 61.

<sup>33</sup> Neumann insists upon the primacy of the feminine: the Spiritual is born out of the feminine: "it is this vessel with its mysterious creative character that brings forth the male in itself and from out of itself. . . . The Great Vessel engenders its own seed in itself; it is parthogenetic and requires the man only as

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opener, plower, and spreader of the seed that originates in the female earth. But this seed is born of the earth; it is at once ear of grain and child, in Africa as in the Eleusinian mysteries" (62-63).

<sup>34</sup> This concept so well developed by the Romantic poets (i.e. Wordsworth's "the child is father of the man", Rousseau, etc.) is articulated by Keller at the end of Chapter 3: On the train of the dead: "No hay niños. Ellos no pueden pertenecer a este mundo muerto. Aún tienen la fantasía y los sueños. Todos fuimos niños" ( 22).

<sup>35</sup> Keller, 8.

<sup>36</sup> "También me da miedo, eso, contar. No sé bien cómo. Y ya habían tratado tantas veces de hacerlo. Nadie pudo. Era como si las palabras no quisieran quedarse, se les arrancaban, se tomaban venganza, sí venganza, decía la mamá con esa cara de irse a la cama" (Keller, 8).

<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of Chapter 3, Keller describes the mother's withdrawal within herself, until she is so far removed that neither she nor her family can recognize her any longer: "Entonces, sin decir una palabra, se fue y en el mismo Valparaíso donde había sido Daniel con mar y con sueños se subió a este tren" (19).

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## **EL *JUAN MOREIRA* DE EDUARDO GUTIÉRREZ: ENTRE EL DISCURSO HEGEMÓNICO Y LO PERFORMATIVO, Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL IMAGINARIO POPULAR ARGENTINO**

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Eduardo Gutiérrez es recordado y celebrado por los estudiosos de la literatura, en mayor medida, debido a su primer folletín gauchesco el *Juan Moreira* de 1879. El *Moreira* es publicado en el matutino *La Patria Argentina*, y con esta novela abre su ciclo gauchesco. Además, es importante recordar que la obra narrativa de Gutiérrez cuenta con un total de treinta y siete obras, de las cuales, nueve pertenecen al ciclo gauchesco, nueve completan su serie histórica y diecisiete son clasificadas como folletines policiales; sin olvidar que dos de ellas no pertenecen al género del folletín (Rivera, 33). Por consiguiente, su producción escrituraria es prolífica, especialmente si se considera que toda ella es producida entre los años 1879 y 1888 –año de su muerte. Sus obras –dice Navarro Viola en el Anuario bibliográfico de 1883– “son narraciones novelescas, horripilantes, para lectores de campaña; factura especial para estragar el gusto y desnaturalizar la historia” (302). Es de notar que la opinión peyorativa de la crítica literaria no influyó en absoluto en la popularidad de los folletines de Gutiérrez, que llegó a ser un fenómeno literario, como testimonia León Benarós:

Por primera y única vez en el país, las gentes se agolpaban a las puertas del diario *La Patria*

*Argentina* para seguir el folletín que Gutiérrez había escrito quizá la noche anterior o algunos días antes, como en los caminos de Inglaterra los lectores de Dickens esperaban, ansiosos, la galera con la última entrega de las novelas del autor de David Copperfield ..... (*El Chacho*, 14)

Estos folletines de Gutiérrez aparecen en el mercado, durante ese "salto modernizador" argentino de finales del diecinueve (Ludmer, 229). Y, sus obras se caracterizan por "la fusión de lo rural y lo urbano, de lo popular y lo masivo que tanto escandalizará a los críticos literarios, pero para el pueblo constituirá una clave de su acceso al sentimiento 'de lo nacional'" (Martín-Barbero, 184-5). Asimismo, Gutiérrez cumple la función de "eslabón" entre la gauchesca en verso anterior y los nuevos ciclos gauchescos en la novela y el teatro (Rojas, 585).

En 1884, el texto original sufre su primera adaptación y reencarnación, cuando las compañías circenses de los hermanos Podestá y Carlos, estrenan la pantomima del Juan Moreira – escrita especialmente por Gutiérrez para esa ocasión (García Velloso, 101). Este mimodrama ha sido considerado como el punto de partida del teatro nacional (argentino y uruguayo), de acuerdo a la opinión de numerosos críticos.<sup>1</sup>

Ya en el siglo XX, Moreira reaparece y es representado en numerosas ocasiones. Por ejemplo, en 1907 se presenta el texto con influencias del modernismo en *Caras y Caretas*; en los años setenta es marxista y freudiano -de acuerdo a la versión de César Aira (Ludmer, 242-3). Sin olvidar que también en los años setenta, Leonardo Favio transforma la obra de Gutiérrez llevándola al cine y, en los ochenta, Moreira es representado en una escena de *La historia oficial* (1985). Y en su más reciente mutación, la de 1987, el Moreira es gay de acuerdo a la versión de Néstor Perlongher (Ludmer, 243).



Pero, el presente trabajo propone un enfoque en el texto original de *Juan Moreira* (1879), publicado como folletín por *La Patria Argentina*, para luego integrar a nuestro análisis las primeras puestas en escena del texto de Gutiérrez –o sea, las de 1884 y 1886. En nuestro estudio se tratarán de detectar aquellos momentos textuales que ejemplifiquen o que puedan definirse como pedagógicos<sup>2</sup>; es decir, que ayudaron a construir el discurso hegemónico nacional (Bhabha, 145-7). Pero, por otro lado, también rescataremos otras instancias disidentes y contestatarias, o sea, performativas<sup>3</sup> y subalternas (Bhabha, 148). Y, por último, nos proponemos demostrar que debido a la popularidad del texto de Gutiérrez –y a sus adaptaciones teatrales–, tanto el protagonista Juan Moreira como así también otros personajes de la obra, los inmigrantes Sardetti y el Cocochile, se integran al imaginario popular de masas argentino.

