Stubborn Structures: Revaluing Masculinity in Mexican Women-Authored "novelas sobre la Revolución" (1963-2010)

By
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**Abstract**

The 1910 Mexican Revolution is one of the most important and most represented events in 20th-century Mexican history. Although narratives written by men about men on the battlefield dominated representation in the first few decades after the Revolution, women-authored novels began proliferating and garnering critical attention in the second half of the century. Previous analyses of the latter narratives have largely focused on their representation of women's experiences during the civil war—both on and off the battlefield—and after the armed conflict had finished and institutionalization of the Revolution had begun. Although these novels work to fill in the historical gaps left by men-authored narratives, I argue that they also respond to what those narratives and other cultural products did represent: Namely, the promotion and denigration of a *machista* masculine performance. In this dissertation, I propose that it is impossible to give a full account of women-authored novels on the Revolution by examining only one pole of the traditional gender binary and, furthermore, that doing so fails to acknowledge the spectrum through which we now conceptualize gender. Through my examination of men and masculinity in these novels, I outline the complicated relationships that Mexican women have with these social constructs. While all of the works analyzed in this dissertation, which were published between 1963 and 2010, recognize the drawbacks to continuing to overvalue traditionally machista and overtly violent masculinity, only some have recognized how valuing other kinds of masculinity—including female and bourgeois masculinity—also often serves to perpetuate class-, race-, and gender-based systems of oppression. By "reading between the lines" of narratives that do not center men and masculinity, I have also been able to illuminate the contemporary issues that inspired these women's writing,

reinforcing the argument that works of historical fiction can yield as much information about the time in which they were written as they can about the time about which they speak.

## Acknowledgments

Few people imagine themselves writing a dissertation, and even fewer, I'd hazard a guess, imagine that they will be doing so during a worldwide pandemic. This is, however, the position that I found myself in during the majority of the time that I was working on this project. The isolation, fear, and anxiety of writing a dissertation was magnified by all the same factors of the COVID-19 pandemic. And yet, here I sit, having finished my project. This experience has driven home the tremendous importance of my support system, to whom I owe many thanks for helping me get to this point. I will be forever grateful to my husband and best friend, Tom, for believing in me, encouraging me, cheering me, and making me laugh. Having such a supportive partner, and one who understands firsthand the challenges of completing a doctorate, has made all the difference. I must express my gratitude to my family—my parents, who never doubted that I would finish this degree and who owe me a celebratory balloon arch; my brother and his partner; my grandfather, who always wanted to know what I was up to at KU; and all of my lovely in-laws in the UK. Thank you. I also want to thank the furry members of my family—Frida, who gave me unconditional love for the bulk of my graduate studies and whom I miss dearly, and Baxter, who has been a bright spot over this past year.

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# Introduction

## What About the Men?: Re-Examining Gender Dynamics and Links Between Past and Present in Women-Authored 'novelas sobre la Revolución'

As the title to this introduction indicates, this study began with a simple question: What about the men? I posed it as I began considering what my project could contribute to our understanding of women-authored historical fiction that centers on one of—if not *the*—most important events in recent Mexican history: the 1910 Mexican Revolution. This query, however, was not as straightforward as it might seem at first glance. To clarify, in making it, I was not joining the ranks of so-called "men's rights" champions, who decry the alleged marginalization and oppression of cisgender, heterosexual men at the hands of feminists and other gender-equality activists who seek to center the struggles of cis- and transgender women, transgender men, and non-binary and intersex individuals. I was also well aware that men and masculinity had long been centered, albeit not from a critical standpoint, in Mexican letters and, in particular, had dominated novels and other narratives that explore the 1910 Revolution and its impact on Mexican politics and society. And yet, the much more recent emergence of critical studies on men and masculinities in comparison with the fields of feminist and queer studies, as I outline in chapter 3, points to the enduring reluctance, inability, and/or failure to consider cisgender, heterosexual men as gendered beings. There was much room, I believed, to critically explore those concepts in these novels. Doing so would not come at the expense of the consideration of women and femininity, but, rather, would serve to provide a fuller understanding of their representation and the approach that they novels' authors take toward gender.

To understand why commenting on men and masculinity can more fully illuminate issues of women and femininity, it is important to keep in mind the interrelatedness of the poles on the

traditional gender binary, especially in a patriarchal society such as Mexico's. As some critics have argued, Mexican men have actually long been measured against the feminine. That is to say, they have been considered "manly" and "masculine" insomuch as they do not exhibit "womanly" and "feminine" qualities and behaviors. There was, for example, an increasing anxiety in Mexico (and other Latin American countries) at the turn of the 19th century that bourgeois men were becoming too civilized and "soft" or, in other words, too feminine. In fact, many critics at the time employed emerging (social) scientific discourses to express their fears that this "degenerative condition" reflected a decay of morality and patriarchal gender standards and was thus affecting the very health of the nation. According to Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, 19th-century political cartoons linked the virile and the national and the effeminate and the antinational (3). Similarly, Robert McKee Irwin has argued that a growing homophobic anxiety in 20th century Mexico led Mexican letters to mark civilized bourgeois masculinity as "un-Mexican," elitist, effeminate, and "patently homosexual" (xxxii). Thus, the national and the masculine in Mexico largely came to be defined by what they rejected: the feminine, the effeminate, the homosexual. As Domínguez-Ruvalcaba argues, due to the hierarchical structure of the patriarchal gender system, an "analysis of the masculine is incomplete without a consideration of the relationship between gender categories" (4). Can not the same be said, then, for an analysis of the feminine? If the feminine is conceptualized in relation with the masculine, as its inferior "other," should we not consider to be incomplete literary analyses of the feminine that do not take into account a text's treatment of the masculine?

And yet, studies of women-authored *novelas sobre la Revolución* have largely focused on their portrayal of women and their efforts to recover women's experiences and stories from the Revolution. The literature reviews in chapters 1 and 2 make this tendency clear:

Representative analyses of Ángeles Mastretta's 1985 bestseller, *Arráncame la vida*, for example, include Aída Apter-Cragnolino's "Jugando con el melodrama: género literario y mirada femenina en *Arráncame la vida* de Ángeles Mastretta," Monique LeMaître's "La historia oficial frente al discurso de la 'ficción femenina' en *Arráncame la vida* de Ángeles Mastretta," and Eva Núñez-Méndez's "Mastretta y sus protagonistas: ejemplos de emancipación femenina," among many others. On the one hand, this approach is not baseless: As I have mentioned above and will explore further in this introduction and in chapters 1 and 2, historiography and fiction on the 1910 Revolution for many years centered on men and masculinity, including women only as tropes or, à la Gayle Rubin, as trafficable objects used to cement homosocial bonds between men.[1] The development of feminist and postmodern theory—as well as the greater opportunities afforded to female authors in Mexico due to the rise of large, transnational publishing houses that accompanied Mexico's embrace of neoliberalism—provided the conditions needed to be able to tell women's silenced stories. While, as others have noted, it is reductive to assume that women authors only have something to say about women and femininity and that their works are fundamentally more personal than are men's (Finnegan and Lavery 5; Sánchez Prado, *Strategic Occidentalism* 165), the fact remains that many of the authors examined in this dissertation positioned women at the center of their works, as did many other Mexican women writing in the late 1960s and 70s through the 1990s (I. López 28-32). However, I argue that the novels studied in this dissertation respond not only to what was *lacking* in early canonical *novelas de la Revolución* but also to what was *present* in those works. It is hard to imagine that women writing in such a strongly patriarchal society would not have something to say about or, at the very least, be influenced in some way by the discourses on national (that is to say, revolutionary) masculinity, which were seemingly omnipresent in political discourse, cultural production, and

social commentary in the decades following the Revolution.

By examining men and masculinity—the latter of which, as Jack Halberstam makes clear in his landmark 1998 study, *Female Masculinity*, is not the exclusive domain of men—in women-authored novelas sobre la Revolución, I have found both a resistance on the authors' part toward perpetuating patriarchal power structures as well as a (perhaps unconscious) tendency to do so. The latter inclination can largely be understood as the result of persistent classist (and racist) rhetoric surrounding men of the popular and lower classes, which has served to mask the oppressive gendered practices of men of the middle and upper classes. To aid my analysis, I have taken a more "sideways" glance at issues of gender in these novels, to borrow from Slavoj Žižek (3-4), by not focusing on the more immediately identifiable concerns of women and femininity but rather the more implicit issues of men and masculinity. Doing so has allowed me to uncover enduring, naturalized gender attitudes and, thus, reveal links between the past and the present.

Furthermore, I argue that reading "between the lines" of this historical fiction has proven necessary to illuminate the concerns of the present that these novels address. In a process seemingly related to that described by Walter Benjamin in his essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History"—in which Benjamin develops the concept of the "angel of history," a tragic figure with its back turned toward the future who sees the chaos of the hopelessly tangled past but is blown forward, unable to unsnarl its piles of debris, but also unable to look away (257-58)—, Lauren Berlant has postulated that "the present is perceived, first, affectively: the present is what makes itself present to us before it becomes anything else, such as an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we can look back" (4). We can sense the chaos of the present, but, with our back turned toward the now and the next, we can only see it as we move farther away, into the future, that is to say, as the present becomes the past. If the concerns of the present

cannot be expressed directly, they can, instead, be detected in how concerns of the past are presented. In the case of the authors examined in this dissertation, they have used the past to comment on present preoccupations, including women's continued lack of representation and denial of participation in civil society in Mexico in the 1950s and 1960s; the link between financial gains and (a misperceived) equality between men and women in the Mexico of the 1980s and 1990s; and the deconstructive possibilities of the extension of the Mexican academy's understanding of gender to include cisgender, heterosexual men in the 1990s and 2000s.

**Setting the Parameters: *La novela de/sobre la Revolución***

In order to better understand how the novels examined in this dissertation dialogue with men-authored narratives on the 1910 Revolution as well as to clearly outline the criteria that I have used to select the novels for my study, it is necessary to examine the ties between the formation of an early canon of novelas de la Revolución and notions of *mexicanidad* and masculinity. Sarah E.L. Bowskill has identified several influential works that contributed to the development of said canon, including Frederick Rand Morton's *Los novelistas de la Revolución mexicana* (1949), Antonio Castro Leal's *La novela de la Revolución mexicana* (1958), Adalbert Dessau's *La novela de la Revolución mexicana* (1967), and John Rutherford's *An Annotated Bibliography of the Novels of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917* (1972) ("Towards a Broader Definition" 21). The parameters that these scholars employed to determine what constitutes a novela de la Revolución and what does not vary significantly. Although Rutherford argues for generic inclusivity in terms of what constitutes a "novel," he uses one of the least inclusive definitions in terms of the time frame that he believes novelas de la Revolución can encompass, arguing that the Mexican Revolution is only the "military or destructive phase," lasting from 1910 to 1917 (6).[2] Dessau also limits the Mexican Revolution to the "fase armada (1910-1917),"

although he acknowledges that, alongside descriptions of direct combat, there emerged a series of novels that analyze "los problemas relacionados con la prosecución de la Revolución," which he refers to as "novelas revolucionarias" (17). Castro Leal employs perhaps the most open understanding of a novela de la Revolución, arguing for the inclusion of works inspired by the actions and changes brought about by the Revolution, which he dates from 1910 to 1920 (1.xvii). Although unintentional, Dessau's and Castro Leal's recognition of the disadvantages of restricting the parameters of the novela de la Revolución to novels that describe armed combat sets the stage for a more gender-inclusive and feminist definition of the genre.

Categorizing as novelas de la Revolución only those that deal with what has traditionally been recognized as "combat" clearly serves a patriarchal gender politics. As I explore more thoroughly in chapter 1, women participated en masse in the Mexican Revolution but were erased from the political discourse and historiography on the war—and thus denied the civil and social benefits afforded to male *veteranos*. Women's "domestic" services both at the front lines of combat and at the more traditionally feminine "home front" were not coded as "military" activity, even though they were essential to the functioning of both the federal and rebel bands during the 1910 Revolution. Although not writing specifically about the Mexican Revolution, Cynthia Enloe's observations about the exploitative relationship between women and military operations holds true for Mexico: "Debates in the media and legislatures over just what constitutes 'combat' and the 'front'—as versus 'support' and the 'rear'—are nothing less than arguments over how to make use of women's labour without violating proper notions of femininity, masculinity and the social order itself" (7). As Bowskill has noted, this attitude surfaced in the production and canonization of literature on the Revolution.

In an effort to rethink those narrow generic parameters, Bowskill has argued for

expanding our understanding of what constitutes novelas de la Revolución to include a subcategory that she terms "novelas sobre la Revolución." This is the term and subgenre that I will employ in this dissertation. Bowskill defines "novelas de la Revolución" as male-authored, canonical novels (that is, the ones included in the anthologies and surveys that I have referenced), which deal almost solely with the armed phase of the Revolution. Those that discuss the ongoing Revolution typically endorse the agenda of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Novels in the category of novelas sobre la Revolución do not necessarily focus on events on the battlefield but instead explore the political circumstances leading up to the outbreak of fighting in 1910 and/or employ the Revolution as a background event to a home-front setting. Additionally, they extend their temporal perspective to include the ongoing/institutionalized Revolution ("Towards a Broader Definition" 21). As Rutherford notes, however, the wide-reaching effects of the Revolution on Mexican society mean that including under the umbrella of the novela de la Revolución all novels that deal with the fallout and changes resulting from the Revolution renders the category so encompassing as to be meaningless as it, in effect, encompasses all novels written after the Revolution (6). Therefore, I have decided to analyze novels either set in the time frame of armed combat, which I place between 1910-1920, or those that feature characters who either participated in the Revolution or who were alive during that time period and who reflect upon those experiences from a later point in their lives. Notably, however, the majority of the novels that I examine in this dissertation are largely not set on the battlefield, with the two exceptions being Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío* and Ángeles Mastretta's *Mal de amores*.

Until this point, my consideration of genre has focused on how novels sobre la Revolución have expanded the literary and historical record to include that which had been

excluded from representations and historiography of the Revolution. As I mention at the beginning of this introduction, previous studies of the novels included in this dissertation have focused heavily on these contributions. Thus, I instead seek to expand our understanding of these novels by showing how they enter into a dialogue with what *was* represented in early canonical works. Novels traditionally defined as novelas de la Revolución clearly and overwhelmingly worked to address questions of nationality and how those efforts continued a tradition of conflating nationality, citizenship, and masculinity in Mexican letters. At the heart of canonical works written during and about key moments of national (re)formation in Mexico lies an effort to encourage "proper" masculinity and discourage "dishonorable" conduct among men. Take, for example, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento* (1816). Considered by many to be one of, if not the, earliest Latin American novels, *El periquillo sarniento* was published as Mexico transitioned from its status as a colony (Nueva España) to an independent republic. An indictment of the Spanish colonial administration, the novel also lays out ideal behaviors for the new Mexican citizen: As Guillermo Núñez Noriega writes, for Lizardi, "el ideal es *el hombre* racional del proyecto ilustrado y la otredad es el hombre 'del antiguo régimen,' apegado a la tradición religiosa o a la superchería y en general a la 'ignorancia'" (my emphasis 52). In a similar vein, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano's *El Zarco* (1901) is considered to have contributed to national consolidation and the promotion of certain masculine conduct.[3] Juan Pablo Dabove argues that the destruction of the novel's titular character—a bandit leader who uses flashy virility to hide his cruelty and cowardice— allows for an "imaginary a posteriori refounding of the national project" during a time when President Porfirio Díaz sought to stamp out rural banditry (102). As a foil to el Zarco, Dabove argues, the character of Nicolás represents a model citizen: a virtuous, self-made man who adheres to the ideals of liberalism and bases his

identity on work and a citizen's rights and obligations (109). Although the specific ideals and comportment promoted by these novels change, the fact that the authors of these narratives looked beyond merely representing manly conduct toward more didactic goals—inspiring certain gendered behavior in the "real" world—indicates an implicit understanding of masculinity as socially constructed.

The authors of early bibliographies and anthologies of the novela de la Revolución and other canon-producing works make explicit the connections between these novels and debates about nationhood and citizenship. They also highlight the centrality of men in these works. However, they do not clearly link literature, masculinity, nation(ality), and the Revolution. Rand Morton, for example, argues that the Revolution opened the path toward "el sentir verdadero de lo mexicano y el modo de expresarlo" (22), and he even goes so far as to call the novela de la Revolución the "nueva novela mexicana" (26). However, although he calls attention to the portrayal of men in these novels—including that of the "soldado protipo" of Gregorio López y Fuentes' *¡Mi General!* (1934) and the transformation of Pancho Villa into the Revolution incarnate in Rafael F. Muñoz's *Si me han de matar mañana* (1934)—, he does not argue that these novels present Revolutionary fighters as ideal figures of postrevolutionary masculine citizenship. A similar gap can be seen in Dessau's work: He both sustains that the central theme of the novel of the Revolution is the Mexican citizen (449) and notes that this literature "entroniza al *hombre de pueblo* como medida de la Revolución" (my emphasis, 469). Yet, like Rand Morton, Dessau does not address the gendered weight and social implications of the (new) model for mexicanidad being the lowly, *male* Revolutionary fighter. Like the authors of 19th-century Mexican literature, these critics can be seen as continuing a tendency identified by McKee Irwin: the "hiding" of men's gender and sexuality in habitus—that is, the continued

essentialization and naturalization of these aspects of men's identity (48). Men are presented as the default citizen: To be a citizen is to be male. (Although, as will become evident in this study, the inverse was and still is not always necessarily true.) It is not until the advent of critical literary analyses based in gender studies, queer studies, and critical studies on men and masculinity that the connection between masculinity, nation(ality), the Revolution, and literature —among other cultural production—is made explicit.

**The Praise and the (Continued) Vilification of the "Macho" Man**

Recent criticism repeatedly calls attention to the ways in which the novels, films, and intellectual discourse of the first postrevolutionary decades promoted a certain masculine performance—namely, a *machista* one—as patently Mexican and as something to be celebrated and emulated. Domínguez-Ruvalcaba argues that many of the narratives surrounding the Mexican Revolution have been "paradigmatic in constructing the idea of a national masculinity" (55). Similarly, Sergio de la Mora views the cultural, nationalist postrevolutionary establishment as aggressively pushing the "cult of a particular form of masculinity" (2), which he explicitly identifies as machismo (6). Literature and literary polemics played a central role in the emergence of these narratives. As McKee Irwin asserts, the very writers who had looked down on the "barbarous masculinity" of the lower classes at the end of the 19th century made an about face after the Revolution due to the "socialist and sometimes hyperbolically nationalist spirit in the milieu of Mexican letters following the 'proletarian' revolution" (xxxii). They began, instead, to promote as prototypically Mexican lower-class masculinity and male homosociality. The rise of this discourse, as well as the glorification of the specific novel that became most closely associated with the "new national genre" (the novela de la Revolución)—Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*—, can be directly tied to a debate that arose in Mexican newspapers over the existence

of a so-called "literatura viril"—virility being, of course, one of the attributes most commonly associated with machismo.[4]

Although ostensibly about literature, the *literatura viril* debate largely started as an argument more concerned with the masculine performances of the members of the artistic elite themselves rather than the portrayal of masculinity in Mexican letters focused on the Revolution. As Daniel Balderston explains, the polemic first erupted in 1924, when two articles were published bemoaning the "effeminization" of Mexican letters. Francisco Monterede responded with an article titled, "Existe una literatura mexicana viril" (Balderston 58-59). In his article, Monterede specifically celebrates the work of Azuela and other "poetas de calidad—no afeminados" (qtd. in Balderston 59). The reference to "poetas […] no afeminados" in Monterede's article makes clear that he is chiefly concerned with the gendered self-representation of Mexico's writers, a concern that had surfaced a year earlier in a manifesto written by a literary group known as "los Estridentistas." The authors of said manifesto declare that "[s]er estridentista es ser hombre" (qtd. in Balderston 59), and they specifically target as unmanly and un-Mexican another group of intellectuals, known as "los Contemporáneos," several of whom were either openly gay or known to have "homosexual tendencies" (McKee Irwin 163).[5] It did not take long, however, for the debate to evolve into one about the content of the literature being produced in the wake of the Revolution, which was viewed as reflecting the masculine and national values—seen as one and the same—of those writing it. As several critics have remarked, the literatura viril debate not only produced and promoted the discourse that the literature being produced at the time should be Revolutionary—that is that, that it should uphold the ideals of the Revolution—, but it also linked *lo revolucionario* with *lo viril*, *lo agresivo*, *lo masculine* and *lo heterosexual* (Balderston 57; Macías-González and Rubenstein 19; McKee

Irwin 187). The promotion of Azuela's *Los de abajo* in Monterde's article as evidence of the existence of a literatura viril in Mexico not only inaugurated the novela de la Revolución as the new, preeminent narrative genre in Mexico, but also, via *campesino* protagonist Demetrio Macías, transformed a previously vilified model of masculinity and held it up as one to be emulated due to its supposed embodiment of mexicanidad.

The metamorphosis of the aggressive, corporeal masculinity associated with the lower classes—which would eventually come to be known as "machismo"—from a denigrated and pathologized masculinity into the essence of mexicanidad was a significant reversal. If, as noted above, the end of the 19th century saw an increasing anxiety over the "softness" of "civilized," bourgeois masculinity, there was an equally as strong fear and condemnation of what was perceived to be the animalistic masculinity of the popular classes. These men were portrayed as *essentially* more sexual, more violent, more corporeal, more dangerous. The term "essentially" here is a nod to gender essentialization, as the ideas embraced by the intelligentsia at the time drew on medical, criminal, and social science discourses that promoted the belief that the men of the proletariat—men who were frequently much darker than those who were writing about and otherwise portraying them—were *fundamentally* less developed or evolved. Domínguez-Ruvalcaba notes that popular drawings from the mid 19th century through 1910 featured violent depictions of mestizo and Indian bodies, using them to represent the opposite end of the "civilizatory image proposed by the aestheticism of academic art" (28). In an intriguing paradox, these men were seen as both more masculine and less masculine than other men: Although they were perceived as stronger and more potent, and thus more manly, they were also subordinated and inferior due to their race and class and were thought to be more closely tied to their emotions and bodies, like women and children (McKee Irwin xxvii). This disconnect did not disappear

with the exaltation of the macho in the early novelas de la Revolución, however, and its persistence points to issues of classist violence that also surface in the novels studied in chapters 2 and 3.

While the Estridentistas were busy promoting machismo, a parallel discourse continued to flourish in social commentaries and ethnographies in Mexico that condemned this kind of masculinity as a dangerous illness plaguing the nation and impeding its forward progress and embrace of modernity. Some of this commentary was produced by outside observers, including foreign journalists—such as John Reed, author of *Insurgent Mexico* (1914)—and anthropologists—such as Oscar Lewis, author of *The Children of Sánchez* (1961), among many other works. Lewis in particular has been cited as contributing to national gender stereotypes that, in turn, have been used to support xenophobic and racist attitudes in countries such as the United States.[6] Víctor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein argue that Lewis' writings contributed to the perception that "all Mexican men either were or wanted to be violent, overly emotional, fatalistic *machos*" (emphasis in original, 21). It was not only outsiders who promoted these ideas, however. Indeed, some of the most vocal denouncers of Mexican (i.e. "male") character were Mexican themselves: As Dessau points out, "la mayoría de los autores de la novela de la Revolución Mexicana provenían de la burguesía o pequeña burguesía provinciana" (465). These intellectuals took part in a long Mexican tradition of depicting the popular and lower classes "from above," so to speak: An exploration of the control exercised by the few over the depiction of the many lies at the heart of Roger Bartra's seminal 1987 work on mexicanidad, *La jaula de la melancolía*, in which he asserts that the supposed commonalities of the Mexican character are a handful of stereotypes codified by individuals, which are then reproduced in society, thus creating the illusion of a popular mass culture (2). This dynamic has been identified

by many other critics (Legrás 123; McKee Irwin xv; Monsiváis, "¿Hubo alguna vez?" 106). Essayists such as Samuel Ramos seized upon the stereotypes of the novelas de la Revolución for very different purposes than the first authors of this genre. His 1934 work, *Perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*, focuses on the macho type of the "pelado." As Domínguez-Ruvalcaba explains, with Ramos, the "[e]xalted macho of the revolutionary epic, of the melodrama of the classic cinema, or of the hopeful images proposed by [José] Vasconcelos and the socialist intellectuals are inverted" (103). The pelado becomes decried as resentful, boastful, overly aggressive, and unproductive, in both his public and private life. Ramos' work was a clear antecedent to and influence on Octavio Paz's seminal 1950 collection of essays, *El laberinto de la soledad*, a highly influential—and highly polemic—treatise on mexicanidad that draws extensively on the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud and whose entry "Los hijos de la Malinche" continues to be cited in explanations of Mexican men's alleged propensity toward (sexual) aggressiveness, which will be further explored in chapter 1.

To add another layer of complication to the exaltation and denigration of the popular man, Ramos and Paz were writing during a period of cinematic production that came to be known as the "Golden Age" of Mexican film. Lasting roughly from the 1930s through the early 1950s, this period of Mexican film production was marked by high levels of production, quality, and national and international success. As Niamh Thornton notes, the release of Fernando de Fuentes' trilogy of films set during the Revolution coincided with the beginning of this period of cinematic production, which saw the emergence of popular big-budget Revolutionary movies (*Revolution and Rebellion* 19-26).[7] Film, perhaps even more so than literature, was instrumental in the Mexican state's postrevolutionary national (re)formation, consolidation, and education efforts. In fact, the visual was the state's preferred pedagogic method from early on, as evidenced

by its patronage of the three great *muralistas*: José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. With the advent of cinema, the state poured money into the production, distribution, and screening of films that served to mythify the Revolution in support of official state rhetoric, which solidified the narrative that the PRI was the heir and guardian of Revolutionary values. As with literature, the national and the masculine were linked in film, with Mexican national cinema becoming a "powerful institution concerned with configuring a male-centered culture" (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba 76). De la Mora has argued that cinema was instrumental in the "creation" of the Mexican macho: "virile, brave, proud, sexually potent, and physically aggressive" (7), and two of the Golden Age's biggest male stars, Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante, became well-known for their machista performances—both on- and off-screen—due in part to their roles in popular Revolutionary films. Monsiváis has gone so far as to say that to be "macho entre los machos" is to "parecerse lo más posible a Jorge Negrete" and names Infante as the incarnation of "machismo positivo" ("¿Hubo alguna vez?" 107-08). Thus, at the same time that Ramos and Paz were questioning machismo and the character of the masses in essays circulated among the elite, Mexican cinema was promoting this brand of masculinity in cultural production designed to be consumed by those whom it depicted.

This overview of the emergence, transformation, and simultaneous celebration and vilification of the Mexican macho demonstrates the complicated relationship between cultural production on the Revolution and the class positionalities of those representing and those being represented. On the one hand, lower-class machista masculinity came to be "hegemonic" in the sense first proposed by R.W. Connell—in early novelas de la Revolución and Golden Age cinema, machismo was promoted as the most honored way of being a man, as the "currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to

guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). And yet, this masculinity was not "hegemonic" in the classic, Gramscian sense—or indeed even in the sense proposed by Connell, who cites Gramsci in her understanding of hegemony (77)—as it was not the masculinity practiced by the men of the middle and upper classes. (Or, if they did perform this masculinity, they did not do so publicly or exclusively.) In fact, as I have already discussed, machismo was denounced as a social illness by some of these men, such as Ramos and Paz.

In that sense, there was another "hegemonic" masculinity dominating Mexican letters at the same time in the mid 20th century. Emily Hind has explored the complexity of the simultaneous promotion and denial of machismo by the (male) members of the Mexican intelligentsia from the mid 20th century to the early 21st century in *Dude Lit: Mexican Men Writing and Performing Competence, 1955-2012*, which I will outline in greater detail in chapter 2. My examination of the case of the Estridentistas suggests that this paradoxical duality stretches back farther, into the early 20th century. Additionally, it reveals the grounds laid by these authors to continue the perpetuation of systemic violence against men of the lower classes: On the one hand, the Estridentistas promoted a certain kind of masculinity in their novels—machismo—and thus were indirectly associated with this masculinity. However, by centering their narratives on men of the popular classes, they promoted official Revolutionary discourses while simultaneously putting up a barrier between themselves and the masculinity that they portrayed in their writing. That is, they maintained a very public and prominent association between the men about whom they wrote and violent, virile masculinity, which also allowed them to disassociate themselves from machismo and thus mask and otherwise shield their own violent, gendered behaviors, behaviors that did not always—and, in fact, often did not—take the form of physical, subjective violence.

The concept of different kinds of violence and the question of how they are and are not confronted in women-authored novelas sobre la Revolución surface frequently throughout this dissertation. The reality that women often promote (gendered) systems of oppression that work against them has long been recognized to be a stumbling block toward greater equality: In the case of Mexico, Domínguez-Ruvalcaba points to the role of the mother or grandmother in reinforcing patriarchal gender roles, as illustrated in the classic Golden Age film *Los tres García* by director Ismael Rodríguez, in which the family's matriarch encourages her grandsons' violent machismo (81). (A similar didactic dynamic can be detected with Mamá Elena in Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*, as outlined in chapter 2.) In chapter 1, I explore the catch-22 confronted by Mexican women authors who rejected the perpetuation of this masculine performance as well as the overvaluation of masculinity in general—the latter of which can be identified as a kind of systemic, objective violence—but who saw no real way of escaping this dynamic in a fundamentally patriarchal society. While the effort of feminists to denounce and stop more overt, physical forms of masculine violence is widely recognized, a lack of awareness of the ways in which this violence has been tied in Mexico to men of the lower classes by men of the intellectual, political, and social elite has resulted in women authors' perpetuation of classist (and gender-based) violence. By engaging with the forms of violence postulated by Žižek, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's theories of habitus, fields, and the different forms of capital,[8] I examine in chapters 2 and 3 the factors that have contributed to the invisibilization and continuation in women-authored novelas de la Revolución of these stubborn structures of oppression for men of the popular classes and women of all classes, as well as an emerging effort to understand and resist the violence of men of the middle and upper classes.

**Looking Back to See the Now (and the Future)**

The differing approaches that the authors studied in this dissertation take to these issues can be tied, in large part, to the different material and social conditions of the times in which they wrote. That is to say, as I have argued above, it is possible to detect in their writings on the past the concerns of their presents. I consider this approach to composing and evaluating historical fiction to be a sub-approach of one of the two main trends of writing and analyzing historical fiction of the past three to four decades.[9] The first approach is the one that I have chosen not to engage with as it is the one adopted in many of the previous studies of the novels analyzed in this dissertation: Looking at how (postmodern) historical fiction works to fill in gaps in the historical record, to recover and then amplify the historical experiences and contributions of marginalized groups, to question and rewrite official histories. This approach is most closely tied to postmodern theory—although scholars such as Helene Carol Weldt-Basson have also promoted feminist and postcolonial theory as useful theoretical frames for this analysis, with Weldt-Basson noting that both fields share certain "techniques and agendas with postmodernism but […] are not synonymous with it" and can thus be used to take this current of historical fiction analysis in new directions (10).[10] Linda Hutcheon was one of the first to theorize and recognize the trend of using historical fiction to interrogate historiographic and archival gaps in her work *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). Hutcheon discusses the postmodern shift from the (hegemonic) center to the margins (113-14) as it relates to the breaking down of "official," monolithic discourses of history (93) and the refutation of the notion that only history has a "truth claim" (110). There are many Latin Americanists and Latin American theorists who have also developed, or at the very least acknowledged, similar trends in the writing and analysis of historical fiction in Latin America.[11]

The dominance of the postmodern "recovery" approach also has its critics, principally among those who engage in the second major trend of historical fiction writing and analysis—looking to the past to comment on the present—, although some theorists consider both goals of the genre in their analyses.[12] Brian Price has criticized those who have focused too extensively on the use of historical fiction to recover past experiences and question official narratives, writing that this approach tends to fall back on "relatively antiquated formulations of metafictional narratology" first proposed and made popular by Hayden White in his seminal works from the 1970s, including *Metahistory* (1973) and *Tropics of Discourse* (1978) (16-17). Instead, Price is more interested in establishing the ways in which Mexican historical fiction reconstructs moments of history to respond to present crises in order to (attempt to) answer the question, "How did Mexico get to this point?" or, perhaps more accurately, "Why does Mexico *keep* getting to this point?"[13]

Price is certainly not incorrect in his assessment of those who limit their analyses to narrative technique, particularly as regards Hutcheon's and Seymour Menton's concerns with establishing generic parameters for postmodern historical fiction and their focus on defining historiographic metafiction and the new historical novel of Latin America, respectively.[14] However, Hutcheon, for one, has recognized the attempt to connect past and present in this literature. She writes, for example, of the ways in which historiographic metafiction exposes narrativized history's reshaping of the past in the light of the present (137). Hutcheon also acknowledges the ideological implications of representing the marginal and the different, which include highlighting the stasis and lack of social and economic progress for these groups (196). The notion of circularity as a false sense of progress, as it is a type of movement that results in stagnation by ending where it began, features in many of the novels analyzed in this dissertation,

either as a theme included more directly by the author—as in the case of Carmen Boullosa, Elena Garro, and Poniatowska—or more indirectly—as in the case of Ana García Bergua, Laura Esquivel, and Mastretta.

Although the first group of authors features elements that speak more directly to themes of stagnation than does the second group, it is possible to read all of the novels examined in this dissertation as establishing implicit connections between past and present, which is what I have sought to highlight and analyze. While I work more from the second approach to historical fiction as outlined above than the first—that is, how historical fiction uses the past to explain the present rather than how contemporary theory is used to explain and (re)consider the past—I am less interested in overt connections made between past and present. Rather than ask, "How did Mexico get here?," I want to interrogate how authors *indirectly* address where Mexico is socially and politically, how this fails to differ from where it has been, and why it has stayed mired in the same oppressive hierarchies. I am concerned, consequently, with systemic violence on both a societal and a personal level, hence the reference to "stubborn structures" in the title of this dissertation.

I thus have sought to make connections between the elements of the past that authors have chosen to portray, how they have portrayed said elements, and the sociopolitical circumstances in which these authors were writing, particularly in regards to women's rights and gender relations in Mexico. In the case of Garro and Poniatowska, the authors' focus on female masculinity can be related to contemporary advances (and setbacks) in the women's civil rights movement in Mexico and the patriarchal gender binary that is designed to oppress women and the feminine. Esquivel's and Mastretta's novels, on the other hand, express a misplaced sense of optimism given economic advances made by Mexican women in the 1980s and 1990s, conflating

purchasing power with empowerment and failing to engage with the particular brand of gender-based violence long practiced by men of the middle and upper classes. Unlike the other author pairs, Boullosa and García Bergua ultimately do not promote similar agendas. Although the focus of both writers on the formulation of their male characters' gender identities can be tied to the rise of critical studies on men and masculinities in the 1990s and 2000s, García Bergua works to address the violence that patriarchal gender standards have long inflicted on men and women across class in Mexico, while Boullosa reinforces the essentialist stereotypes about the masculinity of men of the lower classes that have been used to maintain hierarchies among men.

**Chapter Overviews**

In chapter 1 of the dissertation, "The Patriarchy Trap: Revolutionary Women and the Pitfalls of Masculine Agency in *Los recuerdos del porvenir* by Elena Garro and *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* by Elena Poniatowska," I examine how Garro and Poniatowska simultaneously challenge female Revolutionary tropes established in early cultural production on the 1910 Revolution and reject a continued (over)valuation of masculinity in Mexican society. Although widely studied as some of the first examples of women-authored novelas sobre la Revolución, Garro's and Poniatowska's novels have, as of yet, not been read in concert with the earlier, men-authored and directed novels and films to which Garro and Poniatowska were responding. In carrying out this reading, I establish how Garro and Poniatowska complicate the Adelita and Cucaracha tropes—which align closely with the traditional Mexican virgin-whore dyad—by showcasing female protagonists with complex gender performances. Via Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the "double bind," I also argue that Garro and Poniatowska do not promote these protagonists' adoption of "masculine" behaviors as a clear path to agency and increased equality among the genders. I sustain that Garro and Poniatowska acknowledge that patriarchal gender

standards would have prevented such gender performances from being accepted as "valid" in Mexico at the time that they were writing. I also argue that the authors highlight the risk that said performances would have served to maintain the associations of masculine-action-valued and feminine-passive-devalued. The second point, in particular, illuminates the oblique manner in which gender hierarchies and systemic violence can be perpetuated in the name of empowerment and advancement.

In fact, chapter 2, "Lusting for a (Bourgeois) Macho Man: Conservative Class and Gender Sensibilities in Bestsellers by Ángeles Mastretta and Laura Esquivel," examines just such a case of false progress. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the male characters of Mastretta's *Arráncame la vida* and *Mal de amores* and Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*. Despite the extensive criticism that these bestselling novels have generated, this aspect of these novels has been little studied. My analysis reveals Mastretta's and Esquivel's perpetuation of the class-based, machista stereotypes discussed in this introduction. By reading these novels in the context of Bourdieu's notion of the different types of capital, I am able to identify a clear double standard in the authors' treatment of lower-class men and middle- and upper-class male characters: The former continue to be portrayed as more fundamentally aggressive and virile—that is, more tied to their bodies—, a masculinity that Mastretta and Esquivel frame as oppressing and abusing their female protagonists. However, when exhibited by middle- and upper-class men—who are also seen as more "developed," due to their possession of greater cultural capital—, these same qualities are presented as attractive and are used to boost the (sexual) desirability of these characters. I have developed the concept of "classed myopia" to explain how Mastretta's and Esquivel's class expectations and positionalities impede their ability to identify and criticize macho behaviors outside of the lower classes. I also argue that this same

classed myopia leads these privileged authors to place greater importance on their female protagonists' sexual fulfillment. Mastretta and Esquivel are ultimately unable to understand the continued struggles of Mexican women in the 1980s and 90s due to their embrace of neoliberalism and their conflation of women's economic (limited) economic gains with overall social advancement and equality.

Finally, in chapter 3, "A Questioning of Honor: The (Self) Harm of Masculine Formation in *Isla de bobos* by Ana García Bergua and *Las paredes hablan* by Carmen Boullosa," I explore the emergence of a new focus in women-authored novelas sobre la Revolución—men and masculinities—and the divergent approaches towards these topics that García Bergua and Boullosa ultimately take. Written in a time when critical studies on men and masculinities had become more established in Mexico, the novels present their male protagonists as gendered beings and explore the development of these characters' gender identities, which the authors link to broader patterns of masculinity in Mexican history. Bourdieu's notions of habitus and fields, as well as the concept of the palimpsest, serve to elucidate how García Bergua and Boullosa have constructed their novels to highlight the ways in which past attitudes and behaviors inform present attitudes and behaviors while simultaneously hiding their constuctedness. This, in turn, serves to perpetuate oppressive practices and structures of oppression. In particular, I examine how García Bergua and Boullosa interrogate the notions of "honor" and "honra," which have a long, documented history of undergirding patriarchal gender structures in Mexico. These concepts have also been weaponized against lower-class and darker-skinned men, as their often-physical defense of honor was coded as barbaric and the men as more corporeal because their codes of conduct were not formalized in the same way as were those of men of the middle and upper classes. I argue that Boullosa, much like Mastretta and Esquivel, does little to dispel this

discourse and, in fact, maintains it by focusing on the overt, honor-based violence of lower-class men, thus reinforcing classist notions of machismo. García Bergua, on the other hand, exposes honor's wide-reaching violence by showcasing how it not only negatively affects women, but also men across race and class.

Through these chapters, I both center and do not center literary portrayals of the Mexican Revolution in my analysis. As I have made clear in this introduction, I am less concerned—in fact, not very concerned at all—with the ways in which the authors studied in this dissertation seek to expand our understanding of the Revolution by questioning official discourses and interrogating whose experiences have been left out of historiography and cultural production on this key event in 20th century Mexican history. That approach is already well established in the significant body of critical work that has been published on the novels that I examine here, especially those in chapters 1 and 2. While these postmodern and feminist approaches seek to understand how women authors of novelas sobre la Revolución insert themselves in the tradition of Revolutionary narratives by filling in what has not been represented, my approach does the same but by considering the ways in which these novels respond to that which has been represented, as well as the sociopolitical consequences of that representation. The models of masculine behavior established in men-authored novelas de la Revolución have served to both glorify and vilify Mexican men of the lower classes, and female authors have had to grapple with the consequences of claiming this masculinity for women while, rightfully, criticizing its deleterious effects on them. However, we must also take into account women's role in their own oppression—and that of men. As Matthew Gutmann acknowledges, recognizing the role of complicity in perpetuating subjugation does not mean forfeiting the ability to distinguish greater and lesser powers (*Meanings* 20). Acknowledging the role of some women authors in promoting

systemic violence that has affected men does not mean disregarding the ways in which women have also suffered due to this violence. In fact, as I demonstrate in my dissertation, a truly feminist approach must take into account men and masculinity, or else risk leaving undisturbed more insidious, that is, more stubborn, patriarchal structures.

