The Ideology of Cultural Identities: Narrative Technique and Subjectivity in Contemporary Mexican Novels

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Submitted to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

To Bonnie and Jean
for their unwavering optimism and confidence

Acknowledgements

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the committee members reading this work in various stages of preparation. Vicky Unruh, Michael Doudoroff and Danny J. Anderson unfailingly and patiently provided sage counsel and guidance, as well as extremely knowledgeable critical comments. Special thanks are due Danny Anderson for his accessibility, kindness, and expertise.

I also wish to acknowledge the Latin American Studies Fellowship awarded by the University of Kansas and the U.S. Department of Education for 1991-1992.

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Introduction

> When seen as a site of social reproduction and struggle, language cannot be imagined as unified.
>
> Mary Louise Pratt

Mary Louise Pratt distinguishes between a linguistics of community that "seeks to capture identity, but not the relationality of social differentiation" (59) and the linguistics of contact that places "at its centre the workings of language across rather than within lines of social differentiation, of class, race, gender, age" (62). Reading texts through this contact lens reveals how literature creates and depicts categories of cultural difference by defining and exploring the sites that cross the "lines of social differentiation." The "crossing" may, in fact, be the only meaningful sign involved in defining cultural identity and difference, which are concepts wholly interdependent on each other for their meaning. Difference has the advantage, as Renato Rosaldo points out, of making culture "particularly visible" to outsiders, but it does so only in relation to the cultural identity assumed, consciously or not, by the observer (202).

The narratives I study here enact modern efforts in Mexican prose to portray cultural differences (and, consequently, identities) involving race, ethnicity, nationality and literacy. The texts define and portray

dominant and dominated characters in their relations with each other, but they also demonstrate the difficulties and paradoxes involved in encoding marginated identities within the framework of a written text. Oficio de tinieblas (1962) by Rosario Castellanos uses many of the conventions and techniques of the indigenista novel to depict the relations between the Tzotzil indigenous community and their Ladino neighbors in southern Mexico. Las posibilidades del odio (1978) by María Luisa Puga also articulates the representation of cultural difference through the guise of fiction, but adopts strategies common to both the short story and novel to depict colonial relations in Kenya and to reflect the parallel issues involved in Mexican identity. Hasta no verte, Jesús mío (1969) by the Mexican journalist and novelist Elena Poniatowska challenges traditional genres of literature through the form of the testimonial novel to narrate the life story of a working class Mexican woman.

Each of these works adopts different strategies of narration to position the reader with respect to the issues of cultural identity. Castellanos relies heavily, but not exclusively, on a traditional anonymous narrator to reveal significant cultural positions. Puga also uses an anonymous narrator along with a variety of other narrative strategies, including extensive quoted monologues, a

technique that serves to contrast individual perceptions of identity. Poniatowska abandons the anonymous narrator altogether in favor of an autobiographical form that highlights a single individual's idiosyncratic constructions of identity and difference.

Each text also enacts linguistic differences that describe the workings of language across rather that within lines of social differentiation. At a referential level, for example, characters interact across national, ethnic, class, and literacy boundaries. Each novel also embodies difference as a text in a world where literacy is a sign of membership in a dominant group.

The truth or falseness of the images portrayed is not as much of an issue for me as are the ways textual representation of difference is limited in manners it does not, or, perhaps, cannot acknowledge. The texts studied here reveal many contradictions inherent in the activity of portraying marginated communities in the dominant literary world of the text. While literary efforts may reflect a desire for the political and social enfranchisement of marginated groups, they cannot help but subsume the marginated individual into the dominant world when they are represented in the text. As a consequence, Tzotzil Indians in southern Mexico speak Spanish in Oficio de tinieblas, so that the dominant Spanish speaking reader can perceive the

issues involved in their margination. Kenyans in Las posibilidades del odio also adopt a Spanish language code appropriate to a Mexican reader, and in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío the life story of a character who is illiterate appears in a written text marketed as a novel. Through these strategies, the texts privilege the communicative act of reading and writing over any accurate or authentic (in their terms) portrayal of marginated people.

Of the three novels discussed in this work, Oficio de tinieblas is the most traditional in terms of narration. Written in the historical realist style, it may be considered one of the most ambitious attempts by a Mexican writer to create a historical novel in the Lukacsian sense (Franco 139). Innovative narrative techniques such as narrated monologue and interior focalization are used to depict conflicts between the Tzotzil indigenous population and the Spanish speaking mestizos of southern Mexico. In addition to difference based on ethnicity, language, class and education are explored in their capacity to unite and/or divide culturally distinct populations.

Jean Franco sees Oficio de tinieblas as one of the first attempts by a Mexican author to write women into the national narrative, a narrative that, at the time, equated national identity with male identity, and emphasized the heroic aspects of that male identity (131-132). The

attempt to rewrite the master narrative around a female protagonist, and to work through the divisions between women of different classes and races fails, according to Franco, primarily because Castellanos is subject to positivist attitudes that equate indigenous with literal, and mestizo with abstract, ways of thinking (141).

Although Franco's assessment is accurate in general terms, a closer look at cultural interaction in Oficio de tinieblas reveals the underlying paradoxes that affect any effort to portray marginated, non-literate communities through the medium of writing. Castellanos's sophisticated use of traditional narrative devices engages the reader in a wide variety of cultural positions in an effort to portray an indigenous perspective on cultural conflicts in southern Mexico. The novel plays through the dynamics involved in access to and control of a symbolic order, particularly with regard to the power of written texts to reflect and influence attitudes towards culture, but is ultimately ambiguous in asigning symbolic versus literal characteristics to a specific cultural group. In Chapter two of this work, "Initial Settings: Establishing Cultural and Narrative Dialogue in Oficio de tinieblas," I analyze the opening moves in the novel, concentrating on how the narrating agency positions the reader with respect to cultural differences, and the contradictions inherent in

the task of portraying an indigenous culture in a language and medium to which it has no access in the represented world of the text. Chapter three, "Writing Cultural Identity in Oficio de tinieblas" discusses how oral versus written strategies of communication define and simultaneously blur categories of cultural identity throughout the novel.

Maria Luisa Puga, in Las posibilidades del odio also addresses the complex interaction between writing and cultural characterization. In contrast to Castellanos, who spent her youth far removed from the center, Puga begins life in the capital, Mexico City, attends primary school in Acapulco, and then moves to the margins, traveling to Europe at the age of twenty-four, and then to Kenya where she experiences the parallels between Mexican and Kenyan colonialism that she writes about in Las posibilidades del odio. As Debra A. Castillo puts it, "it is as if Puga had to leave the national center, recenter herself in Europe, and then find the most eccentric position possible, marginalized as a foreigner in the marginally existent continent of Africa, before returning to her own eccentric center, Mexico" (217).

Not surprisingly, given her experiences, Puga's novel delves into issues carrying implications that cross national boundaries. She presents, without resolving,

images of conflicts involving race, nationality, colonization and rebellion. Structurally, her work seems to reflect her extended life experiences with dislocation. Las posibilidades del odio places vignettes that can be read as individual short stories in a novel-like setting that additionally includes historical references to official Kenyan history. In step with the Mexican novel of the 1980s, Puga's text privileges instability over equilibrium (Sefchovich 276). As a result, the narrative complexities that express this instability become all the more crucial to understanding how written language carries and defines issues of cultural identity. In Chapter four, "The Multiplicity of Difference," I look at how narrative strategy presents and controls the conflicting ideologies swirling through the pages of this very original novel. As in Oficio de tinieblas, the narrative agency functions in crucial ways to condition the reader to adopt certain cultural perspectives. In Las posibilidades del odio, however, the non-traditional structure of the text adds complexity to the narrative techniques involved in positioning the reader, including a strong vein of self-referentiality that exposes the dilemmas involved in writing about difference.

Puga describes the contradictions inherent in the position from which she writes, a Mexican author living in

Kenya:

> Al llegar a Kenya vi algo perfectamente absurdo, considerando que nací en este país [Mexico]; el tercer mundo;los subhumanos; el poder del blanco; el colonialismo; la colonizabilidad. Me vi, pues. Nos vi. Sólo que para ellos, los kenyanos, yo venía a constituir eso que vi durante toda mi infancia en Acapulco: el turista. (De la onda 133-134)

Puga here gives voice to an awareness of difference shared by all three authors I discuss. Castellanos, who grew up in southern Mexico, experienced as both familiar and foreign the indigenous presence in that region. Familiarity came in the person of her indigenous nanny, and foreignness in her efforts, as an adult, to overcome the frustrations involved in literacy campaigns aimed at educating that same indigenous population. Puga's awareness of being different, of being in a place both familiar and foreign at the same time, applies to experiences in Kenya as well as Mexico, a country she was absent from during some of its most turbulent years. This added complexity of experience is mirrored in the thematic, narrative and structural elements of her novel.

A writer similarly committed to the experience and portrayal of social conflicts is Elena Poniatowska.

Perhaps the best-known living female author in Mexico, she evidences an equal interest in writing difference into her texts, differences reflected in both her topics and her narrative strategies. Like Puga and Castellanos, her engagement stems, in part, from personal experience. Her family, of elite Polish background, immigrated to Mexico when she was a young girl. Thus, she became actively engaged in living difference, as she adapted to a new language, nation and culture. Hasta no verte, Jesús mío is the product of conversations she had as an adult with an older working class woman. This experience, and the text that emerged from it, helped Poniatowska bridge the cultural distance between the "outsider" status of immigrant and a more authentic sense of personal identity based on nationality. Although chronologically earlier than Las posibilidades del odio, I consider Poniatowksa's testimonial novel in the last chapter of this work because of the even greater challenges that it poses to the traditional literary canon. Hasta no verte, Jesús mío depicts a broad range of cultural difference at the referential level, but I have chosen to concentrate my analysis on the narrative setting, particularly the issues of the agenda and position of the representer and its effect on the represented individual. Poniatowska's novel crosses accepted literary boundaries. It challenges the conventional borders between

fact and fiction, and also crosses the boundaries between oral and literate forms of representation, but it does so as much by its choice of genre as by its specific narrative structure. In chapter five, "Whose Story Is It?," I am also concerned with critical responses to the portrayal of the marginated individual in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío for what they say about how writing and oral differences are interpreted by the community of literary critics.

While textual analysis of cultural identity and difference can be approached from a number of different positions, I have chosen to analyze the impact created by specific narrative strategies, particularly the role of the narrating agent with regard to focalization strategies. This approach stems from my earlier involvement in the linguistic field of pragmatics, which concentrated on the non-verbal techniques involved in the production of meaning. Turn-taking, stutters, "errors," intonation, and the like, contribute huge amounts of information in spoken discourse. Thinking about written discourse, it seemed likely that this kind of "indirect" information would appear in the decisions about narrative structure, which would, consequently, affect the reader's attitudes towards the words, and worlds, being narrated.

My primary interest in narrative analysis stems, somewhat ironically, from the conclusions drawn by social

scientists who have been active in uncovering the influence of narrative on images of culture. When anthropologist Renato Rosaldo reviews the developing concern with the role narrative plays in constructing culture, he turns to historiographer Hayden White's argument that "the moment one chooses a particular form of discourse (and not another), it shapes historical knowledge both by what it includes and by what it excludes" (131). Discursive strategies, in other words, play a major role in the kinds of information created. James Clifford also stresses the impact of the poetic processes that produce images of different cultures. As he makes clear in The Predicament of Culture, distinct discursive practices have molded and created particular interpretations of cultures throughout the twentieth century. Today, however, he points out that

> Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighborhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth. . . . "Cultural" difference is no longer a stable, exotic otherness; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence. (14)

The "power and rhetoric" involved in literary narrative can be considered as influential as that in historical and anthropological writings. Literary studies, then, can also begin to explore the effects its discursive strategies have

on the production of meaning. In literature, as well as in other fields, the constructed images of cultural identity and difference that appear must necessarily emerge from and be controlled by the often unstated expectations of the narratives that produce them. Cultural identity, for example, must cede some of its distinctiveness to the contract between author and reader in order for the latter to perceive the kinds of difference the text does narrate. In its most obvious form, this contract means that characters indigenous to southern Mexico or Kenya must "speak" in the reader's language. They must "act" in a constituted structure "natural" to the writer's conceptual notions of narrative.

In terms reminiscent of the anthropological statements on the impact of specific discursive practices Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires in Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction point out that

> . . . literature is actually a set of culturally and historically defined conventions for reading texts in one way as opposed to another. . . . The expectation's of a work's universal significance, metaphorical coherence, and thematic unity define an agenda for reading which has political and social implications in what it excludes as well as includes. (23-24)

To reveal the agenda included in reading, they emphasize the importance of textual analysis, which "concentrates on language as a field of signifiers which multiplies possibilities of meaning," in contrast to literary analysis which "subordinates a work's signifiers to a final signified" (25). The strategies these authors use to reveal the many "possibilities of meaning" in a text range from analysis of narrative structures such as story and narration, to discussions of the roles ideology, subjectivity and discourse play in producing textual meaning. In my analysis of the novels in this work, I refer to their categories of narration to reveal the construction of cultural identity and difference in texts. I show how the narrative structures of Oficio de tinieblas, Las posibilidades del odio and Hasta no verte, Jesús mío create, contradict and struggle with the difficulties inherent in portraying distinct categories of cultural identity in a literary text.

James Clifford comments on one of the strategies anthropology experiments with as it explores different narrative contracts in an effort to more accurately portray non-western cultures. In a study of Papuan Indians in New Guinea, the anthropologist collaborated with the shaman informant to produce the structure of the final text. The book is consciously designed

> to transfer to a shaman as many as possible of the functions normally associated with authorship. These include the selection of an expository style, the duty to make interpretations and explanations and the right to judge which things are important and which are not. (51)

These and other experimental models for writing ethnography lead Clifford to conclude that "new possibilities for reading (and thus for writing) cultural descriptions are emerging" (53).

This search for new models is reflected in the novels in this study as they move from the traditional realist style of Castellanos' novel, with the over-reaching authority of the writer, to the polyphonic voicing in Las posibilidades del odio to the combined authorial presence in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío. All three authors confront the challenge of cultural diversity as they experiment with ways that language can be used to cross the lines of social differentiation in their society to produce a "literature of contact." The results have much to say about how cultural identity and difference are constituted from a literary as well as a societal perspective.

Chapter Two

Initial Settings: Cultural and Narrative Dialogue in Chapter One of Oficio de tinieblas

The Latin American indigenista novel of the 1930s and 1940s has been characterized as a genre of "limited" literary caliber (Sommers, "Indian-Oriented" 249). However, by the 1950s, the indigenista novel found new approaches to portray the Indian in Latin America. The newer novels, among them Hombres de maíz (1949) by Miguel Angel Asturias, Los ríos profundos (1958) by José María Arguedas and Hijo de hombre (1960) by Augusto Roa Bastos, explore the roots and significance of cultural conflict through an emphasis on language, myth and psychology. These qualitatively different indigenista novels stress cultural analysis rather than an ideologically motivated political allegory as a means of understanding relationships between cultures in Latin America.

Among Mexican indigenista novels, Rosario Castellanos's Oficio de tinieblas (1962) portrays conflicts between indigenous and mestizo peoples in Chiapas, the southernmost state in Mexico. Taking place during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), the story also comments on political efforts to address land reform demands emerging from the Mexican Revolution. While some critics see the Mexican indigenista novel beginning earlier in the century, there is widespread agreement that the Cárdenas years,

which saw concerted efforts to improve the living standards of Mexico's Indian population, mark the emergence of indigenismo as a central issue of Mexican fiction, and one which continues until the early 1960s when Oficio de tinieblas appears.[1] The literary symbol of the cardenista policies, according to Cynthia Steele, was the character of the rural schoolteacher, the idealistic, middle class reformer who works in the interest of national society by acting as its foremost agent of acculturation. This character lives and works alongside the Indians, sharing their daily hardships, and also teaches them what they need to know to become model Mexican citizens: Spanish, reading and writing, modern farming methods, etc. ("Literature" 18).[2] The unquestioned superiority of the mestizo national identity and lifestyle joined with scanty knowledge of, interest in or respect for the indigenous cultures portrayed in these works characterizes them as primarily discussions among the Mexican literary elite rather than any attempt to accurately represent an indigenous point of view of reality.

A different approach to the indigenous populations appears in Mexican novels during the late 1940s largely as a result of the intensive ethnographic studies initiated during this decade. Instead of concentrating exclusively on the social abuses suffered by the Indian communities,

these works more clearly portray the Indian within the context of the indigenous community. Juan Pérez Jolote (1948) by the anthropologist Ricardo Pozas exemplifies this trend, which saw the narrative center of gravity shift from the world of the mestizo to the Indian communities, as it tells the life story of a Chamula man from his own perspective. The new ethnographic emphasis on Indian cultures culminates in a group of novels and short stories written by young anthropologists associated with the Centro Coordinador Tzeltal-Tzotzil in Chiapas in the 1950s, among them Rosario Castellanos (Steele, "Literature" 21).[3] Her novel Oficio de tinieblas (1962) reflects the increased knowledge of Indian communities manifested in a highly creative literary work. The psychological depth of characters, especially the focus on female characters, the juxtaposition of cultural conceptions of time, and the absence of simplistic "good or evil" constructions are only a few of the innovative characteristics of the novel.

In spite of the author's knowledge of and experience with the indigenous community in Chiapas, Oficio de tinieblas nevertheless fails to transcend ethnocentrism. As Steele points out, "indigenista writers have consistently projected their own culture-bound values onto Indian characters, and misrepresented Indian values" ("Literature" 22). Castellanos is no exception. The narrative complexi-

ty of Oficio de tinieblas, however, reflects a sincere attempt to circumvent the contradictions inherent in portraying indigenous characters in a genre designed for a Spanish-speaking mestizo audience. The narration is distinguished by frequent contrasts of focalization, both in terms of the agency and the object of focalization, that function to express personal and cultural relationships in the novel. Throughout, the narrating agency not only plays a prominent role in establishing and defining the relationships between diverse cultural groups, but also defines attitudes for the reader towards the various communities depicted.

In broadest terms, Oficio de tinieblas tells the story of an uprising of the Tzotzil Indians of southern Mexico against the non-Indian landowning population, the Ladinos.[4] The story combines two different historical periods. An Indian uprising that took place in 1869-1870 in Chiapas is transplanted to the post-revolutionary period of the Cárdenas presidency when the Mexican government was initiating efforts at land reform (Sommers, "Forma" 80). By setting the conflict between Indian and Ladino within the context of government sponsored land reform efforts, Oficio de tinieblas discusses the relations between three different cultural or ideological groupings. The binary opposition between Indian and mestizo that traditionally charac-

terizes indigenista fiction develops into a triadic relationship that includes cultural ideologies belonging to the Indian, the Ladino and the land-reform mestizo represented by the government functionary. In the novel, it is the promised land reform that upsets the stable relationship of subordination between Indians and Ladinos and inspires Indian leaders to seek redress of the oppressive conditions under which they live and work. Their efforts intertwine with a myriad of unforeseen circumstances, resulting in an armed rebellion and military defeat at the hands of the Ladino leaders.

Because of the novel's complex synthesis of cultural attitudes and narrative technique, I analyze the first chapter of the novel in detail, concentrating on how focalization establishes initial positions of cultural subjectivity for the reader. Edward W. Said, in his work Beginnings, points out that like all other activities, a beginning has associated with it "a field of play, habits of mind, conditions to be fulfilled" (19). Beginnings set limits on the narration to come and, among other things, define the terms of engagement between the narrating agency and the reader. I am particularly interested in how the initial narration in Oficio de tinieblas positions the reader with regard to the issue of cultural identity and difference as it relates to the naming of distinct popula-

tions in the text.

I approach this question through an analysis of focalization, which Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires define as "a triadic relation formed by the narrating agent (who narrates), the focalizer (who sees), and the focalized (what is being seen and, thus, narrated . . .)" (95). The relationship among these elements necessarily includes positions of similarity or opposition at any given point in the narration. The narrating agency, for example, may align itself or distance itself from the focalizer of any given event.[5] The positioning of the narrating agent with respect to what is narrated obviously affects the reader. In Oficio de tinieblas, the relationship between narrating agent, focalizer and focalized helps to create the reader's attitudes towards the three distinct cultural groupings.

To introduce the effects of narrative technique on the reader's cultural attitudes, I look first at the naming process used to introduce the Tzotzil community and the Ladino population, the only two communities named in the first chapter. Naming has always been crucial to the definition and portrayal of indigenous communities in Mexico. Alan Knight summarizes the subjective nature of Indian/mestizo status: "Depending on the criteria used, an individual or community may be deemed Indian or mestizo; an individual may seem a mestizo (or Ladino) to his erstwhile

fellow-Indians, but remain an Indian in mestizo eyes" (74). In Mexico, differences between the indigenous population and the European newcomers began to merge as soon as the two populations met. This mestizaje, biological as well as cultural, resulted in Indians in Mexico being defined more by lifestyle than by racial characteristics. Rosario Castellanos, who spent her youth and early adult years in Chiapas subject to this definition of Indians as those who lived like Indians, was keenly aware of the dynamics of naming. According to Debra A. Castillo, she believed that "literature carried the power of changing reality through the act of naming" (223). The process of naming culturally distinct communities in Oficio de tinieblas is complex, and reflects the influence that different narrative strategies can have on the reader.

The initial focus given to Tzotzil and Ladino communities underscores the importance of the stable relationship between these two communities prior to the appearance of the issue of land reform. More significantly, the focalization used to name each community defines attitudes towards cultural identity for the reader. Both members of the Indian community and an anonymous narrating agency engage in the initial naming of the Tzotzil and Ladino. No Ladino characters have access to the privileged function of naming. Through this strategy, the decisions about who

names and what name is given define positions of cultural authority that affect the reader's attitude towards the named groups.

The opening paragraphs of Oficio de tinieblas use a focalizing strategy that positions the reader within the represented world of an indigenous community, thus prioritizing an indigenous view of cultural relations. The text initially authorizes, and the reader first perceives, an indigenous voice, an indigenous place, and the name of an indigenous community, the Tzotzil. The text opens with an indigenous legend that portrays the conflictive relationships between the Spaniards and the Tzotziles. An unspecified Indian narrator recounts the arrival of Spaniards to the homeland of the Tzotziles, implicitly defining the indigenous community as the original inhabitants of the region. The initial naming of a culturally discrete population is this narrator's reference to his community: "las tribus pobladoras del valle de Chamula, los hombres tzotziles o murciélagos" (9).[6] The first mention of the Spaniards is focalized through the eyes of this same Indian narrator: "fue necesario que más tarde vinieran otros hombres" (9). The Indian focalizer specifies a secondary status for the newcomers, named as they are only in relation to the original Tzotziles, and characterized as arriving later. The Tzotziles emerge from this initial naming

process with primacy of place, time and even existence, both textual (via the focalization) and fictional. The reader entering this represented world through the indigenous voice experiences the ideological and narrative priority granted to the indigenous world view.

As the legend continues, the reader witnesses the effects of co-existence of the two culturally distinct groups. Their names change to reflect the privileged position of the Spanish newcomers. The change occurs inside the newly constructed Christian church full of the echoes of "las oraciones y los cánticos del caxlán; los lamentos y las súplicas del indio" (10). The indigenous focalizer re-names the two cultures with the words caxlán and indio (10). The "otros hombres," as the Spaniards were first called, gain specificity, becoming caxlanes, a term used throughout the novel exclusively by Tzotziles to refer to the Ladino population.[7] In contrast, the Tzotzil population loses individuality, becoming generalized as merely "indios," no longer the "hombres tzotziles" who originally inhabited the region. In effect, co-existence in the same region has resulted in a privileged identity for the newcomers.

The loss of identity reflected in the transition from "hombres tzotziles o murciélagos" to mere "indios" is particularly significant because of its focalization.

Although the fictionalized relationship and names of the two populations change, the Indian focalizer remains the narrator. Consequently, the reader becomes aware that the change in status between newcomers and Tzotziles was absorbed by the indigenous community and reflected in their (re)-naming process. The exclusively indigenous focalization is a narrative choice that grants authority to that cultural discourse even as it focalizes a loss of indigenous authority in the represented world.

Repeated instances of focalization through indigenous eyes occur even when the narrating agency changes at the end of the legend. An anonymous narrator adopts an "outsider" position to both the Indian and Ladino communities, and adds gender into the picture, an element that, as a consequence, becomes notably absent from the discourse of the Indian narrating agency. The anonymous narrator introduces the first Indian character, Pedro González Winiktón, as "un indio" and then in parentheses characterizes him as having "esa juventud tempranamente adusta de su raza" (11), a statement that defines the narrating agency as non-Indian. This same narrator uses the term Ladino, its first appearance, to refer to the non-Indian inhabitants of the region, avoiding the use of the specifically Indian term caxlán introduced earlier by the Indian focalizer. Significantly, however, this first reference to ladino is focal-

ized from the perspective of Tzotzil women on their way to the local market. They see the "construcciones de tejamanil, habitación de ladino que vigila sus sementeras o sus menguados rebaños, precario refugio contra la intemperie" (15). As a result of the Tzotzil focalizers, the reader has yet to perceive the Ladino through the eyes of non-indigenous focalizer. In this way, the Indian focalization of cultural relations dominates the textual naming process.

When the anonymous narrating agency does establish an exclusively exterior position to the issue of naming cultural groups, unmediated by parenthetical remarks or interior focalization, the result is female gender specific. For example, the group of Indian women on their way to market are "las tzotziles" and they encounter a group of "cinco mujeres ladinas" (16). In other words, when focalized from the perspective of an anonymous narrating agency, gender becomes an issue in the naming process of the cultural groups. In some sense, then, the anonymous narrator both corroborates and modifies the indigenous narrator that initiates discourse in the novel. Corroboration comes in the form of a predominantly indigenous focalization of cultural relations, and modification in the form of the addition of gender as an element of cultural relations.

Even this brief, initial example of the naming process

demonstrates the importance of focalization in determining cultural and gender-based perspectives. By changing focalization, the text reflects decisions about who sees that establish or undermine positions of authority for different cultures in the novel; in this way, focalization creates a cultural subjectivity for the reader who is submerged in a system where discursive authority is an issue. From the very start, Oficio de tinieblas presents the cultural conflict in terms of the power to control linguistic production. Relying exclusively on indigenous focalization immediately subjects the reader to a position relative to the conflict. In the represented world, two cultural systems, the Tzotzil and the Ladino, are presented as co-existing in a hierarchical social relationship that oppresses the Indian community. At a discourse level, however, this relationship is inverted and privileges the Tzotzil focalizer over the Ladino. These narrative strategies reflect the complexity involved in naming, and alert the reader to the issues involved in representing cultural differences. The varying focalization names two positions, one indigenous and one non-indigenous, through which events can be perceived. As a result it becomes clear that there is no neutral position from which the reader can observe cultural differences.

In addition to the complexity reflected in the process

of naming, other narrative strategies affect the reader's attitudes towards cultural difference. As mentioned earlier, the opening paragraphs of Oficio de tinieblas relate an account of a Tzotzil origin legend. As legends do, this one explains the present, with its conflictive relationship between Ladinos and the indigenous community, as emerging from a specific past, in this case, the Tzotzil history in the Chamula valley. Focalized from an Indian perspective, the legend tells of the arrival of the Spanish in order to help interpret the signs left by San Juan, "el que estuvo presente cuando aparecieron por primera vez los mundos" (9), signs that the Tzotziles are unable to interpret. Recognizing the Chamula Valley's beauty, San Juan chooses it as a site for a church:

> Y para que no hubiera de faltar con qué construir su iglesia y para que su iglesia fuera blanca, San Juan transformó en piedras a todas las ovejas blancas de los rebaños que pacían en aquel paraje. El promontorio - sin balido, inmóvil - quedó allí como la seña de su voluntad. (9)

The Spanish are also unable to interpret the meaning of these "signs," so it is only through San Juan's personal appearance that the communities understand that they are to build a church in which to worship him.