### ***El Juan Moreira* en folletín: la elaboración del discurso pedagógico.**

En su primer folletín gauchesco, *Juan Moreira* (1879), el autor delimita y expone claramente su punto de vista respecto al problema social del gaucho:

Moreira era como la generalidad de nuestros gauchos [...] y que empujado a la pendiente del crimen, no reconoció los límites de sus instintos salvajes y desesperados por el odio y la saña con que se le persiguió ... Educado y bien dirigido, ya lo hemos dicho, hubiera hecho una figura gloriosa.

Hasta la edad de los treinta años fue un hombre trabajador y generalmente apreciado [...] cuidando una ovejas y unos animales vacunos, que constituían su pequeña fortuna..... (5)

Moreira era un hombre trabajador que poseía un pequeño capital, pero que no obstante fue empujado al crimen. El protagonista no es un criminal sino una víctima de un sistema judicial que no protege al trabajador y al pequeño propietario rural. Al tratar de buscar justicia y protección de la ley, el hombre del campo se encuentra desfavorecido ante la justicia. Así le sucede a Moreira al reclamar sus "derechos" por una deuda de dinero que le debía el almacenero italiano Sardetti:

El gaucha invocó sus derechos -¿pero qué gaucha tiene derechos?-Invocó la justicia, palabra hueca para él, y no fue escuchado... y fue expulsado del juzgado con la amenaza de que si no se corregía sería enviado a la frontera en el primer contingente..... (12)

Se puede argüir que si Moreira hubiese recibido justa compensación por la deuda del almacenero italiano, su vida se habría mantenido dentro de los parámetros de la ley, a lo cual refiere el mismo Moreira repetidas veces: "para el gaucha no hay justicia amigo Julián" (33). Este sería el sustento de la tesis liberal básica de Gutiérrez: no es la Ley (la pedagogía nacional) sino una aplicación perversa de la misma (el sistema jurídico y político actual) la responsable de la persecución política, la explotación económica y la marginación social del gaucha. Como sostiene Jorge B. Rivera, Gutiérrez es crítico de la arbitrariedad administrativa, pero no del sistema mismo (*Eduardo Gutiérrez*, 15). Esto le permite efectuar una crítica del sistema preservándolo y reforzándolo. Es este doble juego, muy liberal, el que permite a Gutiérrez elaborar héroes románticos que interpelan sentimentalmente al público, que se identifica así con los protagonistas, viviendo en, y a través de ellos, otra historia posible de sus vidas. Es así que Moreira encarna a

través de sus múltiples enfrentamientos contra “los justicias” prácticas resistentes y disidentes que cuestionan el sistema nacional. Como bien lo declara el protagonista:

Mi vida –replicó Moreira– es pelear siempre con las partidas y matar el mayor número de justicias que pueda, porque ellos me han hecho todo el mal que he recibido en la vida, y por la justicia me veo acosado como una fiera dondequiera que me dirijo..... (136)

La lucha de Moreira es testimonio de una protesta social soterrada ya pagada por las fuerzas gubernamentales que Gutiérrez registra como huellas textuales de una performatividad social subalterna no textualizada. Pero en el transcurso de la narración detectamos un cambio en su actitud con respecto a su lucha contra la ley. Este fenómeno se percibe especialmente en los últimos capítulos del folletín:

Y era verdad; ya Moreira no podía esperar nada que alegrara su vida...Moreira, pues, como decía, no peleaba por defender la vida; deseaba que lo matasen, pero que lo matasen como él debía morir: rodeado de cadáveres de policianos y oficiales de partida. Ya no dormía como antes, al lado de su caballo ensillado, que debía ser su salvación en esos caso de apuro..... (143)

No se trata entonces de una derrota ante un sistema que le es superior, que en cierta forma él se deja vencer, admitiendo quizá tácitamente la legitimidad del sistema, y muriendo como un héroe. Cumple así su famosa profecía, proferida al salir de la pulpería después de haber matado a Sardetti-: “Ahora, que se cumpla mi destino” (19). Se cumple el fatalismo romántico al morir luchando a manos de una partida

de justicias, confirmando, con su muerte, la pedagogía hegemónica dominante, según la cual todo el que luche contra el sistema judicial encontrará el destino violento de Moreira.

No obstante, en los últimos capítulos de su primer folletín gauchesco, Moreira se está preparando para su destino fatal – romántico, disidente y contestatario–, porque ya no toma las precauciones necesarias para escapar de las partidas policiales que lo persiguen, Gutiérrez nos dice que Moreira: “Ya no dormía como antes, al lado de su caballo ensillado, que debía ser su salvación en esos casos de apuro” (Moreira, 143).

Por consiguiente, podríamos considerar la resistencia de Moreira como un subtexto que denota entre fisuras una protesta subalterna que deja huellas en el texto, y el fatalismo romántico de Moreira puede interpretarse como una moraleja que funciona como soporte del discurso pedagógico nacional.

Muchas veces el autor interviene, interrumpiendo la narración, para criticar en discurso directo el discurso pedagógico nacional, enunciando una defensa del gaucho y una crítica al sistema judicial:

¡He aquí los graves defectos de que adolece nuestra célebre Justicia de Paz! ... De un hombre nacido para el bien y para ser útil a sus semejantes, hacen una especie de fiera ... El gaucho es un hombre para quien la ley no quiere decir nada más que esta gran verdad práctica; el juez de paz de partido tiene derechos de remacharle una barra de grillos y mandarlo a un cuerpo de línea.

Es tiempo ya que cesen esos hechos salvajes y el gaucho empiece a gozar de los derechos que le otorga la Constitución... sean

respetados y garantizados en todas las latitudes del suelo argentino..... (152)

En realidad, la crítica de Gutiérrez es tardía e inefectiva para cambiar la situación del gaucho, debido a que para el año 1879 –año de publicación del folletín–, “el gaucho ya había desaparecido como raza y grupo social” (Jitrik, 56). En efecto, el análisis de Gutiérrez apunta a una mejora del proceso administrativo y judicial, pero no implica una crítica del sistema propiamente dicho -que fue la raíz del genocidio de esta cultura.