## Chapter 1

## The Patriarchy Trap: Revolutionary Women and the Pitfalls of Masculine Agency in *Los recuerdos del porvenir* by Elena Garro and *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* by Elena Poniatowska

The 1910 Mexican Revolution stands indisputably as one of the most represented historical events in 20th century Mexican cultural production. As noted in the introduction, for many years it was largely male-authored novels dealing with events on the battlefield that "occupied centre stage" in the tradition of the literary genre of the *novela de la Revolución* (Bowskill, "Towards a Broader Definition" 22). Many of these novels were written in the decades immediately following the Revolution by authors who had firsthand experience with the uprising. Although Mexican women also produced narrative representations of the Revolution, their contributions were either initially ignored, such as Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho* (1931); are still in the process of being recovered, such as Consuelo Delgado's *Yo también, Adelita* (1936); or failed to gain a larger share of the genre until the latter half of the 20th century. Two of the novels in this last category not only work to incorporate woman-centered Revolutionary stories into the canon, but also challenge the female stereotypes that had solidified over several decades of Revolutionary cultural production. Both Elena Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963) and Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* (1968) complicate Revolutionary tropes by featuring female protagonists whose idolization and emulation of aggressive masculine behaviors push the strict boundaries between conservative Mexican notions of femininity and masculinity. However, Garro and Poniatowska ultimately do not promote this continued overvaluation of masculinity as a clear path to greater agency for women and greater equality between the sexes.

In order to better understand the ideas against which Garro and Poniatowska were

responding, it is important to first overview why and how these ideas gained prominence. Just as women writers were denied entry to the Revolutionary canon, so, too, were women participants in the Revolution denied entry to the vast, emerging historiography on the conflict. B. Christine Arce notes that, despite their significant influence in the 1910 uprising, Mexican women remained largely invisible in its official history (2).[15] It was not until 1964 that the first study dedicated exclusively to women's participation in the Revolution was published—María de los Ángeles Mendieta Alatorre's *La mujer en la Revolución Mexicana*—and it was not followed by additional studies of any substance until the 1980s and 1990s.[16] This historical exclusion is part of a broader tendency in patriarchal societies to erase or minimize women's participation in combat. War not only reveals the porosity between the so-called "public" and "private" spheres and their respective associations with "masculinity" and "femininity," but arguably widens these extant gaps within the (patriarchal) boundary that seeks to divide them: During wartime, women leave their homes in order to travel with military regiments as nurses, cooks, prostitutes, and soldiers, while military regiments encroach upon the so-called "home front" by occupying villages and houses. In a bid to firm up this public-male/private-female barrier, there emerges a constant effort to redefine the "front" and "combat" in order to exclude women and "domestic" activities. As Cynthia H. Enloe remarks, by denying women access to these realms and experiences, "men can claim a uniqueness and superiority that will justify their dominant position in the social order" (15). Likewise, by granting women the ability to serve the military but not to serve *in* the military, Enloe says, militaries can use women's essential services to ensure the smooth functioning of the war machine while making women appear as marginal to their core identity (6). In her study of postrevolutionary Mexico, Jocelyn Olcott asserts that the 1917 Constitutional Congress established three traditionally masculine activities as the basis for

Revolutionary citizenship in Mexico: military service, civic engagement, and labor (11). By refusing to acknowledge that women contributed to combat operations at the frontlines of the Revolution, not only as armed fighters but also in more traditionally feminine roles, historians thus attempted to maintain not only war and history but also citizenship as masculine realms.

A similar invisibilizing tactic can be seen in the name used to label the mostly poor and darker-skinned or indigenous women who traveled with troops during the Mexican Revolution: The term "*soldadera*" derives from the word for a soldier's pay—"*soldada*"—, as soldaderas were often entrusted with this money to purchase food and other provisions (Salas xii). As Arce argues, rather than being described as soldiers (*soldados*) or warriors (*guerreras*), these women were reduced to a degenerate military status and thus denied remuneration and recognition (65).[17] The catchall term "soldadera" does offer the advantage of flexibility and, consequently, the ability to encompass and reflect the fluidity of women's roles in the Revolution: In addition to meal preparation, soldaderas worked as nurses and took up arms when soldiers fell during battle. Some also held military rank and headed up battalions. They were wives, servants, lovers, prostitutes and, undoubtedly, integral parts of military units (56-59). As Sophie Esch acknowledges, however, it can be argued that some of the very historians who have more recently sought to (re)insert women into histories on the Revolution have perpetuated attempts to maintain the traditional division between masculine and feminine spheres of activity by calling for the division of soldaderas into a much larger group of "camp followers," who chiefly cooked and kept camp, and a smaller contingent of female "combatants," who mainly engaged in armed fighting (64). Although historians such as Frederick C. Turner (606), Anna Macías (41-42), and Ana Lau Jaiven and Carmen Ramos (36) acknowledge the existence of female warriors, their insistence upon distinguishing between different kinds of soldaderas minimizes female

revolutionaries' incursion into the traditionally masculine realm of combat by acknowledging as combatants only those women who focused on fighting. Turner, Macías, Lau Jaiven, and Ramos ignore the reality that many women intermittently took up arms during the Revolution, as well as the contribution of soldaderas' "domestic" activities to the success, or failure, of men on the battlefield and thus contribute to the upholding of binary divisions and a patriarchal-militarist logic. Ultimately, abandoning the term "soldadera," despite its flexibility, and recognizing all female participants in the Revolution to have been "soldados" will help to expand understandings of "combat" activity.

In a phenomenon that seems, at first glance, to counteract the efforts of historians to erase or condense women's presence and activities at the front during the 1910 Mexican Revolution, Mexican women were decidedly not elided from cultural production on the conflict but rather appeared in abundance in *corridos*,[18] novels, murals, photography, films, and theatre. This seeming omnipresence of Revolutionary women in the arts, however, hardly represented a departure from the ideological aims of historians of the Revolution. Female characters were largely limited to unimportant background roles and tropes, and Arce argues that the bodies of the real women who participated in the Revolution have thus been "*figured* and *disfigured* by the tropological forms their representations have taken by means of metonymy, mythification, or caricature" (emphasis in original, 2). The reduction of the space that women were allowed to occupy in cultural production on the Revolution thus mirrors the efforts designed to minimize and manage their presence in official history. Additionally, the recurrence to tropes in the arts can be tied, like the invisibilizing efforts in historiography, to a growing postrevolutionary patriarchal anxiety at the perceived leakage between masculine/public and feminine/private. The emergence and circulation of two tropes in particular —*la Adelita* and *la Cucaracha*—can be

seen as not only limiting representation but also constituting a concerted, didactic effort to encourage Mexican women to (re)embrace and aspire to traditional, middle-class feminine behaviors and spaces.[19]

Emerging from popular corridos, la Adelita and la Cucaracha quickly proliferated across different media. Tabea Alexa Linhard, for one, refers to la Adelita's "countless appearances" in novels, plays, songs, and visual culture (*Fearless Women* 226). Despite the immensity and variety of this cultural production, it is possible to align these tropes and their variants with the patriarchal dyad from which they were derived: the virgin-whore dialectic. Linhard argues that female revolutionaries in Mexico and Spain were assimilated into literary, historical, and popular discourse through preexisting discursive conventions. She refers to this as a "domesticating" gesture that sought to redraw gendered boundaries challenged during war (2-3). Likewise, Arce proposes that soldaderas were identified with the only conceptual fields available to creators at the time—mothers, sweethearts or whores (13)—, with Adelita and Cucaracha closely aligning with the last two figures, respectively (80). Similar to Linhard's concept of "domesticating" discourse, Arce speaks about the "metonymic freezing" carried out by tropes: As metonymies, tropes favor the fragment to represent the whole over recognizing the slippery variability and diversity that comprised the reality of soldaderas' gendered performances (14). La Adelita thus came to stand in for the "good" soldadera, the self-sacrificing sweetheart of the troops who embodied the Virgin-linked trait of "*abnegación*."[20] Developed from a corrido in which she accompanies men to battle not to fight but to be courted by them and mourn their brave sacrifices, and thus to enhance their masculinity (Esch 64), "la Adelita" quickly became shorthand for "soldadera." She was allowed to become the "great text and melody of the Mexican Revolution" because her image did not present a threat to the social order (Estrada

170): She represented an acceptable, objectified female helpmate whose presence with the troops did not undermine their mission. Never stepping out of her role or challenging her place (Linhard, *Fearless Women* 44), la Adelita and her story ignored a messy historical reality in favor of a controlled, homogenized narrative that confirmed and reinforced patriarchal expectations and, more importantly, served as a model for postrevolutionary femininity well after the Revolution had ended. In a telling example, Arce mentions the case of a 1951 female basketball team from Chihuahua whose victory in an international championship was celebrated with the composition of a song titled "Las Adelitas," thus invoking the most traditionally feminine of the soldadera tropes in order to effeminate women who had excelled at sport, a "masculine" pursuit (90-91). The ideal of la Adelita could not shine as brightly, however, without an opposing figure against which to be contrasted, thus necessitating the development of another trope to serve as an anti-model and a cautionary tale.

Although not unified under one moniker like la Adelita, the trope that Arce has identified as "la Cucaracha" engaged in similarly unacceptable and unaccepted—read, "masculine"—behaviors in her various incarnations. One of the earliest appearances of this trope comes in one of the earliest universally accepted examples of a novela de la Revolución: Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo* (1915). The character *la Pintada* is a brash, hard-drinking, rough-riding member of *la bola*.[21] She is powerful, straightforward, and unrestrained but finds herself kicked out of Demetrio Macías' band of men after she attacks his kidnapped lover, Camila, in a fit of jealous rage (Azuela 105-06). As Arce remarks, la Pintada's female strength and sexuality cannot be incorporated into the male realm and ultimately must be "dealt with" (95). She represents a degenerative force and threatens to undermine Macías, his men, and ultimately the uprising, putting her in line with the supreme female Mexican scapegoat, *la Malinche*.[22] As Debra Castillo

has proposed, "loose" women like la Pintada proliferated in postrevolutionary cultural production as a marker of the "tensions and anxieties inherent in a society in flux" (*Easy Women* 17-18). Because Mexican women in postrevolutionary society needed to be (re)educated as to their "proper" spaces, places, and roles, la Cucaracha and her variants could not be left unchecked to wreak havoc in the novels, stories, songs, and films in which they appeared. Accordingly, they were either cast out, like la Pintada, or put back on the path toward accepted femininity, as in Emilio el "Indio" Fernández's 1946 film, *Enamorada*. Fernández's classic Revolutionary melodrama follows the story of the willful daughter of a wealthy landowner, Beatriz Peñafiel (María Félix), who is ultimately wooed by a *zapatista* general, José Juan Reyes (Pedro Armendáriz). She ends the film in her "proper" place, dutifully following José on foot as he rides off into the sunset.[23] The message is clear: Mexican women's rebellion against traditional gender norms would be brought to heel.

The continued use of these didactic stereotypes decades after the armed phase of the Revolution had concluded is unsurprising given the unrelenting push by many Mexican women against public/private, masculine/feminine boundaries in their fight for civil rights as the postrevolutionary state continued to coalesce. Ex-soldaderas fought, largely unsuccessfully, to be recognized as *veteranas* for their contributions to the Revolution,[24] while many middle-class women pushed for the right to vote. Not all female activists were in agreement with how to perform their femininity in public, however. Among the suffragists, a notable split opened between those who argued for pushing against the masculine/feminine binary, advocating instead for women's adoption of more "masculine" performances, and those who wanted to challenge the feminine/private association without questioning the feminine ideals of maternalism and abnegation (Olcott 17, 59). This latter contingent gained traction, its supporters arguing that

accessing the public sphere would grant them the resources and conditions needed to better fulfill their domestic duties as the moral heart and educators of the family. As Mary Kay Vaughan notes, maternalism became the "discourse and practice for an active female citizenship in dialogue with a paternalist state" (30). Women played upon the patriarchally accepted feminine quality of abnegation, arguing that society was in debt to them due to all that they had done and given up: They were owed the vote (E. Tuñón Pablos 133). Although women eventually earned the right to vote in 1953, this "victory" came about in a way that officially ignored women's role in this achievement.

Instead, it was a question of optics and the result of a strengthening patriarchal state that, seemingly contradictorily, earned Mexican women suffrage. As Olcott notes, after the Revolution, Mexico sought to portray itself as a "modern" nation. Affirming women's political rights was necessary in order to support its claim to be a democratic and Revolutionary state (59). However, the federal government made sure to grant women the vote in a way that would affirm its paternalism and not reward women's activism. Instead of approving a 1937 constitutional amendment allowing the female vote that had resulted from popular mobilization, the Mexican Congress ratified a very similar piece of legislation that had been written by President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines in 1951, thus linking women's "victory" to state patronage and chivalry (234). Women's attempt to use traditional femininity to gain political and civic agency was thus erased by the state as a factor in their achievement of suffrage. This is, perhaps, unsurprising if we take into account Carlos Monsiváis' assertion that in Mexico the construction of a "feminine sensibility" aimed to give women a visible image in order to make them invisible and thus absent them from the true scenes of power ("Sensibilidad femenina" 87). In Mexico, "woman" was tied firmly to the domestic realm, where she could ultimately be hidden away. The

traditional femininity on which many activists drew in their call to bridge the private and public realms was not successfully resignified to align with activity outside of the home. Additionally, although women would now technically have a voice in deciding representation in the political realm, the State was confident that this voice would be influenced by its newly reminted ally: the Catholic Church. Monsiváis writes that Ruiz Cortines trusted in the alliance of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and the Catholic hierarchy when making the decision to grant suffrage ("Gender Can't Be Seen" 10). Although Monsiváis does not elaborate, it is clear that he is referring to the long-held assumption that the Church held a particularly strong ideological sway over women. While this presumed traditionalism was lamented as an anti-modern impediment during the Cristero War (1926-1929) (Lau Jaiven 91, Olcott 41, Esch 61), it had been rethought as useful by the early 1950s.

By the time that Elena Garro was writing *Los recuerdos del porvenir* at the beginning of the 1950s, then, Mexican women had been largely stymied in their attempts to position themselves as Revolutionary citizens in a postrevolutionary Mexico. They had been erased from official history and reduced to shallow tropes in cultural production and were assumed to desire and need paternal guidance in the form of adherence to the State-Church alliance and its mandates. A heavily studied novel, *Los recuerdos del porvenir* is set not during the first armed phase of the Revolution but during the *cristiada*, a reactionary uprising that took place between 1926 and 1929 in the rural communities of central and western Mexico. The *cristeros* opposed the anti-clerical measures of President Plutarco Elias Calles that were being enacted in fulfillment of the 1917 Constitution. Chiefly, they rejected the Calles Law of 1926, which closed churches, confiscated Church property, and required clergy to register with civil authorities (Bowskill, "Women, Violence" 438). Although Garro's novel is not set during the violent events

of 1910-1917 that are typically considered to constitute the Mexican Revolution, as I note in the introduction, Bowskill's call for an expansion of the category of novelas de la Revolución provides a strong rationale for including *Los recuerdos del porvenir* in the subcategory of *novelas sobre la Revolución*. The novel centers the first postrevolutionary governments' struggles to institutionalize the Revolution and, by including *Los recuerdos del porvenir* in the Revolutionary canon, we commit to recognizing political and historical perspectives excluded from official history (Bowskill, "Towards a Broader Definition" 21-33). Indeed, other prominent scholars include *Los recuerdos del porvenir* in an expanded Revolutionary canon for this very reason, including Linhard (*Fearless Women* 232), Sara Potter (107-08), Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado ("La escritura viril" 161), and Niamh Thornton (*Women and the War Story* 61). In Garro's case, her novel raises the ghosts of the impoverished, bourgeois, and aristocratic rural women who participated in the Cristero Rebellion, framing their uprising not as a defense of conservative ideals and a repudiation of the Revolution but as a rejection of the state's strategies for institutionalizing the Revolution, chiefly its imposition of a hegemonic Revolutionary ideology on rural communities.

Garro is not alone in being recognized as a pioneer in the attempt to rescue women's erased Revolutionary experiences via historical fiction: Elena Poniatowska's hybrid testimonial novel, *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* (1969), has also been widely analyzed because of its efforts to recover and amplify the silenced voices of soldaderas. The two novels, however, have not often been read together, despite this common goal and other similarities—to be explored in this chapter. Furthermore, while analyses have recognized how Poniatowka's protagonist, Jesusa Palancares, challenges soldadera stereotypes, Garro's novel has never been read as attempting to unpack and expand the tropes to which Revolutionary women were reduced, despite the well-

noted presence of these figures in the Revolutionary cultural production both preceding and contemporaneous with *Los recuerdos del porvenir*. This chapter aims to fill this gap in critical analysis by examining how both Garro and Poniatowska challenge these tropes in their novels. Despite the widespread use of la Adelita and la Cucaracha to promote "traditional" feminine behaviors, as well as the failure of female activists to successfully wield traditional femininity in the public sphere, however, I do not propose that Garro's and Poniatowska's novels present the expansion of the notion of the "feminine" to include behaviors traditionally codified as "masculine" as an easy, or desirable, solution for Mexican women's lack of agency and representation, both in literature and the "real world."[25] Instead, I propose that it is possible to read these two novels as demonstrating how a continued overvaluation of masculinity would do more harm to Mexican women than good.

At the time that Garro and Poniatowska were writing, generations of Mexicans had, consciously and unconsciously, embodied and reproduced a system of masculine domination that positioned men as agents in not only civil society and history, but in the private realm as well, as men ultimately served as the bridge between public and private spaces.[26] As I will show in this chapter, the characters of Isabel Moncada and Jesusa Palancares— in *Los recuerdos del porvenir* and *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*, respectively—, perpetuate the association between masculinity and agency by idolizing and imitating masculine, and in particular "machista," behaviors. The attraction of the oppressed toward the methods of their oppressors, although seemingly contradictory, can be better understood by taking into account the unnoticed and essentially unnoticeable ways in which dominant ideologies are reproduced across generations. In his work *Masculine Domination*, Pierre Bourdieu builds upon his concept of "habitus" to explain what he calls a "paradox of doxa," or the puzzling fact that the order of the world is broadly respected,

that there are not more transgressions and subversions (1). The seemingly effortless perpetuation of this established order can be tied to the intransigence of habitus, which Bourdieu defines as "systems of *durable, transposable dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (my emphasis, *Theory of Practice* 72). In other words, although all practices and ideologies are products of history, their constuctedness becomes lost over time as successive generations are formed within them. This process of naturalization obscures their origin, leading to their unquestioned adoption and passing down ad nauseam as they shape the way that people think and act and thus influence the thinking and acting of successive generations. This is a process that impacts men as well as women, as we will see in chapter 3. In the particular case of masculine domination, Bourdieu argues that because we have embodied "the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation" we are likely to resort to "modes of thought that are the products of domination" when trying to understand masculine domination (*Masculine Domination* 5). In the case of Isabel and Jesusa, then, because they have been conditioned to equate masculinity and agency, it stands to reason that their own search for greater agency leads them to adopt, or attempt to adopt, a masculine positionality.

If, however, the pairing of masculinity and agency has become naturalized through habitus, it is unsurprising that women, and in this case female characters, who seek to take charge of their lives through "masculine" performances will face pushback and rejection from not only men, but also other women for doing so. Bourdieu refers to this inevitable rejection of women who pursue agency as a "double bind": Women who seek access to power of any kind find themselves in a lose-lose situation because, Bourdieu argues, if they behave like men "they risk losing the obligatory attributes of 'femininity' and call into question the natural right of men

to positions of power; if they behave like women, they appear incapable and unfit for the job" (*Masculine Domination* 67-68). Power has been linked not only to "masculine" behaviors, but, more importantly, to bodies coded as male. Additionally, Isabel's and Jesusa's embrace of a "masculine" positionality is not only rejected by others but arguably compounds the internalized misogyny, or "anti-narcissism" to borrow from Hélène Cixous,[27] from which these characters already suffer as women, as it results in their reproduction of the very behaviors that have been used to oppress them. Although Garro and Poniatowska do not offer a concrete solution to this dilemma, they seem to anticipate Cixous' call that women not simply appropriate the instruments, concepts, and places of "men," but instead resignifiy as valuable and powerful the feminine,[28] although perhaps not without a certain sense of pessimism, given the failure of Mexican women to do so in the decades immediately following the Revolution.

Cixous' thinking is echoed in Jack Halberstam's influential 1998 work, *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam emphasizes that when questioning the limits between masculinity and femininity, it is vital to not simply create another binary in which masculinity always signifies power (29). That is, he advocates against promoting female masculinity over female femininity and denigrating male femininity over male masculinity. This approach would result in the production of a similarly "charged" gender binary in which, in terms of agency, the "masculine" is valued and the "feminine" devalued. Because the intransigency of habitus and the double bind make it likely that many women will continue to perform "traditional" femininity, such a binary will perpetuate "feminine" women's oppression. Consequently, there is a need to accept and value as agential certain "feminine" behaviors in addition to accepting women's performance of traditionally "masculine" behaviors. It is not necessarily reactionary, then, to promote traditionally feminine behaviors if this is done not to continue to affirm the supposed inferiority

of those with a traditionally feminine gender performance but to recognize and refute their sociohistorical categorization as such.

Both Elena Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir* and Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* complicate the Adelita and Cucaracha tropes by showcasing female protagonists with complex gender performances. However, while these novels challenge the traditional boundaries between conservative Mexican notions of femininity and masculinity, they do not promote women's adoption of "masculine" behaviors as a clear path to greater agency and equality. Although Garro's Isabel Moncada and Poniatowska's Jesusa Palancares are disposed to view the adoption of masculine behaviors as their only chance to gain agency, as they have been formed within a context in which only masculine positionalities are associated with power, Garro and Poniatowska highlight the double bind that prevents their characters' communities from accepting this gender performance as valid. Furthermore, the authors showcase how glorifying masculinized women runs the risk of maintaining the patriarchal associations of masculine-active-valued and feminine-passive-devalued and thus perpetuating the gender hierarchy—an example of systemic violence that, in this case, is often defended by direct violence—from which women seek to escape.

***Los recuerdos del porvenir***

Elena Garro's 1963 novel *Los recuerdos del porvenir* is set in the fictitious village of Ixtepec during the *Guerra Cristera*, the 1926-29 rural revolt against the federal government's imposition of secularist and anticlerical laws. The village itself serves as the narrator of the novel, which is divided almost equally into two parts. The first half of the novel centers on Julia Andrade, the reluctant *querida* of General Francisco Rosas. Rosas has been sent to occupy Ixtepec and bring it in line with the federal government's hegemonic vision of a

postrevolutionary Mexico. Rosas rules with fear and cruelty, employing frequent public lynchings to keep the village residents under control. Ixtepec, which feels stuck in time—or perhaps, more accurately, stuck outside of time—finally experiences a novel event with the arrival of the outsider Felipe Hurtado, who has come seeking Julia. While some of the wealthier families in town occupy themselves with the staging of a play under the direction of Felipe, Rosas grows increasingly frustrated with Julia's emotional and mental distance and looks to eliminate any threats to the total possession of his lover, the chief one being Felipe. In a fantastical ending to the first half of the novel, time seemingly freezes as Julia races to rescue Felipe and escape with him before Rosas and his men can kill her former lover. A witness reports seeing Julia and Felipe riding away from Ixtepec, which remains shrouded in night as the morning dawns in the countryside around it.

The second half of the novel follows the villagers as they rebel against Rosas' enforcement of the Calles Law of 1926, which results in the closing of Ixtepec's church and its priest and sacristan being forced into hiding. Villagers from different social standings band together to protect their religious leaders, including the madam of the local brothel, who shelters the priest, and a poor *beata*, who hides the sacristan. In order to spirit the men to safety, the wealthy families of Ixtepec plan a party to keep Rosas and his men occupied while the priest and sacristan escape. Their plan fails, however, as Rosas either sees through it or is tipped off as to the party's true purpose, resulting in several deaths and arrests. The Moncada family suffers the death of one son and the imprisonment of another. Their daughter, Isabel, decides to take up with Rosas as his lover in the hotel where he and his men have been staying. Although Isabel eventually pleads with Rosas to spare the life of her surviving brother, Nicolás, after he has been tried and sentenced to death, Nicolás refuses his pardon in favor of the firing squad. The novel

ends with Rosas' abandonment of Ixtepec. Isabel, in turn, rejects the suggestion of the village *curandera,* Gregoria, that she prostrate herself at the base of the Virgin's shrine. Instead, Isabel runs away, shouting that she must see Rosas again. When Gregoria searches for Isabel, all she finds is a stone, which she proclaims is Isabel, engraves with a moralizing statement, and places at the feet of the Virgin.

While *Los recuerdos del porvenir* was published in 1963, Garro actually wrote the novel a decade prior. In 1980 letter to Emmanuel Carballo, she writes that she drafted *Los recuerdos del porvenir* in 1953 while recovering in Bern, Switzerland, from "un estruendoso tratamiento de cortisona" (485). She explains that she then put the manuscript away in a trunk, where her sister discovered it in 1960. Garro claims that the pages that her sister found were half-burnt, as Garro had attempted to destroy the novel in Mexico in 1957. Garro's husband, Octavio Paz, was allegedly so taken by the manuscript that he spread the word about it to anyone who would listen, eventually ensuring that it was published by Joaquín Moritz (485). Based on this timeline, Lucía Melgar argues that *Los recuerdos del porvenir*'s two female protagonists are linked to Garro's personal romantic experiences in the early 1950s—chiefly, her affair with the Argentine author Adolfo Bioy Casares. Melgar posits that while Julia's story reflects the ending that Garro might have had had she and Bioy Casares left their respective spouses, Isabel's story reflects Garro's reality: A woman afraid to break with convention, paralyzed with fear and unable to pursue what she desired ("Garro en París" 172). Melgar's reading is certainly possible: Garro's letters to Carballo mention that she packed the manuscript away with poems that she had written to Bioy Casares (Carballo 485). Her letters also make it clear that *Los recuerdos del porvenir* is semi-autobiographical, with Ixtepec standing in for her hometown of Iguala in Guerrero state (488), where Garro belonged to a wealthy family that supported the cristeros (479). It is

necessary, however, to go beyond an autobiographical reading in order to reach the larger social issues upon which Garro's novel comments. In her 2013 in-depth examination of Garro's understanding of *mexicanidad* and *modernidad*, Rebecca Biron argues that using Garro's blending of the public and private in her work as justification for ignoring the discussion that she contributed to national debates reflects a broader tendency to relegate women's literature to a lesser status (*Elena Garro* 15). Garro's works did not ignore sociopolitical issues, and these must be taken into account when analyzing her writing.

Indeed, many critics have already done so by identifying the recovery and expansion of history as key goals of *Los recuerdos del porvenir*. While they acknowledge that Garro drew upon her childhood when writing her novel, they argue that she did so because she recognized that the female voices and experiences from this childhood had been left out of Revolutionary historiography and cultural production (Castillo, *Easy Women* 82; Sánchez Prado, "La escritura viril" 157; Seydel 277). We must go one step further, however, and remember that these voices and experiences had not just been simply elided from Revolutionary narratives: They had been warped and simplified through the use of tropes. As Arce and Linhard have argued, these tropes drew from extant conceptual fields that were reworked in the specific context of the Revolution: The agential woman was rejected as a threat to Revolutionary ideals in favor of the submitting, sacrificing woman, although this figure, too, could pose a threat if she were led to support whatever ideologies were being framed as antirevolutionary. Debra Castillo has already argued on a more general level that the men in *Los recuerdos del porvenir* are threatened not by violence from other men but by unconfined—read, agential—female bodies (*Easy Women* 98), and other critics have already read Julia and Isabel against the Virgen/Malinche dyad (Gunn 76; Lund 408-09, 413; Ruiz Serrano 882). While the Adelita/Cucaracha duo is a variant of that

binary, it is one that developed during and in support of the mythification of the Revolution. Despite the relevance of these specific tropes to the specific historical context of *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, however, they have never been read against Julia and Isabel.

In the vast body of analysis that has been generated on *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, the critical interpretation of Julia Andrade varies significantly. While some authors have read Julia as a very passive, ultra "feminine" figure (Franco, *Plotting Women* 135; Gladhart 94), others have described her as a more nuanced character. Rául Brown points out that Julia makes an active choice of resistance when deciding to save Felipe's life (54), while Mariana Libertad Suárez Velázquez argues that Julia confronts Rosas on her own terms and in a manner that is only *perceived* as passive (63-64). In a similar vein, Bárbara A. Gunn proposes that Julia uses "apparent" indifference and silence in order to defend herself from Rosas' violence (70). These interpretations clearly challenge Julia's classification as a nonthreatening, dutiful *querida*. Although the comparison is not overt, it is not unreasonable to argue that the specter of la Adelita—a figure loved for her potential to be a man's lover (Estrada 170), that is, for her potential to be loved by a fighter and to devotedly love him back—has informed interpretations of Julia. A more explicit comparison of the two figures, then, seems not only warranted but also a fruitful avenue for better understanding Julia and how Garro uses this character to comment on gender roles in Mexico.

Indeed, upon closer examination, it is possible to find both explicit and implicit references to the Adelita trope in *Los recuerdos del porvenir*. Near the beginning of the novel, Isabel's mother, Ana Moncada, recalls that when the Revolution started, the streets of her village were flooded with soldados singing "La Adelita" (36). While an older version of "La Adelita" is sung from the perspective of a soldado who is in love with Adelita, the version that Garro cites

reverses these roles and makes Adelita the love-struck character (Herrera-Sobek 108). This newer version, however, also incorporates key stanzas from the older one, thus preserving a discourse that casts women as objects to be owned and flaunted by men. In one of these stanzas, the male singer clearly seeks to use Adelita to boost his status among his peers: "Que si Adelita quisiera ser mi novia/que si Adelita fuera mi mujer/le compraría un vestido de seda/para llevarla a bailar al cuartel" (qtd. in Herrera-Sobek 107). Rosas follows a similar modus operandi: The villagers gossip about the gifts with which he showers Julia, describing with disdain "los trajes, las alhajas y las comidas exquisitas" that he (allegedly) brings in daily on the train from Mexico City (Garro 91). Like the corrido's sergeant, Rosas shows off his most-prized possession by taking Julia for walks in the plaza that lies at the heart of the town. In doing so, he very strategically chooses the stage for a performance that is meant to convince the townspeople of his dominance over his lover: By parading Julia in the most public space in Ixtepec, he simultaneously reinforces her position as his (love) object and reminds its inhabitants of the control that he exerts over their lives. However, in another echo of "La Adelita," Rosas ultimately both assumes a claim toward Julia and questions the extent to which he controls her.

In the first half of the novel, Garro includes several moments in which readers are made privy to Rosas' internal monologue of doubt as to his power over Julia. The town speculates that he is rattled by the possibility that Julia will leave him for Felipe, resulting in him living "hostigado por la duda" (Garro 77). At one point, close to tears, Rosas bemoans the fact that Julia "se empeñaba en vivir en un mundo distinto del suyo" (79). The more recent version of "La Adelita" includes a stanza from the original—perhaps the most famous and cited one of the song—that highlights the fear that women will inevitably betray men. In it, the sergeant proclaims that "si Adelita se fuera con otro/la seguiría por tierra y por mar/si por mar, en un

buque de guerra/si por tierra, en un tren militar" (qtd. in Herrera-Sobek 107). Like Rosas, the sergeant worries about his abandonment, reinforcing a patriarchal narrative of women's treachery. He is also unwilling to let Adelita go without a fight. Although perhaps meant to be interpreted as a romantic gesture of devotion, in a song in which the soldadera has been reduced to a love object, this mentality instead reinforces a denial of Adelita's agency and a vilification of the real-life soldaderas who viewed the Revolution as an opportunity to gain greater control over their lives through fluid movement and relationships with men.[29]

While Garro ultimately does use Julia to push back against the condemnation of Revolutionary women who circulated freely during the conflict, she does not promote this active movement as women's only path toward agency. Instead, the methods of resistance with which she endows Julia combine both traditionally lauded "activity" with traditionally maligned "passivity." Julia is outwardly compliant to Rosas and does not resist his use of her body. She does, however, inwardly resist Rosas' domination. As Castillo argues, while Julia's corporeal yielding can be read as evidence of severe damage and indifference toward further abuse of her body, her refusal to disclose her "innermost identity" can be read as her consciously turning on and dominating her victimizer (*Easy Women* 87). This domination, in contrast to Rosas' overt violence, is distinguished by its apparent passivity, which can best be understood through the metaphor of a wall. In fact, Garro has Rosas employ the imagery of a besieged, walled city when he describes his frustration at not being able to access and control Julia's mind and emotions as well as her body: "Su frente era un muro altísimo que la separaba de él. 'Detrás está engañándome', se dijo, y la vio galopando en pasajes desconocidos, bailando en oscuros salones de pueblo, entrando en camas enormes acompañada de hombres sin cara" (Garro 80-81). Paz, who, as noted previously, was Garro's husband at the time that she wrote *Los recuerdos del*

*porvenir*, famously argues in "Los hijos de la Malinche" that there exist only two positionalities for Mexicans in terms of agency: the masculine *chingón,* "el macho, el que abre" and the feminine *chingado*, "lo pasivo, lo inerte y abierto" (100).[30] The character of Julia, while partially fulfilling the parameters of a "chingada," also demonstrates the possibility of a third positionality, one that Paz does not take into account: The impenetrable.

The impenetrable combines the positionalities that Paz would seek to place in diametric opposition. Like the chingón, the impenetrable is closed, walled off, as by its very definition it avoids the penetration that characterizes the chingón. Unlike the chingón, however, it is not actively forceful or violent. A wall is, in this sense, simultaneously passive, in that it is inert, and yet also active, in that it does a job through its inertness—sometimes many jobs at once. Humans outsource all kinds of labor to walls: In her discussion of the concept of the material delegation of emotions, Birgitte Schepelern Johansen argues that German non-Jews used the walls of Jewish ghettoes to physically and emotionally expel Jews from the community during World War II. (53). In Julia's case, she has not merely built a wall and left it to do work for her, as she must also constantly maintain it: In sense, then, she *is* the wall that resists Rosas and protects herself from him. By putting Julia in the position of the impenetrable, Garro contributes to the blurring of the distinction between activity and passivity. While she does not completely invert the chingón-chingado hierarchy, she does question the importance that it places on corporeal penetration as a demonstration of agency. Furthermore, she avoids advocating that women adopt the aggressive behavior of the "masculine" chingón in order to exercise agency and instead promotes the idea of the agency of the inert.

Although she uses Julia to question what agency looks like, Garro does also show her protagonist as taking on a more traditionally "active"—but still non-violent—role in her

liberation. In fact, it is Julia who initiates her and Felipe's magical escape from Ixtepec by seeking him out and warning him that Rosas has decided to kill him. Despite this active step, however, several critics have continued to cast Julia in the role of the damsel in distress who is rescued by a "white knight" (Franco, *Plotting Women* 135; Gladhart 94). This interpretation echoes the villagers' mythification of Felipe in the stories that they develop about the *fuereño*'s time in Ixtepec. The narrative that the townspeople build around Felipe and Julia emphasizes the apparently supernatural qualities of the former, casting him in the active role of the savior and thus denying the agency of the latter, who is transformed only superficially. It is important to note that the villagers tend to mention Felipe's perceived otherworldliness not in the moment of interacting with him, but when *remembering* that moment of interaction. For example, the inhabitants of Ixtepec find out only "*mucho después*" that hotel owner Don Pepe Ocampo seemingly witnessed Felipe materialize two cigarettes from thin air (my emphasis, Garro 40). And it is again only "*mucho después*" that they question how Felipe apparently walked through a storm without getting wet (my emphasis, 106). Garro emphasizes these instances of remembering within a larger narrative that is, itself, a collective memory that is both built from and contributes to individual memories. With this subtle metanarrative commentary, Garro highlights the distorting effect of time on memory as well as the role that oral culture plays in solidifying a limited narrative: These mythified memories of Felipe are circulated amongst the villagers and their descendants and will be circulated amongst their descendants' descendants, etc., their repetition steadily reinforcing one figuration of the fuereño and progressively erasing the possibility of drawing another. Garro thus highlights the mechanisms that contribute to the mythification of real people or groups of people. These techniques, as previously noted, have been identified as key contributors to the erasure of soldaderas' Revolutionary contributions and

experiences in favor of the acceptable stories of omnipresent figures such as la Adelita.

In another parallel with la Adelita and in contrast with the mythification of Felipe, the collective mind of the village ultimately centers Julia's beauty and not her agency as they turn her into a character in the narrative of Rosas' reign in Ixtepec. At the beginning of the second half of the novel, the village-narrator remarks that, as time passed, Julia's "belleza crecía en nuestra memoria" (Garro 151). Aligning themselves with Rosas, the inhabitants of Ixtepec mourn the loss of Julia as one would mourn the loss of a beautiful possession. In a realization of the fears of the corrido's sergeant, their Adelita has gone off with another man, demonstrating not her strength but his power. The narrative that coalesces, then, is one in which the relationship that ultimately matters is not the one between a man and a woman but the one between two men: Who was "manly" enough to possess the woman: Rosas or Felipe?[31] In this case, the villagers are reminded when they look at Rosas that "Hurtado tenía más poder que él" (152). He has bested Rosas, absconding with his rival's prized possession. However, as mentioned above, it was Julia who demonstrated strength through her decision to leave with Felipe. In doing so, she took charge in breaking the cycle of domestic abuse to which she had been submitted, itself part of the larger cycle of patriarchal violence against women that seeks to control them through objectification and in which the townspeople participate in their narrative building.

By leaving Ixtepec, Julia quite literally refuses to continue to participate in this narrative. Isaac Gabriel Salgado argues that Felipe and Julia are incompatible with the world of Ixtepec and that it is only by exiting the novel entirely that they can have a happy ending (84). Garro explicitly frames Julia's decision to leave Ixtepec as a rupturing: When Julia goes to the home where Felipe is staying in order to initiate their escape, Felipe's host, Doña Matilde Meléndez, contemplates Julia's simultaneous fragility and violence. Doña Matilde trembles as a brilliant

storm seems to envelop the querida and her "imagen brillante se escindió y cayó en trozos de cristal" (Garro 134). Garro describes Julia not only as breaking apart, but as shattering into pieces of glass like a windowpane or, alternatively, a mirror. Julia's figurative transformation into a shattered mirror can be read as a repudiation of the false rupture that results from imitating, or mirroring, the violence of one's oppressors. Identifying with a male positionality over a female positionality in order to gain access to the agency associated with the former produces only the illusion of a break, as it reinforces extant violent power structures. In order for true change to occur, the phallocentric symbolic order that has guided women's ego formation must be abandoned, just as Julia abandons Rosas and the patriarchal violence that he practices and upholds.

Julia's path to freedom is not presented as a realistic one: She only succeeds in leaving the gran chingón with the aid of magic. It is important to note, however, that critics have recognized fantasy's ability to challenge the status quo and to visualize new, emancipated possibilities towards which subjugated groups can work. With this understanding of fantasy, it is possible to argue that Garro's departure from realism ends up producing a more realistic text. She imagines the possibility of escaping from the violent, patriarchal system that undergirded understandings and performances of gender in 1920s and 1950s Mexico. However, by framing this as fantastical, she acknowledges that doing so would not have seemed plausible to many of her readers. Furthermore, by using magic to aid her protagonist and thus presenting her readers with no viable way of bringing this rupture to fruition, Garro highlights the extensive work that would have needed to be done to transform a dream into a reality, to get from start to endpoint. Garro thus does not deny the difficulty of rejecting a structure that was as deeply entrenched as was the masculine domination of her culture. Indeed, she underlines this challenge with the path

that she sets for the protagonist of the second half of the novel, Isabel Moncada. By idolizing and seeking to mimic Rosas' positionality, Isabel not only experiences the burn of the double bind via the other villagers' rejection of her actions, but she also reinforces the valuation of masculinity and its link with violent power and agency.

Like Julia Andrade, Isabel Moncada has been the subject of varying and conflicting interpretations. The main point of dispute has been how to understand her decision to become Rosas' lover the night of the failed attempt to free Ixtepec's priest and sacristan. Some critics, like Cristina Ruiz Serrano, have written her off as a Malinche figure whose protofeminism Garro betrays by turning her into a femme fatale (882). Most critics, however, have not taken such a simplistic approach, recognizing the ambiguity of a novel dominated by motifs—mirrors, smoke, shadows, footsteps, ghosts, echoes—that bring to mind the complicated present-absence of the Derridean trace and the slipperiness of signification. In his article on nation building in *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, Joshua Lund argues that there is little given to us in the text to help us evaluate Isabel's motivations. Nevertheless, Lund proposes that the origins of Isabel's affair with Rosas are an act of political resistance meant to further the town's rebellion by undermining Rosas' sovereignty (408-10). Like Lund, others have also seen a kind of resistance in Isabel's actions, but one that has more to do with her personal, rather than political, identity. While recognizing that Isabel's motives are not entirely understandable, these readings argue that her affair constitutes a rebellion against the limitations placed on women of her class and race (Castillo, *Easy Women* 92-98; Franco, *Plotting Women* 136-37; Kaminsky 85; Melgar, "Amibgüedad, violencia" 63-64; Polit Dueñas 121). They argue that Isabel sees choosing her romantic partner as the only way to exercise some kind of agency in her life. I would go one step further and argue that Isabel's true desire is not to be with Rosas but to *be* him, although the

latter option is, ultimately, the only possible one. Isabel clearly links subjectivity and masculinity and objectivity and femininity, with the narrator explaining that she was disgusted by the "diferencias entre ella y sus hermanos. Le humillaba la idea de que el único futuro para las mujeres fuera el matrimonio. Hablar del matrimonio como de una solución la dejaba reducida a una mercancía" (Garro 24). Her high estimation of Rosas allow us to argue that Isabel does not equate just any masculinity with agency but, in particular, the aggressive machismo with which Rosas appears to achieve supreme agency over the town and its residents.