The legend introduces and distinguishes between the

Ladino and Tzotzil communities in a number of ways. The story itself defines cultural identity and difference in terms of place of origin, skin color, class and language. It places the "hombres tzotziles" in the Chamula Valley and contrasts them with "otros hombres" que "vinieron como de otro mundo" (9). These strangers are a different color, portrayed as carrying "el sol en la cara" (9). During the construction of the church, the newcomers work with their heads, and the Indians with their hands (10), reflecting the initial stages of class differences.

Language, however, is predominant in the characterization of the cultural difference between the two communities. According to the initial indigenous narrator, the Spanish speak a

> lengua altiva, lengua que sobrecoge el corazón de quien escucha. Idioma, no como el tzotzil que se dice también en sueños, sino férreo instrumento de señorío, arma de conquista, punta del látigo de la ley. Porque ¿cómo, sino en castilla, se pronuncia la orden y se declara la sentencia? ¿Y cómo amonestar y cómo premiar sino en castilla? (9)

Cultural differences abound in this characterization of the "other's" language. Not only is a clearly defined hierarchy apparent in terms of power to control and induce fear,

but Castilian is portrayed as essentially a language concerned with defining categories. While the Tzotzil language can cross the barrier between exterior and interior worlds, Castilian is the language of an exclusively exterior world, where it can conquer, punish and reward, where it can, in other words, define social relationships of domination and approved categories of behavior. Tzotzil does not have the linguistic power, or perhaps the desire, to achieve these same ends.

As the differences between the two cultures surface in the text, the focalizer of these differences emerges as an important element in the signifying process. Several factors point to the existence of a Tzotzil focalizer. The legend recounts a non-Western origin myth that places the Tzotzil at the center of the story. In addition to being familiar with the Tzotzil language, the focalizer is acquainted with this community to the extent of providing detailed visual (although legendary) descriptions of their frustrated inability to interpret San Juan's signs: "Todo les fue balbuceo confuso, párpados abatidos, brazos desmayados en temeroso ademán" (9). Perhaps most telling, however, is the description of the interior of the church, where Christian symbols are read through a non-Christian filter. Saint Jerome, for example, is the "protector de brujos," and the symbol of the cross is the "exigidora de

la víctima anual" (10). The statues of the saints are "Potencias hostiles a las que fue preciso atar para que no desencadenasen su fuerza" (10). The Christian symbols are read not as benevolent providers of sacred protection, but as malignant forces indifferent to human concerns, with "Oído duro, pecho indiferente, mano cerrada" (10). Reinforcing the cultural differences towards this religious center are the sounds within the church, the "oraciones y los cánticos del caxlán, los lamentos y las súplicas del indio" (10).

As a result of this focalizer, the reader enters the world of the text subject to a Tzotzil version of their own history, a fact which establishes an initial narrative hierarchy privileging the Indian point of view. An analysis of the agency of this narration reveals much of the complexity underlying this seemingly straightforward positioning of the reader. The narrating agency is in the discursive position of representing one culture to another, an endeavor that carries with it, directly and indirectly, a variety of contradictory attitudes. In this case, the task involves at least the re-contextualizing of another's cultural discourse, at most, the appropriation of discourse for motives perhaps unconnected with its source. In what follows, I will analyze consequences inherent to this representation of one culture to another. I discuss the

implications of transforming oral discourse into written, as well as the impact of the novelistic context on the goal of representing a foreign culture to a reader.

Several elements of the narration, both of the legend and the comments that follow it, evoke a sense of orality, a feeling that one is reading what Walter J. Ong calls "the text of an oral utterance" (13). In addition to the undeclared cultural assumption that Indian legends function as part of an oral tradition, the text contains signals which, taken together, point to orality as an aspect of the medium of narration. After describing the church in the present tense, the narrating agent justifies the legend in the following manner:

> Así como se cuentan sucedieron las cosas desde sus orígenes. No es mentira. Hay testimonios. Se leen en los tres arcos de la puerta de entrada del templo, desde donde se despide el sol.
>
> Este lugar es el centro. (10)

The narrating agency in the paragraph quoted above is consistent with that of the legend. Both the self-referentiality of these comments to the narration of the legend itself, in addition to the continuation of the present tense initiated in the description of the church, make it clear that the Tzotzil speaker is the narrator.

Several factors suggest the oral nature of this dis-

course. One of these is the use of the verb "contar" to refer to the production of discourse. Another is the claim to credibility expressed in short declarative sentences along with the appeal to the "reading" of the drawings on the church arches, a mode of interpretation that implies the use (although, of course, not exclusive use) of non-literate codes. The deictic references "así como se cuentan" and "este lugar," given their evocation of a single source of the utterance, also point to orality as an aspect of the medium of narration.

In effect, what the reader has encountered is a written version of an oral Indian legend. This obviously complicates the question of defining the narrating agent in this section. Two different agencies, speech and writing, are involved in transmitting what appears to be a single discourse. This double agency produces a double-voiced effect, what Bakhtin describes as "speech [that] . . . serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions" (324). The dialogue between the Tzotzil "speaker" and the Spanish-writing agency, and between each agent and the reader, describes a variety of cultural positions.

The concept of "textualization" as applied by anthropologists helps to clarify aspects of the dialogic relationship of the Indian speaker and the narrating agency.

According to James Clifford, textualization is "the process through which unwritten behavior, speech, beliefs, oral tradition and ritual come to be marked as a corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation" (38). He adds that "In the moment of textualization this meaningful corpus assumes a more or less stable relation to a context" (38). In the case of the introductory pages of Oficio de tinieblas, an oral Indian legend is isolated from any "immediate discursive or performative situation" involving the Tzotzil culture in southern Chiapas. The legend is "textualized" as a significant piece of culture and placed in a stable relation not to an anthropological context, but to a novelistic one.

As a result, the legend functions not in the context of Tzotzil culture, but in the context of the indigenista novel in Spanish America. The double-voiced effect of the narration of the legend complicates the question of who is narrating. Is a Tzotzil character "speaking," or is an anonymous narrating agency writing? If the reader perceives the written text of an oral utterance, there are perhaps two agencies at work. Castellanos's approach to representing cultural difference at this point in the text suggests that two agencies are at work. The narrating agency (the writing agency) borrows the Tzotzil "speaker,"

(portrayed as an oral narrator), to communicate several important points to the reader. The first are content oriented. In the represented world, two very different cultures exist in a stable relationship that oppresses the indigenous people. In addition, indigenous people value oral story telling and origin myths. The narrative decisions give the indigenous version of history precedence over a Ladino perspective on events. The indigenous focalizer appears first, reflecting a preference for the Tzotzil view of the world over the choice of any other focalizer.

The legend also serves more specific interests of the narrating agency, which, as a result of the double voicing, gains credibility as a source of written information about a culture both foreign and unknown to the reader. The narrating agency stakes its claim to knowledge of the Tzotzil world. This informing stance encourages the reader to rely on the narrating agency for access to the Tzotzil world view. In all fairness, no claim appears in the text as to the anthropological accuracy of the legend. Nevertheless, Western readers are likely to accept, perhaps somewhat condescendingly, a narration of an origin legend as something typical of the "mythic Indian."

In addition to being a knowledgeable source of Tzotzil culture, by recounting the legend, the narrating agency

also defines its related authority to bridge cultural gaps. The legend is transformed from an oral medium to a written one and placed in a novelistic context where it functions to define the relationship between the narrating agency and its readers. An oral Indian legend is thus transformed into written Spanish, a language characterized by the Indian "speaker" as one of conquest, power, reward and punishment. In this manner, the narrating agency exposes some of the contradictions involved in representing one culture to another. To do so, elements of a culture must be singled out, "textualized," on the basis of definitions from outside the culture, transported to other contexts, and translated into terms appropriate to that new context. Clearly, these processes highlight the difficulties involved in any effort to bridge cultural gaps.

The double-voiced nature of the text makes especially interesting the use of deixis in the paragraph quoted earlier, which ends with, "Hay testimonios. Se leen en los tres arcos de la puerta de entrada del templo, desde donde se despide el sol. Este lugar es el centro" (emphasis added). According to Stephen C. Levinson, deixis concerns "the ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the context of utterance or speech act, and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of

utterance" (54). From the perspective of the Indian speaker, "este lugar" which is "el centro" becomes an obvious geographical referent of the church as a physical and spiritual center for the speaker. In addition to this analysis based on place deixis, "el centro" could also reflect discourse deixis, "the use of expressions within some utterance to refer to some portion of the discourse that contains the utterance (including the utterance itself)" (Levinson 85). "Este lugar" then refers to the source of the discourse involved in recounting the entire legend. In this case, since the Indian speaker "reads" the justification of the legend from the stone arches on a Spanish Christian church, the center could be the place where both Spanish and Indian influences combine in the formation of the legend. Because of the ambiguity of the source of the drawings on the arches (from the Indians who worked with "las manos" or the Spanish who worked with "la cabeza"), it is possible that the Indian speaker is justifying the "Indian" legend with material from a Spanish version of history. It is certainly clear that the Christian building holds the key to the authority of the indigenous legend.

The double-voiced nature of the legend suggests an additional interpretation of the deictic references. For the narrating agency, "este lugar" also refers to the

discursive position involved in representing one culture to another. The center then becomes a place filled with the contradictions of cultural representation. The Indian focalizer holds a dominant first-voice position in the novel, but can only do so by undergoing a transformation of basic characteristics of cultural identity such as language, context and mode of communication. The narrating agent experiences "este lugar" as the place where those contradictions are produced.

The reader is subject to all these centers at once, and experiences, as a result of the effects of the double-voicing, the sense in which the Indian voice is compromised at the same time that an attempt is made to privilege it. Beginning the novel with a Tzotzil focalizer obviously marks the consequence this voice has. Nevertheless, the legend's inclusion in the novelistic context involves alterations in the legend and its cultural context that apparently serve the interests of the anonymous narrating agency in its communication with the reader. In one sense, the reader, characterized by this narrative process as non-Tzotzil, motivates the transformation of the oral Indian legend. To a large extent, the reader's lack of cultural knowledge, language and context necessitates the alteration of Tzotzil culture. Thus, the reader's cultural limitations are also inscribed in "este lugar" which is the

center.

When the narrating agency leaves this double-voiced perspective behind and adopts an anonymous narrating position, it continues to define cultural attitudes available to the reader. The anonymous narrating agency that dominates the rest of this first chapter of Oficio de tinieblas demonstrates the different ways that focalization can be used to define cultural positions. Given the continuity of the narrating agent in this section, the changes in the focalizer are the primary means of defining cultural attitudes for the reader. The remaining pages of this first chapter of the novel introduce the two primary Indian characters and narrate a conflictive encounter between Tzotzil women on their way to market and poor Ladina women who try to rob them of their merchandise.

The narrating agency, through its use of focalization and narrative content, highlights the importance of two individual members of the Indian community, the married pair Pedro González Winiktón and Catalina Díaz Puiljá. Several excellent critics, among them Naomi Lindstrom and Frances R. Dorward, discuss the role of interiorization as a narrative technique that provides access to the inner thoughts of characters in Oficio de tinieblas. In this first chapter of the novel, both main characters are subject to interior focalization, a fact which makes their

ideas and inner conflicts important to the reader.

From the perspective of cultural positioning of the reader, the significant factor in this approach to focalization concerns the treatment of other members of the Indian community. While Pedro and Catalina are characterized extensively through the use of interior focalization, the rest of the Indian community is fairly anonymous. For example, when Pedro is first introduced, his full name is given as well as his relationship to his community: "A pesar de su juventud . . . los demás acudían a él como se acude al hermano mayor" (11). This presentation singles out Pedro as an outstanding individual, both through the content of the text and through the process of naming: Pedro González Winiktón in contrast to "los demás." In Catalina's case, this process of individualizing her character in contrast to other members of the Indian community is even more dramatic:

> Alrededor de la choza se había reunido un grupo de mujeres que aguardaban en silencio la aparición de Catalina . . . La sumisión de los demás ni la incomodaba ni la envanecía . . . Catalina Díaz Puiljá se detuvo y se persignó. Sus seguidoras la imitaron. (14-15)

Both Catalina and Pedro are repeatedly named in detail and characterized as outstanding members of their community, he

for his wise counsel (11), she for her role as ilol, or sorceress, with special connections to mysterious powers (13). In other words, they are not typical of their community. This point is emphasized by the repeated references to the other Tzotzil as an undefined mass of people: "los demás," "un grupo," and "seguidoras." This apparent insignificance of the nameless "other members of the tribe," suggests a dismissal, in cultural and narrative terms, of the importance of the larger group of Indians, a situation that may seem incongruous in a novel about a revolt by this same group. A possible motive for the contrast between Pedro and Catalina and "los demás" could be that the exceptional nature of these two individuals within their own community may flatter an unsympathetic reader into a willingness to identify with these characters. Their superiority to other members of their tribe is emphasized directly through the content of the narration, and indirectly through the interior focalization of their characters in contrast to the rest of their community.

The narrating agent underscores its authority to narrate and to bridge cultural gaps for the reader throughout this first chapter. Through the variations in focalization, and the use of deixis, the reader is constantly repositioned, occasionally subjected to a "member" position within the culture, and other times addressed as

an "outsider." The flexibility of the focalization to produce these different positions is reflected in the description of the Indian women's departure from San Juan Chamula on their way to the market town: "La distancia entre San Juan Chamula y Ciudad Real (o Jobel en lengua de indios), es larga. Pero estas mujeres la vencían sin fatiga" (15). The parenthetical clause highlights the informing stance adopted by the narrating agency to address a reader outside of the Tzotzil culture. Both the Ladino and the Tzotzil name for the market town are included, but the latter is distinguished in several ways. The Tzotzil name "Jobel" is secondary to the Ladino name and appears in a clause separated from the flow of narration by parentheses. The narrating agent defines the Indian term for the reader, thus emphasizing both the superior information of the narrator and an awareness of the reader's limitations to interpret the term "Jobel." By demonstrating an ability to handle terms in two different cultural domains, the Ladino and Tzotzil, the narrating agent not only claims knowledge of both worlds, but declares a willingness to serve as a bridge or interpreter for a reader outside the Indian world.[8]

The deictic reference in the next sentence to "estas mujeres" continues to highlight the presence of the narrating agency, but with different implications for the

reader. In this case, deixis defines a simultaneity of place and time between the narrating agent and the Indian women. The narrator's earlier informing stance is consequently replaced by a closer identification with the Indian characters. Instead of pointing out cultural differences, the deictic reference lessens the distance between the narrating agent, the characters and the reader just established by the parenthetical clause.

Deixis also functions as a technique to align the reader with the female Indian focalizers. As the women continue their journey to the market, they observe the first Ladino houses on the outskirts of town:

> Aquí y allá, con intermitencias, como dejadas caer al descuido, aparecen las casas. Construcciones de tejamanil, habitación de ladino que vigila sus sementeras o sus menguados rebaños contra la intemperie. A veces con la insolencia de su aislamiento, se yergue una quinta. Sólidamente plantada, más con el siniestro aspecto de fortaleza o de cárcel que con el propósito de albergar la molicie refinada de los ricos.
>
> Arrabal, orilla. Desde aquí se ven las cúpulas de las iglesias, reverberantes bajo la humedad de la luz. (15, emphasis added)

In contrast to the narrating agency bridging cultural distances between the Indian characters and the reader, this paragraph reflects a confluence of the positions of the narrating agency, the reader and the characters. Since deictic references rely on the position of the speaker for their meaning, in this passage, deixis underscores the power of the narrating agency to focalize from the perspective of the Indian women. The reader can only correctly interpret these references by occupying the same place from which to understand "aquí" and "allá," in this case, the place of the Indian focalizers on their way to market.

It is worth noting that this confluence of positions achieved through deixis also produces the first characterization of the Ladino lifestyle. The houses all appear to be carelessly situated, but a class difference emerges. The poorer Ladinos live in precarious vigilance against rough weather which might damage their crops or stunted flocks. The richer Ladinos, however, are characterized as arrogant in their "aislamiento" and "insolencia," both sinister as well as trapped in fortress-like dwellings.

The houses are focalized through the Indian women's eyes but with the vocabulary of a sophisticated Spanish speaking narrating agency. The deictic references at the beginning suggest the power of the narrating agency to accompany the women, to view "aquí" and "allá" from the

same perspective they do. In a sense, this counteracts the sophisticated vocabulary used to narrate the perception of houses. The words "insolencia," "siniestro," and "molicie," among others, define the attitude of the women towards Ladinos, but in the language of the non-Indian narrator. Thus the narrating agency both defines its difference from the Indian women and demonstrates its ability and authority to adopt a world perspective close to theirs. This narrative position reflects the contradictions inherent in any cross-cultural representation. Aligning the reader, through deictic references, with the Indian focalizers can only be accomplished using language from the reader's world.

As a consequence, when the narrating agency adopts an exclusively exterior position to narrate the attack on the Indian women, the reader is struck by the restraint of the narrating agency to choose sides. The conflict is narrated almost even-handedly in terms of focalization:

> Calladas, como quien no ve y no oye, como quien no está a la expectativa de ningún acontecimiento inminente, las tzotziles echaron a andar.
>
> Al volver la primera esquina el acontecimiento se produjo y no por esperado, no por habitual, fue menos temible y repugnante. Cinco mujeres ladinas, de baja condición, descalzas, mal

> vestidas, se abalanzaron sobre Catalina y sus compañeras. Sin pronunciar una sola palabra de amenaza, sin enardecerse con insultos, sin explicarse con razones, las ladinas forcejeaban tratando de apoderarse de las redes de huevos, de las ollas de barro, de las telas, que las indias defendían con denodado y mudo furor. Pero entre la precipitación de sus gestos ambas contendientes cuidaban de no estropear, de no romper el objeto de la disputa. (16)

In these paragraphs, the narrating agency maintains a basically exterior position. The motives of the conflict are clear in the narration, but just as the struggle takes place in silence, so the narrating agency is silent when it comes to expressing a basic preference for either side of the conflict. The cultural groups are named from identical perspectives. The struggle is between "tzotziles" or "indias" and "ladinas", a naming tactic that addresses each group from the same narrating distance. The reference to "ambas contendientes" also avoids a distinguishing preference for either group. It is as if the narrating agency now wishes to maintain as objective a position as possible, leaving the reader with the burden of judging the event.

The paragraph that ends the narration of the conflict maintains this objective exterior position while emphasiz-

ing, through the use of vocabulary, the conflictive nature of the encounter: ". . . las rezagadas abrían la mano herida, entregaban su presa a las 'atajadoras' quienes, triunfantes, se apoderaban del botín" (16). The vocabulary of this section distinguishes clearly between aggressor and victim, defining the Ladinas as aggressors and the Indians as victims of that aggression. The narrative position, however, does not distinguish between the two groups in terms of its distance from either one of them; rather, it leaves that task to the reader who has now, through the narrative process of the whole chapter, been "trained" to a position sympathetic to the Indian community. As a result, the reader is now able to judge a conflictive encounter between two cultures within the terms of gender, race and class established by the narrating agency.

The complex narrative processes in this first chapter of Oficio de tinieblas expose the paradoxical nature of representing "other" cultures. The narrating agency uses a variety of techniques, among them double-voicing, deixis, and focalization, in an effort to obscure and minimize these contradictions, but cannot escape the culturally-based ideology that informs this task of representation. It becomes clear that language cannot be used independently of an ideological backdrop, that there is no neutral viewpoint from which to narrate. As the novel unfolds, cultur-

al conflicts intensify both in the represented world of the text, and at the narrative level, topics I discuss in the following chapter.

Notes

[1] Cynthia Steele considers the 1893 novel Tomochic by Heriberto Frías the first indigenista novel in Mexico because it is the first work to treat "contemporary conflicts" between indigenous and Mexican national societies ("Literature" 17).

[2] Steele refers to the short story "Quetzalcoatl" (1940) by Gregorio López y Fuentes as a condensed example of the rural schoolteacher character. Major indigenista novels of the period, El resplandor (1937) by Mauricio Magdaleno and El indio (1935) by Gregorio López y Fuentes also deal with government reform and acculturation efforts, but from a much more pessimistic viewpoint.

[3] In addition to Ricardo Pozas and Rosarios Castellanos, Carlos Antonio Castro, author of Los hombres verdaderos (1959), belongs to this more informed group of writers who reflect their anthropological experiences with indigenous cultures in their works.

[4] According to the Diccionario de Mejicanismos, "Ladino" is a term used in southeastern Mexico to refer to a "mestizo o blanco en general, que no desciende de padre y madre indígenas y cuya lengua nativa es el español u otra no indígena; por contraposición al indio, que habla su lengua aborigen y desciende de padre y madre indígenas" (Santamaría 651). I use the term "Ladino" when speaking about the mestizo population in Chiapas, both land-owning and poor, and "mestizo" when referring to non-indigenous people from other

areas of Mexico who, in this novel, function as agents of the modernizing urban culture and natinal political system.

[5] I use the term narrating agency in the same sense as Stephen Cohan and Linda M. Shires do, who define it as "some medium of transmitting the story through telling" (89). In relation to prose, they call agency "the linguistic medium of narration" (89). They thus "implicate agent in agency, defining them jointly as: the position of telling inscribed in language use, that is, in discourse" (90). I prefer this approach to "narrator" because it crosses genre lines, being equally applicable to film studies as to literary studies, for example; it avoids gender definition, which is particularly relevant to the study of texts in Spanish, where "narrator" must be translated with a gender specific term; in addition, it gives precedence to the linguistic medium of narration over the characterization of a narrator.

[6] Throughout, all cited material from Oficio de tinieblas is from the 5th edition (México: Ed. Joaquín Mortiz, 1977).

[7] In her analysis of the folklore of ethnic conflict in southern Chiapas, Bricker points out that the Indians of Chiapas refer to the Spanish as as Ladinos ([larino] in her transcription) or as Castilians, a word she represents phonetically as [hklaslan] (5). This may explain the use in Oficio de tinieblas of the word caxlán as an exclusively indigenous term.

[8] Ashcroft points out that glosses--the parenthetic translations of an individual's words--are "the most obvious and most

common authorial intrusion in cross-cultural texts," and "foreground the continual reality of cultural distance" (61).

Chapter Three

Writing Cultural Identity in

Oficio de tinieblas

In the represented world, chapter one of Oficio de tinieblas describes cultural difference in terms of place of origin, skin color, lifestyle and language. With regard to narrative strategy, the first chapter also defines cultural difference in terms of the power to control discourse. In the origin legend discussed earlier, for example, the narrating agency transforms the oral into written and the Tzotzil into Spanish for the purpose of communicating with a reader of Spanish. As the text reveals this authority, it simultaneously privileges an indigenous focalization of the events narrated.

The discursive complexity of this endeavor has drawn extensive critical attention to the issues of time, history and myth in the novel. Critics have been of the virtually unanimous opinion that the novel depicts the Tzotzil culture as mythic and timeless in contrast to the historically oriented Ladino. In this view, myth and legend, themselves considered a-historic and eternal, dominate the Tzotzil vision of their reality.[1] In this chapter, I propose an alternative interpretation of the mythic/historical opposition as a characterization of cultural difference, and suggest that the perceived contrast in cultural perceptions of time is a product of

Western conceptions of the power of writing as a means of expression.

Two passages in the novel are almost universally cited to support the characterization of the Tzotzil as mythic and timeless. The first describes the Tzotzil shortly after their defeat by the Ladinos. The few survivors, scattered in the hills, are homeless, leaderless, and utterly defeated:

> Desnudos, mal cubiertos de harapos o con taparrabos de piel a medio curtir, han abolido el tiempo que los separaba de las edades pretéritas. No existe ni antes ni hoy. Es siempre. Siempre la derrota y la persecución. (362)[2]

This paragraph is the most commonly cited textual support for a characterization of the Tzotzil as mythic and timeless. The specific context of the quotation, however, minimizes its appropriateness as a basis for cultural generalization. The reference to abolishing time occurs at a specific and very critical moment for the Tzotzil community, at a time when their sacred rituals have failed them. After a lifetime of unjust treatment, they overcame their hesitation, rebelled against their oppressors, brutally murdered innocent women, children and elderly men, and suffered a massive defeat at the hands of the better-organized Ladinos. Using this passage in support of a

characterization of the Tzotzil as timeless ignores specific temporal restrictions and, in a somewhat ahistoric manner, singles out this characterization as a ubiquitous facet of Tzotzil culture.

The oral legends in the first and last chapters of the novel comprise the second most commonly cited passages in support of an ahistorical, mythic Tzotzil. Perhaps because these legends take place apart from the novel's main plot, both literally and chronologically, critics have used them to characterize the Tzotzil as outside chronological time, emphasizing "la cualidad ahistórica de la leyenda eterna" as a dominating feature of Tzotzil life (Sommers, "Forma" 80).[3]

The assumption which so frequently associates timelessness with legends may originate in the oral nature of the passages in question. Both the origin legend in the first chapter and the story of rebellion told by Teresa in the final chapter are characterized by their orality. Teresa's legend is marked off from the text by quotation marks, and though the origin legend in the first chapter lacks these markers, it exhibits many signs of oral discourse, most obvious among them, deictic references.[4] Assumptions common to Western culture may dictate that the oral nature of these legends makes them less believable than a written account of events. In part because of their

orality, the legends, and by extension the Tzotzil depicted as speaking them, have been denied the features of historicity and progression.

Critical discussions, then, have linked time and myth to cultural identity in Oficio de tinieblas, characterizing it as a novel where the mythical and timeless Indian competes with the literate and historically oriented Ladino. In my view, the fundamental distinction underlying this perceived cultural difference is the contrast between orality and writing.[5] Critics have tended to designate writing, history and truth as traits of literate culture, while they characterize the oral culture as timeless and mythic. Since the opposition between orality and writing underlies such a crucial cultural difference, it is worth looking at in detail.

In my view, Oficio de tinieblas does not align timelessness, myth or history with either the Indian or Ladino culture exclusively. These concepts certainly intersect in the cultural characterizations present in the novel, but they do not define cultural identity. Oficio de tinieblas does, however, establish a direct connection between writing, authority, and cultural survival.

Writing as discussed in Oficio de tinieblas occurs within a context of cultural interchange that can most accurately be described by an acculturation or salvage

model. Writing, in the represented world of the novel, refers to the alphabetic representation of speech, the "papel que habla" (11) that often separates the Tzotzil from the Ladino. Since the majority of the Tzotzil community in the novel lacks the ability to represent itself via writing, that task is taken up by a narrating agency who writes on its behalf. Positing the narrating agency as ethnographer makes it clear that the task involved in this act of representing corresponds to what James Clifford defines as "salvage." In his account, every description or interpretation that "conceives itself as 'bringing a culture into writing' moving from oral discursive experience . . . to a written version of that experience . . . is enacting the structure of 'salvage'" ("Allegory" 113). The narrating agency in the novel expresses an inherent presumption about its right to represent a culture that it simultaneously characterizes as illiterate, assuming, as the salvage model does, that the other culture is "weak and 'needs' to be represented by an outsider" ("Writing" 113).

Without discounting the altruistic motives often ascribed to <u>indigenista</u> fiction in its more recent appearances, it is also a genre with an ethnocentric backbone. In most cases, the Indian theme is developed by a non-Indian author who inevitably reflects and responds to

contemporary social theories. In Mexico, where assimilation of the Indian into the broader mestizo population has been a goal since the Mexican Revolution, indigenista novels obviously respond, directly or indirectly, to the issue of cultural identity and integrity (Muñoz 194).

Assimilation was of interest in Mexico for several reasons. Cultural (and perhaps biological) mestizaje was a possible path to what Braulio Muñoz calls the "Dream of sociocultural unity" (2). Economic factors also played a role in favor of assimilation. Mexico depended on Indians as a primary source of labor (Steele, "Literature" 9). The assimilated Indian was thought to be a known factor, available, as necessary, as a member of a labor force or as a consumer in a market economy. As a result of social and economic interests, then, assimilation of the Indian has been a clearly stated goal of part of Mexican society in the twentieth century, a goal that, if achieved, would result in the cultural death of the Indian. Given the economic and social interest in assimilation, the Indian character in Mexican novels often faces the choices of acculturation or death, a situation reminiscent of that faced by female protagonists in nineteenth-century English novels, whose literary options were marriage or death.