### **Juan Moreira: la performatividad en su puesta en escena.**

Cinco años después del estreno del *Juan Moreira* en folletín, en 1884, Eduardo Gutiérrez adapta su novela al teatro, y escribe el guión de una pantomima sobre su famosa obra. La primera presentación se lleva a cabo en el circo criollo de los hermanos Podestá. Al recordar el estreno José J. Podestá atestigua:

Terminada la obra y después de muchísimas llamadas a los artistas y al autor, el moreno seguía muerto, lo que intrigó al público, que saltó al picadero, se llegó hasta el escenario para ver si efectivamente había sucedido alguna desgracia, y cuando yo creí oportuno di la voz de ¡ahora! y el muerto se levantó, alzó los brazos y soltó una carcajada estridente que se remató con un gran aplauso, mientras Gutiérrez, su señora esposa y muchos amigos me abrazaban y me felicitaban por mi trabajo y por la sorpresa del moreno, que sin ser artista había coadyuvado el éxito general..... (*Medio siglo de farándula*, 44)

En forma similar, dos años más tarde en la segunda adaptación del texto de Gutiérrez, el público también invade el escenario como declaran Verbitsky, García Velloso y el mismo Podestá<sup>4</sup>; y en efecto, denota un claro fenómeno de performatividad espontánea que cuestiona la soberanía del discurso hegemónico. En el avance del público espectador hacia el escenario, o sea en su "salto al picadero", se pone en movimiento el proceso de performatividad que- de acuerdo a Podestá- trata de verificar "si había sucedido alguna desgracia". Esto significa que para el espectador el final no es vivido como un mero espectáculo; se lo interpreta como una realidad en la cual participan, tratando de cambiarla. Las intervenciones del público, nos dice García Velloso, suceden en momentos culminantes de la obra:

La concurrencia parecía insaciable y el negro tuvo que cantar cerca de una hora ... mientras los zanagorias ponían en el picadero una mesa con recado de escribir, tres sillas y un cepo, para el primer cuadro de *Juan Moreira*. La aparición de los milicos de la partida, produjo un verdadero motín en las bancadas; era el odio popular a la autoridad arbitraria, a los perseguidores de Moreira ..... (*Memorias de un hombre de teatro*, 111)

Efectivamente, es la presencia de las partidas policiales que persiguen al gaucho lo que produce la reacción del público, en una suerte de performatividad social sucedánea, si se quiere, en respuesta a una ficción. "El cepo" en el escenario simboliza el recuerdo de sufrimientos colectivos; un ataque a Moreira es vivido –por el público– como una agresión personal, una trasposición de lo real. La irrupción del público sobre el escenario es un momento performatividad colectiva y de

cuestionamiento. Más aún es una evidente protesta contra el discurso hegemónico nacional, una reescritura de la obra y, una intervención sobre el imaginario nacional, momentáneamente territorializado –diría Deleuze–, apropiado y transformado.

Domingo F. Casadeval, en *La evolución de la Argentina vista por el teatro nacional* (1965), analiza la devoción del público por el espectáculo de los Podestá:

Los pobladores de los suburbios porteños, hermanastros del gaucho y del paisano en las llanuras, cultores de la guapeza ... vieron en Juan Moreira un arquetipo real ... En Moreira vieron un vengador de los criollos amenazados por los ricos que se valían de la violencia, del enredo, del pleito, de la chicana y de otras añagazas de la ciudad para desplazarlos del suelo en que habían sido felices..... (24)

Queda claro que lo que Gutiérrez escribe, y luego Podestá pone en el escenario, está lejos de ser una mera diversión, evasión o recreación. La obra teatral en 1886 está demasiado unida a una realidad. Como menciona Verbitsky, "Juan Moreira convoca, como todo mito, tendencias y aspiraciones generales" (9). En estos momentos performativos, en estas instancias de cuestionamiento del discurso soberano y pedagógico enunciado desde su presente, "people emerge [...] as a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogeneous emptytime" (Bhabha, 159), disputando la posesión y expresión del imaginario nacional, que siguiendo a Cornelius Castoriadis, podríamos tentativamente definir de la siguiente manera:

*The institution of the imaginary –'conforms to the ends' of society, follows from real conditions and fills and essential function. That such a society necessarily produces this imaginary– This 'illusion'*

as Freud said speaking of religion- which it needs in order to function ... it crystallizes a sedimentation of innumerable *rules, acts, rites, symbols, in short components that are full of magical and imaginary elements* [...] *the figures that render a society visible to itself.....* (128-30, énfasis mío)

Por sobre todo, el imaginario es un magma de significantes inventados e ilusorios, que encuentran su anclaje en el sedimento de símbolos y prácticas provenientes del pasado nacional, donde se encuentra cargado de facultades casi mágicas el imaginario popular de Juan Moreira. En la puesta en escena este imaginario es objeto de la apropiación, transformación e intervención performativa del público. Este imaginario que encarna Moreira es una cristalización de la americanidad y de la productividad argentina; o, como diría Castoriadis, "the figures that render a society visible to itself" (130). En una palabra, en la figura de Moreira –representado en escena– el público se ve así mismo (Verbitsky, 12). Cabe recordar que este público estaba compuesto, en parte, por los mismos gauchos desplazados hacia la ciudad, que "ahora veían en el espectáculo pobretón de los Podestá revivir el ciclo entero de sus vidas" (Rama, 142). Este público veía en Moreira a una figura justiciera, no como era en la realidad, sino como imaginaban que podría haber sido. Josefina Ludmer nos dice en su análisis de la representación escénica del Moreira:

A fin de siglo, con el salto modernizador, la división de la cultura se formula en el espacio de la representación: en un teatro Lugones europeiza a Martín Fierro y en otro se dramatiza y nacionaliza a Juan Moreira ..... (*El cuerpo del delito*, 229)



Como resultado de lo anterior, el Martín Fierro de la Vuelta queda legalizado como el trabajador de la Argentina agropecuaria y el bardo homérico de la poesía épica nacional (Ludmer, 230). Pero simultáneamente, se elabora otra construcción textual, teatral y cultural, la de un imaginario popular de masas, Juan Moreira. El imaginario argentino, en una palabra, se elabora a posteriori sobre dos figuras opuestas y complementariamente diseñadas, Martín Fierro y Juan Moreira.