If Isabel is seduced, then, it is not by Rosas himself but by her desire to, like Rosas, enjoy autonomy, separation, and the ability to wield power rather than be subjected to it. Although she does not dedicate much space to this idea in her analysis, Amalia Gladhart proposes that Isabel joins Rosas out of alienation and anger more than sexual desire, as she is attracted to his ability to stand "apart, self-defined" (103) due to her "desire for radical autonomy" (106). From the beginning of the novel, Garro primes her readers to draw parallels between Rosas and Isabel: While the former is described as "alto y violento" (Garro 14), the latter is said to be "alta e interrogante" (31). For someone whose gender, race, and class would dictate that she be obedient and unquestioning, Isabel's interrogatory tendencies can be read as a kind of violence against the structures that have limited her life choices. However, rather than leaving these structures behind, as Julia does by fleeing Rosas and the oppressive, top-down control that he both exercises and represents, Isabel is drawn to the general's positionality. When Rosas shuts down the town's church, Isabel describes her compassion for him and her desire to take "el salto para colocarse al lado de Francisco Rosas" in order to be "en el mundo de los que están solos" (161). Isabel is arguably partially correct in her assessment of Rosas, as he can be said to stand alone at the top of the hierarchy of power in Ixtepec.

In other ways, however, Rosas appears to take on the position of a transcendent signified for the villagers and is therefore never alone: The residents of Ixtepec feel that it is impossible to escape Rosas, as even when he is physically absent they sense his presence, the weight of his power conditioning every decision that they make and providing meaning for everything that they do.[32] Garro describes this sensation by using the imagery of a shadow, with the town-narrator confessing that the "sombra de Francisco Rosas cubría mis cielos, empañaba el brillo de mis tardes, ocupaba mis esquinas y se introducía en las conversaciones" (118). Although Rosas would seem to be immune from this sense of suffocation, Isabel's incursion into his private space sends him into a paranoid, unsettled state. In contrast with Julia's physical presence and mental absence, Isabel's focus is constantly trained on Rosas. She unsettles him with her "ojos obstinados" (245). Her "doubled" presence convinces him that "[n]o quedaba lugar para él […] se ahogaba" (246). It would seem, then, that Isabel has triumphed, as she is not only with Rosas, but has also come to occupy his dominating positionality, if only in the hotel room that they share.

Upon closer examination, however, it becomes clear that, just as Jacques Derrida argues that transcendent signifieds do not actually exist, Rosas' dominance is not absolute, irreducible or independent either, but instead tenuous and dependent upon his relationship with the residents of Ixtepec. If their fear evaporates, so does his power over them. Garro provides insight into Rosas' thinking and behavior that ultimately belies his supposed supreme agency, providing some sympathy for a character who feels obligated to terrorize an entire town. In one of the few close examinations of Rosas, Gabriela Polit Dueñas argues that he derives no pleasure from complying with his orders. Instead, she says, he feels pressured to act aggressively, as he views his power as dependent on being recognized as powerful. Through violence, then, he

simultaneously exercises and creates his power. Rosas' scenes of despondency, drunkenness, and despondent drunkenness reveal "sus remordimientos, sus frustraciones, y en última instancia, su fracaso como hombre" (Polit Dueñas 119). Rosas falls into despair when he is unable to escape this cycle of violence—his attempt to show mercy is rejected when Nicolás Moncada refuses to be pardoned and Rosas is forced to order his execution. Looking at Nicolás' bloody corpse, Rosas reflects on his life as "un engaño permanente" (Garro 287). Full of resentment, he sees Nicolás' "ojos vidriosos de la muerte" as they "miraba su derrota" and compares himself to the fallen youth, reflecting on his shared fate as "un fusilado de la suerte" (287). In a certain sense, then, Rosas is just as powerless as his victims, unable to escape the cyclical recurrence to violence that is expected of a man in his position.

Cyclicality, in fact, abounds in Garro's novel and in the critical analyses that have been produced on it. In addition to extensive commentary on Garro's discussion of the cyclicality of memory and time (Gladhart 95; Kaminsky 80-82, 88-90; Méndez Ródenas 848; Salgado 78-80), analyses have centered on her denouncement of the repetition of institutional and state violence in Mexico (Biron, *Elena Garro* 206-08; Gladhart 100; Potter 111; Seydel 264). While her character Ana Moncada expresses hope as a younger woman that the Revolution will produce a violent, erasing rupture, resulting in the forging of a new, egalitarian order in Mexico (Garro 36), Garro, like many of her contemporaries writing on the legacy of the Revolution, uses Rosas and his men to denounce the 1910 uprising as having maintained and reinforced oppressive structures. The only change that it has produced is, to some degree, those who occupy the positions at the top. Striking a pessimistic note, Garro points to the failed promises of change that revolts in Mexico have yielded, her village-narrator proclaiming that "[u]na generación sucede a la otra, y cada una repite los actos de la anterior. Sólo un instante antes de morir descubren que

era posible soñar y dibujar el mundo a su manera, para luego despertar y empezar un dibujo diferente" (248). While this statement mourns the fruitless attempt of Ixtepec's citizens to defy their occupiers and the latter's violent crackdown as the latest iteration of a tired story, it can also be read against Isabel's actions: Her idolization of Rosas' agency does not provide her with an escape from the patriarchal oppression against which she chafes but rather reinforces the overvaluation of violent, machista masculinity. She has not drawn a new world but has instead attempted to position herself differently in the inherently violent patriarchal gender order that already exists. While Isabel challenges women's limitation to a submissive, "feminine" positionality and thus pushes against the boundaries that would maintain masculinity as the exclusive realm of men, she does not contest the association of masculinity and power. Additionally, she fails to recognize the vulnerability behind Rosas' masculine performance—namely, its reliance not only upon constant displays of violence, but also on others' recognition of and deference to that violence.

Others residents of Ixtepec, however, challenge neither the association of masculinity and power nor the boundaries of masculinity and femininity. If Julia can be read against the trope of la Adelita, Isabel is positioned in the novel against la Adelita's binary counterpart, la Cucaracha. Across her many incarnations, la Cucaracha has been used as a pejorative figure to disavow the "unfeminine" behaviors that women have adopted when participating in insurrections. If la Adelita is the loyal sweetheart, la Cucaracha is the troublemaking whore, the defeminized soldier whose "unnatural power and military prowess profoundly unsettles the gendered social order" (Arce 92). Just as la Cucaracha is accused of engaging in mischievous, degenerate behavior that undermines retroactively established Revolutionary ideals (94), Isabel is framed by many of the villagers as betraying their participation in the Cristero Rebellion, while a few believe that she is

trying to help her brother behind closed doors. Those in the former group, including her imprisoned brother, Nicolás—consider her an ungrateful daughter and traitor (Garro 247; 263), while those in the latter group call her a "diosa vengadora de la justicia" (266). This confusion and disagreement arguably stems from Isabel's decision to work simultaneously for her autonomy and her brother's freedom rather than sacrificing herself for the cause as other female participants in the escape scheme have done, including the madam of the town brothel. Choosing this course of action places Isabel outside of the boundaries of accepted, understandable "feminine" behavior, making her not only "el único enigma de Ixtepec" (249) but also "otra extranjera" (268) who occupies Ixtepec but no longer belongs there. Like other women caught in the "double bind," Isabel has come to value a masculine positionality as one to emulate, believing that doing so offers a path toward agency. Also like women caught in the double bind, however, her behavior has rendered her femininity illegible to those around her. This illegibility is not only confusing but also dangerous: Like the soldaderas of the Revolution, Isabel must be reframed within the narrow, simplistic parameters of traditional Mexican femininity in order to prevent their further degeneration.

In another instance of metanarrativity, Isabel, like other transgressive Cucarachas, is brought back in line with these gender norms through the establishment of a distorted and distorting narrative on her behalf. After Isabel refuses to prostrate herself before the Virgin's shrine and is allegedly turned into rock as a consequence, the curandera Gregoria inscribes what she has identified as the Isabel-stone with the following message:

> Soy Isabel Moncada, nacida de Martín Moncada y de Ana Cuétara de Moncada, en el pueblo de Ixtepec el primero de diciembre de 1907. En piedra me convertí el cinco de octubre de 1927 delante de los ojos espantados de Gregoria Juárez. Causé la desdicha de

> mis padres y la muerte de mis hermanos Juan y Nicolás. Cuando venía a pedirle a la Virgen que me curara del *amor que tengo por el general Francisco Rosas que mató a mis hermanos, me arrepentí y preferí el amor del hombre que me perdió y perdió a mi familia*. Aquí estaré con mi amor a solas como recuerdo del porvenir por los siglos de los siglos. (My emphasis, Garro 292)

Other critics have already acknowledged how Gregoria twists Isabel's narrative with this inscription: Lund calls it an erasure of Isabel's political action (414), and Gladhart argues that the events preceding the novel's final words largely undermine their authority (92). The specific ways in which Gregoria hijacks Isabel's narrative bear striking similarities to the reactionary Revolutionary cultural products in which rebellious women are either tamed into submission by their love for a powerful man or, if they remain unrepentant, punished for their transgressions. Gregoria resorts to both methods in her inscription. She claims that Isabel was turned into stone before her eyes, despite not actually witnessing this metamorphosis, thus establishing Isabel's (rightful) punishment for sinning against her family and community. She also describes Isabel as hopelessly in love with Rosas, despite little evidence in the novel to support this claim, thus framing her as an object in love and not a subject in search of greater agency. Furthermore, Gregoria's attempts to "correct" Isabel's femininity are not limited to the inscription that she writes but also include her attempt to make Isabel pray for forgiveness at a shrine to la Virgen de Guadalupe—the traditional paragon of Mexican femininity—as well as her placement of the Isabel-stone at the foot of the shrine. This latter action in particular functions in a similar way to didactic Revolutionary films, novels, and songs: The creators of these cultural products sought to bring women back in line with traditional feminine ideals, which Garro captures in the image of Gregoria laying the transgressive Isabel-stone before an image of the model that she should have

followed. By doing so, Gregoria also arguably hopes to scare future female visitors to the shrine into obedience by reminding them of that fate that awaits if they refuse, like Isabel, to follow the example of the sacrificing Virgin.

Given the intransigence of habitus and masculine domination it is not unusual that Gregoria, although a woman herself, promotes traditional gender standards that disempower women. What is more unusual is that she does so in writing, given that women in Mexico had long been shut out of the canon at the time when the novel is set and, indeed, their voices still remained largely absent from written cultural production on the Revolution when Garro was writing *Los recuerdos del porvenir*. Garro's woman-centered novel is undoubtedly an attempt to rectify this situation, although it upholds the silencing of indigenous women and is ultimately filtered through Garro's privileged perspective. Although Elena Poniatowska's 1969 testimonial novel, *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*, has similar goals as Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir* it does not, at first glance, rely as heavily on Poniatowska's voice and experiences. Rather, Poniatowska attempts to address the silencing, reduction, and homogenization of soldaderas by basing her work on interviews with a real-life former soldadera, Josefa Bórquez. Still, the voice to which readers have access is one that, again, has been passed through a privileged perspective, and Poniatowska's use of the testimonial genre runs the risk of creating another trope, one which, due to protagonist Jesusa Palancares' embrace of machista behaviors, can ultimately be classified as misogynistic.

***Hasta no verte Jesús mío***

*Hasta no verte Jesús mío* is based on a series of interviews that Elena Poniatowska conducted in 1963 and 1964 with Josefa Bórquez, an illiterate washerwoman living in a poor *colonia* of Mexico City. Protagonist Jesusa Palancares recounts her life story to an unnamed

listener, focusing largely on her childhood and experiences in the Mexican Revolution. Jesusa's mother dies when she is a small child, and Jesusa's father begins moving from partner to partner, leaving the work of childrearing to his female companions. When the Revolution begins, Jesusa's father takes her with him to war as a soldadera. When Jesusa attempts to return to Oaxaca, her father's general instead marries her off to a soldier who has been aggressively courting her. Jesusa continues serving as a soldadera for her husband, Pedro, who physically and psychologically tortures her. She eventually stands up to him, earning something of a respite from her suffering, although she is not completely free of Pedro until he is killed in action. Jesusa ends up stranded in Mexico City after her possessions and money are stolen while she is returning home. From this point onward, her narrative consists largely of recounting the various jobs that she takes on over the years, mostly in factories, workshops, and bars, but also as a dancer, maid, tortilla maker, and washerwoman. Jesusa remains unmarried and childless, choosing to fend for and defend herself, which occasionally lands her in jail. She forms tenuous friendships, chiefly with other poor women and gay men. Jesusa also periodically adopts stray animals and children, although the former inevitably die and the latter inevitably leave her. Jesusa finds some sense of control in her life through her involvement with the spiritualist religious movement known as *la Obra Espiritual*, although by the end of the novel she appears to be thoroughly tired of what she believes to be her current incarnation and is looking forward to death, which she believes will lead to her rebirth.

*Hasta no verte Jesús mío* has been recognized as a pioneering work in the effort to incorporate women's voices into Revolutionary narratives. Beth Ellen Jörgensen argues that the act of narrating is presented in the novel as one of self-creation and self-salvation, allowing Josefa Bórquez to reclaim her past and prevent herself from becoming a face forgotten in the

crowd (36), a fate suffered by the vast majority of soldaderas. Arce expresses similar thoughts, calling Jesusa's story one of the "most complete and compelling accounts of the soldadera," as it "unravels many polarizing stereotypes of women in the Revolution" (122). Arce's assessment is not surprising when read in concert with the interviews and accounts that Poniatowska has given over the years about the creation of *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*. Poniatowska has stated that she was attracted to Josefa's story not just because Josefa had been a soldadera, but principally because she had so clearly broken with the self-abnegating, submissive Adelita trope that dominated cultural production on the Revolution. According to Poniatowska, she sought to "hacer hincapié en *las cualidades personales* de la [Josefa], en *aquello que la distingue de la imagen tradicional de la mujer mexicana: su rebeldía, su independencia* […] [s]u *combatividad*" (my emphasis, Poniatowska, "Hasta no verte" 11). Telling Josefa's particular story was clearly important to Poniatowska, insomuch as doing so allowed Poniatowska to undermine conservative ideas about Mexican women. As others have recognized, however, this was not Poniatowska's only goal in telling Josefa's story, as she also sought to emphasize Josefa's shared experience as one of the thousands of poor female fighters for whom the Revolution ultimately changed very little (K. López 21; Perilli 181). Ultimately, for Poniatowska, "Jesusa es Jesusa, pero también es miles de mujeres pobres" (qtd. in Kiddle 184). Writing what she has called "una novela testimonial" (Poniatowska, "Hasta no verte" 10) allowed Poniatowska to impose these social messages on what she considered Josefa's (extra)ordinary life.

The writing of *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* involved substantially greater editorial intervention than that found in a traditional *testimonio*.[33] For one, Poniatowska did not transcribe her interviews with Josefa, as she did not record them or even take notes during their time together, but largely recreated their conversations after the fact (Poniatowska, "Hasta no verte"

10). Poniatowska has also openly admitted to cutting certain elements of Josefa's story and playing up others: "Maté a los personajes que me sobraban, eliminé cuanta sesión espiritualista pude, elaboré donde me pareció necesario, podé, cosí, remendé, inventé" (10). These editorial interventions, coupled with the goal of testimonial works—using one person's experience as representative of that of many marginalized people—point toward the ontologically and epistemologically violent process inherent in this kind of representation, no matter an author or editor's goal of helping the traditionally voiceless to speak. Thus, although Poniatowska undermines the Adelita trope by telling Josefa's story, by doing so via a testimonial novel, she engages in a symbolic violence toward her subject that echoes the violence employed by those who disfigured other real-life soldaderas' experiences through the creation and proliferation of didactic soldadera tropes.[34]

Although Poniatowska viewed Josefa's rebelliousness, individuality, and combativeness as "cualidades personales," when taking into account the role of masculine domination in the formation of Jesusa's gendered subjectivity, it becomes difficult to understand this aspect of her identity as idiosyncratic. Previous analyses have largely tended to support Poniatowska's assessment. Jörgensen, for one, ties Jesusa's conflicting gender performance to conflicting demands of her personal history (40). Kimberle S. López argues that Poniatowska's decision to "leave in elements that make Jesusa less than a model of feminism" serve to de-metaphotrize her (29), as does her "refusal to erase the internal tensions that underscore Jesusa's personality" (30). Some of Jesusa's most notable internal tensions are those that make it difficult to qualify her as a feminist figure. Jesusa condemns men "por creer que son muy charros porque se nos montan encima" (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte* 178), and yet she also equates masculinity with virile physicality by decrying the soldiers of the 1960s as "unmanly" because they no longer use horses

as their primary mode of transport (238). She yearns to fulfill the traditionally feminine role of motherhood, yet she scoffs at women who legally bind themselves to abusive men through marriage (270). Jesusa does not blame her husband for his infidelity, as he "cumplía como hombre porque las mujeres lo perseguían," and yet she sneers at those women for being with Pedro when they already have husbands (105). Although López sees the inclusion of Jesusa's contradictions as an attempt to preserve Josefa's individuality, conflicting and conflicted attitudes towards femininity and masculinity are an unavoidable side effect when women who have been interpellated as women in a society shaped by masculine domination seek greater agency within that society.

While Jesusa and the women around her have suffered direct, physical violence and indirect, symbolic violence in their positions as women, the former proves far easier to recognize and combat than the latter, a reality that is also evident in the novels analyzed in chapter 3. Žižek has argued that violence is most visible, and most distracting, when it is subjective—"enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds" (10). Jesusa clearly identifies how individual men have wronged her and other women by beating them. However, she cannot clearly identify how she and these other women have been wronged by a gendered hierarchy that places men at the top and women at the bottom. In fact, Jesusa supports this hierarchy through her words and actions: As we will see, she imitates violent masculine behaviors to achieve greater agency, and as we have already seen, she perpetuates an essentialist, machista discourse that categorizes men as more sexual than women. Bourdieu argues that masculine domination has become so dehistoricized as to make it extremely difficult to understand it as it truly is: An arbitrary social relation. Consciousness and will alone cannot overcome symbolic violence, because "the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and

deeply embodied in the body in the form of dispositions" (*Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu 39). Jesusa consciously rejects the physical violence exerted against her, and yet she cannot reject the symbolic violence that has convinced her of women's inferiority to men. As Gabriel Osuna Osuna poignantly asks, "¿Cómo estar orgullosa de ser mujer en un mundo donde no existe redención, donde el único modelo a seguir es el de los hombres?" ("Paradigmas de representación" 224-25). Jesusa's contradictory thinking toward gender thus does not curtail Josefa's conversion into a representative figure but rather contributes to it: She resents men for their abuse, but admires them for the power that they exercise, the only model of power to which she and other women have been exposed.

The overlooked opening chapter of the novel arguably not only further transforms Josefa into a representative figure, but also highlights how the perpetuation of the link between paternalism and protection has contributed to Mexican women's domination. Because Poniatowska has openly admitted that she cut much of Josefa's discussion about her spiritual beliefs, closely examining the parts of the novel where Poniatowska has included these experiences stands to reveal more about the author's ideological overlay that informs Jesusa's story. The novel opens with Jesusa recounting what has been revealed to her about her past lives through her work with la Obra Espiritual. According to Jesusa, this is her third reincarnation. Through all of her reincarnations she has been watched over by three protectors assigned to her by God—all of them male. Her third protector, Luz de Oriente, shot and murdered her in her first reincarnation, leading Jesusa to believe that God decided not to warn Pedro, Luz de Oriente's latest reincarnation, about his death as punishment for failing as Jesusa's protector (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte* 10-11). While Jesusa condemns Luz de Oriente's individual violence against her, she does not find fault in the paternal system that is celebrated by her spiritual adviser as vital for

her protection: “Pues es tu esposo, el que cuida de ti” (11). Jesusa parrots this sentiment, expressing her admiration that “¡Cuántos cientos de años habrán pasado y él [Luz de Oriente] todavía no me deja sin su protección!” (11-12). Jesusa is comforted by the idea of having a male protector and fails to see how this power differential has led to men’s ability to wield physical violence against their wives, daughters, and sisters. She instead misidentifies the source of her abuse with the personal moral failings of her protector and not a system designed to subjugate and objectify women.

Although Jesusa is recounting her personal reincarnations, her description of experiencing abuse throughout the ages can be read as a commentary on the deep roots and resulting cyclicality of violence against women in Mexican society. In a process similar to the one that shapes the gender identifies of the male protagonists of the novels examined in chapter 3, Jesusa’s acceptance of paternalism throughout her reincarnations mimics the mechanisms through which the structures of habitus are maintained and passed down: With each new coming into her body, Jesusa is infused with dispositions from her past lives, dispositions that operate on a subconscious level and that are not immediately apparent to her. Likewise, as we come into our subjecthoods, we are influenced by the behaviors of those around us and imbued with the ideological underpinnings of these behaviors, just as those around us were influenced by the behaviors and ideologies of those before them. The dispositions of our ancestors endure in our dispositions, which we embody and which will endure in the generations that follow us.

Several recent approaches to the novel have attempted to resolve Jesusa’s inconsistent attitudes toward masculinity and femininity by labeling her as either androgynous or transgender rather than viewing her as a woman formed within a society that (over)values men. As Claudette Williams notes, critics who argue that Jesusa is androgynous imply that she does not suffer from

any internal conflict due to her gender expression but rather enjoys the harmonious coexistence of masculine and feminine tendencies (223). Joel Hancock not only promotes the idea of Jesusa's androgynous gender blending, but he goes so far as to propose that she is "not *defined or restricted* by her sex" (my emphasis, 356). Hancock appears to base his assertion on Jesusa's insistence on remaining single and supporting herself after her husband's death. While, in this sense, she does not allow her sex to "restrict" the path that her life takes, she struggles to accept her actions later in life. Throughout the novel, the narrating Jesusa use terms like "mala," "terrible," and "perra" to describe her younger self and her tendency to react with physical violence if she perceived someone as having attacked or slighted her. Jesusa's recurrent self-deprecation points to the toll that going against the traditional norms promoted for Mexican women has taken on her self-worth as a woman. She is, in this sense, clearly defined by her sex, suffering from anti-narcissism by failing to adhere to the feminine dispositions that she has unconsciously embodied. In a different, more Cixousian kind of anti-narcissism, Jesusa rejects her society's feminine standards as restrictive, proclaiming that "me gusta más ser hombre que mujer. *Para todas las mujeres* sería mejor ser hombre porque es más divertido, es uno más libre y nadie se burla de uno" (my emphasis, Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte* 186). Niamh Thornton appears to read this declaration at face value, proposing that Jesusa believes herself to be transgendered ("(Trans)gendered Lines" 91), although, confusingly, she also asserts that "[w]e are never to understand that [Jesusa] is anything other than a straight woman who sometimes disguises herself as a man" (95). Thornton's inconsistency towards Jesusa's inconsistencies can be attributed both to her understanding of transgenderism as "acting out the roles of the other gender" (91), rather than as identifying with a gender different than the one assigned at birth, and to her failure to read Jesusa's declarations more carefully. While Thornton claims that, in the

quote above, Jesus "delineates the practicalities of *wanting to be* male" (my emphasis, 95), what Jesusa really delineates are the practicalities of *being* male. Jesusa does not so much want to change her gender as she recognizes the obvious social benefits afforded to men in a patriarchal society.

It is not surprising that Jesusa would make such a declaration given her experiences as a child and young bride, just as it is not surprising that she would adopt a machista gender performance in the hopes of exercising control over the course of her life. Some critics have labeled Jesusa's use of physical violence as necessary in order for her to survive (Le Maître, "Jesusa Palancares" 754; Perilli 186; Thornton, "(Trans)gendered Lines" 91). Cynthia Steele, for one, calls her "continued, often gratuitous use of violence" a "survival strategy" marked by machista ideology and behavior (53). It is possible, however, to survive while being subjected to violence and stripped of one's subjectivity. What Jesusa wants is not merely to survive, however, but to become a subject in charge of her own life. From what she has seen, this positionality has been achieved by the men around her, who, by her account, have consistently demonstrated their agency by emotionally and physically abusing whom she considers to be the silent, timid women in their lives. In fact, Jesusa manages to *survive* her childhood without recourse to direct violence, despite suffering from such an acute lack of agency that she is passed around between adults in the same way that livestock and slaves are exchanged between owners: From her father to her stepmother, to her step-grandmother's acquaintance, to the acquaintance's daughter, to her mother's friend, to various foreigners, to her father again. The experiences of her sister and sister-in-law serve as a preview of the continued abuse to which she can expect to be subjected as a grown woman: The former is kidnapped by a railway worker and then "rescued" by another man, whose beatings she quietly suffers after being reunited with her family, while the latter

endures thrashings at the hands of Jesusa's older brother, Efrén, who dies of alcoholism (*Hasta no verte*, Poniatowska 27-33). Indeed, Jesusa's young adulthood makes it seem as though she is destined to repeat her sisters' suffering: Rather than sending Jesusa back to Oaxaca, as she requests, so she can avoid marrying the man romantically pursuing her, the general in charge of her father's regiment makes her wed, "forzosamente" and "no por [su] voluntad (83). His decision is based not on what is best for Jesusa, but on what is best for his reputation, as he refuses to send an unaccompanied girl off to Oaxaca on a boat otherwise full of men.

Implicitly guiding the general's refusal are the notions of "honor" and "honra." These concepts have deep roots within the patriarchal gender systems of the Iberian Peninsula, roots that stretched across the Atlantic Ocean to the Spanish colonies and entwined themselves in the social structures there. In early modern Spain and colonial Mexico, honor was linked to status and rank, honra to moral integrity, or virtue. For women, reputation and virtue were both traditionally tied to their sexual conduct, and men's reputation to the reputation and virtue of the women under their control, as a man could be dishonored by the public disclosure of the sexual activities of a wife or sister (Seed 62-63). As evidenced by the reasoning behind the general's decision to force Jesusa to marry—better that she be joined officially with Pedro and beaten by her husband than sexually abused outside of wedlock by various men—, reputation and virtue continued to influence Mexican men's conduct even hundreds of years later, a situation whose damaging nature will become even clearer in chapter 3. The general is far from the only character to demonstrate this kind of thinking, which also guides the behavior of the women in Jesusa's life: In one instance, a soldado fighting in la bola beats his wife for spreading rumors about Jesusa's infidelity (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte* 100), and in another, fellow soldaderas urge Jesusa to fight back against her father's latest partner and chastise Jesusa's father "por

consentir que una mujer cualquiera de la calle me insultara a mí que era su hija" (69). By including these details, Poniatowska provides readers with a better understanding of the complex dynamics that drove (some of) the physical displays of violence between the people in Josefa/Jesusa's social class. Although Poniatowska does not necessarily condone this behavior, she does not condemn it, either, as the unprovoked, animalistic outbursts of inherently more violent men and women. Instead, she conveys the sense that, for many among the peasantry and working class, honor (reputation) was one of the few, if perhaps only, "possessions" that they saw themselves as having and was defended as such.

For women, however, even this "possession" was ultimately also the possession of a male relative, and, in Jesusa's experience, these men do not always reserve their physical violence for questions of reputation. Her husband, Pedro, frequently hits and otherwise abuses her. According to Jesusa, Pedro refuses to allow her to bathe, causing her skin to become caked with muck and blood from the wounds that he inflicts on her. Jesusa's suffering is compounded by being given only one dress to wear, despite the fact that, as she recalls, Pedro "me llevaba mucha ropa" (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte* 96). Jesusa explains that she was not allowed to wear this clothing, as Pedro bought it "para presumir con los soldados y con las mujeres: '¡Miren cómo la tengo!'" (96). This particular instance of abuse, at first glance, appears to be a perversion of the stanza from "La Adelita" in which the unnamed soldado expresses his desire to dress Adelita in finery and show her off at the *cuartel*. In reality, Pedro and the song's soldado both view women as objects that they can use to boost their standing among their peers, and if anything, Pedro's behavior simply makes it easier to identify his selfishness: The song's soldado dissimulates his self-motivated actions by improving the material reality of his querida. Although he ultimately seeks to boost his consideration among the other soldados by styling himself as a provider,

Adelita does, arguably, benefit from this performance. By showing off the fine clothing that he has purchased by itself and not while it is on Jesusa's body, however, Pedro promotes himself while not only failing to do what he claims to be doing but in fact doing the opposite by keeping Jesusa in an abject state. As a concept, Jesusa retains importance as the referent that provides meaning to Pedro's declaration, "¡Miren cómo *la* tengo!" (my emphasis). The state of Jesusa the person has ceased to be of any importance: It is understood that she is being (well) provided for, and that is all that ultimately matters.

In order to stop and reverse this erasure of her subjectivity, Jesusa needs to assert herself in a way that Pedro understands and respects: With the use of physical violence. After repeated beatings, Jesusa reaches a breaking point. Stowing a pistol in her blouse, she obeys Pedro's orders and follows him to an isolated spot, where he plans to beat her. Jesusa points the weapon at Pedro when he threatens to kill her, declaring that "[n]os matamos porque *somos dos*. No nomás yo voy a morir. Saque lo suyo que yo traigo lo mío" (my emphasis, Poniatowska*, Hasta no verte Jesús mío* 99). Arce has argued that the peasant insurgents who fought in the Revolution used physical violence to become visible as social and political subjects. By taking up arms and joining la bola they refused to be ignored any longer, affirming their presence vis-à-vis the Mexican state and society (15). Jesusa arguably looks to do the same on an interpersonal level, using the pistol to claim her agency against Pedro. Her husband is forced to recognize Jesusa as a subject who is equally as capable of acting against someone as he is or he risks losing his life, just as the Mexican state was forced to recognize the agency of la bola's insurgents or risk being annihilated. Jesusa's choice of language echoes and strengthens her use of the pistol: By using a reciprocal structure—"Nos matamos"—, she acknowledges Pedro's ability to act upon her and her ability to act upon him, placing them on an equal plane linguistically. She reinforces this idea

with her declaration that "somos dos," again equating herself with Pedro.

Although Jesusa does not specify what she and Pedro are, her follow-up—"No nomás yo voy a morir"—implies that she views them as both being actors capable of inflicting violence. Paradoxically, then, although she uses language to place herself and Pedro in the same role, it is a role in which they seek to impose their will upon each other. Jesusa is done being the only one acted upon: If she dies because Pedro kills her, he will suffer the same fate. Gabriel Osuna Osuna argues that Jesusa only begins to accept violence and identify with masculine values in this scene, when she liberates herself with violence ("Paradigmas de representación" 223). Jesusa's decision to take a pistol to her confrontation with Pedro, however, suggests that she had already developed an understanding that the men around her equated physical violence and agency and that she would have to adopt this same thinking if she hoped to claim subjectivity. Jesusa's showdown with Pedro thus marks not the beginning of this mindset, as Osuna Osuna proposes, but the beginning of her acting upon it. Similarly, although María Teresa Medeiros-Lichem argues that Jesusa defies male privilege in this scene (130), she arguably does not defy this privilege, but rather weaponizes and claims it for herself.

This will not be Jesusa's only recourse to violence, however, but the first of many occasions in which she uses direct violence against anyone she perceives as attempting to impose his or her will upon her. As she recalls, after confronting Pedro, "[M]e hice muy peleonera, muy perra. Y con los años me fue aumentando el instinto de dar antes de que me den. El que me tira un jijazo es porque ya recibió dos por adelantado" (Poniatowska, *Hasta no verte* 102). Jesusa's need to repeatedly employ violence to prove and protect her subjectivity is largely due to her being a woman in a society where women have been deemed to be subordinate to men. The double bind comes into play for Jesusa, as it did for Isabel Moncada, with different attempts

made to "correct" her gender performance: In one instance, she is jailed after beating a man who pulls her hair. This official condemnation of her behavior is followed by further, unofficial punishment, as her employer fires her for being "mala" (150). Jesusa is not unaware of the dilemma in which she finds herself. While, on the one hand, she believes that men equate agency and physical violence and that she must therefore use direct violence in order to be recognized as a subject in a male-dominated society, she understands that she is fighting an uphill battle in that many men will condemn her behavior in order to protect their positions of power in the gender binary. This thinking arguably influences her decision, for example, to not take command of her husband's regiment in the official capacity of a *comandante*, as she knows that she will not be respected by the men under her or over her (131). Jesusa appears to find herself in something of a Catch-22: In Butlerian terms, although she can cite machista, masculine gender norms, doing so in the hopes of improving her position in the gender hierarchy will prove difficult in a society where men and women, including Jesusa herself, reject these citations as invalid for women.[35]

Instead of confirming their natural superiority, however, by treating Jesusa's masculine citations as a threat, men instead reveal the tenuousness and constuctedness of their own gender positionalities. As R.W. Connell has noted, although violence is part of a system of domination, a "thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate" (84). If men's superiority over women were natural, it would be unassailable and thus not need to be protected. The men around Jesusa who have tried to control her by beating her or otherwise "correcting" her behavior have arguably done so from a position of power that they have been allowed to access as men, but they have also shored up this position through their use of violence. Their dominance, in a Butlerian sense, is performative, as it generates that which it allegedly displays: Men violently impose their will, creating a male/subjugator-female/subjugated dynamic; this

dynamic is accepted as valid; men are seen as having agency and women are not; repeat.[36] The problem with Jesusa's adoption of machista gender behaviors does not have to do solely with her gender performance being accepted or rejected, then, but also involves the unequal distribution of power promoted by the model that she cites. A path toward equity for women does not involve acting like machista men if those men are seen as acting like men only if and when they employ symbolic and direct violence against women. Men must change, too.

**Conclusions**

In *Los recuerdos del porvenir* and *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*, Elena Garro and Elena Poniatowska clearly challenge the omnipresent soldadera tropes in Revolutionary cultural production that sought to (re)educate women about their "proper" roles in postrevolutionary Mexican society. My chapter establishes how Garro exposes the mechanisms by which individual women were transformed into tropes, as well as how both Garro and Poniatowska push against the boundary between traditional Mexican notions of masculinity and femininity by featuring female characters who embrace aggressive masculine behaviors. As I have also shown, however, Garro and Poniatowska ultimately disavow their characters' behavior as a path toward greater agency for women, as it preserves a system predicated upon agential inequality and, thus, systemic violence. This does not mean, however, that Garro and Poniatowska disavow their characters themselves: Unlike with la Cucaracha, who is denigrated for her (supposed) personal and moral failings, Isabel Moncada and Jesusa Palancares are failed by the structuring structures that they have embodied and that have caused them to equate masculinity and agency.

Despite this push against a continued overvaluation of masculinity, however, masculinized soldadera characters flourished in later cultural production on the Revolution. Esch speculates that two corridos about female combatants with firearms, "Juana Gallo" and "La

Chamuscada," were produced in relation to two films of the same name, the first from 1961 and the second from 1971. Esch argues that the corridos do not question underlying gender norms but rather exalt prevalent ideas about masculinity: The soldaderas are praised for their bravado, honor, and ability to wield a rifle (65). The tendency to center the masculine soldadera as a "positive" alternative to the subjugated Adelita and the reviled Cucaracha has continued into present day. In a 2006 study, Gabriela Cano brought wider attention to the life story of Amelio Robles. Born as Amelia Robles, he adopted a more masculinized appearance and performance during the Revolution, eventually coming to embody "the ideal of the macho revolutionary soldier" and continuing to live as a man after the Revolution ended (40-46). The story of Pedro Herrera, born Petra, has similarly attracted widespread attention on social media and served as the basis for the character of María de Jesús González in Mónica Lavín's 2011 novel, *Las rebeldes* (Estrada 179). As outlined in the introduction and seen in these examples, when not performed by a lower-class, darker-skinned male body, it seems, machista behavior not only appears harder to disavow, but serves instead as an impetus for admiration. As I will show in my next chapter, these differing standards become even more apparent when considering how middle- and upper-class machista characters are framed as desirable partners in Ángeles Mastretta's and Laura Esquivel's bestselling novels of the 1980s and 90s.

# Chapter 2

## Lusting for a (Bourgeois) Macho Man: Conservative Class and Gender Sensibilities in Bestsellers by Ángeles Mastretta and Laura Esquivel

If the 1960s and 1970s saw the "explosion" of the overwhelmingly male Latin American "boom" authors onto the world literary stage,[37] then the 1980s and 1990s saw a similar phenomenon among female writers from the region. In Mexico, the end of the 20th century brought a flood of newly published women authors, among them Carmen Boullosa, Ana Clavel, Laura Esquivel, Ana García Bergua, Ángeles Mastretta, Silvia Molina, María Luisa Puga, Cristina Rivera Garza, and Sara Sefchovich. This *boom femenino* has been tied in part to the economic crises that Mexico weathered during the 1980s and 1990s, as publishers were hit with dramatic increases in production costs due to peso devaluations and a reliance on imported paper (Anderson, "Creating Prestige" 27).[38] Financial problems led to closures, mergers, and takeovers, mostly by large publishers based in Spain, such as Alfaguara (Barrera Enderle). Some critics have argued that the market began to assume a more dominant role in Mexican letters, as presses that were more concerned with sales numbers than literary prestige gained ground in the local publishing scene (López González 665). These industry shifts consequently weakened the influence that misogynistic elites had on what titles appeared in publishers' catalogs.[39]

Space thus began to open up for the publication of more novels by Mexican women. This shift was especially beneficial for women writers who drew upon traditionally derided styles and genres seen as more accessible and widely appealing, such as melodrama, (magical) realism, romance, and family sagas (Finnegan, *Ambivalence* 166; Sánchez Prado, *Strategic* 144, 152). However, although female authors began accruing more economic capital, this did not automatically translate into increased symbolic capital, especially for writers of accessible

bestsellers.[40] Mexican women who achieved widespread commercial success were blasted by critics both abroad and at home, who referred derisively to their work as "*literatura light*."[41] As Emily Hind notes, female authors take a risk by writing novels with romantic and melodramatic elements, as these allegedly "inferior" genres have not been coded as "literary" ("Six Authors" 57). Women who take them up risk hemorrhaging their own symbolic capital—if they have any to speak of, that is. In Mexico, lingering assumptions that "popular" meant "low-quality" and thus lacking in sociocultural and literary merit continued to circulate during the 1980s and '90s. Danny Anderson argues that a conflation between "popular" writing and female authors emerged, "suggesting that all contemporary women's writing is *literatura light*" ("Aesthetic Criteria" 129). Laura Esquivel and Ángeles Mastretta were two authors who endured particularly vitriolic attacks over the merits of their wildly successful debut novels, both of which were published by commercial presses based in Spain—*Como agua para chocolate* (Planeta, 1989) and *Arráncame la vida* (Oceáno, 1985).[42]

Revisiting the early reviews of these novels from Mexican cultural and literary critics shows a clear reluctance to accept them as constituting "literature," despite—or, more accurately, because of—their runaway success. Concerning *Arráncame la vida*, Nuala Finnegan notes that "large elements of the critical community were appalled at the idea that 'readability' could hijack the pretensions of 'high' literature in Mexico" (*Ambivalence* 139-40).[43] Elizabeth Moore Willingham highlights a 1991 essay by Antonio Marquet in the Mexican literary magazine *Plural* as emblematic of the negative press that dismissed *Como agua para chocolate*, calling Marquet's efforts to trivialize the novel's "affective and concrete elements […] staples of subsequent negative Esquivel scholarship" (7).[44] The unprecedented phenomenon of two female Mexican authors achieving such widespread success just four years apart resulted not only in

derision, however, but also in an extensive corpus of academic work that seeks to seriously consider the potential of these novels and others from the boom femenino to offer social, cultural, historical, and political criticism.[45]

As indicated in the introduction, the vast majority of these analyses for *Arráncame la vida* and *Como agua para chocolate*—as well as those for Mastretta's second bestselling novel, *Mal de amores* (Alfaguara, 1996)—have centered their discussion on Mastretta's and Esquivel's portrayal of women and the female experience during the 1910 Mexican Revolution and the nation (re)building efforts of the following decades. Numerous critics have praised these three novels for opening up the historical archive to include a female-centered perspective (Knights 72; Lavery, *Textual Multiplicity* 47; LeMaître, "La historia oficial" 194; Rivera Villegas 39). As I have outlined, emphasizing the ideological currents that have shaped the writing of history and recovering the voices that they have marginalized or silenced is a widely noted trend in both Latin American historical fiction produced during the rise of postmodernism at the end of the 20th century and the academic criticism of this fiction. Helen Carol Weldt-Basson has argued that critics should not limit themselves to postmodernist theory in their analyses of these novels but should also draw upon feminism and postcolonialism (10). Much of the critical work on Mastretta's and Esquivel's novels appears to have taken at least the former field into account by considering the specific oppression(s) that their protagonists face as women and how they challenge this subjugation.

The influence of feminism in these studies has thus led to a common question of Mastretta's and Esquivel's novels: Can they be considered "feminist"? Those who say that they can be considered feminist argue that Mastretta and Esquivel have created female protagonists who manipulate the patriarchal systems to which they are subjected, thus calling those systems

into question. As Willingham notes in her literature review of Esquivelian criticism, common threads of *Como agua chocolate* analyses are the construction of the kitchen as a "locus of female power" and protagonist "Tita's struggle for agency and identity against a patriarchal maternity" (8). In my own review of analyses on *Arráncame la vida*, I have found a tendency to examine the ways in which protagonist Catalina Guzmán undermines the authority of her stereotypical *macho* husband, Andrés Ascencio. These include denying him access to her body (LeMaître, "La historia oficial" 195; Pearson 87), carrying out numerous sexual affairs (Knights 72), and deliberately poisoning him under the feminine guise of administering a soothing herbal tea (Duncan 189). Studies on *Mal de amores* have considered how protagonist Emilia Sauri challenges the "arbitrary dictates of the patriarchal hegemony" by taking an active role in a Revolution that advocated for equal opportunities for women in theory but did not defend them in practice (Canivell 250-51) and by participating in transgressive romantic relationships (Hernández Enríquez 287; Rivera Villegas 43). While Esquivel's and Mastretta's protagonists are shown as challenging the limitations placed on them due to their gender, the authors' narrow focus on the personal struggles of these women—all of whom occupy positions of privilege due to their class and race—have led some critics to question the scope of their criticism and feminism.