Not surprisingly, assimilation and/or cultural identity are primary themes in novels portraying Indian

communities. Oficio de tinieblas deals directly with the issue of assimilation through, among other things, the concept of writing. In the novel, alphabetic writing is a means to power, and the Tzotzil, in general, do not have access to it. As mentioned earlier, Indian focalizers refer to writing as the "papel que habla," a phrase which underscores their dependence on orality as a means of communication. There is, however, an extended discussion in the novel revolving around the education and consequent acculturation of one of the Tzotzil protagonists, Pedro González Winiktón. Through various focalizers, both Tzotzil and Ladino, the text examines prevailing notions about learning, literacy, progress and authority and their impact on cross-cultural perceptions.

The liberal position is expressed by a wealthy German immigrant, Adolfo Homel, who decides to establish a school for his Indian workers. In disagreement with other landowners, he voices the optimistic view that "Hombres instruídos . . . hacen naciones prósperas" (57). He believes that education will improve both the Indians' skills as well as their willingness to work (56). The other landowners oppose Homel's efforts to educate the Indians, believing that education will only lead to revolt: "Indio alzado es indio perdido . . . . Cuando los indios sepan lo que sabemos nosotros nos arrebatarán lo nuestro"

(56-57). This attitude, although appearing in quotation marks in the novel, is not ascribed to any individual landowner; rather it is the quoted expression of the "patrones de las fincas vecinas" (57) speaking to Homel. Their communal identity contrasts with Homel's individuality, emphasizing the difference his foreignness creates. It is his voice, the voice of the European immigrant, that speaks out in favor of educating the Indians while the Mexican landowners resist the revolutionary government's decree that the Indian workers receive education.

The debate over education as it stands, expressed in dialogue, is clear enough. A third perspective emerges, focalized by the anonymous narrating agency, which ridicules Homel's idealism without, however, siding with the Ladino landowners' aversion to educating the Indians. In the first place, Homel, the reader is told,

> tenía un corazón sensible. Si en su finca se recurría, cuando era necesario, al cepo, al calabozo y al látigo, era porque apreciaba la disciplina. Si en la tienda de raya se expendía aguardiente a precios más altos que los del mercado y si las jornadas de trabajo eran de sol a sol, era porque respetaba las costumbres. (56)

The sarcasm apparent in this description of the German immigrant derides Homel and, as a consequence, the pro-

education sentiment he represents. His motives for establishing the school are ascribed in large measure to the fact that "desde luego la disposición gubernamental había conmovido profundamente su instinto germánico de obediencia" (56). A few lines later, the anonymous narrating agency undercuts Homel's idealism even more directly:

> A don Adolfo le gustaba pronunciar esta palabra: Instrucción. Le despertaba la nostalgia de una patria cuyo recuerdo era cada vez más impreciso y caprichoso. Una patria en la que (como ya no tenía presentes los motivos para emigrar) todo era prosperidad y abundancia; gracias, naturalmente, a las escuelas, liceos y universidades . . . . (56-57)

The parenthetical phrase recalling Adolfo's emigration marks a change in the focalizer from Adolfo to the anonymous narrating agency. By referring to Adolfo's economic incentives to emigrate, the anonymous narrating agency briefly but abruptly interrupts Adolfo's nostalgic reminiscing about his homeland, transforming his optimism about education into nothing more than unattainable daydreams. As a result, Adolfo's focalization of literacy as a solution to Indian oppression loses any sense of credibility in the text.

The Indian laborers themselves consider the school a waste of time. The same anonymous narrative position describes the reaction of the Indian workers to Homel's school. They are supposed to attend at night, after their field work is completed. Only the threat of violence forces them to attend. They are unwilling, ill-qualified participants, "alumnos distraídos, incapaces de estarse quietos ante una hoja de papel, torpes para empuñar el lápiz, rebeldes a las indicaciones del maestro" (58).

The one willing convert to the educational process, the Tzotil individual Pedro González Winiktón, demonstrates a persistence in sharp contrast to the general indifference of the larger Indian community of workers. In fact, he learns how to speak, read and write enough Spanish to serve as a kind of interpretive bridge between the Ladino community and his own. The transition from illiteracy to literacy includes a dramatic change in focalization:

> Pedro se desvelaba . . . contemplando aquellos signos que lentamente penetraban en su entendimiento. ¡Qué orgullo, al día siguiente, presentarse ante los demás con la lección sabida! ¡Qué emoción descubrir los nombres de los objetos y pronunciarlos y escribirlos y apoderarse así del mundo! ¡Qué asombro cuando escuchó, por vez primera, "hablar el papel"! (58)

To highlight the drama of the moment, the narrating agency adopts the character's focalization of his own educational progress.[6] The narrating agency is "seemingly effaced" in favor of Pedro's subjective response to learning (Cohan and Shires 100). As a result, the expression of pride, emotion and astonishment that Pedro experiences when he first hears "the page speak" reflects exclusively his perception of events.

This focalization has several consequences. One is a possible minimizing of condescension inherent in the context. By presenting the "joy of learning" through Pedro's eyes, the narrating agency avoids establishing a literacy hierarchy where an anonymous narrating agency "explains" the less literate character's responses. In addition, the more direct access to Pedro's subjectivity makes his response appear more authentic in spite of the antagonism felt by the Indian community toward schooling.

Nevertheless, using Pedro as the focalizer does not completely diminish the cultural hierarchy suggested in this passage on literacy. Pedro sounds like a child: proud to have done his homework, pleased to discover the names of things and how to pronounce them, and astonished to hear "the page speak." The key to this attitude may be in the phrase "apoderarse así del mundo," which implies that writing Spanish is equivalent to taking charge of the

world. Before this literacy transition, the text suggests, Pedro did not know the names of things, and could not take an authoritative approach to the world. Since Pedro is a respected and high-ranking member of the Tzotzil community, a judge, in fact, the empowerment he experiences as a result of literacy must relate to the Ladino world, not in tandem with the indigenous community, but to the exclusion of it.

The text emphasizes the connection between writing and "real" power, defined as authority in the mestizo world, by relating Pedro's gradual acculturation to Ladino ways. As a result of learning Spanish, all sorts of doors "open up." The German landowner removes Pedro from the field to serve as a sort of squire who accompanies him to farms and cities that would otherwise have "siempre permanecido cerradas para un indio" (58). More importantly, when the President of the Republic arrives to announce land reform goals, Pedro, of all the assembled Indian workers, is the only one who comprehends any of the speech. Nevertheless, the anonymous narrating agency places concrete limits on his ability. Pedro has just heard the President speak on the issue of land reform with a specific reference to

> una palabra que despertaba en él tantas resonancias: la palabra justicia. Incapaz de representársela en abstracto, Pedro la ligó entonces

> indisolublemente con un hecho del que tenía una experiencia íntima e inmediata: el de la posesión de la tierra. (61)

At the very threshold of the literate world, Pedro still lacks the ability to conceive of abstract concepts. This occurs in spite of the constant characterization of him, at other moments in the text, as a clever, observant, and highly complex thinker, certainly one with the capacity to manipulate abstract and symbolic concepts and language. His understanding of the speech, in fact, although partial, motivates his political activism that eventually contributes to the Tzotzil rebellion.

The entire literacy episode directly connects writing and the Spanish language with power. The Ladino landowners believe that a literate, Spanish-speaking Indian threatens their cultural and economic domination. Pedro's path from literacy to expectations of justice to revolt seems to support their position. Throughout the novel, Pedro acts as a cultural bridge between the Spanish-speaking world, both Ladinos and government representatives, and the Tzotzil community. His bicultural skills contribute directly to the Tzotzil rebellion by establishing and maintaining communication between the Revolutionary government representative and the Tzotzil community. Although Pedro's death at the end of the novel contradicts

the idea of acculturation as a just solution to cultural conflict, his role as a literate Indian highlights the narrating agency's cultural assumptions about writing both within the context of the novelistic world and in relation to the broader social issue of assimilation of the indigenous population. The death of the only literate indigenous character may reflect an inability, or at least, an unwillingness, on the part of the narrative agency to conceive of a future for an assimilated Indian. In a nation where cultural identity relates closely to life-style, assimiliation will involve at least cultural death, at most complete annihilation of the indigenous members of a culture.

Winiktón's experiences demonstrate the consequences for a culture of crossing a boundary perceived by others to be a fundamental aspect of identity. However, Oficio de tinieblas also presents information that contradicts the oral-indigenous/literate-mestizo opposition suggested by Winiktón's death. One place in the novel where the correspondence between orality and culture specificity breaks down involves cultural attitudes towards time and truth. The novel portrays the very characteristics of orality that make oral indigenous versions of history suspect. In a written work of fiction, the effect of these techniques is not so much incredulity as the creation of an

interface between oral and written approaches to mediating experience.

Orality often carries with it certain attitudes towards time. For example, oral versions of history typically have a tendency to telescope time, condensing events far apart chronologically into a briefer period of time (Bricker 6). As a result, oral histories are often labeled as incorrect since they do not correspond to the historical chronology found in the written version of events. Victoria Bricker points out that the telescoping of time is not culture specific, and occurs in both Indian and Ladino oral versions of historical ethnic conflict (9). The written novel Oficio de tineblas reflects this particular characteristic of oral history. It telescopes time by conflating the Chamula Indian rebellion in the 1860s with the years of the Cárdenas presidency in Mexico in the late 1930s. Critics acknowledge this temporal distortion, but attribute it to factors other than the telescoping of time characteristic of oral history.[7] Bricker's description of the telescoping of time just as accurately reflects the temporal situation in Oficio de tineblas:

> As new conflicts arise and become history, they are mentally fused and confused with older conflicts, their structural components squeezed into the pigeonholes of the timeless folklore

> paradigm. The only distortion necessary to achieve this result is the telescoping of time. (9)

By conflating the Indian rebellion with the era of promised land reform, Oficio de tinieblas puts the Mexican Revolutionary government in the structural "pigeonhole" of all Mexican governments that have neglected to address the needs of the indigenous population. The Tzotzil rebellion, likewise, serves as a representative case of past, present and future failed rebellions against the eternally oppressive Ladino landowners.

Thus, while Oficio de tinieblas is correctly credited with portraying detailed descriptions of individual Tzotzil, the temporal conflation characterizes the cultural conflict as timeless and unchanging. As Bricker describes the process, the novel "fuses and confuses" older struggles with newer ones, creating the sense that the conflictive encounters are endless. By adopting this characteristic of oral discourse, the novel blurs the distinction between the historical and the mythically timeless that might otherwise define a basic cultural difference between Ladino and Tzotzil. At both the level of character development, and through narrative structure, Oficio de tinieblas challenges any simple cultural characterization on the basis of time or history.

Although Oficio de tinieblas does not portray attitudes towards time and myth as definitive components of cultural identity, it does establish a direct correspondence between literacy and cultural survival. As the conflict between Tzotzil and Ladino escalates in the novel, so does the undisguised disclosure of textual authority. In fact, throughout the rebellion, cultural survival, or destruction, depends directly on the ability to produce and decipher written texts. Texts not only decide the winner of the conflict between Indian and Ladino, but also assign blame as they establish the written version of historical events.

Two distinct episodes demonstrate the consequences of access to textual authority. The first, detailing Tzotzil activities during the rebellion, depicts numerous scenes of aimless brutality, characterizing the rebelling Indians in dehumanizing terms as they murder, rape and quarter helpless, and, for the most part, innocent, Ladinos. The corresponding narration of Ladino activities during the rebellion does not mention armed conflict with the Tzotzil community. Rather, it focuses on the creation of a text designed to win the war for the Ladinos. The landowner in charge of defending the Ladino town creates a text, the ordenanzas militares, powerful enough to defeat the Tzotzil rebellion and then become a sacred object of worship for

this same community.

Each of these incidents carries with it abundant lessons about culture and writing. The portrayal of Tzotzil atrocities connects literacy with history, and writing with truth. Two aspects of the focalization of this story are significant. First, and most significant, the narrating agency recounts numerous and detailed accounts of brutality by the Tzotzil in contrast to a complete absence of images of hostile armed Ladinos. At one point, for example, the rebelling Tzotzil forces invade a church where Ladino women, children and elderly men are hiding. After a brief stand-off, the conflict begins:

> De pronto sobrevino un aullido y los chamulas se lanzaron sobre sus víctimas. Daban alcance a las mujeres, les rasgaban la ropa, se reían de su desnudez. Jugaban a aventar a los niños al aire y a ensartarlos en la punta de sus lanzas. Los viejos imploraban, en vano, piedad. Morían temblando, innoblemente.
>
> Uno se aplicaba en descuartizar, con cuidado, con minuciosidad, un cadáver. Quería encontrar algo que no fuera semejante ni a la carroña de los animales ni a los despojos del indio. Eso, que permite a los ladinos mandar. Como no lo hallaba, movía la cabeza insatisfecho, dudoso.

> Abandonó ese cadáver inútil para buscar otro. (332)

This is one of a number of portrayals of Tzotzil violence against seemingly helpless Ladinos. By the time the rebellion ends, the reader knows that the Tzotzil community has been defeated militarily by Ladinos, but no armed violence by Ladinos appears in the text. The reader is left, however, with detailed accounts of irrational brutality by the Tzotzil.

This written legacy of the rebellion clearly indicates the power literacy has to produce history. By focalizing Ladinos as victims and Tzotzil as aggressors, the narrating agency sympathizes with the Ladino perspective of events. In this case, history declares violence and brutality to be an element of Tzotzil culture. The unsympathetic portrayal of the Tzotzil provides a clear example of the consequences textual authority can have for a culture. The literate culture writes history from its own perspective, or focalization, narrating the events that it deems relevant. These events become the truth.

The version of events depicted in Oficio de tinieblas provides, for many readers, the only perspective on the rebellion that they are likely to encounter. As a result, the novel and its readers together perform one of the consequences of literacy: the creation of history. Lacking

exposure to any contradictory discourse, many readers will retain an image of rebelling Indians committing brutal and senseless acts of violence. Although written fiction, Oficio de tinieblas produces images that, like oral myth, function to describe and explain the world outside the text.

Another passage in the novel has been read as an oral counterpart to the written history of the Tzotzil rebellion. The novel ends with the legend of an Indian uprising, told by a Tzotzil servant, Teresa, concerning an ilol, or sorceress, who, with her son, demands the sacrifice of the first-born of every family of the tribe. Some of the details of the legend correspond to the story of the rebellion narrated in the novel. For example, the ilol's son is made of stone, echoing the image of Catalina and her stone idols. Bullets bounce off the ilol and her son, paralleling the promise Catalina made to her followers concerning their invulnerability to death. The legendary ilol and her son are finally defeated with the aid of a shawl believed to hold magic powers.[8]

Because of these points of similarity, critics have read the oral legend as a retelling of the events narrated in the novel.[9] Teresa, in this view, becomes a producer of the oral history that will be her people's (the illiterate ones') version of the events of the rebellion. If the

legend is the recreation or retelling of the novel's events, Oficio de tinieblas offers two versions of the history of the rebellion, the oral one by Teresa and the written one that concentrates on the depiction of Tzotzil atrocities. Neither version flatters the Tzotzil, but Teresa's characterizes the Tzotzil as victims rather than aggressors, and Ladinos as saviours rather that destroyers.

The legend could just as easily be read as the inspiration for events depicted in the novel. If it exists in the folklore of Catalina's community, then she could easily have appropriated the story for her own purposes, modeling her behavior and decisions on those taken by the ilol in the legend. Considered in this light, the legend, prior to Catalina's rise to power, demonstrates the repetitive and prophetic nature of oral history most graphically, since the novel's protagonist retraces many of the events told in the legend.

Regardless of whether the legend anticipates or replicates the rebellion narrated earlier in the novel, it does provide a competing oral version of events focalized by a member of the Indian community. In contrast to the written history of the Tzotzil rebellion, the legend is spoken, and consequently focalized, through a single character's perspective. Teresa, the Tzotzil nanny, tells it as a bedtime story to her Ladino charge, Idolina. The

typically imaginary nature of bedtime stories underscores the mythic and legendary nature of what otherwise might be considered oral history. Placed within a frame which characterizes it as legendary, Teresa's story loses any opportunity to be read as an authentic version of events, to be read as history. By associating the oral with the legendary, and the written with the true, the novel underscores the consequences writing has for the portrayal of cultural history. The text makes it clear that in interactions between literate and illiterate communities, the culture that writes controls the historical version of events, including the portrayal of the non-literate community.

The Ladino preparations for war demonstrate even more explicitly the authority and power associated with writing. The landowner in charge of the Ladino defense, Leonardo Cifuentes, produces a text called the ordenanzas militares, military ordinances for the town's defense. This strategic text, with a history all its own, emphasizes the undeniable supremacy of writing over orality. Leonardo creates the text out of a need to establish discipline among the panicky Ladinos, who are preparing to abandon the town to the approaching Tzotzil rebels. In their nervousness, the guards posted on the town's outskirts accidentally kill each other, although their deaths are attributed to the

rebelling Indians (334). Leonardo wants to diminish Ladino fears, and provide them with the encouragement, motivation and justification necessary to take the offensive against the Indian rebellion because, as he puts it, "El mejor indio, dice el refrán, es el indio muerto" (341).

The ordenanzas militares text later appears in what is left of the Tzotzil community after its destruction by the Ladinos. The few surviving Tzotzil have left their homes and possessions behind, escaping to the highlands where they attempt to reconstruct their communal patterns. In an attempt to maintain religious traditions, these include rituals that take place deep inside the same type of cave that Catalina used to worship in. This time, however, the object of worship is the very text that the Ladinos used to defeat the Tzotzil, the military ordinance written by Leonardo. The text was found on the battlefield, rescued by an unnamed Tzotzil hero, and brought to the cave. Focalized from the perspective of the Tzotzil worshippers, the text takes on sacred attributes:

> . . . en el arca está depositada la palabra divina. Allí se guarda el testamento de los que se fueron y la profecía de los que vendrán. Allí consta lo que dictaron las potencias oscuras a sus siervos. Allí resplandece la promesa que conforta en los días de la incertidumbre y de la

> adversidad. Allí está la sustancia que come el alma para vivir. El pacto. . . . Unas cuantas páginas y sin embargo el puente entre lo divino y la humanidad. Existe, para que la esperanza no desfallezca. (363-4)

No explanation appears in the novel to account for the transformation of the text into a sacred object. The meaning of the event depends on whether the Tzotzil worshippers can interpret the text's written signs, on whether they can read. The focalization from the Tzotzil's view suggests that they comprehend the meaning of the text. They know it was dictated by the "dark forces" (Leonardo), and that it mentions previous and possibly future rebellions (los que se fueron . . . y los que vendrán). The text brings comfort and hope to the worshippers by means of an unexplained promise, a possible reference to the military organization that led to victory on the battlefield. In addition, the leader of the elite group of worshippers is known to his companions not as a priest or holy man, but as the "escrutador de signos" (363), a name which suggests his role as leader of the religious ritual depends on his ability to read signs unfamiliar to the community at large.

The issue of the interpretation of the sacred text strongly influences the characterization of the Tzotzil.

If the worshippers read and understand the text of the ordenanzas militares, if their comfort and hope stems from newly acquired tactics of armed rebellion, then Oficio de tinieblas points to a future of increasingly successful rebellions by the Tzotzil group. The rebellion portrayed in the novel, characterized as spontaneous and disorganized, as "un gran animal torpe, desarticulado y acéfalo" (326), fails precisely because it has no strategy. If the survivors of that rebellion have access to military tactics via the "sacred text," then the Ladino community will no longer be able to dismiss Tzotzil demands for reform. Access to the text will have brought the Tzotzil new kinds of power with unanticipated results, enabling them, perhaps, to step out of the cyclic nature of oppression, rebellion and defeat.[10]

This optimistic speculation evaporates in the face of the traditional alternative interpretation of the ritual that excludes literacy as a component.[11] This view maintains the focus on literacy and power, but with inverted consequences for the Tzotzil, who appear foolish, without the capacity to recognize--in fact worshipping--the means of their own destruction. While this perspective of the incident leaves certain questions unanswered, it does once again associate negative consequences with the non-literate world.

Both the narration of the Tzotzil brutality, and the story of the military ordenanzas text point to the importance the narrating agency in Oficio de tinieblas gives to textual authority. While writing is not necessarily culture specific, only writing cultures survive and endure in the novel. The consequences for the exclusively oral culture include military defeat, distorted written histories, and ridicule. Writing becomes a medium through which to salvage a culture portrayed as weaker because of its reliance on orality. The narrating agency salvages the Tzotzil in Oficio de tinieblas, both speaking/writing for them, and providing material lessons in the power of written discourse.

Like the fearful Ladino landowners, a writing culture may consider education and literacy a means to equality, to a state of cultural assimilation where difference diminishes. This belief in the power of writing corresponds neatly with the values of cultural assimilation dominant in Mexico since the end of the Revolution. Certainly the Mexican government's goal to educate its Indian population bears witness to a belief that writing bridges the gap of cultural difference. Oficio de tinieblas expresses a similar notion of cultural membership where textual authority is the overriding determinant of cultural survival.

Defining cultural survival as dependent on writing

creates a paradoxical situation for a community characterized as oral. By following the lessons of the narrating agency, the primary indicator of cultural identity as defined by that textual authority will disappear. From the perspective of the writing culture, at least, difference will have been erased.

Notes

[1] Characterizing culture in terms of myth and time occurs in many critical studies of Oficio de tinieblas. One of the earliest, by María del Carmen Millan, distinguishes between static Indian time and the progressive, sequenced time outside the Indian world (293). In his most influential and wide-ranging study of the novel, Joseph Sommers refers to the "aura envolvente de mito que llena la conciencia y la visión del mundo de los tzotziles" who also subordinate their sense of time and their reason to magic and myth. In contrast, he says, the ladinos learn from history and can adapt its lessons to their reality ("Forma" 86). Combining the mythic and temporal, Walter M. Langford characterizes the Tzotzil mind as "a blend of reality with myth, in which time is of little account" (185). Cynthia Steele sees the modern/primitive paradigm implicit in Castellanos' treatment of history as "lineal and progressive for the ladino and yet mythic/cyclical, or simply static for the Indians" ("Literature" 66). Critical endorsement of cultural difference based on the concepts of myth and time continues in recent criticism of Oficio de tinieblas. Minerva Margarita Villarreal, for example, refers to the two different conceptions of time in the novel, the historic and the mythic (69).

Challenging the notion of cultural distinction based on attitudes towards time and myth, Thomas Washington states that the examples of myth in the novel highlight the fact that Castellanos was "searching for the reality of her own historical essence as it was wedded to that of the Indian." He points out that the myth portrayed in the novel says more about dominant power structures than it does about the Indian in an anthropological sense (100). Joanna O'Connell questions the assumption that a mythic world view is ahistorical. She does not believe that the Indians lack "any kind of historical consciousness" (207).

[2] Throughout, all cited material from Oficio de tinieblas is from the 5th edition (México: Ed. Joaquín Mortiz, 1977).

[3] Alfonso González holds a similar view which associates the opening legend, with its "carácter de rito y de literatura oral" with the "apertura de un mundo primitivo donde la existencia . . . es lenta, monótona y triste" (442).

[4] Leslie Davis points out that the Tzotzil myths which open and close the novel are "transmitted orally" (24). For further comments on the oral nature of the origin legend, see chapter one of this study.

[5] I agree with O'Connell, who connects time and history with orality when she points out that the competing

versions of history present in the novel might be recast "in terms of orality and literacy." For her, "this difference is an important aspect of the differentiation between the two communities" since it characterizes the ways people "mediate their experience" (211). In contrast to O'Connell, however, I suggest that the oral/literate boundary is not assigned exclusively to one or another culture in Oficio de tinieblas.

[6] Cohan and Shires describe several categories of focalization of subjectivity in narration. The passage cited corresponds to what they call "consonant psychonarration" which "follows a character's own self-apprehension, often to the point of imitating his or her vocabulary and syntax. From this figural perspective the character functions as the focalizer as well as the focalized in relation to a seemingly effaced narrating agency" (100).

[7] It is fascinating to consider the alternative interpretations of an oral technique, telescoping time, when it appears in writing. Sommers acknowledges the transformation of historical time and refers to the "artistic prerogative" inherent in the creative act ("Indian" 263). Rinda Young points out that not only was Castellanos better acquainted with the Cárdenas period, but the transformation of events means that land becomes "the prime motivating factor" for both Indian and ladino (30).

Beth Miller says the "recreación y reinvención" make it possible to observe critically class structure and cultural attitudes in cardenista Mexico (135). O'Connell believes the effect of the "transposition" is to "demonstrate the historical continuity of relations of oppression in Chiapas, and by implication, in Mexico and Central America as a whole" (82).

[8] For those readers unfamiliar with the novel, Catalina's rise to power and influence before the rebellion depends, to a large extent, on a shawl believed by her followers to be magic.

[9] Sommers refers to the "inventing" of a new myth ("Forma" 80) as does Beth Miller (138). Regina Harrison MacDonald says that Teresa "reinterprets" events in the novel (52); Stacey Schlau states that Teresa "magically reconstructs Catalina's story" (49); Steele characterizes the narrative as a "distorted, mythified version of the revolt" portrayed in the novel ("Literature" 126).

[10] As I write this, the indigenous community in southern Mexico is engaged in the armed occupation of Chiapas resulting from a rebellion begun in January 1994. A literate, Spanish-speaking individual of unknown but apparently non-indigenous origens functions as the public representative and primary negotiator of the rebelling indigenous forces. Reality, at this point in time, seems

to confirm the reading of the "sacred text" by the indigenous "escrutador de signos" in the novel. Although perhaps peripheral to the discussion at hand, this is not the first uprising of chiapaneco Indians involving Ladino leadership. Bricker discusses the leadership role of Ignacio Fernández de Galino, a native of Mexico City, in the Chamulan rebellion of 1869 (123-124).

[11] Critics uniformly consider the Tzotzil worshippers illiterate, and interpret the ritual pessimistically. Sommers considers "amargamente pesimista en su ironía" the fact that the Indians are worshipping "un libro mágico como si contuviera un mensaje o narración posiblemente liberadora." He also notes the consequent implicit characterization of the Tzotzil as incapable of understanding history ("Forma" 86-87). Stacey Schlau sees the Indians as "enclosed in an alienating linguistic code that dominates them," exiling them from language and power, with their continued misery assured (55). O'Connell, who also believes the Indians cannot read the book, sees their illiteracy perpetuating their persecution and yet paradoxically providing hope since "Orality is the means of preservation and cultural survival" (253).