### **Moreira, Sardetti y Cocoliche: hacia el imaginario performativo italiano "tano"**

Desde el día de su estreno el drama de Moreira sufre permanentes cambios, cuando cada escena improvisada por los actores es recibida favorablemente por el público (García Velloso, 127). Se trata de un riquísimo proceso de creación mediante la improvisación, individual y colectiva, que tiene su génesis a partir de frases cómicas y de situaciones novedosas, que al ser festejadas por el público, pasan a ser parte integral de la obra (Rama, 145). Es un proceso de doble flujo e influencia, por el cual los actores dialogaban con los espectadores, recomponiendo la obra día tras día, en una verdadera creación colectiva (*Medio siglo de farándula*, 63).

Entre los personajes elaborados con el público, el más famoso de todos, y el que más contribuyó a acrecentar la popularidad de la obra, fue Francisco Cocoliche, también conocido como el italiano Franchisque, descrito de esta manera por Enrique García Velloso:

Tipo colosalmente cómico por su arbitraria prosodia, por los efectos de contraste entre sus condiciones nativas y su afán de asimilarse a un

medio de aventuras heroicas que le resulta imposible, por su indumentaria y su físico grotesco ..... (*Memorias de un hombre de teatro*, 125)

Este personaje fue la creación de Celestino Petray, un integrante de la compañía, y su improvisación se lleva a cabo dos años después de la primera aparición de la obra dramática, en 1888. José Podestá nos relata el episodio en que nace el personaje:

[Celestino Petray] no triunfó hasta que en una ocasión, sin aviso previo, se consiguió un caballo inútil para todo trabajo [...] y vestido estrafalariamente y montado en su Rocinante, se presentó en la fiesta campestre de Moreira... Cuando Jerónimo vio a Celestino con aquel caballo y hablando en tal forma, dio un grito a lo indio y le dijo:

–¡Adiós, amigo Cocoliche! ¿Cómo le va? ¿De dónde sale tan empilchao?

A lo que Petray respondió:

–¡Vengue de la Petagoña co este parejieri macanuto, amique! ..... (*Medio siglo de Farándula*, 63)

El éxito de este personaje fue inmediato y definitivo. Dice Rama:

De modo que la gente corría al Politeama a dejar sin localidades en la boletería, a la voz unánime de: –Vamos a ver a la rubia de Podestá; –Vamos a ver al napolitano don Franchisco, o a Franchisco el verdulero, que de una y otra manera lo llamaban ..... (*Los gauchipolíticos rioplatenses*, 143)

Esta incorporación de los personajes extranjeros ya tenía una larga historia en el género gauchesco. Ya en el temprano *El amor de una estanciera* (1780-1795) se registra al portugués Marcos Figueira, comerciante, en oposición al criollo trabajador del campo. En el *Martín Fierro* hay varias referencias peyorativas respecto a extranjeros, especialmente ingleses e italianos: "Era un gringo tan bozal / que nada se le entendía / ¡Quién sabe de ande sería! / tal vez no fuera cristiano; / pues lo único que decía / es que era pa-po litano" (*Martín Fierro*, 193). No obstante, la figura del inmigrante italiano adquiere mayor relieve narrativo en el folletín *Juan Moreira*, donde el conflicto criollo/gringo tiene su anclaje textual en el enfrentamiento Moreira/Sardetti y su consiguiente desenlace en la muerte del italiano. Eduardo Gutiérrez revela y hace patente el problema subyacente, o sea, el desplazamiento del gaucho por el inmigrante:

[El gaucho] ve para sí cerrados todos los caminos del honor y del trabajo, por que lleva sobre su frente este terrible anatema: hijo del país.

En la estancia, como en el puesto, prefieren al suyo el trabajo del extranjero, por que el hacendado que tiene peones del país está expuesto a quedarse sin ellos cuando se moviliza la guardia nacional, o cuando son arriados como carneros a una campaña electoral..... (*Juan Moreira*, 8)

En el folletín se pone en relieve el conflicto entre el criollo y el inmigrante presentándolo desde el punto de vista del discurso pedagógico nacional. De esta manera, Gutiérrez extiende la vena xenófoba –en la cual reposaba una vertiente ideológica del nacionalismo argentino. Un claro ejemplo de lo

anterior es el propio Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, uno de los máximos promotores de la inmigración europea al país, pero que ya en su vejez cambia de opinión respecto a los beneficios de la misma. En 1887, escribiendo para "El Diario", expresa su desilusión con los efectos reales de la inmigración:

Lo más atrasado de Europa, los campesinos y gente ligera de las ciudades, es lo primero que emigra. Véalo. En el desembarcadero [...] El labriego español, irlandés o francés, viene a Santa Fe a saber lo que es maquinaria agrícola, y a aprender a manejarla, porque en su país y en su comarca deja todavía el rudo implemento primitivo [...] Pero lo que la emigración no nos trae es educación política de que carecen las masas en general aunque en Inglaterra esté difundida y comience a generalizarse en Francia, Alemania, etc..... (*El Diario*, 12 de septiembre de 1887)

Para Sarmiento, como para tantos otros intelectuales y políticos de la época, la ciudad ha perdido su antiguo vigor civilizador, ya no es la civitas virtuosa que en el *Facundo* se oponía a la barbarie, sino la nueva urbe masificada y corrompida por el aluvión más grande de inmigrantes europeos recibidos en la América del Sur (Onega, 19). Valga como dato: para 1890 la ciudad de Buenos Aires tenía 500.000 habitantes, de los cuales 300.000 eran extranjeros (Jitrik, 56).