While allowing for a focus on the female spaces and experiences traditionally ignored in in *novelas de la Revolución*, Mastretta's and Esquivel's tendency to avoid overt political commentary has proved divisive. Instead of praising an attempt to (re)valorize the domestic, critics such as Maite Zubiaurre have argued that this approach allows for women's continued social and political marginalization as well as the perpetuation of other systems of oppression. In the case of *Como agua para chocolate*, Zubiaurre points to Esquivel's failure to have her

characters exert any real sense of public influence as well as the lack of community and solidarity in the de la Garza kitchen, where the social and racial hierarchies of the outside world are mimicked and unquestioned (31). Both this preoccupation with self and disregard for inequality among women have been identified as larger trends in popular boom femenino novels. In her insightful chapter "Six Authors on the Conservative Side of the *Boom Femenino*, 1985-2003," Emily Hind argues that novels like *Arráncame la vida*, *Como agua para chocolate*, and *Mal de amores* ultimately promote conservative gender sensibilities by focusing on their female protagonists' consumption, individualism, and personal transformation. She draws special attention to the importance that these novels place on female characters' "Do-It-Yourself" campaigns of social improvement, which allow for personal growth that ultimately does not disturb the larger social order. Pointing to the double standard that expects only female characters to embark on these journeys of change, Hind argues that these works do not seek to overturn gender inequalities but rather make them tolerable for women protagonists (61-62). This last point hints at the possibility of better understanding the conservative ideologies that undergird Mastretta's and Esquivel's bestsellers by opening up the examination of their gender representation to include the novels' male characters.

While some studies have taken into account male characters when considering these novels' gender dynamics, critics have overwhelmingly based the subversion—or lack thereof—of Mastretta's and Esquivel's works on the actions and characterizations of their female characters.[46] As I have previously argued, a truly feminist examination of literature must take into account portrayals of men and masculinity as well as those of women and femininity. I consequently propose that the argument for reading Mastretta's and Esquivel's novels as socially conservative can be strengthened by considering how these authors portray their male characters.

More specifically, I argue that examining Mastretta's and Esquivel's treatment of their male characters in light of their class positionalities supports Hind's assertion that these novels leave various systems of inequality undisturbed. In this chapter, I contribute to the extensive scholarship on *Arráncame la vida, Como agua para chocolate*, and *Mal de amores* by proposing that a classed myopia on the part of critics has resulted in a failure to recognize how Esquivel's and Mastretta's own classed myopia perpetuates the oppressive aspects of *machismo* for both women and men by positively associating bourgeois and upper-class male characters with an exoticized lower-class masculinity while framing lower-class male characters as oppressive and abusive. The concept of classed myopia as I develop it here refers to both a tendency to overlook class when analyzing these characters as well as the way in which class expectations and prejudices blur and impede the ability to identify and criticize macho behaviors outside of the lower classes. I argue that Esquivel's and Mastretta's coding of their protagonists' macho love interests as desirable and desired ultimately reflects and reinforces the greater cultural, social, and symbolic capital enjoyed by bourgeois and upper-class men in contemporary Mexican society.

Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the different forms of capital—in particular the concept of embodied cultural capital—proves helpful in better understanding these tendencies. In his 1986 essay "The Forms of Capital," Bourdieu proposes that cultural capital in its fundamental state is "linked to the body and presupposes embodiment" (244). For Bourdieu, embodied cultural capital is akin to a kind of self-improvement, as the norms, skills, and knowledge that comprise it take time and personal investment to acquire. The external wealth (economic capital) that allows one to access the resources and experiences needed to acquire embodied cultural capital is thus converted into an integral part of a singular person, with whom this now-embodied capital will

die. (244-45). (It should be noted, however, that this capital can be passed on, in a way, through its contribution to the formation and/or maintenance of certain social fields and, consequently, the shaping of the habitus of one's progeny, the importance of which will be more thoroughly examined in chapter 3.) For Mastretta and Esquivel, the embodied cultural capital of their bourgeois and upper-class machos thus weakens their perceived corporeality. I see both Mastretta and Esquivel as promoting gender essentialism, to a certain extent, when it comes to their male characters: I argue that their novels support the idea that men are, fundamentally, more sexual, more aggressive, more controlling. Bourgeois and upper-class men, however, are framed as having learned to restrain these tendencies—some more than others—by expanding their repertoire of gendered behaviors to include those that have been coded as more "civilized." Consequently, even when these characters do engage in more aggressive actions, their authors do not define them by these behaviors.

This treatment stands in contrast to lower-class men in the novels, and in Mexican society at large, whose alleged propensity to aggressive behavior and virility are framed as fundamental components of their subjectivity. That is to say, whereas bourgeois and upper-class machos are seen as having developed intellectually and culturally and, thus, as having moved farther away from "nature," lower-class machos are seen as unrefined and closer to a more primal, and more dangerous, "animal" state. This is, of course, not a new idea, as my introduction's discussion of 19th- and early 20th-century Mexican discourses on masculinity makes clear. Judith Butler, in her formulations of the theory of gender performativity, draws on an extension of the realm of the discursive from the purely verbal to the non-verbal and corporeal by postulating that "gender is produced through the stylization of the *body*" and that "*bodily* gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (my emphasis, *Gender Trouble*

179). It seems, then, that because bourgeois and upper-class machos have crafted a gender performance that relies less heavily on hypervirility and body language that is perceived as "uncontrolled"—such as aggressive outbursts—they have been able to dissimulate their machismo. Mastretta and Esquivel thus ultimately draw from and reinforce 19th century classist discourses as well as the perpetuation of said discourses in the 20th century due to the tendency of heterosexual, male Mexican authors to (negatively) associate "raw" machismo with lower-class men thanks to their control of the objectified cultural capital produced and circulated in the country.[47]

As acknowledged in my introduction, there is widespread recognition of the control that intellectuals and creators who are not members of the popular classes in Mexico have traditionally wielded over the representation of those who do belong to them and the oppression and prejudices that have resulted from this control. In his 1987 treatise on contemporary "*mexicandad*," *La jaula de la melancolía: identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano,* Roger Bartra argues that the commonalities of "Mexican" character are not organic but rather codified by intellectuals and then circulated in mass culture, resulting in myths of the popular that are produced by the hegemonic classes and then reproduced among the lower classes (2). This cycle thus works to obscure the origin of these stereotypes—because they are, to a certain extent, taken up by the masses and eventually form part of their subjective formation, they are transformed from a distorted vision of reality imposed from above to one that is seen as having emerged from below. This process is apparent in the entrenched association of the macho with the lower classes in Mexico. According to Bartra, the "new man" of Mexico emerged after the Revolution and has taken many forms—*mestizo*, *pelado, pachuco*. However, a commonality has been his primitive, barbarous, violent character, leading "most commentators [to] search in the lowest social strata

for the prototype of the national character" (90). Consequently, although the privilege afforded to Mexican men performing machismo in higher classes has begun to be recognized and problematized, it remains largely understudied. In her recent book, *Dude Lit: Mexican Men Writing and Performing Competence, 1955-2012* (2019), Hind examines the ways in which male Mexican authors who have accrued large amounts of cultural, social, and symbolic capital have been both able and encouraged to cycle between two main gender performances: the "macho civilizado" (a gentlemanly scholar) and the "macho bárbaro" (a cool "bad boy"). Adding a racial component to her analysis, Hind remarks that the same flexibility is denied to women and men with dark complexions. She notes that among contemporary Mexican men writers she can think of no one as darkly complexioned as Benito Juárez, a respected violent civilized man, who has been allowed to cross into the "exceptional privileges of the macho bárbaro" (27). More plentiful than studies like Hind's, however, are important ethnographic and sociological works that seek to call into question the machista animalism that allegedly marks lower-class Mexican men.

These works thus take aim at the belief in the violent essence of the masses whose genesis Bartra, and others, have traced to the Mexican intelligentsia. In 1996, Matthew Gutmann published *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*, an influential ethnography on the residents of a working-class *colonia* in Mexico City. Gutmann interrogates the validity of the macho as a model of masculinity for lower-class men. During his time in the colonia, he observed men engaging in child-care practices and heeding increasing female autonomy. He also remarks upon a growing tendency among the members of this community to question machismo, although he adds that this gender performance continued to be defended in everyday conversation (240). While this work and others are important in challenging classist assumptions about working-class Mexican masculinity, some scholars have criticized such studies for

perpetuating the idea of the macho as a more organic rather than constructed phenomenon. In his study on the history of the concept of machismo and its ties to the ethnicization of hypermasculinity in the United States, Benjamin A. Cowan argues that attempts to investigate the term "machismo" result in scholars treating it as a "self-sustaining, empirically measurable unit of analysis" (618). Cowan neglects, however, to recognize that asking Mexican men if they associate themselves with machismo makes sense in a society where this masculine performance has been heavily promoted in cultural products directed toward the masses, such as the films of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. As Bartra indicates, this has inevitably fed into the gender stylizations of men who consume this culture, either through their adoption or rejection of machista practices. Additionally, while Cowan is right to warn against research that has the potential to reify machismo, I argue that studies that a) focus on less overt machista behaviors and b) incorporate middle- and upper-class Mexican men will challenge the existence of a singular macho type, highlighting the variety of macho performances that can be seen in "real life" and representation.[48]

While studies such as Gutmann's and Cowan's seek to disavow the negative stereotype of lower-class Mexican men as driven by violent and sexual urges, Mastretta and Esquivel perpetuate these associations and demonstrate a double standard by employing those same qualities to boost the desirability of their protagonists' lovers. These authors' emphasis on their female characters' sexual emancipation and satisfaction further contributes to a reading of these novels as promoting conservative gender sensibilities. Mastretta and Esquivel place greater importance on portraying their protagonists as seeking or engaging in sexually satisfying relationships than they do on questioning the machista behaviors in which these characters' bourgeois and upper-class macho love interests engage. Like Hind's male Mexican intellectuals

who cycle between more- and less-refined masculine performances, these male characters strike a balance between civility and virility. If a lower-class macho exudes a raw, aggressive sexuality that is attractive and exciting but also too potent, too dangerous, too masculine, then the bourgeois or upper-class macho offers the best of both worlds: His education and other embodied cultural capital make it clear that he has distanced himself from an animal state, while his sexual prowess make him an exciting lover whose (heterosexual) masculinity is unquestioned.

***Arráncame la vida***

Published in 1985, *Arráncame la vida* details some 20 years in the life of Catalina Guzmán, a woman from Puebla who, at age 15, becomes the bride of Revolutionary General Andrés Ascencio. The novel follows Catalina as she evolves from a naïve teenage newlywed into a jaded politician's wife who seeks to defy her controlling husband through rebellions small and large, including by having several extramarital affairs. Speaking in retrospect, Catalina reflects upon her life with Andrés, a ruthless *caudillo*[49] who ascends to the governorship of Puebla and moves among the highest echelons of the Mexican government as he angles to receive the presidential *dedazo*[50] from his friend, Rodolfo "Fito" Campos.[51] The "tap" never comes, however, and Andrés' decline in political power is accompanied by a decline in health, with the novel concluding shortly after his death in the mid-1940s.

Andrés' character arc leads to obvious parallels between Mastretta's boom femenino novel and Carlos Fuentes' 1962 boom classic, *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*. A key difference between Mastretta's novel and Fuentes' is that the former's is focalized through a woman, whereas the latter's is concerned with the perspective of the titular Artemio. However, both Mastretta and Fuentes draw attention to the hypocrisy of the ex-revolutionaries who publicly claimed to uphold the Revolution's egalitarian ideals while they privately concerned themselves

with accumulating personal wealth and power (Apter-Cragnolino 129).[52] Mastretta includes snippets of Andrés' stump speeches during his campaign for the governorship of Puebla, making it clear that he employs a populist approach in his impassioned diatribes as he attempts to form an affective bond with his fellow *poblanos*. In one speech in particular, he directly compares his family with those of the state's indigenous and proletariat citizens, proclaiming that "ésta es mi familia, una familia como la de ustedes, sencilla y unida" (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 48). With this approach, Andrés suggests a unified cause and struggle with voters, targets the emotional links that unite them with their families, and sets himself up as the patriarch of all *poblanos*. However, Mastretta has Catalina reveal just pages later that her husband is ultimately most concerned with (illegally) appropriating *ejidos*[53] in order to sell them to American investors (65). Beyond highlighting the disconnect between the public discourse that mythologized the Revolution and its "heirs" and their private intentions, by emphasizing Andrés' penchant for emotionally manipulative discourse, Mastretta also denounces the stereotypical macho as an undesirable romantic partner.

Throughout the novel, Mastretta makes a point of showing how Andrés uses similar methods of discursive control in the private realm as he does in the public sphere, thus characterizing him as a scheming and tyrannical spouse. In a notable example, Andrés tells Catalina a melodramatic story about the tragic death of Eulalia, whom he calls his first wife, during a typhus epidemic. Andrés claims that he met Eulalia after following his employer, the governor of Puebla, to Mexico City during the Revolution. Catalina discovers, years later, that "[t]oda esta dramática y enternecedora historia" was a lie and that Andrés had ended up in the capital after joining the ranks of the "*usurpador*" Victoriano Huerta (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 44).[54] It is implied, although not explicitly stated, that Eulalia did not enter willingly into a

relationship with Andrés but was rather a conquest of war. Marcelo Fuentes argues that Andrés' intention to "melodramatizarse […] lo humaniza […] al revelar su propia incomodidad y su reticencia a ser 'el villano'" (48). However, Mastretta offers no evidence that her character's psyche has attempted to protect him from the truth of any past sexual, violent or unpatriotic misdeeds through the creation of redeeming false narratives. I argue, instead, for interpreting his tall tale as an attempt to emotionally manipulate Catalina—in this case, to make her more amenable to accepting his two bastard children with Eulalia, whom he has just delivered into Catalina's care. It is far from the first and only time that Andrés seeks to affectively influence Catalina—Mastretta portrays him as frequently toying with his wife's emotions, such as when he has her lover Carlos Vives killed.

While Andrés does not physically take out his anger about being cuckolded on Catalina, he makes it clear that he will not allow her to seek love and support outside of their household, even though he provides her with sporadic, and principally material, displays of affection. While on holiday in Puebla, Andrés isolates Catalina in their bedroom in order to prevent her from saving Carlos from abduction and death in a secret government prison. During the ensuing conversation, Andrés asks Catalina several times if she is having an affair with Carlos, which she denies; comments on her fidelity; and reminds her of her position as his woman (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 173-74). Because Catalina, the readers, and, clearly, Andrés all know the truth about her relationship with Carlos, we can interpret his comments as veiled threats designed to remind Catalina of how she should and should not behave if she wants to avoid the emotional trauma that he is capable of inflicting on her for straying. Similar to the way that he spoke on the campaign trail, Andrés says one thing but means the opposite: When he asks Catalina why anyone would kill Carlos, as "[n]o coge contigo, no visitó a Medina, es mi amigo, casi mi

hermano chiquito" (174), he is actually denouncing the veracity of Catalina's earlier statements and listing the reasons why he, at that moment, is having Carlos killed. This is an allusion that Catalina, and the readers, will only understand in the pages to come, but one of which Carlos is fully aware as he poses this doubly encoded, rhetorical question.

Different forms of violence and control—discursive, physical, sexual, emotional, and political—thus converge in this scene. Andrés taunts his wife before and after he forces her to sleep with him during their retreat to the bedroom. Although he has been caressing Catalina throughout the scene, Andrés becomes more physically aggressive as he makes her swear that she hasn't been sleeping with Carlos, taking her "de la barba para que yo le sostuviera la mirada" (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 173). He forces Catalina to answer his question once again before penetrating her, reminding her immediately after he finishes that "[e]res mi mujer. No se te olvide" (174). The order of his comments and actions acquires a sadistic bent in light of what is happening to Carlos elsewhere: Not only does Andrés achieve physical pleasure by using sex to reestablish his control over Catalina, his knowledge that he is simultaneously, via corporeal violence, reasserting his dominance over Carlos and the political fight in which the two are embroiled arguably intensifies his sexual gratification. So, too, does his anticipation of the devastation that Catalina will face when she realizes that he has both ended her lover's life and prevented her from saving him. Mastretta thus promotes the idea that low-class machos like Andrés are not only fundamentally violent, but also fundamentally perverse. By intimating that Andrés not only views shows of force as the only way to rule, but also takes pleasure from them, Mastretta perpetuates the pathologization of low-class machismo: She ties proletariat men not just to their bodies, but to their "sick" and "sickening" bodies, which threaten both their female partners and the wellbeing of the nation.

Mastretta thus takes part in the tendency, as I have noted, both inside and outside of Mexico to condemn lower-class Mexican men as an infected and infecting presence in private and public life. Additionally, by associating Andrés with various forms of domination, Mastretta also participates in a larger pattern involving the literary representation of caudillo masculinity. In her book *Cosas de hombres: escritores y caudillos en la literatura latinoamericana del siglo XX*, Gabriela Polit Dueñas proposes that while the caudillo has been one of the most visible male types in 20th century Latin American literature, his masculinity has remained largely invisible (21). By this, Polit Dueñas means that the strongman's masculinity has been "biologized," portrayed as something natural and not the result of social processes (22). Critics have compounded this problem by failing to examine how authors of caudillo novels have perpetuated a link between a violent, ignorant, and crude masculine performance and bloody, tyrannical *caudillismo*. By making Andrés' leadership one based on domination and by employing realism, a style allegedly free from ideological biases, Mastretta maintains the seemingly "natural" ties between the macho caudillo and his overtly oppressive rule. Although it is undeniable that many caudillos did rule with force, Mastretta ignores the sociohistoric factors that might have led these men to recur more often to physical and other forms of violence, thus perpetuating the idea that they were driven by biological, and not socialized, responses to political and personal challenges. Consequently, she participates in the Mexican intelligentsia's tradition of spreading a stereotype that has fed into the gender performances of men in real life—in this case, caudillos—, resulting in a feedback loop that further obfuscates the origin of these violent behaviors.[55]

A close reading of Andrés' initial appearances in the novel reveals further evidence that Mastretta seeks to tie lowborn machos and their masculine performances to their bodies. In these scenes, however, the association is not completely a negative one, especially in Catalina's first

encounter with her future husband. Here, Mastretta emphasizes Catalina's (female) gaze in order to exoticize Andrés and emphasize his virility, strength, and power. Mastretta makes it clear that Catalina seeks corporeal pleasure. She takes Andrés' body in, visually segmenting it and thus objectifying him, resulting in a scopophilia that inverts Laura Mulvey's classic idea of the "male gaze."[56] Remarking, simply, that "[m]e gustó," Catalina runs her eyes from Andrés' "manos grandes y unos labios que apretados daban miedo y, riéndose, confianza," to his "ojos tan vivos" and full of certainty, (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 7). The use of the verb "gustar" in this passage is telling. Lacking a similar equivalent in English, in Spanish, "gustar" means to be pleasing to someone and can carry many connotations, among them romantic and sexual ones. With her word choice, Mastretta hints that Catalina wants both an emotionally and sexually fulfilling union. Notably, however, her initial attraction to Andrés is mixed with fright, or at least the recognition that Andrés has frightening qualities, as evidenced by his "doubled" mouth. Mastretta thus points to the fine line between the attractiveness of the macho's brawn and the repulsiveness of his frightening animalism, which is held back by a thin veneer of socialization and civility.

Mastretta continues to highlight the fine, blurry line between the desire and repulsion associated with popular machos' bodies in the following scene. Thinking back to the night that she lost her virginity to Andrés, Catalina remarks that seeing his "pito parado" was the "espantada de mi vida" (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 9). She promptly tells Andrés that she is not "segura de que eso me quepa" (9). Andrés' "manhood" is, literally and figuratively, too much, too imposing, not conducive to a pleasurable experience on Catalina's part. Indeed, Andrés laments that Catalina fails to climax after a sexual encounter in which he caressed her just enough to physically prepare her body for sex then, in quick succession, "se metió, se movió,

resopló, y gritó" (9-10). While Cynthia Duncan reads this moment as indicative that "*men* are not as knowledgeable as they pretend to be about women's sexuality" (my emphasis, 183), I argue against making such a broad generalization. In this case, Catalina is left sexually unsatisfied because of Andrés' seemingly more "instinctual" approach to intercourse. Raw sexuality, while attractive, is not enough to ensure female satisfaction, and the uneducated, uncultured, unrefined Andrés is woefully unprepared and ultimately unable to provide Catalina with a fulfilling sexual encounter. Andrés' corporeal shortcomings are tied to his lack of embodied cultural capital. Not only does he lack knowledge of the ties between female anatomy and sexual pleasure, he shows no indication of an awareness that the "natural" act of human copulation is sociohistorically and culturally specific and thus can be studied in order to improve the sexual satisfaction of both partners.

Mastretta frames the stereotypical *macho*'s focus on the penis as the ultimate source of pleasure and power as not only disappointing for female partners but also laughable. While visiting with Bibi, a friend whose husband is the owner of an important newspaper chain, Catalina hears about a party attended by revolutionaries-turned-leaders. Bibi recounts that, during the soiree, the men removed their pants and lined up hip-to-hip "a ver a quién le llegaba más lejos la cosa" (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 207). One can almost hear Hélène Cixous' Medusa laughing at the sight of a group of men who subscribe to a phallocratic ideology in which they continue to conflate the Phallus and the penis.[57] As Butler postulates in *Gender Trouble*, although the penis and the Phallus are clearly not identical, the latter deploys the former in order to gain legitimacy by promoting a binary and asymmetrical naturalization of bodies (135), resulting in the (con)fusion of the symbolic and the physical. It is not surprising then, that men portrayed as so attached to their bodies place so much importance on the size of their penises as a

literal measurement of their manhood. For these men, their sexual organs denote not only a "natural" superiority over women, but also over other men. The female prostitutes who are present at the party have been hired to serve as a physical and symbolic heterosexual buffer to prevent a homosocial gathering from slipping into a homosexual one. Their reaction to these men's *pitos* is unimportant—the activity is one for the men to quite literally "size each other up." By transforming a gathering of social and political leaders into a scene more reminiscent of schoolboy shenanigans, Mastretta further pushes the narrative of stereotypical machos as being closer to "nature" than their bourgeois counterparts. Bibi's bemused remark—"Eran demasiados pitos. Da emoción uno, pero no una bola de encuerados. Estaban ridículos" (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 207)—suggests that while a certain degree of corporeality is sexually exciting for women, men who are too unrefined, besides being potentially dangerous because of their virile excess, are also too childlike— too emotionally, culturally, and intellectually stunted to provide worthwhile companionship. Mastretta thus again reproduces contradictory 19th- and 20th-century discourses classifying men of the popular classes as simultaneously more and less masculine than other men.

Andrés is certainly framed as not being able to connect with Catalina on a "deeper" sentimental level, as Mastretta shows him turning repeatedly to consumerism to display his affection for his wife. A notable example is when he comes to see Catalina with chocolates and red roses after he misses the birth of their first child (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 33). By having Carlos arrive with these particular items, which are arguably some of the most cliché romantic gifts in the contemporary Western social imaginary, Mastretta points once again to Andrés' lack of embodied cultural capital and resulting "unrefined" approach to relationships. It might seem contradictory for Mastretta to have included this subtle criticism of Andrés, especially as other

critics have signaled Mastretta's obsession with consumerism and the power of consumption. As Hind notes, Catalina truly comes into her own in when she comes into greater control of her husband's financial resources ("Six Authors" 63). However, although capitalism has arguably filtered into the most intimate areas of our lives (Harzewski 11), the reality and the recognition of this influence are two very different things. In her 1997 book, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Eva Illouz notes that while members of the middle and upper classes in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s expressed an "anticonsumerist ethos," or a rejection of goods manufactured explicitly for romance (252), they were simultaneously avid consumers of these products (262-63). This same cognitive dissonance can be seen in Catalina's—that is, Mastretta's,—disdain for Andrés' cliché gifts, aligning her more closely with a bourgeois sensibility that demands original, non-commoditized intimacy, while at the same time placing a high value on purchasing power. This position becomes especially significant when analyzing Catalina's most important lover, the symphony conductor Carlos Vives.

The cultured Carlos has been read as a foil to Andrés—a sensitive man capable of loving Catalina on a "deeper" level and of using art, rather than material things, to display his affection, such as when he directs his orchestra to play one of Catalina's favorite songs. The son of a general, Carlos has studied in Europe and is involved with the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM), a real-life confederation of labor unions founded in 1936 by President Lázaro Cárdenas. This pits him against Andrés politically, as the latter continues to support the older union confederation, the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (CROM). Carlos' appreciation for art, apparent devotion to the working class, and more refined mannerisms have led him to be labeled "el polo opuesto del cacique machista, corrupto y sanguinario" that

Catalina has married (LeMaître, "La historia oficial" 186). Other critics have argued that Carlos represents a left-wing liberalism that directly contradicts Andrés' despotism (Standliand 185) and that he is the "antithesis" of Andrés, who allegedly considers him effeminate (Lavery, *Textual Multiplicity* 69). However, a closer scrutiny of this character reveals a number of parallels with Andrés, suggesting that Carlos and Catalina's relationship is not fundamentally different from that of the caudillo and his wife. It is possible to read him as an unintentional mirror of Andrés rather than as his foil—unintentional due to Mastretta's classed myopia—, a relationship that is at once very similar to and very different from the intentional bourgeois and popular mirrors that Ana García Bergua establishes in *La isla de bobos*, which will be explored in chapter 3.

Carlos' machista behaviors become more apparent when taking into account both how his embodied cultural capital makes it more difficult to identify him with the classic macho type, as well as the specific focalization and deliberate gaps that Mastretta includes in order to develop a conservative romantic fantasy for her protagonist and readers. Such a reading makes it clear that Mastretta is more oblique in portraying how Carlos uses Catalina for political gains than she is in her criticisms of Andrés' use and abuse of his wife. Combined with the bias produced by academics' classed myopia, this more subtle masculine domination has led the few critics who have argued for not simply interpreting Andrés and Carlos as foils to still argue that Carlos has the potential to be a better, more egalitarian-minded partner for Catalina than does Andrés. Christopher Harris has proposed that, like Andrés, Carlos is driven by personal ambition (104), which includes using Catalina as a pawn in favor of the CTM in order to "fuck over" Andrés (109-10). Despite noting the elements of Carlos' character that align him more closely with Andrés, such as his desire to play the "chingón" in the *chingón/chingado* game of Mexican

politics (109-10), Harris ultimately fails to take several factors into consideration in his (re) consideration of this character. For one, although Mastretta makes it clear that Catalina loves Carlos, she provides murkier evidence that Carlos reciprocates these feelings. Harris initially acknowledges that it is difficult to tell if Carlos just wants to use Catalina to embarrass Andrés or if he has truly developed feelings for her (111). However, he later argues that Carlos most convincingly aligns himself with bell hooks' idea of feminist manhood by expressing his love for Catalina (113).[58] Yet, beyond stating that Carlos makes them, Harris offers scant textual evidence of these supposed declarations of love—only a single line of dialogue: "[M]e parece linda" (qtd in Harris 113). In fact, more often than not, Carlos explicitly states not his love for Catalina, but his desire to sleep with her.

I use "explicitly" here in multiple senses of the word, as Carlos not only expresses these *ganas* plainly and directly, but also uses expletives to initiate trysts. On the night of their first sexual encounter, for example, he responds to Catalina's inquiry about what he wants to do next with "Yo, coger" (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 142). In a later scene, he deflects Catalina's demand that he make their relationship known to Andrés by asking her if "lo pronto quieres que demos una cogidita, ¿no?" (159). Hind has proposed that part of male Mexican authors' macho bárbaro performances involves their use of explicit language, which she argues is considered more "authentic" and thus is associated primarily with the lower classes (*Dude Lit* 87). There seems to be a connection with actions that are codified as less "refined" and the language that is used to express them: Carlos can only convincingly perform the macho bárbaro in all of his virile glory if he not only walks the walk but also talks the talk. Tellingly, his use of profanity is limited to these two instances with Catalina, as his speech otherwise can be categorized as that of a formally educated man. Having Carlos use these pejorative terms, then, is one of two principal

ways in which Mastretta demonstrates that this character, despite his extensive embodied cultural capital, remains in touch with his more "natural," and thus exciting, sexuality. The other involves the ties that Mastretta establishes between Carlos' creativity, his corporeality, and his sexual power.

The scenes in which Catalina observes her lover at work with the symphony most clearly illustrate how Mastretta develops a physically desirable love interest who channels his bodily passion in order to generate art and, consequently, avoid crossing over entirely into macho bárbaro territory. Returning to the blind spots in Harris' article, although Harris notes the ability that Carlos has to sexually excite Catalina, he argues that this stems from "the music that he conducts," which allows him to metaphorically penetrate Catalina via his powerful presence (108). In his argument, Harris fails to also take into consideration Catalina's objectification of Carlos' body. Echoing earlier comments about her attraction to Andrés' large hands and their ability to provoke fear (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 67), Catalina remarks during a rehearsal that she likes how Carlos "movía las manos, cómo otros lo obedecían […] Él tenía el poder y uno sentía claramente hasta dónde llegaba su dominio" (129). On the one hand, this strengthens the contrast between Carlos and Andrés, as the latter's passion has no artistic appreciation or knowhow to guide or temper it, resulting in outbursts of destructive violence and control through fear. On the other hand, it bolsters the similarities between these two men, whose bodies both teem with virile potential, making them sexually desirable.

It is possible to see further parallels between the two men's corporeality in the scene in which Andrés and Catalina attend Carlos' first concert. Mastretta has Catalina take in Carlos' body with a scopohilic gaze that echoes the one that she uses when meeting Andrés for the first time. Catalina remarks that, during the performance, she was "mirando a Carlos. Le miraba la

espalda y los brazos yendo y viniendo. Le miraba las piernas" (137). Catalina clearly objectifies Carlos as she visually dissects him, breaking him down into his strong torso and extremities. And yet, just as in the rehearsal scene, Mastretta tempers interpretations of Carlos as a macho figure by not reducing him to his body but rather by tying his body parts and their actions to the genesis of (high) culture. Catalina is not observing a stagnant Carlos but rather a Carlos at work as a symphony conductor. It is an image that summarizes the hybridity of the bourgeois or upper-class macho: physically strong and attractive but simultaneously imbued with a wealth of embodied cultural capital.

Although Mastretta employs language and framing that clearly establish similarities between the way that Catalina views Carlos' and Andrés' bodies, the parallels between Carlos' motives for entering into a relationship with Catalina and the way that Andrés uses her are harder to detect, especially as Catalina is our only narrator, and her judgment is clouded by love and devotion to her paramour. These feelings stem from how Mastretta depicts Carlos' use of Catalina to pursue his political aspirations. When Andrés employs his wife for the same purpose, Mastretta leaves no doubt in her readers' minds that this what he is doing.[59] Starting at the post-concert reception at the presidential residence, *Los Pinos*, which ends with Carlos and Catalina making love for the first time, Andrés explicitly orders her to listen to Carlos' conversation with one of his political rivals and report back (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 140), and he later orders her to continue spying on Carlos for him. By having Carlos make Catalina his lover, Mastretta gives him an opportunity to politically screw over Andrés by physically screwing his wife. Carlos emotionally manipulates Catalina not by provoking negative feelings but rather positive ones. By making Catalina the center of his romantic and sexual attention, he makes her want to be around him—thus giving him more chances to be around Andrés—and not want to inform on him to her

husband. Carlos perceives Andrés' plan to use his wife as a political pawn who will feed him information, and by quickly turning Catalina into his own pawn, he counters Andrés' move without the pawn herself knowing anything about it.

It is certainly possible that Carlos might care for Catalina, but the degree of his affection is ambiguous. When faced with serious conversations about a possible future with Catalina, in addition to his tendency to initiate sex to shut down the conversation, Carlos repeatedly lightens the mood by making flirtatious comments. When Catalina insists that they hold a mock wedding ceremony in a Tonanzintla church during *Día de muertos* celebrations, Carlos responds to her sincerely recited, traditional vows by promising to be "fiel con marido y sin marido, en las carcajadas y el miedo" and to love her and respect her "preciosas nalgas" as long as he lives (167). Carlos' cheeky comment indicates that, while he is willing to play along, he does not view his relationship with Catalina as seriously as she does. In contrast, the moment in the church is very important for Catalina, as it fuels her construction of a romance that she has not been able to live out with Andrés. The vows and the church setting represent her opportunity to finally have a proper wedding, the one that she had yearned for but had been denied by Andrés. Arguably, however, Catalina is not living out a true romance with Carlos, either, although she is unable to see any similarities between her lover and her husband.

Ultimately, what Mastretta has constructed for her protagonist, as well as for her readers, is a fantasy. Unlike Elena Garro's use of fantasy as outlined in chapter 1, however, Mastretta's is much less obvious and much more subversive, but in a way that reinforces structures of oppression instead of working to undermine them. While Mastretta has her protagonist recount in detail the many ways in which Andrés has used, manipulated, and disappointed her, the only moments with Carlos that she recalls are filtered through a heady haze of excitement, desire, and

passion. Like all subjective narrators, Catalina is, to a certain extent, unreliable. Mastretta has included gaps in Catalina's recollections that deepen the fantastical elements of her relationship with Carlos. Whereas she explicitly describes Catalina's disappointing and frightening sexual encounters with her husband, she provides details of only the last rendezvous between Catalina and her lover, in which her protagonist descends to such a primal state that "quería ser una cabra," making love and making noise without restraint (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 167). In previous sections, Mastretta ends the scene before Carlos and Catalina begin having sex. Even here she avoids explicitly describing Carlos and Catalina's sexual encounter, adding the animal reference as an indicator of intensity but providing no other details. By structuring her love scenes in this way, Mastretta thus provides her (female) readers with not only the opportunity to imagine what happens next, but also to imagine themselves in Catalina's place.

Mastretta's novel allows her readers to escape momentarily from any dissatisfaction in their own love lives and envision the romance that they could, and should, enjoy. Although Catalina and Carlos' relationship is fantastical, Mastretta employs a confessional discourse to disguise its implausibility and deepen the affective bonds between reader and narrator. By having Catalina relate her story in retrospect and in the first person, Mastretta gives her novel the quality of a memoir. This implies a certain veracity to what Catalina recounts, although the novel's only grounding in historical reality are the loose associations that can be made between some of its characters and postrevolutionary political figures. Despite the fact that readers cannot identify with Catalina's specific situation, they are thus encouraged to aspire to a more fulfilling partnership, just as Catalina does. Mastretta's realistic style stands in marked contrast not only to Garro's, but also to Laura Esquivel's in *Como agua para chocolate*. Many critics have remarked upon Esquivel's use of magical realism, fairy-tale elements, and humorous exaggeration in her

debut novel (Ibsen, "On Recipes" 112; Standiland 36; Taylor 203; Willingham 8;). Although their styles differ, Mastretta and Esquivel pursue similar goals, as the latter also advocates for women to have the freedom to pursue emotionally and sexually satisfying partnerships. Additionally, like Mastretta, Esquivel promotes the bourgeois macho as having the right combination of civility and virility to provide this ideal(ized) relationship for her female protagonist (and readers).

***Como agua para chocolate***

Published in 1989, *Como agua para chocolate* is divided into 12 sections. Each part features the preparation of a particular dish, the recipe for which Esquivel has included at the beginning of the chapter. The novel's unnamed, seemingly omniscient third-person narrator is revealed in the final pages to be the great-niece of the protagonist, Tita de la Garza, whose life story she has pieced together thanks to her great-aunt's diary/cookbook. As the youngest of three daughters, Tita is condemned to a life without marriage by her overbearing, patriarchal mother,[60] Mamá Elena, who insists upon keeping alive the family tradition of having the last-born daughter serve her mother until the latter dies. Although Tita falls in love with Pedro Muzquiz, Mamá Elena forbids them from marrying. Pedro agrees to wed Tita's sister Rosaura in order to stay close to his true love. Unable to openly express her feelings for Pedro, Tita transfers them to her cooking and exhibits the ability to influence the emotions of those around her via her culinary creations, often to comical extremes. Although Tita becomes engaged to an American doctor, John Brown, after Mamá Elena's death, she ultimately cannot resist her attraction to Pedro. With the begrudging approval of Rosaura, the two enter into a clandestine sexual relationship. Upon Rosaura's death, they are able to make love freely for the first time, but their unbridled passion ends in a fiery demise for both. The ensuing blaze destroys the de la Garza ranch, leaving behind

only ashes and Tita's diary/cookbook.

The novel's ending has sparked debate among critics over whether or not Esquivel intended to write a parody of romances or a sincere romance with parodic elements. Those who argue for the former interpretation cite Tita and Pedro's literally blazing love as clearly over-the-top and thus not meant to be held up as an ideal dynamic. Willingham specifically notes the couple's fiery union when she states, "Esquivel parodies or subverts nearly every staple of the romance novel," including "the cliché of 'flaming passion'" (11). In a similar vein, Victoria Martínez argues that Tita and Pedro's doomed relationship reflects the problems that come from passionate Mexican men and women joining together. Martínez proposes that the successful union of Tita's niece, Esperanza, with John's son, Alex, is the novel's true ideal relationship, with Alex's calm, American influence tempering Esperanza's Mexican intensity (39). What Martínez does not consider, however, is the importance that Esquivel places on passion in this relationship as well: Tita becomes even more committed to making sure that her niece will not be subject to the same fate as her after Esperanza mentions that Alex's gaze makes her feel "como la masa de un buñuelo entrando al aceite hirviendo" (Esquivel 238). Not coincidently, this is the same simile that Esquivel uses to describe the effects of Pedro's gaze on a young Tita (21). The problem is thus not the intensity of Tita and Pedro's love, but their inability for many years to openly act upon what they feel. Esquivel reiterates through the novel that if Tita had been allowed to pursue her desires, she would not have had to live with a dangerous amount of unspent passion at her core.[61] Esquivel consistently emphasizes that the source of Tita's problems and any unpleasantness in her life are Mamá Elena's patriarchal dictates, which Rosaura attempts to keep alive.

It is clear, then, that Esquivel's principal target of criticism is not the basis of Pedro and

Tita's relationship but rather the male-designed, sometimes female-internalized social mandates that result in women's lack of agency and choice. Pedro, too, is presented as a victim of the oppressive system that Mamá Elena represents. When he is confronted with a rival for Tita's affections later in the novel, he reacts poorly, lamenting that he cannot clearly demonstrate his "claim" to Tita by marrying her and living openly with her as a couple (Esquivel 143). Although Tita chafes at his behavior, Esquivel does not let her protagonist's thoughts linger on Pedro's possessive attitude. She instead reminds readers that Tita's main source of anger at that moment is her sister's desire to strip Esperanza of her agency: "Este desmesurado enojo era causado en una mínima parte por la discusión con Pedro […] y en gran parte por las palabras que Rosaura había pronunciado unos días antes" (154). Because Tita and Pedro have been forced into a clandestine relationship, unable to celebrate a love that Esquivel has referred to as "perfect" (Loewenstein), the latter has been driven to jealousy and childish behavior. Pedro suffers because Tita suffers in a life that she did not want or choose. Emma Standiland argues that it is "easy to judge Pedro as a facile character too weak to challenge Mamá Elena's iron will," but counters that what he is really facing is not his mother-in-law, but the unequal system of gender relations that she incarnates (49). And yet, arguments by critics that Pedro should defy Mamá Elena anyway reveal how overly restrictive expectations for how "real" men should behave frequently guide evaluations of this character.

After reviewing numerous analyses, it becomes clear that Pedro is often criticized for failing to live up to macho ideals. On the one hand, as noted, he is looked down on for being subject to women's whims and dictates—chiefly those of Mamá Elena, whom he fails to confront throughout the novel (Ibsen, "On Recipes" 116; Martínez 32; Oxford 77). This criticism implies that Pedro would not only be a stronger character but, more importantly, a stronger man

if he were to be more assertive. Although Mamá Elena represents the patriarchal order, she is still a woman, and as such, according to these critics, Pedro should not have to acquiesce to her. On the other hand, he is criticized for physically failing to live up to macho ideals. Martínez, for one, judges Pedro against the virility-obsessed dictates of machismo by writing that he seems to be less than a man because he is incapable of producing a viable son (30)—never mind his daughter, who lives to adulthood. Martínez insinuates that there is something physically wrong with Pedro's firstborn, Roberto, and that there must also be something physically wrong with Pedro to have resulted in this weak child. However, Esquivel does not imply this anywhere in her novel. Instead, she makes it clear that Roberto does not survive because Rosaura is incapable of adequately feeding him (102). By trying to find as many ways as possible to read Pedro as having been feminized by Esquivel, Martínez ends up reinforcing macho gender expectations for Mexican men. She fails to entertain the idea that macho performances can differ, to look for the signs of machista behavior in a character who does not fit a narrow stereotype. Indeed, unlike a lower-class macho, Pedro is chastised for *not* demonstrating an overpowering sex drive: Kristine Ibsen writes that Esquivel's inversion of masculine and feminine characteristics is made clear by the fact that Pedro refuses to immediately consummate his marriage with Rosaura ("On Recipes" 116). Because Pedro is written off as going against the stereotype of the boastful macho, Ibsen and others pay more attention to the elements of Esquivel's novel that confirm how she plays with gender expectations and ignore the ways in which she affirms them.