Chapter Four

The Multiplicity of Difference in

Las posibilidades del odio

Las posibilidades del odio (1978) by the Mexican author María Luisa Puga explores the intertwined themes of colonialism, race, national identity and individual identity. Like Oficio de tinieblas, the novel also implicitly addresses the issues involved in portraying cultural identity. Set in Kenya, the narrative uses elements of both the novel and short story genres to define various positions towards national, racial and individual identity and difference. Portraying the effects these cultural boundaries have on individual lives, the text leads the reader through a maze of conflicting ideological positions, stressing distinct axes of identity at various times. Eventually, after exploring a multiplicity of cultural differences, the text names one, colonialism, as more important, enduring and productive than any other. Through the structure and focalization of various approaches to identity, the text positions the reader to view colonialism from a similar ideological position.[1]

Las posibilidades del odio contains six independent episodes exploring the issues of identity and difference. The work comments on issues of the hegemonic representation of a foreign culture through its complex design. The structure of the narrative, which is neither exclusively

short story nor novel, demonstrates how genre affects constructions of identity and difference. The contrast between the individual episodic nature of the short story and the unified perspective of the novel mirrors issues of individual identity--racial, ethnic, linguistic--within the broader spectrum of nationality with its inevitable sense of totality produced by a finite series of specific examples.[2]

Alternating between white and black protagonists, the six episodes in Las posibilidades del odio offer many perspectives on what it means to be Kenyan.[3] Each contains clear ideological messages that position the reader with regard to cultural differences. A brief summary of each will demonstrate the breadth of the identities belonging to the "nation." The text begins with a tour guide's focalization of his life in Kenya. A third-generation descendent of British heritage, he considers himself both British and Kenyan. The second episode, untitled, as they all are, concerns the daily life of a one-legged beggar who works the streets of Nairobi eking out a meager living with donations from passers-by. Next, the text narrates the experiences of a visiting Mexican student in Nairobi who pairs up with a Kenyan traveling companion. Together, and much to their surprise, they discover how culturally diverse the coastal region of Kenya is compared to the

capital cities or to rural life. The fourth episode is an interior monologue by a low-level, pro-colonial employee of a British firm. A member of the minority Kamba tribe, the protagonist reveals his distrust of other ethnic, tribal and racial communities in Kenya. The monologue includes the story of his last two days at his job, and ends with his dismissal for corruption. After this image of a sold-out Kenyan, the text jumps to one of a committed white immigrant. This penultimate episode is the first-person account of a British immigrant who, as a teacher in a school for black Kenyans, trains and encourages the black students' rebellion against the Kenyan government. The final and lengthiest episode follows the experiences of a young Kenyan woman, Nyambura, from childhood through her student life in Italy. There, she resolves her conflicts involving race, national identity and colonialism, and decides she must return to Kenya in order to foster her developing identity.

Each of the six episodes contains an extensive analepsis that covers at least the adult life of the protagonist, and often details of the parents' and grandparents' lives. Although there are few explicit references to it, the "present time" for each of the episodes appears to be the decade of the 1970s.[4] Since the six episodes deal with roughly the same time period, the different

protagonists and their varied situations work like a kaleidoscope, describing a multifaceted society from a variety of perspectives, complete with unresolved tensions apparent in the characters' daily lives.

Perhaps the predominant factor that characterizes the work as a collection of short stories is that each of the six episodes in the novel can be read independently from the rest of the work. Different characters in particular contexts appear in each episode, and are confined to that episode, eliminating any cross-over interaction between characters in separate episodes, and providing a range of focalizers that contributes to an image of Kenya that is at once wide-ranging and specific. Also, each episode portrays an escalating conflict leading to a crisis and a resolution, with a consequent lesson for the reader about cultural identity and difference. Most of the episodes have a consistent narrating agency. The first, fourth and fifth are basically monologues, while the second and third involve an anonymous narrating agency. The final episode, which subsumes all the previous conflicts under the umbrella of colonialism, involves a combination of monologue and an anonymous narrating agency.

The independence of each of the six stories allows for a thought-provoking and satisfying reading experience of even one episode. Nevertheless, a first-time reader,

unaware of the self-contained nature of each section, will be likely to read the chapters in the order in which they appear in the book, anticipating the reappearance of familiar characters, as one would read the chapters of a novel. The separate episodes are one way that Las posibilidades del odio resists the totalizing characteristics of the novel genre that permit representation of the nation as a social body.

There are, however, novelistic attributes that encourage the reader to consider the work as an indivisible unit. In addition to the thematic coincidences between each episode, the physical layout of the text promotes a sense of unity. The work has one title printed on one title page, followed by one dedication, one epigraph, and one poem. In addition, the work is dated and located by the author as a unit, when, on the final page, the words "Nairobi 1976/Oxford 1977" appear. Further, Debra A. Castillo creates a unit out of the episodes by reading them both as a "paced chronology as well as a superimposed synchronicity of scenes" beginning with the white man's arrival (the tour guide) and leading to the eventual importation of leftist theories of liberation with the British expatriate in the penultimate episode (254).[5]

In addition to the six narrative episodes, the text contains an official-looking chronology of Kenya's journey

from a British protectorate in the late 1800s to its first ten years of independence beginning in 1963. The chronology, a list of dates and matter-of-fact historical events, also contributes to a novelistic frame for the text. A fragment of the chronology precedes each of the six narrative episodes. The developing national identity is portrayed as a connected series of historical periods, each with its own political, ideological and economic characteristics, but each also functioning as a building block of the entity which is the present nation. Consequently, the chronology defines another aspect of the text's novelistic unity.

The multiplicity of genres in Las posibilidades del odio emphasizes the interconnectedness of struggles for national and personal identity. Both the events described in the chronology and those found in the stories between the chronology form part of a larger unit of meaning. The chronology contributes to an explanation and definition of the present national identity by depicting the major political unions and disputes, assassinations and elections, constitutional and revolutionary activities of Kenya's official history. The chronology does not, however, tell the whole story. The narrative episodes interspersed among the pieces of chronology offer a view of the struggles for personal identity found in a world where

race, nationality, gender, religion and class foment partial, inauthentic and unsatisfying identities for the characters caught within their boundaries. Neither the chronology, nor any one of the episodes taken as a unit can satisfactorily portray the complexities of national and personal identity in Kenya. Their joint appearance, separate and yet part of a unit, mirrors the struggles between alienation and identity assigned to both the individual characters and the nation itself.

This interdependent view of the textually different sections, along with the difficulty of naming the whole as a single literary product, underlies the text's portrayal of cultural difference in Kenyan society. The structure of the text denies a single global and definitive vision of difference in Kenyan society. Instead, the novel portrays separate and independent visions of cultural difference which can, and must be, accepted on their own terms, rather like the short story view of the text. Although these instances of naming or experiencing cultural difference are independent, they also contribute to a collection of incidents that mean more than any one of them. A novelistic perspective on the text reveals its ability to avoid a hegemonic view of cultural difference while still describing individual instances of it. Just as the structure of the text oscillates between two (or more) literary genres,

and thus avoids becoming fixed, so the examples of cultural difference portrayed in the text express a variety of perspectives without claiming to provide a definitive, static and totalizing view of Kenyan society.

The generic ambivalence allows for and highlights a variety of cultural differences in the represented world of the text. Las posibilidades del odio deals with a wide variety of differences. Religious, national, linguistic, tribal, racial and class boundaries appear, as do differences in attitude towards the themes of colonialism and independence. The various ideological sources of difference in Las posibilidades del odio weave a complex texture of identity and difference where identical nationalities, for example, live drastically dissimilar lives and view each other as foreign. In addition, racially and nationally distinct individuals may consider themselves more alike than different in certain contexts. It would be interesting to discover how each category of difference in Las posibilidades del odio corresponds to current definitions and discussions of ethnicity, race and nationality. I am less concerned, however, with pinning down the categories of cultural difference than I am about analyzing the narrative structures and procedures that underlie the production of otherness, be it national, racial, ethnic or religious or "cultural."

Since, as Steven Greenblatt points out, the term "culture," because it is so broad, is often used "without meaning much of anything at all" (225), I propose to analyze the portrayal of difference without attempting to establish a necessary and sufficient criteria to classify it as "cultural" as opposed to national, racial, or ethnic difference. The classic anthropological definition of culture, which posits culture as "a self-contained whole made up of coherent patterns" (Rosaldo 20) concentrates on unity at the expense of individual variety and originality. As Rosaldo points out, because the classic view defines culture as a set of shared meanings, it becomes difficult to study zones of difference within and between cultures (28). In contrast, he suggests that culture is more usefully conceived of as "a more porous array of intersections where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its borders" (20). This approach permits analyses that focus on the "cultural borderlands" (Rosaldo's term), those annoying exceptions to cultural generalizations that are usually more interesting and thought-provoking than the broader descriptions often used to portray unfamiliar cultures (Rosaldo 28).

This perspective is particularly appropriate for Las posibilidades del odio because the text itself makes an issue out of specific-versus-general descriptions of

society and culture. While the historical chronologies present impersonal and often general information about uprisings, elections, trade and the heroes of Kenyan history, the narrations between the chronologies describe individual lives in detail, contextualizing the narrative present through extensive analepses that often refer to moments portrayed in the chronologies. In the first episode, for example, the tour guide discusses his childhood in some detail, but also mentions in passing the fact that he is a third generation immigrant to Kenya (11).[6] This temporal reference sets the first event of the episode, his grandparents' arrival to Kenya, during the years mentioned in the first official chronology, which covers the period 1888-1903 and discusses the initial stages of British control and exploitation of Kenyan resources. Because of the connections between the chronology and the narrative episode, the general, which is present in the chronology, establishes the background leading to the specific, personal present, as the tour guide remembers and narrates his life experiences in Kenya, the land of his birth. The tour guide's specific story can be seen as one of the many results of the events depicted in the chronology.[7]

Indigenista novels discuss difference within an expected framework conventionally based on outsiders'

imagined, if erroneous, perceptions of Indian and non-Indian characteristics. Las posibilidades del odio, in contrast, has fewer reader expectations to rely on or refer to directly.[8] In its efforts to portray the alignments and conflicts that make up Kenyan society, the anonymous narrating agency carefully avoids sweeping generalizations about tribes, cultures or nations. The reader learns of distinct groups and attitudes towards them from specific characters--in other words, from the focalization of a particular individual in a particular context. This specificity, while exposing the reader to a variety of attitudes, does not avoid, but in fact even encourages the reader to adopt definite positions with regard to cultural difference.

The epigraph that precedes the text of the novel first suggests the theme of difference as well as the importance focalization has in interpreting difference. Quoted from Franz Fanon's writings, the epigraph reveals the interdependence between naming cultural difference and focalization:

> No son ni las fábricas, ni las propiedades, ni la cuenta en el banco lo que caracteriza principalmente a "la clase dirigente". La especie dirigente es, antes que nada, la que viene de afuera, la que no se parece a los autóctonos, a

"los otros".

In this quote from Los condenados de la tierra, Fanon refers to the ruling class as those who come from outside, and consequently, differ from the "autóctonos." The statement defines difference in terms of origin. Neither race, wealth, nor gender matter as much as the issue of original inhabitants versus newcomers. The focalization, especially in the final sentence, intensifies the attention to the issue of "autochthonous" versus "foreign." The focalizer in this sentence initially adopts the autochthonous position by implying membership "inside" in contrast to the explicitly mentioned external source of the foreigner, "la que viene de afuera." Once they have arrived, however, the foreigners' perspective becomes dominant as seen in the naming of the autochthonous as "los otros." The focalization is that of the outsiders characterizing the original population as different, as "los otros." This brief and very ironic switch in focalization performs the contrast between familiarity and difference that is the thematic core of the statement, and also exemplifies the importance of focalization in naming difference.

As this example shows, it is not focalization alone, but rather the joining of focalization with the process of naming that ultimately positions the reader with regard to cultural difference. A concrete incident from the fourth

episode illustrates how meaningful specific character focalization can be to portray attitudes towards cultural difference. The Kenyans Matiolo and Julius, friends since childhood, and united by membership in the Kamba tribe, have separate and distinct opinions about cultural and race relations in their country. Julius, the more politically progressive and successful of the two, insults Matiolo for his subservience towards his white boss, and departs for Tanzania where he plans to work in the national education movement, rather than continue in the exploitive middle-level bureaucratic position he has held in Kenya. Matiolo, in contrast, is an office manager of the worst sort: arrogant, dominating, prejudiced, inefficient and irresponsible. His ineptness gets him fired, although he blames Julius for distracting him from his duties and causing his downfall.

Due to the unsavory aspects of his character, when Matiolo focalizes events, his perspective serves primarily to alienate the reader from the opinions he expresses. Perhaps more significantly, the unpleasantness of his character discredits his assessment of the problems in Kenyan society.[9] Consequently, the reader reacts differently to the opposing views expressed in a conversation between the two friends that Matiolo remembers this way:

Esa es nuestra discusión de todos los días: los

> blancos. Los odia. Dice que son lo peor que tenemos en Kenya, cuando lo peor, según yo, son los asiáticos y luego los kikuyu, pero Julius dice que no, que no me equivoque. (123)[10]

Matiolo expresses racial and national resentment towards the Indian immigrants who live and work in Kenya but who maintain strong national ties to their homeland. He also expresses resentment, based on tribal boundaries, towards the Kikuyu, the largest and most influential of Kenya's tribal groupings. In contrast, Julius hates the white colonizers who he believes are stealing the country's national identity, and on more than one occasion tries to persuade Matiolo to his way of thinking. The cultural views and opinions stated affect the reader's position relevant to race relations. Since Julius is by far the more pleasant and credible character, the reader is positioned to sympathize with his cultural preferences rather than with Matiolo's. By relying on character focalization, the narrating agency avoids the appearance of overt statements about cultural value and difference. Rather, clearly defined positions towards difference are disguised (somewhat) as character's opinions, with the simultaneous positioning of the reader with regard to these differences.

The places in the text where this process is most revealing as a tool of cultural positioning involve the

expression and consequences of hatred. True to its title, Las posibilidades del odio suggests a multiplicity of responses to the emotion of hatred. Sometimes the text focuses on the events that create the emotion, other times it portrays events resulting from, or even actively produced by, hatred. The title refers then to myriad manifestations of hatred as a sign of difference as well as to the possibilities of change that the emotion inspires. As will be clearer after a detailed look at some textual examples, Las posibilidades del odio explores both meanings.

In the text, hatred functions to inform the reader of the primary cultural distinctions at work in this portrayal of Kenyan society. In other words, hatred reveals the place where a cultural boundary has been drawn and where, as a result of that boundary, individuals feel the distinct separation and distance that characterizes "otherness." In the opinions that Matiolo cites, for example, both his and Julius's hatred functions on a racial axis. Matiolo experiences additional differences defined by tribal membership, although the reader is discouraged from adopting his views. Thus, while the expression of hatred reveals the cultural foundations of difference, the focalization works to encourage a positive or negative reaction in the reader to the specific difference named.

In the text as a whole, the contrast between colonizer and colonized dominates the production of meaningful cultural boundaries, especially since many differences not explicitly associated with this contrast in the text nevertheless arise from its existence. The focalization of each of these named differences colors the reader's attitudes towards them. In what follows, I analyze the novel's gradually increasing emphasis on colonialism as the one difference that makes a difference.

In the first episode, definitions of and attitudes towards national identity make it clear to the reader that there really is no space between the poles of colonizer and colonized. In this narrated monologue, a tour guide, desperate for an ideologically comfortable identity, attempts, and fails, to establish a middle ground between colonizer and colonized. He does this by attempting to describe a cultural space that includes whites as Kenyan nationals. If successful, he could be considered neither colonizer nor colonized, but rather a legitimate member of an autonomous Kenyan community. It is, of course, not to be, in part because the tour guide looks to the British citizen for recognition of his imagined member status.

Speaking to a British tourist, the guide begins by explaining his deeply-felt attachment to Kenya, the land of his birth. The child of parents who arrived in Kenya two

generations ago, he considers Kenya his home, in fact, his own, as when he comments that, "Sencillamente no se iría y eso era todo. Defendería lo suyo y moriría si fuera necesario. . . ." (16). The guide becomes even more explicit about his difference from his British listener when he comments on his visit to Europe: "Qué distinto a Kenya. Y qué aburrido. Cómo le había hecho falta el sol y estos colores. Cómo se había dado cuenta de que él, en realidad, era un africano" (15). This is the first clear attempt to create the image of a white person as a non-colonist, as autochthonous, in other words.[11]

The gap between himself and the British national increases when the guide compares their perceptions of Kenyan society to his own. He is able to read easily the emotions of the black Kenyans at work in the hotel:

> Se les notaba en la cara cuando entraban en silencio a avisar que la comida estaba servida. En esas expresiones cerradas, idiotizadas que jamás alzaban. Les brillaba opacamente en la piel ¿sabe qué? ¿no se imagina? Espeso, intenso, oscuro, el odio. . . . Y eso ustedes no lo sabrán jamás. Prefieren fingir que no ven nada. Hipócritas. (21)

The focalizer sets himself apart from the British national, and from black Kenyans, stressing his ability to read their

masked hatred. By referring to the British as "ustedes," he excludes himself from the hypocritical attitude he perceives them expressing. In conjunction with his disappointment with Europe, the guide's claim to an insider's track from which to understand Kenyan reality differentiates him from the British "outsider." By comparison with the tourist, the tour guide positions himself as the autochthonous Kenyan inhabitant, as the wiser, and more experienced, guide to the visitor.

He desires to be considered Kenyan, but only if that characterization includes the quality of being white. Throughout his narrated monologue, he expresses contemptuous attitudes towards blacks and "asiáticos," the other two primary racial groups in Kenya. The "asiáticos," for example, are "relamidos y gordos siempre . . . de expresión severa aunque perdida en algún punto invisible del aire" (11). The blacks walk with "pasos felinescos" (11). The black servants in his childhood home were given tennis shoes "para que no anduvieran descalzos, y sobre todo, para que no hicieran ruido por la casa. Aunque lo hacían, claro. Típico" (13).

At the end of the episode, the guide, desperate to retain the company of his British companion for a little longer, resolves the contradictions of race and national identity in an altogether different manner. The guide's

own words and behavior destabilize the tenuous membership category he is trying to establish, one that includes both white and Kenyan. In the final sentence of the episode, the tour guide, speaking to the tourist, says:

> Mañana vería todos los animales que quisiera. Mañana el cielo sería azul otra vez. El sol garantizado. Pero ahora debía seguir tomando con él. El último. Prometido, el último. Palabra de caballero inglés. (22)

Although the guide considers himself Kenyan, the appeal to his word as an English gentleman resolves the issue of national identity differently for the reader. The difference between white Kenyan and white Briton evaporates as the guide's attempt to establish a cultural category that contains whites as Kenyans falters, leaving him aligned with the white British tourist condemned earlier for his hypocrisy.

In this first episode, the portrayal of hatred occurs in a context where definitions of colonialism and colonialists are at issue. The text admits no space for a white, non-colonizing Kenyan. The protagonist perceives the hatred directed toward the tourists. He hopes his discernment marks a difference between himself and the British tourist, that it functions to make him not-British. The struggle to create a space where Kenyan and white overlap

fails, exposing the tour guide's conflicted national identity.

Colonialism, and reactions to it, also structure the manifestations of hatred in episode four, mentioned briefly earlier. Julius and Matiolo, both members of the Kamba tribe, belong to ideologically different sectors of Kenyan society, different primarily because of their attitudes towards colonialism. As in other episodes in the text, the manifestations of hatred define a boundary of cultural difference. In addition, the focalization privileges one character's ideology over another's, setting up a clear hierarchy of values in relation to the colonizer/colonized dichotomy as well as to other oppositions present in the text.

Matiolo's interior monologue, which comprises the entirety of the fourth episode, includes both Julius's and his own experiences of hatred. Julius hates whites in general (123), and in particular his father's white boss, who paid for his education, but who expresses openly racist attitudes towards blacks. After Matiolo loses his job, he seeks shelter in Julius's house. He is refused, however, not by the white "patron," but by Julius's father, who relays the white man's words, all the while refusing to meet Matiolo's disbelieving gaze. Julius's father says that the "patron":

> dice que no quiere tanta gente desconocida en torno a la casa. Que después no sabe quién entra ni quién sale. No te conoce. No quiere. Dice que tanta gente negra en torno de su casa no le gusta. Que mi familia está bien, nos conoce desde hace mucho, yo le he cocinado siempre. Pero gente desconocida dice que no quiere. No quiere tanto africano por aquí. (140)

This passage contains an explanation, a defense, and perhaps even a justification of Julius's hatred towards his father's boss who believes that a Kenyan who cooks for him is acceptable, but any black not his servant is indistinguishable from any other. Although the segment shows the white man's racism hurting Matiolo, not Julius specifically, the boss portrayed in this incident is the same one that Julius grew up with and the source of his hatred for whites in general. Since Matiolo, an unreliable narrator, expresses beliefs that the reader is meant to reject, focalizations by other characters are used to express statements that the reader is to accept. Julius's father reports the racist speech to Matiolo, a narrative choice that encourages the reader to believe the message. Further justification of Julius's hatred for this white boss appears in his comment about his own father: "Mi padre es el miedo. Nunca ha sido un hombre" (140). Again, the

change in focalizer away from Matiolo positions the reader to understand and validate Julius's hatred for whites as colonizers.

In Matiolo's case, the focalization works to engage the reader's disapproval of his hatred, which focuses on the "asiáticos" in general and on one Indian co-worker in particular. She walks by his desk several times a day, provoking thoughts such as:

> La asiática. No va a saludar nunca. Una mínima cortesía. Nada. Ni siquiera está en su país. Habría que sacarlos de Kenya ya. En las reuniones la odio más que en ninguna otra parte. Busca sentarse siempre entre los jefes, como si los africanos le dieran asco, como si fuera blanca. (135-136)

Matiolo's hatred for the Indian population in Kenya receives no substantiation from any other focalizer in the text. Julius, in fact, tries to dissuade him of his negative attitudes towards the Indian immigrants.

Through different focalizers, the reader learns that Matiolo's perceptions of himself, of his performance at work, and of those around him are unreliable. Matiolo's resentment towards his co-worker is discredited in part through his boss's speech dismissing him. Instead of the ideal worker he believes himself to be, he is fired "por

deshonesto, por sucio y por perezoso" (139). While he portrays himself as vigilantly recording the extended breaks and overuse of supplies by "la asiática," the reader learns from the new focalizer that she left the building to buy supplies that Matiolo refused, from pure pettiness, to provide her.

As these examples demonstrate, changes in the focalizer can function either to defend or to condemn a character's attitudes towards difference. A variety of focalizers supports Julius's perception of Kenyan society. They confirm Julius's reliability, positioning the reader to accept his ideological assessments of Kenyan society. In contrast, Matiolo's opinions are discounted both by his unreliability and by the fact that no other focalizer expresses or defends opinions similar to Matiolo's. These opinions include racism and resentment directed at the Indian population in Kenya, a child-like faith and trust in the British model of society and the white men who promote it in Kenya, and a hostile attitude towards other tribes in Kenya and other nations in Africa.

Julius, and consequently the reader, focuses his hatred on the whites that control so much of Kenyan society. Among other things, for example, he specifically hates the Stanley Hotel, where the only blacks allowed to enter serve the white clientele (128). In Julius's case,

his hatred turns into a productive possibility. He decides to leave Kenya for Tanzania, a country that is portrayed throughout Las posibilidades del odio as a progressive, fair-minded nation where successful black socialism empowers its citizens, in contrast to the alienation produced by colonialism in Kenya. His motivation for this change comes from his hatred for the white colonists in Kenya. Prior to his abrupt departure, he says, "no quiero vivir odiando, no es digno, no es sano" (141). Julius's action defines one of the productive possibilities of hatred. In his case, it motivates him to leave a homeland where he feels powerless in search of a more meaningful existence in another African country. He reflects none of the narrow nationalism that dominates Matiolo's thinking, nationalism that the reader knows to read as "narrow" because of the positioning provided by the focalization. The text does not discuss or question the fate awaiting Julius as a "foreigner" in another African country other than to propose it as a utopian solution outside of the negative, colonized images of Kenya.

Perhaps in response to the ideological differences estranging culturally similar individuals in episode four, the fifth episode portrays political alliances that cross race, class, and nationality boundaries. An unnamed British citizen, alienated by the air of superiority

characterizing his peers, repudiates his heritage, and travels to Kenya where he helps incite a successful coup d'etat against the pro-British government. Through his first-person narration, the reader learns of his activities as an expatriate, ironically defined by the protagonist as "aquel que llega a una nación en proceso de construcción con el propósito de ayudar a su desarrollo" (145).[12] The assistance, in this case, takes both conventional and unconventional forms. While teaching in a high-school steeped in colonial ideology, the Briton secretly trains black Kenyan youth in the organizational skills needed to foment a rebellion. He successfully plans his own assassination to serve as a spark for the final uprising.

From the start, hatred plays a more complex role than in previous episodes, affecting the portrayal of both British and Kenyan society. Both the manifestations of hatred and its productive possibilities establish significant cultural differences and alliances. For example, several different sources of hatred emerge, both in England and in Kenya, each defining a cultural opposition. While still in England, the protagonist provokes the hatred of his compatriots as he challenges their unanalyzed sense of superiority. He implicitly establishes a causal connection between a perceived threat and feelings of hatred. He explains the fact that he is "ostentosamente odiado" (149)

by his fellow citizens by pointing out that

> . . . todos, sin excepción, sabían de una manera más precisa o menos, que lo de la superioridad era puro cuento pero que ninguno, por ningún motivo, estaba dispuesto a ponerla en tela de jucio y que primero me matarían antes que dejarme hablar del asunto. (149)

The protagonist, defining himself as different from his compatriots, challenges the hypocritical sense of superiority that his peers adopt. His ideological divergence from them outweighs any similarity stemming from race, nationality or language. He ignores familiar similarities, emphasizing instead an ideological difference that rejects the false superiority that his compatriots indulge in. Since the protagonist focalizes his peers, the reader perceives them through his ideologically critical perspective. The absence of any focalization <u>by</u> these peers forestalls debate about the protagonist's assessment of his society leaving the reader open to accepting the only judgement available in the text, that of the protagonist.

Throughout this episode, The main character narrates his own story without referring to others' views. The narrative authority he assumes, to the exclusion of any paraphrased or reported speech by other individuals, may mirror the inherited colonizer status he so anxiously seeks

to escape. Because he is the sole focalizer, the text resorts to other narrative strategies in order to position the reader with regard to cultural difference in this episode. In the following discussion, references to the protagonist include his role as the focalizer of events.

After adapting to his new life in Kenya, the protagonist reiterates his sense of ideological distance from his British countrymen:

> No podía recordar nada de mi vida anterior que no me produjera una ansia de burlarme de mí mismo. Con razón se ocupan en ser superiores mis compatriotas. De qué otra manera podrían consolarse de esa vida que llevan.
>
> Me sentía liberar de esa costra cultural que tanto odiaba, y por primera vez me sentía vivir. Me sentía sentir. (157)

As the protagonist focalizes his own thoughts and feelings, he reveals the value associated with opposing traditional categories of identity and difference. He rejects identification based on nationality, race and language, and experiences the freedom associated with choosing the terms of his identity.

When the protagonist first arrives in Kenya, the expression of hatred returns to a category of difference already familiar to the reader: race. This is the barrier

that the expatriate proposes to cross. The racial hatred does not emanate from the expatriate, who nevertheless acknowledges an initial shock at the image of "tantos negros juntos" (150). Instead, the protagonist perceives and initially fears the hatred that he inspires in the black Kenyans (151). Later, he learns more about this source of hatred from his Kenyan wife, Flavia, and her son Makini, who train him to understand Kenyan reality from the perspective of the black population: "Ellos me ayudaban a comprender a la gente. Me mostraban la vastedad de su odio hacia el blanco" (168).

Not only does this manifestation of hatred based on race construct a fundamental cultural difference, it also functions as one of the productive possibilities of hatred. Hatred becomes a motive and a tool for change. In his work as a high-school teacher, the protagonist constantly strives to tap the students' resentment of whites in order to encourage their political awakening. He hopes to "Sacudirlos, removerles un odio ancestral. Utilizar ese odio como fuente de energía" (169). Even as he encourages Makini's rebelliousness, the protagonist comprehends the boy's motives:

> Yo sabía perfectamente que Makini me odiaba, que todas esas armas que le estaba dando serían destinadas a destruirme a mí primero que a nadie

> . . . . No me importaba pues, que en esa etapa fuera el odio contra mí lo que lo sostenía primordialmente. (169)

Racial hatred, the product of colonialism, emerges as a positive force for change. The British expatriate uses the hatred existing among the black Kenyans and attempts to focus it to achieve his own goals of defeating British superiority.

The search for a new axis of identity involving people of different races creates inescapable contradictions for the protagonist. As events progress to a crisis, the expatriate British national inspires and catalyzes an internal rebellion that leads to the overthrow of the Kenyan government. The combination of voice and focalization by this same British national, along with his dramatic impact on Kenyan politics, certainly approximates the intrusive aspects of colonial activities and one-sided history making that he had hoped to escape. Although well-intentioned, the paternalistic Briton ends up being as much a colonizer as other British subjects who use different strategies.