Este cambio radical en la opinión de Sarmiento, quien pasa de la xenofilia de su madurez a la xenofobia de sus obras de vejez –*Condición del extranjero en América* (1888) y *Conflicto y armonía de las razas en América* (1883)– se explica o tiene sus raíces en un cambio en el tipo de inmigración recibida por Argentina antes y después de 1850, como apunta Gladis Onega<sup>5</sup>:

La explicación del proceso es bastante simple, los extranjeros que vivían en la Argentina hasta 1850 no eran inmigrantes en el sentido más corriente del término, sino profesionales, comerciantes, militares, estancieros, gente con seguridad económica que no se veía como competidora sino como colaboradora de la comunidad, y que constituía núcleos cuyo reducido tamaño y relativamente alto nivel social, no provocaba alarma sino simpatía y emulación..... (*La inmigración en la literatura argentina*, 21)

De este modo, podríamos argüir que la reacción sarmientina tiene su basamento en un prejuicio de clase, que por primera vez los patricios del ochenta se enfrentan con la realidad de una inmigración que es masiva, aluvial y proveniente de las clases más miserables de Europa. Podríamos decir entonces que la reacción –y el análisis– sarmientino son en este caso, como en tantos otros terrenos, síntoma e inicio de una nueva posición ideológica, aquí lo es de la xenofobia (Jitrik, 57).

La xenofobia nacionalista implica también la construcción del otro en el panorama nacional, otro que ahora se encuentra encarnado en la figura del inmigrante, catalogado desde el prólogo al Payador como “La plebe ultramarina que a semejanza de los mendigos ingratos, nos armaba escándalo en el zaguán, desató contra mí al instante sus cómplices mulatos y sus sectarios mestizos” (Lugones, 15).

Ahora bien, retomando el folletín de Gutiérrez, debemos tener en cuenta que nuestro autor se sitúa en la línea populista de inclusión del inmigrante, mientras extiende la xenofobia imperante en los círculos oligárquicos (Onega, p. 96-7). En el choque entre Moreira y Sardetti, por ejemplo, este último no

aparece como el verdadero rival del gaucho, que lo es el teniente alcalde Don Francisco. Don Francisco instiga a Sardetti a no pagar su deuda al gaucho, con el objeto de tener un pretexto para perseguirlo, encarcelarlo y seducir a su mujer. Debido a lo anterior, Sardetti no aparece como un cobarde, aunque sí como un “embrollón”.

Por consiguiente, el conflicto y el núcleo dramático principal en ambos textos (folletín y drama) es la lucha entre Moreira –ya instalado en el imaginario popular–, enfrentándose a la injusticia metafóricamente representada por Don Francisco. Esto significa que Don Francisco simboliza la autoridad político-civil, mientras Sardetti encarna una proto-burguesía del comercio y el dinero. Sin embargo, debemos notar la importancia del italiano como instrumento de la (in)justicia, ya sólidamente circunscrito al panorama nacional. Dicho de otro modo, Sardetti representa la entrada del inmigrante en el imaginario nacional.

Más tarde, la aparición, elaboración y permanencia de Cocoliche en el escenario de los Podestá denota una evolución y transmutación en el proceso del imaginario nacional. Con respecto a la influencia de Cocoliche, Rama nos dice:

fue mediante esa comicidad que el inmigrante se instaló en el centro del corazón gaucho. Cocoliche desplazó el interés que motivaba a Juan Moreira y concluyó reinando en el picadero y en el escenario..... (*Los gauchipolíticos rioplatenses*, 145)

La aparición de Cocoliche implica la presión de un sector público –el aluvión inmigrante–, que buscaba reconocerse en la escena y en la nación. Es justamente a través de la comicidad que se sostiene, en la contradicción lenguaje /identificación nacional gauchesca:

Me quíame Franchisque Cocoliche, e songo  
cregollo gasta la güese de lata e la canilla de lo  
caracuse, amique, afficate la parata..... (*Los  
gauchipolíticos rioplatenses*, 145)

Dijimos entonces que Cocoliche entra en el imaginario nacional a través de la comicidad, de la burla, cargada de xenofobia, a su manera de hablar, lo que le permite compartir el escenario con el famoso Moreira. Si el pulpero Sardetti representa una primera incorporación del inmigrante al imaginario nacional, es con Cocoliche que este adquiere su definitiva carta de ciudadanía en el teatro gauchesco. En la invención, elaboración y definitiva permanencia de Cocoliche detectamos la intervención del público en la creación del personaje, un personaje que representa a un amplio sector emergente en la sociedad argentina, a la cual se va integrando en un rápido pero doloroso proceso de nacionalización. La presencia de Cocoliche compartiendo el tablado con el famoso Moreira facilita su entrada en el imaginario. Este personaje italiano ya no es el embrollón Sardetti –ni otro afín a él–; el italiano Cocoliche hace estallar de risa al público, carcajada en la que se filtra un momento performativo de aceptación en el imaginario nacional. Esa risa congela la pedagogía xenofóbica dirigida hacia el italiano –metáfora de todos los recién llegados– llenándola de heterogeneidad. Así, si en el imaginario de Moreira encontramos la presencia del discurso pedagógico nacional, también aparecen las fisuras y grietas por donde se filtran otros momentos que denotan la presencia de lo performativo, subalterno y contestatario.

## Notas

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<sup>1</sup> Es necesario mencionar que se ha desarrollado una polémica sobre la fecha de fundación del teatro argentino; y existen dos posturas, a favor del *Juan Moreira* como punto de partida del teatro nacional, y por otro lado un segundo equipo que considera su fundación a principios del XIX o aún antes. Se alinean en pro de *Juan Moreira*: Abdón Aróztegui, José Assaf, Oscar Beltrán, Alfredo Bianchi, Emilio Furgoni, Roberto Giusti, Ángel Rama, Elías Regulas Enrique García Velloso y Vicente Rossi entre otros. Se oponen Arturo Berenguer Carisomo, Eduardo Gordon, Enrique de María, Ernesto Morales, David Peña, Carlos M. Princivalle, Ricardo Rojas y Florencio Sánchez. Estas listas no son exhaustivas.