By revisiting a key scene in which Esquivel appears to question the passive-female/active-male sexual binary, however, we can see how she simultaneously challenges and reinforces this dualism. When Tita feeds her family quail in rose sauce. Esquivel makes sure to underscore how it is Tita, and not Pedro, who takes up the role of the chingona and enters

Pedro's body via her cooking. Her "ser" having dissolved into the food and drink, "penetraba en el cuerpo de Pedro" (Esquivel 57). With Tita as "la emisora, Pedro el receptor," Pedro "la dejó entrar hasta el ultimo rincón de su ser" (57). Tita not only stirs Pedro's sexual desire but that of her sister Gertrudis as well, who flees with a *villista* revolutionary. And yet, Esquivel continues to associate (sexual) power with the traditionally male act of penetration. She does not celebrate the power of the "feminine" but the ability of women to occupy the "male" role. The rose sauce in this scene can be read as a stand-in for semen, the traditionally most masculine of bodily expulsions, which in a heteronormative understanding carries the (genetic) essence of its producer into the body of a female recipient. While Esquivel puts a woman in the penetrative, seed-planting role in this scene, there are multiple others where it is Pedro, and not Tita, who (visually) enters another character's body. By analyzing these scenes, it is possible to see how Esquivel contributes to the perpetuation of machismo's possessiveness and objectification.

Although Esquivel champions female agency in her novel, she uses a technique that Mulvey has famously linked to women's disempowerment in cultural production: the male gaze. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given Esquivel's background in the film industry, she recurs early and often to the sexual power of Pedro's look.[62] Unlike Mastretta, who allows her female protagonist to take in, dissect and objectify her male love interests in *Arráncame la vida,* Esquivel reserves this framing for Pedro: As Ibsen notes, whenever a female body is described in hyperbolic detail in *Como agua para chocolate*, the focalization has shifted to Pedro ("On Recipes" 116). Additionally, Esquivel makes it clear that it is only because Pedro views Tita as a sexual object that Tita begins to become aware of her own sexuality. This is not presented negatively, but rather as a transformative experience for Tita, one that puts her more in touch with her body and more deeply in love with Pedro. In the novel's first chapter, Tita describes how Pedro's gaze

ignites her sexually, causing her temperature to rise throughout her body parts, bit by bit—"la cara, el vientre, el corazón, los senos"—until she can no longer "sostenerle esa mirada" (Esquivel 21). Having enjoyed this experience, Tita seeks to attract Pedro's blazing look again later in the novel. Somewhat akin to Garro's use of wall imagery as examined in chapter 1, Esquivel plays with the active/passive, male/female binaries when she has Tita present herself as a sexual object to be visually consumed by Pedro. When he enters the kitchen and finds her working, "Ésta dejó de moler, se enderezó y orgullosamente irguió su pecho, para que Pedro lo observara plenamente" (74). However, while Tita is presented as choosing when and how to let Pedro gaze upon her, Esquivel leaves the degree of Tita's agency unclear when she continues by noting that it is ultimately Pedro, and not Tita, who has the power to sexualize Tita's body: "En solo unos instantes Pedro había transformado los senos de Tita de castos a voluptuosos" (74). Although Tita and Esquivel's readers might be aware that Tita has initiated this exchange, because it is a silent invitation, it is not clear that Pedro knows that Tita has chosen to present herself to him. Not only has he been left in his role as objectifier, he is unaware that this exchange is any different than any others in which he has engaged in scopohilic behavior.

Esquivel's novel thus raises questions about the relationship between sexual objectification and subjectification and whether it is possible to engage in both simultaneously with the goal of greater corporeal agency, especially if the position of the traditional (male) objectifier is left unchallenged. Rosalind Gill has argued that some women at the end of the 20th century began to see themselves as active, desiring sexual subjects who chose to present themselves in an objectified manner, resulting in a paradoxical construction of simultaneous empowerment and subordination. She questions the liberating potential of sexual subjecthood, arguing that it leads to a different form of exploitation (*Gender* 111). With Tita, Esquivel has

written a protagonist that has internalized the judging male gaze, leading her to display herself in a way that she thinks Pedro will find attractive. Pedro remains in control of Tita's sexuality even when she thinks otherwise—her sense of sexual self-worth is wholly dependent upon him. While Tita's decision to present herself as sexually desirable is active, as indicated above, only she is aware of this change, and Pedro has not consciously yielded any of the power traditionally exercised by men in the sexual objectification of women. Under the influence of classed myopia, Tita's actions have led some critics to see Pedro's aggressive sexual behavior towards Tita as justified and desired.

This consideration of Pedro's actions is especially problematic when analyzing the scene in which Pedro and Tita have sex for the first time. Esquivel writes that, finding Tita alone and ignoring her attempts to converse, "Pedro, sin responderle, se acercó a ella, apagó la luz del quinqué, la jaló hacia donde estaba la cama de latón que alguna vez perteneció a Gertrudis y tirándola sobre ella, la hizo perder su virginidad y conocer el verdadero amor" (Esquivel 161). There is no mutuality in this encounter: The use of the third-person singular marks Pedro as the sole subject, while Tita is reduced to a sexual (and grammatical) object. Notably, she is not even referred to by name, just a series of object pronouns. Although the verbs that Esquivel employs here are clearly aggressive—*jalar, tirar, hacer perder*—critics have been reluctant to label the encounter a rape. For instance, while Jeffrey Oxford acknowledges the scene's violence, he argues that Pedro's actions do not constitute rape, because Tita had previously shown a "willingness" for a sexual encounter and because Pedro is a man dominated by a woman (Mamá Elena) (77). Oxford's comment about Pedro's relationship with Mamá Elena is a clear example of the classed myopia that has driven analysis of Pedro. Because Pedro is not consistently assertive and thus does not fit the mold of the lower-class macho's behavior, Oxford writes off

his capacity for sexual violence, despite textual evidence to the contrary. Additionally, his argument that Tita must have been a willing participant because she had previously been receptive to Pedro's advances highlights the slippery line between "empowering" self-objectification and exploitative objectification. Incidences of the latter can be argued to be the former, providing men with an excuse for predatory sexual behavior.

To be fair, Esquivel and her differing standards for traditional and bourgeois machos make it easier for critics to refuse to label Pedro a rapist, despite signs that point toward the one-sidedness of his and Tita's "lovemaking." These signs go beyond the language that Esquivel uses to describe this encounter. Notably, in the preceding scene, Pedro comes across Tita as she showers and gazes voyeuristically at her naked body, causing her to hastily dress and flee in order to avoid his "libidinosas intenciones" (Esquivel 158). Esquivel thus introduces doubt as to Tita's willingness to have sex with Pedro, calling the tenability of Oxford's argument into question. However, by returning to the sex scene, we can see that Esquivel adds another layer of ambiguity to the situation by seemingly dismissing Tita's hesitation and reinforcing a heteronormative patriarchal sexual dynamic in which it is the man's job to sexually initiate the woman. Although Pedro arguably forces himself on Tita by dragging her to bed and throwing himself on top of her, Esquivel writes that, in the end, he makes her "conocer el verdadero amor" (161). In so doing, Esquivel implies that just as Tita needed the power of Pedro's gaze to know that her body was capable of feeling sexual pleasure, she also needed his forceful touch to stop denying herself physically. Like the "agua" of novel's title, Tita had seemingly reached a boiling point by bottling up her lust for Pedro. She was saved from exploding by the actions of a man that knew that her protestations of "No" were really disguised pleas of "Yes." Esquivel not only excuses Pedro's actions but frames them as instrumental in Tita's sexual liberation: Pedro is not

driven by blind, animalistic lust but rather acts because Tita will not allow herself to do so.

Pedro is allowed to toe the line of the exciting, forceful lover and the macho rapist, ultimately falling back on the side of the former, in a way that Esquivel's popular male characters are not. In contrast to her treatment of Pedro, Esquivel is much less ambiguous about sex involving traditional, low-class macho characters. When Gertrudis is swept up by Juan, a villista revolutionary, Esquivel makes sure to specify that this is no kidnapping or rape but a mutually desired sexual encounter. She explicitly remarks that Gertrudis needed "que un hombre le apagara el fuego abrasador que nacía en sus entrañas" (Esquivel 59). However, not just any man would do: It had to be one "igual de necesitado de amor que ella" (59), a man like the valiant macho fighter who arrives. Because Gertrudis' lust is so overwhelming, the only man potentially capable of satiating it is one who is hypervirile—strong, capable of vigorous sex, and more susceptible to the pheromone-like cloud that Gertrudis emits after eating her sister's quail in rose sauce. While Pedro is also affected by this meal, Juan is driven into a frenzy by his sexual desire, as he, like an animal, lacks the ability to restrain himself from acting on his urges. Esquivel deepens these parallels by remarking that Juan follows Gertrudis' scent to the ranch (59), as if he were a dog looking for a bitch that has gone into heat. Esquivel thus plays into stereotypes surrounding lower-class Mexican men. Along these same lines, Esquivel mentions later in the novel that the family's indigenous servant, Chencha, is raped during revolutionaries' attack on the ranch (136). Taking this into account, it is clear why Esquivel labels Gertrudis' encounter with Juan as desired and not Tita's with Pedro: While the former involved a man not completely in control of himself, the latter featured a man in touch with but not defined by his corporeal desire. If Esquivel had not presented Juan's behavior as she did, it could have opened the door to speculation of rape because, as she reinforces with Chencha, this was typical of

lowborn fighters.

However, while Esquivel writes Juan as a stereotype, she does so in an over-the-top way, thus poking fun at the revolutionary melodramas that idealized boastful, hypervirile machos. Esquivel endows Juan with so much sexual prowess that when he finds Gertrudis, he is able to scoop her up and make love to her while continuing to ride his galloping horse (60). Commenting on the 1992 film adaptation of the novel, for which Esquivel wrote the screenplay, Gastón Lillo remarks that with Juan, "[a] la mistificación épica del héroe masculina se le opone la caricatura, el estereotipo llevado al exceso y puesto al desnudo" (69). His masculinity is clearly impossible to live up to and invites a questioning of the seemingly more obtainable but ultimately equally as manufactured male ideals promoted in Golden Age cinema. We can further cement the intertextuality of this moment in the novel by noting that Esquivel frames Tita and Pedro as spectators of a film as they take in Gertrudis and Juan riding away: They watch, moved to tears, "al ver a sus héroes realizar el amor que para ellos estaba prohibido" (Esquivel 60). With this explicit reference to one of the novel's chief intertexts, Esquivel calls her readers' attention to the way in which a particular genre marked by oppressive, patriarchal gender standards, as indicated in chapter 1, has influenced the Mexican public's understanding of romance. And yet, just as she does with Tita's sexual liberation, Esquivel ultimately ends up taking a contradictory, uneven approach to the figure of the macho.

If Esquivel rejects the traditional formulation of the macho, she also rejects a masculine performance completely devoid of his virile passion by having Tita chose Pedro over John Brown. While Juan represents a lover who is too driven by his sexual urges, his Anglo counterpart—who not coincidentally bears the English version of the same name—lies at the other end of the virility spectrum. Although he takes Tita in and nurses her back to health after

she suffers a mental breakdown, treating her kindly and later proposing marriage, she repeatedly frets over not being sexually moved by him the same way that she is by Pedro. This ultimately keeps her at the ranch for good, in a secret relationship with Pedro, despite "la paz, la serenidad, la razón" that the highly educated North American doctor represents (Esquivel 176). Pedro, then, as a bourgeois macho represents the ideal compromise between Juan and John. But he also represents Esquivel's desire to have her cake and eat it, too, so to speak. Critics have long struggled to decide if *Como agua para chocolate* is subversive or conservative. Perhaps that is because, as Diana Nieblyski suggests, Esquivel has written it in such a way that makes it both (189): While she criticizes the patriarchal system that prevents women from exercising agency over their love lives, she reinforces this same system by championing Pedro—despite his voyeurism, possessiveness, and objectifying tendencies—as the partner that Tita needs to recognize and celebrate her sexuality. In her second novel, *Mal de amores*, Ángeles Mastretta places her protagonist in a love triangle with two men who align very closely with Pedro Muzquiz and John Brown. Although Mastretta's Emilia Sauri is not forced to choose between her bourgeois macho and her sensitive bourgeois, Mastretta's decision to let her protagonist have it all similarly results in a celebration of female sexual satisfaction at the expense of denouncing machismo at all levels of society.

***Mal de amores***

Mastretta's second novel follows the liberal Sauri family of Puebla through the *porfiriato*[63] and the decade of upheaval that results from Francisco Madero's 1910 call to armed rebellion. Firmly *antireeleccionista*, the Sauris join with other bourgeois families in the city in the efforts to unseat Porfirio Díaz and bring about greater economic and social equality in Mexico. Their only child, Emilia, aspires to be a doctor — her father schools her in his

*curandero* knowledge from an early age, and she later makes secret arrangements to learn "modern" medical techniques from family friend and fellow antireeleccionista Dr. Octavio Cuenca. Emilia is also deeply enamored of her childhood friend, Octavio's son, Daniel Cuenca, and her family supports her as she (literally) pursues the restless Daniel while he chases the Revolution through northern and central Mexico. Frustrated by Daniel's inability to settle down and his rejection of her medical career, Emilia repeatedly separates from Daniel only to find herself chasing after him again. She reaches a breaking point near the end of the decade and returns to Puebla for good. There, she resumes working in a small hospital with the lover that she had left behind, the ever-waiting, supportive, gentle Dr. Antonio Zavalza. Emilia does not reject Daniel wholesale, however, as she welcomes him back to her bed whenever he appears in Puebla, an arrangement tolerated without comment by Zavalza and her family, and one that continues into her old age.

Although Mastretta has written *Arráncame la vida*'s Carlos Vives in a way that makes his masculine domination more difficult to detect, she leaves little doubt that *Mal de amores*' Daniel is more prone to less "refined" displays of masculinity. Like Esquivel, Mastretta employs the male gaze as a key tool in her character's arsenal of interpersonal control, beginning with his first appearance in the novel at 4 years of age: When the Sauris visit the Cuenca home with the newborn Emilia, young Daniel screams until she is brought to his eye level (Mastretta, *Mal de amores* 35). His need to visually assess and possess Emilia continues as they grow. When Daniel is 10 years old, he stares intensely at 6-year-old Emilia, who flees his unwanted scrutiny and climbs a tree. As Daniel watches Emilia from the ground, he mentally equates the movement of her swinging legs with those of his kite, which flies high but remains attached to him by the "cuerda que lo reconocía como su dueño" (50). Although Daniel's gaze does not sexually

objectify Emilia, it does result in her being reduced to a (play)thing. The toy with which Mastretta has Daniel compare Emilia further establishes the imbalance of power that Daniel sees as marking their relationship: Although a kite appears to dance freely in the sky, its movements and reach are limited, subject to the length of string that the flyer releases and the movement of his hands as they shift the spool of string back and forth. This moment foreshadows Daniel's future attempts to keep Emilia bound to him, to reel her back in no matter how far the "string" stretches between them.

As her character is young and has yet to accrue much embodied cultural capital, Mastretta has Daniel rely largely on corporeal, nonverbal behaviors such as gazing and touching in these initial chapters as he performs his possessive masculinity. Mastretta, Esquivel, and their critics have tended to accept and encourage these (supposedly) more base elements of their bourgeois machos' masculine performances as long as they are counterbalanced by behaviors that have been coded as "civilized." As Mastretta's Daniel grows into young adulthood, he initially displays this balance, managing to largely style himself as a macho civilizado with an underlying current of attractive virility: When Emilia reunites with him after he finishes studying law in the United States, she notes this duality, remarking that Daniel "podia pasar por el hijo del gobernante más atildado, pero ni así, su gesto intrépido y sus ojos de fiera dejaban de ser un desafío" (Mastretta, *Mal de amores* 126). Daniel seems largely en route, then, to masking, but not extinguishing, his sexually exciting, defiant masculine energy behind seductive charm and displays of cultured intellect. Like Carlos Vives, Daniel aims to use his passion to improve life for the masses. Just as Catalina does, Emilia begins returning Daniel's objectifying gaze while he is engaged in an activity that highlights his education—in Daniel's case, a speech on liberal politics at one of his father's *tertulias* (86). Mastretta thus emphasizes that Emilia sees Daniel as

not just a body that can give her physical pleasure, but also as a body willing to channel its energy in order to heal the body politic from what Daniel believes to have been decades of abuse and sickness.

As the novel progresses, the "civilized" aspects of Daniel's masculine performance become increasingly overshadowed by overt displays of possessiveness, aggressiveness, and jealousy. Some critics have blamed Daniel's upbringing and education as largely informing these gendered behaviors. In one of the few analyses that have commented on Daniel, Jane Elizabeth Lavery argues that Daniel's "uncompromisingly conservative views on gender roles" are passed down in part by his father, in part by the isolated, pseudo-military boarding school to which his father sends him as a teenager (*Textual Multiplicity* 96). Closer examination reveals, however, that neither his father nor his schooling instill in Daniel a conservative gender ideology that would lead him to more consistently perform as a macho bárbaro throughout the latter half of the novel. His school, for one, is said to promote a more balanced masculine comportment: Mastretta describes its anarchist founder as believing that "la inteligencia crecía mejor en los niños de espíritu indómito" but as also teaching his students "a tramar razones y a gobernar su emoción, sin perder la bravura" (Mastretta, *Mal de amores* 60). Daniel's father, although less sensitive and warm than Emilia's father, Diego Sauri, shows none of the same prejudices that his son does when the latter repeatedly berates Emilia for pursuing a career in fits of jealous rage. Dr. Octavio Cuenca is a leading proponent of Emilia becoming a doctor and studying modern medical techniques, making him another member of the frankly unrealistic circle of support that helps Emilia along in her professional journey.[64] Daniel's outbursts betray his public and private gender formation by men who exhibit and advocate for male emotional restraint. By turning to class and the later influences in Daniel's life instead of the earliest ones, however, we can see

how Mastretta ties Daniel's descent into "barbarie" with his time among the proletariat fighters of the Revolution. Mastretta thus continues the pathologization of lower-class men that she establishes in *Arráncame la vida* with Andrés Ascencio.

If Daniel built up his embodied cultural capital during his childhood and school days, Mastretta depicts him as losing it, or at least losing touch with it, as he associates more with *obreros*, *cantineros*, and *rancheros*. Notably, she uses language that suggests an infection or parasitic invasion when describing how Daniel becomes obsessed with chasing a nomadic life of adventure and physical conflict. After encountering Daniel as he marches into Mexico City among a mass of fighters, Emilia comments that her lover is being consumed by a fire that "se había hecho dentro de él con las cosas y la guerra de *otros* […] era intenso y le invadía el cuerpo adueñándose de los rincones que sólo a ella le habían pertenecido" (my emphasis, Mastretta, *Mal de amores* 213*)*. Emilia's remark about "las cosas y la guerra de otros" that have taken up space within Daniel can be interpreted in several ways: The first is that Daniel is driven by ideas and conflicts that are foreign to Emilia as a young woman largely uninterested in the sociopolitical struggles of the time. The second is that these concerns are also foreign to Daniel's situation, that he is being taken over and used to further a cause that is not his and that does not allow him to stop and think but only rage onwards. Notably, it is not his mind that has been occupied by these interests, but his body. The use of the verbs "invadir" and "adueñarse" suggest a hostile takeover, much like when a virus hijacks its host's cells in order to replicate itself and establish dominance. Daniel's new associates have (metaphorically) sickened and reprogrammed him to behave and think as they do.

Instead of engaging in thoughtful discussions such as those that mark the tertulias hosted by Daniel's father, the men that he now spends his time with prefer to drink, curse, spit, and tell

crude jokes. Daniel also takes up drinking, an activity that he once derided. When Emilia encounters men gathered outside a rural cantina, for the first time in her life she is not welcomed with open arms by a group of men but met with hostility as she infringes upon their site of homosocial bonding. Mastretta's classed myopia prevents her from considering or conveying the role that cantinas have played throughout Mexico's history as an important social and public space for marginalized men. Instead, she evokes the anxieties about drinking's negative impact on productivity and civility that concerned many Mexican intellectuals writing throughout the 19th and into the 20th century. As Deborah Toner notes, in the 19th century, the Mexican economic, social, and intellectual elite often "exaggerated the negative aspects of popular drinking culture" and "failed to understand the complexities of popular culture" (27). Mastretta continues in this tradition by associating other vices with drinking, including laziness and lechery. Before Emilia enters the cantina, Daniel introduces her to his companions as his woman while putting his hands around her waist like "dos pinzas apretándose" (*Mal de amores* 242). His possessive body language indicates that he, despite being friendly with these men, feels the need to mark Emilia as his possession. Besides being a clear instance of macho posturing, Daniel's action belies a lack of trust in his *compadres* and a fear of what they might do to or with Emilia, given Mastretta's emphasis on their aggressive virility and tendency to drink until drunk. When Emilia enters the cantina after being told not to do so by several men outside, she finds two men asleep on the sawdust-covered floor, and another lurches toward her, begging the "virgencita" for forgiveness for his drunkenness (243). Mastretta presents the cantina as a space that both reflects and reinforces these men's abjection. This scene is just one of several that can thus be read as belying Mastretta's own discomfort at what she perceives as the incapacity of popular revolutionaries to control themselves, which in turn can be read as belying her mistrust of

popular revolutions in general.

To arrive at these readings, it is important to first consider not only the sociohistoric context about which Mastretta wrote but also the one in which she was writing. *Mal de amores* was published in 1996, just two years after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in Mexico and the resulting *zapatista* indigenous uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.[65] Mastretta has commented on the parallels between the 1910 and 1994 revolutions. In a 1997 interview she remarks that 1994 and 1995 seemed like the years before the 1910 Revolution, with people dreaming about a different country and showing a willingness to take up arms to bring that reality about. She continues by saying that this made her "really afraid," but that she thinks "we're over the danger now" (Mujica 39). Although quoting from the same interview with Mastretta in her analysis of *Mal de amores*, María Odette Canivell sees Mastretta as joining others who "wondered if the Zapatistas were not the 'new revolution,' an opportunity to fulfill the nation's dream" (248). This take reads against Mastretta's own comment rejecting another large-scale armed movement in Mexico. Additionally, both Canivell (251) and Georgia Seminet (663) argue that Mastretta's middle-class, pacifist, egalitarian Sauri family, which advocates for social change via a democratic, electoral process, represents not only an idealized vision of turn-of-the-century liberals but also an ideal Mexican family blueprint for the present. Instead of advocating for avoiding the mistakes of the past, Mastretta seems to be supporting their repetition by opposing the possibility that armed movements can dismantle the structures behind structural violence. She appears to assume that all armed insurrections automatically lead to chaos and destruction without measurable change. Furthermore, Mastretta ignores the importance that taking up arms has had historically for Mexican peasants, who, as Sophie Esch argues, were first able to enter the political arena and national consciousness only

through the rifle (15). Her portrayal of Daniel's compadres as barbarous reinforces stereotypes, denies past peasant insurgents legitimacy, and stokes anxieties about the outcome of the armed movement active at the time of her novel's publication.

It is not just Daniel, after all, whom Mastretta portrays as being susceptible to these men's de-civilizing influences but the broader fabric of Mexican society as well. When Daniel and Emilia leave the northern front in order to travel to Mexico City, they journey via train, one of the revolutionaries' most emblematic forms of transport (Arce 43). Mastretta describes in detail the squalor to which the train cars have been reduced, as their passengers "orinaban en las esquinas o desde las ventanas […,] dormían medio encuerados, maldecían a sus parejas o se les iban encima sin interesarse en lo más mínimo por la opinión de los otros viajeros" (*Mal de amores* 299). The state of the train cars and the comportment of its passengers are particularly striking given that Mexico's train system was one of the most visible signs of Díaz's modernizing efforts (Arce 45). Those efforts have been literally and symbolically derailed, as the trains have either been destroyed or stripped of their elegance and turned into human cattle cars, with the revolutionaries and their *soldadera* partners fulfilling the role of the livestock. By including this scene, Mastretta points to the ways in which war reduces human experience and concerns to the immediate needs and wants of the body. However, Mastretta includes a comment in the next chapter that implies that this more base behavior threatens to endure past wartime and reshape Mexican society. When Emilia insists that they bathe before venturing out in the capital, Daniel replies that no one would look down on them for their disheveled appearance as "el país ya era de los pobres y de los mugrosos, gobernaban el país los soldados campesinos que habían viajado con ellos en el tren" (307). Although the condition of the train cars and its passengers has shocked Emilia, for Daniel's compadres, little has changed materially. Without the civilizing and

moralizing guidance of formally educated liberals, such as the Sauri family, these men will continue to live as they did before the Revolution, their bodies bereft of embodied cultural capital. Their newfound influence will result in the lowering of behavioral expectations for the rest of society, keeping Mexico's modernization off track for the foreseeable future.

Mastretta portrays these men as also likely to keep Mexican women's advancement off track as well. While the bourgeois men with whom Emilia has interacted in Puebla have, rather fantastically, overwhelmingly supported her academic and professional pursuits, Daniel grows increasingly frustrated with her dedication to medicine and resents her being unavailable "cuando la necesitaba como otros una cirugía" (*Mal de amores* 322). In an echo of the Adelita trope examined in chapter 1, Daniel has witnessed the female companions of his compadres wait patiently at home as their men come and go from war or accompany them as soldaderas, only to be abandoned in train cars, where they cry and bemoan the cruelties of war (300). By having these *soldados* wield absolute control over their partners' mobility, Mastretta portrays lower-class machos as maintaining a traditional gendered power imbalance. Their increased social and political presence and power threatens the promise of more egalitarian relationships between men and women as represented by families like the Sauris. Failing to acknowledge the economic, social and cultural resources that enable Emilia to do so, Mastretta has her heroine avoid the fate of the patriotic, self-abnegating Adelitas by refusing to follow Daniel into exile and instead return to Puebla to practice medicine and cohabit with Dr. Antonio Zavalza.

It would seem, then, that unlike Esquivel, Mastretta rejects the middle-class macho as well as the lower-class macho. In contrast with Tita de la Garza, Emilia does not forego being with a man who allows for the possibility of an egalitarian intersubjective relationship in order to maintain her ties to a more sexually exciting macho. However, the ending of the novel cements

the fact that Mastretta, very much like Esquivel, has written a novel that is simultaneously subversive and conservative: Although Daniel does not "win" Emilia outright, neither is he cut out of her life completely. Emilia simply declares that she is a "bígama" and carries on a relationship with Zavalza while continuing to sleep with Daniel when he periodically finds his way back to Puebla. Mastretta does not make Daniel suffer for or reform his self-centered, possessive masculine performance. He gets to come and go as he pleases with the knowledge that Emilia will always be available when he wants her. Although Emilia's children do not bear his name, her winking comment when Daniel inquires about their paternity—"Aquí todos los hijos son del Doctor Zavalza" (Mastretta, *Mal de amores* 374)—does not completely deny him his virility, either. Despite his behavior, Daniel remains attractive and desirable to Emilia. He has left his mark on her corporeally, as her body "guardaba su devoción por el otro hombre de aquella vida" (358), even when she reunites with Zavalza. Emilia does not completely indulge her desire for Daniel, as doing so when younger almost ended in her being consumed by the "mal de amores" that gives the novel its title, nor does she completely deny herself either. Instead, she is allowed a fairy tale ending with an emotionally, professionally, and sexually satisfying life. If Mastretta seeks to give *Arráncame la vida*'s Catalina as happy an outcome as possible within the constraints of her time and social position, for Emilia, she provides an ideal ending not bound by any such restrictions.

In that regard, *Mal de amores,* despite its realistic prose, is even more of a (romantic) fantasy than *Arráncame la vida*. As acknowledged in chapter 1, fantastical genres such as fairy tales have been seen as allowing women to project alternative ways of constructing their lives (Standiland 38). However, by grounding this fantasy within the realm of historical fiction, Mastretta gives Emilia's situation the weight of (faux) tradition and reality. She thus disguises its

implausibility by casting Emilia's balance of domesticity, professional achievement, and sexual satisfaction not as a vision of what could be, but as a recovery of what has already been and what could be again. Through this representation, readers are assured of the tenability of a life in which they also "have it all." Mastretta herself calls her protagonist both "perfect" and a "dream" and yet also insists that Mexican women are not trying to become like her protagonists, but are realizing that they are *already* like them (Mujica 39-40). Mastretta's optimism for Mexican women being able to achieve a life like Emilia's can be traced to one factor: earning capacity. In the same interview, Mastretta remarks that she believes that the closer women are to working and making a living, the closer they are to doing whatever they want to do (40). Mastretta's conflation of women's economic agency with agency in other areas of their lives was hardly unique in the 1990s, as it formed the basis of neoliberal-influenced strands of feminism known collectively as "postfeminism." [66] Although postfeminism has been discussed largely in the context of the United States and the United Kingdom, Mastretta's comment points to the presence of similar ideologies in Mexico.

**Conclusions**

Recently, the impact and manifestation of postfeminism in Latin America have finally begun to be noted and explored. In an article published in November 2019 in *Debate feminista*, "Posfeminismo/ Genealogía, geografía y contornos de un concepto," Isis Giraldo notes that postfeminism "opera desde hace más de una década" in Latin America (3). In the same article, Giraldo points to the ideological inconsistency of postfeminism when she asserts that one of its key tenets, hypersexualization, requires postfeminist subjects to serve as the agents of their own sexual objectification (16). In this chapter, I have noted this same contradiction in the case of Tita de la Garza in Laura Esquivel's debut novel, *Como agua para chocolate*. I have also

underscored the importance of sex and sexuality for not only Tita, but also Catalina Guzmán and Emilia Sauri, the protagonists of Ángeles Mastretta's first two novels, *Árrancame la vida* and *Mal de amores*, respectively. By highlighting these characters' search for physical satisfaction in their romantic relationships, these three bestsellers thus seem to take a progressive stance by advocating for an acceptance of Mexican women as sexual beings. However, by promoting as desirable partners (only) middle- and upper-class male characters that perform machista behaviors, Mastretta and Esquivel simultaneously reinforce an oppressive gender paradigm. As Giraldo argues, "la lucha contra el patriarcado constituye la esencia misma de la lucha feminista" (25). By failing to fully participate in this fight and, in fact, by reinforcing and perpetuating machista standards of behavior, Mastretta's and Esquivel's novels can be labeled "postfeminist" but not "feminist." Thus, by bringing an analysis of these novels' male characters to the forefront, this chapter has helped solidify the argument for reading these works as ideologically conservative. Furthermore, it has also exposed the classed myopia that marks the novels and the critical analysis that they have generated; Mastretta's and Esquivel's perpetuation of the narratives of primitivism and animalism that have long shaped considerations of Mexican men from the popular classes; and the role of cultural, social, and symbolic capital in shaping these narratives. As we will see in chapter 3, it is not until the development of critical studies on men and masculinities in Mexico that the negative link between machismo and men of the lower classes and the positive link between this masculine performance and men of the middle and upper classes begin to be problematized in novelas sobre la Revolución. As we will also see, however, these associations have proven difficult to disconnect.

# Chapter 3

## A Questioning of Honor: The (Self) Harm of Masculine Formation in *Isla de bobos* by Ana García Bergua and *Las paredes hablan* by Carmen Boullosa

Although most studies of the Mexican publishing industry's *boom femenino* center on its initial phase, the last two decades of the 20th century, Mexican women authors' increased presence in the Mexican literary market has continued into the 21st century. Indeed, it is possible to detect a "sub-boom" that emerged among Mexican female writers in the 2000s and 2010s, as the number of women-authored narratives on the 1910 Mexican Revolution surged in the five years before and after the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the conflict.[67] In keeping with boom femenino authors' tendency to publish with larger, transnational presses, as discussed in chapter 2, many of these novels were released by the Spanish-language publishing behemoths Alfaguara and Planeta, typically under their more commercial imprints. Laura Martínez-Belli's *Por si no te vuelvo a ver* (2007), Isabel Custodio's *La Tiznada* (2008), Paloma de Vivanco's *El amante de mi abuela* (2009), and Beatriz Gutiérrez Müller's *Viejo siglo nuevo* (2012) were all published by Planeta; and Mónica Lavín's *Las rebeldes* (2011), Magdalena González Gámez's *La bandida* (2011), and Sofia Segovia's *El murmullo de las abejas* (2014) were published under various Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial imprints, including Debolsillo, Grijalbo, Lumen, and Vintage Español.

As Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado notes, however, some Mexican women authors have had a more tenuous, back-and-forth relationship with commercial presses. These writers looked elsewhere to publish their *novelas sobre la Revolución*. Carmen Boullosa, for one, has published on and off with Alfaguara, as well as with more prestige-based publishers and independent imprints, such as the Fondo de Cultura Económica, Sexto Piso, and Spain-based Siruela

(Sánchez Prado, *Strategic Occidentalism* 151-56), with which she released the time-hopping *Las paredes hablan* in 2010. Other female writers, such as Ana García Bergua, have consistently published only with more independent editorial houses, such as Era, or prestige imprints, such as Planeta's Seix Barral (165). It was with the latter that García Bergua published *Isla de bobos* (2007), which spans the end of the Porfiriato through the revolutionary conflicts of the 1910s.

It is not only the publisher trends for Mexican women authors from the 1980s and 90s that have carried over into the 21st century, however, as the themes established by earlier female writers of novelas sobre la Revolución, including those examined in the previous chapters of this dissertation (Elena Garro, Elena Poniatowska, Ángeles Mastretta, and Laura Esquivel) can be detected in these newer narratives as well. The focus on recovering women's wartime and combat experiences, for one, continues to be a central goal of Mexican women writing historical fiction on the Mexican Revolution. Oswaldo Estrada includes in this group Poniatowska's *Las soldaderas* (1999), a collection of essays and photographs in which Poniatowska "rescues" anonymous and forgotten women as well as those "previously mythified" (158), and Estela Leñero's *Soles en la sombra: Mujeres en la Revolución* (2011), a play that highlights understudied historical female revolutionaries such as Juana Belén Gutiérrez and María Talavera (165).[68] In a similar vein, Lavín's *Las rebeldes* centers on Leonor Villegas, the founder of the Cruz Blanca Constitucionalista and a leader in the effort to professionalize nursing in Mexico (173). Although there has, then, been a turn toward the fictionalized recovery of historic *revolucionarias*, other women writers have continued to create fictional, representative figures like those featured in Mastretta's and Esquivel's novels. It is possible to find strong parallels with Mastretta's *Mal de amores* in Custodio's *La Tiznada*, as, like the former, the latter also features as a well-to-do female protagonist—the titular la Tiznada—who finds herself fulfilling

the role of the surgeon for the men of *la bola* and that of the "feminist" champion for other *soldaderas*, whom she encourages to find and own their sexuality.

Sexual emancipation as shorthand for female empowerment, then, is another trend that has continued in recent women-authored historical fiction on the Revolution, as has the idealization of the macho revolutionary fighter. For some authors, there is an unquestionably personal element behind this fetishization: Estrada notes that *Itinerario de una pasión* (1999) was written by one of Pancho Villa's granddaughters, Rosa Helia Villa de Mebius, and reconstructs a "sentimental history of Villa" as a "brave and courageous male hero surrounded by numerous women who try to make his life easier" (147). Estrada argues that the 2013 film adaptation of the novel proves that in a globalized, neoliberal era sex still sells—and well. In this case, the product for sale was the story of a "hypersexual revolutionary hero," and its success further cemented Latin American exoticism as a cultural commodity (149).[69] De Vivanco's more recent *El amante de mi abuela* (2009) provides a similarly unproblematized, but highly problematic, portrayal of a macho revolutionary fighter, in this case from a well-to-do family. The short novel follows Clementina, the granddaughter of a woman who lived through the Revolution, as she discovers that she can transport herself to the time and place that a photograph was taken. She meets and falls in love with her grandmother's former lover, Ramiro Ventura, a physically powerful, mustachioed *hacendado* turned *revolucionario*. Ventura is a poorly developed character that serves as little more than a sexual magnet for Clementina, drawing her time and again into the past. With Clementina and Ramiro's relationship, de Vivanco has constructed an exoticized vision of Mexico's Revolutionary past and its macho fighters, participating in what Elodie Rousselot calls a spectacularization of the past Other.[70] Rousselot argues that this phenomenon is both a sign of and contributor to the commodification of history

in contemporary culture (8). The inclusion of a pull quote by Mastretta on the front cover of de Vivanco's novel—as well as a review by the bestselling author on the back cover—and the novel's publication by Planeta all point to the predominance of commercial interests in its marketing, at the very least, and perhaps its composition as well.[71]

Although the unproblematized macho fighter continues to surface in recent women-authored historical fiction on the Revolution, a third, new trend can be detected in these narratives, one that has not carried over from the 1980s and 90s into the 2000s and 2010s and one that I will examine in the works of Boullosa and García Bergua.[72] While, as I show in the previous chapters of this dissertation, it is possible—and, I argue, necessary—to analyze male characters and masculinity in novels sobre la Revolución whose protagonists are women, some female authors have begun to center men and masculinity, thus no longer necessitating a focus on secondary characters or "extraordinary" women to study these issues of gender. Ana Rosa Domenella notes that while, in the past 20 years of women-authored Mexican fiction "[p]redomina la perspectiva femenina o de mujer," it is also possible to find "narradores neutros y protagonistas masculinos" (65). Domenella singles out Boullosa and García Bergua as two female authors in particular who feature these elements in their novels. In their recent historical fiction novels that take place predominantly or partly during the Revolutionary era, Boullosa and García Bergua not only center male voices and characters but also work to reveal the ways in which their characters' masculinities are created and how they relate to the masculine performances of those who came before them and those who will come after them. However, while García Bergua considers the ways in which men can also be the victims of their gendered habitus, Boullosa condemns the persistence of honor-driven masculinity but largely does not develop her characters away from being stereotypical lower-class machistas who inflict (direct)

violence only upon women and not on themselves. Thus, unlike García Bergua, Boullosa engages only minimally with the honor-based violence that affects men and women of the higher social classes.

The focus on men and masculinity in novels written during and dealing with times of national (re)formation is clearly not new to Mexican letters and, indeed, was the impetus for a turn toward the feminine and female perspectives in the first women-authored novelas sobre la Revolución. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, the male authors of the canonical novelas de la Revolución were largely concerned with national (re)formation and the (re)definition of "Mexican"—read, "masculine,"—conduct. Featuring men in frontline combat, these novels led to "machista" performances increasingly taking center stage as the new ideal conduct for (male) citizens—at least in theory—, a portrayal that spread to and was solidified by the national cinema of the so-called Golden Age of Mexican film and its faux *charro* stars, such as Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante. These authors and filmmakers followed in the footsteps of their creative forebears: "Ideal" masculine behavior has long been tied to notions of national identity and citizenship in Mexican literature.

In contrast to canonical works of national (re)formation such as *El periquillo sarniento* (1816) by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi and *El Zarco* (1901) by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, however, García Bergua's and Boullosa's narratives not only feature men and masculinity but were written when men had begun to be studied as men—that is, *explicitly* understood to have a socially constructed gender, the same as women. The emergence of critical studies on men and masculinities as a subset of women and gender studies in Mexico follows the timeline of the field's emergence in English-speaking academia: As noted in the *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies*, "feminist and gay researchers started to theorize

the role of men and masculinity in society" in the 1970s, and critical studies on men and masculinities began to more formally take shape in the 1980s as "primarily White, pro-feminist men" in Anglo-American academia, principally social scientists and sociologists, turned their attention to the emerging field (Gottzén et al. 1). Critical studies on men and masculinities began to spread beyond the social sciences and English-based researchers into the humanities and other parts of the world in the 1990s. Matthew C. Gutmann remarks that the study of "men-as-men" in Latin America developed in the 1980s and 90s in the wake of feminist research ("Discarding Manly Dichotomies" 3), and Núñez Noriega notes that various Mexican scholars—including Ana Amuchástegui, Daniel Cazés, Laura Collin Harguindeguy, and María Lucero Jiménez—have signaled the lead role that feminists in Mexico took in organizing the first critical gender studies workshops focusing on men and in founding academic institutions dedicated to critical studies on men and masculinities in Mexico (42). Inspired by these efforts, this dissertation, too, was born in large part out of feminist thinking and research. Núñez Noriega also points to the "movimiento homosexual" as another fundamental force behind the emergence of critical studies on men and masculinities in Mexico in the 1990s (46). As Nelson Minello Martini notes, critical studies on men and masculinities in Mexico are continuing to pick up steam, with the production of a "considerable volumen de textos dedicados a estudiar a los varones" at the end of the first decade of this century (17). However, the field is also still very much in its early stages: The first Congreso Nacional de la Academia Mexicana de Estudios de Género de los Hombres took place fewer than two decades ago—in Guadalajara in 2006.

As I will show in this chapter, elements of a critical studies on men and masculinities standpoint can be detected in the ways that Boullosa and García Bergua interrogate two enduring markers and shapers of masculinity in Mexico: *honor* and *honra*. Although, as signaled above,

the understanding of what constitutes "ideal" masculine behavior has always been in flux across time and within and between social groups in Mexico, these notions have continually emerged as central to both the lived and represented experiences of men—and, consequently, women—in what today constitutes Mexico. It must be noted that these concepts, too, have changed diachronically and have always varied synchronically across categories of race and class. As noted in chapter 1, honor and honra were an integral part of the patriarchal gender system introduced by the Spanish upon their conquest of Mesoamerica.[73] The two concepts are distinct yet related: Honra was traditionally used to refer to one's personal virtue, which is how I will refer to it, and it often contributed to one's honor—one's social status and rank. In colonial Mexico, women's virtue and honor were often dependent upon the same area of their lives—their sexual conduct (Seed 61-62). Men's virtue could be proven by their physical courage, honesty, wealth, occupational skill and generosity, all of which could be used to boost their honor (Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera 4). Additionally, men's honor was tied not only to their own virtue, but also to the honor and virtue of the women over whom they had control—sisters, wives, mothers, daughters (Seed 61-63). Clearly, then, honor and virtue were used to promote and sustain a gender hierarchy: Women protected their virtue not only for their own standing but also, and perhaps centrally, to defend their men's honor. They also frequently depended upon men for retribution if their honor was besmirched. Men sought to control women's behavior not so much out of a concern for said women but out of a preoccupation with their standing with other men in the community. This is a clear example of one of the many homosocial structures that, as noted in the introduction and chapter 1, are argued to have been key to national and masculine formation in Mexico.