The protagonist himself is aware of the contradiction between his original goal of teaching a lesson to his British compatriots and the effects of his actual activities. In his farewell letter to Makini, he admits

> Yo no sabía que sería a ti a quien daría lecciones. Creí que sería a mis compatriotas. Era ante ellos y por ellos que quería demostrar que la superioridad es un truco. Y mi alumno fuiste tú. Ahí tienes. El blanco paternal otra vez, siempre, creyéndose superior. (181)

The individual liberation experienced by the protagonist as he left England and his compatriots' hypocrisy behind cannot save him from the more powerful contradictions of colonialism. The Briton specifically and deliberately distanced himself from his compatriots and attempted to establish a space where British did not equal colonial. From that position, however, he has no power to educate his British peers. By "crossing over," ideologically and through his marriage with a black Kenyan, by identifying with the "other" race, he has become invisible to his target population.

Realizing the paradoxes of his situation, the expatriate puts into motion a series of dramatic events that culminate in his willful death. In order to provoke the rebellion, he initiates a racist assault on black Kenyans. Makini, as anticipated and expected, shoots and kills him, an event which sparks the larger uprising. This martyrdom directly serves the interests of the Kenyan youth who planned the revolt, stressing once again the protagonist's

commitment to their cause.

The expatriate crosses racial, national, and cultural boundaries to align himself with the interests of those who are different from him. Although he does establish a new cultural position, it is shown to be untenable. The temporary union between black and white evaporates with his death. Most of the textual references to hatred portray it as an indirect but important motivating factor of the racial alliance. Hatred brought the protagonist to Kenya, motivated his politicized teaching, and inspired the student revolt. Hatred, in other words, prompted the crossing of powerful cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, in his last message to Makini, the protagonist stresses as his "última lección" not the productive nature of hatred, but rather the negative consequences of love:

> . . . es el amor que crea las distinciones, que ampara y busca defender lo propio. El amor que cierra la puerta al mundo y permite sentirse diferente. El amor que te va a hacer odiar al otro. El amor que te hace creer que has encontrado a los tuyos. (181)

As he acknowledges his love for Makini and Flavia, the protagonist also explicitly disowns this emotion because of its negative consequences. He believes that by creating boundaries, love has the power to separate nations, races,

cultures, and individuals from each other. It also is the source of hatred for the "other."

Although the main character repudiates love, his words betray the productive nature of this emotion and its close ties to hatred. Love, from his perspective, is a boundary-producer. He notes the sense of belonging, and consequently identity, generated by love. He also recognizes as automatic the tie between belonging and difference. Without the first, the second cannot exist. "Otherness," and the hatred that it so often provokes, is a consequence of the limiting nature of love which "closes the door on the world," creating, as a result, the boundary which defines "us" and "them," and along with it, the respective labels of "love" and "hatred." Consistent with this view is the positive boundary-crossing power assigned to hatred which, although ultimately unsuccessful, motivates the characters to cross national, racial and class boundaries.[13]

In the sixth episode, expressions of hatred, along with examples of its productive power, abound. More so than any previous episode, in the final one, hatred defines the space occupied by colonialism, and describes its specific effects. The episode follows the Kikuyu girl Nyambura from her childhood, through her education at a Christian missionary school and the university, and finally

to Italy where she pursues a graduate degree in history. In a lengthy and wide-ranging narration, the reader follows Nyambura's growing awareness of the insidious effects of colonialism on herself and her family over a period of approximately fifteen years.

The structure of the narration connects Nyambura's personal, familial and ideological conflicts in Kenya and her present-moment struggles for identity in Italy. The moment of narration occurs during Nyambura's last night with her white, British lover, Chris. In an effort to explain her decision to leave Chris and return to Kenya, Nyambura recounts her memories of her life up until the point where she and Chris met. Interspersed with this narrated monologue is dialogue between herself and Chris during the night, and sections where an anonymous narrating agency discloses the outlines of the year-long relationship they have sustained.

The interweaving of Nyambura's earlier experiences with the gradual revelation of her decision to return to Kenya ties together two different periods of her life. In Kenya, Nyambura struggled with issues of identity and authenticity in relation to her family and school authorities, in relation, then, to other Kenyans. She gradually comes to differentiate herself from "colonized" Kenyans: the African nuns at the school, and her father and younger

brother, for example, all of whom happily work for whites. Race, and one's attitude towards it, become the predominant issues in her life.

In Italy, she lives and associates with other non-Italians, with people who, like her, are "foreigners" from the perspective of the primary inhabitants. Along with her roommates, who are white, she occupies the space of the tourist, who cannot speak the language and is on the margin of the host society. Her position as the "other," as the one who is different, reminds the reader of the many images of the colonist in Kenya, of the "other" who contrasts with the autochthonous inhabitants. The apparent inversion of roles does not hold up, of course, since the educational nature of her visit to Italy contrasts profoundly with the role of outsider-as-colonist that characterizes the images of Kenyan society.

Nevertheless, because of her new position in relation to the society around her, the clear dichotomy of Nyambura's earlier years yields to a more complex set of issues. In Italy, identity becomes as much a matter of place as of race. She discovers that the non-Kenyans around her are satisfied with superficial portrayals of what it means to be Kenyan, and that the struggles that she feels are her own, those involving race, colonialism and individual identity, are not those of her friends. Her

decision to return home stems from the new understanding of her own identity that she achieves through contact with these differently-different people.

As is true throughout the text, hatred marks boundaries and differences stemming from the nature of colonialism. For Nyambura, in both Kenya and Italy, hatred expresses and creates a new and, from the text's positioning of the reader, an ideologically "better" awareness of the powerful and insidious role of colonialism in Kenyan's lives. Nyambura's earliest experiences with her home life reveal signs of the colonized world, of the autochthonous and the colonized side by side. In her case, her father and mother enact this cultural difference. Her mother goes to the market every day: "El mercado no era el mundo. Era la madre. El mercado además era africano" (199). This image of the nurturing, African mother contrasts sharply with the portrayal of her bureaucrat father, who seems to come from another world when he returns home from work (199). Nyambura and her brother and sisters react to him with "una fascinación extrañada, una curiosidad inquietante. Esos lápices que le asomaban del bolsillo eran tan antena de otra realidad, que resultaban hipnotizadores" (200).

The childlike fascination (and focalization) with the cultural difference between her parents gives way to more

mature reflection during Nyambura's years in the Christian high school she attends. Although her mother has died, she remembers the difference between her parents in the light of her growing awareness of what colonialism is. In a letter to her oldest brother, she acknowledges her new attitudes:

> Y papá es lo que me preocupa. Porque, fíjate, me doy cuenta de que si me descuido, también lo puedo odiar. Es muy fácil. En mamá, por ejemplo. No sé por qué el otro día se me ocurrió que mamá lo avergonzaba porque no sabía hablar inglés, porque comía con los dedos, porque ¿sabes por qué? Porque era africana y papá ya no. Papá es cristiano. Ya ni se mueve como africano. . . (257)

The contrast that elicits Nyambura's hatred is clear: the Christianized in contrast to the African, the imported versus the autochthonous. The focalization by the more mature Nyambura shows her growing up and gradually coming to understand all the Christian influences in her life as facets of colonialism. These include not only her father's appearance and attitudes, but her friendships at the Christian school and her perceptions of the authoritarian nuns who run it.

During her year at the university in Kenya, Nyambura

struggles with issues of identity that revolve around a different axis. Having chosen to struggle against colonialist influences, she then has to deal with her older brother's expectations of what an activist student is and does. The student group that he heads performs plays critical of establishment values, organizes demonstrations and agitates against the status-quo wherever and whenever they can. Nyambura makes up excuses to avoid spending all her time with them:

> Se había dado cuenta de que los pretextos imbéciles eran los mejores. Quiero dormir tarde. Quiero recoger una falda de la tintorería. Y la obligaban a odiarse -- falda de la tintorería, si desde que había salido de las monjas no usaba falda y si usara, se decía digna, no sería de llevar a la tintorería. (269)

Nyambura finds herself using what she considers a colonialist symbol, "una falda de la tintorería," to evade the expectations of the anti-colonialist student group. Ironically, the pretext works, and she finds herself free to adapt to university life in her own way.

The three previous quotations each refer to a different stage in Nyambura's life and each narrates with a slightly different focalization. The narrative techniques reflect a constant tension between the adult Nyambura

narrating her life story to Chris, and the young Nyambura experiencing and focalizing the events which are narrated. The shifting position of perception parallels Nyambura's changing attitudes towards difference as she struggles to achieve her own sense of identity.

Cohan and Shires distinguish three divisions in the subjectivity involving a "character-bound (first-person) narration" (109)[14] They divide the narration of subjectivity into three categories:

> (1) an "autobiographical" narrator; (2) the subject of this narration who not only acts in the story but also focalizes its telling; and (3) the narrated subject appearing to unite these two . . . in a coherent, developing characterization. (109)

The "autobiographical" narrator is the adult Nyambura: the "teller" who talks about her youth, about young Nyambura, who is the subject of the narration, the "actor and focalizer" of events. These two images of the character at different periods of her life, engaging in different activities, function together to produce the final portrait, the "narrated subject."

The three stages of development reflected in the three previously quoted passages call attention to the issues of identity, narration and focalization and how they work

together to produce subjectivity. In the comment about the father's pens, for example, there is a clear distinction between the adult narrating subject and the child focalizer who is the subject of narration. The child experiences the "fascination" and the "unsettling curiosity," feelings that the adult narrator no longer shares. The child's voice, excluded from the narration, finds expression only through the adult narrator who remembers.

The second quotation, the letter discussing the adolescent Nyambura's feelings towards her father, inverts this relationship between the "autobiographical" narrator and the subject of narration. Framed by quotation marks in the text, the letter expresses the adolescent Nyambura's focalization and voice. The voice of the autobiographical narrator, the adult Nyambura, disappears temporarily from the process of narration.[15]

The final quotation involving conflicts at the university reflects a closer relationship between the adult narrating subject and the subject of narration, evidencing, perhaps, the relatively shorter time span between them. It contains an indirect quotation by Nyambura, the university student, about her own thoughts and feelings, as well as a direct quotation of her verbalization of that feeling, "Quiero dormir tarde" (without quotation marks in the original).[16] The narrating subject reports these feelings,

but also comments on them with phrases like "se decía digna," and "Y la obligaban a. . . ." Interweaving the narrating and experiencing levels of narration begins to diminish the distance between Nyambura, the adult, and the adolescent Nyambura. The quoted monologue, "Quiero dormir tarde . . . ," highlights the diminishing duality by superimposing the voicing of the older Nyambura on the younger. Both utter these words, but at different times, one as a university student, one as an adult speaking to Chris. This superimposed voicing, along with the switching of focalization from one to the other, suggests not only a shorter time span between the two, but also a closer, and perhaps more integrated, relationship between them.

In fact, as the narrative progresses, the distance between the narrating subject and the subject of narration diminishes until it vanishes, leaving the voice and focalization of the narrated subject, the accumulation of the "autobiographical" teller and the younger Nyambura. At the end of the episode, in other words, Nyambura's multiple roles as narrator, actor, focalizer and subject of narration coalesce into her present-moment narration. The reader perceives a single subject, narrator and focalizer, a narrative unity that mirrors Nyambura's new-found sense of identity.

Nyambura's unified identity, both as a narrator and a

character, appears gradually as the reader learns of the decisive crises both the adult Nyambura in Italy and the university student in Kenya experience in their relationships with "others." Both settings exemplify the productive possibilities of hatred, first as an indication of difference, and secondly, as a motivating force for change. Both contribute as well to the image of Nyambura's growing sense of identity.

In Kenya the crisis stems from her brother's arrest for his leadership role in a university demonstration. His incarceration forces Nyambura to reconsider her role at the university. Feeling helpless and disillusioned, she decides to compete for a scholarship to study in Italy. Her indecisiveness is reflected in the multiple targets of her hatred. She was

> una mezcla curiosa de odios que se disparaban en todas direcciones y aterrizaban invariablemente en la palabra blanco para rebotar de ahí a la ciudad, a la gente que veía pasar en coche, a los edificios de oficinas, las madres con sus niños, las caras de los empleados, la quietud triste de los sirvientes, ella. (278)

Each of these hatreds signals a place of rejection in Nyambura's struggles for identity. She wishes not-to-be the whites, the office employees, a city-dweller, etc. She

wishes not-to-be herself, and so, unfocused, angry and alienated, Nyambura contrasts her present disorientation with an imagined Rome, "un mundo blanco seguro y sólido," where she hopes to escape the dilemmas of her search for identity (278).

Her brother's unexplained death while incarcerated accelerates and clarifies the issues surrounding her departure for Italy. Nyambura, who "ya era odio sin principio ni fin," chooses to leave behind a Kenya where colonial forces have prevailed (280). With the students' defeat, her brother's death and her own disillusionment, Nyambura surrenders to the image of a colonized Kenya:

> Que siguieran viniendo los turistas al país de los safaris. Que los hoteles siguieran sirviendo cóctel de frutas en piñas socavadas y bien refrigeradas. Que el ministerio de recursos naturales reorganizara los parques nacionales. Que la Ford anunciara a cuatro vientos su confianza en la estabilidad de Kenya. Que se construyeran más bancos, más edificios de ocho, diez o cuatrocientos pisos para que los ex-patriados llegaran a forjar esa nueva nación libre y democrática tan cerca de dios y tan lejos de su gente. (280)[17]

The extensive and detailed depiction of colonial influences

in Kenya clarifies the nature of Nyambura's conflict and defeat at this point in the narrative. Consistent with earlier images of colonialism, this one rests on the conflict between the autochthonous and the imported. Ironically, the imported is characterized in great detail (tourists, hotels, parks, car companies, banks, democracy, etc.) while the autochthonous seems to exist only in contrast. Like Nyambura, the desired image, a nation/person somehow "true" to itself/herself, appears only in terms of that which it/she rejects. Nyambura is left with a nation alienated from "su gente," a nation without an identity, without herself, and without a place for herself.

She travels to Rome, then, and establishes herself in a setting far removed from the daily and direct pressures of colonialism. In fact, her friends and associates come primarily from other colonizing nations, such as Great Britain and the United States. Even in this environment, however, Nyambura continues to struggle with the issues of race, identity and colonialism. Eventually, her experiences in Italy produce in her a clearer sense of identity along with a desire to return to Kenya to confront the complex political and social issues that she escaped earlier. The various stages in the decision-making process are focalized differently, ranging from an anonymous

narrating agency to Nyambura's closing monologue. Although mentioned earlier, it is worth restating that as Nyambura resolves her conflicts, the changes in focalization diminish, ceding to an interior monologue, thus underscoring her growing sense of identity.

Nyambura's process of change begins with what her white friends term "una crisis de antiblanquismo" (242). Two independent incidents initiate this crisis. The first is her experience of the inverted roles of autochthonous and outsider. After a year in Italy, she one day finds her friends and herself positioned as the obnoxious tourists who were the object of her hatred in Kenya:

> Ahí, en medio de la piazza, sintió la presencia de los italianos que los miraban con una mezcla de distancia y escepticismo --americani, stranieri, inglesi. Sentía los ojos curiosos de los niños . . . y hubiera querido estar de su lado, mirando otra vez a los blancos desde su propia gente, sintiéndose capaz de negarles la impunidad de sus risas siempre irritantemente insolentes. Como la suya ahora. Ahora que la oía. (210)

Nyambura, accustomed to producing this distancing gaze, now finds herself provoking it, not just from the Italians, but also from the anonymous narrating agency which defines the terms of the "otherness": nationality for the Italians, and

race for Nyambura. The focalization underscores the sense of difference portrayed in this passage. The frequent character-bound narration that positions Nyambura as the narrating subject disappears. The switch to an anonymous narrating agency deprives her of this position, making her the object of focalization for an "other" narrator. "Odiarse," is Nyambura's reaction to her new position as the object of the narrative gaze, and "por supuesto, odiar" (210).

In an effort to escape her object position, Nyambura tries to distance herself from her white companions, among them a new acquaintance, a British expatriate, Christopher Matthews. Initially, she dismisses his advances in an effort to maintain racial difference as a justification for her hatred. She explains her "crisis de antiblanquismo" with the opinion that "quizá el primer paso liberatorio del oprimido, del humillado, del distinto, era conocer el odio" (230). Rejection of the "other" through the tool of hatred remains her procedure for naming and knowing herself.

In spite of her initial reservations, however, she enters into an intimate relationship with Chris. Not surprisingly, this contact generates a deepening of her crisis, opposing her individual affection for Chris with her habitual association of whites with colonialism. The resulting confluence of the personal and the historical,

and of class, racial and gender issues erupts in the following stream of consciousness:

> Qué absurdo Nyambura, eres una mujer enamorada que/eres una kenyana enamorada de un inglés y ambos están saltando la historia tomados de la mano, unificando/eres una africana que no tiene nada que ver con la macabra historia del occidente, cómo, si eres de las víctimas tú, no te olvides/eres una burguesa contenta/una mujer enamorada de un hombre. Ya. Eso: eres una insatisfecha sexual que al fin se ha liberado. (261)

In this passage, Nyambura voices several different and competing positions regarding her relationship with a man who possesses characteristics that, until now, she has forcefully rejected. He is white, she is not. He is British and Western, the "intruder"; she is Kenyan, African, and autochthonous. She briefly considers the image of the two of them crossing the gaps of history and nationality that separate them, unifying unspoken differences, but relinquishes this vision in favor of the image of her victimization and consequent difference from the West. Her conflict, momentarily an identity crisis involving culture, history, and nationality, resolves into an affirmation of identity based on affection and sexual

expression, both of which are presented as free from the ideological "contamination" surrounding the more public issues. These personal terms of identity are presented as less ideologically "loaded" than the terms nationality, race, and colonialism.

While romance has not been a concern until this point in the text, its appearance marks a rare example of Nyambura actively establishing her identity as opposed to mechanically defining herself by rejecting what she sees around her. Instead of self-definition through negation (not-white, not-colonial, not-Christian, etc.), Nyambura names herself in terms of her own choosing. Since there are no other explicit references to sexuality in the narration, it is difficult to gauge the importance of the preceding passage on Nyambura's quest for identity. It is clear, however, that unable to resolve her attitudes towards the abstract issues of nationality, race, and colonialism, Nyambura settles instead for the personal as the vehicle to self-knowledge. It is here, in this stream of consciousness, that she find the beginnings of her own voice.[18]

She does not stop here, however. As the end of her scholarship approaches, Nyambura's struggle with the personal versus the historical continues. In contrast to the earlier emphasis on the personal, she begins to see her

affection for Chris as ahistorical and, as a consequence, unreal. At one point during their all-night conversation, she tells him:

> Es que no es cierto que el amor no tenga fronteras. Existen tierras de nadie, pedazos en los tiempos de cada uno en los que se puede querer sin fronteras, pero fuera del mundo, fuera del lenguaje, fuera de la realidad. (283)

This piece of dialogue defines the space where the historical does not affect the personal. It is a temporary space, a no-man's land, outside the world, language, and reality. These, then, become the terms of ideological "truth" for Nyambura: the world, language and reality. No longer does she accept the personal as a sufficient criterion for self-knowledge; instead, she chooses the ideology of the broader and more public historical world as her own. She rejects a life outside of Kenya or a life in Kenya with Chris, who would then be one of the expatriates she has always despised. In one of the few references to a possible future, Nyambura imagines and rejects an image of life in Kenya with Chris: ". . . él se irritaría con la lentitud de los camareros y desarrollaría un tono lento, claro y paternal y ¿qué diferencia entre Livingstone y él?" (285). The conflict between the personal and the historical ends with Nyambura's acceptance of her differences from

Chris. Her colonized status constitutes, for her, a difference that makes a difference, and one on which she bases her emerging identity.

The narrating agency mirrors Nyambura's progress to an identity of her own. Through the increasing incidence of interior monologue, dialogue and stream of consciousness, Nyambura's voice appears more frequently unmediated by an exterior narrating agency that explains or comments on her observations and reactions. In addition, as the biographical narration and the present-moment conversation merge, so does the distance between Nyambura as narrating subject and Nyambura as the subject of narration. As a result, the end of the text funnels both the temporal and focalization changes into the words of the narrated subject. Neither Oficio de tinieblas nor Hasta no verte, Jesús mío evidence as subtle an awareness of how focalization creates subjectivity. As Nyambura's identity emerges, the narrating agency cedes all available authority to her character, abandoning the more intrusive functions exemplified by an exterior focalization through an anonymous narrating agency.

As the night-long conversation with Chris ends, so do the analepses concerning Nyambura's life, in Kenya and in Italy, prior to meeting Chris. The chronology of her life is now complete. In one last focalization switch, the

dialogue with Chris cedes to an interior monologue where the narrating agency, almost completely effaced, acts only as the medium of quotation. The text ends with Nyambura's thoughts about her return to Kenya: "Y encima tener que tomar el avión, mierda" (303). This last sentence, without quotation marks in the text, signals the present moment for Nyambura. Thus, it resolves the temporal changes that occurred during the retrospective account of her life to Chris. It also marks the end of the changes in focalization, which have gradually tended to favor Nyambura's words and perspective over those of an exterior narrating agency.

The resolution of the structural tensions, both the temporal changes and the focalization switches, coincide with Nyambura's decision to leave Chris and return to Kenya where she will confront all the unresolved evils of colonialism that she tried to escape. Familiar class, racial, religious and ethnic boundaries await her. What is different, is her approach to these issues. No longer exclusively personal, her understanding of difference rests on exterior motivations, namely, on her historical understanding of colonialism and its real impact on her life. Her identity is still created through rejection of particular roles, for example, being the wife of an expatriate, but this rejection is no longer an impulsive reaction based

on personal hatred. Rather, she understands her reactions to be in response to historical conditions. Debra A. Castillo notes the inherent paradox of this new-found identity when she points out that "Nyambura rejects all colonialist discourse even in the certain knowledge that she cannot get outside its historical structures" (254).[19]

Instead of resolving any particular conflicts based on difference, the text instead proposes approaching those differences from a single ideological perspective emerging from the experience of being colonized. When considered in conjunction with the other episodes, Nyambura's new-found perspective becomes even more forceful. Earlier episodes demonstrated the fallacy of predicting behavior on the basis of race, tribe, class or origin. The black African, Matiolo, behaves more like a colonizer than the British expatriate in episode five, for example. And, in episode six, Nyambura discovers that race is not the all-encompassing difference that she had thought it was. What remains after each of these boundary-producing categories vanishes is the issue of colonialism, which, throughout the text, remains as an historically-produced position from which to identify and define difference. It is the ideological basis for Nyambura's new perspective, and the new instruction for the reader, who is asked to assume the same position.[20]

The choice of this ideologically-based system of difference as opposed to a racial or ethnocentric system, for example, prefigures what Sara Sefchovich defines as the mood of the early 1980s in Mexico. She writes of the "fin abrupto de los sueños de grandeza" that Mexico underwent, and describes the new reality: "Otra vez nos sabemos pobres además de colonizados" (3). She considers the critical realism of Las posibilidades del odio to be a reflection of "autores preocupados por la totalidad y por lo social," an approach that contrasts with a more mimetic form of realism (230). In this novel, at least, that change is defined in terms of how to view difference, and, in particular how to respond to colonialism and the personal demoralization that it produces.

Notes

[1] The relationship between colonialism and literature has been of increasing interest recently. Traditional scholarship includes Prospero and Caliban: the Psychology of Colonization (1956) by O. Mannoni, which, as the title suggests, analyzes colonial-type relationships from a Freudian perspective as "two types of personality" (26), the colonizer and colonized. Relevant as a document of the ideology of the times, it has not held up well in the face of more recent criticism. Written in the same period, Albert Memmi's The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957, English translation 1965) also tries to "reproduce, completely and authentically, the portraits of the two protagonists of the colonial drama and the relationship which binds them" (145). Although dependent on colonial "types" for its relevance, the work nevertheless is an interesting "read" on the dynamics of colonialism as Memmi experienced them. More currently relevant is the theoretical work Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature (1990) with essays by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward W. Said. The essays reflect "the conviction that we need a new discourse for a new relationship between our idea of the human subject and our idea of human communities" (3).

The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (1989) by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin is a wide-ranging and fascinating discussion of colonialism, language and literature. Of the studies mentioned here, it is perhaps the most relevant to my work in that it analyzes the textual dynamics in post-colonial literature. Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983), although focusing on nationalism as an ideological construct, also discusses the dynamics affecting colonized literatures. Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism (1993) addresses the literature both of the empire and against the empire. As Said points out in his introduction, ". . . stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (xii).

[2] Benedict Anderson, who defines the nation as "an imagined political community" (6), discusses how the genre of print languages arising during the 1500s paved the way for the emergence of national consciousness. He mentions three distinct aspects of this connection. Print languages created "unified fields of exchange and communication," gave "new fixity" to language, and created "languages-of-power" (44-45). Print languages, thus, helped create the

possibility of a sense of "totality" that belongs to the imagined community of the nation. For Anderson, the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century created the possibility of "'representing' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). As Pratt summarizes Anderson's message, in both the novel and the newspaper, the print forms present worlds "in which multiple story lines are pursued discontinuously and simultaneously, connected only by their adjacency, and totalized in the imaginations of omniscient narrators or readers" (50).

[3] I am uncomfortable with the implications inherent in the custom of capitalizing "Black" since it works as a sign of difference in relation to the non-capitalized, unmarked "white." Although this usage is customary in discussions of racially distinct populations in the United States, it is not universally accepted usage in other countries and other languages. Since I am writing here about the portrayal of the black population in Kenya by a Mexican author, I will adopt the usage present in Las posibilidades del odio and capitalize neither racial classification.

[4] One of the few specific time referents comes from the radio broadcast in Episode 4 which refers to the Viking IV mission to Mars in 1973 (133).

[5] Critics' opinions of the structure of Las posibilidades del odio reflect its ambiguous nature. For

Sada, it is a novel (51), for Sefchovich, it is a series of "relatos" (222). Reckley considers it to have autonomous but related chapters (714). Guiñazu calls it "un libro de relatos" or "cuentos" that is also a novel (3), while Domenella refers to it as a "conjunto de relatos" or "capítulos en una novela fragmentada" (239-240). Castillo calls the work a novel, but analyzes it primarily as vignettes, tales, moral parables, fables and even a novella (247-259). The difficulty with naming the shape may well reflect the problems inherent in the "colonized nation" status that the text portrays.

[6] All quotations from Las posibilidades del odio are from the only edition: México, D.F.: Siglo veintiuno editores, 1978.

[7] My view of the temporal relationship between the chronologies and the narrative episodes differs from some commentators. Alice Reckley, for example, defines a different relationship between the two types of text. I agree with her assertion that "each episode focuses on what is not explicitly stated in the historical data" but rather serves to "create a consciousness that history is never complete" (715). However, she also states that the author "follows the historical data with a story which focuses on one life within the respective, chronological periods" (714). I do not see enough clearly defined time markers in

the text to support such a conclusion.

[8] Castillo implicitly addresses the issue of reader expectations when she discusses the uniqueness of Las posibilidades del odio:

> It is an unusual novel, as distinct as possible from such bastions of Mexican literature as the canonical works of Paz and Fuentes and other writers whose nuanced explorations of the nature of Mexicanicity have been greeted both at home and abroad with recognition and applause. . . [I]n setting the novel in Nairobi, Puga implicitly comments of the inward-turning nature of almost any other Mexican novel one can bring to mind. She expands the horizons of center and margin and redefines the periphery in an entirely different way. (249-250)

[9] The appropriation of an "unsavory" character to express views the reader is expected to question recalls the example of the German immigrant in Oficio de tinieblas who so lamely "defended" educating the indigenous population that the notion began to appear ludicrous.

[10] The "asiáticos" are immigrants from India.

[11] The dilemma faced by the tour guide corresponds neatly to that of criollo birth during the late-colonial and early- independence period in Mexico. How could second

and third generation Mexicans born of Spaniards develop a sense of national identity in the colony? This is the first, but not the last, correspondence between the two countries that suggests that Puga is exploring parallels between the Mexican and Kenyan colonial experiences.