<sup>2</sup> Lo pedagógico, puede definirse tentativamente de la siguiente manera: "we then have a contested conceptual territory where the nation's people must be thought in double-time; the people are historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past; [...] The pedagogical founds its narrative authority in a tradition of the people, described by Poulantzas as a moment of becoming designated by itself, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that represent an eternity produced by self-generation." (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 145-7).

<sup>3</sup> Lo performativo, de acuerdo a Homi K. Bhabha, se delimita del siguiente modo: "In the place of the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation 'in-itself' and extrinsic to other nations, *the performative introduces a temporality of the 'in-between'*. The boundary marks the nation's selfhood *interrupts the self-generating time of national production and disrupts the signification of the people as homogeneous* [...]. We are confronted with *the nation split itself, articulating the*



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*heterogeneity of its population. The barred nation It/ Self, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and the tense locations of cultural difference"* (author's emphasis).

<sup>4</sup> También citado en: García Velloso (101-3), Podestá (102), Rivera (19), Verbitsky (30).

<sup>5</sup> La inmigración europea aumenta exponencialmente desde 1853, cuando la legislatura de la Confederación autorizó la entrada de inmigrantes, y ese fue el comienzo del proceso de ingreso masivo de extranjeros. [...] Una rápida ojeada a las cifras nos permite apreciar la rapidez y la sorprendente eficacia con que se cumplió el supuesto básico de toda la política liberal: de 1.300.000 en 1859, a 1.737.076 en 1869, a 3.954.911 en 1895, y 7.885.237 en 1914. Combinemos estos datos netos con otros comparativos: de 1859 a 1869 con un aumento de 400.000 personas (en cifras redondas), a razón de 43.076 por año. Asimismo, de 1869 a 1895, con un aumento de más de dos millones, a razón de 81.500 personas por año; y en el tercer período con un aumento de casi cuatro millones, a razón de 207.000 personas por año; el porcentaje de extranjeros se ha elevado al 42,7 por ciento sobre los argentinos nativos (Onega, 6).

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## **THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AGENDA OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

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"The peoples of the Americas have a *right* to democracy and their governments have an *obligation* to promote and defend it." These words open the "Inter-American Democratic Charter" which was recently drafted by the Organization of American States (OAS). The charter goes on to specify procedures to follow should the constitutional system of any member state be threatened or interrupted. While the OAS champions the Democratic Charter as an important step in the hemispheric defense of democracy, people throughout Latin America have good reason for skepticism. Despite the transition from authoritarian rule, politics remains an exclusive club, with power concentrated in the hands of a narrow elite who benefit from the existing order and resist change.<sup>i</sup>

The Democratic Charter reflects a gradual evolution in the institutional mission of the Organization of American States (OAS 2000). The regional body has traditionally focused on

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security issues and generally refrained from intervening in the domestic political affairs of member states. In recent years, however, deference to national sovereignty has receded and the OAS has repeatedly adopted formal commitments to democratic governance.<sup>i</sup> The organization has also established a range of programs to further political reform in the region.

### **Exclusionary Political Systems**

While competitive elections are generally considered the strongest evidence of Latin America's "re-democratization" during the past two decades, there remain weaknesses in the electoral processes of the region. Electoral manipulation, fraud, and coercion continue to compromise voting processes. Governing parties have sought to influence election rules, exclude opposition parties, pressure electoral commissions, and alter vote totals to ensure victory for their respective candidates. In some cases, violence has been used to harass and intimidate civilian populations during the electoral process.

The *exclusionary* nature of Latin American politics is also reflected in the region's political institutions with power concentrated in two fundamental respects. First, political authority is concentrated in national governments at the expense of state, local, and municipal governments. Federal governments control fiscal resources and tax collection, directly appoint local officials, and reserve the right to intervene in state and municipal affairs. Most laws and policies are formulated by national governments with little consultation of officials at sub-national levels. Second, political authority is largely concentrated in the executive branch with the powers of the president greatly exceeding those of the legislature and judiciary. Latin American presidents enjoy considerable powers to control public expenditures and set legislative agendas while judicial review is minimal.

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Latin America's political transition has also been limited by the inability of civilian leaders to fully subordinate the armed forces. Although military officers have abandoned formal positions of power, they retain considerable influence over political affairs. Military elites also retain autonomy over a range of policy areas deemed "internal" to the armed forces. They typically enjoy fixed budgetary lines that cannot be adjusted by civilian governments. This produces annual defense budgets considerably larger than what could reasonably be justified by national security needs. Although, state-sponsored violence is not as extensive today as in the immediate past, and governments are formally committed to protecting human rights, leaders of opposition political parties, labor unions, and civil society organizations continue to be the targets of repression. Latin American militaries are frequently immune from civilian prosecution for human rights abuses and only accountable to specialized military tribunals. Civil liberties are also inadequately protected. "National security" or "public order" laws, which permit governments to censor the media, are used to limit basic freedoms. Non-governmental organizations are rarely in a position to directly engage the political system or challenge those in positions of authority.

### **Institutional Commitments**

The incomplete nature of Latin America's political transition underscores the need for stronger measures to collectively defend democracy. The origins of the Democratic Charter can be traced to a series of institutional commitments adopted by the OAS in the mid-1980s and coinciding with the collapse of authoritarian military regimes throughout the region. The first indication of change came at the 1985 General Assembly session in Cartagena. Delegates to this session amended the preamble of the OAS charter to identify

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"representative democracy" as an "indispensable condition for the stability, peace and development of the region." Chapter one of the charter was also modified to include the promotion of representative democracy as an "essential purpose" of the OAS. When the General Assembly reconvened the following year in Guatemala City member states were instructed "to undertake or continue genuine dialogue" conducive to "strengthening the representative and pluralistic democratic system." In 1989, the General Assembly urged all states to "support and strengthen genuinely democratic and participatory systems" and to ensure periodic and honest electoral processes. The importance of electoral monitoring was again highlighted at the 1990 General Assembly meeting in Asunción where delegates called for a new unit within the OAS specifically to assist member states hold democratic elections.