A gendered hierarchy was not the only one undergirded by honor and virtue, however, as

these concepts were weaponized against lower-class men, who were also frequently darker-skinned than their upper-class counterparts. However, although the wealthy attempted to lay sole claim to the possession of honor and virtue, research has shown that the lower classes also valued these concepts. Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera note that because many *campesinos* and members of the working classes believed "life without honor was unlivable," "men and women of humble circumstances" stood willing to defend their honor not only through physical means, such as fists or knives, but also with lawsuits and petitions (11). As chances for upward mobility increased with Mexico's entry into modernity, the elite seized upon the lower classes' use of physical fights to settle disputes, which they considered unchecked emotional outbursts, to deny plebeians the ability to claim honor, in yet another attempt to frame these (racialized) men as more fundamentally tied to their bodies. Dueling thus grew in popularity among the upper classes at the end of the 19th century: Although still a violent way to resolve disputes of honor, duels were framed as a "controlled" violence for men capable of "controlling" their emotions.[74] Although there is evidence that honor-based disputes among the lower classes also followed sets of rules,[75] because these rules were uncodified, these disputes were not referred to as duels, thus implying that the lower orders lacked honor (Piccato 337). As indicated in chapter 1, instances from Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* point to these unwritten—and thus "illegible," at least for the upper classes,—rules: Jesusa's father chastises his son, Efrén, for beating his wife without cause (28), while he, in turn, is scolded by his commanding officer for not corporeally disciplining his lover for spreading false rumors about Jesusa's sexual conduct (68-69). In the latter case, it is not just Jesusa's father who is expected to use physical force to settle a dispute of honor, but Jesusa as well, as the other soldaderas force her to fight her father's lover so that Jesusa can defend her sexual reputation. Poniatowska thus clearly

demonstrates that while direct violence was an acceptable, and expected, tool to be employed in the defense of honor among the lower classes, seemingly arbitrary violence was not encouraged and, in fact, could and did lead to punishment. Whatever the logic behind its use, however, honor-driven violence is still portrayed in Poniatowska's *novela testimonial* as disproportionately affecting women, as they not only frequently found themselves on the receiving end of blows from men, but were also expected to take an active role in their own oppression by perpetuating the link between their honor, virtue, and sexual behavior.

Despite the violence of the concepts of honor and virtue—which have been used throughout their history to reinforce hierarchies of gender, class, and race—, a debate has recently emerged in social science and cultural studies publications on Mexican men about whether or not to celebrate honor as a "positive" aspect of machismo. This seems to be part of the larger effort, as mentioned in chapter 2, to dismantle stereotypes used to discriminate against lower-class, racialized men in Mexico. Some researchers have questioned this "rescuing" of honor. Jennie B. Gamlin and Sarah J. Hawkes pose the question of the emotional and psychological harm that honor inflicts not upon women but upon men who feel that they "dishonor" their families by failing to provide or otherwise live up to predominant masculine ideals (59). In their 2019 ethnographic study of honor and masculinity among drug cartel members in Sinaloa, Marco Alejandro Núñez-González and Núñez Noriega note that while the cartel members who are seen as giving "honorable" masculine performances do not physically threaten or attack women in order to control these women's sexuality and thus maintain their honor, they do employ "estrategias de cortejos caballerosos para dominar a la mujer" (12). The authors suggest that, in terms of maintaining a gendered hierarchy in which men exercise more power than women, the end result is the same, whether men employ direct or, in this case,

indirect violence.

Other researchers have taken a much less consistent stance toward honor and machismo but ultimately seem to support the perpetuation of honor as a masculine ideal, ignoring its role in the perpetuation of patriarchal gender relations, a traditionally—and, perhaps, inherently—oppressive structure. In their attempt to differentiate between "negative" and "positive" machista performances among Latin American men, José B. Torres, Scott H. Solberg, and Aaron H. Carlstrom qualify as the "positive" aspects of machismo "honor, being a good provider and protector, moral courage, and responsibility" (175). While they, like Núñez-González and Núñez Noriega, recognize the existence of so-called "benevolent sexism"—identified by Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske as a "chivalrous ideology that offers protection and affection to women who embrace conventional roles" (qtd. in Torres et al. 165)—they do not disavow men who center their constructions of masculinity around maintaining and upholding honor.

The reluctance of some researchers and their research subjects to abandon a culture of honor among men begs the question of why this particular aspect of masculinity has endured for so long in Mexico and why it continues to do so. Although Pierre Bourdieu has been frequently criticized for what many consider the "pessimistic determinism" of his theories of social fields and habitus (Jagger 211),[76] it is the very intractability of these structured contexts and the embodied structuring structures that they produce that appears to be evident in the endurance of honor/honra in the formation of masculinity in Mexico. The concepts of social fields and habitus, as indicated in chapter 1, lie at the heart of Bourdieu's theory of subject formation, and although originally formulated around the idea of class, social fields can, and have, been extended to apply to the formation of a subject's gender(ed) identity (McLeod 18). According to Bourdieu, the "structures constitutive of a particular type of environment" (*Theory of Practice* 72), which

constitute a social field, lead to the formation of a subject's habitus, or the "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (emphasis in original, 72). Social fields and habitus, then, exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship: Our habitus leads us to perpetuate the conditions that led to the formation of our habitus, thus setting the stage for their continuation among subsequent generations. This also means, of course, that the habitus of previous generations have contributed to the habitus of those generations that have followed. This does not mean, however, that these structures persist completely unchanged throughout time: As Bourdieu indicates, material conditions of existence, which are sociohistorically specific, also play a role in the formation of social fields and habitus, imposing "different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable" and causing one generation to experience "as natural or reasonable practices […] which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous" (78). Thus, while conventions and rules as they were understood and practiced hundreds of years ago continue to influence our practices today, they have been warped and changed into new forms by ever-changing conditions of existence.

The constitution of social fields thus seems to bear certain similarities to the way in which a palimpsest is created. Historically, a palimpsest was a parchment or other material written upon (at least) twice, with the first layer of writing having been erased or rubbed out so that the next layer could be put down (Dillon 12). Physical palimpsests thus contain layers that are at once distinct and merged, independent and interdependent. Because of this "simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation," palimpsests have been used conceptually as a model for a "rigorous and flexible form" (3). As Karen Dillon notes, the present of the palimpsest is "only constituted in and by the presence of texts from the past," but the palimpsest also remains "open to further inscription by texts of the future" (37). In the case of Mexico, Sandra Messinger

Cypess has used the concept of the palimpsest to explain the conversion of the historical figure of la Malinche into a literary sign "whose layers of meaning have accrued through the years" as each successive generation has added "diverse interpretations of her identity, role, and significance" (5), transforming her from Great Mother to Mexican Eve to Chicana icon. Social fields, like palimpsestuous texts and literary figures, both bear the traces of and are constituted by the social fields of the past, yet they cannot be reduced to any one of these past social fields: They are the product of many years of accumulation and evolution, of generation and regeneration. Given this structure, to understand the present form of the palimpsest it is necessary to bring forward the underlying layers that form its base. Historically, this was achieved through destructive processes, akin to the creative destruction that birthed the palimpsest in the first place: To read the lower layers, chemical reagents and ultra-violet lights were used to encourage the natural process of oxidization that occurs as the ink remaining from the palimpsest's erased layers reacts with oxygen in the air (Dillon 12). For Cypess, the presuppositions embedded within a sign can be uncovered by returning to the beginning and analyzing the texts and contexts that have added up to constitute its current permutation (8). Alternatively, I argue, this process can also be achieved through the use of historical fiction, which also allows us to (attempt to) delineate the earlier sociohistorical conditions and social fields that have led to the social fields that guide habitus formation today.

In the case of the novels examined in this chapter—Ana García Bergua's *Isla de bobos* and Carmen Boullosa's *Las paredes hablan*—the authors benefit both from a temporal distance and a gendered distance from the male characters whose gender formations and identities they examine. Indeed, García Bergua has recognized as an element of her attraction toward writing masculine narrators and focusing on male characters the natural distance that she finds between

her experience and theirs, although she also sees the potential pitfalls in writing outside what she personally knows, saying "puede haber trampa en el hecho de elegir una voz masculina para alejarte de ella y trabajar con un objeto, algo con lo que te involucras menos. Quizás al revés es una dificultad" (qtd. in Hind, *Entrevistas* 67). This distance is thus, admittedly, both a potential tool and a hindrance. On the one hand, it provides for a way to overcome one of the principal complaints concerning Bourdieu's conception of habitus: Social norms and regulations are incorporated at the preconscious, pre-reflective level, thus leading to the seeming impossibility of knowing—and changing—one's own habitus (Jagger 225). Studying the formation of someone else's habitus removes this obstacle. However, it also opens the door to a key debate that has arisen with the rise of postmodernism and postcolonialism regarding the accuracy and morality of those who study and speak about experiences that are not their own, in particular those of marginalized and subjugated communities, such as the debate surrounding *testimonios*.

The novels in this chapter ultimately reflect both of these possible outcomes: On the one hand, a more intimate understanding of past "layers" in the palimpsestuous social fields that inform current gendered habitus formation and, on the other, a superficial representation that prioritizes tracking the continuity of overtly oppressive behaviors among members of a lower social class.[77] Both García Bergua's and Boullosa's novels question the idea of preserving honor as a "positive," supposedly nonviolent aspect of masculine gender performances, but the former provides a broader understanding of honor-based violence than the latter. By taking a micro, synchronic approach to studying honor and gender, Bergua ultimately exposes the violence that notions of honor inflicted upon and encouraged among Mexican women *and* men across race and class at the turn of the 20th century. Boullosa—whose novel takes a macro, diachronic approach to the same issues—principally decries only the more overt violence that women have suffered at

the hands of lower-class men over issues of honor. Thus, like Ángeles Mastretta and Laura Esquivel—and writers and other creators before them—, Boullosa ultimately reinforces classist notions of machismo and also largely ignores the harm that this masculine performance inflicts upon men.

***Isla de bobos***

Ana García Bergua published *Isla de bobos* in 2007 with Planeta's Seix Barral imprint, although her interest in the novel's topic first took root in the 1990s when she was an editorial assistant at Clío. It was during her archival research for Clío that she first became familiar with the tragedy that took place on Clipperton Island (García Bergua, "Reconstruir" 35-36): Seeking to regain sovereignty of the tiny atoll in the Pacific Ocean from France, Porfirio Díaz sent soldiers to occupy Clipperton at the turn of the 20th century, some of whom brought their wives and children along with them. When the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910, the contingent on Clipperton was quickly forgotten, and the federal government failed to continue sending necessary supplies, leading many soldiers to die from scurvy. Despite the dire situation, the Mexican captain in charge refused to leave the island when offered the chance to do so by the captain of an American steamboat in 1914. When the remaining Mexican men, including the captain, later died by drowning while setting out on a desperate quest to reach Acapulco, the women and children whom they left behind were at the mercy of a sadistic lighthouse keeper, whom they eventually murdered before being rescued by a passing ship.

While García Bergua's novel hews closely to historical fact, she chose to change the names of the real people involved in the tragedy, as well as that of the island, in order to, as she says, "hacerlos míos" ("Reconstruir" 38). Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado notes that this decision—as well as García Bergua's polyphonic narrative style—resists the "imperatives imposed by the idea

of the Mexican woman writer developed in the early 1990s" (*Strategic Occidentalism* 164). Sánchez Prado argues that García Bergua frees herself from the burden of formal innovation and excessive documentation, relying instead upon the "ability of fictionalization to convey a historical core" (164). Her use of polyphony—the novel switches among various narrative voices throughout, although the two principal narrators are Captain Raúl Soulier, based on the real-life Captain Ramón Arnaud, and his wife, Luisa Roca/Soulier, based on Alicia Arnaud—also allows García Bergua to escape the trap of autobiographical and identitarian devices and readings that Sánchez Prado says plagued the female writers of the boom femenino (165). As previously noted, García Bergua herself has acknowledged her attraction toward writing masculine narrative voices as a means of, seemingly paradoxically, using biographical (and, in this case, temporal) distance to gain more insight into the lives and motivations of her male characters.

In the case of *Isla de bobos* in particular, García Bergua has stated that she was drawn to the historical figure of Ramón Arnaud. She notes that other fictional works that focused on the tragedy neglected to thoroughly explore Arnaud's motivations and that "se daba por sentada la lógica del capitán Arnaud al negarse a ser rescatado por un barco extranjero" ("Reconstruir" 37).[78] She wondered why such an educated man, ostensibly sent to Clipperton as a punishment for prior disobedience during his military service, would make such a decision, why he would arrive at the conclusion that "México […] ese México representado por el Ejército Federal, lo rescataría, le agradecería el gesto heroico y lo recompensaría quizá con otro ascenso" (37). Despite García Bergua's explicit interest in understanding the actions of Arnaud, which drove her creation of the character of Raúl Soulier, and the fact that almost half of the novel is narrated from his fictional counterpart's perspective, there has been very little analysis focusing on Raúl to date. While Sánchez Prado, as noted above, has interpreted García Bergua's approach to

historical fiction in this novel as a desire to avoid a gendered reading, he acknowledges that such an analysis is still possible. However, he mentions only García Bergua's rehabilitation of the *women* who suffered at the hands of the lighthouse keeper when doing so (*Strategic Occidentalism* 164). In the scant other literary criticism on the novel—chiefly limited to a collection of essays published by the French Presses Universitaires de Renes—García Bergua's treatment of the female survivors is again favored, especially in Davy Desmas's contribution, "Indagando los márgenes de la historia: La imaginación femenina en *Isla de bobos* de Ana García Bergua." While Fabrice Parisot's chapter in the same volume does put a male character at the heart of his analysis, it is not Raúl but rather Saturnino A., the stand-in for the real-life lighthouse keeper, Victoriano Álvarez. Parisot thus, like Sánchez Prado, ultimately centers in his analysis García Bergua's oblique references to the abuse and subsequent trauma of the surviving women, despite García Bergua's own denunciation of the sensationalistic *nota roja* journalism tactics employed in the Mexican press at the time of the Clipperton tragedy (Thornton, "What Happens in Clipperton…" 62).[79] This rejection can be seen in how García Bergua has chosen to structure her narrative: The portions of the novel narrated by Raúl begin with his childhood and end with his ill-fated rescue mission. The portions narrated by Luisa begin only *after* the surviving women and children have been rescued, thus sidestepping detailed descriptions of the abuse inflicted by Saturnino and, consequently, rejecting further exploitation of the suffering of these women's real-life counterparts.

It is clear, then, that a fuller understanding of García Bergua's treatment of the character of Raúl is a necessary addition to the critical body of work on this novel—to understand not only Raúl's gendered habitus formation and masculine performance but also the role of honor and virtue in the overall gender dynamics of the novel. Key to García Bergua's portrayal of the first

two elements is her decision to frame the portions of the novel either told from Raúl's perspective or about him as a bildungsroman or, more accurately, as an anti-bildungsroman. The term anti-bildungsroman, much like the term from which it derives, has inspired a variety of definitions, each with its own set of generic parameters. The one that seems to best fit García Bergua's novel characterizes the anti-bildungsroman as depicting a broken maturation process and "an *ethical critique of the society* into which the protagonist seeks entrance" (my emphasis, Hoagland 220). Consequently, although Raúl shows what can be considered moral and personal growth over the course of the novel, his adult formation is rigid, and he is unable to change course despite the very dangerous circumstances in which he and those for whom he is responsible find themselves on Clipperton. García Bergua ensures that this rigidity ultimately reflects poorly not so much on Raúl as it does on the ideologies, institutions, and rules of the social field(s) in which he is formed.

Readers already know how Raúl's insistence upon staying on Clipperton to defend "la patria"—and to be rewarded for what he considers to be his honorable conduct—will turn out. Those familiar with contemporary Mexican history can detect certain parallels between the Mexican state's treatment of its soldiers as disposable at the turn of the 19$^{th}$ century with its failure to protect its citizens more broadly at the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century. Indeed, García Bergua has written about the impact that the period in which she was writing had on her development of the novel: The Mexico of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was crumbling, the war in Iraq raging, and "las ideas sobre el patriotismo y el heroísmo se pusieron en duda frente a los intereses que las impulsan y los muertos que de ellas resultan" ("El heroísmo" 77). And yet, while García Bergua writes that she believed that her recreation of what happened on Clipperton must be fictionalized so that she could use questions brought about by the present to explore

decisions of the past (78), the ties between honor and masculinity and masculinity and citizenship that I have traced in this dissertation, as well as the idea of a palimpsestuous social field that I have introduced in this chapter, steer us away from a unidirectional temporal understanding of the present being used to illuminate the past. The character of Raúl is not necessarily imbued and framed with anachronistic viewpoints: The similarities that can be teased out between his thinking and actions at the turn of the 20th century and those of Mexicans at the turn of the 21st century ultimately indicate the former's influence on and shaping of the latter.

García Bergua's novel helps illuminate the fact that honor, especially as it relates to patriotism and masculine self-sacrifice, is clearly violent against men. The preoccupation with honor that leads to the end of Raúl's life is present from its beginning and, thus, from the beginning of the novel. However, as a young man Raúl is far less concerned, if at all, with improving his honor by developing his virtue, as he anticipates an easy rise through the ranks with relatively little danger: "Después de todo, no era mala idea ser soldado, marchar por las plazas, morir en un lance heroico o en un duelo defendiendo el honor. Sobre todo ahora que no había tantos lances, ni en realidad tantos duelos porque los habían prohibido" (García Bergua, *Isla* 22). Raúl's understanding of military service as full of uniforms, balls, and fawning women is clearly a fantasy and alludes to a consumption of romanticized literary portrayals of war and soldierly gallantry. Highlighting the role that class plays in gendered habitus formation, García Bergua shows Raúl as not having been exposed to, and thus as being unaware of, the corporeal sacrifice demanded of the men who fill the lower ranks of the federal army. In keeping with the parameters of a(n) (anti)bildungsroman, however, Raúl undergoes a transformation over the course of the novel, a journey guided by the disposition that prompts him to join the army in the first place—a drive to bring honor to his family and himself. It is this enduring disposition that,

as the structuring structures of habitus are programmed to do, displays a seemingly paradoxical mix of rigidity and flexibility, leading Raúl to adopt new means of achieving, and thus perpetuating, this marker of manhood given the new material circumstances in which he finds himself.

In the sections on his early army experience, García Bergua focuses on how Raúl's gendered habitus very slowly adjusts to the new field that he occupies as a soldier. Although his family suffers a loss of fortune when he is young, Raúl is ultimately still raised in a bourgeois family with bourgeois values, and, thus, he does not have a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* 66) when he enters the army and begins living among men of a lower class, many of whom are also implied to be of a different ethnic and racial background.[80] Although both he and these men are disposed to want to accrue honor, Raúl struggles to understand why, when his fellow soldiers "escuchan a sus superiores hablar de la patria [,] giran los ojos como si miraran visiones" (García Bergua, *Isla* 37). For Raúl, honor comes not from what one does, not from one's virtue, but from how one appears physically and how one is thus treated by others: "Al honor corresponden el trato respetuoso y comedido, los bellos uniformes […]" (37). As time marches on, Raúl begins to profess beliefs similar to those of his comrades in arms, but García Bergua sets readers up to read between the lines and spot the discrepancies between her protagonist's actions and words and his convictions. At the beginning of one chapter, for example, Raúl claims that he has conquered his weaknesses and has been reborn as a "[s]oldado raso de nuevo, pero iluminado" after having been punished for desertion (79). However, a few pages later, in a metatextual response to an army report that notes his tendency to accrue debts, Raúl confesses that:

> subsistían en mí algunas debilidades […]. Muchas veces surgía en mí el deseo de algo

> […] y no disponía de dinero en ese momento […]. Además, en el ejército hay cosas difíciles de conseguir […]. Yo traía el comercio *en la sangre* […]. Eso del comercio me servía para agradar, para hacerme de compañeros, de amigos. (my emphasis, 81-82)

Readers are thus made aware that, despite his protestations to the contrary, Raúl continues to believe that he will ultimately acquire symbolic and social capital through the careful expenditure of traditional capital. García Bergua uses humor and structure to expose Raúl as an unreliable narrator—although perhaps he is not knowingly misleading readers, as his formation in a bourgeois field has blinded him to the fundamentally arbitrary link between insignia, material goods, and honor. Having entered a different field relatively late in life, Raúl struggles to not see the behavior of those who were born into it as absurd, while he views his own comportment as biologically based and perpetuated, passed down to him much like the light skin of his European forebears.

Although Raúl's attraction to commerce is not natural in a biological sense, it has, like other elements of social fields that feed into habitus, not only become naturalized among the men of the class in which he was raised but also embodied by those men, Raúl included. A key component of Bourdieu's theories of habitus is that habitus goes beyond a mental schemata and also encompasses a bodily way of being in the world. As Julie McLeod explains, habitus includes the way that one occupies and moves through space and is expressed through hexis, or "durable ways of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of *feeling* and thinking" (my emphasis, 14). Bourdieu's notion of habitus thus also has an affective element, and it is an affective attachment to being recognized as a man of honor that, in part, leads Raúl to choose to stay on Clipperton despite being offered passage back to the mainland after he and his contingent are abandoned by the federal government. By this key moment in the novel, after continued

indoctrination by his superiors and repeated punishment for various infractions, Raúl has come to realize that bribery and uniforms will only get him so far, that he can only hope to advance as he wishes, to achieve the honor that gives him sense and purpose as a man, by demonstrating his commitment to the defense of Mexico's sovereignty. His attraction to honor, then, remains, but the material conditions of his existence have forced him to adopt a different way of going about obtaining it. Still, a logical assessment of the dire straits in which Raúl and the others find themselves would lead one to expect him to order their return. It is in this discrepancy, then, that we can detect the deeper, affective structures that keep Raúl from leaving.

Affect theory allows us to understand Raúl's hope of being recognized as honorable as cruelly optimistic. The idea of "cruel optimism" was developed by Lauren Berlant to describe situations in which "something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1). For Berlant, the attachment that links one to this desired thing is based on an affective structure that "involves a *sustaining* inclination to return to the scene of *fantasy* that enables one to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in the right way" (my emphasis, 2). Berlant is writing specifically about the ways in which late-stage capitalism has frayed fantasies of upward mobility, job security, equality, and durable intimacy (3). There are, however, parallels between the fantasies that Berlant describes and those to which Raúl clings, namely the expectation that his military service will earn him the honor (symbolic capital) that he not only expects of himself, as a man, but that (he perceives) his family also demands of him. In keeping with Berlant's notion that the present is first perceived affectively, the distance of time—and gender—allows García Bergua to see the cracks in this fantasy that Raúl's real-life counterpart was unable and unwilling to see: She again exposes Raúl as an (unintentionally) unreliable narrator when, in one paragraph, he both acknowledges that his ascension to the rank

of captain was part of a broad measure made necessary by the outbreak of war on the Mexican mainland (García Bergua, *Isla* 189) and also sees his promotion—and the accompanying uniform that "sentaba bien a mi hombría" (190)—as proof that the sacrifices that he had made for la patria had finally been rewarded: "[E]n el espejo me contemplé y fue ante él que me dije: por fin, Raúl, por fin el ejército reconoce tus sacrificios, después de tantos golpes obtienes recompensa" (190). This seemingly effortless misrecognition of the circumstances behind his ascension is evidence of a cruelly optimistic attachment at work: Raúl believes in the fantasy that commitment to the army and Mexico will bring him the recognition that he desires, if only he holds on a bit longer, if only he truly believes in the importance of his mission on the desolate speck of an island that he has been tasked with guarding and defending.

The increasing intensity of Raúl's affective attachment to the fantasy of achieving honor through military service—and, more specifically, through "defending" the Mexican sovereignty of Clipperton—allows readers to see him as a victim. He is, ultimately, not only a victim of, as indicated previously, the patriotic discourse pushed by an army that demands and depends upon his bodily and emotional sacrifice while giving him little in return, but also of the (bourgeois) expectation that his honor will prove his worth as a man and provide a path toward upward mobility for himself and his family. Raúl makes repeated references to the traditional and symbolic capital that he feels obligated to provide for his family, "la familia Soulier, venida a menos" (García Bergua, *Isla* 22). It is a pressure that, despite his reservations about entering the army once he arrives at the barracks, stops him from leaving "corriendo y ser el hazmerreír de la ciudad" (30). When he returns to his hometown later, as a cadet, he notes that he is finally a respectable person but that the women in his life—his mother, lover, and sisters—still expect more: "un ascenso imparable, una carrera brillantísima […] una subida […] sin debilidad

ninguna, a la gloria militar" (107). If, then, as examined in the introduction to this chapter, women's honor and virtue affected the honor of the men in their lives, the same can be said of men's honor affecting that of the women under their care. In a patriarchal society where male homosocial relationships determine social status and advancement for both genders, women can achieve the latter by, on the one hand, safeguarding their virtue and thus sustaining the honor of the men in their lives and, on the other hand, by encouraging these men to achieve greater honor among their peers. As masculinity studies have begun to show, and as García Bergua indicates through her development of Raúl, men, too, suffer under the weight of a patriarchal gender structure.

This suffering, then, is limited not just to men in marginalized positions but extends to all men in honor-based patriarchal societies: As a man raised by a bourgeois family that clings to bourgeois aspirations despite its change in fortune, Raúl cannot bring himself to leave the army, despite his recognition of the emotional toll that his service is taking on him, as seen in the inner monologue in which he laments: "Y yo no puedo con esa carga" (García Bergua, *Isla* 107). In an especially telling scene later in the novel, it is not only Raúl's mental health that has begun to suffer due to his service on Clipperton, but his physical health as well: While on leave with his family in his hometown, he endures the painful passage of a kidney stone that appears, to him at least, to be in the shape of Clipperton. His body's expulsion of the stone can be read, symbolically, as an effort to free him from the affective ties that have kept him there, hoping to prove himself and bring honor to his family. And yet, Raúl, instead of accepting this abject object as a sign that he needs to separate himself from Clipperton and the expectations that it represents, continues to identify with the expelled stone, remarking that "Ahora se me forma la isla adentro […] y me cuesta mucho sacarla" (184).[81] His body, through much effort, has

managed to expel only this tiny object, make only this small break with Clipperton—the bulk of these ties lies much deeper, shaping the form of his insides, forming an integral part of his sense of self. Raúl's disposition toward striving for honor through state recognition of his loyal patriotism is thus now so deeply and thoroughly embodied, so strongly attached to his sense of purpose that he cannot accept its loss, as doing so will come at the expense of the dissolution of his whole way of being.

Raúl can certainly be seen as a victim of his gendered and classed habitus, however those same habitus result in his reproducing structures of oppression. In this sense, we cannot, as Anadeli Bencomo does, simply classify him as a "victima de un patriotismo de manual marcial" (86). Instead, as Niamh Thornton asserts, the characters in *Isla de bobos* are "not *merely* decent actors caught up in the consequences of war nor *solely* victims of systemic violence, they are fully realized characters […] within an unjust system that is sometimes stacked against them" (my emphasis, "What Happens in Clipperton…" 57). The systemic violence to which Thornton refers can actually be classified as systemic *violences*, as hierarchies of race, class, and gender are, inevitably, all reproduced on the island, given the intersectional nature of identity, and thus of oppression, which makes it impossible to extricate and isolate any one of those positionalities from the others. Although, as is evident upon closer examination, Raúl can, and should, be included among the characters whom Thornton describes above, Thornton goes on to focus her analysis on the only explicitly (and repeatedly) racialized character in the novel: the lighthouse keeper, Saturnino A. Thornton characterizes Saturnino's subjective violence against the female survivors of the island as a result not merely of disease-induced madness but also of the oppression and invisibilization that he has faced as a black Mexican, an objective violence that he continues to suffer on Clipperton, where he is isolated from the other members of the

Mexican contingent and tasked with the physically, mentally, and emotionally draining job of guarding the lighthouse. Thornton's analysis of Saturnino serves as a corrective to other, less-forgiving analyses of the same character, such as the one offered by Parisot. Instead of understanding Saturnino's subjective violence as (partially) a result of the objective violence that he has suffered as a "negro," Parisot repeats language that has been used to animalize lower-class, racialized men in his assessment of the lighthouse keeper. He follows his remark that Saturnino undergoes a metamorphosis into "casi un animal salvaje" (181) by highlighting what he considers to be Saturnino's "potencia sexual bastante vigorosa" and "necesidades físicas insaciables" (187). If, for Thornton, the conditions on Clipperton allow Saturnino to translate systemic violence into subjective violence, for Parisot they encourage the emergence of his latent animalism, which had been kept at bay by the expectations of society. In Parisot's view, then, Saturnino's acts of subjective violence stem from a greater inherent propensity toward such direct, physical violence.

Although Thornton does not reproduce classist and racist rhetoric as Parisot does, she does not expand the focus of her analysis beyond the subjective violence that takes place on Clipperton. She is not alone: Sánchez Prado categorizes García Bergua's novel as a "rehabilitation of the experience of the women who suffered *under Victoriano Álvarez*" (my emphasis, *Strategic Occidentalism* 164). This focus fits with Slavoj Žižek's argument that violence is most visible, and hence most distracting, when it is direct and subjective and least visible when it is indirect and objective (10). It is clear to readers that the female survivors who suffered sexually and physically at the hands of Saturnino were victims of violence on Clipperton. It is much less clear that they were also victims of violence due to the hierarchies and systems of oppression that Raúl helped to recreate on the island. If direct violence allows the

indirect violence from which it stems to become visible, then the indirect violence that results from indirect violence perpetuates this form of violence's invisibility. Indeed, a cursory reading would establish Raúl and Saturnino as contrasting characters, akin to the famous island-bound foils—Ariel and Calibán—that have long influenced Latin American thought: Raúl is light-skinned, refined, and restrained; Saturnino dark-skinned, coarse, and raging.[82] A closer examination of the way that García Bergua frames Raúl's behavior on the island, however, revels that she has used our propensity to be drawn toward direct violence in order to illuminate the indirect violence that works in the background, maintaining the supposed "peace" against which direct violence appears to flare so brightly. Instead of foils, then, Raúl and Saturnino can be more accurately classified as mirrors, much like Andrés Ascencio and Carlos Vives in Ángeles Mastretta's *Arráncame la vida*.

Key to arriving at this understanding is comparing how García Bergua portrays Raúl and Saturnino as running things on the island when each is in control. Raúl is, admittedly, the first to acknowledge that he is attempting to establish a "reino" on Clipperton by insisting that the men under his command observe the pageantry of military life—in particular carrying out daily the ceremony of raising and lowering the Mexican flag—and work to build up the island's facilities (García Bergua, *Isla* 162-64). It is a description that he, and others, employ multiple times: Raúl's mother refers to Clipperton as "un reino lejano" of which Raúl and his wife consider themselves "los monarcas" (182), and Raúl calls Clipperton "mi pequeña isla" (192) and his "reducido dominio" (198). In Raúl's view, by occupying "el centro de la vida en aquel pequeño país" (165), he begins to take on a kind of fatherly position for his troops, becoming more involved in their personal lives and development. When his wife arrives on the island, the pair begins to attempt to educate the troops both formally and morally, forming "clubes de lectura"

and striving to "enseñar los diversos oficios a estos soldados que se habían acostumbrado ya a que los trataran como perros" (172). The latter quote comes from a German man living on the island, working for a North American guano-mining company. Señor Schubert, too, does not see Raúl's actions as violent, instead expressing his admiration as Raúl attempts "distinguirse de los soldados, por educarlos cómo si también estuviera educándose a sí mismo" (174). The language that García Bergua employs, however, brings Raúl's violent actions into relief: If Raúl's habitus has allowed him flexibility in how he can go about achieving honor, his classed formation is still silently at work, pushing him to establish himself above his fellow soldiers and leading him to educate them away from what he perceives to be an animalistic comportment. The ties between Raúl's classed and gendered formation, then, require other people—specifically people "below" him—in order to allow him to accrue that symbolic capital upon which his self-worth depends. Raúl is conscious of his "oportunidad de recuperar el honor perdido o desaprovechado" (166), but he does not demonstrate that same awareness of the systemic violence that he depends upon in order to achieve this outcome. The structure of power that Raúl has established on the island is thus clearly a vertical one in which he imposes his standards on those under his command. It is important to emphasize that these standards are not just Raúl's, however, as his emphasis on ties between masculinity, honor, and service to la patria are the very structures that have been imposed upon Raúl: As he reflects, "Después de Dios, el ejército era de las cosas más seguras en la vida de los hombres. Dios y la Patria […]" (222). Raúl's actions thus serve to not only help him achieve personal gain but also to instill standards in others that demand sacrifice with great promises—but little hope—of recompense.

Raúl's benevolent despotism on Clipperton can be most clearly seen when taking into account how García Bergua uses the setting of the novel to bring into relief the absurdity not

only of the Mexican captain's actions on the island but also that of the standards to which he subscribes—and to which he pushes his men to adhere—in general. The title of García Bergua's novel has an obvious double meaning, as "bobo" refers in Spanish to the birds—blue-footed boobies—that inhabit the island and is also a term for "idiot," akin to one of the meanings of the English words "boob" or "booby." García Bergua thus implies that Clipperton was occupied by both kinds of bobos, with the latter consisting of the Mexican contingent led by Raúl.[83] The captain's insistence upon continuing with flag ceremonies, uniform wearing, and military drills seems idiotic given the desolate environment and constant struggle for survival in which he and the others find themselves (Mohssine 92; Román Alvarado 59). Equally as absurd is Raúl's decision to stay on the island and wait for supplies and instructions from a government that has clearly forgotten about him and his "important" mission. That his men *also* decide to stay on the island despite the death and illness that they have already suffered and despite Raúl's offer to let them leave demonstrates how fully he has instilled in them a sense of duty that goes against their best interests, exactly as designed. Raúl recognizes his role in this outcome, commenting to himself upon "aquella ebriedad que parecía poseerlos a todos, como si los hubiera arrastrado con mi ejemplo" (García Bergua, *Isla* 226). The fact that Raúl indicates it is possible that some of his men might feel forced to stay and yet he refuses "ver los rostros de los demás," so that he does not "topar con gestos que desmintieran aquella frase tan bella" (226), underscores his—and the ruling class'—need to dissimulate the violence of their structures in order to ensure their survival. And yet, exactly because it is more difficult to hide this violence on Clipperton, García Bergua provides her readers with a chance to see this violence as it exists and perpetuates itself in "ordinary" circumstances as well: If Clipperton represents a microcosm of life on the mainland, then the (self)harm demanded and generated by the association of masculinity,

patriotism, and sacrifice—especially among men of lower classes—must be inherent in situations in which such an association has become naturalized and glorified, such as war.

Although the tactics that Raúl employs differ from those used by Saturnino, the outcome in both cases is similar: The suffering and sacrifice of those who are submitted to their rule. Bourdieu postulates that when relations of domination are taken over by "objective" mechanisms, strategies oriented toward the reproduction of domination become more indirect and impersonal. Before this point, however, the dominant class must resort to "the elementary forms of domination […] the direct domination of one person by another" (*Theory of Practice* 189-90), which Žižek refers to as "subjective violence" (1). If, through his formation in a bourgeois family and the military, Raúl is equipped with the ability to reproduce forms of domination that go unnoticed by the other occupants of Clipperton, Saturnino, who comes from a very different background, is not so equipped. His domination of the female survivors thus relies upon tactics that are easy to identify as violent: intimidation, rape, torture, and murder. It was these clear forms of violence that served as fodder for Mexico's nota roja, historically, which García Bergua reflects in her inclusion of fictionalized newspaper reports and the perspective of a journalist. And yet, a newspaper's labeling of Saturnino as a "completo tirano" (García Bergua, *Isla* 187), coming, as it does, amid García Bergua's portrayal of Raúl as an equally authoritarian ruler, encourages a comparison of the two men. The perception of the former as a "tyrant" and the latter as a "monarch" is, in part, undoubtedly racially motivated, but largely involves the former's employment of tactics considered cruel and unjust against those of the latter, whose tactics' cruelty and arbitrariness have become hidden over the years, until they have finally blended into the background of "normality" against which subjective violence is so easily seen.

If, then, Raúl and Saturnino can be classified as both victims and perpetrators of violence,

the women of the novel can also be seen as simultaneously occupying these seemingly opposed positions, in particular Rául's wife, Luisa. Their victimization at the hands of Saturnino, and la nota roja press, is easy to detect. A bit harder to see is how these women also suffer under the standards imposed by Raúl and, even harder still, how they promote that systemic violence. The key factor that contributes to this clarity or lack thereof is, once again, the difference in the types of violence under which the female characters suffer and to which they contribute. At first, Raúl is opposed to having women and children on Clipperton, noting that some soldiers were accompanied by "sus mujeres y sus niños, cosa que me pareció buena para ellos, cruel para las familias" (García Bergua, *Isla* 134). Eventually, he changes his mind, due in large part to Luisa. If Raúl feels obligated to accrue honor not only for himself but also for his family, then Luisa is driven to help him achieve this honor.

Luisa's words and actions serve to reinforce Raúl's honor-based sense of self and, consequently, his (un)conscious desire to reproduce mechanisms of discipline and oppression—or systemic violence—on Clipperton. It is Luisa who insists upon accompanying Raúl to Clipperton, who insists to a disillusioned Raúl that he has the chance to forge, through sheer will, an edenic civilization on the island (García Bergua, *Isla* 147). In a particularly telling moment, after receiving a promotion, Raúl muses, "No hubiera necesitado, como antes, quedarme contemplando mi estampa ante el espejo, pues tan solo la mirada admirativa de mi esposa me devolvía ya aquella imagen a la que aspiraba de honor y gallardía supremos […]" (189). With the imagery of the mirror, García Bergua captures the simultaneously active and passive role that women at the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century occupied in terms of the perpetuation of (harmful) honor-based masculinities: Luisa is made into a (seemingly) passive surface in which Raúl seeks his honorable sense of self—however, the only way that this image arrives back at him is through

her actively returning it via her admiring gaze. Like a mirror, or a wall, Luisa has arrived at this form not through conscious effort, but because she has been constructed, through the unconscious production of her habitus, to prioritize reflecting and shaping not her own sense of self, but that of the user of the mirror—her husband, Raúl. Raúl, in turn, has been trained to seek his sense of self, at least partly, in the admiration of the women in his life. This begins with his mother, who encourages him, from a young age, to envision himself as a great hero. In fact, the first image that we are given of Raúl is one in which we see this process at work. The novel opens with Raúl remembering how, in his childhood bedrooms, "había un espejo grande, de cuerpo entero. Yo, chiquito como de cinco años, ya me veía grande, igual al futuro héroe que veía mi madre en mí, pues el espejo reflejaba sus ojos" (García Bergua, *Isla* 13). In a Lacanian sense, then, Luisa simultaneously fulfills the role of the mirror with which Raúl integrates a sense of self and the role of the Other, originally occupied by the/his mother, whose (un)conscious desires and machinations provide the basis for that sense of self.

The field in which she was raised has made it so that Luisa's sense of self cannot be detached from or put before that of Raúl. This contributes to her support of his actions on Clipperton and to her cruelly optimistic pursuit of the state's recognition of his honor and heroism after his death. In the portions of the novel that focus on Luisa's life after being rescued and returned to the mainland with the other female survivors, she doggedly attempts to receive a widow's pension, first from the government of President Venustiano Carranza, then that of President Álvaro Obregón. In one of several reflective essays that she has written about the origins and development of *Isla de bobos*, García Bergua notes that these parts of the novel were inspired by letters that she found while doing archival research in which Luisa's real-life counterpart, Alicia Arnaud, begs Obregón's administration to recognize her husband's heroism

and to aid her and her children financially ("El heroísmo" 75). While García Bergua considers the survival of Luisa and the other women to represent the true heroism that took place on Clipperton, she also recognizes that these women were victims of "una idea de patria que las excluía, las apartaba de la labor de purificación que significa el heroísmo" (78). As examined in chapter 1, women's contributions to combat have long been ignored in Mexico—and elsewhere—and it was only in their position as war widows that many women could hope to achieve any kind of recognition and compensation from the state. García Bergua comments that she believes that Alicia Arnaud's pursuit of recognition for her husband was not only her only option, financially, but was also necessary emotionally, so that her and the others' suffering would have meaning, "no había pasado en balde" (78). In a similar vein, I suggest that Luisa's habitus demands she seek this recognition, leading her to reject an offer of marriage from one of her rescuers in favor of a campaign with only a small chance of success (García Bergua, *Isla* 138). It is not just that Luisa must be able to ascribe meaning to the suffering on the island but to the actions that she took that encouraged this suffering, to her bolstering of Raúl's sense of heroism and honor, to her belief in her husband's mission, to her devotion in being his loyal helpmate, to her support of his insistence of staying on the island. This disposition toward basing her sense of self on her husband's symbolic capital transforms as her romanticized dreams of a *Robinson Crusoe* existence are dashed when faced with the harsh reality of life on Clipperton (147). It even wavers, several times, when confronted with the indifference of Carranza's administration (28, 219). Ultimately, however, it endures, a deeply and affectively embodied way of being in the world.