[12] The theme in episode five appears in other works by Puga. Pánico o peligro (1983) discusses the problem of the intellectual's position vis-a-vis the society he or she wants to change, often in a revolutionary way. Pánico o peligro seems to ridicule the intellectual's self-defined superior observer status. In contrast, this episode of Las posibilidades del odio explores the intellectual's active role in fomenting rebellion.

[13] The love/hate discussion in this episode coincides with a rebellion against the state, thereby establishing an interesting point of contact with Doris Sommers's thesis in Foundational Fictions. She reads nineteenth-century Latin American romances as novels of national beginnings whose coherence as a group comes from

> their common project to build through reconciliations and amalgamations of national constituencies cast as lovers destined to desire each other. . . . And in Latin America, romance doesn't distinguish between ethical politics and erotic passion, between epic nationalism and

> intimate sensibility. It collapses the distinctions. (24)

In this episode, Puga has inverted the erotic codes of earlier romances, making love a creator of ineradicable difference instead of the sign of a desired union. In the following episode, however, she allows a desired union between colonizer and colonized to exist temporarily, and then abandons it in favor of an individual solution.

[14] For the purpose of the following discussion, I am referring to Cohan's and Shires' definitions of several elements of prose narration. The narrating subject is the "agency responsible for the telling as enunciation." The subject of narration represents "the narrating subject in the form of traited characters or even simply their functions." Finally, the narrated subject is "the signified of the narration which results in a plurality of signifying effects: the characterization as produced through the double mediation of narration and focalization, and . . . the reader's identification with the mediated subject of narration. . . (108).

[15] In a sense, the adult Nyambura is still the narrating subject, however, as she continues to tell Chris of her life. The letter then becomes the subject of her narration, a narration which contains another narrating subject, the adolescent Nyambura.

[16] Cohan and Shires refer to these techniques as "narrated monologue" and "quoted monologue," respectively (99).

[17] Readers familiar with Mexican history will recognize ironic echoes of the phrase attributed to Porfirio Díaz, "Pobre México, tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos." The Díaz years were distinguished by a high rate of foreign investment and involvement in Mexican affairs, another theme reflected in Nyambura's denunciation of colonialism in Kenya in this quotation. Combined with the novel's discussion of criollo issues in episode one, and with the love union/national dream duality discussed in episodes five and six, the parallels in this section of the novel between colonialism in Kenya and Mexico suggest that Puga is establishing alliances between "peripheral" colonial nations to the exclusion of European (or estadounidense) "center." Although none of her characters succeeds in imagining a fortuitous response to colonialism, Puga's novel itself may suggest a way out of the dilemmas of colonialism by enacting a joining of colonial identities, and thereby establishing a new center.

[18] Like the British expatriate from episode five, Nyambura is trying to establish a place beyond her society's repressions. Her solution, unlike his, is, at least temporarily, to seek out the utopian space of

heterosexual romance as a site for her identity, a space defined by the British protagonist as nothing more than a new source of hatred.

[19] In support of the "no exit" reading, Benedict Anderson mentions the future awaiting the educated colonized subject in the twentieth century:

> For even in cases where a young brown or black Englishman came to receive some education or training in the metropole, in a way that few of his creole progenitors had been able to do, that was typically the last time he made this bureaucratic pilgrimage. From then on, the apex of his looping flight was the highest administrative centre to which he could be assigned: Rangoon, Accra, Georgetown or Colombo. Yet in each constricted journey he found bilingual travelling companions with whom he came to feel a growing communality. In his journey he understood rather quickly that his point of origin - conceived either ethnically, linguistically, or geographically - was of small significance. (114)

Las posibilidades del odio does not follow Nyambura back to Kenya. Perhaps unwilling to engage the resulting dilemmas and frustrations, the novel contents itself with having established the overriding issue to be solved, not racism

or ethnicity, but colonialism as a barrier to individual identity. Nyambura has an identity at the end of the story, but where that individual fits in the nation/colony is as yet an unexplored issue.

[20] Critics have different opinions about whether colonialism is the dominant issue in the novel. Ana Rosa Domenella asserts that colonialism is the foundation of difference when she states the novel's primary theme: "el problema del colonialismo en sus diversas manifestaciones (económica, cultural, racial, ideológica) y las innumerables "posibilidades del odio" que este colonialismo genera y entreteje" (240). Daniel Sada, in contrast believes that racial identity is the overwhelming consideration: "las luchas están fundamentadas en la ponderación de una raza que añora su identidad y su vida, y no en las opugnaciones del sistema colonial" (51). Fabienne Bradú emphasizes the relativity of naming difference. She highlights how often "los personajes experimentan cuán relativo es el sentimiento que tienen hacia lo otro, hacia el otro. . . . la autora demuestra otra vez cómo la percepción del otro o de uno mismo como otro es terriblemente relativa" (120-121). While I agree with this aspect of the text in relation to the issues of race, origin, tribal affiliation, etc., I see colonialism persisting as an issue that determines difference. Puga

herself stresses the overall importance of colonialism. In an interview with Reinhard Teichmann, she comments ironically on her experience of Kenya: "Al llegar a Kenya vi algo perfectamente absurdo, considerando que nací en este país; el tercer mundo; los subhumanos; el poder del blanco; el colonialismo; la colonizabilidad" (133).

Chapter Five

Whose Story Is It? Authorial Mediation in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío

Testimonial novels are a hybrid form of narrative that challenge traditional definitions and interpretations of literature. Beginning in the mid-sixties, they have had a growing impact on the literary production emerging from Latin American writers.[1] Neither sociology nor biography, neither anthropology nor pure documentary, they emerge from both testimony and literary creation. Typically, the author of one of these works interviews an informant, absorbs the overview and details of the life story, and produces a first-person narrative told from the point of view of the informant. The "I" in the story, then, is in some sense the "I" of the informant who tells a story as well as the "I" of the author who reconstructs that story for a reader.

Without engaging, at this point, the many controversies surrounding the definition or categorization of testimonial works, I will refer to Sklodowska's definition of the genre as a starting point:

> Agrupamos bajo el rótulo del discurso testimonial mediatizado formas que consisten en una transcripción por un gestor (editor) de un discurso oral de otro sujeto (narrador, interlocutor, protagonista) y que intentan incorporar

> el acto ilocutorio de testimoniar . . . dentro de un molde mimético-realista. (100)

Testimonial novels are only one form of mediated testimony in Sklodowska's typology. Other primary critics also include the testimonial novel in the broader genre of testimony.[2]

The ambiguity over authorship is only one of the characteristics that distinguishes testimonial novels from more traditional categories of narrative. Because of the factors involved in their production, these works usually cross various other kinds of interpretive boundaries. The novel is based for example on oral testimony given by an individual who has limited, if any, access to the world of reading and writing. The non- or minimally-literate informant tells the story of his or her life to the author. When this story appears in novelized form, it has been mediated and interpreted by the writing author, and, as a result, it encapsulates all the contradictions inherent in crossing several boundaries that fiction has tended to avoid. For example, it crosses the boundaries between oral and written discourse, between the traditional anthropological categories of informant and author, and between the fictionalized narratives found in novels and the documented life stories of biography.

I have chosen to examine these issues in a testimonial

novel by Elena Poniatowska, Hasta no verte, Jesús mío.[3] Since its publication twenty-five years ago, Hasta no verte, Jesús mío has attracted an ever-increasing amount of critical attention. From a scant three to four articles and interviews with its author during the first ten years,[4] its place in critical bibliography has grown to include extensive analyses in books and dissertations, as well as numerous critical articles.[5] Much of the criticism analyzes the narrator-protagonist, Jesusa Palancares, from one of a variety of perspectives: feminist, picaresque, psychoanalytical, etc.[6] More recently critics have looked at how the work fits into the growing debates over testimonial literature in general. While there is still some disagreement on this issue, it seems safe to say that Hasta no verte, Jesús mío has a testimonial gene. In recent years, for example, there has been a growing tendency to scrutinize the text through the lens of the testimonial novel conventions, raising the consequent issues of truth, fiction or fact, the relation between the author and the narrator, and the definition and place of testimonial literature, within or without, of the traditional literary canons.

Hasta no verte, Jesús mío is the story of a working class Mexican woman, Jesusa Palancares, who, in a first person monologue, tells her life story to an unnamed

listener. Beginning with her involvement, in middle-age, with a spiritualist sect in Mexico City, the narration jumps back in time to Jesusa's impoverished childhood and proceeds, basically chronologically, to cover the experiences of her life up to the moment of narration. Jesusa's story ranges from religious reflections and social commentary to recipes for cooked turtle eggs. Work experiences, her participation in the Mexican Revolution, family relationships, and financial struggles all form part of the rounded-out life story.

Typical of the autobiographical mode, the narration interweaves Jesusa's earlier life with her comments and reflections on those events, allowing the reader to perceive both earlier and revised reactions to different events.[7] These autobiographical features of a first-person life story are supplemented, however, by the testimonial process underlying the text's creation. The author, Elena Poniatowska, is a journalist well known for her documentary narrative on current issues in Mexican society. Consequently, it is not surprising that her first foray into the realm of long fiction should be based on the communicative process involved in a testimonial novel. Poniatowska has spoken many times of her Wednesday afternoon interviews with Josefina Bórquez, an elderly resident of a poverty-stricken suburb of Mexico City. During a year of weekly

visits with this informant, Poniatowska listened, took notes, and asked questions, gradually molding the information into the text the reader confronts today. The account of the connection between these interviews and the final life-story has varied over the years. Occasionally, the text has been read as a faithful representation of the conversations, while at other times, the novel's character is seen as simply loosely based on the Bórquez interviews.[8] The various accounts of the relationship between the three figures, Elena Poniatowska, Jesusa Palancares and Josefina Bórquez, the real-world informant, affect and reflect the changing interpretations of the text, a topic that will be discussed more thoroughly below.

So intriguing are the boundary crossings involved in this and other testimonial works that the story of the novel and, perhaps, the life itself tend to be overshadowed by their implications. The texts cross over and blend conventionally distinct interpretive zones. Fact/fiction, priviledged/poor, and oral/written oppositions dissolve into a single entity that then highlights, as it crosses, traditional boundaries of interpretation. As in (auto)biography, and ethnology, events external and prior to the novel itself are involved in the reception of the text, in knowing what it says and means. In the case of the testimonial novel, the result of these processes appears in

a form, the novel, that signals imagination and "make-believe." The combination of the external "truth-producing" process and the make-believe packaging places the reader in a "fact/fiction" dilemma. [9]

Because the process of the text's creation has so crucially affected its reception and interpretation, it is interesting to examine the communicative roles, intentions, and attitudes involved in the extra-textual events and procedures, search out their presence in the text, and speculate about how they affect the on-going reception of the text. In the case of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, this is best done by reviewing the many interviews by the author on the topic, as well as discussions in critical studies that emphasize the procedural over the topical.

Poniatowska's text not only carries differences in it, which I will discuss shortly, but it also establishes differences with previous testimonial novels. Since Poniatowska's text both emerges from and modifies the literary space created by earlier testimonial works in Latin America, it is worth taking a look at how her work adds on to theirs in order to place it in an appropriate literary context. Hasta no verte, Jesús mío updates earlier testimonial novels, but continues to reflect contradictions inherent in this genre, particularly with regard to the dynamics involved in crossing the

oral/literate boundary.

Immediate predecessors to Poniatowska's work with the testimonial novel include the Mexican anthropologist Ricardo Pozas, author of Juan Pérez Jolote: biografía de un Tzotzil (1952), and Miguel Barnet, the Cuban author of El cimarrón: un relato etnográfico (1966) and Canción de Rachel (1970). These authors laid the modern groundwork for the testimonial novel with their own works, as well as with their personal commentary on the methods and goals of the genre. In the prologues and articles published separately from the literary works themselves, these comments outline the recent developments in the modern testimonial novel in Spanish America.[10] I am particularly interested in these authors' comments on the choice of an informant, the purposes and goals of their work, and how they see their role as writing author. After comparing and contrasting their objectives with Poniatowska's, I will then examine the traces of the creative process underlying, and reflected in, Hasta no verte Jesús mío with particular reference to the competing authorial voices present in the first chapter of the text.

In Latin America, the testimonial novel emerged to a large extent from work done in sociology and anthropology.[11] One of the earliest modern texts involving an oral informant and a writing author was a monograph written by

the Mexican anthropologist, Ricardo Pozas. Belonging as much to anthropology as it does to literature, Juan Pérez Jolote's involved testimonial techniques, including interview, reconstruction, and writing. In step with the anthropological discourses of his time, during the 1950s Pozas strove to represent the reality of another culture through extensive interviews with a single member of that culture.[12]

As will become apparent, the characteristics of an "ideal" informant change over time and always reflect the individual interests of the writing author. This illustrates one of the many dilemmas surrounding testimonio. These works emerge from the challenges involved in representing a non-literate, marginalized individual or culture to the literate elite. Because the writing authors have agendas of their own, based in part on their target audience (e.g., anthropologists, the general reading public, etc.), the astute reader must interrogate the text's faithfulness to its purported (and only acknowledged) source, the non-literate informant.

It has been customary to downplay the author's impact on the written text. The writers themselves, including Pozas, Barnet and Poniatowska, make every effort to emphasize the reliability of their texts to the informants' stories. In general, critics of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío

have tended to concentrate on the protagonist's unusual character in lieu of narrative analysis that reflects the mediation involved between the oral story and the written text. This critical approach has made it easier to view the testimonial novel as an authentic, if representative, expression of marginalized individuals and their communities. Recently, a closer examination of the effects the writer's social position, class, and literary goals might have on the text has seemed to be in order. Sklodowska states this issue in its broadest terms:

> Nosotros somos de la opinión de que el testimonio mediato no puede representar un ejercicio de la autoría genuino y espontáneo por parte del sujeto-pueblo. El testimonio sigue siendo un discurso de élites, si bien comprometidas con la causa de la democratización y su consagración y difusión dependen de todo un aparato institucional "letrado" que - a partir de la revolución cubana - es capaz de "acomodar" la voz del "otro" subalterno. (85-86)

Accepting, as Sklodowska does, that the literate world impacts in a fundamental way on the production of testimonio, it becomes reasonable to ask how the writing author's ideology affects the written text. The author is, after all, by definition a member of the literary elite

that Sklodowska refers to.[13]

These issues began to arise in Latin American literature with the publication of the earliest modern testimonial novel. This work inspired and, in its context, set a standard for testimonial novels. The work, Juan Pérez Jolote, is a study of an individual member of the indigenous Tzotzil culture in southern Mexico. Typical of the testimonial process, the informant told his life story to the author, who then created the written version of his story.

Ricardo Pozas, in his introductory remarks to Juan Pérez Jolote, discusses the appropriate object of study in the communicative act that produces testimonial works. Pozas refers to his work as "el relato de la vida social de un hombre en quien se refleja la cultura de un grupo indígena, grupo en proceso de cambio debido al contacto con nuestra civilización" (7).[14] For Pozas, the individual, and, in this case, his relationship to the culture he belongs to, is the primary topic. Implicit in the above quotation is a hierarchical distinction between the Tzotzil "cultura" and both Pozas' and the readers' ("nuestra") "civilización." This opposition exemplifies a feature common to testimonial works where the author self-defines a significant difference between him- or herself and the object of study, and proposes, by crossing this boundary,

to communicate new information to uninitiated, and therefore, uninformed, readers. The "nuestra" of "nuestra civilización" is not further defined or characterized by Pozas, but obviously assumes access to the Spanish language and literacy.

Because his goal is to represent the broader Tzotzil community through the simulacrum of a single individual, Pozas makes every effort to portray his informant as typical of his context, as an "ejemplo" of his culture:

> Nuestro ejemplo es típico, ya que caracteriza la conducta de muchos de los hombres de su grupo (exceptuando la participación en el movimiento armado de la Revolución Mexicana, que fue un accidente de su vida). No es una biografía excepcional; por el contrario, es perfectamente normal dentro de su medio, salvo las causas que obligaron a nuestro biografiado a salir de su pueblo. (7)

This anthropological monograph aims to present the informant as a individual case study representative of a broader community. Defined as different from the author, by the author himself, the individual informant nevertheless is seen to exemplify the larger culture to which he belongs. Pozas wants the reader to believe that he is typical, characteristic, unexceptional, and all that is "normal."

In the preceding quotation, the exceptions to being typical ("exceptuando. . . accidente de su vida") could just as easily have been highlighted instead of hidden in parenthetical remarks and subordinate clauses, but this would defeat one of Pozas' primary goals. The effort made to define the informant as "normal" signals the prevailing anthropological interests of the time, which were to learn about broader communities through the detailed study of one of its "typical" members. It is obvious from the contradictions in the paragraph cited above, however, that "typical" is a category that must be forced on an individual life in order to ignore the inescapable uniqueness present in any single person's life story.

The appropriate object of study, as Pozas defines it, then, is different from the author and his community of readers, but has enough similarities with his own community so as to count as typical. A third and by now obvious feature is that the object of study is male. Pozas clearly believes that a culture can be revealed through the study of a single individual, but he does not question the assumption that a culture can be known through a single gender. His introductory remarks carry only a single reference to Tzotzil women. In a list of basic personality characteristics of Tzotzil men, he mentions women's physical attributes: "Una constitución física atlética en

el hombre, y en ocasiones pícnica en la mujer" (12). The footnote to this statement adds additional information about the relevance of gender to the study of a culture: "Es dificil determinar la constitución física de la mujer, ya que el embarazo y otros factores de carácter sexual pueden modificarla aparentemente" (12). The "aparentemente" which ends this quoted passage might just as well refer to the apparent existence of women as members of the Tzotzil culture. Clearly, Pozas' attitudes towards culture, even its very definition, impact on the text he produces, at the very least, affecting his choice of informant.

Seventeen years later, Pozas' novel emerges as critical inspiration for two testimonial novels by Miguel Barnet, Biografía de un cimarrón and Canción de Rachel. In his 1969 essay, "La novela testimonio. Socioliteratura," Barnet speaks of the "fuerza del relato, la verosimilitud del discurso de Juan Pérez Jolote" as being key factors in his decision to write testimonial novels (286).[15] He approaches this task with the clearly stated desire that the testimonial novel contribute to a "literatura de fundación," Octavio Paz's term for an authentically American literature, one that both responds to and opposes European influences (285). Barnet hopes this "literatura de fundación," and the testimonial novel, will speak from "la

mirada desde dentro, desde el yo latinoamericano, desde el nosotros latinoamericano" (285) and thus contribute to "la memoria colectiva" (294).

Barnet's clear agenda defines for him the appropriate object of study. Like Pozas, he looks for a representative informant, but defines the characteristic very differently. Barnet looks for individuals who serve as points of departure to learn about history, "para conocer un medio, una época" (290). Writing about a character within an epoch will serve as a vehicle to rewrite history, to "quitarle a ese hecho histórico la máscara con que ha sido cubierto por la visión prejuiciada y clasista" (291). Barnet's ideal object of study, then, is someone who has participated in major historical periods and events of Cuban history and whose experience can reveal the limitations involved in sustaining class differences. As Sklodowska mentions in her extended analysis of Barnet's writings, his objective was more political than ethnographic (13).

Given his agenda, Barnet selects as his informant for Biografía de un cimarrón Esteban Montejo, an eldely man chosen for the idiosyncrasy of his life as an ex-slave. In contrast to Pozas' "typical" informant, Montejo is unusual, "singular . . . de un destino insólito" (286-7). It is his very uniqueness that makes him the ideal informant for

Barnet:

> Esteban me iluminó el pasado cubano, con su extraordinaria memoria, a modo de lámpara de Aladino. La esclavitud, la cimarronería la Guerra de Independencia, estaban perfectamente deslindadas en su vida y a la vez formaban su todo espiritual. Esteban, pues, era un modelo ideal porque reunía dos condiciones necesarias para la novela-testimonio; era un personaje representativo de una clase, de un pensamiento, y había vivido momentos únicos en la historia de Cuba que marcaban la psicología de todo un conglomerado humano. Esteban era, decididamente, un eslabón. (296)

In contrast to Pozas' more static, contextual orientation in terms of the Tzotzil culture, Barnet chooses Esteban because he considers him representative of a class and because of his involvement in Cuban history. As in the earlier work by Pozas, an informant is selected because of differences deemed significant by the writing author, in this case, Montejo's involvement in slavery, the War of Independence, and his fugitive status. Participation in these historical events far outweighs the "representative" qualities Esteban possesses, which, although mentioned, are never very clearly defined. Barnet hopes that the story of

Esteban's unique experience will produce a truer vision of Cuban history. In this way, his experiences will contribute to the revised collective memory that is the goal of "la literatura de fundación."

Barnet speaks eloquently of Esteban's language abilities, another desirable characteristic in an informant, and one that, in the cimarrón's case, raises him to nearly epic status: "La ingenuidad del Cimarrón, las palabras rotundas, claras de su monólogo le adosan un dramatismo mayor a su vida; hacen que los sentimientos se ennoblezcan y los hechos se compliquen" (292). Part of the appeal, then, lies in the informant's ability to dramatize the events of his life by means of his linguistic skill. It is clear that such talent would appeal to the writing author who, in some sense, strives for a similar goal.

The effect of agenda on the testimonial product emerges clearly when Barnet reveals his attitudes towards the language of his female informant of his second novel, Canción de Rachel. Since Barnet's interest is primarily historical in the broadest sense of history as a sequence of major events affecting a nation, it is not surprising that he does not have quite as much success with the female informant of Canción de Rachel. She is not epic, but rather possesses "una gran dosis de frivolidad," and often contradicts herself (291). Neither her frivolous life nor

her language is as appealing to Barnet as the Cimarron's epic narrative is. Rachel's language is "un lenguaje de subdesarrollo," with its "frases sofisticadas y palabras rebuscadísimas" (292). One might ask the reasons why Barnet chose to write about her at all, but he does observe that he has found reflections of Rachel in many Cuban women, and we can only guess that it is this "representative" quality that endeared her to him.

Rachel's case describes what might be considered a negative, but not necessarily failed, object of study for Barnet. Although in total disagreement with her personal, racist and demagogic evaluation of events (300), he finds some value in their expression. They do permit him a better knowledge of the period, and that knowledge motivates him to "lanzarme a la búsqueda de los juicios opuestos, de los otros puntos de vista" which he then incorporates into his novel as voices of refutation to Rachel. As he puts it,

> Lo que me interesa decir en Rachel no es tanto sus puntos de vista parciales, caprichosos, sino cómo ellos se funden con los otros quizá menos parciales, menos caprichosos y establecen un sistema de vasos comunicantes que reflejan la frustración de una vida, en un contexto social específico. (300)

The female informant cannot quite measure up to the "epic" standing of the cimarrón. Her voice serves as an object to reject, to write over. The negatives belonging to Rachel's case reveal Barnet's specific interests in the rewriting of history, which are as much for his benefit and the benefit of his readers, as for the novela-testimonio which will then contribute significantly to a "literatura de fundación." If, as in this case, his informant's story does not quite match his agenda, then he can use his role as author to modify it, and thus render it more suitable for his purposes.

In addition to his personal, political and literary goals for the genre, Barnet speaks in some detail of the methods he uses to produce his novela-testimonio. Both the roles he defines for himself and the impact those roles have on his testimonial novels reveal aspects of his agenda, and will be of use when I consider Poniatowska's views of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío.

Barnet uses many different terms to characterize his role in the production of his novela-testimonio. In general terms, he adopts the role of "gestor," a sort of manager or behind-the-scenes director of the project (291). When he speaks of the interview process, he considers himself an "investigador" with the consequent obligations of arriving on time, adopting an open but not uncritical

attitude towards his informants, and conveying a sense of solidarity with them (296). Transforming the information gathered in these interviews into literature is the work of the "artista-sociólogo" (290) or the "autor" (292), who, after listening to the tone of the informants' language and their anecdotes, creates a style that blends that information with the author's goals. Barnet feels strongly that, although the novela-testimonio is based on spoken language, it must be more than just a transcription of recorded material. Texts that reproduce spoken language without elaboration, such as The Children of Sanchez by Oscar Lewis, are not artistic, but rather "falsa literatura, simplista y chata" (292). One of the author's roles, then is to elaborate the spoken language in such a way as to make it Art.

To do this, Barnet's "autor" depends on creative resources that are, however, confined within certain restrictions:

> . . . a mi entender, la imaginación literaria debe ir del brazo de la imaginación sociológica. Y el autor de la novela-testimonio no debe limitarse. Debe darle rienda suelta a su imaginación cuando ésta no lesione el carácter de su personaje, cuando no traicione su lenguaje. La única manera de que un autor puede sacarle el

> mayor provecho a un fenómeno es aplicando su fantasía, inventando dentro de una esencia real. (292)

The obvious tension portrayed here between creativity and fidelity reflects a primary conflict inscribed in the testimonial novel. The reader is supposed to consider the interests and skills of the author to be fused with the personality/language/self of the informant to produce the final work.[16]

Barnet's concept of adherence to the informant's language is a surprisingly flexible one. In fact, Barnet believes that explicit adjustments need to be made to his informants' speech to bridge the gap from specific regional dialects to a more universal language. In Cuba, in particular, he feels that popular language may contain "estructuras muy peculiares" that inhibit communication, and he faults those writers who believe that popular language is the only guarantee of authenticity. In contrast, his role as author is to take the essence of the speech and translate it to a more universal medium: "El problema es saber elevar estas formas, estas estructuras, a otras formas, a otras estructuras: las cultas" (293). It seems a bit ironic for Barnet to adopt such class-conscious terminology as "elevar" and "cultas." As a consequence of his "translation," however, he produces a language that

becomes accessible to a wider audience who no longer carries the burden of having to decipher something uncomfortably new and "different." The author has translated difference into something more familiar, less "inferior," and thus, by implication, more palatable.

Because Pozas's and Barnet's works involve a similar creative process to Hasta no verte Jesús mío, many of the same issues of agenda, language and appropriateness arise in Poniatowska's comments about the novel. Her approach to these topics differs from theirs in marked ways, however. In contrast to Pozas and Barnet, for example, Poniatowska's choice of an informant reflects no overtly political or anthropological designs, although her agenda, as will be seen, does influence her selection. Overhearing, by chance, Josefina Bórquez talking in a laundromat, Poniatowska was drawn towards the directness of the woman's language and, above all, "su capacidad de indignación" ("Hasta" 5). Poniatowska was impressed with Josefina's difference from the traditional image of the Mexican woman, attracted by "aquello que la distingue de la imagen tradicional de la mujer mexicana: su rebeldía, su independencia" ("Hasta" 11). Unlike Pozas, then, who chose an informant because of his "typical" qualities, or Barnet, who sought figures whose uniqueness could help round out the image of Cuban history, Poniatowska's ideal informant

appealed because of her qualities at variance with the conventions that Poniatowska associated with her personal gender norms. The author has spoken at length of the many lessons she learned during her conversations with Josefina, whom she calls Jesusa in the novel, lessons about not just independence, but also class differences and national identity. For Poniatowska, who immigrated to Mexico as a young girl, Josefina provided a new point of view not just on Mexican history and current conditions, but on what it meant to be Mexican. This sense of belonging grew gradually for Poniatowska, who speaks about her developing sense of national identity in intensely personal terms:

> Lo que crecía o a lo mejor estaba allí desde hace años era el ser mexicana; el hacerme mexicana; sentir que México estaba adentro de mí y que era el mismo que el de la Jesusa y que con sólo abrir la rendija saldría. . . . Descubrirlo fue como tener de pronto, una verdad entre las manos, una lámpara que se enciende bien fuerte y echa su círculo de luz sobre el piso. . . . Una noche, antes de que viniera el sueño, después de identificarme largamente con la Jesusa y repasar una a una todas sus imágenes, pude decirme en voz baja: "Yo sí pertenezco." ("Hasta" 8)

These and other lessons learned from her informant are cast

in terms of their personal value to Poniatowska, who struggles in the pages of her essays with issues of guilt over her upper class status, her "falta de carácter," and her ineptness at performing menial chores that her informant accomplished daily ("Hasta" 8).[17] Poniatowska actively resists, in fact, any temptation to explicitly historicize or politicize her informant, because she considers it to be "fuera de lugar, pedante. . . . Si yo la transformara en un Zapata de barrio traicionaría todas esas horas que vivimos juntas" ("Hasta" 11).