An institutional commitment to representative democracy was reiterated at the twenty-first regular session of the OAS General Assembly in Santiago in June 1991. At this meeting, foreign ministers and heads of delegations endorsed a resolution that became known as the "Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System." This resolution identified representative democracy as the *only* acceptable form of government in the region and declared that the defense and promotion of democracy was an "inescapable commitment" of the OAS. The resolution also stated that governments would be held accountable for the means by which they assume power.

Delegates at Santiago went beyond this formal declaration to devise specific procedures for defending representative democracy in the hemisphere. The most significant development in this respect was the adoption of Resolution 1080. Under this resolution, any "irregular interruption" of the democratic process or legitimate exercise of power by the elected government triggers an immediate

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response from the OAS.<sup>i</sup> The resolution empowers the Secretary General to convene an emergency meeting of the Permanent Council. After examining the situation, the council can call for either an ad hoc meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs or a special session of the General Assembly. In either case, delegates are charged with devising a collective response to the crisis. The OAS is required to first utilize peaceful settlement procedures, such as mediation or good offices, but should these preliminary measures fail, it can recommend stronger action, such as the imposition of economic sanctions. Resolution 1080 extends the mandate of both the Secretary General and Permanent Council from simply responding to security disputes between states to defending representative democracy within states.<sup>i</sup>

Resolution 1080 set the stage for a series of further pro-democracy measures. At the twenty-second regular session of the OAS General Assembly in 1992, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation adopted the "Declaration of Nassau" which called for increased institutional support for member states to build, preserve, and strengthen representative democracy. At the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly in December 1992, article nine of the OAS charter was amended so any state whose democratically elected government had been overthrown by force could be suspended from the organization's governing bodies. This measure subsequently became known as the "Protocol of Washington."<sup>ii</sup>

An institutional commitment to representative democracy was again emphasized at the twenty-third General Assembly meeting in June 1993. The foreign ministers and heads of delegation adopted the "Declaration of Managua for the Promotion of Democracy and Development" which reiterated the organization's "firm belief that democracy, peace, and development are inseparable and indivisible parts of an overhauled and comprehensive view of solidarity in the

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Americas.” The declaration also stated that the OAS should not simply focus its work on those countries where the fundamental values and principles of democracy have collapsed, but also promote the continued consolidation of nascent democracies in order to preempt crises from occurring in the first place. This resolution also emphasized “the need to consolidate, as part of the cultural identity of each nation in the hemisphere, democratic structures and systems which encourage freedom and social justice, safeguard human rights and favor progress.” Regional governments were called upon to modernize domestic administrative and political structures, improve public administration, protect opposition political groups, and ensure the subordination of armed forces to legitimately constituted civilian authority.

Democratic governance has also been stressed at the various Summits of the Americas. The declaration of principles of the first summit, which took place in Miami in December 1994, stated, “the strengthening, effective exercise and consolidation of democracy constitutes the central political priority of the Americas.” The summit’s Plan of Action included proposals for enhancing OAS capacity “to preempt or manage situations in member states that threaten the democratic order.” At the second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago in April 1998, the OAS pledged to redouble its efforts to strengthen civil society, promote human rights, and improve judicial systems. At the third Summit of the Americas, which occurred last year in Quebec City, delegates stressed their commitment to the collective defense of democracy and called for a hemispheric treaty to safeguard constitutional governance.

### **Inter-American Democratic Charter**

The Inter-American Democratic Charter was quickly drafted and adopted at a special session of the OAS General



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Assembly in September of 2001. The charter defines “essential elements” of representative democracy, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections, a pluralistic system of political parties and organizations, and the independence of the various branches of government. The charter also includes formal procedures to follow should democracy be threatened in any member state. When a government considers its constitutional process or legitimate exercise of power to be at risk, it can request assistance from the Secretary General or the Permanent Council. The Secretary General may, with prior consent of the government concerned, arrange for visits or other actions in order to analyze the situation and will then submit a full report to the Permanent Council. The council will undertake a collective assessment of the situation and, where necessary, adopt measures for the preservation of constitutional governance.

The Democratic Charter also includes procedures to follow in the event a constitutional regime is interrupted. The Secretary General or any member state can request the immediate convocation of the Permanent Council that is authorized to undertake diplomatic initiatives to foster the restoration of representative democracy. If such diplomatic initiatives prove unsuccessful, or if the urgency of the situation so warrants, the council can immediately convene a special session of the General Assembly that could suspend the member state from the OAS. Such a suspension would require a two-thirds affirmative vote of the member states. The organization would continue its diplomatic initiatives to restore representative democracy and once the threat has past the Secretary General or any member state may propose lifting the suspension. Lifting the suspension would again require a two-thirds vote of member states.

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## **Unit for the Promotion of Democracy**

The political reform agenda of the Organization of American States is broader than formal commitments to democratic governance and encompasses a range of additional initiatives. Many of these initiatives are managed and coordinated by the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD), established in 1990 as the principal body within the General Secretariat to support political reform. The UPD responds to requests from member states for assistance to preserve their political institutions or democratic procedures.

Electoral assistance is one of the central responsibilities of the UPD. The unit extends technical support and advisory services to national authorities for enhancing the efficiency and transparency of electoral processes. Specific priorities include the development of electoral institutions, the updating and maintenance of electoral roles, the provision of electoral education programs, and the modernization and strengthening of civil registries. The UPD also offers training to local elected officials and assistance in reforming electoral legislation. The unit is developing an information and documentation system to serve as a repository of electoral and legal codes in the region.