García Bergua's novel thus explores the complicated relationship between victim and victimizer that a patriarchal, honor-based construction of gender produced in men and women at

the turn of the 20th century. Raúl, as García Bergua notes, was a man "maltratado por una estructura rígida" ("El heroísmo" 76), but he was also a man who reproduced that rigid structure on Clipperton, who sacrificed the lives of others due to his own need for heroism and honor (77). Luisa, likewise, was formed within a field that demanded that she put her husband before herself and seek her sense of self in him, which resulted in her, too, causing others to suffer and sacrifice. *Isla de bobos* thus works to highlight the systemic violence produced and reproduced by the notions of honor and virtue and avoids focusing solely on the easily recognizable direct violence against women that said notions have encouraged and continue to encourage in Mexico. By writing a diachronic work of historical fiction that explicitly extends from the early 19th century to present day, Carmen Boullosa more explicitly traces the endurance of honor and virtue in Mexican men's gendered habitus formation. Unlike García Bergua, Boullosa centers her examination of honor-based violence on that inflicted (directly) on women by lower-class men. Her novel largely does not address how these men also suffer due to their masculinity nor does it highlight the less visible, but no less destructive, indirect violence driven by honor and virtue among the upper classes.

***Las paredes hablan***

Carmen Boullosa published *Las paredes hablan* in 2010. The novel follows three sets of families who live in a house (Casa Espíritu) in a traditionally wealthy enclave of Mexico City at three points in history: 1810, 1910, and 2010. The portions of the novel set in 1910 and 2010 also detail the doings of the occupants of a neighboring house (Casa Santo). These years were not chosen arbitrarily, as they align with moments of social and political upheaval in Mexican history: the 1810 rebellion against Spain; the 1910 Mexican Revolution; and the so-called War on Drugs that began, officially, under President Felipe Calderón in 2006 and was ongoing in

2010. Boullosa wrote *Las paredes hablan* after penning a screenplay for a movie of the same name, which was released in 2012. The film stars her daughter, María Aura, and was produced by her son, Juan Aura (Gallagher). Neither the novel nor the film seem to have attracted any kind of academic attention to date. However, an overview of other historical fiction novels that Boullosa has written, as well as the critical analysis that they have inspired, does point to commonalities between Boullosa's previous works and *Las paredes hablan,* as well as, to a certain extent, similarities with Ana García Bergua's *Isla de bobos*.

To begin with, Boullosa has participated in one of the most popular current veins of historical fiction, as outlined in the introduction, with her well-established (postmodern) concern with expanding and challenging history. Sánchez Prado notes that Boullosa often uses her writing to expose deficiencies in official versions of history, employing both her public persona and her female characters as part of "a larger aesthetic project of ironic intervention into the spaces of the past in order to expose the semantic gaps and structural blind spots in our narratives" (*Strategic Occidentalism* 157). In a similar vein, Anna Reid argues that in early novels such as *Mejor desaparece* (1987) and *Antes* (1989), Boullosa reveals these gaps in history to be "alternative stores of memory" and thus brings to the forefront "alternative" means of recording the past, such as oral memories, sculptures, and pictorial screenfolds (87). As discussed in chapter 2, Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* is a prominent example of how the postmodern acknowledgment that women have historically been denied both their role as historical actors and recorders of history has led to the mining of traditionally "female" cultural production such as weaving and cooking for alternative historical information and excluded historical viewpoints.

While Boullosa's decision to set *Las paredes hablan* in the domestic—read, traditionally

"feminine"—realm would support its designation as another of Boullosa's works that rewrites history from a "feminine" jumping-off point (Zabalgoitia Herrera 101), her inclusion, like García Bergua, of a polyphony of female and male voices within the home setting challenges both the strict gender divide between the so-called public and private spheres as well as the unilateral writing of history. This use of polyphony is another characteristic that marks much of her historical fiction, including works such as *Llanto* (1992) (Quinn-Sánchez 65). However, it is important to note that, while *Las paredes hablan* features a large ensemble of characters, Boullosa hints that her protagonists have been reincarnated at key moments in Mexican state (re)formation by endowing them with similar backgrounds, comparable characteristics, and the same names: The 1810 and 1910 occupants of Casa Espíritu include artists, cultured intellectuals and Revolutionary fighters, while the 1910 and 2010 occupants of Casa Santo include newly rich and powerful—as well as sadistically machista—men. Beyond these character parallels, Boullosa also outright refers to her characters' reincarnation in the last third of the novel (271). Therefore, the voices that constitute the polyphony in *Las paredes hablan* cannot be considered fully independent, but rather are more akin to echoes of previous voices, or, at the very least, the newer voices contain echoes of the older ones, the past thus influencing and surfacing in the present over and over again.

This concern with (historical) repetition connects with another of Boullosa's stated interests and also establishes further parallels between *Las paredes hablan* and *Isla de bobos*—as well as with older novels, chiefly, Elena Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir*. All three novels highlight the cyclicality of time and history and, consequently, question the idea that the latter is innately linear and progressive. Reid acknowledges the political motivation behind such an approach, noting that the Mexican state's agenda has been based on the idea of "progress" since

it first embraced positivism during the Porfiriato. Building on Nelly Richard's idea that the Latin American experience is marked by a multiplicity of pasts laid down like sediments, Reid argues that, by revealing the fragmentary nature of the historical discourse upon which contemporary national discourse is based, the nation-state is delegitimized (87). Boullosa has, on more than one occasion, explicitly stated her belief in the cyclicality of history, suggesting that it is a conception of time held by all Mexicans. In an interview with Emily Hind, Boullosa comments that the panorama of contemporary Mexican history has no explanation in its own present, but rather only in the past. She goes on to say that "[e]n ese sentido los mexicanos no somos completamente occidentales. Tenemos una tendencia a creer que el tiempo es circular" (qtd. in *Entrevistas* 24-25). As my analysis of *Los recuerdos del porvenir* in chapter 1 makes clear, this is a belief and theme that Boullosa's work shares with that of Garro, for whom Boullosa has expressed admiration and whom she has identified as a key influence on her work.[84]

It is not a stretch, then to establish *Los recuerdos del porvenir* as a key intertext of *Las paredes hablan*. The argument for doing so becomes even stronger when considering the similarities between the narrative devices that Garro and Boullosa employ in their respective novels. Famously, the narrator of *Los recuerdos del porvenir*—which also features an ensemble cast of characters—is the rock on which the town of Ixtepec is situated. As Amalia Gladhart has noted, Ixtepec is thus both the subject and site of its recollections (96), and its memories juxtapose elements of timelessness with concrete events (99). Garro emphasizes, according to Gladhart, the "irreducible multivalence of memory" (105). In *Las paredes hablan*, Boullosa literalizes a famous phrase—"If those walls could speak"—by making Casa Espíritu the novel's narrator. Like Ixtepec, Casa Espíritu is thus both the subject and the site of the novel's recollections. Although the bulk of *Las paredes hablan* is separated chronologically, with

sections set either entirely in 1810, 1910, or 2010, in the first 50 pages or so of the 350-page novel, the house-narrator mixes memories of the past with happenings of the present (2010) to show their parallels and hint at their future repetition(s). In several metatextual interruptions, however, the house-narrator explains its decision to move away from engaging with this messy, overlapping cacophony of memories in order to focus on one era at a time in its examination of the occupants and events that have taken place in Casa Espíritu (and Casa Santo), first acknowledging that "[n]o me bastan los golpes de memoria […] Para seguir el hilo ardiente del tiempo, necesito volver, seguir mi historia desde un principio" (Boullosa 55) and then commenting that "[a]unque no sea fundamental, las coincidencias […] hacen mis recuerdos confusos. Las diferencias me ayudan […]" (59). If the house's present is the messy, difficult-to-read palimpsestuous result of past actions deposited on top of one another like sediments, in order to decipher its constitutive layers, it is necessary to bring them forward and isolate them. In the case of the house-narrator, this necessitates focusing on one point in time of its existence at a time. Concentrating on the differences of the events that constitute Casa Espíritu's history ultimately aids in better understanding its evolution, singling out what has endured from what has changed, the ways in which what has endured has also changed, and the sociohistorically specific circumstances that have led to said changes.

Employing the theory of the palimpsest to interpret Casa Espíritu's history ultimately contributes to our ability to read Casa Espíritu not just as a house but also as both a result and a physical representation of the palimpsestuous social field(s) that have shaped its inhabitants' habitus. Physically, the home is a structured environment in which we are introduced to certain rules, rituals, conventions, and categories. That is to say, it is one of the first and most important places where we begin to, unconsciously, translate social fields into our embodied habitus.

Furthermore, according to Bourdieu, inhabited spaces such as houses are actually privileged sites of the objectification of generative schemes, as the assignment of certain areas to certain practices for certain actors both reflects and establishes divisions and hierarchies (*Logic* 76). The layout and use of the rooms in a house thus tell us about the practices and values of the times in which they were built, and the renovations that they undergo reveal how said practices and values have changed, with the literal layering over of the previous layout reflecting the layering over of previous practices and values with new and/or altered ones. While this traditional link between house, field, and habitus is not absent from *Las paredes hablan*, Boullosa does not focus on the relationship between the *use* of domestic space(s), social fields, and habitus as such. Rather, we can read her establishment of strong parallels between the houses' temporally distant inhabitants, as well as the use of Casa Espíritu as a narrator, as her employing the houses as a whole to symbolize the social fields in which the novel's characters' habitus are formed. This explains, in part, how Casa Espíritu is able to serve as an omniscient narrator, frequently escaping the boundaries of what we would presume it would be able to narrate—that which takes place within the titular walls that speak—to follow those who grew up and reside within said walls around Mexico City. Social fields, after all, are ultimately embodied in the form of habitus and, thus, Casa Espíritu, as a social field, is carried around inside those formed within it. This interpretation also explains how Casa Espíritu's consciousness extends to the neighboring house of Casa Santo, which is constructed in 1910 and is based on the plans of Casa Espíritu, and also reveals the classist assumptions about norms—in this case, gender norms—that Boullosa's novel helps to perpetuate.

The description of the construction and decoration of Casa Santo, and the behavior of the male characters that occupy this house, ultimately serves to reinforce the classist conception that

the flow of norms and ideals is unidirectional, trickling down from the upper classes to the lower ones, where they then become perverted. In a visual representation of this distortion, Casa Santo, is the mirror image of Casa Espíritu. However, despite their architectural similarities, Casa Santo can better be described as a fun-house-mirror version of Casa Espíritu, as it is grotesquely bloated in size in comparison with the latter. The Casa Espíritu narrator remarks that:

> *El espejo* de que habían echado mano para reproducirme era *convexo, el reflejo magnificaba las proporciones de los espacios*. Su patio, también al centro de su construcción, era casi el doble que el nuestro. Sus salones, su cocina, las habitaciones, los baños, todo en ella era más grande, *grandiosidad paródica que me irritaba sobremanera*. (my emphasis, Boullosa 169)

The builder of Casa Santo, General Bernardo Goríbar, shares many similarities with *Arráncame la vida*'s traditional machista military man, Andrés Ascencio: Goríbar, too, has risen to a position of power from extremely humble origins, transforming from an orphan to a soldier to a merciless secretary of war under Porfirio Díaz (45). Like Andrés, Goríbar also uses his traditional capital to attempt to acquire the other forms of capital—cultural, social, and symbolic—that he lacks in order to gain acceptance in the upper echelons of Mexican society among which he now moves. He makes sure, for example, to show off his collection of colonial art to the elites that he invites over for lavish parties (178). Casa Espíritu's aversion to Casa Santo, however, points to the ultimate futility of this attempt, and Boullosa's inclusion of a pair of howling conjoined infant twins as secret Casa Santo residents is one of the first hints of the distorting force that this distorted house-field exerts on its occupants (172). It is a perverting effect that only deepens and worsens with the passage of time, a process that is visually reflected in the physical changes that Casa Santo undergoes between 1910 and 2010.

The contemporary (2010) version of Casa Santo is a garish, *narco* nightmare. Already fundamentally distorted by the warped base on which it has been layered, it is even more over-the-top than the 1910 iteration of the house. It is an unbridled celebration of what traditional capital can buy, complete with all of the latest technology—"pantallas de plasma, enormes; el sistema de sonido; el portero electrónico […] la cocina con cuanto imaginable artefacto existe" (Boullosa 37)—, a pantry stocked with imported food, and gold and marble covering the walls (247). Like Goríbar, César Gutiérrez, the owner of Casa Santo in 2010, has risen from obscurity and poverty to a position of wealth and power. Also like Goríbar, he has attempted to use his traditional capital to purchase the cultural, social, and symbolic capital that he lacks, financing his daughter's education at Oxford, for one (46), and purchasing colonial-era (or at least colonial-style) furniture to give his home a splash of aristocratic grandeur (247), for another. The most striking decorative feature of 2010 Casa Santo, however, is the menagerie of taxidermy animals present in every room, hunting trophies that include a giraffe that has been cut in half in order to be able to be put on display (38). If Goríbar, as secretary of war, was ostensibly responsible for violent actions and death in the name of *la patria*, Gutiérrez, in his role as a money launderer and fixer for drug cartels, engages in violence in service of what Sayak Valencia has termed gore capitalism, wherein the destruction of bodies is the product for sale (16), a product for which Gutiérrez's clients pay him handsomely. The taxidermy animals, then, —as well as a hyperrealistic portrait of Gutiérrez dressed as Tarzan and surrounded by bound captives (Boullosa 247)—serve as clear visual reminders of what Gutiérrez trades in—death—and what he does and does not value.

By presenting readers with a glimpse into the sordidness of 2010 Casa Santo and its owner in the first section of the novel and then moving back in time to 1810 and the

establishment of Casa Espíritu in the second section, Boullosa primes readers to trace the devolution of upper-class-originating practices by members of the lower classes. This is not to say, however, that Boullosa offers no criticisms of members of the higher classes: The 2010 version of Casa Espíritu has fallen into disrepair, a visual representation of the moral and creative stagnation into which members of Mexico's Old Guard have sunk. In this way, Boullosa parrots turn-of-the-century fears about the "softness" and moral decay of rich men. If the 1810 and 1910 occupants of Casa Espíritu were generative forces, making art and leading political movements, then the 2010 occupants are consuming forces, reading and critiquing but failing to create. The contemporary owner of Casa Espíritu, Vértiz, surrounds himself with books and an impressive, highly valuable art collection that he refuses to sell—despite not being able to afford the insurance needed to protect it—, clinging to the objectified social capital that remains to him. His son, Javier, is not an artist, but rather an art historian, satisfied with analyzing what others have made while producing no artistic work of his own.

If the 2010 version of Casa Santo is decadent in the newer sense of the word, that is, self-indulgent, then the 2010 version of Casa Espíritu is decadent in the classic sense, that is, marked by decay and decline. Vértiz, in a way, is clinging to a cruelly optimistic dream, as he hopes that he can continue on the way that he always has and that, somehow, things will improve or return to the way that they once were. The house-narrator wryly remarks at one point that Vértiz practices "un culto a la aristocracia, retrógrada e inconfesa, reaccionario a punta de tanto creerse elegante" (Boullosa 23). This reactionary behavior has led to stagnation, linking *Las paredes hablan* again with *Los recuerdos del porvenir*: Isaac Gabriel Salgado argues that Garro's novel is marked by a sense of hopelessness due to recurrences that lead to stuckness, stasis, and a pessimism about the ability to break free from boundaries (78-80). In one sense, then, Boullosa's

portrayal of 2010 Casa Espíritu, when the house is read as a representation of a social field, confirms the arguments of those who criticize Bourdieu's conceptualization of subject formation for its pessimistic determinism. The past (material) conditions that allowed Casa Espíritu's occupants to cultivate honor have evaporated, and all that remains are signs of former wealth. And yet, Vértiz cannot abandon them, cannot accept his loss of status: His pride, his sense of self—which is deeply bound up with being respected and respectable—is too thoroughly entrenched in a culture of honor, akin to the foundation that gives Casa Espíritu its shape.

It is possible, then to detect a subtle critique of honor among the (traditionally) higher classes in 2010 Mexico, in the sense that Boullosa highlights the decay and stagnation that result from their clinging to ways of being that no longer work in the sociohistorically specific material circumstances in which they now find themselves—a Mexico that has seen the fall of the PRI, which had been their lifeblood for decades, and the rise of the para(llel) state formed by drug cartels. Despite this hint of recognition of the harm that men inflict upon themselves in the name of honor, Boullosa reserves her harshest, clearest critique for the direct violence against women that results from the understanding of honor and virtue that drives the behavior of the male residents of Casa Santo. Returning back to 1810 Casa Espíritu, which served as the physical—and, I argue, behavioral—model of Casa Santo, allows us to trace the evolution of these standards as they are taken up and distorted, 100 years later, by the 1910 residents of Casa Santo and again, another 100 years later, by its 2010 occupants. The builder of Casa Espíritu, in many regards, represents the masculine ideals of conduct promoted in José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sarniento*: A man of the Enlightenment, Padre Acosta speaks multiple languages, including several indigenous tongues; was educated in a Jesuit institution, where he studied Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes, Leibniz, Molière, Newton, and Racine; and

supports separating from Spain—which he perceives as fundamentally mismanaging and plundering its colonies—, a cause for which he is prepared to fight and die. Acosta thus demonstrates skill, courage, and generosity, which, when combined with the wealth that he has acquired through careful business decisions, results in a substantial accumulation of virtue. This, in turn, translates to substantial honor within the community.

If there is any critique of the honor/virtue system in the section of the novel that focuses on 1810 it is, again, very subtle and only briefly acknowledged: Acosta does not hold to his vows of chastity, starting a sexual relationship with a woman to whom he is unfaithful while she is pregnant. Acosta's second, unnamed mistress suffers from the double standards of sexual conduct associated with an honor-driven patriarchal gender system: While Acosta's honor remains unchanged, his discarded lover has no doubt that her "reputación estaba arruinada para siempre, como una olla mellada sin remedio" (Boullosa 91). While the fact that Acosta does not concern himself with what happens to this lover does not reflect well on him for modern readers, it pales in comparison to the direct violence that Boullosa portrays the men of Casa Santo as inflicting upon women in the name of honor.

This direct violence results in what can only be termed "honor killings" in both 1910 and 2010. Boullosa primes her readers for these actions by, like the Estridentistas, Laura Esquivel, Ángeles Mastretta, Samuel Ramos, and many others before her, tying her lower-class male characters more intimately to their bodies. In readers' very first introduction to Goríbar and Gutiérrez, Boullosa connects both of these men's rise to wealth and power to physical struggle, with her house-narrator commenting that "[l]os dos se curtieron en lucha directa; los dos pelearon a brazo partido" (44). Additionally, she ties a continuity of subject formation between Goríbar and Gutiérrez to the house that they both own—or, in the symbolic reading developed in

this chapter, to the social field(s) in which both have had their habitus formed: "Al dar el primer paso en el salón principal de la casa […] el general Goríbar ya es el señor Gutiérrez, metamorfoseado por un paso de tiempo súbito" (44). The two men are separated by time but otherwise the same, the force molding them clearly identified as the house in which they both reside. Casa Santo, as has already been established, is physically a grotesque distortion of Casa Espíritu. As a representation of a social field, it inculcates degenerated and degenerative forms of the standards of conduct seen in the residents of Casa Espíritu. This degeneration worsens with the passage of time—the more that the "original" layer of the palimpsestuous field is covered, the more distorted, illegible, and thus unable to be accurately copied it becomes. General Goríbar, like Padre Acosta, generates his honor through service to la patria. Unlike Acosta, however, Goríbar struggles to see and accept the corruption of the administration to which he has pledged himself, as, "para el general era 'de una gavilla de avorazados que utiliza sus buenos nexos con el Gobierno'[…]" (214). If Goríbar's allegiance to what Boullosa frames as a fundamentally corrupt system, then, points to the degeneration of the standards of honor inherited from the upper classes, it is the behavior of Goríbar's son, Julián, that most clearly demonstrates this distortion and decay.

Julián is tied both more to his body and more to Casa Santo than his father is, having grown up within the house/field's walls and structures rather than appropriating them later in life. His propensity to violence verges on the parodic, rendering him almost animal-like in his behavior, or, at the very least, sadistic. Like Ramos' *pelado* or Octavio Paz's *chingón,* he has seized on sexual and physical domination as the main informant and marker of his masculinity, attacking both men whom he perceives as being weaker and women in general in order to demonstrate his manliness. His behavior borders on the feral: When his sister, María, returns

from New York for a visit, he responds to her embrace by "estrujándola, la aplasta contra sí," then proceeding to bite her ear (Boullosa 42). He also attacks María's assistant, Lucrecio, attempting to throw him into the home's pond (192) and later cornering him in a bathroom, where he attempts to sexually dominate him, (202-03). It is not surprising, then, when Julián's understanding of honor is revealed to rely principally—if not solely—on the physically violent policing of his sister's behavior.

If Julián's father has built up the family's honor through his courage on the battlefield, demonstrating his martial skill by rising to one of the top military positions in the country, Julián personally demonstrates none of the traditional male markers of virtue. Instead of seeking to contribute to the family name in this way, he attacks and kills his sister after a photograph is published under her name that depicts federal forces massacring *anti-reeleccionista* demonstrators, thus costing his father his position in the Díaz administration (217). His physical response is driven by apparently uncontrollable physical impulses. The direct violence that he inflicts in the name of honor is a clearly visible and understandable demonstration of the danger that an honor-based patriarchal gender system poses in the hands of men who are, allegedly, more "fundamentally" tied to their bodies. Boullosa includes descriptions of Julián's emotional reactions that point toward a hydraulic understanding of emotions, an idea formulated by Johan Huizinga and Norbert Elias in which emotions are understood to be both universal and contained within the body, periodically welling up, boiling over, and breaking out in different ways (Plamper 67). It should be noted that this conception of emotions has fallen out of favor since the advent of cognitive psychology and anthropological social constructivism (68), with leading scholars of emotion and honor cautioning against continuing to use it (Strange and Cribb 7).[85] Nevertheless, this understanding can be clearly detected when Boullosa describes Julián's

reaction as the anti-reeleccionista demonstrators fill the alley between Casa Espíritu and Casa Santo: "*Se sumergió en un torbellino propio*, íntimo, sobrepoblado, absurdo y a su vez hermoso. Un canal de sangre se arremolinaba ante él […]" (my emphasis, Boullosa 204). Old prejudices against traditionally machista men have resurfaced in Boullosa's novel—if they ever even dissipated, that is. If the emotions associated with the defense of honor are controlled by more controlled—educated, refined, disciplined—men, the same cannot be expected of men like Goríbar and Julián, who can only ever imperfectly copy the standards of the upper classes. The description that Boullosa includes of Julián's reaction after killing his sister reinforces how perverted his quest to maintain the Goríbar family's honor really is: Instead of remorse or sadness or even righteousness, Julián appears to be sexually aroused: "Siente algo parecido al placer entre las ingles. O tal vez es miedo. O excitación. O satisfacción" (223). Julián's conception of honor is not just divorced from the more "positive" behaviors that some have associated with this concept—it appears to be little more than an excuse for carrying out misogynistic, gender-based violence.

While Julián's use of direct violence in the name of honor is presented as clearly repugnant, his father's reaction is more ambiguous. When General Goríbar sees the newspaper with his daughter's photograph on the front page, he loads his revolver. He does not just ready his arm with bullets, however, as he also, "con un movimiento casi natural de la vista […] desliza su alma en la segunda cámara, como a una pesada munición" (Boullosa 220). At this point, readers are still unsure on whom Goríbar intends to use his weapon: It could be that loading up his soul, so to speak, is a sign that he intends to take his own life or it could be a recognition that killing his daughter in order to uphold his honor, and that of his family, will leave him morally and spiritually bankrupt. Both readings are supported by the fact that the

Catholic Church considers any life-taking action, including suicide and murder, to be mortal sins that result in the forfeiture of one's soul to Hell.

Goríbar's internal turmoil points to the emotional violence that patriarchal codes of honor inflict upon the men who uphold them, with this invisible violence again being made visible, as in García Bergua's novel, through the use of direct, subjective violence. As Carolyn Strange and Robert Cribb note, men have historically turned to violence in order to avoid feeling the shame that comes with a loss of honor (2). By killing himself, Goríbar would no longer have to face any harmful emotions; by killing his daughter, he would be able to repair, at least, the harm done to his honor. Goríbar's physical location during this internal struggle is of particular symbolic significance: He is standing in the alley between Casa Espíritu and Casa Santo. Alleys are inherently liminal spaces, and Goríbar finds himself torn between the standards practiced by Padre Acosta 100 years before and laid down in the form of Casa Espíritu—an honor that was backed by virtue—and the imperfect, distorted copy set down in the form of Casa Santo—an honor without virtue. This positioning appears to grant him some clarity: When he hears that Julián has murdered María, he expresses shame not at the actions of the latter but those of the former, remarking, "Me avergüenzo de haberlo engendrado […]. Pero, créame, yo no le di lo que él tiene" (Boullosa 225), before killing himself. It is possible to argue, however, that the general very much did give Julián "lo que él tiene." He just did not *knowingly* do so when immersing his son in a certain field that led to the formation of a certain habitus.

Another 100 years removed from the standards set by Padre Acosta, César Gutiérrez's behavior demonstrates a further degeneration of honor-based conduct. César seems to be able to understand only honor and not virtue, much as the more layers that a palimpsest contains, the harder it becomes to clearly read what was first laid down, leaving only the outline of the

original content legible. If Bernardo Goríbar upheld some of the traditional male standards of virtue, Gutiérrez demonstrates a concern for none of them. Or, at least, if he seems to do so, he does not seek to protect or support others but only to protect and serve his own reputation. Through this character, then, Boullosa exposes how the so-called "positive" aspects of machismo, which align with many of the traditional contributors to male virtue—self-respect, responsibility for providing emotionally and financially for the family, being a good protector, moral courage, and responsibility (Torres et al. 166, 175)—can ultimately be used as a cover for justifying direct violence and promoting one's self-interests. Núñez-González and Núñez Noriega indicate that this kind of selfish behavior is actually far more common among men involved with drug cartels (the "campo buchón") than is self-sacrificial behavior. They propose that few of these men achieve the honorable categorization of "viejón," which requires acting to "proteger a las personas en desventaja o queridas, para restaurar el honor de mujeres o el de ellos y para 'educar' a los hombres cuando su comportamiento no es el deseado" (11). Many of them instead frequently employ violence against women by prohibiting them from going to public spaces without being chaperoned as well as physically threatening and beating them (12). All of these behaviors can easily be seen in Boullosa's portrayal of Gutiérrez.

Much like Julián Goríbar, Gutiérrez is an over-the-top sadistic, violent, controlling machista. His objectification of his daughter, María, is undeniable, and his upholding of this systemic, gendered violence leads him to commit other types of violence against her—emotional, sexual, and physical. If a "viejón" provides for his family out of concern for their well-being, Gutiérrez provides for María and her mother as a cover for his illegal business activities: María, who has been living in Spain for 15 years, returns to Mexico only because her mother has died and her father needs to sign over to his daughter some of the properties that he has been using to

launder money in order to continue this charade (Boullosa 237-39). When María arrives in Mexico, Gutiérrez assigns her a detail of security guards to follow her everywhere (242): This arrangement, again, has not been designed with María's well-being in mind but rather to protect Gutiérrez's own reputation, as, if his enemies succeed in attacking or harming his daughter, it will make him look weak and unmanly. In a telling exchange, when María protests at the idea of staying in Casa Santo and not a hotel, he remarks that even if "no te importa perder el pellejo, a *mí* sí *me* altera pensar que *me expongo* a que *me* humillen o lastimen" (my emphasis, 253). The use of first-person pronouns and verb conjugations drives home the fact the Gutiérrez considers María to be simply an extension of himself and that any harm that others may cause her is, in effect, harm done to him. Boullosa solidifies Gutiérrez's disregard for his daughter's subjectivity by revealing that he sexually abused her as a child (291). The indirect patriarchal violence of controlling women's bodily autonomy by making their virtue and honor one and the same—their sexual purity—has been replaced by the direct violence of physically violating their corporeal boundaries, imposing a male will on a female body in a tangible, undeniable way.

When Gutiérrez senses that he cannot, in fact, smother his daughter's agency, she becomes more of a liability to him than an asset: The longer that she is in Mexico, the more he becomes exposed to others potentially witnessing his inability to control her rather than, as he intends them to witness, his ability to subject others to his will. When María slips her security guards for an afternoon and evening, Gutiérrez first decides to have an innocent woman of similar appearance murdered and placed in his daughter's bed in order to intimidate her and reimpress upon her the extent of his power (Boullosa 313). However, when María reveals that she has spent the evening with Vértiz's son, Javier, and intends to go to Spain with him, Gutiérrez becomes even more infuriated and concocts a new plan: Saying that she is dead to him,

Gutiérrez decides to pretend that María has actually died and hold a mock funeral for her, a spectacle in which he will symbolically bury his weakness in front of a large crowd of Mexico's new elite in order to avoid his daughter openly associating with the son of a people (the PRI) who, as he proclaims, "se dedicó a hambrearnos setenta años" (318). If the mock aspect of this ceremony would seem to indicate that Gutiérrez cares, somewhat, about his daughter's physical wellbeing, this is undercut by his follow-up threat to actually kill her if Javier fails to marry her before the mock funeral (320). With these plans Gutiérrez reveals, once again, his preoccupation with his own reputation, his own honor, before all else. He does not care about his daughter's reputation having been besmirched by spending the night with a man: His sexual abuse of María, his physical violence against her, makes it clear that her "purity" does not, and has never, mattered, nor has the "purity" of any women living in patriarchal, honor-based societies. What has mattered is controlling women's bodies, and direct violence has, once again, laid bare what indirect violence had concealed.

Although it is possible, if one looks hard enough, to read a wider critique of honor and virtue in Boullosa's novel, the fact remains that she focuses very little, if at all, on exploring the indirect violence that upper-class men have exercised against women in the name of these concepts and, instead, includes lower-class male characters who reinforce the trope of the emotional, violent machista. The direct violence exhibited by these men is simply too over-the-top and distracting to allow for much illumination of the fundamental violence of the honor-based gender system that they have inherited and which they perpetuate. Adding to the difficulty of detecting this systemic violence is the rather anachronistic, protofeminist approach that Padre Acosta takes in raising his bastard daughter, María, further weakening any connection between him and men of honor who derive said honor from their control of women. Acosta encourages

his daughter to study and develop herself not in "womanly" skills such as sewing or childrearing but instead invites her into the masculine artistic and intellectual relationship that he has cultivated with the painter for whom he is patron (Boullosa 114). After her father and said painter are slaughtered during the beginning of the uprising against Spain, María joins the fight. In another allusion to *Los recuerdos de porvenir*, Boullosa's house-narrator participates in María's mythification, providing varying versions of her fate, although they chiefly recount her participation in armed combat, leading other women and indigenous fighters against the Spanish (158-61). Esperanza, the daughter of Casa Espíritu's 1910 residents, follows a similar trajectory, trading her journalistic anti-reeleccionista efforts for male clothing and life as a Zapatista fighter after Julián kills her brother and María (230-31). Unlike Garro, Boullosa perpetuates the association of *lo masculino* and *lo positivo*, offering these characters as hopeful phoenixes who rise from the ashes of their families' destruction to carry on the fight for justice and equality, female warriors to be celebrated and the agential inequality that they promote to be ignored.

**Conclusions**

In many ways, Carmen Boullosa's *Las paredes hablan* is the perfect amalgamation of 60 years of women-authored novelas sobre la Revolución. It features a direct intertextuality with one of the first such novels written in the years after national (re)consolidation—Elena Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir*—and continues trends seen in Ángeles Mastretta's and Laura Esquivel's bestsellers of the 1980s and 90s, as it does not thoroughly interrogate the types of violence—both indirect and direct—promoted and allowed by the gender(ed) standards and class privilege of upper-and middle-class men. Furthermore, Boullosa's novel takes part in a new trend that I have identified in this chapter: An examination of the formation of men's gendered habitus that can be connected to the rise of critical studies on men and masculinity, that is, the

understanding that men, too, have a socially constructed gender. While Boullosa's diachronic approach allows for a clear tracing of the perpetuation and transformation of certain gendered standards of conduct in Mexican history—in particular the patriarchal system of honor and virtue—, it ultimately results in characters who are not fully developed and dynamic. Although gender-based direct violence against women in the name of honor is a very real phenomenon in Mexico that continues into the present day, Boullosa's inclusion of exaggerated, sadistic, lower-class machistas centers this issue at the expense of challenging class-based stereotypes and examining the gendered burdens that men bear.

In contrast, Ana García Bergua's *Isla de bobos* elucidates upper- and middle-class men's gender(ed) formation, said formation's connection with entrenched past standards, and the way in which these men have thus both contributed to and suffered from the association between honor, virtue, and gender in Mexico. Although García Bergua also includes a sadistically violent, lower-class, racialized character, she does not place him in contrast with her bourgeois, light-skinned male protagonist but rather establishes the two as mirrors, highlighting how both characters are, at the same time, victims and victimizers. Thus, García Bergua signals in her fiction something that Boullosa has acknowledged in interviews but not in her own writing, or at least not in *Las paredes hablan*: "[P]ienso que igualmente difícil la pasan los hombres en esta cultura, si no es que la pasan peor" (qtd. in Hind, *Entrevistas* 28). Although the continued relevance of honor and virtue in masculine gender(ed) formation in Mexico is not laid out as neatly in García Bergua's novel as it is in Boullosa's, the former's attention to the affective ties that bind men to certain (self)harmful behaviors points toward the kind of work that must be done in order to illuminate and eliminate this conduct, and others, and produce more egalitarian, less exploitative gender(ed) relations in Mexico.

# Conclusions

## ¿Que viva lo masculino?: Mexican Women Accommodating and Interrogating Masculinity

On November 27, 2019, an exhibition opened at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, the country's preeminent art museum and cultural center. The exhibition, titled "Emiliano Zapata después de Zapata," featured some 140 works of art and was curated by the Secretaría de Cultura to honor the 140th anniversary of the birth of the beloved "Caudillo del Sur" as well as the 100th anniversary of his death. One painting in particular, which was featured prominently on advertisements for the exhibition, stirred indignation and condemnation, led largely by one of Zapata's grandchildren, Jorge Zapata. The artist of the work, queer Chiapas painter Fabián Cháirez, frequently questions the boundaries between masculinity and femininity in his paintings, which often feature imagery associated with Mexican national identity, such as revolutionaries, figures from the Catholic Church, and masked *luchadores*. His painting in the exhibition, "La Revolución," features a mustachioed male figure wearing only a pink *charro* hat and black high heels, which appear to be made from pistols. The man is mounted on a white horse, whose penis is erect, and his legs are tucked up onto the flanks of the horse in a pose that echoes those of female pin-ups from the 1940s and 50s. His body is smooth and hairless, and a tricolor ribbon, featuring the colors of the Mexican flag, wraps around his torso and floats behind him. His eyes are either downcast or looking backwards, and his lips are pursed demurely or seductively, depending on your interpretation.

Jorge Zapata demanded that the painting be removed from the exhibition, threatening to sue the museum and the artist if it were not. He described the painting as a "delito" against Zapata, whom he called "el mejor ícono, más noble y más puro que tuvo nuestra Revolución" (qtd. in González). He also claimed that Cháirez was an unknown artist who sought to generate

fame by depicting a "gay" Zapata. In response, Cháirez remarked that the male figure in the painting had elements shared by many revolutionaries but that nowhere in the painting did it explicitly name the figure as Zapata nor did it say that the figure was gay. Cháirez questioned how, even if the painting did depict a gay Zapata, it would be denigrating to the Caudillo del Sur and reiterated his mission to portray masculine figures in different ways. In his criticism of Mexican art, Cháirez remarked that men are always "blancos, hipermasculinizados, nunca vemos hombres morenos y femeninos" (qtd. in Ruiz). The Secretariat of Culture defended Cháirez and his work in a series of tweets, remarking that Cháirez "cuestiona los estereotipos machistas que conforman *la identidad nacional*" (my emphasis, qtd. in Ruiz). The painting remained on display and was later sold to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City to become part of its permanent collection.

"La Revolución" and the ensuing controversy and responses that it generated encapsulate many of the themes and issues discussed in this dissertation. The intensity of the outrage displayed by Zapata's descendants points to the continued relevance of the Revolution in Mexico's popular imaginary, even 100 years after the end of its armed phase, as well as the impact of its mythified figures on ideas about gender roles in Mexico. The perceived slight toward the legacy of Zapata was twofold: one, that he had been "feminized"—which, in this case, meant depicted as anything "less" masculine than the hypervirile fighters glorified in early *novelas de la Revolución* and Golden Age cinema—and two, that this automatically also rendered him gay. The latter connection is not unique to Mexico, but it is one that is well documented in this country: Robert McKee Irwin ties the association of effeminacy and homosexuality to the infamous "41" scandal of 1901, in which 41 cross-dressed men were arrested during a raid in Mexico City (xxii), and proposes that, by the 1940s and 50s homophobia

had become a "major guiding principle" in Mexican culture (xxiii). While Jorge Zapata was most vocally upset about the supposed "gayification," so to speak, of his grandfather in Cháirez's painting, it is also important to highlight the negative associations that he arguably perceived and expressed upon viewing a (biologically) male figure adorned and posed in a way that can be read as "feminine." As Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba has stated, in Mexico, the "social prestige acquired through *valuable masculine* attributes is among the most appreciated of social goods" (my emphasis, 6). This phenomenon, which Elena Garro and Elena Poniatowska recognized in their publications from the 1960s, is not new and has endured to the present day. Artists like Cháirez, however, are clearly interrogating the (over)valuation of the traditionally masculine by promoting images of men with traditionally feminine physical qualities. Furthermore, not only is Cháirez blurring gender lines, he is doing so in a space that stands at the heart of cultural and symbolic capital in Mexico: el Palacio de Bellas Artes.

Cháirez's work to expand the understanding and representation of what can be valued as "masculine" in Mexico is vital. However, it is not at all surprising that his painting was identified as a commentary on Mexican masculinity. Although not speaking specifically about Mexico, Jack Halberstam's argument that masculinity "becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body" (2) appears to still hold largely true in Mexico, especially if "heterosexual" is added to the description. Both McKee Irwin's and Domínguez-Ruvalcaba's studies focus largely on queerness and Mexican masculinity, and, as Guillermo Núñez Noriega has noted, a fundamental conceptual and cultural source of critical studies on men and masculinities in Mexico has been the "movimiento homosexual" (46). As this dissertation has shown, however, it is possible to interrogate men and masculinity in any work with male and masculine characters. In fact, I have argued that it is especially important to do so

in literature that features light-skinned, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class men. Their violent behaviors have frequently gone unchallenged due to the classed myopia that impedes the ability to identify and criticize these actions outside of the popular classes, who continue to be more fundamentally tied to their bodies in the perpetuation of centuries-long discriminatory discourses.

Previous studies of the novels analyzed in this dissertation have largely focused on their depictions of women and femininity, perhaps due to the erroneous assumption that women writers can and do only speak from personal experience. And yet, even if this were the case, precisely because these authors are women in a country with strong patriarchal institutions, a country that has linked its national identity to masculinity, we would expect them to have something to say about men and masculinity. Mexican men's masculinity has long been measured by its lack of femininity, and the opposite can be said to be true for women. It is important to note that I did not begin this study with the expectation that all of the authors examined would have exactly the same thing to say about men and masculinity. Doing so would have amounted to rehashing the misogynistic prejudices against female authors that surfaced during the *literatura light*, *literatura difícil* "debates" of the 1980s and 90s As Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado has noted, a valid criticism of the idea of a "boom femenino" is its flattening of "substantial aesthetic and ideological differences between women writers, making gender the defining trait of their fiction" (*Strategic Occidentalism* 146-47). However, I did find similarities in the novels published around the same time. In chapter 1, I examined how both Garro and Poniatowska express a certain pessimism via their female protagonists, who are attracted to a masculine positionality but are denied access to it. In chapter 2, I highlighted Ángeles Mastretta's and Laura Esquivel's misplaced sense of optimism as seen in their simultaneous

promotion of women's sexual liberation and failure to interrogate the machista behaviors of their female characters' bourgeois and upper-class lovers. Finally, in chapter 3, I explored Ana García Bergua's and Carmen Boullosa's more overt exploration of Revolutionary men and masculinity and their interrogation of the patriarchal concepts of honor and virtue.

The messages in these novels are not exactly, the same, of course, as is most clearly seen in the case of García Bergua and Boullosa: While the former exposes honor's violence on women and men across race and class, the latter focuses on the overt and direct honor-based violence of men of the popular classes, thus reinforcing classist (and racist) notions of machismo. The similarities between the focuses of the authors in each chapter can be tied to several factors. One, as I have outlined, is the important commentary that novels of historical fiction can offer not only on the time periods about which they are written but also about the time periods in which they were written. Garro and Poniatowska wrote at a time when disillusion about the "failure" of the Revolution was gaining steam, particularly for women, who had been denied incorporation into civil life on the basis of their femininity. Mastretta and Esquivel published during a period of increased access for women—to the literary market, to politics, to the professional realm. Postfeminism was on the rise, and its optimistic message that equated purchasing power with power and equity in other areas of society can be detected in Mastretta's and Esquivel's buoyant tones. And García Bergua and Boullosa pivoted toward a focus on male characters at a time when critical studies on men and masculinities were more fully taking form in Mexico. Shared sociohistoric context, then, seems to have played a role in the shared focus of these authors.