Although Poniatowska emphasizes the personal, she nevertheless also reflects the agendas common to writing authors. Poniatowska chooses her informant for many of the same reasons as Pozas and Barnet. Like them, she defines a set of differences between herself and her informant, but in contrast to both of them, she couches those differences in personal terms. This procedure serves, perhaps unintentionally, to obscure and de-politicize what might otherwise be considered a threat to conventional ideological boundaries of class and gender. Whether consciously or not, Poniatowska's emphasis on personal interest as a motive mediates the differences portrayed in her story, avoiding a controversial social discussion of poverty and politics and instead describing woman's search for herself, be it Poniatowska or Jesusa. Difference is thus anchored in an

arena, familiar to many middle-class readers at least, of a somewhat therapeutic personal growth and discovery modality.[18]

Poniatowska's methods and goals also reflect similarities to and contrasts with Barnet and Pozas. Because she has been interviewed so often, it is possible to trace her changing views on the genre question over time. Her early emphasis on the testimonial novel label for Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, for example, gradually gives way to a broader characterization of the work. In 1978, she stresses the testimonial aspects of her book in order to distinguish it from other areas of study prevalent in Mexican letters at that time: ". . . como no soy antropóloga, la mía puede considerarse una novela testimonial y no un documento antropológico y sociológico" ("Hasta" 10). It is possible that Poniatowska chooses to make this particular distinction between the testimonial novel and anthropology in part because of Oscar Lewis's works on the Mexican poor, which, as Barnet mentioned, were not considered particularly artistic. Poniatowska did work for a short time on one of Lewis' projects, and might have wished, in 1978, to distance herself in the public mind from that experience, in part, perhaps, because of the very polarizing response to them.

In later years, she acknowledges the influence working

with Lewis had on her, and coincidentally begins to modify her characterization of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío as a testimonial novel (García Pinto 169). When asked whether the work was a testimonial novel, Poniatowska responds this way:

> If you ask her [Josefina], she says it isn't . . . .Now it's true that the book is based on many conversations with her, but it's a novel, right? It's not what she dictated to me nor does it use exactly the same language, but it's based on her story. . . . I wanted to make a text that, though I'm not an anthropologist or a sociologist, would reflect a certain reality that she couldn't acknowledge. (García Pinto 167)

By the time of this 1981 interview, the testimonial novel had begun to be characterized with some specificity by critics studying the different manifestations of testimonial writings. Perhaps for this reason, Poniatowska preferred to emphasize the novelistic aspects of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío over the testimonial nature of the work, since her text did not carry the explicitly political intention of later testimonial works.

Her comments also suggest a new criterion for defining a testimonial work, one based on the perspectives of the informant. In a 1989 interview with Cynthia Steele,

Poniatowska goes into more detail on this point, defining some of the areas of invention in her novel, and discussing Josefina's reactions to them. In her words, "Pues inventé situaciones, inventé gente. Las situaciones las apresuré para hacerlas más novelísticas" ("Elena" 94). She also expressly eliminated areas of primary concern to her informant, including repeated discussions of the spiritualist sect Josefina was involved with, as well as complaints about current social and economic conditions in Mexico. As Poniatowska put it, "Para ella [Josefina] la novela habría sido sólo el espiritualismo, la carestía y la mala situación actual" ("Elena" 95).

As a result of the creative processes attached to "her" story, Josefina herself denies the testimonial nature of the work making it of consequent difficulty for the author to do so (Steele, "Gender" 33). This interdependence between author and informant on the question of the novel's genre highlights the personal nature of Poniatowska's decisions about her work, especially when contrasted with Barnet's lengthy theoretical decisions, and Pozas' sociological norms. In Poniatowska's description of Jesusa in 1978,

> La veo como un templo; un templo en el sentido en el que lo concebimos de niños cuando nos dicen que dentro de mosotros (sic) hay una arca que no

> debemos ensuciar jamás. Siempre he tenido de Jesusa esta imagen de la pureza. ("Hasta" 9)

Jesusa not only lacks corporal existence in this early description, but also is completely subsumed by and integrated into a child's vision of the world. As a consequence, she is excluded from the social impact of "epic hero" status that Barnet gives Eduardo, and even of the irritating presence of the "wrong" voice which is Rachel's fate.

When Poniatowska looks back on her wide range of socially committed writings, from the vantage point of 1990 in an interview with Agnes Dimitriou, she describes her motives somewhat differently:

> Porque lo que he hecho realmente yo es documentar mi país, en el sentido de escribir sobre los problemas del país. . . . durante casi trienta años yo pensé que yo debía nada más estar al servicio de causas sociales, que yo debía de olvidar totalmente las ideas que a mí se me ocurrían en la mañana acerca de tal o cual cosa. ¿Por qué? Porque no eran útiles para mi país. (130)

This is the expression of a mature, and more importantly, a successful writer who no longer hesitates to describe a former social, if not a political, agenda. She ascribes

those motives to her youth, and while it is easy to see their reflection in her topics from that period, their absence from her interviews signals a silence of Poniatowska's own that is only now being addressed. In contrast to Barnet's explicit political and literary agenda, Poniatowska chose to mediate her work through a private lens, concentrating on the details of the relationship between herself and her informant. To this end, she contextualized her informant in personal terms, deemphasizing the broader class issue raised by her work.

The author/informant dynamic discussed at such length by the authors of these testimonial novels exemplifies the fundamental differences portrayed and enacted by these hybrid works. The novels portray differences of race, class, literacy, experience, gender and power. They also enact in the privileged world social conflicts between literate and illiterate, rich and poor, male and female, powerless and powerful. Testimonial works, in contrast to other novels, at least, are the result of an explicit intention involving the author, the work and the reader; the authors have openly commented on their agendas, thereby encouraging specific attitudes from the reader. The agendas may be expressly stated as anthropological, or political, or disguised as "personal," in the case of Poniatowska's early comments on her text. These novels are

surrounded by their authors' statements attesting to agendas that include crossing conventionally accepted boundaries, be they of class, ethnicity or the more general "life experience." The extra-textual discussions of agenda inevitably encourage the reader to participate in the boundary-crossing experience portrayed in the novels.

In light of the often stated authorial agendas, it is surprising to find the authorial role in testimonial novels described as neutral and invisible. A number of critics hold this view, including those who consider the author an "invisible scribe" (Scott 419), or not an author at all but just "a medium, a recorder and transmitter of oral history" (Bruce Novoa 509). Beverley believes testimonio involves "a sort of erasure of the function, and thus also of the textual presence of the 'author'" ("Margin" 17). In fact, if I understand him correctly, while he ascribes intentionality to the narrator of testimonios, he seems to equate narrator with the informant.[19]

Opposing views include critics who have seen a type of dual authorship status as an appropriate lens through which to view the testimonial novels. Cella may get at this most appropriately by considering the author of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío to be a complex ideological product (150). The "yo" in the text could be conceived of as the product of the relationship between Poniatowska and Josefina (152).

Chevigny holds that the testimonial novel in general lends itself to a sort of "symbiosis" where "as the writers become ventriloquists for their subjects, so is the reverse true" (53). Steele also sees a sharing of voices in the novel's structure ("Mediación" 213). Franco chooses to consider Hasta no verte, Jesús mío a "compositely authored work," a choice she feels avoids the problem of "the hierarchical alignment of writer and informant, writing and voice" (178). Renato Prada Oropeza recognizes the effects of the author both in prologues and writings external to testimonio, as well as internally when the author offers his or her "versión del discurso original haciéndola pasar selección y acomodación para integrar un discurso 'coherente' dentro de las normas y las reglas del sistema que se toma de modelo."[20]

The authorial role in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío is unusual, somewhat contentious, and very intriguing. Kiddle states this unequivocally that "the proper approach to the non-fiction novel must be found in the author's intentions" (29). Those intentions affect all sorts of narrative decisions, and consequently should be taken into account. One of the more obvious signs of the author's influence is the narrative form and voice adopted in the novel. This includes, for example, the construct of a first person transference from informant through author to character.

The reader confronts the informant's voice in an apparently unmediated monologue. The semblance of authenticity granted by this autobiographical-like structuring of voices lends an innocent and, perhaps, misleading credibility to the voice in the text.

Along with this voicing choice, authorial presence can also be detected in the transformation from oral to written in the text, as exemplified in the organization of the words on the page, paragraphs, chapters, dialogue, a title page, etc. The agenda here is clearly to make an oral voice available to a reading community. This translation of the oral to the written signals the willingness and even desire of the literate culture to "listen" to the oral culture. At the same time, it underscores the hierarchical status of the listener/reader's culture and the speaker's, by allowing the organizational customs of written narrative to govern the text.[21]

Beyond these structural and fairly obvious textual devices common to all testimonial novels lies another area where the author's role in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío becomes apparent. It is the struggle for interpretive authority. As voice and narrative structure are mediated by the author of the text, so is the role of interpreter of events. In Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, the struggle between narrator and character over interpretive authority occurs

and is resolved in the first few pages of the novel.[22] What I see reflected in this first and very unique segment of the novel are shadows of differences commonly, but falsely, attributed to the literate/non- literate worlds. The former is often believed to be the sole possessor of abstract and symbolic interpretration, while the latter is portrayed as child-like, able to know only that which can be observed and experienced directly.

The conflict occurs in the first chapter of the book, eight pages long, which situates Jesusa in the midst of her spiritual world, and leads in to the narration of her life story that begins in chapter two. This first chapter gains significance because, alone among all the chapters, it breaks the predominantly chronological order of Jesusa's life story. In this section, Jesusa struggles to understand the meaning of certain visions she has of her spirit protectors, of herself and of the meaning of her life. Initially, Jesusa asserts an interpretive role as character, but then belies aspects of it, ceding that authority to an agency outside her represented self, the narrative authority, considered here to reflect the author's agenda.

The struggles for interpretive power are framed in terms of conflicts between the represented world and the experienced world. Lucille Kerr posits this opposition in clear and original terms:

> Jesusa's statements . . . draw distinctions between the telling of things (that is, the narrative produced by the act of telling) and the things themselves . . . access to the truth about things, access to reality, comes mainly, if not exclusively, from direct apprehension of the material world, from one's own presence to the reality that one seeks to know. (6)

Jesusa believes what she experiences, and doubts stories that are told to her by others. The opposition defined by these different interpretive strategies reflects the connections between class and literacy that surround the construction of the text.

The episode that begins the text describes a process of interpretation and the role of interpreters. In this first chapter, physically and chronologically removed from the body of the text, Jesusa speaks about her struggles to understand the spiritual meaning of her life. Initially confident of her interpretive powers, she begins her story with the narration of a vision she had:

> Esta es la tercera vez que regreso a la tierra, pero nunca había sufrido tanto como en esta reencarnación ya que en la anterior fui reina. Lo sé porque en una videncia que tuve me vi la cola. (9)

The "cola," described as "un triángulo jaspeado de tigre con manchas negras y amarillas," and "el pedazo de piel de tigre como la flecha en la cola del diablo" (9), draws the attention of both the reader and Jesusa as it establishes a mark of difference that must be interpreted. In this instance, the interpretive positions include Jesusa and an undefined "they" from the Obra Espiritual, a community spiritualist group. The Obra Espiritual voice suggests that the spots on the tail symbolize the debts and past sins that Jesusa must redress during this lifetime. Jesusa accepts this interpretation as true because it corresponds with the realities of her concrete world: "Mi deuda debe ser muy pesada ya que Dios me quitó a mis padres desde chica y dejó que viniera a abonar mis culpas sola como lazarina" (10). The loss of her parents, her isolation and unrootedness, are concrete features of Jesusa's world that allow her to confirm the validity of the spiritual interpretation. It is true because it conforms to her experience.

When these two interpretive strategies, the concrete experiential strategy and a more abstract process involving representation next appear together, a conflict develops between them for interpretive authority. The incident revolves around Jesusa's need to interpret her vision of a man astride a camel who chases and kills her with a pistol.

Still confident of the interpretations afforded by the spiritual community, Jesusa looks to Padre Elías, one of several mediums who provide "la explicación de sus revelaciones" (10) for the meaning of her vision. He interprets the figure as her husband in a previous life, a view that is accepted neutrally by Jesusa, until Padre Elías goes on to describe the husband's role as a caring one: "-Pues es tu esposo, el que cuida de ti . . . -Me quedé callada, ya no le seguí escarbando pero solita estudié mi sueño y me viene al pensamiento quién fue y por qué me mató en el primer tiempo" (11).

When the represented world is at odds with her concrete experience, Jesusa chooses an independent and solitary reflection that is based on that concrete experience. She opts out of the symbolic interpretive mode, preferring to study her vision "solita," precisely because the conclusion it offers is at odds with her experience in the concrete world where husbands do not "take care of" anyone. She supports her position by making extended reference to her defunct husband, Pedro Aguilar, who ignored and mistreated her. The figure on the camel must be suffering now, she concludes, precisely because "no ha cumplido como mi esposo" (11).

Jesus's rejection of representations of reality gradually escalates. When her own reflections lead her

into an arena where experience is unavailable to guide her assessment of what is "true", she eventually arrives at a point where she becomes mute, and can no longer articulate her own thoughts. As she begins to engage in a non-experiential thought process, she focuses on herself as an object to be interpreted, insisting on her own powers of self-reflection: ". . . yo solita con lo que se me revela voy sacando en limpio mi vida pasada. Mentalmente me profundizo mucho, tanto que hasta me duele la cabeza como si adentro trayera este mundo tan calamitoso" (12). This declaration of her own skills and power of interpretation contrasts sharply with her earlier dependence on the spiritual community as the primary source of valid interpretation. Having temporarily left that community behind, due to the conflict between its interpretations and her concrete experience, Jesusa now establishes herself as the interpretive authority as well as the object to be interpreted. She asserts her own multifaceted nature: "Uno tiene muchos ojos dentro del cerebro como un atadijo de estrellas. Por eso hay que cerrar los ojos corporales. . . para poder ver detrás" (13).

With this multiplicity of eyes, Jesusa recognizes and expresses the complexity involved in an abstract mapping of her identity, her object to be interpreted. This difficulty with defining a specific and concrete identity may

encapsulate authorial dilemmas as much as character ones. The "I" of a testimonial novel is a comlicated creation, and uncertainty as to what it represents is at the center of most disputes about the nature of testimonial novels. The complexity is dizzying, as manifested, for example, in Williams psychoanalytic reading of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, " . . . in speaking of the self the 'I' that the subject pronounces (the perceived 'I') is to be distinguished from the 'I' that does the pronouncing (the 'I' that perceives" (216). Her analysis of the 'I' that does the pronouncing in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, while complex, does not stray outside the bonds of the represented world of the text. Kushigian, however, does see the authoritative narrative voice as one that summarizes and confuses the perspective of Jesusa with that of the author (675). "Al apropiarse el personaje de Jesusa," she says, "Elena Poniatowska se declara el sujeto de su propio conocimiento, incorporando la narrativa de primera persona a la novela en forma de un diario" (675). Even Beverley, with whom I disagree on the issue of a vanished authorial presence, sees the narrator in testimonio speaking "for, or in the name of, a community or group" ("Margin" 16). While I realize he has in mind a broader community than that created by Poniatowska and Josefina, he does recognize a multiple presence behind the "I" the reader perceives in

testimonio.

After deconstructing the "I," the very narrative black hole/core of the testimonial novel, Jesusa closes her bodily eyes, her concrete world eyes, and ends up lost and mute, in a world where she cannot speak about anything but the concrete, and can no longer even evaluate that: ". . . en esta última reencarnación he sido muy perra, pegalona y borracha. Muy de todo. No puedo decir que he sido buena. Nada puedo decir" (13, emphasis added). Jesusa's abstract reflections take her to a no-where land where she is judged evil and and can no longer speak, interact, or exchange information to an interested listener (also known as a reader involved in "believing" a represented world). She is mute in the represented world of the text. The focus of the reader's interest, if "intentions" are accepted as an element of testimonial novels, will be the protagonist, Jesusa, who has just become incapacitated as a result of her contact with the metaphor of "los ojos/estrellas" that represent her mental images of herself. All her claims to the contrary, Jesusa, in the end, is unable to articulate an interpretation of her own life if it involves symbolic representation as opposed to experienced events, an opposition that also characterizes the literate/oral boundary.

This situation creates the narrative necessity of a

voice that can act as "translator" between the two worlds, the world of Jesusa's concrete experience expressed orally, and the world of the novel where that experience exists only on a represented level. In this way, the opening pages of the novel portray a justification for Elena Poniatowska's role in the creation of the work. As author and narrator, she has established, in the represented world of the text, a parallel to the "medium/transcriber/editor" functions ascribed to her authorial role in the real world.

In this case, the struggle for interpretive authority clearly revolves around the validity of different truth-producing procedures. As a character, Jesusa appears unable to articulate an interpretation or to act in a represented world, to assign value and "escarbar" the meaning of her life. She can know the concrete details of her life, but in the represented world of the text, she is portrayed as needing an interpreter of those events, someone who can operate comfortably in a world where knowledge is available only through representation. This someone, the narrator/author/compiler/transcriber, or more simply put, the writer, has created a hierarchical narrative situation that places the literate community in a superior position to the community or individual who acts and reacts on an experiential level and is unable to articulate that experience in a way valued by the literate

community. This assumes, of course, that articulate symbolic interpretations are held to be superior to experiential interpretations. Such a hierarchization is not neutral but reflects the privilege and interests of a certain hegemonic group.

It is worth noting that this introductory section to the novel ends with the words: "Son muchos los que están en las tinieblas de oscuridad y allí se quedan soterrados hasta que una alma caritativa los llama" (16). These are Jesusa's words in reference to finding her mother's lost soul. In light of the interpretive struggles portrayed earlier, they also bring to mind the literate and educated middle class benevolently rescuing the illiterate from their otherwise "doomed" existences, with Jesusa in the role of the "soterrada" and Poniatowska playing the "alma caritativa" that calls/writes her back into existence, or at least into existence in the represented world of the text. Those familiar with the text may recall the scene immediately following the "soterrada" image: the scene that begins the represented recreation of Jesusa's life story in chapter two finds her at the bottom of her mother's grave as the gravediggers begin to fill it in. She is "soterrada," temporarily in her own concrete world of experience, but more definitely so in the world of representation.

What I see happening in this first and very unique segment of the novel are the reflected shadows of differences commonly, but falsely, attributed to the literate/non-literate worlds. The former is often believed to be the sole possessor of abstract and symbolic interpretation, while the latter is, child-like, able to know only that which can be observed and experienced directly. Jesusa'a appearance in the reader's world, her "rescue" into the literate world, has been made at the expense of her character's ability to operate in a represented, non-concrete world, and thus to serve as the interpreter of her own life. Alongside this mythic difference, however, is another one involving the appearance of Jesusa, as a reflection of a very real Josefina Bórquez, in a world of readers. The efforts of the translator have rescued Jesusa from a "tinieblas" of non-existence in the literary world, making her, at least temporarily, front-page news in the represented world of the text.[23]

I hope to have shown how the role of the writing author impacts on the image of the marginalized individual that the literate community perceives in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío. By recognizing the impact of the writing author, the reader can avoid the illusion of a simplified and easy access to difference. Hiding the role of the writing author conceals the complexities and consequences

involved in crossing firmly entrenched ideological boundaries, and may mislead the "literate elite" into believing that, because these boundaries are obscured in the represented world, they are also diminished in the real world. As an example, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no critical inquiry or comment concerning the allocation of profits from the very succesful sales of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío. I wonder if Josefina Bórquez, or any assigned inheritors, received any monetary compensation for her story.

Stated in its most extreme form, this concern, in Castillo's words, is that Poniatowska may be "the unwitting and therefore all the more culpable participant in a questionable cultural translation from a colonial to a metropolitan context which enacts a literary structure of rape" (29). In a kinder and, I think, more accurate light, Steele summarizes the issue in this way:

> Se trata, en gran medida, del clásico dilema del escritor comprometido que aspira a representar (en el doble sentido de retratar y abogar por) sectores de las clases campesina, proletaria o, como en este caso, lumpenproletaria. A la vez que su trabajo puede contribuir a la educación del público lector sobre la situación de las clases "marginadas," la cercanía--tanto física como

> emocional--del escritor con sus informantes sirve como un recuerdo constante de que él o ella se beneficia de las enormes diferencias socioeconómicas que mantienen a sus informantes en la miseria. ("Mediación" 216)

Another "recuerdo constante" appears in the appearance of the oral in written form, constantly reminding us of reader privilege. This may be an unintended but extremely productive facet of testimonial novels.

As heartfelt as their attempts may be to bridge the painful divisions in societies, testimonial novels perform under constraints belonging to the literate and less marginalized world. One may question the validity of any attempt to portray difference in writing, but this and other narrative experiments with the challenges involved may well lead to new solutions, new discursive strategies, that will illuminate the experience of cultural difference textually.

Notes

[1] As John Beverley points out, testimonio-like texts have existed for a long time at the margins of literature, but for practical purposes, he speaks of testimonio coalescing as a new narrative genre in the 1960s ("Margin" 13). Sklodowska points to the international success of Miguel Barnet's Biografía de un cimarrón (1966) as crucial to the incorporation of the term "testimonial novel" into Latin American criticism. Non-fiction narrative, she goes on, culminated in the period 1970-1985 and hit the peak of its popularity with critics during the 1980s (1).

[2] In his typology of testimonio, Beverley, for instance, includes autobiography, autobiographic novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novela-testimonio, and "facto-graphic literature" ("Margin" 13).

[3] Although most critics refer to Hasta no verte, Jesús mío as a testimonial novel (Chevigny, Davis, Gertz, Hancock, and Sklodowska, among others), there are those who are less definite about its specific place in the typology of testimonial works. Jean Franco, for example, who refers to it as a "novel" (her quotation marks), considers its genre

> . . . problematic, since the text can be clas-

> sified neither as literature nor as ethnography, although it seeems to belong to the life stories of the subaltern classes exemplified by Ricardo Pozas' life story of a Chamula, Juan Pérez Jolote. (177)

By 1990, testimonial literature had several defining characteristics that varied according to the commentator. John Beverley, for instance, distinguishes testimonio, a joining of class forces, from a testimonial or "non-fiction novel" where the author extensively reworks the informant's story with explicit literary goals ("Margin" 25). I would expand Beverley's concept of goals to include the author's personal, social, and/or political agenda as it relates to the literary goals, which cannot exist in isolation. Georg Gugelberger and Michael Kearney highlight a different quality as essential to testimonio, and one that I believe distinguishes it from Poniatowska's testimonial novel:

> . . . [W]here in autobiography the aggandisement of the ego makes significant popular insights impossible, where in the comparable ethnographic life histories the objective facts prevail, we find in testimonial literature a learning process which leads to action improving social relations. (9)

This description excludes Hasta no verte, Jesús mío from

belonging to this "pure" form of testimonio unless the "learning" and "action" referred to can take place in the reader, not, I think, the authors' meaning. It is possible that the genre definition issue arising from Hasta no verte, Jesús mío has more to do with the problematic nature of characterizing testimonial novels as a discrete form than it does with whether Hasta no verte, Jesús mío fits into that somewhat nebulous category.

[4] The earliest comments on the work were character and thematic analyses, focusing primarily on the protagonist, Jesusa Palancares. See, for example, Loustaunau (1973), and Young (1975). While the emphasis on character analysis has not diminished, it has branched out into more specific regions. Tatum (1979), for example, details the picaresque aspects of the protagonist's character; Lemaitre (1981), discusses the Jungian aspects of her character, and Williams (1990) analyzes her with respect to the Lacanian model of psychoanalytic theory.

[5] Kiddle (1984) situates Hasta no verte, Jesús mío in the broader context of testimonial novels in Mexico, providing excellent background on the broader cultural issues of the times as well as an excellent summary of the picaresque aspects of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío. Chevigny (1985) discusses class differences between Poniatowska and Jesusa, and how these might have influenced Poniatowska's

later work, while Davis (1986) focuses on the class-related aspects of Jesusa's character. Kushigian (1987), Saltz (1987) and Cella (1991) discuss, in detail, the genre questions posed by this testimonial novel. Excellent narrative analysis has been done by Saltz (1987) as well and Jorgensen (1986, 1988). Many critics have analyzed Jesusa's character from a variety of feminist perspectives, including Shea (1987), Jorgensen (1988) and López-Gonzalez (1991). Franco (1989) emphasizes the non-canonical nature of the work as it relates to women's efforts to be heard by the dominant Mexican culture of the period. Steele (1992), who has had extended contact with Poniatowska over the years, reviews the author's works in the light of gender, genre and authority issues. Woodrich (1992) analyzes the protagonist's character in minute detail, and situates the work in an autobiographical arena.

[6] Jorgensen attributes the emphasis on character analysis to the multiplicity of the "I" in the novel, which refers to Jesusa as the protagonist, focalizer and narrator ("Perspectivas" 112, emphasis added).

[7] Cella, Kushigian and Woodrich discuss Hasta no verte, Jesús mío in light of the conventions of autobiography.

[8] The range of authenticity ascribed to Poniatowska's work seems to have been more a function of critical interpretations than of Poniatowska's description of the

creative process involved in its production. Her statements have been quite consistent in this regard, although she gradually emphasized the novelistic nature of the work over its testimonial aspects. In 1978, for example, Poniatowska refers to the novel as a "novela testimonial" based on a procedure of reconstructing interviews she had with her informant, although she clearly states that the procedure involved eliminating repetitions and elaborating where she thought necessary ("Hasta" 9). In an interview in 1981, she asserts that the text is a "novel based on a completely real account . a testimony based on a reality she [the informant] didn't recognize as hers" (García Pinto 167). By 1990, in an interview with Juan Armando Epple, she says the novel "se fundamenta en una voz real, pero su composición sigue las pautas creadoras de la novela" (127-128). In a personal comment made to Cynthia Steele in 1988, Poniatowska actually pointed out sections of the novel that were completely invented ("Gender" 38). However, she also let Steele examine some of the earlier transcriptions of interviews Poniatowska had with her informant. Steele's conclusion was that Poniatowska was "remarkably faithful" to her informant's story ("Gender" 34).

[9] There are many different approaches to the fact/fiction dilemma in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío. An example

of the growing complexity surrounding this issue begins with the statement by Elena Poniatowska that she cannot "afirmar que el relato es una transcripción directa de su vida porque ella misma [Josefina Bórquez] lo rechazaría" (Young and Young 76). The authors use this information to distinguish Hasta no verte, Jesús mío from new journalism, considering it instead "factually based fiction" (76). By 1992, Lucille Kerr comments on this same rejection of the text's veracity by the informant. Kerr's statements reflect the growing complexity of the fact/fiction dilemma in this testimonial novel:

> Oddly, this text we are to take as a testimonial of truth, as a reliable and essentially accurate (though also 'literary') account of what its narrator tells us, is a text that virtually puts into question the possibility of fashioning such a testimony. Hasta no verte, Jesús mío itself becomes an arena within which such access to the "real" or the "true" is proposed as problematical, if not always impossible, by Jesusa herself, the subject whose seemingly truthful representations fill its pages. (3)

[10] I stress the fact that these works are only the immediate precursors of Poniatowska's novel. The roots of the testimonial novel are varied and deep, extending back

to what González Echevarría calls the "primal American literary scene" where writing chroniclers asked the "natives" to tell their stories (123).

[11] Many critics cite the importance of Pozas' ethnographic study of the Tzotzil culture, Juan Pérez Jolote, as a precursor to the modern Mexican testimonial novel. See, for example, Kiddle's second chapter, "Historical Precedents for the Novela Testimonial in Mexico."