The UPD frequently becomes directly engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of elections in the region. During the past decade, the OAS has helped observe more than fifty elections.<sup>i</sup> Observation missions were initially composed of a few high level officials who visited countries for short periods of time. Their primary activities involved meeting with electoral authorities, candidates, and civic groups in advance of the election and visiting polling stations on election day. These missions have since evolved into more comprehensive efforts, observing all aspects of the electoral process, including political

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campaigns, voter and candidate registration, voting, and verification of results by electoral authorities.

The UPD has also developed statistical sampling techniques to assess the accuracy of vote counts. OAS observers are present at polling stations deemed statistically representative of the country as a whole. The observers obtain the number of votes given to each candidate and transmit these numbers to a data processing center where the results for the entire country are estimated. The official results are then compared with these estimates and should be within the margins set by sampling errors. Should the two numbers be outside of these margins, there would be reason to believe that voter manipulation or some other problem had occurred in the electoral process.

The UPD also established programs to strengthen governing institutions in the Americas. Here, special focus is placed on fortifying regional legislatures (OAS 1999b). Training programs for legislators and their staffs have been established in such areas as drafting legislation, budget management, cultivating media relations, and improving information technology. The UPD has sponsored legislative programs in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The unit has also worked to enhance the capabilities of Guatemala's national congress with emphasis placed on preparing draft legislation to implement provisions contained in the country's peace treaties.<sup>i</sup> In Suriname, the UPD created a National Assembly Information System that tracks legislative proposals from presentation through approval and provided computer training for members of the assembly and their staffs. In the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Honduras the UPD provided advisory services in the development and implementation of modernization plans for their respective national congresses.<sup>i</sup> Judicial reform has also been a priority area for the UPD. It recently created a Center of Justice in the

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Americas to facilitate human resource development, information sharing, and other forms of technical cooperation. The center also supports the reform and modernization of the region's justice systems.

The institution building agenda of the UPD also includes measures to advance public sector decentralization (OAS 1999a). In 1997, the unit established a Program of Cooperation in Decentralization, Local Government and Citizen Participation to strengthen sub-national governments and expand citizen participation at municipal, local, and community levels. The UPD has worked with national and multilateral institutions to bring together mayors, city officials, legislators, and other local leaders to increase attention to decentralization and local government.<sup>i</sup>

### **Pressures for Change**

The democracy agenda is a notable development in the institutional mission of the OAS and the product of multiple forces. The transition from military to civilian regimes in Latin America is certainly important in this respect. The newly elected leaders of the region have a compelling self-interest in preserving constitutional democracy. Since civilian leaders have not been able to fully subordinate their armed forces, the threat of military intervention remains strong. Collective measures to defend the constitutional order were carefully crafted to lessen this threat and stabilize civilian regimes.

Second, there are powerful grassroots pressures to preserve democratic governance. Most people in the region retain painful memories from the period of military rule. Elections were canceled, legislatures dissolved, civilian courts closed, independent political activity was tightly restricted, and human rights violations were common. There is a near universal desire to ensure military regimes do not reemerge in

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the hemisphere. The democracy agenda is driven, at least partially, by these grassroots pressures.

Third, the end of the cold war has significantly altered regional priorities. During the period of super-power competition, the United States, which exercises considerable influence within the OAS, was preoccupied with countering revolutionary movements in the hemisphere. Authoritarian regimes were frequently viewed by Washington as both reliable allies and the only alternative to revolutionary change. With the end of the cold war and subsiding of insurrectionary pressures, the perceived need to support such regimes has diminished. In fact, constitutional democracies are now viewed as more reliable allies and more likely to ensure regional stability.

Fourth, the democracy agenda can be linked to the region's economic transition. During the past decade, most governments have slashed social welfare programs, deregulated domestic economies, sold-off publicly owned enterprises, and lowered barriers to foreign trade and investment. Because these neo-liberal market reforms typically intensify societal inequalities, democratic governments are considered more effective at implementing this economic agenda. The greater legitimacy accorded democracies, it is argued, lessens the likelihood that market reforms will engender widespread social protest.

Lastly, the democracy agenda reflects broader normative change in the global system during the past decade. It is increasingly the case that governments are only considered legitimate members of the international community to the extent that they respect democratic principles. The work of the OAS reflects international pressures to preserve and protect democratic governance.

## **The Road Forward**

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The OAS has strengthened the collective defense of representative democracy in the hemisphere and developed a range of new initiatives to enhance electoral processes and governing institutions. Although constitutional protections, transparent elections, and efficient institutions are, without question, critical for the effective functioning of democratic systems, they do not in themselves guarantee that the actual practice of politics will be fully democratic. The establishment of genuine democracies will ultimately require addressing economic conditions in the region. At present, about two hundred million people

live in poverty and inequalities are more pronounced in Latin America than any other region of the world.<sup>1</sup> The poorest forty percent of the population receives just ten percent of total income, while roughly sixty percent of income goes to the wealthiest twenty percent.<sup>2</sup>

Such extreme inequality is a formidable obstacle to democracy. With highly skewed distributions of income and wealth, it is relatively easy for a narrow elite to dominate political affairs regardless of the formal institutions of governance.<sup>3</sup> These people have the educational backgrounds, financial resources, and personal connections necessary to advance their interests in the political system while the poor and working class are largely excluded from meaningful participation in public affairs. To create truly inclusionary and participatory political systems it will be important to reduce the vast imbalances in the region. While the work of the OAS is laudable in many respects, political democracy will remain a distant aspiration in the absence of greater economic equality.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Inequalities in Latin America are reflected in Gini coefficients which range from .45 to .64. See Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> In countries with the greatest inequality, such as Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, the income of the wealthiest twenty percent of the population is nearly thirty times that of the poorest twenty percent.

<sup>3</sup> It should thus come as little surprise that the most rigidly stratified sub-regions, such as Central America and the Andes, have traditionally had the least representative political systems.

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