The other factor resulting in these commonalities is the positionalities that these authors share beyond being women: Namely, all of the authors studied in this dissertation came/come

from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, all were/are fairly light-skinned, all were formally educated—mostly at prestigious institutions, such as the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México or the Universidad Iberoamericana—, and all can be considered *chilangas*, either having grown up in Mexico City or having moved there at a relatively young age. Expanding the work done in this dissertation would, logically, involve seeking out female authors who do not fit this mold, writers who either were not formally trained or who were trained outside of the cultural center of the country, writers who are darker skinned, writers with different socioeconomic origins. Another way to expand the scope of this study is by widening its temporal frame: Although Nellie Campobello's *Cartucho* (1931) has recently generated considerable critical interest from scholars of men and masculinities, particularly for its apologetics of Pancho Villa's División del Norte, other earlier works have yet to be significantly examined, including Consuelo Delgado's *Yo también, Adelita* (1936). Venezuelan critic Mariana Libertad Suárez includes Delgado's novel in her recent study of "forgotten" early female-authored Revolutionary narratives— *Éramos muchas: mujeres que narraron la Revolución mexicana (1936-1947)*, which was published by the Secretaría de Cultura in 2019—, along with Magdalena Mondragón's *Puede que pa'l otro año* (1937), Rosa de Castaño's *Transición* (1939), and María Luisa Ocampo's *Bajo el fuego* (1947) (34). Stretching the other way in time, many of the novels published in what I have called the "sub-boom" of women-authored *novelas sobre la Revolución* that emerged in the 2000s and 2010s also await attention from literary analysts.

The importance of cinema in promoting the "virile, brave, proud, sexually potent, and physically aggressive" Revolutionary standard of Mexican manhood (de la Mora 7) offers another potential avenue for expanding this study: films on the Revolution that were either directed or written by women. Esquivel notably wrote the screenplay for the 1992 hit adaptation

of *Como agua para chocolate* and Boullosa's *Las paredes hablan* was, as I have noted, a screenplay before being adapted into a novel. Analyzing these and other films could prove fruitful, especially regarding the use of machismo to bolster, or detract, from male characters' desirability, with the former tactic, in particular, potentially playing into the age-old adage that "sex sells." (As noted in chapter 3, Oswald Estrada has already identified this approach in his brief overview of the filmic adaptation of Rosa Helia Villa's *Itinerario de una pasión: Los amores de mi general* (146-49).) Performance and theatre are two other areas of potential interest to this study: Josefina Niggli's *Soldadera* (1936) has attracted some attention already, although chiefly concerning its complication of the Adelita trope and not its portrayal of men and masculinity. Other potential works of interest include Estela Leñero's *Soles en la sombra* (2011), which "demystifies male figures of the Mexican Revolution who are privileged in most historical rearticulations" (Estrada 165), and Sabina Berman's *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* (1993), which was adapted into a film by Berman in 1995.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, these narratives, much like the ones that I have examined, all hold potentially valuable commentaries on men and masculinity in contemporary Mexico. The relationships between Mexican women and masculinity are complicated, particularly so the one with machista Revolutionary masculinity, which has occupied a central place in postrevolutionary politics and cultural production. While the (over)valuation of this masculinity is easy to tackle in its more overtly violent manifestations, doing so at the expense of not also recognizing the damage that it does in its more objective forms only serves to further entrench stubborn structures of oppression that affect women and men alike. While racialized men and men of the lower classes especially suffer from this approach, so, too, do other men, especially those who feel beholden to "honor-based" standards of conduct. As the gender binary

continues to be questioned, stretched, twisted, and destroyed, the narratives in this dissertation demonstrate the importance of not only working to devalue or revalue the traditionally masculine but to also value the traditionally feminine, or else risk creating a new gender paradigm in which the masculine always reigns supreme and putting a man in heels is always seen as a denigration of his worth.

# Notes

## Introduction

[1] Rubin first developed her idea of the traffic of women in her 1975 essay, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." In her essay, Rubin postulates that there is a "systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products" (158). This apparatus results in the precedence of relationships between men, in which women are simply a tool used to establish and maintain such relationships. That is, as Rubin proposes, "If it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked, the woman being a conduit of a relationship rather than a partner to it" (174).

[2] Understandings of the parameters of the armed phase of the Mexican Revolution vary widely. Some, including John Brushwood (5), Adalbert Dessau (17), and John Rutherford (6), place it between the years of 1910, when the uprising against Porfirio Díaz began, and 1917, when a new constitution was signed in the state of Querétaro under the leadership of Venustiano Carranza. Others, such as Héctor Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer (87) and Alan Knight (2.493), place the ending of the combative portion of the Revolution in 1920, when Carranza was assassinated and Álvaro Obregón won the presidential election and consolidated power under the Partido Laborista Mexicano. Knight considers the armed skirmishes of the 1920s, such as the Cristero War of 1926-1929, to be part of the sporadic and endemic local violence that persisted after Carranza's triumph but argues that the latter was the last major revolt to succeed (2.493). Others, however, such as Castro Leal, consider those uprisings to be a continuation of the Revolution and do not mark its endpoint until 1928, when Obregón is assassinated, or even 1929, when Plutarco Elías Calles founds what will eventually become the Partido Institucional

Revolucionario (xliv).

[3] Although not published until after Altamirano's death, the author began writing *El Zarco* in 1874 and worked on it intermittently until 1886 (Dabove 310).

[4] There are, unsurprisingly, many definitions of the macho and machismo. Although they differ, most emphasize the centrality of the corporeal by naming physical and sexual aggressiveness and, most importantly, virility as hallmarks of this masculine performance: Domínguez-Ruvalcaba associates power, violence, virility, and seductive domination with the macho (81), and De la Mora similarly defines the Mexican macho as "virile, brave, proud, sexually potent, and physically aggressive" (7). McKee Irwin emphasizes the importance of virility throughout his survey of 20th century literary representations of Mexican masculinity, and while Gutmann rightly notes that what it "means to be macho changes over time for various sectors of Mexican society" (*Meanings of Macho* 3), he also remarks that for many men and women in early 1990s Mexico, abusive, virile male physicality continued to connote the essence of machismo (237).

[5] Members of the Estridentistas would go on to write a petition in 1934 calling for the purging of several members of the Contemporáneos group from government positions, specifically Salvador Novo and Xavier Villaurrutia. Many of the petition's signatories had produced or would go on to produce key, male-centered works in the early canon of the novela de la Revolución, including José Rubén Romero (*Mi caballo, mi perro y mi rifle*, 1936), Mauricio Magdaleno (*Tierra grande*, 1949), Rafael Muñoz (*¡Vamónos con Pancho Villa!*, 1931; *Si me han de matar mañana*, 1934; *Se llevaron el cañon para Bachimba*, 1941), and Francisco L. Urquizo (*Tropa vieja*, 1943) (Balderston 61).

[6] For a comprehensive overview of the emergence of the term "machismo" and its ties to

English-language scholarship, see Benjamin A. Cowan's article "How *Machismo* Got Its Spurs—in English: Social Science, Cold War Imperialism, and the Ethnicization of Hypermasculinity." Cowan contends that, although social scientists and public health authorities in the United States drew on the works of Mexican essayists such as Samuel Ramos and Octavio Paz as they sought to pathologize machismo as the source of problems in Latin America, Ramos and Paz themselves never used the word "machismo" and used the word "macho" only sparingly (607-09). Gutmann also traces the etymology of "macho" in *The Meanings of Macho*, noting that "macho" and "machismo" have short word histories (222). Gutmann cites a 1967 work by Américo Paredes to note that, at the time of the Revolution, terms such as "hombrismo," "hombría," "hombre," and "hombre de verdad" were more commonly used to describe men of the popular classes than was "macho" (224).

[7] The de Fuentes trilogy consists of *El prisionero trece* (1933), *El compadre Mendoza* (1934), and *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa!* (1936), the last of which, in keeping with many of the novelas de la Revolución of the time period, demonstrated a certain disillusionment with the outcome and legacy of the Revolution (Thornton, *Revolution and Rebellion* 21).

[8] As Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado notes, Bourdieu's concepts have long circulated among researchers in Latin America. Building off of Mabel Moraña's work in *Bourdieu en la periferia*, Sánchez Prado argues that Bourdieu's desire to understand and critique power structures in their material functioning has been easily legible in the region—in particular in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—due to the "conceptual" arsenal it provides to discuss questions that have been circulating and informing critical work in Latin America since the middle of the 20th century ("Introduction" 5-6).

[9] The understanding of what constitutes "historical fiction" varies considerably. Seymour

Menton, quoting Enrique Anderson Imbert, employs a somewhat nebulous standard by arguing that the historical novel is one whose "action occurs in a period previous to the author's" (16). Although this is a more inclusive definition than is the one proposed by Marxist theorist Georg Lukács in his seminal work *The Historical Novel*, in which he includes as an essential feature of the genre its setting in a "distant past" (40), it precludes the novels included in chapter 1 of this dissertation, which are based on the childhood of the author in one case (Garro) and the life experience of the protagonist/testimonial giver in another (Poniatowska). The definition of historical fiction from which I have worked aligns most closely with the one outlined by María Cristina Pons in *Memorias del olvido: Del Paso, García Marquéz, Saer y la novela histórica de fines del siglo XX*. For Pons, the distance between the setting and composition of a historical novel is not as important as is the use of history in the novel, and she argues that history must have a "structural role" for the novel to be considered historical (59). I do break with Pons on one point, however, as she excludes from her definition works that do not adhere to linear time (61), which would exclude several novels in this dissertation, including those in chapter 1 and Carmen Boullosa's *Las paredes hablan*. As specific historical moments take center stage in these novels, alongside notions of circularity, I feel comfortable classifying them as "historical fiction."

[10] Although I do not disagree with Weldt-Basson, as postmodernism, feminism, and postcolonialism are related but still distinct fields, an analysis of historical fiction from a feminist or postcolonial perspective does not necessarily diverge all that much from one based in a postmodern perspective if what is being considered is a lack of representation and/or marginalization or what qualifies as sources of historical evidence or experience. The approach just becomes more focused on certain groups than it would be under the umbrella of

postmodernism.

[11] This includes, but is certainly not limited to, Noé Jitrik in *Historia e imaginación literaria: las posibilidades de un género* (1995); Seymour Menton in *Latin America's New Historical Novel* (1993); Gabriel Osuna Osuna in *Literatura e historia en la novela mexicana de fin de siglo* (2008); and Magdalena Perkowska in *Historias híbridas: La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana (1985-2000) ante las teorías posmodernas de la historia* (2008).

[12] These include Jitrik (68, 84), Osuna Osuna (150-51, 156-57), Perkowska (28-31, 42), and Weldt-Basson (11-12, 36).

[13] Price notes that he is chiefly interested in the ways in which authors of recent historical fiction in Mexico "conscientiously frame their national history as a long succession of defeats, mistakes and missteps" that stretches back centuries (4). While Price focuses on authors' turn toward the 19th century as a "new and accessible repository for stories, heroes, and myths in Mexico" (15), contemplation of the failure of postrevolutionary governments to uphold Revolutionary ideals and the consequential disillusionment of the intelligentsia emerged as an early trend in novelas de la Revolución. While John Brushwood notes this current in later novels, including Agustín Yáñez's *Al filo del agua* (1947) and Carlos Fuentes's *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962), he also traces it as far back as Martín Luis Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente* (1928) (8-11). Aralia López Gómez has argued that this disillusionment can be traced back to at least the early 1940s, with the publication of José Revueltas' *El luto humano* in 1943. According to López Gómez, this novel launched the discourse that "la Revolución y sus proyectos sociales han muerto sin que se hayan cumplido sus objetivos" (665).

[14] Hutcheon defines "historiographic metafiction" as "well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events

and personages" and identifies as its goal the use of "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" in order to rethink and rework the "forms and contents of the past" (5). In terms of Latin America's new historical novel, Menton proposes a list of six traits that mark this genre: the subordination of mimetism in favor of the illustration of philosophical ideas; the conscious distortion of history; the use of famous historical characters as protagonists; the employment of metafiction; the use of metatextuality; and the presence of the Bakhtinian concepts of the dialogic, carnivalesque, parody, and heteroglossia (22-24).

**Chapter 1**

[15] Arce estimates that up to half of Mexican women were either roaming the country or engaged in "nontraditional" activities during the Revolution (66), and Elena Poniatowska has gone so far as to say that "[s]in las soldaderas no hay Revolución Mexicana" (*Las soldaderas* 14).

[16] Although important due to its pioneering efforts, Mendieta Alatorre's work espouses essentializing, stereotypical notions of the relationship between women and combat, with the author at one point proclaiming that both the voluntary and forced participation of women in combat go against their very nature and that, while women do not automatically decide to become involved in war, in extraordinary circumstances there is a "serie de renunciaciones y convencimientos que van moviendo su inclinación y su repulsa a la violencia de la sangre" (22).

Several works that followed Mendieta Alatorre's focused in part on Mexican women's participation in the Revolution, including Anna Macías' *Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940* in 1982, Julia Tuñón Pablos' *Mujeres en México: Una historia olvidada* in 1987, and Shirlene Soto's *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910-1940* in 1990. Another study

dedicated entirely to Revolutionary women was not published until 1990, however: Elizabeth Salas' *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History*.

[17] Women were officially barred from ranks, barracks, and field maneuvers by the 1930s and were designated as soldiers wives by the 1940s, further aligning the work that they did in camps with the unremunerated housework performed by women for their husbands and families (Salas xii).

[18] Corridos are Mexican folk ballads. In her feminist study of the corrido, María Herrera-Sobek argues that corridos encompass three primary genres: epic, lyric, and narrative. Like epics, corridos also extol the deeds and virtues of their (typically male) subjects. Their lyric component derives from their "affective overtones" and their narrative character from their structure—a first- or third-person recounting of a story (xiii). Herrera-Sobek traces the origin of corridos to European romances and epics, and in particular their Iberian variants, which are primarily concerned with the actions of *guerreros*, or (male) warriors (1).

[19] As Arce notes, the ideal Mexican womanhood to which all women are encouraged to aspire has been predicated on codes of conduct tied to "white" middle- and upper-class women (8).

[20] Olcott defines "abnegación" as "selflessness, martyrdom, self-sacrifice, an erasure of self and the negation of one's outward existence" and asserts that it "became nearly synonymous with idealized Mexican femininity and motherhood" (*Revolutionary Women* 15-16).

[21] "La bola" is a term used to refer to the Mexican Revolution's "mobile collective of insurgents traversing the country" (Esch 15). Esch argues that joining la bola allowed combatants to both realize their self-worth and affirm their presence as political subjects.

[22] La Malinche is the mythified figure that has arisen from the real-life indigenous

woman (Marina/Malintzin) who was given as a slave to the *conquistador* Hernán Cortés and who served as his translator. She also bore him a son, Martín, who has come to symbolize the first *mestizo*, and thus "Mexican," born in Mexico. A controversial and widely debated figure, la Malinche has been framed by many as a traitor to Mexico's indigenous peoples. In his famous 1947 essay "Los hijos de la Malinche," Octavio Paz claims that Mexicans' innate self-loathing stems from their historical legacy as descendants of Martín Cortés, who was the "fruto de una violación" due to his mother's seduction and betrayal (103-10).

[23] Arce identifies a similar character arc in a film by Ismael Rodríguez also starring María Félix: 1958's *La Cucaracha.* In the film, Félix plays a brash soldadera who stands in contrast to Dolores del Río's soft-spoken and decent widow. She is ultimately sexually overpowered and brought to order by a man—Emilio Fernández's el Colonel Zeta—in a violent taming to which del Río's middle-class character is not subjected (96).

[24] According to Salas, ex-soldaderas were often denied pensions or given very low sums (50). Martha Eva Rocha notes the role that class played in determining which ex-soldaderas were successful in obtaining government recognition and aid and which were not. According to Rocha, the women who were officially recognized as veterans of the Revolutionary cause were the "teachers and professional women who acted as spies, publicists, and couriers for various revolutionary factions" (15). Although the Medal of Revolutionary Merit was created in 1939 for ex-combatant men and women who participated in a civil or military fashion in the war, obtaining this medal required documentation of service that most poor ex-soldaderas simply did not have, as they had never been officially recognized as members of Revolutionary groups. Between 1939 and 1975, only 450 women were recognized as official veterans. (15-17). The story of María Teresa Rodríguez is representative of the experience of most women who sought

this recognition. Despite carrying letters, arms, and bombs for the Central Revolutionary Committee of Mexico City and being promoted to the rank of *coronela*, Rodríguez died abandoned and impoverished at age 84 in 1962. The application that she filed in 1939 remained open until her death, when it was official rejected due to a lack of commission papers (22-30).

[25] My understanding of representation as having two different senses—political (*vertreten*) and artistic (*darstellen)*— and the complicity between the two comes from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's classic essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (275-76).

[26] In his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections,* Slavoj Žižek classifies symbolic violence as one of two forms of objective violence. Unlike subjective violence, objective violence is not perpetrated by a clearly identifiable agent. Žižek argues that symbolic violence, or the violence embodied in language, is not limited to overtly violent discourse, such as incitement. Rather, he says, it is fundamental to language itself, which seeks to impose a certain universe of meaning. The other form of objective violence that Žižek identifies is systemic violence, or the "often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (1-2).

[27] Cixous introduced the concept of "anti-narcissism" in her seminal 1975 essay "Le Rire de la Méduse," writing that men had led women to hate themselves, "to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs" (418).

[28] Writing within a Lacanian understanding of subject formation, Cixous calls for the rejection of writing from the symbolic order, which she views as inherently phallocentric. She advocates women to return to the "real," to "write the body" in order to revalorize the feminine through "écriture feminine." Despite Cixous' admirable goal of affirming traditionally devalued

terms, her critics have called out what they view as the promotion of biologism and an essentialistic binarity through the use of the female body as a central metaphor in her essay. Although Cixous attempts to use "feminine" and "masculine" outside of anatomical contexts and contradictorily maintains that men can also write from the female body, she often speaks of "écriture feminine" in specific relation to cisgender women (Aneja 18-19). Additionally, as the Lacanian "real" is that which precedes and lies outside of language, Cixous refuses to define exactly what "écriture feminine" would look like, as doing so would place it within the realm of the symbolic. She also fails to explain how subjects already interpellated within the current, phallocentric symbolic order will be able to escape it.

[29] While many soldaderas followed their husbands, fathers or other male relatives to war in order to provide them with domestic services, others independently joined the Revolution, seeing the fulfillment of these roles as a business opportunity. While these soldaderas frequently became the lovers of the men for which they cooked and made camp, this did not permanently tether them to these men. Arce notes that for many women, participation in the Revolution thus became a way to travel, work independently, and have different sexual partners (56). She also remarks that while women's ability to move from soldier to soldier was portrayed as fickle, it ultimately benefited them, as they were not left at the mercy of the community if their partner was killed (67).

[30] While I have chosen to read Garro's writing in concert with Paz's, I recognize that doing so can be seen as problematic. For one, beyond the broader issue of assuming that a woman's thinking is automatically conditioned by that of the men in her orbit, it can be seen as more specifically continuing to put Garro in Paz's shadow. As Biron notes, the "Garro/Paz couple […] still operates in the reception of her work but is ignored in the reception of his work"

(*Elena Garro* 17). Additionally, Paz's understanding of mexicanidad has been widely critiqued as an intellectual, personally influenced imposition from above rather than an accurate understanding of those whom he purports to write about. However, we must also acknowledge that constructions like Paz's have widely influenced cultural production and criticism, thus working to create that which they allegedly identify (Bartra 2). While automatically reading Garro's work against Paz's is not necessarily called for, "Los hijos de la Malinche" was first published in 1947, just six years before Garro wrote *Los recuerdos del porvenir*. Sara Potter, for one, has argued that Rosas "podría haber salido de la formación del mexicano de Paz: es inseguro, violento, machista, y a la vez vive sumamente triste y aislado" (115-16). Additionally, Biron notes that Garro's work seeks to "safeguard the radical otherness of the Other while Paz perpetually writes to break it down, to know the other as self" (*Elena Garro* 18). Reading Rosas and Julia in concert with Paz's understanding of mexicanidad supports Biron's argument: Julia's resistance to Rosas' violent drive for total possession mirrors Garro's resistance to academics' intellectual drive for all-encompassing analyses and definitions.

[31] McKee Irwin argues that male homosocial relations were essential to the construction of the Mexican nation throughout the 19th century, not the heterosexual relations that feature in Doris Sommer's seminal text *Foundational Fictions*. By the 1940s and 1950s, however, homosocial bonding as an institution had become an impossibility due to the rise of homophobia in Mexico (xxvii). The relationship between men continued to be what mattered, but this relationship could no longer be a harmonious one. Women arguably remained objects, but they were no longer traded between men but rather stolen by one to show his dominance over another.

[32] Derrida formulated the idea of the "transcendent signified" to explain the dominant ideological discourse that he was working against in his development of deconstructive theory.

The transcendent signified is the "ultimate referent at the heart of a signifying system" and is portrayed as absolute, irreducible, stable, timeless, and transparent ("Transcendent signified"). For Derrida, however, such a referent is ultimately an illusion and does not represent how meaning is actually made—via an endless chain of signification.

[33] The *testimonio* genre emerged in Latin America in the 1970s. A traditional testimonio is a kind of autobiography based on oral testimony given by a subaltern or marginalized subject and written down and edited someone who is more formally educated.

[34] To be fair, Poniatowska was aware of the unequal power dynamic that existed between herself and Josefa. Beth Jörgensen argues that the various essays that Poniatowska has written over the years about her relationship with Josefa and the genesis of *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* represent Poniatowska's attempt to pay a debt to Josefa. Jörgensen writes that Poniatowska has acknowledged her failure to represent Josefa adequately, the disproportionate benefits that she received from writing the novel—including the growth of Poniatowska's national and cultural identity—, and the necessarily hierarchical relationship between women of different social classes. Although this does not undo the violence that Poniatowska has done to Josefa, it does represent a recognition that any effort to give voice to the oppressed results in truths that are partial and ideologically charged (62-66).

Others, however, are less forgiving. Kimberle S. López argues that, through her writings on Josefa and *Hasta no verte Jesús mío*, Poniatowska has attempted, but failed, to erase her "own position of power within an internal colonialism that aligns her with the institutions that retain" the disenfranchised of Mexico in a marginal position (35).

[35] Judith Butler introduces the ideas of "citationality" and "citations" in her expansion of her theory of gender performativity in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). In an effort to correct the

misunderstanding that, because gender is performative, one can simply adopt different behaviors at will to change one's gender identity, Butler draws on the work of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida to emphasize that assuming an *acceptable* sex position occurs when one cites an *established* norm (232).

[36] Butler establishes the theory of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1990), proposing that acts, gestures, and enactments that purport to express a gender essence or identity in actuality work to create that identity (173).

**Chapter 2**

[37] The emergence and characteristics of boom literature have been widely studied and debated. Here, I am drawing in part on Randolph D. Pope's understanding of the movement as beginning in 1962, when Mario Vargas Llosa won the Premio Biblioteca Breve (Brief Library Prize) from Barcelona's Seix Barral publishing house for *La ciudad y los perros*. European success such as Vargas Llosa's meant wider visibility and prestige for boom authors, whose writing was broadly marked by a superposition of points of view, technical complexity, and non-linearity. Questions of time, history, reality, fiction, and language took center stage (229-32). In his 1972 memoir, *Historia personal del boom*, José Donoso also notes the important role of Vargas Llosa's 1962 prize and continental publishers' interest in Latin American writers in the coalescing of the boom. However, he points to another 1962 event—the Congreso de Intelectuales de la Universidad de Concepción— as helping to dismantle the national isolation in which many authors had been writing, fostering new, international literary and intellectual relationships (47). It is unlikely that this network was openly extended to women writing in Mexico—as Emily Hind notes, Mexican women generally did not write or publish in collaboration or adhere to particular aesthetic movements in the 20th century (Femme*nism* 7).

[38] As Danny Anderson notes in his article "Creating Cultural Prestige: Editorial Joaquín Moritz," 1982 saw Mexico suffer "devaluations, disruptions in the international oil market, and nationalization of the Mexican banking system" (27).

[39] A tradition of gendered bias against female authors in Mexico is well established. As Sarah E.L. Bowskill remarks in her book *Gender, Nation, and the Formation of the Twentieth-century Mexican Literary Canon,* reviewers and critics in Mexico have long held male-authored books to be key in the formation of a national literature, ignoring novels written by women in the same time periods. In his article on publishing and symbolic capital in Mexico, Anderson writes about the so-called "mafia," a male-dominated community of producers creating for other producers who set themselves up as the arbiters of (high) literary culture in Mexico in the 1960s and 1970s ("Creating Prestige" 31). Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado notes the continuance of this misogyny amongst the male writers of the Crack group, who he argues insinuated a dismissal of genres favored by women writers, such as romance, in their defense of "literary density" (*Strategic* 139).

[40] I am referring here to the idea first formulated by Pierre Bourdieu in his 1979 work *La distinction*. As defined in the 1990 translation of Bourdieu's *Choses dites* (1987), symbolic capital refers to a degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, and honor founded on a dialectic of knowledge and recognition (22).

[41] In the *literatura difícil* vs. *literatura light* debate that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, the former was largely associated with male writers who employed more experimental, complex narrative techniques, while the latter was tied to commercially successful female writers who often wrote with a post-boom, neo-realist style, placing greater emphasis on content, directness of impact, and reader accessibility (Standliand 15). Although men also wrote in this style, and

female authors such as Carmen Boullosa and Cristina Rivera Garza did not, women who employed it were singled out for criticism, especially if they published with large commercial editorial houses. As Sánchez Prado notes, when Bollousa began publishing with Alfaguara, moving away from "prestige" presses such as Era, reviews of her work in the Mexican magazines *Vuelta* and *Letras Libres* became markedly more negative (*Strategic* 155).

[42] Mastretta's novel was published with an initial run of 5,000 copies and went on to be reprinted ten times in two years, amounting to some 50,000 copies (Bowskill, "Origins" 75). Esquivel's debut had an initial print run of just 2,000 copies and, three years later, had been reprinted 16 times, with each reprint consisting of 25,000 copies (Lillo and Sarfati-Arnaud 488n6).

[43] The novel was awarded the Premio Mazatlán de Literatura the same year that it came out, in part based on the strong support and recommendation of Elena Poniatowska (Bowskill, *Gender* 90).

[44] Antonio Marquet's review is resoundingly negative. In it, he takes aim at Mastretta's style, or what he considers a lack of style, calling the novel "despojada de una intención estilística definida" (59). He also criticizes Tita as representing a very traditional vision of femininity (58) and the novel's unchecked praise of Tita (61). Marquet also wades into the literatura light vs. literatura difícil debate by remarking that as "es de esperarse en la literatura popular, en esta novela las situaciones se crean con la única finalidad de proporcionar satisfacción de fantasías sexuales, en este caso, femeninas" (64).

[45] See De Beer; Finnegan, *Ambivalence;* Finnegan and Lavery; K. García; Ibsen. *The Other Mirror*; and Lavery, *Textual Multiplicity*.

[46] These analyses tend to be asides in longer studies focusing on the novel's female

protagonists. As of yet, only one study dedicated to analyzing the principal male characters of Ángeles Mastretta's *Arráncame la vida* has been published: Christopher Harris' 2014 article, "'De la música y los toros': masculinities and the representation of Carlos Vives in Ángeles Mastretta's *Arráncame la vida* (1985)." As of yet, there do not appear to be any studies that focus on the principal male characters of *Como agua para chocolate* and *Mal de amores*.

[47] Objectified cultural capital refers to "material objects and media, such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc." (Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital" 246).

[48] This is a central goal of Gutmann's *The Meanings of Macho*, in which he remarks that we can either "accept that there are multiple and shifting meanings of macho and machismo, or we can essentialize what were already reified generalizations about Mexican men in the first place" (241-42).

[49] Caudillos, which can roughly be translated into "strongmen" in English, have a long political and literary history in Latin America. A lack of structure and stability in the years following independence from Spain led to a need for politicians to rely upon military power to both gain and maintain rule. Gabriela Polit Dueñas notes that caudillos have typically been associated with a chauvinistic and exaggerated masculinity in fictional works that "exageran y se adornan las versiones históricas del personaje y de su ejercicio de poder" (27).

[50] The *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) enjoyed seven uninterrupted decades of power in Mexico. Because of this one-party rule, the PRI candidate for president was essentially guaranteed to win. The "dedazo" refers to the tradition of the current PRI president choosing the next PRI candidate for the office or, in effect, naming his successor.

[51] Mastretta based her characters in part on real-life historical figures. Andrés has been tied to Maximino Ávila Camacho, the governor of Puebla from 1937 to 1941 ("La historia

oficial," LeMaître 187), and his compadre, Rodolfo "Fito" Campos, to Maximino's younger brother, Manuel Ávila Camacho, who served as president from 1940 to 1946 (193).

[52] This focus was by no means novel when Mastretta employed it. Neither was it a new approach in literature about the Revolution when Carlos Fuentes wrote *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, although this has become perhaps one of the most well-known literary efforts to denounce the "failure" of the Revolution. See Note 12 for more.

[53] Ejidos are communal lands owned and overseen by the Mexican government, which allows peasants to farm individual parcels indefinitely. These rights can be passed on to children. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) oversaw most of the land redistribution that created ejidos, while President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) ended the creation of new ejidos and allowed for the privatization of ejidal land ahead of Mexico's enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994.

[54] Victoriano Huerta was a Mexican military officer who came to power by overthrowing democratically elected President Francisco Madero, an action that earned him the nickname of "el Usurpador."

[55] Polit Dueñas proposes that "los propios caudillos se identifican con esas descripciones que de ellos han dado ciertos autores," noting specific comments made by Panamá's Omar Torrijos and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez (28).

[56] In her classic 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey employs psychoanalytic theory to explain how cinema employs a masculine, heterosexual perspective to present women as objects of pleasure for male viewers. Mulvey proposes that cinema allows for two pleasurable structures of looking. The first is scopohilic and allows for pleasure via visual objectification of another person. The second is narcissistic and comes from

identification with the image seen. Mulvey argues that cinema has traditionally positioned women as erotic objects, allowing men to identify with the main male protagonist and the active power of his gaze. As a part of this process, women's bodies are often stylized and fragmented by close-ups.

[57] The "Medusa" to which I refer here is the one featured in Hélène Cixous' 1975 essay, "La Rire de la Méduse." See Note 13 for more.

[58] The idea of a "feminist manhood" is introduced in hooks' *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love.* She conceives of a manhood that is unlinked from the dominator model and instead tied to a partnership model, doing away with the assumption that men must have power over others to be valued. Part of this shift involves promoting a masculine performance in which men show love and respect others' subjectivity.

[59] For example, he uses her as a political prop while running for governor, bringing her and his children to his speeches in order to support his populist message of family values (Mastretta, *Arráncame* 46-50). After being elected governor, he has her take part in a photo opportunity in which she donates appropriated jewelry —passed off as her own— to help fund oil nationalization efforts (55-56).

[60] Referred to as a "mujer castrante" by Esquivel (143), Mamá Elena has been interpreted by numerous critics as representing the patriarchal order, which denies women self-determination and keeps them in an oppressed positionality of servitude (Duffey 72-763; Oxford 80; Standiland 46-48; Wu 179).

[61] John Brown recounts to Tita his indigenous grandmother's theory that everyone is born with a box of matches inside that can only be lit with the help of certain stimuli—music, a caress, a word, a sound. If we fail to identify the stimuli that will light our matches or we are surrounded

by people who dampen them, we will be unable to light these matches. On the other hand, if an overwhelmingly strong emotion hits us, all of the matches will light at once and produce a magnificent light that illuminates the path back to our divine origin, resulting in our death (Esquivel 119-20).

[62] Before writing *Como agua para chocolate*, Esquivel wrote the screenplay for the 1985 film *El chido guan: Tacos de oro*, which was directed by her first husband, Alfonso Arau. Esquivel was nominated for best screenplay by the Academia Mexicana de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas (Ledford-Miller 1).

[63] The term "el porfiriato" refers to the time period during which General Porfirio Díaz ruled Mexico at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries (1876-1911).

[64] Virginia Hernández Enríquez notes that it would have been incredibly difficult for women in the time frame of the novel to have had access to professional studies in medicine. Although the first female physician in Mexico, Matilde Montoya, began her studies in 1872 in Mexico City, she was limited to practicing obstetrics and gynecology and, even then, faced public disapproval (285).

[65] Formed in 1983, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) issued a declaration and seized public buildings in the state of Chiapas on January 1, 1994, the day that NAFTA went into effect. The group sought to instigate a revolution against neoliberalism and protest the signing of NAFTA, which it believed would increase social inequality, especially among indigenous groups in Mexico. The group continues to control a large portion of Chiapas today.

[66] Rosalind Gill has outlined the similarities between the two movements, arguing that the "relentless individualism" of postfeminism and its emphasis on "choice and agency" ("Life

of Postfeminism" 607) parallel the underpinnings of neoliberalism and its "largely unquestioned ideas about choice, entrepreneurialism, competition and meritocracy" (608). As Stephanie Harzewski remarks, these attitudes put the onus on women to transform their lives and selves rather than tackling structural inequalities, and advocate for carving out personal happiness within the dominant order (181).

**Chapter 3**

[67] Although he is not speaking specifically about women-authored novels on the Mexican Revolution, Brian Price has documented a noted uptick in historical fiction being published in Mexico. Writing in his 2012 book, *Cult of Defeat in Mexico's Historical Fiction*, he comments that more than 30 historical novels had been published in the past five years alone, mostly by the editorial powerhouses Alfaguara, Grijalbo Mondadori, Joaquín Moritz, and Planeta (15).

[68] The former was a Zapatista general whose life was later mythified via a corrido, the latter an anarchist (Estrada 165).

[69] Similar criticisms have been made of the film adaptation of Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate*. In a particularly excoriating analysis, Harmony H. Wu argues that the movie "plugs into and perpetuates" a "cultural apartheid of magical realist aesthetic" in depictions of Latin America, adding fuel to an "exotic fire" via its fetishization and eroticization of border life (188).

[70] Rousselot traces this phenomenon to a reliance on "orientalist" modes of perception in order to use the past to comment and reflect upon the present. Such tactics inevitably result in a categorization of the viewer in a position of authority over the viewed as well as the creation of false narratives that fail to correspond to historical change (7-10).

[71] Mastretta packs her review with words meant to stir readers' emotions—and bodies:

"eufórica," "deseo," "intenso," "el privilegio de narrar para reconocerse viva." Her ending line, which also features on the front cover, drives the point home: "Bienvenida sea esta historia, su *delirio*, su *emoción*, su *alegría*" (my emphasis).

[72] Sabine Schlickers identifies Sabina Berman's *Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda* as an early example of this shift toward a focus on masculinity in Mexican women's cultural production on the 1910 Revolution and its enduring legacy. Published first as a play in 1993 and adapted to the silver screen in 1996, Berman's work mocks the Pancho Villa-idolizing main male character, Adrián, in order to criticize the "intelectuales politizados" of the 1990s who based their masculinity on the macho caricature into which Villa had been transformed (185).

[73] There is a long history of scholarship tying "honor" to Mediterranean cultures, including J.G. Peristiany's *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (1965) and Julian Pitt-Rivers' essay "The Anthropology of Honour" (1965). Later scholars questioned Peristiany's and Pitt-Rivers' methodologies and conclusions, which saw Mediterranean societies as united by a uniform value system based on complementary codes of honor and shame (Gilmore 2). In the introduction to the edited volume *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (1987), David D. Gilmore notes that later fieldwork has suggested that other moral principles—such as hospitality, respect, and honest—overlay or overshadow honor as masculine ideals (3) and argues that the "classic honor/shame model has been reified," leading to "circularity and reductionism in some literature" (6). While Gilmore does not rule out the importance of honor in Mediterranean cultures, he does point toward a need to question the supposed uniformity and expansiveness of conceptions and practices of honor among Mediterranean societies. Nevertheless, scholars investigating honor in contemporary Mexico continue to cite Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers, such as in the ethnographic case study

"Masculinidades en la narcocultura de México: 'los viejones' y el honor," published in 2019 by Marco Alejandro Núñez-González and Guillermo Núñez Noriega.

[74] As Pablo Piccato notes, proponents of dueling also saw the practice as signaling elite Mexican men's cosmopolitanism and modernity. There had been a revival of the idea of honor and the skills and ritual practices sustaining it in late 19th-century France, and, thus, by engaging in duels, "Mexican men became members of an international group of men of honor" (333-34).

In terms of the discourse promoting dueling as a way for men to dominate their anger and confront their adversaries coolly (Parker 321), we can clearly detect a hydraulic understanding of emotions in late 19th-century Mexico. The hydraulic model understands emotions as universally conceived and contained within the body, where they well up, eventually "boiling over" through verbal or non-verbal signs and physical actions (Plamper 67). This model has been challenged, and leading scholars now promote the view that emotions are "processed sensations, perceived and expressed through language and culture; they are appraisals which may or may not be conscious or articulated" (Strange and Cribb 7). *All* bodies are trained to perceive and express emotions in certain ways, further disproving the idea that members of the lower classes are more bodily oriented than are their upper-class counterparts.

[75] Sonya Lipsett-Rivera notes that historians have only recently started to recognize that plebian violence in 18th and 19th century Latin America followed an internal logic. If these unspoken rules of violence were violated, then bystanders would step in to ensure that established rituals and conventions were being followed (7).

[76] Judith Butler, in particular, has both argued and been used to argue against the apparent determinism of Pierre Bourdieu's theories. Gill Jagger argues that rethinking habitus as Butler does—that is, in terms of performativity—would lead to its conceptualization not as the

immediate, automatically successful incorporation of a field but rather as an iterative and reiterative process characterized by instability and indeterminacy (221). While theoretically Butler's approach appears to provide for more flexibility, it must be asked if, practically, it varies all that much from Bourdieu's. As Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado points out, the "urgency of understanding power as it works in power, and not as we model it in position-takings and ideological paradigms," is, in fact, one of the greatest strengths of Bourdieu's thinking ("Introduction" 3). There seem to be certain parallels between Butler's use of the idea of citationality and Bourdieu's concept of knowing the "rules of the game." In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler reworks the idea of gender performativity through citationality, arguing that performativity can be understood as the forced citation of previously established norms, which is required to produce a "viable" or legible subject. Although the hyperbolic citation of these norms in theatrical performances such as drag can serve to expose their normalization (236), successfully reformulating norms on a large scale among those who have cited them, unknowingly, their entire lives is another matter entirely. Similarly, Bourdieu argues that it is possible for those who lack "native membership" in a field to see as arbitrary the actions that take place within it but extremely difficult to make those born into the game similarly aware, as the latter's "practical faith" in the game leads them to "sanction" and "disbar" those who would attempt to destroy it (*Logic of Practice* 68).

[77] I borrow my understanding of the term "palimpsestuous" from Karen Dillon. According to Dillon, "palimpsestuousness" and "palimpsestuous" are neologisms that describe the "type of relationality reified in the palimpsest" (4). The official adjectival form of "palimpsest" is "palimpsestic," and refers to the process of layering that produces a palimpsest but not the structure that results from that process (4).

[78] García Bergua explicitly mentions the following works: Francisco L. Urquizo's *El capitán Arnaud* (1954), Teresa Arnaud de Guzmán's *La tragedia de Clipperton* (1982), Laura Restrepo's *La isla de la pasión* (1989), and Miguel González Avelar's *Clipperton, isla mexicana* (1992) ("Reconstruir" 37). Since the publication of *Isla de bobos*, there has been another novel published on the Clipperton tragedy: Pablo Raphael's *Clipperton* (2013).

[79] La nota roja is a sensationalistic genre of journalism in Mexico with roots stretching back to the 19th century. Similar to American yellow journalism, la nota roja tabloids focus almost exclusively on crimes involving graphic physical violence.

[80] Raúl does not explicitly identify his fellow soldiers as indigenous, but he does describe many of them by saying that "ni siquiera hablaban español" (García Bergua, *Isla* 36).

[81] The idea of the abject was originally formulated by Julia Kristeva as part of her explanation of subject formation. According to Kristeva, the abject refers to those elements of our self that we must expel in order to establish the limits of our subjectivity. This expulsion, however, results in the establishment of an inherently weak subjective border. Consequently, biological materials that wind up outside of our bodies—such as blood, excrement, and pus—fill us with a sense of horror because they remind us of the fragility of our being and threaten us with the rupturing of the barrier that our psyches have established between ourselves and others (2-4).

[82] The most famous analogization of these two characters in Latin American letters can be found in Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó's 1900 essay *Ariel*, in which Ariel represents the ideal, selfless values that Rodó calls on the youth of Latin America to follow and Calibán the instinctual side of man that he calls them to reject.

[83] In an article on the different forms of "bobería" that can be found in the novel, Juan Pablo Román Alvarado traces further parallels between the human and bird occupants of

Clipperton. Román Alvarado notes that both isolate certain members (Saturnino), care for their young at all costs (Luisa), remain quiet and docile when physically attacked (the women and the abandoned soldiers), and are robbed by others (the North Americans who mine the guano) (63).

[84] In an interview with Gabriella de Beer, Boullosa remarks that "Elena Garro has always impressed me as a great writer of fiction and continues to do so" (177). She goes on to say that Garro's earlier works—including *Los recuerdos del porvenir* (1963) and *La semana de colores* (1964) "have a brightness and joy that her later work lost completely, even though it didn't lose its vitality" (187).

[85] See Note 74 for more.

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