[12] Elzbieta Sklodowska traces this faith in the individual being able to represent a broader culture to the methodologies initiated by the Chicago School in the 1920s which searched for "un recuento de experiencia individual para revelar las acciones del individuo como agente humano y participante de la vida social" (64).

[13] Sklodowska includes an interesting footnote to the discussion of the role testimonio plays in the literate world. She cites Hugo Achugar who argues that testimonio is a discursive space where the struggles for power involve not the issue of the hegemony of the literate world, but rather the question of which sector within the literate world will control it (106 n18). Achugar's comments come from "Historias paralelas/historias ejemplares: La historia y la voz del otro."

[14] He later refers to the work as "una biografía" and as "una pequeña monografía de la cultura chamula" (7),

statements that reflect the anthropological roots of testimonial works in Latin America. All references come from the 5th edition of Juan Pérez Jolote.

[15] The essay is reproduced in Testimonio y literatura, Ed. René Jara and Hernán Vidal (281-302).

[16] González Echevarría recognizes the dichotomy inherent in the author/informant dynamic in Biografía de un cimarrón. Speaking of Barnet's goals, he says

> He wants to convert, to become another, to write from within a memory that will be inconsolable, a memory that will finally give meaning, sense to the past by aligning it in a significant fashion with the present, a memory that will not be consoled by the ambiguities of language and literature. . . . It is an illusion that those dreams are realized, an illusion that the text's own dialectics dissolves. (120)

[17] Many critics have stressed the importance of the "personal" for Poniatowska, not just in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, but in her whole body of work. Chevigny feels that the privilege issue was one of the primary motives for Poniatowska's success in many of her works:

> The particular force of Poniatowska's work derives from the emptiness she found in her position as a woman of privilege and from her

> using that position to cultivate a readiness of imagination and spirit; when this readiness met with vivid exposure to the dispossessed, she converted equivocal privilege into real strength (50).

Other critics have also noted the importance of the relationship Poniatowska developed with Josefina. It reminds Steele of "ciertos aspectos del nacionalismo cultural de los años veinte y treinta, en su idealización de lo campesino o de lo popular como fuente de vitalidad y de la identidad nacional" ("Mediación" 213). Lagos-Pope reports hearing Poniatowska explain her preference for the testimonial style due to its "manera de contrarrestar su sentimiento de desarraigo del país, es decir, debido a un sentimiento de inseguridad personal que no le permite asumir su propia voz para hablar de la realidad de México" (249). Beverley feels that testimonio in general is an instance of the New Left and feminist slogan that "the personal is the political" ("Margin" 15).

[18] Lagos-Pope believes that Poniatowska chose the testimonial novel genre precisely because it would allow her to articulate a radical critique of women's conditions in Mexico under the guise of an "authentic" character "lo cual," in Lagos-Pope's words, "suaviza el carácter subversivo del relato" (253).

[19] Beverley says:

> In oral history it is the intentionality of the recorder--usually a social scientist--that is dominant, and the resulting text is in some sense "data." In testimonio, by contrast, it is the intentionality of the narrator that is paramount. The situation of narration in testimonio has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, and so on, implicated in the act of narration itself. ("Margin" 14-15)

Although Beverley makes clear in other places that he is aware of the "inescapable contradictions" inherent in the "narrator/compiler/reader" relations in testimonio, I am unsure precisely whose functions he has in mind when he here refers to the "intentionality of the narrator," since the narrator of testimonios usually lacks access to the literate world ("Margin" 21). I also wonder if the "urgency to communicate" assumes an urgent need to communicate specifically to a reader.

[20] The quotation is from Sklodowska (85) who cites Prada Oropeza's article "Constitución y configuración del sujeto en el discurso-testimonio."

[21] For an excellent narrative analysis of how focalization contributes to the overall effect of Hasta no

verte, Jesús mío, see Jorgensen 1988. Friedman analyzes how the intentional narrative structure creates an ironic reading of the novel.

[22] Because the interpretive roles and positions are negotiated and determined in the first chapter, I limit my textual analysis to this section of the novel. The remainder of the novel concentrates on Jesusa's experiences, but does not engage the conflict over interpretation that occurs in the first chapter.

[23] Josefina Bórquez' rejection of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío may be, in part, a judgment on the alterations, deletions and additions made by Poniatowska to the life she, Bórquez, had struggled to represent to the author. Then again, her opposition may be ascribed to a very real rejection by Bórquez of representation as a means of knowing "truth," a trait which would align her closely with the represented character of Jesusa.

Chapter Six

Concluding Cultural Positions

The final section of Frank Lentricchia's Literary Terms for Critical Study (1990) is titled "Literature, Culture and Politics," and contains seven articles discussing those topics. The first is "Culture," the last "Ideology." Within that frame, two essays deal with literature as a product, "Literary History," and "Canon." The three remaining entries categorize subjects currently relevant to cultural identity and difference: "Race," "Ethnicity" and "Gender." Although interesting to speculate about what the list leaves out--class, literacy, nationality--each entry stresses a belief in the reproductive nature of texts along with the more familiar notion of texts reflecting the societies that produce them. Lee Patterson, for example, in "Literary History" points out that "texts do not merely reflect social reality but create it" (260). In "Ethnicity," Werner Sollers hopes that literary analysis will lead to an "understanding of the imaginative and symbolic structures that intensify (or, at times even generate) group consciousness among dominant as well as suppressed collectivities" (303, emphasis added). The productive nature of texts is most forcefully expressed in the final essay, "Ideology," where James H. Kavanaugh foregrounds the importance of ideological analysis in literary or cultural study. He is interested in "the institutional and/or

textual apparatuses that work on the reader's or spectator's imaginary conceptions of self and social order in order to call or solicit him/her into a specific form of social 'reality' and social subjectivity" (310).

Considered in the light of these statements, the novels studied here, Oficio de tinieblas, Las posibilidades del odio and Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, not only reflect how difference is constituted, but also shape the reader's images of cultural identity.[1] To produce these responses, the novels interact with literary codes, expectations and contracts shared by the authors and the readers. They also reproduce, through the medium of those contracts, positions for the reader within the arena of cultural identity and difference. After reviewing how these novels enact difference at a literary level, and how these decisions might affect a reader, I then reevaluate these activities in the light of concerns about truth and fiction, orality and literacy, and the literary production of difference.

Each of the novels enacts difference as a text. In other words, each challenges existing reader experiences and expectations. Castellanos, the "token woman as canonical writer," appropriated the then predominantly male tradition in Mexico, the indigenista novel, and changed that form by updating the narrative techniques involved (Castillo 221). At a time when the Mexican novel was

oriented to more cosmopolitan definitions of identity, Oficio de tinieblas moved away from the narrative center, and positioned itself at the border. It is at the chronological border of the indigenista tradition in Mexico, and envigorated the indigenista topic with its narrative complexity. Interiorization, quoted monologue, and dramatic focalization switches both reflect and help create a more subtle and sophisticated approach to the portrayal of cultural difference.

Las posibilidades del odio and Hasta no verte, Jesús mío enact more obvious differences, stretching and, in the latter, perhaps even breaking traditional generic boundaries. Puga's novel unremittingly shifts between the dualities of short story and novel to highlight the difficulties of creating any sort of unitary vision of the nation represented. It also struggles with the dichotomy between official history and personal stories in an attempt to contrast the two strategies as ways-of-knowing. The novel quite explicitly privileges the fictional representation of the personal over more "historical" events in an effort to challege the constructed barrier between fact and fiction. It questions notions of "truth" by intercalating personal stories within the offical chronology contained in the text. It thereby modifies and challenges any attempt at an objective interpretation of history.

Although consistently referred to as a novel, Hasta no verte, Jesús mío is analyzed to a large extent as a non-fiction document, a sociological study of an individual whose character says something about mexicanidad. Because Jesusa's character connects, in some way, to a real-world individual, the boundaries between literature and other narrative genres comes into play. John Beverley even questions whether testimonial works belong to literature: ". . . testimonio arises outside or at the margin of the historically constituted institution of literature in Latin America, and in some cases it actively resists being literature" ("Against" 11). Hasta no verte, Jesús mío exposes the boundaries within the field of literature between fact, fiction and (auto)-biography. Both Puga's and Poniatowska's texts are defined as different from an imagined novel-like form, and as a result invite questions about reader expectations. The challenge to traditional literary definitions may reflect the difficulties involved in encoding marginated characters within dominant rhetorical strategies. As these novels attempt to portray difference at a represented level, in the text, they also appear to need to re-configure the literary space available for their imagined worlds of difference.

One area where they seem to have expanded available literary positions involves the image of author that they

create. In Reclaiming the Author, Lucille Kerr discusses the author's reappearance in Latin American fiction as a "figure of considerable authority" (161). She goes on:

> Yet what emerges in this appearance is not a traditional concept universally triumphant in a contemporary setting, but rather a figure that is drawn in dialectical relation to the notion of the author as a disappearing, if not defunct, entity. In performing a critical reexamination of "the author," Spanish American fiction opens up a space for the appearance of that concept's contrary--but nevertheless compatible--figures. (161)

The figures of Castellanos, Puga and Poniatowska, as suggested by their texts, have certain "authorities" in common. Not only can they enact difference at a literary level, they also share an awareness that they are portraying difference in the represented world of the text. Although (or perhaps, because) it seems obvious, this statement is worth considering. "Awareness" of difference means being subject to some ideological norm that asserts that category, that defines, for example, Indians as different from Spanish-speaking mestizos. In Puga's novel, Black Kenyans are not British colonizers (although sometimes they try to be "like them"), and neither group is

Mexican. In Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, where the boundary between the represented world of the text and the "real" world is intentionally blurred, the non-literate protagonist does not belong to the community of readers and writers. These three novels name, as they cross, boundaries of predominant concern to identity--race, nationality, literacy, gender, and class-- and as they do so, they also position the authors with respect to these categories. The authors, in other words, are subject to the categories of cultural difference that they portray. The terms of identity they propose characterize their difference as being non-Indian, literate Mexican women with the desire and opportunity to write novels.[2]

Given the authors' awareness of differences, an additional trait that characterizes the authorial identities of these novels is a belief in the value of exploring the construction of identity and difference. An attempt is being made, in each of the novels, to promote a particular understanding of the articulation of difference in Mexican society, both to recognize it and to adopt a certain position in relation to it. The choice of the axis of difference seems to be of some personal relevance to the author-as-person. Castellanos faced indigenous/mestizo differences growing up in Chiapas, Puga spent several years living and working in Kenya, and Poniatowska confronted the

challenges of class and nationality in her efforts to integrate herself into Mexican society. To some extent, then, each individual appears to be working out not only issues of personal interest, but also issues related to the construction of their own identities as members of the imagined community of the nation.

Accompanying the shared belief in the value of depicting cultural difference, is the assumed right these authors express to portray communities distinct from themselves and their readers. This may be, in fact, the ultimate authorial privilege posited by these novels. Throughout this study, I have pointed out some of the techniques available to the writing authority, but have not stressed the implications of assuming the position of representing a community distinct from both author and the world of readers.

The authority to portray cultural difference appears in the opening pages of each of these novels. Each text begins with a narrating agency that immediately subjects the reader to its knowledge and authority to address cultural differences. The narration and focalization decisions portray individuals affected by the axis of cultural difference that dominates each work. Oficio de tinieblas begins with the voice and focalization of an indigenous character who narrates the history of the

Tzotzil people. His narration depicts the Tzotzil community's gradual domination by the Spanish newcomers. Conflict exists in the represented world of the text, but, at first glance, not at the narrative level, where the constant indigenous perspective dominates the text. By beginning with this point of view, the text establishes its authority to portray a culture foreign to its readers.

Las posibilidades del odio also demonstrates its authority to portray difference in its opening pages, but begins with a character subject to the negative influences of colonialism, the difference the novel engages most insistently. Like the indigenous character that appears in the opening pages of Oficio de tinieblas, the white tour guide who first narrates and focalizes in Puga's novel establishes the terms of difference relevant to the text while simultaneously reflecting the author's knowledge and ability to adopt this narrating position. Colonialism appears not as an issue defined solely by race, but, in this episode, as a division controlled by issues of nationality, origin, and independence. The guide has descended from the British, after all, but no longer is one, belonging instead to the colonized nation of Kenya. By focalizing the issues of colonialism through the eyes of a white individual subjected to its evils, the author demonstrates the ability to look beyond other social

divisions, race and nationality in this first episode, but later class and ethnic background. In this way, the authorial presence foregrounds colonialism as the primary cultural difference that matters, and establishes its ability to narrate from the position of the colonized, regardless of their racial background.

In Poniatowska's novel, Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, the authority to narrate difference appears somewhat less directly. No overreaching cultural division is named in the first pages, as is the case with the indigenismo and colonial themes. The text begins with Jesusa's narration of a dream of herself in a previous life. The focalization strategies are similar to those in the other two novels in that a character representative of the primary difference embodied in the novel is the first to appear, and the first voice to be heard, but the axis of difference, which I read to be an intertwining of class and literacy, is not immediately apparent. Jesusa's initial topic, in other words, is not literacy or poverty, but rather her struggles to interpret her spiritual self. As so often happens with this novel, solutions are suggested by discussions outside of the text. In an interview with Cynthia Steele, Poniatowska pointed out that one of the reasons for her informant's rejection of the novel as a portrait of her life is its lack of emphasis on spiritual matters: "Para ella la

novela habría sido sólo el espiritualismo, la carestía y la mala situación actual" ("Elena" 97). In other words, Poniatowska's engagements with Josefina were dominated by signs of difference that, in her role as author, she chose not to emphasize in the novel: interest in spiritual affairs, and Mexico's poor economic situation. The writing authority resolves the conflict between the writing and speaking "authors," thereby reinforcing the conflict between poles of orality and writing.

Although the topics of class and literacy are absent from the opening pages of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, the narrative situation does, nevertheless, reflect the predominant axis of difference found in the novel, an axis that defines a boundary between orality and writing. Class and its interaction with literacy dominate the narrative structure of the novel. Jesusa "speaks" her story to the reader, and Poniatowska writes it, demonstrating the essence of author-ity. The struggles involved in crossing these boundaries are addressed and played out in the initial pages of the text. The reader has met the only narrating agency present in the novel, an agency that carries the predominant axis of difference within it, but perhaps does not recognize it as immediately as in the other two novels. Difference, as a theme of the novel, is certainly instantly apparent in the represented world,

however, as Jesusa tries to decipher the meaning of the cola she envisions herself as having in an earlier life. This non-human feature establishes difference as the focus of the novel as surely as the indigenist or colonized focalizers of Oficio de tinieblas and Las posibilidades del odio.

The oral nature of Jesusa's declarations identify an axis of difference that each of the novels addresses. In fact, the opening sections of each are "spoken" by a character. Authorial influences at a narrative level--an anonymous narrating agency, or changes in the narrating agency,--are minimalized at the moment when the reader first encounters representations of difference, images that are highly mediated cultural constructs. As examples the oral Tzotzil in Oficio de tinieblas is figured in written Spanish, as is the non-literate Jesusa in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío. Las posibilidades del odio opens with a written "translation" into Spanish of a conversation taking place in English.

The authority in the opening pages of each novel occupies a position that chooses and textualizes "other" cultures, translates unfamiliar languages for the reader, and writes oral discourse. At a narrative level, however, the passages appear deceptively free of mediation. The oral, character-bound narrations obscure the authority of

cultural mediation in an apparently unmediated narrative context.[3] To illustrate, the story told by the indigenous focalizer in Oficio de tinieblas exhibits many features of oral discourse, in particular, repeated uses of deixis along with a self-declared performance involving "telling." By the time this narrating agency disappears, the reader is already accustomed to adopting the cultural views portrayed in the text and consequently less likely to notice the process of his/her narrative positioning and more involved in adopting the positions made available. By "hiding" the narrating authority in the guise of orality, the beginning of the novel makes the portrayal of difference seem normal, unmediated, and, as a result, more authoritative.

Orality is also the road to difference in Puga's novel. The tour guide's monologue in the first episode minimizes the authorial presence by providing direct access to his end of a conversation with an implied listener, a British citizen vacationing in Kenya on a safari--the "great white hunter." The oral nature of the discourse is evident in the tour guide's responses and clarifications to this implied listener. Authority at the narrative level is not, however, quite as concealed as in Oficio de tinieblas. The reader has already encountered authorial mediation prior to this oral discourse in the form of the poem, epigraph and official chronology of Kenya's history that

precedes the first episode. In fact, throughout Las posibilidades del odio, authorial mediation through constant and dramatic changes of the narrating agency and focalizer characterizes this work as the most forthright about the mediation by an authorial presence.

Of the three novels, Hasta no verte, Jesús mío involves the highest degree of concealment of authorial intervention. Not only the novel itself, but even the epigraph preceding the actual text, portray oral discourse. Jesusa seems to be speaking her story directly to the reader, who is instantly immersed in the role of listener. This situation is typical of testimonial-type works, since they intend to portray a non-writing individual to the world of readers. It is curious, however, that in a work designed to cross the boundaries between orality and writing, the writing agency should be so explicitly effaced. The concealment of authorial mediation proposes to privilege the discourse of a character outside of the literacy contract, as if the author were pretending not to be writing. Through its insistence on portraying oral discourse, the seemingly absent authorial presence attempts to attach more "reality" to the represented world in the text.

The success of this endeavor can be read in the high volume of critical articles analyzing Jesusa as a representative individual of marginated classes in Mexico, as a

"real-world" figure, in other words. It has also provoked an interesting discussion among readers as to the "authenticity" of her character. Concealing the authorial presence has worked well if measured by the intense discussions around the "truth" of the image represented in this and other testimonial works. Beverley generalizes the issue in discussions where he cites the "erasure of the function, and thus also of the textual presence of the 'author'" in testimonio as one factor in producing the presence of a "'real' popular voice," which he does, however, acknowledge to be an illusion ("Margin" 18-21).

Of course, in none of these "oral" entries into worlds representing marginated individuals is the writing agency ever really absent, but it has been a revealing exercise to discover the number of discussions that describe Jesusa (or the Tzotzil community, or Kenyan identity) as if they were other than textual inventions. Kavanaugh defines the problem most clearly when he posits the kind of question an ideological analysis undertakes:

> It is less "Does a given ideological discourse or practice accurately represent Thebes, or New York, or Managua?"; it is more: "What is the effect on social subjects of a given ideological practice, in a given situation, transformatively (mis)representing Thebes, or New York, or Mana-

gua, in precisely the way it does?" (314)

The transformation in all three of the novels emphasized here, of oral discourse into written narrative, is a (mis)-representation that conceals, to a greater or lesser degree, the impact of the writing authority on the text. Hiding the writing agency in oral discourse conceals not only the authority to write, but also the cultural authority and consequences involved in representing a culture "foreign" to the reader.

The unacknowledged cultural prerogative to portray difference is at the root of an important critical response to the particular (mis)-representation or orality in writing. For some critics, this amounts to a form of "treachery," the kind which "takes place in the shift from the community bound by orally transmitted culture to the nation" (Franco, Plotting 132).[4] The "treachery" appears to lie in the inauthentic portrayal of the oral community for the purpose of communicating with the cultural elite of readers and writers. Debra Castillo, referring to Castellanos's Balún-Canán and Puga's Las posibilidades del odio, states the problem even more explicitly:

> To write the oral tale is to betray the very nature of that tale, and by extension, to betray the community itself--in Castellanos's and Puga's cases, by a recognizably incomplete knowledge and

> by an acknowledged inability to translate accurately from one language to another, from one culture to another. (220)

The "betrayal" effected by the transformation of the oral into writing again stems from the consequent lack of accuracy or "truth" created by changing the medium of expression.

This is the same issue that anthropologists have been exploring since the mid-1980s as they search for new ways to portray the orally-based communities they study. When, early on in the discussion, James Clifford ponders the consequences of translating anthropological field experiences into a textual corpus, he points out that "as specific authors and actors are severed from their productions, a generalized 'author' must be invented to account for the world or context within which the texts are fictionally relocated "("Predicament" 39). This invented author transforms the "the research ambiguities and diversities of meaning into an integrated portrait" that (mis)represents the "truth" in particular ways. As a result, "the dialogical, situational aspects of ethnographic interpretation tend to be banished from the final representative text" in an effort to attain ethnographic authority ("Predicament" 40).[5]

In terms of the novels discussed here, this banishing

of the dialogical aspects of cultural interaction is most obvious in Hasta no verte, Jesús mío where the only reflection of the many hours of interviews between Josefina Bórquez and Poniatowska dissolve into occasional deictic references to a nameless listener, e.g., "Váyase. Déjeme dormir" (316). Poniatowska's novel is the only one of the three that incorporates any explicit anthropological techniques in its make-up. As such, it may be subject to specific questions about changes inherent in the oral to written transformation. The absence of "dialogical, situational aspects" in the novel does work to promote the writer's authority. It amounts to the concealment of authorial presence discussed earlier, and does produce a "false" image in the sense that Josefina's discursive strategies and her focalization of events are not what appear in the novel. Poniatowska has openly acknowledged the many adaptations of Josefina's story, language and character that resulted in the image of Jesusa in the novel.

The source of the "treachery" and "betrayal" that the transformation of oral to written in Oficio de tinieblas and Hasta no verte, Jesús mío has elicited may have more to do with reader expectations and habits than with any "violation" of communities and individuals engaging in exclusively oral discourse. Readers and writers of anthro-

pology engage in a different contract than readers and writers of fiction, even if, as Poniatowska demonstrates, the spheres can be in close proximity. The criticisms leveled by Franco and Castillo might be more relevant to the anthropology contract than the fiction contract, which makes no claim, and precisely negates a claim, to portraying "truth." As Clifford puts it: "We need not ask how Flaubert knows what Emma Bovary is thinking, but the ability of the fieldworker to inhabit indigenous minds is always in doubt" ("Predicament" 47). To sense betrayal in the representation of the oral community in writing implies that the authors--of fiction or anthropology--have an obligation to an imagined cultural "accuracy," as if marginated communities could be represented "truly," without mediation. The faulty conclusion rests in the belief that there is an unmediated form of representation that will "bridge the gap" between boundaries of difference in society, that will allow a reader to gain an "accurate" picture of a non-literate community represented in a written text.

Undoubtedly, one of the challenges fiction writers face is that of eluding the "fact/fiction" dichotomy. To the extent they are successful, readers will believe their constructed worlds. It becomes clearer and clearer that these three novels portraying a variety of cultural

differences are, in addition, and perhaps unintentionally, challenging the readers's boundaries between fact and fiction. In this sense, they reflect, again, their authors' awareness of a culturally defined distinction between the two. To the extent that the reader accepts the appearance of "truth," or rebels against a seemingly false representation of a particular community, the texts are successfully reproducing in the reader the culturally-based constraint separating fact from fiction, a dichotomy which, like the authorial presences in these novels, attempts to conceal its mediating presence.

In the portrayal of marginated individuals, a representation of orality, which is often equivalent to illiteracy, provides readers with a comfortable position from which to view the differences narrated. They are, after all, reading stories about non-literate characters.[6] The cultural bias favoring literacy (within the realm of the literate, at least) affects readers subject to this position, making it easier for them to imagine closing the "gaps" that their cultural identity poses for them.[7]

Approaching marginated or non-literate communities through the medium of a text creates an inherent authority imbalance between the characters and the reader, who engages in obvious literary complicity with the author. The "treachery" or "betrayal" associated with this imbal-

ance arises when the nature of the assumed reading contract is thought to include authenticity or truth in the represented world. Regardless of the authors' intentions in this regard, the contract can instead be thought of as the literary elite discussing among ourselves our imaginings about communities excluded from literacy.[8] The latter approach produces knowledge not about the marginated communities, but about our (literary) strategies for (mis)representing them, strategies defining our exclusionary practices, not necessarily theirs.

Notes

[1] There are many other Mexican novels by women writers that also portray cultural differences at work in Mexican society. As examples of the variety of difference portrayed, I mention Ethel Krauze's portrayal of the U.S./Mexico border in Donde las cosas vuelan (1985); Barbara Jacobs's Las hojas muertas (1987) deals with a family of Lebanese immigrants to Mexico; Sabina Berman writes about the Jewish community in Mexico City in La bobe (1990). The novels discussed in this study were selected for no more deliberate reason than that they serve as a starting point from which to explore issues of cultural identity and difference.

[2] Lucille Kerr's comments about the specific terminology which has grown up around the word "author" are particularly relevant to this discussion, where I seek only to differentiate between narrating agencies in the text and the image of a more encompassing agency producing the works involved:

> The use of the term author to designate not the person but an abstraction, textual figure, or authorial persona poses other problems. Indeed, the lack of any single term that might be opposed to the notion of the real author or author-person

> is a reminder that there is an array of terms and concepts that have become accepted for use in practical criticism. . . . The poetics of the author proposed within contemporary Spanish American fiction might, in the end, be read as a poetics that resists one or another stable solution to a variety of questions that might be posed about the author. (23-25)

For an extended discussion of the terminology utilized to refer to and describe the author as a "textual and discursive phenomenon," see her first chapter "Situating the Author" in Reclaiming the Author. In speaking of the author or authorial presence, I wish to avoid reference to any one narrating agency in the novels, and speak in more general terms of a source that produces the multiplicity of narrating agencies in the works.

[3] Cohan and Shires refer to a first-person narration as "character-bound," a feature which "obscures the difference between narrating subject and the subject of narration" (109). They detail the complexity of this narrating agency:

> Acting as the narrating subject of the text, its teller, the character who narrates also functions as a subject of narration because he or she is an actor in the story. That this narrating charac-

> ter does mark out two different subject positions initially becomes evident in the temporality of the telling. For the character operates as an actor in one realm of time (story) and as the narrator in another (narration). (109)

The two different subject positions are most apparent in the opening pages of Hasta no verte, Jesús mío and Oficio de tinieblas, where the period of time between the "story" and the "narration" is significant, although not specified. In Las posibilidades del odio, however, the quoted monologue of the tour guide is simultaneous with the narration of that monologue, minimizing even further the effects of narrative mediation.

[4] Franco sees this form of treachery occurring in Oficio de tinieblas, and describes it as treachery that takes place "not so much between reader and writer as on the level of the enunciated--that is, in the space where plot, character and novelistic time are interwoven (132).

[5] As anthropologists have become increasingly aware of the effects of transforming oral discourse into written form, they have developed some limited but innovative solutions such as incorporating the discursive strategies of oral informants into written representations (Clifford, "Predicament" 51-52). As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin note, "Any writer may extend the 'boundaries' of a genre,

but the writer who incorporates forms from other traditions articulates more clearly the constant adjustments we make to our perceptions of what is admitted to the category of 'literature'" (182). As anthropology adopts discursive practices from non-literate societies, and novelists like Puga, Castellanos and Poniatowska attempt anthropological facscimiles, readers will be continually challenged to discover the structures of belief underlying the concept of "literature."

[6] This construction works better in Castellanos's and Poniatowska's works, and less well in Puga's works. Since the primary and overriding issue in Las posibilidades del odio is colonialism, other distinctions, such as race, ethnicity and literacy, are minimalized as signs of difference. Even though orality is not always explicitly equivalent to illiteracy in the represented world of Las posibilidades del odio, the portrayal of difference is very much mediated through an image of orality throughout the novel.

[7] Danny J. Anderson discusses literacy as portrayed by the literate community in "Cultural Studies and Reading Culture in Twentieth-Century Mexico." In support of the view that literariness makes a difference, he states:

> By contrasting the "literate imaginings" of power and authority with a broader social history of

> cultural practices, it becomes possible to map the shape of reading culture, to view reading as a differentiating activity in society, and to measure the literary bias associated with representations of reading and literacy within the realm of the literary. (1)

[8] The discussion about literacy as a differentiating practice is not meant to suggest that there is a definitive boundary between literate and illiterate, but rather a sliding scale of literary practices. At one end signs of writing are not even recognized as such; at the other, reading and writing are activities that consume significant amounts of time and energy.

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